The Kingdom of Württemberg and the Making of Germany, 1815-1871

Bodie A. Ashton

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To Ingrid and Albert, and for Kevin, Ric and Jutta.

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Note on Translation

German is a logical language governed by rules, but it is not so easy to integrate it into an English-language work. Adjectives change their suffixes depending on what grammatical case the sentence takes. For example, the newspaper *Schwäbischer Merkur* could, in fact, be written as *Schwäbischen Merkur* or *Schwäbischem Merkur*, depending on whether it appears as the subject, direct object or indirect object in a sentence. If preceded by the definite article (*der*), it would also be written as *der Schwäbische Merkur*. For the ease of reading, these titles appear as though they are in nominative case without article. Hence: *Schwäbischer Merkur*, *Württembergisches Heer*, or *Schwäbische Kronik*.

A number of the kings, regents, princes and dukes vital to the history told here have similar names. At the same time as there was a King Wilhelm of Württemberg, there was also a King Wilhelm of Prussia. In order to differentiate them, dynastic surnames are used in the references – 'Württemberg' for the House of Württemberg, 'Wittelsbach' for the Bavarian royal family, 'Zähringen' for the Badenese, 'Hesse' for Prince Alexander of Hesse-Darmstadt, 'Hohenzollern' for the Prussians and 'Habsburg' for the Austrians.

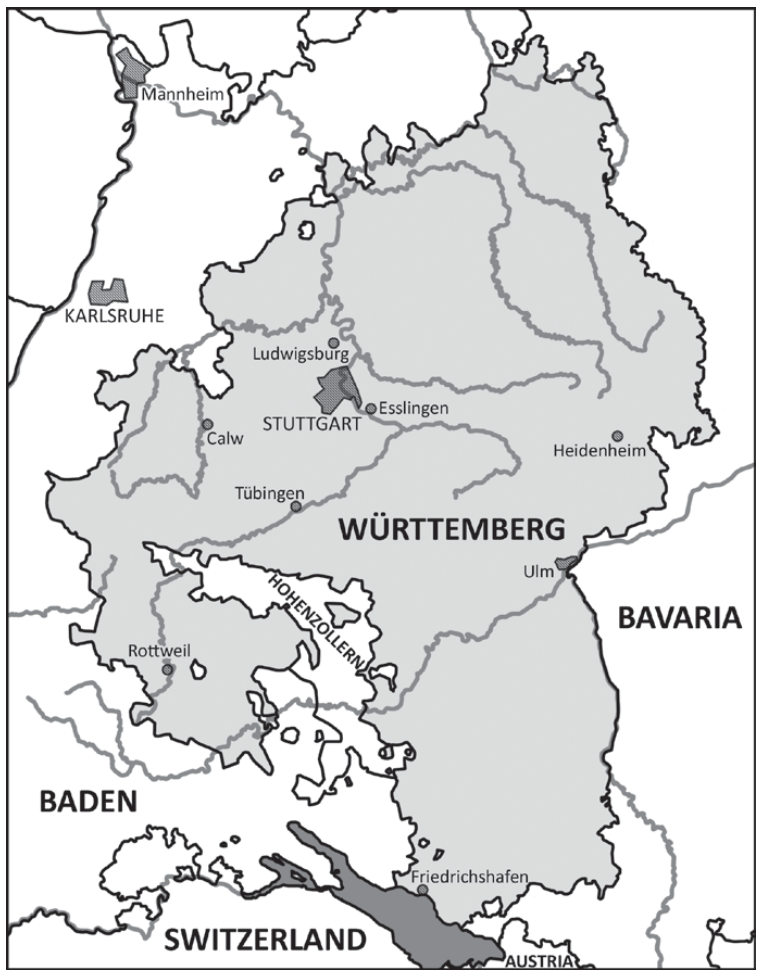
This work also uses a number of contemporary newspaper sources. In many cases, presumably depending on the copy editor or journalists working on a given day, title formats and other details often altered on an issue-by-issue basis. One Württemberg newspaper appears within the same year, month or week as *Staats-Anzeiger für Württemberg*, *Staatsanzeiger für Württemberg* or, simply, *Staats-Anzeiger* or *Staatsanzeiger*. For the purposes of clarity, the present work will commonly refer to this particular paper as the *Staats-Anzeiger für Württemberg*, regardless of the titular flourish of that particular issue.

All translations from German or French to English, unless otherwise noted, are the responsibility of the author. Any errors are mine and mine alone.

Abbreviations

BArch	Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, Berlin
fl	*Gulden* or *Florin*; Württemberg unit of currency
FO	Foreign Office, London
GlaB	Generallandesarchiv Baden, Karlsruhe
GStAPK	Geheimes Staatsarchiv Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin
Hes.StAD	Hessisches Staatsarchiv Darmstadt, Darmstadt
K.W.St.E.	*Königlich Württembergische Staatseisenbahn* (Royal Württemberg State Railway)
PAdAA	Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts, Berlin
StadtAE	Stadtarchiv Esslingen, Esslingen
WVLG	*Württembergische Vierteljahrshefte für Landesgeschichte* (*Württemberg Quarterly Journal of State History*)
ZWLG	*Zeitschrift für Württembergische Landesgeschichte* (*Journal of Württemberg State History*)

Maps



MAP 1 The Kingdom of Württemberg and its post-1815 borders

MAP 2 The German confederal borders (1819) and the proposed national borders of 'Greater Germany'

MAP 3 The proposed national borders of 'Lesser Germany', excluding Austria

MAP 4 The proposed national borders of 'Third Germany' (the 'Beust plan', 1861), excluding Prussia and Austria

MAP 5 The 'Federation of the United States of South Germany' (1866), between the North German Confederation and Austria

Introduction

As this book is being written, edited and printed, the nation remains the fundamental unit of sociopolitical identification. The United States is deep into a presidential election campaign whose central theme is how to recapture (or reinvent) American greatness, and it is hard to point to any other campaign in living memory that has not turned on this theme. In Europe, the influx of refugees fleeing the war-torn Middle East has caused all sides of politics to re-examine the values of the society to which they belong. The co-opting of national symbols for every side of a debate or issue means that the framing apparatus for that debate is one of how the country in question sees itself. Does opening one's borders to people from a fundamentally different cultural heritage dilute the national values and spirit? Or does it in fact exemplify everything that is good and right about the nation – that it is open to change, that it helps those in need, that diversity rather than insularity makes it stronger? Elsewhere, and throughout history, similar debates rage, and the terms are very similar. In the 1950s, Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunts during the Red Scare and the Lavender Scare demonstrated explicitly, through the auspices of the conveniently named House Un-American Activities Committee, that to be a communist, gay or lesbian was incompatible with being an American. Since then, the same language is used with increasing frequency to define a set of behaviours that fall within (and, by definition, outside of) the virtuous norms of the nation. At the beginning of the European refugee crisis, the German interior minister labelled anti-Muslim movements as 'un-German'. The suggestion in some American right-wing circles that Muslims in the United States must register, and that Muslim migration must be suspended or otherwise heavily regulated, implies that the ability of people of Islamic faith to display American virtue is at best difficult, if not impossible. In Russia, the Putin government's campaign against 'homosexual propaganda' suggests much the same for the queer community. Clearly, even in the twenty-first century, there are constraints and contradictions within national identities, and these turn on far more than just where one was born.

These questions will not be resolved because they cannot be. The reason for this is twofold. First, the same questions, albeit in different guises, have been at the heart of the concept of nationhood since its inception. Key to defining what a nation *is* is

identifying what a nation is *not*. The second factor is that it is unlikely that there will *ever* be a consensus on what it means to be American, British, German, Australian, Indonesian, Congolese, Brazilian or anything else. This is because, at a fundamental level, the nation does not exist. It is not a natural unit. No giant, black lines scorched into the earth demarcate where one nation ends and another begins. If nationality is more than simply the coincidence of a location of birth, but also comprises a set of values, attitudes, behaviours, linguistics and cultures, then it is clear that no one is born as a member of a nation. These characteristics are learnt, ingrained by education and habit. They are neither biological nor hereditary. As an identity, then, nationhood is fundamentally different from so many others. A gender is conferred at birth. A sexuality is the product of psychological impulses. Eye and hair colour, skin pigmentation, stature: these are all inborn, inalienable and immutable characteristics. A nationality, beyond the obvious identifier of holding a passport and a right to vote, is an artificial and arbitrary construct. In this modern age, however, its existence is largely taken as a given.

But why is 'the nation' so important to us? This question is at the core of this work. Over the course of the next eight chapters, we will observe the process of nation-building in action, and how an overarching concept of nationhood is constructed. In this case, the nation is Germany, and the prism through which we view the events is a southern state called Württemberg.

The methodology of unification studies

Today, Württemberg (or, rather, the federal state of which it is now a part, Baden-Württemberg) is a prosperous region, a major centre of German industry, and the driving force behind the second-wave 'Economic Miracle' that not only supports itself but much of Europe in a time of financial crisis. This influence is a relatively modern development. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Württemberg was a state of minor importance. Its population numbered significantly fewer than one million, and it was little more than a small duchy nestled in the southwest of the German region – one of about 360 independent states occupying the same area. Over the course of the next seven decades, however, that regional picture would change. By 1806, those 360 states had become 38, the result of sweeping territorial changes originating from Napoleon Bonaparte's military thrust through central Europe. By 1871, Württemberg had ceased being a sovereign state in its own right, and had instead become a founding member of a new, unified nation-state: Germany.

The process by which Germany unified has been the subject of countless historical works, virtually dating back to the moment of its creation. However, the discourse has always been open to political influence. That is to say, most works focusing on the German unification have had some sort of political point to make by doing so. The first efforts – those of the Prussian historians Heinrich von Treitschke and Heinrich von Sybel – emphasized the romanticized liberal-nationalist origins of the German state.[1] The Kingdom of Prussia was a guiding, protective power, which was able to focus the desire of the disparate Germans to become one. Germany was young, its people for the

first time united. It was therefore urgent that the recorded history of Germany should reflect the efforts of the great early German nationalists, such as Ernst Moritz Arndt and Friedrich Ludwig Jahn, and emphasize that the German people were united in culture, language, patrimony, blood and history.

Treitschke and Sybel, of course, are not the only historians who have focused on the popular and cultural will of the German *Volk* as the defining characteristic of the German unification, with Prussia as the standard-bearer. Certainly, this romanticized view did not go unchallenged. In particular, the rise of the Third Reich and the advent of the Second World War caused another wave of historiography. These works written by National Socialist historians can scarcely be taken seriously; at one point, even Hermann Goering turned his hand to writing a history of German unity. But the works written during the same time by non-German historians of Germany were similarly compromised by the overwhelming political sentiment of the era. Emblematic of this movement is the renowned English historian, A. J. P. Taylor. Taylor's *Course of German History* was first published in 1945, and soon became one of the most influential German history texts ever written. Taylor saw in the German unification a malevolent force that had inexorably resulted in the cataclysm of two world wars. Prussia was the militant core of Germany, but the other German states had willingly entered into the unification as a group of 'Little Prussias', intoxicated by the promise of geopolitical dominance of Europe and drawn together by a commonality of barbarity and militancy.[2] In doing so, Taylor popularized a thesis known as the *Sonderweg* (special path), which argued for a unique development of German society and politics. This, Taylor attempted to use to trace an unbroken line of German continuity and historical development between Adolf Hitler and Otto von Bismarck (or, somewhat more ambitiously, Charlemagne). With some modification, this thesis continued to influence the histories of Germany throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. The social historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler, for instance, used the *Sonderweg* as the central plank for his argument that Germany's unique internal tensions led inexorably to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Perhaps more ambitiously, the Hamburg historian Fritz Fischer used it to argue that there had been a continuity in German war aims between 1914 and 1939, while more recently Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, arguing the Germans were imbued with a unique and almost genetic drive to destroy Jews, adopted the *Sonderweg* approach to explain German 'eliminationist antisemitism'. Heinrich August Winkler, though acknowledging that 'no country in the world can be said to have followed a "normal path"', nevertheless concludes that there was a normative developmental project in the West; it was this path from which Germany deviated, thereby paving its own road that led to Hitler and the National Socialists.[3]

To be sure, the *Sonderweg* thesis is not without its detractors, with even one of its proponents dismissing the term itself as 'useless'.[4] Whatever its merits or otherwise, though, the *Sonderweg* thesis has had another, unintended consequence: it effectively denies a history of diversity on the path to unification. In more recent times, other historians, made suspicious by the simplicity of these arguments and their provenance, have attempted to redress the balance by casting light on the institutions and traditions of the other German states in the approach to unification. One of the most important works to question the nature of the German unification is David Blackbourn's *The*

Long Nineteenth Century. To Blackbourn, German unification as an idea was inevitable, but what was not clear was the model it would follow. The centralized, Berlin-based bureaucracy was merely one outcome, albeit the most likely.[5] James J. Sheehan's seminal *German History 1770–1866* remains arguably the gold standard for English-language studies of pre-unification Germany, and its focus sits very firmly on the German region as a whole, and not simply on one or two more important countries. Abigail Green's excellent 2001 work, *Fatherlands: State-Building and Nationhood in Nineteenth Century Germany*, focuses on the institutions and traditions of the kingdoms of Saxony, Hanover and Württemberg.[6] Green's work has been complemented by those of other scholars, emphasizing the particularist roots of many of the *Kleinstaaten* (small states) or *Mittelstaaten* (middle states). In particular, and perhaps unsurprisingly, these works have tended to focus on the larger, more 'important' *Mittelstaaten*, such as Bavaria or Saxony.[7] As a result, they tend to fall into the trap of removing Prussia from the German Question, but finding a proxy replacement. This, of course, is hardly something that Bavaria or Saxony can fulfil.

Of more general works, the late Thomas Nipperdey's expansive *Deutsche Geschichte* series is a masterful achievement of quantitative and qualitative analysis of German society as a whole throughout the nineteenth century, and as such it does not fall within the norms of the old 'Borussian school' of German history, which focuses largely on Prussia.[8] Dieter Langewiesche, meanwhile, has investigated the democratic traditions of Württemberg.[9] In reference to specific events, the smaller states are also well-represented; Hans-Werner Hahn's work on the formation of the German Customs Union, or *Zollverein*, bases its argument on the experiences of the states of Hesse-Kassel and Hesse-Darmstadt, for example, and Manfred Hanisch's *Für Fürst und Vaterland*, dealing with Bavaria, is a particularly impressive academic work on that state's political development during the formative years that led to unification.[10] Most recently, Brendan Simms' ambitious survey of German history, *Europe: The Struggle for Supremacy*, contains a masterful overview of the role of the smaller states as a whole throughout a period of five centuries. The expansive nature of the book, however, precludes a more in-depth analysis of the role of each of these states in the context of specific examples and events.[11]

These works are important, not just because they investigate states and parties that are otherwise drowned out of the German historical discourse, but because they implicitly acknowledge that there is far more to German history than the meek cowing of the smaller states, or the (perhaps) forced conformity with Prussia. At the same time, however, they perpetuate their own problems. These nuanced and conscientious works, regardless of their exceptional scholarship or discursive elegance, may achieve academic acclaim but do not fire the passions of the interested reading public in the same way that Taylor's oversimplified fire-and-brimstone approach continues to do. Green recently remarked that the era of the Borussian school is long gone, and in the halls of the academy she might be correct.[12] Perhaps the Borussian school is dead and buried, but its spectre haunts studies of Germany like a malevolent *Poltergeist*, and the best efforts of the new acolytes of German history have yet to exorcize it. Nor are they likely to, if the recent reissuing of *The Course of German History* by Routledge in 2008 is any indication.[13]

Why Württemberg?

Where does Württemberg fit within this discussion of nationalism and nation-building? At first glance it does not appear to be particularly important: a duchy that became a kingdom, a state with struggling industry, a population of no great size. Yet it is this which makes Württemberg a logical case study for the German experience during the unification process. The state's role as a 'middle state' makes it more representative of the 'typical' German state experience, inasmuch as there *can* be a typical experience of so many disparate states. Austria and Prussia, with their enormous populations and expansive territories, wielded far greater economic and political power than their counterparts. On the other hand, Württemberg's size made it similar to Hanover, Saxony, the two Hessian states,[14] Baden and numerous other middle states. Its economy, not superior by any means, worked in close conjunction with those around it. In times of war, Württemberg could wield military power that was comparable to that of its neighbours. Like Baden, it had a strong tradition of liberal political engagement in civil society. Like Bavaria, it tempered this liberalism with occasional forays into monarchical absolutism. Like all of the middle states, Württemberg's economy was driven largely by agriculture and, though it was slower than some other states to adopt a statewide economic policy that favoured industry, it began to industrialize with modern machinery supplanting traditional manufacturing methods in a similar timeframe as its counterparts. Moreover, while some of the *Mittelstaaten* were exclusively aligned with Austria or Prussia during this period, Württemberg's geographical position, not to mention its dynastic ties, meant that it would, at various points, foster favourable relations with *both* of the German great powers, as well as foreign powers, such as France and Russia. In a sense, then, while the experience of Württemberg and Württembergers during this period cannot be a comprehensively accurate representation of the experience of *all* Germans (or even, all non-Austrian, non-Prussian Germans) between 1815 and 1871, it *can* be considered similar to a line of best fit. Thus, a study of Württemberg's role during these years of change, and what effect those years had on the state itself, approximate the role of other comparable *Mittelstaaten* during the same era.

While historians writing many years later seem by implication to have dismissed the importance of the *Mittelstaaten* in German politics, this view is not borne out by the actions of the political figures, the press and the general public of Württemberg during this era. On more than one occasion, the kingdom attempted to take control of regional national efforts. In other cases, Stuttgart took part in elaborate plans of subversion and deceit. In yet more cases, the state cooperated with the great powers. In each instance, however, Stuttgart and the powers-that-be in the *Neues Schloß* worked in accordance with their own conception of Württemberg's greater good. The state's development may have been roughly representative of that of the *Mittelstaaten*, but it was also unique. Regardless of the hue and cry of German nationalists, the various German states were not homogenous, and time and again Württemberg demonstrated curious divergences from what we may have considered the 'norm'. In its own right, Württemberg deserves reappraisal.

This is not a 'Great Man' history. Undoubtedly, there *were* indeed great men and women who shaped the history of Württemberg, its role in the unification process and the role the unification process played in its political and social constellation. Many of these figures will play prominent roles in the story to follow. Some will appear in many ways to be truly heroic, while others will be objects of sympathy and, in some cases, pity. Some are to be admired. But this is *also* the history of great social movements, driven not by political supermen but by the masses of the public, whose faces and names are lost to us. Most of all, this is a history of the confluence of these people – the leaders and the followers – as they attempted to create a new identity from nothing. What this meant to their lives, and what this meant to their state, is our focus.

Intentions

This work is divided into eight chapters. In Chapter 1, the reader will be presented with a 'prehistory' of Württemberg in the mirror of German nationalism. In particular, this will focus on the era of the Napoleonic Wars, in which German nationalism, which had previously been only of minor significance, blossomed under the pressure of foreign aggression. During this time, Württemberg and many of its neighbouring states grew in influence and power, and this engendered in the political class a particularism that often clashed with the pan-German identity beginning to develop elsewhere. Moreover, the influence of Napoleon on Germany, not to mention the privations inflicted upon the people of the German states, would shape much of Germany's development in subsequent years. In particular, the German sphere was left with two major powers – Austria and Prussia – and it was largely expected that, if the German states were to unify, the impetus and leadership for this unification would come from either of these two countries. The foundations of Württemberg's political particularism and its interest in forming more binding relationships with its neighbours (notably Baden and Bavaria) are discussed in Chapter 2. Chapter 3 revolves around the cultural, social and political relationship between Württemberg, Austria and Prussia, as well as between the state and its *Mittelstaaten* counterparts.

These chapters demonstrate the growing appeal, within political and popular circles alike, of German unification; furthermore, they also show that the form of 'ideal' unification was highly individual, differing from actor to actor and theorist to theorist. By 1848, however, the appeal had become an imperative, as liberal-nationalist revolutions swept the German heartland. These revolutions and their aftermath are discussed in Chapter 4, while Chapter 5 charts the consequences of these years of upheaval between 1850 and 1859. In particular, it is significant that the decade of the 1850s embodied a notable upswing in both official and unofficial representations of the nation, corresponding with a newfound sense of political adventurism. This era led inexorably to the various crises of the 1860s (sometimes descriptively but erroneously termed 'the wars of German unification'); during these years, the political arenas in many states (of which Württemberg was no exception) were courts of intrigue, with each authority jostling for its share of respective power in a game of power whose