

## (How) Could One Be French in Banat (1770–1920)?

Cristian Cercel 

### ABSTRACT

This article engages with discourses about a Lorrainian/Alsatian-Lorrainian/French presence in Banat throughout the nineteenth century and up until the end of World War I. It contextualizes these discourses within the broader context of Franco-German entanglements and shows that such entanglements had reverberations in the east of Europe. It links them with larger processes of identity construction with respect to the Banat Swabians—eighteenth-century settlers in Banat and their descendants. The analysis shows that the Banat instantiation of the distinction between a voluntaristic French identity and a descent-based German identity was extremely porous. Frenchness in Banat was essentially understood as being based on descent, while Germanness appeared not only as descent-based, but also as an identity one could assimilate into. In the early aftermath of World War I, ideas about descent as an identity-endowing element were drawn on in attempts to cast France in the role of a kin-state for Banat Swabians.

**KEYWORDS:** Banat, Franco-German Entanglements, French in Banat, Alsace-Lorraine

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## Introduction

Among the propositions for the future of Banat that circulated in the aftermath of World War I, two emphasized the presence in the region of Alsatians and Lorrainians of French origin.<sup>1</sup> Anne Delouis discusses one of these, the August 1919 memorandum of the “Delegation of the Swabians of Banat at the Peace Conference,” which pleaded for the unity of Banat within the Romanian state.<sup>2</sup> Stanislav Sretenović briefly refers to the independentist demands advanced in a second memorandum, drafted by the “Committee of Alsatians-Lorrainians and Swabians of Banat and Bačka” and situates them within the broader history of the particular interest in villages in Banat considered French, Lorrainian, or Alsatian-Lorrainian. Sretenović’s analysis starts in the 1870s and ends in the aftermath of World War II, when around 10–11,000 people who had fled south-eastern Europe claimed Alsatian or Lorrainian origin and settled in France.<sup>3</sup> In effect, scholarship has tended to focus on the construction of Banat Frenchness in the early aftermath of World War II, with the aforementioned propositions and memoranda being drawn on at most to supply historical background to processes in the early postwar period.<sup>4</sup> Questions of memory and identity are at the center of Smaranda Vultur’s research on Tomnatic (Triebswetter), a “French village” located in the Romanian Banat after 1918, and on La Roque-

- 1 Déléation des Souabes du Banat à la Conférence de la Paix: Mémoire présenté à la Conférence de la Paix. L’unité du Banat. Situation économique du Banat. Avec une carte, 1919-08-19, in: ANNE FRIEDERIKE DELOUIS: Die Delegation der Banater Schwaben bei der Pariser Friedenskonferenz: Hintergrund und Bedeutung eines unbeachteten Memorandums von 1919, in: *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 53 (2015), pp. 279–325, here pp. 310–325; CONSTANTIN DE KAYSER, MARTIN J. ACKERMANN: Indépendance du Banat: Une question européenne, April 1920, in: *Historical Archives of the International Labour Organization*, Geneva, CAT 5-38-2.
- 2 DELOUIS, Die Delegation.
- 3 STANISLAV SREtenović: Les germanophones du Banat serbe et roumain sous le regard français: Des colons “alsaciens” et “lorrains” aux réfugiés, 1871–1949, in: *Histoire, économie & société* 41 (2022), 1, pp. 16–35.
- 4 On the postwar migration of Banat refugees/expellees claiming French/Alsatian-Lorrainian origin to France, see: GÉRARD NOIRIEL: Réfugiés et sans-papiers: La République face au droit d’asile, XIXe–XXe siècle, Paris 1999, pp. 129–135; SÉGOLÈNE PLYER: L’Alsace et les Banatais après 1945, in: MACIEJ FORYCKI, AGNIESZKA JAKUBOSZCZAK (eds.): *Les marques du voisinage: L’Alsace et la Posnanie dans l’ombre des influences germaniques*, Poznań—Strasbourg 2019, pp. 153–164; LAURE HUMBERT: *Reinventing French Aid: The Politics of Humanitarian Relief in French-Occupied Germany, 1945–1952*, New York 2021, pp. 52–58, 73–76. On French ethnicity in early postwar Romania, see: SMARANDA VULTUR: *The Role of Ethnicity in the Collectivization of Tomnatic/Triebswetter (Banat Region) (1949–1956)*, in: CONSTANTIN IORDACHI, DORIN DOBRINCU (eds.): *Transforming Peasants, Property, and Power: The Collectivization of Agriculture in Romania, 1949–1962*, Budapest 2009, pp. 141–164; ANNE FRIEDERIKE DELOUIS: A French Minority in the Banat? Post-War Redefinitions of Swabian Cultural Heritage and Ethnic Belonging, in: *Südost-Forschungen* 79 (2020), 1, pp. 263–290; MIHAELA ȘERBAN: Litigating Identity in Fascist and Post-Fascist Romania, 1940–1945, in: *Journal of Romanian Studies* 2 (2020), 2, pp. 81–108, here pp. 99–103.

sur-Pernes in the South of France, where *Banatais* settled in the late 1940s and early 1950s.<sup>5</sup> In another contribution, drawing partially on the same set of sources as the present one, I engage with the discourses on French origin in Banat throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, showing them to be used in various historical contexts for the articulation of identity claims underlain by different, yet interlinked, logics: the logic of separation, the logic of association, and the logic of recuperation.<sup>6</sup> Elsewhere, I show these discourses to be part of a much broader range of “diasporic possibilities.”<sup>7</sup>

The historical point of reference underpinning the claims to Frenchness in Banat advanced after the two world wars is the presence of Francophone Lorrainians among the eighteenth-century settlers most commonly known as Swabians (*Schwaben* in German) and the establishment of some villages with Francophone majorities. Benjamin Landais discusses the meanings of French ethnicity in eighteenth-century Banat and pleads against its interpretation according to modern-day national sensibilities.<sup>8</sup> But the articulations of Frenchness in nineteenth-century Banat and the discourses on it up until World War I have not yet been subjected to consistent analysis. In the aforementioned text by Sretenović, only three pages out of nineteen are dedicated to villages in Southern Hungary that were perceived as Alsatian, Lorrainian, or Alsatian-Lorrainian between 1871 and 1920.<sup>9</sup>

Taking heed of this scholarship, the present article engages with Frenchness in Banat from the end of the eighteenth century up to the early aftermath of World War I. It expands the analytical approach and makes a distinct case that such articulations and discourses have to be analyzed against the background of Franco-German entanglements and the Franco-German conflict over Alsace and Lorraine. Such an analysis enables a better understanding of the configuration and interchangeability of the ethno-political categories available in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to the descendants of the eighteenth-century settlers in Banat commonly referred to as Banat Swabians. In this way, the present contribution provides a basis for a more consistent analysis of the interwar and post-1945 discourses on Frenchness and Lorrainianness in Banat. Moreover, it shows that Frenchness and Germanness were interlinked categories in nineteenth-century Banat. This suggests that it is necessary to question

5 SMARANDA VULTUR: *Francezi în Banat, bănăţeni în Franţa: Memorie şi identitate* [French in Banat, Banaters in France: Memory and Identity], Timișoara 2012.

6 CRISTIAN CERCEL: *Les “Banatais”: Le discours sur l’origine, entre logique de la séparation, logique d’association et logique de la récupération*, in: BENJAMIN LANDAIS (ed.): *Une diaspora entre France et Allemagne: Les “Lorrains” du Banat (XVIIIe–XXe siècle)*, special issue of *Revue d’Allemagne* (forthcoming).

7 CRISTIAN CERCEL: *Germans Abroad? Danube Swabians and the Plurality of Diasporic Possibilities*, in: *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.3138/diaspora.24.2.2024.12.19> (advance access; forthcoming in print).

8 BENJAMIN LANDAIS: *Être français dans le Banat du XVIIIe siècle*, in: *Études Vauclusiennes* 84 (2016), pp. 45–57.

9 SRETENOVIĆ, pp. 18–21.

the empirical applicability of the distinction often made between voluntarist traditions and models of French ethnicity and nationhood and descent-based traditions and models of German ethnicity and nationhood.<sup>10</sup>

The article begins with the eighteenth-century Habsburg colonization of Hungary and discusses the presence of “French” settlers from Lorraine and Alsace in the wider context of Franco-Habsburg and Franco-German relations. The following sections look at several texts from the nineteenth century up until the end of World War I that deal with people in Banat who were regarded as (or described themselves as) Lorrainians, Alsatian-Lorrainians, or French. Engaging with these texts shows that interest in Lorrainian, Alsatian-Lorrainian, or French settlements in Banat was closely linked with Franco-German entanglements and the Franco-German conflict over Alsace and Lorraine. The article then shifts to examining articulations of Frenchness in connection with nationalizing processes in Hungary before World War I. The final section looks at the configuration of ethno-political categories in two memoranda from 1919/20 and their emphasis on the presence of “Alsatian-Lorrainians” in Banat. The article concludes with some observations on the reverberations of Franco-German entanglements in Eastern Europe.

### Franco-German Entanglements in the Eighteenth-Century Migration to Southeastern Europe

The Ottoman defeats in the Habsburg-Ottoman wars of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century led to “the Habsburgs’ decisive eastern expansion.”<sup>11</sup> Hungary, and with it territories along the Danube—Banat, Bačka, Slavonia, Syrmia—came under Habsburg sovereignty. In line with the precepts of mercantilist populationism, a colonization process spread over the entire eighteenth century followed under three Habsburg rulers (Charles VI, Maria Theresa, and Joseph II).<sup>12</sup> Both the imperial authorities and private colonization agents cast a wide net to recruit settlers from varied locations on both sides of the Rhine (Baden, Württemberg, Saarland, the Rhineland, the Palatinate, Franconia, Bavaria, Westphalia, Hesse, Trier, Alsace, Lorraine, Luxembourg etc.).<sup>13</sup> Many of these territories belonged to the Holy Roman Empire, but some did not. The exceptions included Alsace and, after 1766, also Lorraine.

10 The rigidity of this distinction has been questioned and nuance has been added, see: ROGERS BRUBAKER: *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Cambridge, MA—London 1992; PATRICK WEIL: *How to Be French: Nationality in the Making since 1789*, Durham, NC—London 2008.

11 BÁLINT VARGA: *The Habsburg Monarchy*, in: CATHIE CARMICHAEL, MATTHEW D’AURIA et al. (eds.): *The Cambridge History of Nationhood and Nationalism: Nationalism’s Fields of Interaction*, Cambridge et al. 2023, pp. 64–87, here p. 64.

12 GERHARD SEEWANN: *Geschichte der Deutschen in Ungarn. Vol. 1: Vom Frühmittelalter bis 1860*, Marburg 2012, pp. 114–237.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 120–123.

The presence of Lorrainians among the settlers indicates the relevance of the ties that existed between the Duchy of Lorraine and the Habsburg Monarchy.<sup>14</sup> Such links predated the incorporation of Lorraine into the Kingdom of France in 1766. In 1736, the Duke of Lorraine married Maria Theresa and a Habsburg-Lorraine dynasty came into being.<sup>15</sup> The first governor of Habsburg Banat was Count Florimund de Mercy (1666–1734), a native of Longwy in Lorraine who was a marshal in the Habsburg army. Landowners in Banat were also able to draw on Lorrainian-Habsburg connections. Count Ferraris (1726–1814), for example, was granted the estate of St. Hubert in Banat in 1795 in compensation for the loss of his properties in Lorraine and Belgium; he had been born in Lunéville in Lorraine and had enjoyed a career in the Habsburg army.<sup>16</sup>

The eighteenth-century settlers largely enjoyed a common status as *Kolonisten* that gave them a somewhat privileged position relative to the other groups that were (already) in the region, such as the Wallachians (Romanians) and Rascians (Serbs) who had a status denominated with *Nationalisten*.<sup>17</sup> Most settlers spoke German dialects, depending on their regions of origin.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, there were also some settlers—mainly from Lorraine—whose first language was some form of French patois and some villages had Francophone majorities. French was initially used as the school and church language in Brestowatz in Bačka, in the Banat villages of Mercydorf, Triebswetter, Gottlob, Ostern, Gутtenbrunn, and in the three adjacent so-called “sister villages” St. Hubert, Seultour, and Charleville, also in Banat.<sup>19</sup> Most of these villages were settled in the 1760s and 1770s.

14 JEAN-PAUL BLED, EUGÈNE FAUCHER et al. (eds.): *Les Habsbourg et la Lorraine*, Nancy 1988.

15 RENÉ TAVENEAU: *La Lorraine, les Habsbourg et l'Europe*, in: BLED/FAUCHER, pp. 11–27. The Habsburg family continues to have a special relationship to Lorraine. Otto von Habsburg got married in Nancy in 1951, while in 2012 another Habsburg scion also celebrated his wedding there. See: ZSÓFIA ERDÉLYI, BEÁTA MERZA, ANETT NACSA: *Wedding à la Habsburg 70 Years ago*, 2021-05-10, <https://habsburgottoalapitvany.hu/en/wedding-a-la-habsburg-70-years-ago/> (2025-01-11); *Adelige Hochzeit*, in: *Spiegel Panorama*, 2012-12-29, <https://www.spiegel.de/fotostrecke/adelige-hochzeit-erzherzog-christoph-von-oesterreich-heiratet-fotostrecke-91462.html> (2025-01-11).

16 DR. CONSTANT V. WURZBACH: *Biographisches Lexikon des Kaiserthums Oesterreich*, enthaltend die Lebensskizzen der denkwürdigen Personen, welche 1750 bis 1850 im Kaiserstaate und in seinen Kronländern gelebt haben, vol. 4, Wien 1858, p. 199.

17 BENJAMIN LANDAIS: *Nations, privilèges et ethnicité: Le Banat habsbourgeois. Un laboratoire politique aux confins de l'Europe éclairée*, Strasbourg 2023, pp. 58–62.

18 JOHN C. SWANSON: *Tangible Belonging: Negotiating Germanness in Twentieth-Century Hungary*, Pittsburgh 2017, p. 26.

19 PETER SCHIFF: *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Gemeinde Mercydorf, Timișoara 1934*; GEORG REISER: *Wandlungen der Ortschaft Mercydorf: Beitrag zur Siedlungsgeschichte des Banats*, in: *Neue Heimatblätter: Vierteljahresschrift zur Erforschung des Deutschthums in Ungarn* (1936), pp. 97–114; GEORG REISER: *Zur spät-theresianischen Ansiedlung im Banat: Gottlob, Triebswetter, Ostern* (I), *ibid.*, pp. 268–80; NIKOLAUS HESS: *Heimatbuch der drei Schwestergemeinden Sveti-Hubert, Charlevil und Soltur im Banat 1770–1927*, Sv. Hubert 1927; FRIEDRICH MILLA: *Die Seelsorger*, in: ANTON AFFOLDER

Local and regional allegiances were highly relevant for the settlers in Hungary, who were essentially peasants in a pre-national world.<sup>20</sup> Such identities and allegiances did not necessarily imply the existence of rigid oppositions. Early modern Franco-German relationships were not by default marked by an urge toward separation and distinction. Moreover, the regions of origin of the eighteenth-century settlers were sites of intense political and cultural Franco-German entanglements. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, territories on the left bank of the Rhine had seen armed conflicts as the French monarchy sought to extend its power and influence eastward.<sup>21</sup> While debates about the Rhine as a political and cultural boundary already started to gain traction in the seventeenth century, no “clearly defined, linear, national border” separating France from the German lands existed up until the French Revolution.<sup>22</sup> Even those settlers who were not “French” presumably had some degree of cultural proximity to pre-revolutionary Frenchness.

At times, scholarship assumes that the relationships settlers entertained with their places of origin were rather threadbare.<sup>23</sup> Representations of an abrupt and complete break with the “old homeland” need nuancing,<sup>24</sup> however, as settlers continued to maintain some communication with those who had stayed behind as they sorted out property and inheritance issues, kept emotional ties with families and friends, and at times sought to entice people in their “old homeland” to migrate to Hungary.<sup>25</sup> Correspondence was one way of maintaining such connections, but some individuals also occasionally traveled back to their

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(ed.): *Brestowatz in der Batschka*, Freilassing 1971, pp. 37–41, here pp. 37–38; GEORG HEHN: *Die Schule von der Ansiedlung bis zur Flucht*, *ibid.*, pp. 43–50, here pp. 43–44; LANDAIS: *Être français*.

20 EUGEN WEBER: *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870–1914*, Stanford 1976. See: JOHANN EIMANN: *Der deutsche Kolonist oder die deutsche Ansiedlung unter Kaiser Josef II. in den Jahren 1783 bis 1787 besonders im Königreich Ungarn in dem Batscher Komitat*, ed. by FRIEDRICH LOTZ, München 1965, p. 65.

21 For an overview of Franco-German entanglements in the long eighteenth century, see: GUIDO BRAUN: *Deutsch-Französische Geschichte IV: Von der politischen zur kulturellen Hegemonie Frankreichs 1648–1789*, Darmstadt 2008.

22 CLAIRE GANTET: *Die äußeren Grenzen des Heiligen Römischen Reichs: Wahrnehmung und Repräsentationen in der zweiten Hälfte des 17. Jahrhunderts*, in: ETIENNE FRANÇOIS, JÖRG SEIFARTH et al. (eds.): *Die Grenze als Raum, Erfahrung und Konstruktion: Deutschland, Frankreich und Polen vom 17. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt—New York 2007, pp. 53–76; BERNHARD STRUCK, CLAIRE GANTET: *Deutsch-Französische Geschichte V: Revolution, Krieg und Verflechtung 1789–1815*, Darmstadt 2008, p. 22.

23 SWANSON, p. 21.

24 MARIONELA WOLF: *Alte und neue Heimat: Briefe südwestdeutscher Banat-Auswanderer des 18. Jahrhunderts*, in: WALTER ENGEL (ed.): *Kulturraum Banat: Deutsche Kultur in einer europäischen Vielvölkerregion*, Essen 2007, pp. 85–140, here p. 91.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 88; KARL-PETER KRAUSS (ed.): *Quellen zu den Lebenswelten deutscher Migranten im Königreich Ungarn im 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2015.

places of origin.<sup>26</sup> Cases of re-migration likewise occurred.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, the anti-religious character of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars led to some new cases of immigration from France to Banat.<sup>28</sup>

The existence of such links suggests that awareness and knowledge of developments in the “old homeland” persisted to some degree. After the French Revolution, the towns and regions of origin of many settlers on the left bank of the Rhine were occupied by the French, and this had far-reaching social, cultural, and political implications. Writing about the Palatinate, Celia Applegate notes that “French revolutionary and Napoleonic rule first created the political boundaries of the Pfalz, then radically altered social and political life within them.” She also posits a “lingering affinity between the French and the Pfälzers.”<sup>29</sup> The Palatinate was one of the regions of origin of the eighteenth-century colonists. The Palatine settler Johann Eimann in Neuwerbass, Bačka, was the author of the frequently cited work *Der deutsche Kolonist* (1822).<sup>30</sup> Eimann was not only a self-taught historian of his new homeland, but also in constant communication with friends and relatives in his native Duchroth and other localities in his region of origin.<sup>31</sup>

During Maria Theresa’s reign, elementary schooling in the Habsburg Empire became compulsory and had to be provided in the local vernacular.<sup>32</sup> The temporary use of French in schools in rural localities in Banat with a sizable Francophone population drew on this precept. Nonetheless, finding Francophone (or bilingual) priests and educators was easier said than done. Furthermore, the administrative reforms during the reign of Joseph II (1780–1790) reinforced the relevance of the German language.<sup>33</sup>

26 WOLF, Alte und neue Heimat. See also: CHARLES HIEGEL: Répression de l’émigration lorraine en Hongrie au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle dans les baillages de Bitche et de Sarreguemins, in: Annuaire de la Société d’Histoire et d’Archéologie de la Lorraine 8 (1970), pp. 101–168.

27 MARIONELA WOLF: Württembergische Rückwanderer aus Ost- und Südosteuropa in der ersten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: MATHIAS BEER, DITTMAR DAHLMANN (eds.): Migration nach Ost- und Südosteuropa vom 18. bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts: Ursachen—Formen—Verlauf—Ergebnis, Stuttgart 1999, pp. 263–290.

28 LANDAIS, Être français, p. 49, refers to seven families from Franche-Comté who settled in the village Bacova in 1794; MARIONELA WOLF: Aus der Franche-Comté ins Banat nach Bakowa und zurück? Das traurige Schicksal der Familie Mougin, in: Banater Kalender (2008), pp. 99–104, suggests that Franche-Comté was already the origin of some of those who settled in the 1780s, while also indicating that the revolutionary turmoil led to new cases of migration from France to Banat.

29 CELIA APPLEGATE: A Nation of Provincials: The German Idea of Heimat, Berkeley et al. 1990, p. 15.

30 EIMANN.

31 Ibid.

32 VARGA, p. 67.

33 GÁBOR ALMÁSI, LAV ŠUBARIĆ: The New Discourses of Nation: The Origins of Nationalism in Late Eighteenth-Century Hungary (Parts 1–2), in: Nations and Nationalism 28 (2022), 3, pp. 894–908; 4, 1326–1339.

Late eighteenth-century manifestations of French ethnicity in Banat were localized and largely articulated around the use of the language at church (and in schools). These manifestations could cause some friction at the local level between Francophone and Germanophone settlers.<sup>34</sup> At times, Francophone settlers wrote to representatives of imperial authority in French.<sup>35</sup> But beyond such contextual instantiations, the difference between being French and being German (or, more specifically, Swabian) in Banat was not clear-cut or based on rigid ethnic boundaries. Settler status, with its fiscal and legal privileges permitting settlers to differentiate themselves from other groups in the region, was significantly more important than differences between French and German (or Swabian) settlers.<sup>36</sup> It was possible to move from being French to being Swabian and German by means of language acquisition and language use.<sup>37</sup> This possibility was also connected to the Franco-German entanglements in the settlers' regions of origin.

### Frenchness with an Ancien Régime Flavor

Without pertinent long-term Francophone educational or religious institutional structures, the use of French was destined to fade away over time. In Triebswetter, a village with a sizable Francophone population when it was established, teaching in French stopped in 1806 in the village primary school.<sup>38</sup> The French mineralogist and geologist François Sulpice Beudant (1787–1850) noted on his travels through Hungary in 1818 that “the small colony” of Brestowacz had “preserved its language until now”—with the implication that this had not been the case in the other villages he mentions (Hatzfeld, Charleville, St. Hubert, Großjetscha, Csadat).<sup>39</sup> In the 1830s, Baron Haussez (1778–1854), a French royalist politician in exile journeying through Hungary, made a detour to visit “some villages inhabited by French people whose fathers were

34 LANDAIS, *Être français*.

35 *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 56.

36 LANDAIS, *Nations*.

37 VARGA, p. 66.

38 GEORG REISER: *Der Sprachwandel in den Banater Franzosendörfern*, in: *Neue Heimatblätter: Vierteljahresschrift zur Erforschung des Deutschtums in Ungarn* 3 (1938), pp. 55–71, here pp. 69–71; ANTON PETER PETRI, JOSEF WOLF: *Heimatbuch der Heidegemeinde Triebswetter im Banat*, Tuttligen 1983, p. 79, identify 920 colonists. For 679 of them, they identify places of origin in Lorraine, Luxembourg, France, and Alsace, and for 88 origins in Baden-Württemberg, Rheinland-Pfalz, and Saarland (all current German states that share a border with France).

39 F.-S. BEUDANT: *Voyage minéralogique et géologique en Hongrie, pendant l'année 1818*. Vol. 1: *Relation historique*, Paris 1822, p. 77: “cette petite colonie a jusqu'ici conservé sa langue.” Unless otherwise specified, all translations of direct quotations from French and German into English have been made by the author of this article.



attracted and settled there by Empress Maria Theresa.”<sup>40</sup> Haussez was disappointed by what he encountered: “At best they might remember their origin, but they do not hold its traditions dear.”<sup>41</sup> He found that the French spoken in the villages had already “completely altered and degenerated into patois mixed with German and Slavic.”<sup>42</sup> Haussez’ view of the French language being spoiled by its interactions with other idioms, German included, mirrors the visions of a unitary French nation that gained currency in post-revolutionary France and were underpinned by homogenizing language policies and a distrust of regional tongues.<sup>43</sup> The perception of an original French degenerating into patois inverts representations of an original patois being replaced by high-culture French.

An account of a visit by the Count of Chambord (1820–1883) in 1839 provides a slightly different perspective. Chambord, the young Bourbon pretender-in-exile to the French throne, was on a journey through the Habsburg Empire. The grand tour started in Gorizia, where he lived at the time, drawing on dynastic connections with the Habsburgs.<sup>44</sup> Emphasizing the enthusiasm of the inhabitants of Triebswetter when faced with a royal French visitor, the account of Chambord’s visit noted that “a priest who spoke French” was called for.<sup>45</sup> Anton Bonnaz (1763–1837), a Francophone native of Challex on the Franco-Swiss border who had fled the French Revolution to Banat, had passed away in 1837 just after he had been replaced by his curate, who had no knowledge of French. This caused some issues, given that about 56 elderly villagers could only confess in French.<sup>46</sup> Anton Bonnaz’ nephew, Alexander Bonnaz (1812–1889), also born in Challex, would become priest in Triebswetter in 1840. But knowledge of French had already become largely irrelevant for the fulfillment of clerical duties in the locality by the 1840s.<sup>47</sup>

The description of Chambord’s exuberant reception by villagers in Banat can be taken with a grain of salt, as it is transparently intended as a demonstration of his royal credentials and his royal legitimacy to rule over the French.<sup>48</sup>

40 CHARLES LEMERCHER DE LONGPRÉ BARON D’HAUSSEZ: *Alpes et Danube, ou Voyage en Suisse, Styrie, Hongrie et Transylvanie: Pour faire suite au “Voyage d’un exilé,”* vol. 2, Paris 1837, p. 211: “quelques villages habités par des Français dont les pères avaient été attirés et fixés là par l’impératrice Marie-Thérèse.”

41 Ibid.: “C’est tout au plus s’ils se souvenaient de leur origine, dont la tradition ne s’accompagne d’aucune sympathie.”

42 Ibid.: “La langue française, déjà tout altérée et dégénérée en patois mêlé d’allemand et de slave.”

43 CAROLINE C. FORD: *Which Nation? Language, Identity and Republican Politics in Post-Revolutionary France*, in: *History of European Ideas* 17 (1993), 1, pp. 31–46.

44 COMTE DE LOCMARIA: *Souvenirs des voyages du Comte de Chambord en Italie, en Allemagne et dans les États d’Autriche de 1839 à 1843*, 3rd ed., Paris 1872, p. 5.

45 Ibid., p. 41: “un curé qui parlât Français.”

46 REISER, *Der Sprachwandel*, pp. 70–71.

47 Ibid.

48 Louis-Philippe I from the Orléans branch of the royal family, who ascended to the throne after the Revolution of 1830 and thus usurped it in the eyes of the legitimists

It is improbable that conversation between Chambord and the villagers flowed smoothly in French, although the text suggests that the wannabe sovereign enjoyed perfect communication with the inhabitants of Triebswetter, who “had preserved the national character on foreign soil.”<sup>49</sup> The account indicates the relevance of settler status for the self-identification of the male villagers: “[...] several family heads had brought their certificates of exemption from military service as well as those of their fathers.”<sup>50</sup> It also shows the centrality of the Catholic religion for articulating Frenchness in Triebswetter. This was probably linked with memories of the pre-settlement context and also a result of the longtime service of Francophone priests including the above-mentioned Anton Bonnaz, who had been trained in Annecy and served as curate in Triebswetter from 1798 onward and subsequently as parish priest from 1802 onward.<sup>51</sup> Bonnaz, who learned German in Triebswetter, had replaced Louis Breton, who had likewise fled the French Revolution only to return to France after four years in Banat.<sup>52</sup> The French connection in Banat in the first half of the nineteenth century had an ancien régime flavor and was imbued with Catholicism.<sup>53</sup>

While their views on Frenchness in Banat are strongly colored by their positions within post-revolutionary French emigrant society, the visits by Haussez and Chambord also indicate how Franco-German and Franco-Habsburg entanglements reverberated through perceptions of “French colonies” and Frenchness in Banat resp. Hungary. Both expressly describe visits to villages settled at the behest of Maria Theresa. In line with representations about race and ethnicity that were increasingly being articulated in Europe at the time, they identify and single out Frenchness as deriving from (patrilineal) descent. Such representations tied in with the definition of Frenchness based on visions “of the nation as the political extension of the family” that were inscribed in

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supporting the Bourbon branch, took the title “king of the French” (*roi des Français*), as opposed to *roi de France*. His claimed legitimacy was constitutional and bestowed on him by the French people and not by divine will—a break with the tradition of his predecessor, Chambord’s father Charles X. See: ÉRIC DERENNES: Du roi de France au roi des Français (30 juillet – 9 août 1830): Usurpation et mutation de la royauté au cœur de l’essor démocratique, in: *Parlement[s]: Revue d’histoire politique* 26 (2017), 2, pp. 205–225.

49 COMTE DE LOCMARIA, p. 41: “avaient conservé le caractère national sur la terre étrangère.”

50 Ibid: “plusieurs chefs de famille avaient apporté leur certificat de congé du service militaire et ceux de leurs pères.” I am thankful to Márta Fata for pointing me toward this probable explanation.

51 Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter, 1878-09-20, in: Archive of the Institute for Danube Swabian History and Regional Studies, Tübingen, Nachlass Anton Petri, 4.55, p. 2.

52 REISER, *Der Sprachwandel*, pp. 68–69.

53 On the relationship between Catholicism and national identity in modern France, see: JOSEPH F. BYRNES: *Catholic and French Forever: Religious and National Identity in Modern France*, University Park 2005.

the post-Revolutionary French Civil Code.<sup>54</sup> The ancien régime flavor of Banat Frenchness thus coincided with the turn to *jus sanguinis* that was increasingly informing how nationality was understood in France.<sup>55</sup>

For Haussez, descent was not enough, as his disappointment at the supposed degeneration of the language shows—a consequence, from his perspective, of German influence and also of what he perceived as a lack of interest by the community in its French origins. For Haussez, origins had to be supplemented by some degree of volition. For Chambord, finding Frenchness beyond the borders of French territory appeared to mirror his own exile. His encounter with the villagers of Triebswetter likewise indicates the relevance of factors that go beyond descent such as volition and language. He found the former, which legitimized contributing to efforts to strengthen the latter. In practice, this did not happen. Nonetheless, following his visit, Chambord bought the estate of Count Ferraris from the count's heirs. The villages of St. Hubert, Charleville, and Seultour, the other “French colonies” in Banat, were located there in direct proximity to Triebswetter.<sup>56</sup> He was thus able to symbolically rule over some villagers in Banat presumed to be of French descent.

### Descent as a Kind of Particularism

At the beginning of the 1840s, the Hungarian statistician Alexius (Elek) Fényes (1807–1876) counted 6,150 French people in the Diocese of Csanád, relying on the “dominant language” specified in Catholic schematisms.<sup>57</sup> The methodology used was somewhat dubious. Fényes recognized that the figure was probably exaggerated and that the number of people of French descent likely stood at around 6,000, albeit strongly mingled with Germans from the Reich.<sup>58</sup> He also predicted that French would not continue to be spoken in the villages where the descendants of “Lorrainians” and “Luxembourgers” lived, while noting conversely that French was increasingly spoken in the homes of the elite.<sup>59</sup>

French descent, as identified by Fényes in his statistics—equated by him with Lorrainian or Luxembourgish ancestry—did not provide a basis used to support any ethnopolitical group claims. In the context of the revolution of 1848, claims for political and linguistic autonomy based on the common German origin of the descendants of settlers in Banat (more precisely, in the counties of Torontal and Bačka and in parts of Temes) were advanced. The official use of German was one of the requests laid down in the Bogarosch Petition of 1849, also in response to the fact that Hungarian had become the official state

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54 WEIL, p. 29.

55 Ibid., p. 44.

56 HESS, p. 73.

57 ALEXIUS VON FÉNYES: Statistik des Königreichs Ungarn, vol. 1, Pesth 1843, pp. 38–42, 90.

58 Ibid., p. 90.

59 Ibid.

language in 1844.<sup>60</sup> The text of the petition and particularly the emphasis on descent “from different territories of the German Reich” indicate that origin was important for the construction of ethno-political groupness in nineteenth-century Hungary.<sup>61</sup> The category “German” in Banat was increasingly being configured as a category centered on the legitimacy provided by the settler credentials of eighteenth-century ancestors.<sup>62</sup>

The mandate to submit the petition was signed by villagers in 30 communes in the region (including St. Hubert, Charleville, and Seultour, but not Triebswetter), while the petition as such was signed by 31 representatives of 13 communes. Some of the eighteenth-century settlers in these communes had come from Lorraine, Alsace or Luxembourg, and the ancestors of some of the signatories of the petition had most probably spoken some French patois. The main author of the petition was the priest Josef Novak (1803–1880) from Bogarosch, but the already mentioned French-born priest Alexander Bonnaz also appears to have played an important role in drafting the text.<sup>63</sup> It was anticipated that Karl von Arizi (1804–1870), a landowner of Italian extraction, would head the envisaged autonomous German administration.<sup>64</sup> Origin was indeed increasingly important, but did not exclude other principles of identification. The descent-based category of “German” in Banat could readily include settlers of French (and, for that matter, also Italian) descent without this causing any friction.

The growing interest in descent was related to a growing interest in local history. The beginnings of the *Heimatbuch* (local monograph) genre in Banat Swabian communities date back to the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>65</sup> From the 1860s onwards, villages increasingly started to mark round anniversaries of the establishment of eighteenth-century settlements, which sometimes prompted the writing of a *Heimatbuch* and investigations into the places of origin of eighteenth-century ancestors.<sup>66</sup>

In 1865, a piece on the “Lorrainian colony Triebswetter in Banat” was published in the yearbook of the secondary school (*Unter-Realschule*) in Temes-

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60 ALMÁSI/ŠUBARIĆ, p. 895.

61 The text of the petition can be found in: ANTON PETER PETRI: Josef Novak und die Bittschriften an den Kaiser, München 1963, pp. 36–48, here p. 37: “aus verschiedenen Gegenden des deutschen Reiches.”

62 MÁRTA FATA: “Creatio ex nihilo”: Das sinnstiftende Narrativ der Donauschwaben im Wandel der Zeit, in: MATTHIAS ASCHE, ULRICH NIGGEMANN (eds.): Das leere Land: Historische Narrative von Einwanderergesellschaften, Stuttgart 2015, pp. 165–187.

63 PETRI, p. 31.

64 Ibid., p. 36; SEEWANN, pp. 305–308.

65 JOSEF WOLF: Donauschwäbische Heimatbücher: Entwicklungsphasen und Ausprägungen, in: MATTHIAS BEER (ed.): Das Heimatbuch: Geschichte, Methodik, Wirkung, Göttingen 2010, pp. 129–163, here p. 130.

66 Ibid., p. 135.

var.<sup>67</sup> Its author was one of the school's teachers, Josef H. Horak.<sup>68</sup> Displaying ethnographic interest, Horak described the "French Lorrainians" as one of the "races" in Banat and Bačka, regions where one allegedly came across "offspring of all the main peoples dwelling in Europe's expanses."<sup>69</sup> He advanced a number of over 6,000 descendants of Lorrainian settlers who had come to Banat at the behest of Maria Theresa and settled in nine villages in the counties Torontal (St. Hubert, Charleville, Seultour, Triebswetter, Ostern, Hatzfeld, Kleinjetscha) and Temes (Wiesenhaid and Traunau), as well as "scattered in various villages."<sup>70</sup> The source he referred to for this figure was not von Fényes, but "Canonicus Gabriel Popp" of Lugoj (Lugosch).<sup>71</sup>

Horak was interested in Triebswetter because it was "the largest such colony, partially still preserving its national-French peculiarity."<sup>72</sup> Acknowledging that eighteenth-century Lorrainian settlers were French, Horak explained their migration to Banat by emphasizing the connections with Maria Theresa and her husband, the Duke of Lorraine.<sup>73</sup> The first part of Horak's account was a historical overview of Lorrainian migration to Banat and the initially French character of Triebswetter, attested by the presence of Francophone priests there.<sup>74</sup> Horak noted that French had ceased to be used at the end of the 1830s as "the population had become completely German."<sup>75</sup>

The second part of the text describes his one-day trip to Triebswetter.<sup>76</sup> Horak was on a quest to find distinct expressions of Frenchness. He identified such evidence in the facial features of the inhabitants and concluded that the adoption of German habits and the German language had led to the predominance of the German "facial type" among the men in Triebswetter, whereas women (and "especially the girls") displayed physical features proving "descent from Western Romanic blood."<sup>77</sup> Perusing old parish registers, he came across surnames he identified as French and noted the absence of German

67 J. H. HORAK: Die lothringische Colonie Triebswetter im Banate: Culturhistorische Skizze, in: Jahres-Bericht der Unter-Realschule in Temesvar veröffentlicht am Ende des Schuljahres 1864/65, Temesvar 1865, pp. 5–16; also published in: PETRI/WOLF, pp. 151–161.

68 Lehrplan, in: Jahres-Bericht der Unter-Realschule, pp. 25–35, here p. 34.

69 HORAK, p. 5: "Sprösslinge[n] aller Hauptvölker die Europa's Gefilde bewohnen."

70 Ibid.: "in verschiedenen Dörfern zerstreut."

71 Ibid. See: GAVRIELU POPU: Geografia Banatului si cunoscintie istorice, si etnografice despre locuitorii Banatului compuse pentru tenerime [The Geography of Banat and Historical and Ethnographic Knowledge about the Inhabitants of Banat, Drafted for the Youth], Lugosiu 1864, p. 53.

72 HORAK, pp. 5–6: "die grösste und theilweise noch in ihrer national-französischen Eigenthümlichkeit conservirte derartige Colonie."

73 Ibid., p. 7.

74 Ibid., pp. 6–10.

75 Ibid., p. 10: "die Population war ganz deutsch geworden."

76 Ibid., pp. 11–16.

77 Ibid., p. 12: "besonders die Mädchen"; "die Abstammung vom westromanischem Blute."

ones.<sup>78</sup> He also referred to the connections with the region of origin, suggesting that the original French patois spoken in Triebswetter resembled the patois “as it was spoken in the past century in Lorraine, around Epinal, Nancy, Lunéville, Toul.”<sup>79</sup>

Horak also described an encounter with an elderly man who spoke a mixture of French patois and German, commenting that his “exquisite bodkin beard instantly suggests the emperor of the French,”<sup>80</sup> before going on to acknowledge the entanglements between the lands east and west of the Rhine and their reverberations and parallels in Triebswetter. These included the temporary presence in the village of an adventurer, “purportedly a Rhenish Bavarian,” who had fought in the French legion only to end up for a while in Triebswetter.<sup>81</sup> He taught French there, allowing some men to learn “new French.”<sup>82</sup> Horak’s prediction was, however, that once the last French speakers in the village died, “there will be nothing to remind the completely Germanized population of its origin.”<sup>83</sup> In this light, he suggested the need for the “composition of a cumulative history of all Lorrainian colonies (perhaps in the form of annals).”<sup>84</sup>

Horak’s narrative about Triebswetter is an account of French-speaking Lorrainian migrants who became German: culturally, linguistically, and even physically. His discussion of Triebswetter as a “Lorrainian colony” appears influenced by the Franco-German conflict over Lorraine. Even as he conflates Lorrainianness and Frenchness, his historical overview also acknowledges the shifting identifications in Upper Lorraine, “which used to have initially a completely German population, which became French early on.”<sup>85</sup> Despite this recognition of identity shifts throughout history, Horak was nonetheless influenced by the strengthening trend toward race thinking as the basis for group and individual identity. His perspective mixes consideration of Lorrainians as Franco-German with ideas about deep-seated Franco-German differences.<sup>86</sup> At this point in the mid-nineteenth century, French/Lorrainian descent in Banat

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78 Ibid., p. 13.

79 Ibid.: “wie es im vergangenen Jahrhunderte in der Lorraine, um Epinal, Nancy, Lunéville, Toul gesprochen wurde.”

80 Ibid., p. 15: “wohlgelungene Knebelbart lässt gleich den Kaiser der Franzosen errathen.”

81 Ibid., p. 14: “angeblich ein Rheinbaier.” *Rheinbayern* (Rhenish Bavaria) refers to the Palatinate, which belonged to Bavaria between 1816 and 1945.

82 Ibid.: “neufranzösisch.”

83 Ibid. p. 16: “ganz deutsch gewordene Bevölkerung durch nichts mehr an ihre Abstammung erinnert werden wird.”

84 Ibid.: “Abfassung einer Cumulativ-Geschichte sämtlicher lotharingischer Colonien (vielleicht in Annalen-Form).”

85 Ibid., p. 7: “welches ursprünglich ganz deutsche Bevölkerung hatte, sich jedoch schon früh französirte.”

86 On Germanness as non-Frenchness, see: WOLFGANG KASCHUBA: L’identité comme différence: L’allemand comme le non-français chez Herder, John et Arndt, in: *Revue germanique internationale* 21 (2004), pp. 183–195.

provided a basis for imagining an ambiguous and contradictory kind of particularism.

## Discovering Co-Ethnics

More than a decade after Horak, in 1879, a lengthy article on “Lorrainian and Alsatian colonies in Hungary” authored by Louis-Émile Hecht (1830–1906) appeared in the yearbook of a learned society in Nancy.<sup>87</sup> The article was the product of a study trip undertaken in 1876. Hecht descended from a family of pharmacists that had been established in Strasbourg since the first half of the eighteenth century and had some roots in Speyer. He had been a doctor and a professor at the Faculty of Medicine in Strasbourg, as well as a collector for and curator of its museum. A Protestant, he relocated to Nancy after the French defeat of 1871—as did the entire Medical Faculty of Strasbourg—and thus kept his French citizenship.<sup>88</sup>

The timing of his visit and his personal situation both indicate that Hecht’s interest in “Lorrainian and Alsatian colonies in Hungary” needs to be seen in connection with the particular tensions about Frenchness and Germanness that the Franco-German conflict and the incorporation of Alsace and part of Lorraine into the German Empire had brought to the fore. Hecht identifies “three great races” in modern Europe, the Germans, the Slavs, and the Latins, to which he adds the Magyars.<sup>89</sup> At the time, the idea of a Franco-German (or Latin/Romanic versus Germanic) opposition was an important component in racial classifications of Europe’s populations.<sup>90</sup> The question of where the Lorrainians were to be categorized in this context is in the subtext of Hecht’s article.

Despite the title, the text is mainly about Lorrainians. The novelty of thinking of Alsatians and Lorrainians together and the tenuousness of this endeavor are visible. Nonetheless, by signposting the text as a discussion of Alsatian and Lorrainian colonies together, Hecht mirrored the “invention of Alsace-Lorraine,” a process in full swing at the time.<sup>91</sup> Extensive summaries of his piece

87 L. HECHT: Les colonies lorraines et alsaciennes en Hongrie, in: *Mémoires de l’Académie de Stanislas* 129 (1879), 11, pp. 219–268.

88 PIERRE LABRUDE: Louis Émile Hecht, n.d., <https://www.academie-stanislas.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/hecht-louis-emile.pdf> (2025-01-11). See also the obituary at: <https://www.academie-stanislas.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/hecht.pdf> (2025-01-11). On post-1871 emigration from Alsace-Lorraine to France, see: ALFRED WAHL: *L’option et l’émigration des Alsaciens-Lorrains (1871–1872)*, Paris 1972.

89 HECHT, p. 219: “trois grandes races.”

90 See, for example, KARL ANDREE: Die drei großen Völkergruppen in Europa, in: *Globus: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Länder- und Völkerkunde mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Anthropologie und Ethnologie* 12 (1867), pp. 10–13, 43–47, 73–77.

91 ANSBERT BANSMANN: Die Erfindung des Grenzlandes Elsass-Lothringen, in: BURKHARD OLSCHOWSKY (ed.): *Geteilte Regionen—geteilte Geschichtskulturen? Muster der Identitätsbildung im europäischen Vergleich*, München 2013, pp. 163–183;

appeared in newspapers and magazines with a regional outlook in both France and Germany; they included the Paris-based *Revue Alsacienne* and the Strasbourg-based *Elsaß-Lothringische Zeitung*.<sup>92</sup>

Hecht's objective was to research the contribution of Lorrainians to the colonization of Hungary, to provide an account of the current state of Lorrainian colonies, and to identify "the original features that their inhabitants could preserve and which distinguish them from the neighboring populations."<sup>93</sup> He first went to Vienna, where he looked for archival documents on eighteenth-century Lorrainian and Alsatian emigration to Hungary. During his field research in Hungary, he was mainly interested in the villages where "thanks to its numeric superiority and its concentration, the ancient Lorrainian population could preserve some of its original features," i.e., St. Hubert, Charleville, Seultour, and Triebswetter.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, he also visited and reported on several other localities with a Lorrainian and Alsatian presence. Identity as descent can create a large pool of (potential) co-ethnics.

As Horak had before him, Hecht wrote about the descendants of eighteenth-century French settlers—referring to family names as proof of original Frenchness—who had stopped using French and adopted German. He also came across some elderly people able to converse to some degree in French "studied" with archaisms and words from Lorrainian patois.<sup>95</sup> Hecht noted the importance of the Hungarian language, also due to the Nationalities Law of 1868 that made Hungarian-language instruction compulsory in schools.<sup>96</sup> Beyond the obligation to learn Hungarian, he identified a "special sympathy for the Hungarians," illustrated by the practice of exchanging children (*Kindertausch*) for language learning (German and Hungarian), "which used to be practiced between Lorraine and Alsace, and continues to be widespread between Romanandy and German-speaking Switzerland."<sup>97</sup>

The cultural and physical characteristics of French Lorrainians that he singled out were vague and flimsy categories: "the race is strong and robust," they are "renowned for their activity, vivacity and joyous character," they play

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BENOIT VAILLOT: Lorsque la carte crée le territoire: L'invention de l'Alsace-Lorraine, in: Mappemonde (2021), 132, <https://doi.org/10.4000/mappemonde.6440>.

92 ÉDOUARD SCHMIDT: La misère et l'émigration en Lorraine de 1762 à 1773, in: *Revue alsacienne: Littérature, histoire, sciences, poésie, beaux-arts* (1879), pp. 218–223; *Lothringische und elsässische Colonien in Ungarn*, in: *Elsaß-Lothringische Zeitung*, 1880-04-01.

93 HECHT, p. 221: "quelque faible qu'elle puisse être [...] les traits originels que leurs habitants ont pu conserver et qui les distinguent des populations voisines."

94 Ibid., p. 251: "grâce à sa supériorité numérique et à son agglomération, l'ancienne population lorraine a pu conserver quelques-uns de ses caractères originels."

95 Ibid., p. 253. The original text uses "émaillé," literally "enameled."

96 Ibid., p. 246.

97 Ibid., p. 253: "sympathie spéciale pour les Hongrois. [...] autrefois en usage entre la Lorraine et l'Alsace, et encore aujourd'hui très-répandue entre la Suisse romande et la Suisse allemande." On the *Kindertausch* practice in Hungary and on Hungarian-German bilingualism, see also: SWANSON, pp. 45–54.



*Préférence*, a card game that used to be played in France, they celebrate New Year's Eve with presents, as in France, and they distribute "dragées" "to the children when they get out of the church," a custom that "one comes across only among the Lorrainian settlers."<sup>98</sup> Hecht illustrated the predicament of folklorists in Lorraine, for whom "it was relatively simple to uncover the traditions of Lorraine," but "harder to prove that they were specific to Lorraine, or that they were associated with a particular Lorraine identity."<sup>99</sup>

Hecht also conducted research in French Lorraine to ascertain whether the initial migration had left any traces in the memories of the settlers' villages of origin.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, he suggested conceiving of the Lorrainians in Banat as similar to settlers in Canada and New Caledonia and to French Huguenots in Germany.<sup>101</sup> Both his interest in transregional ties between the former and the new homeland and his hints at imagining Lorrainians as part of a broader community of French people outside France show affinities and similarities with the German discourse on *Auslandsdeutsche* (Germans abroad) that was becoming increasingly prominent in the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>102</sup> His report, as that of an ethnographic observer and sympathetic compatriot from metropolitan France, was structurally similar to contemporary reports about *Auslandsdeutsche*.<sup>103</sup> There was no comparable discourse about the French abroad, although Lorraine and Alsace had been important regions for (transatlantic) emigration throughout the nineteenth century alongside the German Southwest.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, (patrilineal) descent was a central aspect of the debates with respect to the French conceptualization of nationhood.<sup>105</sup> In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, the question of migration and the relation-

98 HECHT, pp. 254–257: "la race est forte et robuste"; "réputés pour leur activité, leur vivacité et leur caractère jovial"; "aux enfants à la sortie de l'église"; "ne se rencontre que parmi les colons lorrains." *Préférence* is a card game not of French, but of German/Eastern European origin. See: DAVID SYDNEY PARLETT: *The Oxford Guide to Card Games*, Oxford—New York 1990, p. 208.

99 DAVID HOPKIN: *Identity in a Divided Province: The Folklorists of Lorraine, 1860–1960*, in: *French Historical Studies* 23 (2000), 4, pp. 639–682, here p. 642.

100 HECHT, pp. 257–260.

101 *Ibid.*, pp. 252–253.

102 BRADLEY NARANCH: *Inventing the Auslandsdeutsche: Emigration, Colonial Fantasy, and German National Identity, 1848–71*, in: ERIC AMES, MARCIA KLOTZ et al. (eds.): *Germany's Colonial Pasts*, Lincoln—London 2005, pp. 21–40; STEFAN MANZ: *Constructing a German Diaspora: The "Greater German Empire," 1871–1914*, New York—Abingdon 2014.

103 NARANCH, p. 27.

104 CAMILLE MAIRE: *L'émigration des Lorrains en Amérique 1815–1870*, Metz 1980; WOLFGANG V. HIPPEL: *Auswanderung aus Südwestdeutschland: Studien zur württembergischen Auswanderung und Auswanderungspolitik im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 1984; NORMAN LAYBOURN: *L'émigration des Alsaciens et des Lorrains du XVIIIe au XXe siècle*, Strasbourg 1986; NICOLE FOUCHÉ: *Émigration alsacienne aux États-Unis 1815–1870*, Paris 1992.

105 BRUBAKER, pp. 95–96.

ship of the French nation to its overseas migrants had become more central in French public discourse, with settlement in Algeria seen as a potential “solution” for Alsatians opting for France.<sup>106</sup> At the same time, historical accounts of the emigration of Alsatians and Lorrainians to Hungary in the eighteenth century were published in the 1880s in newspapers such as *Neue Mülhauser Zeitung* and *Gazette de Lorraine*.<sup>107</sup> Hecht’s “discovery” of Lorrainians in Hungary was inscribed in the particular Franco-German entanglements of the second half of the nineteenth century that revolved around Alsace, Lorraine, and their inhabitants.

Raoul Chélaré (1857–1939) and Raymond Recouly (1876–1910) wrote about the French colonies in Banat in the 1890s and 1900s respectively. Both visited St. Hubert, Charleville and Seultour, and Chélaré also refers to Triebswetter in his text.<sup>108</sup> Both were well-established within the “French-Hungarian networks” aiming to counterbalance German influence in Hungary.<sup>109</sup> As Horak and Hecht had before them, Chélaré and Recouly discovered descendants of French colonists from Lorraine in Banat who had undergone a process of linguistic Germanization. They looked for traits of Frenchness and identified them in racial and cultural characteristics. Chélaré linked the French presence in Hungary with the “exodus of Normands toward the banks of Saint-Laurent or of our Protestants toward the sandy plains of Brandenburg.”<sup>110</sup> According to Chélaré, women were the main bearers of Frenchness:

“some young peasant women greet us with the traditional *Guten Tag*. Nothing curious in their features: the perfect oval of the countenance, the frank, clever, and impish fire of their looks, in a word, everything indicates the purest French blood.”<sup>111</sup>

Quoting a local baroness, Recouly noted that beauty distinguished the French colonists from the Swabians.<sup>112</sup> He interpreted linguistic Germanization as a

106 ROBERT ALDRICH: Colonialism and Nation-Building in Modern France, in: STEFAN BERGER, ALEXEI MILLER (eds.): *Nationalizing Empires*, Budapest—New York 2015, pp. 135–194, here p. 189.

107 Verschiedenes, in: *Neue Mülhauser Zeitung*, 1880-05-16; Émigration de familles des environs de Metz, Lunéville et Marsal, pour la Basse-Hongrie, en l’année 1770, in: *Gazette de Lorraine*, 1883-07-07 and 1883-07-14.

108 RAOUL CHÉLARÉ: Colonies françaises en Hongrie, in: *Le Figaro: Supplément littéraire du dimanche*, 1895-08-03; RAOUL CHÉLARÉ: *L’Autriche Hongrie. II: La Hongrie millénaire*, Paris 1896, pp. 220–229; RAYMOND RECOULY: *Le pays magyar*, Paris 1903, pp. 186–196.

109 NICOLAS BAUQUET: Les réseaux franco-hongrois et la France, de 1896 à 1914: Auxiliaires d’une découverte ou marchands d’illusions?, in: *Studia Politica: Romanian Political Science Review* 5 (2005), 3, pp. 605–644.

110 CHÉLARÉ, Colonies: “exode des Normands vers les bords du Saint-Laurent ou de nos protestants vers les plaines sablonneuses du Brandenbourg.”

111 Ibid.: “quelques jeunes paysannes nous saluent en nous jetant le traditionnel *Guten Tag*. Rien de curieux comme leurs traits: l’ovale parfait de la figure, le feu franc, malin et espiègle de leur regard, tout, en un mot, dénote le plus pur sang français.”

112 RECOULY, *Le pays magyar*, p. 197.

sign of cultural superiority: “the more civilized a people is, the easier it learns a foreign language as compared to when it is an obligation out of practical necessity.”<sup>113</sup>

For Chélar and Recouly, Frenchness—original, natural, innate—appeared as distinctly and almost insurmountably opposed to Germanness and Germanization. The two were keen to assert the purity of French blood and its non-mixing with German blood. Recouly even distinguished between the Lorrainian villagers, representatives of an “old French race,” and the Alsatians, in whom Germans might rightfully see a “Germanic race” that had provisionally turned French due to the vicissitudes of history, but was destined to rejoin “the great Germanic homeland” sooner or later.<sup>114</sup> The way the two authors saw French settlements in Banat was in line with the racialization of national thinking, linked with an essentialization of Franco-German differences that had become common following the Franco-Prussian War.<sup>115</sup>

The interest of Chélar and Recouly in their co-ethnics in Hungary stemmed from broader anti-German motivations that contributed to the Franco-Hungarian rapprochement of the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>116</sup> This rapprochement saw French Magyarophiles perceive Hungary as a modern liberal state without nationality issues and almost as a version of France in Eastern Europe.<sup>117</sup> According to this reading, pan-Germanism, framed as a sort of imperial assimilationism, was threatening both Hungary and France.<sup>118</sup> The Frenchness of the villagers found by Chélar and Recouly was imagined not only as non-German, but as anti-German. It was also imagined as fitting in perfectly within the Hungarian state as a kind of apolitical ethnicity that did not—unlike Germanness—conflict with Hungarian citizenship.<sup>119</sup>

Last but not least, both Chélar and Recouly mention members of the local intelligentsia, such as local teachers and priests, actively learning French as autodidacts to connect with their origins.<sup>120</sup> Frenchness by descent could be reinforced by the active acquisition of Frenchness. Furthermore, both reported on villagers performing Frenchness for visitors from metropolitan France by

113 Ibid., p. 195: “plus un peuple est civilisé et plus facilement il apprend une langue étrangère quand quelque nécessité pratique l’y oblige.”

114 Ibid., p. 193: “vieille race française”; “la grande patrie germanique.”

115 BRUBAKER, p. 101.

116 CATHERINE HOREL: *De l’exotisme à la modernité: Un siècle de voyage français en Hongrie (1818–1910)*, Montrouge 2018.

117 Ibid., pp. 197–199; see also: BAUQUET.

118 On the German “nationalizing empire,” see: STEFAN BERGER: *Building the Nation among Visions of German Empire*, in: BERGER/MILLER, pp. 247–308.

119 CHÉLAR, *Colonies*; RECOULY, p. 197.

120 Chélar refers to the “jeune abbé Emeric Pager,” while Récouly refers to “l’instituteur, M. Georges.” The latter is surely identical with Paul Schorsch, teacher in Charlevil between 1894 and 1927; I could not trace the former. See: CHÉLAR, *Colonies*; RECOULY, p. 196. See also: HEB, p. 109.

playing and singing *La Marseillaise* with a German accent or in Hungarian.<sup>121</sup> French people speaking German was something they could also come across in Alsace and Lorraine.

The Alsatian and Lorrainian origin of some of the eighteenth-century Swabians also occupied visitors with a German-focused agenda. In 1904, the pan-German activist Wilhelm Groos (1849–1934) published an article on Lorrainians and Alsatians in Hungary in the *Straßburger Post*. The article referred to a visit to the village of Franzfeld in Banat and to the discovery of names of Alsatian settlers in the *Heimatsbuch* published on the occasion of the centennial of the village.<sup>122</sup> For Groos, the presence of Alsatian-Lorrainians among Swabians in Hungary, the wholehearted adoption of German to the detriment of French in the “*Welsch*-Lorrainian settlements,” the Germanization of people with French-sounding names such as “Grandjean” were a good omen in view of the “gradual re-Germanization or Germanization of those parts of the *Volk* who still speak foreign languages in our Western March!”<sup>123</sup> Groos also noted with satisfaction that “the compatriots down there on the Danube nurture the memory of their old homeland, they try to establish their ‘historical’ places of origin as the Franzfelders are doing for their children and for their grandchildren, and thus extend a hand to us here at home.”<sup>124</sup> The encounter with the Alsatians in Hungary could lay the basis for the “refreshing relationships with family members and compatriots” as “a piece of labor for the nation.”<sup>125</sup> The Franco-German conflict over Alsace and Lorraine was also the lens through which the presence of Alsatians and Lorrainians in Hungary was perceived and interpreted from German perspectives.

Authors with a German agenda had no qualms about acknowledging the original Frenchness of some of the eighteenth-century settlers. The prolific author Felix Milleker (1858–1942) noted, for example, the Germanization of French settlers in the village of Kudritz.<sup>126</sup> Likewise, in his “ethnographic study” on Germans in Banat, a certain Moriz Rosenfeld waxed lyrical about the Germanization of the French in St. Hubert, Charleville, Seultour, and Triebswetter as well as in a number of other villages, noting that almost noth-

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121 CHÉLARD, Colonies; RECOULY, pp. 198–200.

122 W. GROOS: Lothringer und Elsässer in Ungarn und Siebenbürgen, in: *Straßburger Post*, 1904-11-20. See also: Geschichte der Franzfelder Gemeinde anlässlich ihres hundertjährigen Bestandes, Pancsova 1893.

123 GROOS: “welsch-lothringischen Ansiedlungen”; “allmähliche Wiederverdeutschung oder Eindeutschung der annoch fremdsprachigen Volksbestandteile in unserer Westmark!”

124 Ibid.: “Die Landsleute unten an der Donau pflegen die Erinnerung an die alte Heimat, suchen wie die Franzfelder in ihrer ‘Geschichte’ ihre Herkunftsorte für Kinder und Kindeskinder festzulegen und reichen damit uns zu Hause die Hand herüber.”

125 Ibid.: “Wiederauffrischung der Beziehungen zu Familienmitgliedern und Volksgenossen”; “ein Stück nationaler Arbeit.”

126 FELIX MILLEKER: Geschichte der Großgemeinde Kudritz, Werschetz 1888, p. 10.

ing—except some names—remained as a reminder of their “earlier origin.”<sup>127</sup> The Germanization narrative was also present in standard ethnographic works such as the *Kronprinzenwerk*.<sup>128</sup>

### Frenchness as a Politically Irrelevant Symbolic Ethnicity

The accounts of the visits discussed in the previous sections indicate that there was interest among French intellectuals in Lorrainian co-ethnics in Banat, and even that such co-ethnics could perform Frenchness for visitors who expressly sought it out. Beyond such contextual performances of Frenchness and despite the acknowledgment of Germanization, what, if anything, did French/Lorrainian descent mean for those who could invoke it? A text titled “Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter” and authored in 1878, most probably by the local priest Karl Böhm, can provide some answers.<sup>129</sup>

The text includes no indication of why it was drafted. We do know that *Heimatbücher* and local histories were in vogue at the time. In 1872, Triebswetter had just celebrated its centennial.<sup>130</sup> On such occasions, priests could assume the responsibility of narrating local history to their flocks.<sup>131</sup> Hecht’s visit to the village in 1876 had not passed unnoticed—Böhm’s text refers to a professor from the University of Nancy who collected data for a “French description of the French colonies in Banat,” and found that “especially the men preserved the French type.”<sup>132</sup>

As in most Swabian villages in Hungary, the identity options available after the Dualist Compromise of 1867 were articulated in Triebswetter mainly around discourses on Germanness and Hungarianness.<sup>133</sup> Böhm presented the German and Hungarian identity options as political stances: “The political stance of the people of Triebswetter has been unstable for as long as they have

127 MORIZ ROSENFELD: Die Deutschen als Kulturkämpfer im Banat: Eine ethnographische Studie, Temesvar 1882, p. 20: “die frühere Abstammung.”

128 EUGEN SZENTKLÁRAY: Die Deutschen in Südungarn, in: Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild: Ungarn, vol. 2, Wien 1891, pp. 549–578, here pp. 557–558. See also: JOH. HEINR. SCHWICKER: Geschichte des Temeser Banats: Historische Bilder und Skizzen, Grosz-Becserek 1861, pp. 461–462.

129 Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter. There is no author specified on the two copies kept in the Nachlass of Anton Paul Petri. In Petri’s monograph, Böhm is nonetheless indicated as its author. See: PETRI/WOLF, p. 168.

130 Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter.

131 See, e.g.: GUSTAV BOBIK: Rede zur Feier des 150-jährigen Bestehens der Gemeinde Mercyfalva im Jahre 1884 am Kreuzerhöhungsfeste, Temesvár 1884.

132 Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter: “französische Beschreibung der Banater französischen Kolonien” (p. 12); “besonders die Männer den französischen Typus bisher bewahrt haben.” (p. 13).

133 SWANSON, pp. 19–64.

been here, at times German-imperialist, at times Hungarian-liberal.”<sup>134</sup> This suggests that the mutual exclusiveness of the two attitudes was much less rigid in practice than the nationalist activists on both sides desired.

Although Triebswetter was described as a “French” colony, no particular political positioning was attached to this Frenchness. The one-page description of the 1872 festivities contains no indication that the Franco-Prussian War impacted on them in any way.<sup>135</sup> Frenchness appeared more as a “symbolic ethnicity” *avant la lettre*, one that provided some degree of particularism and differentiation from the inhabitants of German/Swabian villages in Banat: “woe betide anyone who calls the people of Triebswetter Swabians, as they will immediately reply: ‘We are no Swabians, we are French!’”<sup>136</sup> Lorrainian origin and the perceived Frenchness it conferred were able to serve as symbolic markers of distinction from the categories of Swabianness and Germanness. Remarkably, Catholic schematisms continued to refer to Triebswetter as a village with “lingua vicens inter cath. germ. et gall.” up until the twentieth century.<sup>137</sup>

Questions of descent and race were increasingly important in fin de siècle Hungary and frequently operated as a legitimizing principle advanced to support ethnopolitical group claims.<sup>138</sup> French/Lorrainian origin nonetheless appears to have been regularly acknowledged but not used to bolster any such claims. Although it seems to have enabled a certain amount of symbolic differentiation from the people in Triebswetter (and likely also in St. Hubert, Charleville, and Seultour) who were regarded as Swabians, it remained largely irrelevant at the political level.<sup>139</sup>

## Rearticulating Descent-Based Ethnicity at the End of World War I

In his 1913 short monograph on Temesgyarmat (Jahrmarkt), the priest Franz Demele referred to the Franco-German conflict over Alsace and Lorraine as having existed “since time immemorial” and to the difficulties that the German

134 Die französische Kolonie Trübswetter, p. 11: “Die politische Gesinnung der Triebswetterer seit ihrem Hiersein ist eine unbeständige, bald eine deutsch-imperialistische, bald eine ungarisch-liberale.”

135 Ibid., pp. 8–9.

136 Ibid., p. 11: “wehe dem der die Triebswetterer Schwaben nennt, gar bald wird ihm erwidert: ‘Wir sind keine Schwaben, wir sind Französer!’” On symbolic ethnicity in the US-American context, see HERBERT J. GANS: Symbolic Ethnicity: The Future of Ethnic Groups and Cultures in America, in: Ethnic and Racial Studies 2 (1979), 1, pp. 1–20.

137 Schematismus cleri dioecesis Csanádiensis pro Anno Domini MCMXIII, Temesváriini 1913, p. 169.

138 MARIUS TURDA: “The Magyars: A Ruling Race”: The Idea of National Superiority in Fin-de-Siècle Hungary, in: European Review of History 10 (2003), 1, pp. 5–33.

139 For Samu Borovszky, a historian with a Hungarian nationalist agenda, the French origin of some of the eighteenth-century settlers was worth only a few passing references. SAMU BOROVSKY: Torontál vármegye [Torontal County], Budapest 2018 [1911] (Magyarország vármegyéi és városai), pp. 60, 89, 114.

inhabitants had under French dominion in the eighteenth century.<sup>140</sup> He suggested that emigration to Hungary was a consequence of the “coercion frequently exerted in order to deprive them of their language and make them French in this respect as well.”<sup>141</sup> Such an interpretation appears to mirror the growing Franco-German tensions of the early twentieth century.

Representations of the French and the Germans as different and incompatible nations or even races were widespread at the time. Nonetheless, Banat Swabians fought in World War I as soldiers in the Habsburg army, alongside the German Reich, and against France irrespective of the origin of their ancestors. If anything, the war most probably contributed to the further development of a common “German” (and/or “Hungarian”) identity and to a sense of belonging to the German *Volk*. However, the end of the war brought the defeat of the German side and the demise of the Habsburg Empires. Neither membership in the German *Volk* nor allegiance to the Hungarian nation appeared to be winning cards, especially as Banat was actually occupied by the French as well as the Serbian army at the end of the war.<sup>142</sup> With everything in turmoil and the future of Banat unclear, various political options could be imagined and advanced. In November 1918, an independent Republic of Banat was proclaimed. Lacking the support of both the Serbian and the French occupation authorities, it lasted only for a couple of weeks.<sup>143</sup>

Both Romania and Serbia claimed Banat, largely on the basis of demographic arguments. Hungarian claims carried less weight against the background of Hungary’s defeat and the political turmoil in the country that was ongoing. What Banat Swabians could hope for under these circumstances was a settlement that would accord to them some degree of ethnic autonomy in line with the principle of self-determination.

The discourse on French/Lorrainian descent had been politically inconsequential in fin de siècle Hungary, but it had existed and could now evolve further in the changed situation created by the French victory against the Germans. In the context of the broad political relevance of descent as a basis for group identities and claims, supposedly French descent could now be exploited for ethnopolitical gains, particularly given the presence of the French army in the region. On the occasion of a banquet given for the French general Gambetta in the final days of December 1918 in Billed, a speech made by a local empha-

140 FRANZ DEMELE: *Temesgyarmat: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Entstehung und Entwicklung dieser Gemeinde und Pfarre*, Innsbruck 1913, p. 16: “seit uralten Zeiten.”

141 *Ibid.*, p. 17: “welcher Zwang da oft angewendet wurde, um sie ihrer Sprache zu berauben und sie auch dieser nach zu Franzosen zu machen.”

142 IONELA-FELICIA MOSCOVICI: *Français et Banatois entre 1918–1919, l’exemple de la présence militaire française au Banat*, in: *Transylvanian Review* 27 (2018), Suppl. 2, pp. 107–115.

143 VASILE DUDAŞ: *Weltkriegsende 1918/1919: Das Banat im Widerstreit der Erwartungen*, in: VICTOR NEUMANN (ed.): *Das Temeswarer Banat*, Berlin 2023, pp. 397–403.

sized the Alsatian and Lorrainian origin of the villagers.<sup>144</sup> The playbook was not new but a variant of the one that had been used when Hecht, Chélard, and Recouly had visited French villages in Banat—and it had undoubtedly also been used in a slightly modified form with “German” visitors as well when emphasizing German identity had seemed desirable. The fate of Alsace and Lorraine at the end of World War I reverberated in Banat.

The card of French descent was also played by a four-person delegation of Swabians consisting of Stefan Frecôt (1887–1971), Franz Timon, Thomas Fernbacher (1878–1953), and Andreas Buschmann, who attended the Paris Peace Conference in August 1919. Frecôt was a lawyer in Temesvar with origins in Triebswetter and Lorrainian ancestors. Buschmann was a lawyer from Lippa. Fernbacher and Timon were from Lugosch.<sup>145</sup> Until World War I, interest in the settlers’ French origin had come mainly from outside their own community. The end of the war saw the first attempts made by actors inside the community of the descendants of eighteenth-century settlers to exploit the discourse and assert a French identity for political ends. The outcome of World War I suggested the need for selective emphasis on “Alsatian-Lorrainian” origins and a broader reinterpretation of the meanings of such origins in line with French nationalism. As Germany no longer appeared to be a viable kin-state, France had to be made into one.

Historian Anne Delouis has analyzed the context in which this delegation came to represent Banat Swabians in Paris.<sup>146</sup> The memorandum pleaded for a unitary Banat within the Romanian state. In so doing, it argued that the Swabians were largely of French origin.<sup>147</sup> It presented Swabians—putting their numbers at 500,000—as descendants of settlers who had originated “mostly from Luxembourg, Alsace, and Lorraine” and were “in great part of French origin.”<sup>148</sup> Knowing both French and German, “like all frontier populations,” the Swabians had been Magyarized and had ended up speaking “Hungarian or a patois of German structure, yet with plenty of French words.”<sup>149</sup> The supposedly French origin of the settlers was also an argument for the unification of Banat with Romania, given the “common Latin race.”<sup>150</sup>

Claims that (some) Banat Swabians were of Lorrainian origin were not novel. Neither was the addition of Alsatian origins, reflecting once again the imagination of “Alsace-Lorraine.” Emphasizing the Alsatian and Lorrainian

144 Francia tábornok látogatása a Bánatban [A French General’s Visit to Banat], in: Egri Ujság from 1918-12-29; DR. NICOLAE ILIEȘIU: *Timișoara. Monografie istorică* [Timișoara. Historical Monograph], Timișoara 2003, p. 114.

145 DELOUIS, *Die Delegation*.

146 *Ibid.*

147 *Ibid.*

148 *Délégation des Souabes du Banat*, p. 311: “pour la plupart du Luxembourg, de l’Alsace et de la Lorraine”; “en grande partie d’origine française.”

149 *Ibid.*: “comme toutes les populations de frontière”; “le hongrois ou un patois de structure allemande mais où les mots français abondent.”

150 *Ibid.*, p. 313: “race commune latine.”



descent of the Banat Swabians mirrored the special status of the Alsatian and Lorrainian soldiers of the defeated German army, who were to be repatriated to France. In this context, a special category was created, one that came with particular advantages for some captive German soldiers. In Bucharest, up until April 1919, the Committee of Alsatians-Lorrainians was in charge of identifying the Alsatians and Lorrainians among the soldiers. Afterward, this became the task of the French legation.<sup>151</sup> The reference to Luxembourgish origins as an ethnopolitical principle was relatively new, but it also reflected—perhaps inadvertently—the relatively ambiguous status of Luxembourg in the aftermath of World War I. Following German occupation and relative Germanophilia during the occupation, Luxembourg appeared to be heading toward some kind of a union with either France or Belgium in 1919.<sup>152</sup>

The authors of the second memorandum were Constantin de Kayser (Szilárd Kayser) and Martin Ackermann, two low-ranking German-speaking politicians in Hungary. Their memorandum pleaded likewise for a united Banat but against its incorporation into either the Romanian or the Serbian states. Banat was envisaged as an independent republic. The text was signed on behalf of a Committee of Alsatians-Lorrainians and Swabians of Banat and Bačka and emphasized the existence of Alsatian-Lorrainians in Banat and Bačka to appeal to France as a kin-state to take responsibility for them. The narrative explaining the origins of those “generally called ‘Swabians’” was relatively similar to the version in the memorandum discussed above, but it presented the eighteenth-century settlers as having originated in Alsace, Luxembourg, and the Palatinate,<sup>153</sup> which was also occupied by the French in the aftermath of World War I.<sup>154</sup> Alsace appears to stand for all of Alsace-Lorraine in this context, as the specific administrative divisions proposed for the envisaged Banat Republic included one Alsatian-Lorrainian/Luxembourgish canton and one Alsatian-Lorrainian/Palatine canton.<sup>155</sup> The memorandum emphasized the French role in the eighteenth-century settlement of Banat as crucial and foregrounded the role of French engineers in the regularization of Banat’s waterways. The narrative, not devoid of contradictions, is one of harmonious striving by “Gauls” (*Gaulois*) and “Alemanni” (*Alamans*) toward creating a new race in Hungary.<sup>156</sup> In any case, it attempted to reframe the credentials of Swabian settlers as the credentials of a new group, the “Gauls-Alemanni” with origins in Alsace-Lorraine, Luxembourg, and the Palatinate. The French victory over Germany and Austria-Hungary in World War I had reverberations in Banat as the des-

151 JEAN-NOËL GRANDHOMME: Les Alsaciens-Lorrains dans la campagne de Roumanie (1916–1919), in: Les Cahiers lorrains (2001), 199, pp. 19–54, here pp. 46–50.

152 GILBERT TRAUSCH: La stratégie du faible: Le Luxembourg pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale, in: GILBERT TRAUSCH (ed.): Le rôle et la place des petits pays en Europe au XXe siècle, Baden-Baden—Bruxelles 2005, pp. 109–139.

153 DE KAYSER/ACKERMANN, p. 14: “appelés généralement ‘Souabes’.”

154 APPLEGATE, pp. 120–148.

155 DE KAYSER/ACKERMANN, p. 11.

156 Ibid., p. 15.

cendants of eighteenth-century settlers strategically reinterpreted the significance of their origin and the national loyalties it engendered. “Strategic nationalism” was also typical for Alsace-Lorraine during and shortly after the war.<sup>157</sup>

The end of the war saw the first attempts to transform Lorrainian/French origins into an ethnopolitical principle capable of supporting group cohesion. It occurred as a reaction to the unpalatability of Germanness in that particular historical context. At the same time, it was not a rejection of the ethnopolitical principle of descent, but merely a reframing of its implications that reflected the French victory. In France, the cause of the “Banat French” was taken up by the Alsatian politician Emile Wetterlé (1861–1931), who pleaded—ineffectively—in the French Parliament on behalf of the inhabitants of Banat, who supposedly still spoke an Alsatian dialect and had stayed faithful to their traditions.<sup>158</sup>

## Conclusions

Neither of the two memoranda had any practical consequences. Arguments about French or Lorrainian origin nevertheless continued to play a role during the interwar period and in the immediate aftermath of World War II.<sup>159</sup> Discourses about Frenchness and Lorrainianness in Banat have essentially been discourses about origin and descent. Such descent-based arguments may be more familiar to us from their deployment in the service of German nationalism, but French and German discourses of nationhood were closely entangled throughout the nineteenth century and subsequently. These entanglements had reverberations in Banat, as this article has shown.

In Banat before World War I, Frenchness (and Lorraine origins that tended to be read as Frenchness) essentially referred to descent, while Germanness was perceived as acquired by descent but also by means of assimilation. French origin was largely irrelevant from a political point of view throughout the nineteenth century. The—failed—attempts to make it politically relevant at the end of World War I highlight not only the constructed character of identity as an ethnopolitical discourse, but also the relatively interchangeable nature of identifications derived from origin-based identity discourses. The understanding, the meanings, and the implications of “origin” and “descent” are historically contingent and constantly renegotiated.

In their struggles to make sense of the role of the Roman past and the contributions of the Franks and the Gauls to the establishment of a French national lineage, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French intellectuals were able

157 VOLKER PROTT: Challenging the German Empire: Strategic Nationalism in Alsace-Lorraine in the First World War, in: *Nations and Nationalism* 27 (2021), 4, pp. 1009–1025.

158 2<sup>e</sup> séance du mardi 7 juin, in: *Journal officiel de la République Française: Débats parlementaires. Chambre des députés: compte rendu in-extenso*, 1921-06-07, pp. 2582–2615, here p. 2585.

159 VULTUR, Francezi; DELOUIS, A French Minority; SRETENović, Les germanophones.

to identify both differences and commonalities between France and Germany.<sup>160</sup> Akin to such questions about Frenchness, Germanness, and the relationship between the two, questions about Lorraine (and Alsace) were also present in nineteenth-century Hungary, with reference to villages in Banat. This indicates the relevance of breaking with and expanding the spatial frames of reference typically used in approaching the topics of *Auslandsdeutsche* and Franco-German entanglements. The reverberations of Franco-German entanglements and the specific question of Alsace-Lorraine in Banat also remind us that nation-states, important as they may be, should not automatically be taken as the sole or main units of analysis when engaging with minority groups and identification discourses.

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160 MATTHEW D'AURIA: *The Shaping of French National Identity: Narrating the Nation's Past, 1715–1830*, Cambridge 2020.

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