

Saginaw Valley State University

Choosing Home: Alsatians in France 1681-1870

By

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For everyone, home is a basic existential experience.

—Vaclav Havel, 1991

From 1681-1870, Alsatians practiced strong German particularism and generally chose to claim France as “home” and considered themselves to be “French.” They are often noted to have experienced greater autonomy than most in France. Alsatians blended lifestyles and identities to live with their divided parent countries of Germany and France, which historian Jena M. Gaines describes as “a custody battle between its two parent cultures, neither of which could fully accept the divided loyalties of Alsatians.”¹ Interdisciplinary studies reveal Alsatians’ confounding “French” and “German” labels to be linked to early “nationalism,” which resists static definition.

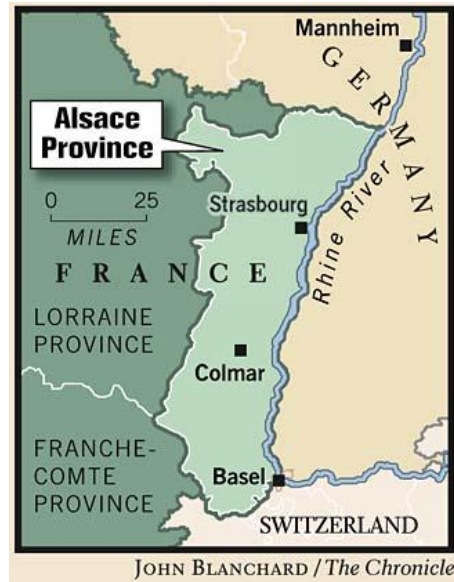
Eleven works were selected to help shape this paper. Kevin McQuillan, associate professor of sociology at the University of Western Ontario, shares data and analysis about Alsatian demographic behavior spanning over a century in *Culture, Religion, and Demographic Behaviour: Catholics and Lutherans in Alsace, 1750-1870* (1999). Lucien Gallois (1857-1941), Sorbonne geography professor and author, adds other basic understanding of Alsace history/geography in “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe,” published in *Geographical Review* (1918). Historian Zosa Szajkowski’s study of *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace, Metz, and Lorraine (1648-1789)* (1954) is based largely upon records from many cities in France, plus the Library of Jewish Theological Study in New York, State Archives in Bern, Switzerland, and his personal archives. Parts of Szajkowski’s discussion shed understanding of general suffering experienced by Alsatians during the Thirty Years War preceding the Peace of Westphalia and French protection of the Alsace region. David A. Bell, Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the

¹ Jena M. Gaines, “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace,” *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* XXI, 1-2 (1994): 99.

Humanities at the John Hopkins University, examines the Alsatian assimilation experience versus the more-studied central government point of view in “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism in Eighteenth-Century France: The Case of Alsace” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (1988). Westminster College history professor Samuel Goodfellow offers more nationalism insight in “From Germany to France? Interwar Alsatian National Identity” published in *French History* (1993). Nicholas Hudson, professor of English at the University of British Columbia, specializes in 18th-century British literature and history and discusses early meaning of nation in “From “Nation” to “Race”: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* (1996). In *The German Melting Pot: Multiculturalism in Historical Perspective* (1998), Wolfgang Zank, Associate Professor in the European Studies Programme at the University of Aalborg, Denmark, discusses early German “nation” building and Alsace. “Nationalism” definition is described by Lloyd Kramer, Dean E. Smith Distinguished Term Professor of History at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, in “Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism” in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* (1997). In “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” in the *Annual Review of Sociology* (1993), New York University Social Sciences Professor Craig Calhoun, president of the Social Science Research Council since 1999, discusses the modern, complex discourse regarding nationalism. Finally, historian Jena Gaines writes about the German myth about Alsatians in “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace” in the *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism* (1994). Czech political leader, dramatist, and essayist Vaclav Havel helps in summarizing with his thoughts about nation and “home” in “At home in the world,” published in 1992 in dual sources *American Theatre* and *Summer Meditations* and included in my 2002 first study of the meaning of “home.”

Alsace, France, previous German territory for hundreds of years, has been largely a part of France for three centuries and its culture is a blend of French and German. The province lies in the northeastern part of France and is bound by Germany on the north, the Rhine River and Germany on the east, Switzerland and the Franche Comte on the south, and the Vosges Mountains and Lorraine on the west.

Alsace is historically recorded to be Celtic in origin and was part of the Holy Roman Empire from the fall of Rome until the Thirty Years War in 1618. It became part of the Celtic Gaul² Roman province of Upper Germany until it was taken over by the Alemanni in the fifth century and then by the Franks³ in 496.



Map 1. Alsace, France. By John Blanchard, *Chronicle* (infohub.com/Maps/Alsace)



Map 2. Treaty of Verdun Division of Holy Roman Empire Among Charlemagne's Three Grandsons. (<http://encarta.msn.com/>)

In 843, the Treaty of Verdun that divided Charlemagne's Frankish Holy Roman empire defined the kingdom of France. After Charlemagne died in 814, his empire was divided lengthwise among his three grandsons (Charles the Bald, Lothair I, and Louis II (see Map 2.)⁴ Charles the Bald

² "Alsace-Lorraine," *tiscali*, tiscali.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/Hutchinson/m0016084.html (accessed February 19, 2008).

³ "France" or "Francia" is derived from the Franks, a Germanic tribe who invaded and occupied Romanized Gaul earlier. Pierre Goubert, *The Course of French History*, trans. Maarten Ultee (New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, Inc., 2006), 2.

⁴ "Treaty of Verdun," *Microsoft Encarta Online Encyclopedia* 2007, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761560375/Treaty_of_Verdun.html#461551600 (accessed April 3, 2008).

received the western portion, which became the kingdom of France. Lothair I, the eldest son of Louis I, Charlemagne's only son, succeeded Louis I as Holy Roman emperor and received the central portion of the empire (Lotharingia) which included Italy, the Low Countries, Alsace, Lorraine, and Burgundy. Louis II (Louis the German) received control of the eastern portion of the empire (Germany).⁵

Alsace, located then in the central region of Lotharingia, was ruled by Holy Roman emperors⁶ from 870 (the Treaty of Mersen) to the 17th century. It came under the control of France as the duchy of Swabia (Alemannia) when Charles the Bald and Louis the German divided Lotharingia. Ten major cities in Alsace then became free imperial cities under Holy Roman emperors.⁷ Prior to the mid 1600s, before coming under French control, Alsace was culturally, economically, and politically a part of the Germanic world.

In 1648, Alsace, with the exception of Strasbourg and Mulhouse, became a protectorate of France with the Treaty of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years War. In 1681, Louis XIV took complete control of Alsace, including Strasbourg; Mulhouse remained a part of the Swiss confederation until 1798, when it joined France during the French Revolution period.⁸

During the French Revolution (1789-1815), Alsace was divided crosswise into the *départements* of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin and incorporated into France. Wars, revolution, armistices, and peace treaties preceded the political and administrative structures and distinct boundaries that shape Alsace today.⁹

⁵ "Treaty of Verdun," *Microsoft Encarta*.

⁶ Later used term.

⁷ "Treaty of Verdun," *Microsoft Encarta*.

⁸ Kevin McQuillan, *Culture, Religion, and Demographic Behaviour: Catholics and Lutherans in Alsace, 1750-1870* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 18.

⁹ "Alsace France, Introduction to the French Region of Alsace," *French-at-a-touch.com*, http://french-at-a-touch.com/French_Regions/Alsace/alsace_1.htm (accessed February 27, 2008).

Alsace crossroads have been valuable since early times. Geography professor Lucien Gallois explains that the Alsace area, part of early Gaul, contained numerous relics “that show that Alsace and Lorraine were thoroughly imbued with her [Roman] civilization.”¹⁰ When barbarism ended among countries beyond the Rhine, new routes that followed nature opened for commerce. Gallois states, “Roman roads were to the first centuries of our era what the railroads are in our times. Along these roads traveled not only men and merchandise but ideas.”¹¹ Gallois explains, “Through Basel she could easily communicate with the Danube and the great Alpine passes; by Mayence and Frankfort, with Hesse and Thuringia, which in turn connect with North Germany.”¹²

Gallois discusses the strengthening of eastern French boundaries that are marked by Alsace-Lorraine. Gallois explains that in 1737 Alsace’s weakened neighbor Lorraine, hemmed in between France and Alsace, became governed by French administrators and was incorporated into France in 1766.¹³ France gradually united with other areas (parts of Barrois in the 14th century; the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun in the 16th century; and the remainder of Lorraine in the 18th century) that helped “ancient Gaul to reconstruct her former boundaries.”¹⁴

McQuillan adds that the Rhine near Alsace was a valuable navigable waterway. French rulers desired the Alsace province to form a protective eastern boundary area to stop military troop traffic flowing along the ancient Spanish Road near the Rhine which connected the Spanish Netherlands with northern Italy. Gaining Alsace also opened a French gateway to Germany.¹⁵

¹⁰ Lucien Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe,” *Geographical Review* 6, no. 2 (Aug., 1918): 93

¹¹ Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 93.

¹² Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 94.

¹³ Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 99.

¹⁴ Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 97.

¹⁵ McQuillan, *Culture*, 16.

Prior to the Thirty Years War, McQuillan explains, the Alsace region was “a patchwork of seigneurial lands and free cities loosely attached to the Empire.”¹⁶ Alsatians, especially those in independent cities of Strasbourg and Mulhouse and those who had converted to Protestantism, had grown uneasy with Habsburgs and their allies attempting to tighten their connection to the Empire.¹⁷

McQuillan states that after the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia, while France had title to Alsace, it was difficult to integrate the new previously German province into the kingdom of France. The treaty was ambiguous, especially regarding the independent cities, and there was no uniform administration in place throughout the area. There was terrible war devastation, a new population to feed, and the Alsace economy needed to be restored.¹⁸ Because of the complex situation, France moved cautiously in its integration efforts and left local institutions and customs in place unless “pressing need force change.”¹⁹

The slow strategy used by France officials during Alsace assimilation helped to relax nobility, especially Protestant nobility, who feared Catholic Church oppression under Louis XIV (r. 1642-1715).²⁰ The French war with Holland in 1672 placed Alsace in a hostile situation again, and the relationship tightened between the Alsatian nobility and the Crown. French control then tightened as armies crossed into Alsace.²¹

¹⁶ McQuillan, *Culture*, 16-17.

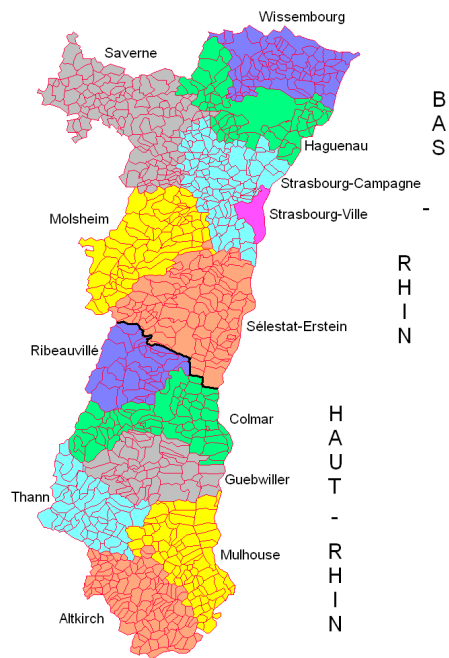
¹⁷ McQuillan, *Culture*, 17.

¹⁸ McQuillan, *Culture*, 17.

¹⁹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 17.

²⁰ McQuillan, *Culture*, 17.

²¹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 17-18.



Map 3. Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin
 (<http://www.en.wikipedia>)

Alsations were not hugely affected by the change in sovereignty.²² During the 18th century, prior to the French Revolution, the elite classes in Alsace, including Protestants, had developed strong attachment to France.²³ The special status region of Alsace was, however, affected during the French Revolution although the Alsatian nobility had not attempted to weaken the monarchy.²⁴

During the French Revolution and Napoleonic era, new centralized administration stretched throughout France, and Alsace prospered. In 1789, Alsace was divided into two departments: the northern area Bas-Rhin, with its chief administration area of Strasbourg, and southern area Haut-Rhin, with Colmar as its *chef-lieu* (département with pre-eminence over others).²⁵ The Concordat of 1802 reorganized the boundaries of the Catholic dioceses, and Protestants gained equal status with Catholics in the new, secularized regime. Also, a

²² McQuillan, *Culture*, 18.

²³ McQuillan, *Culture*, 18.

²⁴ McQuillan, *Culture*, 18.

²⁵ McQuillan, *Culture*, 18-19.

continental barricade and customs barrier was established on the Rhine which built a stronger bond between Alsace and greater France.²⁶ Strasbourg then became a point of entry into France, and the growing industrial cities of Strasbourg and Melhouse enjoyed economic growth spurred by shipment of products to interior France.²⁷ Although Alsatians were recruited into the army, the region was largely spared from direct involvement in the fighting.²⁸

When Napoleon's empire collapsed, Alsatians experienced economic problems and were plagued by foreign troop invasions from 1813 to 1818.²⁹ Discussion also arose about separating Alsace from France. Landowners grew concerned, especially the farmers who had purchased land they feared might be given back to the Church and nobles. No significant changes resulted, however, and the population again adjusted to the new regime (restored monarchy).³⁰

While France experienced much political turmoil during the nineteenth century, the administrative structure of the modern state gradually developed, and ordinary Alsatians became closer to the larger French nation. McQuillan states that many of Napoleon's initiatives remained in place and were expanded by regimes that followed. "[T]he Napoleonic code, military conscription, and the spread of public schooling helped to reshape the lives and habits of the people."³¹

Although Alsace became more linked to France, it still remained distinctive in its language and culture. While many French regions had local dialects, Alsatians maintained a unique German dialect that linked them to Germany and German culture. Bilingualism did develop in larger cities and among many elites desiring careers in politics, administration, or

²⁶ McQuillan, *Culture*, 19.

²⁷ McQuillan, *Culture*, 20.

²⁸ McQuillan, *Culture*, 20.

²⁹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 20.

³⁰ McQuillan, *Culture*, 20-21.

³¹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 21.

commerce.³² Progress in teaching French language in schools was slow due to lack of teachers qualified to teach French, and due to Alsatian resistance.³³ McQuillan explains that “part of the intelligentsia supported retaining German as both an essential part of the regional identity and as a means of making Alsace a bridge between French and German cultures.”³⁴ The churches also supported the use of German. McQuillan writes, “For the Catholic clergy, French culture was tainted by rationalism and atheism and the local language was seen as a way of solidifying the faith.”³⁵ Protestants too embraced the German language and Luther’s German liturgy.³⁶

McQuillan’s study of demographics in Alsace reveals that the Thirty Years War of 1618-1648 marked a turning point in Alsatian demographics when, in the region as a whole, as much as half the population “may have disappeared.”³⁷ The author explains that the period prior to the war had been prosperous and resulted in a high density of population, but the war’s devastation had a harsh impact on Alsace. Few parish registers survived the war period and those that did showed “a huge surplus of death” due to the war, plague, and several hard winters.³⁸ By the late 17th century, peace was restored, foreign troops had left, and economic production resumed. The population grew and immigrants from Germany and Switzerland entered the region together with migrating French officials and military personnel. By the end of the 17th century, McQuillan cites source estimates of approximately 350,000 people in Alsace.³⁹

McQuillan states that multiple, limited existing studies verify continual, significant population growth that doubled in size in 80 percent of the villages in lower Alsace during the

³² McQuillan, *Culture*, 21.

³³ McQuillan, *Culture*, 21.

³⁴ McQuillan, *Culture*, 21.

³⁵ McQuillan, *Culture*, 21.

³⁶ McQuillan, *Culture*, 21-22.

³⁷ McQuillan, *Culture*, 22.

³⁸ McQuillan, *Culture*, 22.

³⁹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 22.

18th century.⁴⁰ McQuillan cites findings that Strasbourg alone grew from about 28,000 in the 1690s to nearly 50,000 at the time of the French Revolution.⁴¹ By the time of the French Revolution, the Alsace population had reached about 650,000.⁴² By 1815, a 1793 civil system was implemented to register births, marriages, and deaths, and first attempts at census taking recorded the population to be approximately 825,000.⁴³ The 1,100,000 count in the 1866 census of Alsace was the last census before the region's sovereignty was transferred back to Germany.⁴⁴ *french-property.com* shows Alsace population today to be approximately 1,734,145.⁴⁵

Alsatian economy from 1750-1870 was remarkably diverse explains McQuillan. The area covering “just over 8,000 square kilometers” was predominantly agricultural. The majority of crops produced were varying cereals depending on the type of soil, and a significant part was allotted for wine production. Landholding patterns varied considerably, with small owner-operators; a few large landholders, and few landless workers. McQuillan states that in contrast to other regions in France and neighboring Germany, Alsace had remarkably high production and peasant ownership and successfully supported a growing population with the help of a gradual agricultural revolution.⁴⁶ Dense population offset the high productivity. Prior to the Revolution, Alsatian peasants, like others in France, were burdened with heavy taxes, seigneurial dues, and tithes.⁴⁷ Revolutionary changes abolished the seigneurial dues and tithe, and the sale of Church and noble émigrés land helped peasants to increase their land holdings. The area

⁴⁰ McQuillan, *Culture*, 23.

⁴¹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 23.

⁴² McQuillan, *Culture*, 23.

⁴³ McQuillan, *Culture*, 23.

⁴⁴ McQuillan, *Culture*, 24.

⁴⁵ “Alsace Population,” *french-property.com*, <http://www.french-property.com/regions/alsace/population.htm> (accessed March 27, 2008).

⁴⁶ McQuillan, *Culture*, 24-25.

⁴⁷ McQuillan, *Culture*, 25.

continued to be a valued producer until World War I, but gradually shifted toward industrialism.⁴⁸

Alsace's main industry, explains McQuillan, was textile production that started in Mulhouse in 1746. Mulhouse industry in the departement of Bas-Rhin grew rapidly and became known as the "Manchester" of the continent.⁴⁹ McQuillan states that the Mulhousian capitalists "were leaders on the continent in the development of new techniques of production" and published technical articles in the *Bulletin de la Société Industrielle de Mulhouse* beginning in 1828.⁵⁰ Factories dominated by Calvinists and Swiss-financed were technically advanced and produced high-quality products. In the late 18th century, immigrants from Switzerland, then Germany worked, and even some from England worked there as skilled laborers; but in the 19th century, skilled local workers were dominant.⁵¹ The textile industry there peaked between 1800-1840 and provided over 60 percent of exports from the region.⁵² Bas-Rhin population were noted for their high literacy that became generally recognized during army recruiting in 1866.⁵³

Other significant industry in Bas-Rhin in Alsace included metallurgy. Tobacco and brewing industries increased in the later 1800s. The northern part of Alsace provided work for small craftsman such as shoemakers, blacksmiths, and millers plus some smaller industries that produced goods for regional and international use.⁵⁴ The fashion industry provided full or part-time rural employment for some. McQuillan writes, "Fabricants from Sainte-Marie traveled to the surrounding villages, bring with them the raw materials and instructions for the workers and

⁴⁸ McQuillan, *Culture*, 26.

⁴⁹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 26-27.

⁵⁰ McQuillan, *Culture*, 27.

⁵¹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 26.

⁵² McQuillan, *Culture*, 26.

⁵³ McQuillan, *Culture*, 27.

⁵⁴ McQuillan, *Culture*, 28.

collecting the finished products.”⁵⁵ Families worked in varying degrees, as they wanted, either in their homes or with others in common local workshops.⁵⁶

German Alsace was one of the first areas to be affected by the Reformation, especially in Strasbourg where Martin Luther’s ideas appealed to both lay people and clergy.⁵⁷ McQuillan writes that “by 1529, key city Strasbourg was completely committed to Luther’s ideas.”⁵⁸ Mulhouse broke from Catholicism in 1529.⁵⁹ While Protestantism took hold in some areas in the north and central regions, in general the rural areas remained Catholic.⁶⁰ The Treaty of Augsburg (1555) that “solidified the religious attachment of communities” established about one-third orthodox Lutherans and primarily Catholics in Alsace.⁶¹

Under French control, Catholicism was gradually promoted but Protestantism was not suppressed as it was in some parts of France. McQuillan states that “freedom of worship was guaranteed and Alsace was excluded from the effects of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.”⁶² Despite this, all was by no means ideal due to the introduction of the *simultaneum*, a practice which allowed Catholics to use Protestant churches in villages where there were at least seven Catholic families.⁶³ Other anti-Protestant practices made life for Protestants increasingly challenging.

During the revolutionary time, both Catholics and Protestants endured religious difficulties when Catholic church property was seized. McQuillan writes, “The Bas-Rhin led France in the proportion of priests who refused to take the oath pledging allegiance under the

⁵⁵ McQuillan, *Culture*, 28.

⁵⁶ McQuillan, *Culture*, 28.

⁵⁷ McQuillan, *Culture*, 26.

⁵⁸ McQuillan, *Culture*, 29.

⁵⁹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 29.

⁶⁰ McQuillan, *Culture*, 29.

⁶¹ McQuillan, *Culture*, 29.

⁶² McQuillan, *Culture*, 30.

⁶³ McQuillan, *Culture*, 30.

new constitution.”⁶⁴ Catholics and Lutherans both weakened in support for the Revolution during the Terror. German culture remained strong even after the Revolution and Napoleon’s administrative changes and increasing use of French language in churches and decreased Protestant pastors trained in Germany.⁶⁵ The Concordat provided a framework that helped to stabilize Catholic-Protestant relations.

Historian Zosa Szajkowski’s work is the first in a series regarding Jews of France prior to 1789 French Revolution. Szajkowski includes discussion of general Alsatian peasantry because, he states, “the status of the Jews was so strongly bound to the economic position of the peasants [especially war debt, land parcelization, and Jewish financial loan support].”⁶⁶

The Thirty Years War involved most countries in western Europe and was based on religious conflict between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Later, fighting focus was based on other issues including German prince rivalries and efforts to stop the spread of the Holy Roman Empire. The war ended with the Peace of Westphalia and badly weakened the Holy Roman Empire. Szajkowski concurs with McQuillan that when France extended sovereignty over Alsace following the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the cities and villages were devastated and largely destroyed. Szajkowski expands, “According to one source, 500 Alsatian cities and villages completely disappeared as a result of the war; one-third of this number were certainly destroyed as a direct result of the fighting.”⁶⁷

Szajkowski explains additionally that during The Thirty Years War when other countries entered the war, the Swedes so ravaged Alsace-Lorraine region that the peasantry there still (1918, post World War II) discuss it. Szajkowski writes that “the Catholics themselves had

⁶⁴ McQuillan, *Culture*, 30.

⁶⁵ McQuillan, *Culture*, 31.

⁶⁶ Zosa Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace, Metz and Lorraine (1648-1789)* (New York: Editions Historiques Franco-Juives, 1954), 3.

⁶⁷ Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace*, 5.

begged the aid of France, and had surrendered to her Zabern and Hagenau.” Alsace was placed in trust by France “as the price of her intervention” and after the treaty of peace was signed in 1648, Alsace (except for Strasburg and Swiss Mulhausen) remained French.⁶⁸

In one detailed footnote, Szajkowski gives a glimpse into the Thirty Years War devastation in Alsace and into early French-protection there:

An enormous part of the population, both in the cities and in the townships, was killed or perished of hunger and plagues. The peasants who remained in their hamlets were stripped of all their belongings by the soldiers; peasants were tortured to divulge the hiding places of their money; they were hanged by their beards, by their genitals, their nails were pulled from their fingers. Many of the peasants hiding in the woods were devoured by beasts or bitten by rabid dogs; most of those who attempted to reach the larger cities died of diseases on the roads. 1636—the year of a horrible famine—marked the beginning of instances of cannibalism. To be sure, not every locality suffered all these hardships, but after 1648 came all manner of fires, bandits’ raids, poor crops, and cold waves and floods, too. . . . Half a century after 1648, while the reconstruction of Alsace was in full swing, 23,343 beggars, or approximately 10% of the populace, roamed the cities and villages of the province.⁶⁹ Fields previously cultivated were soon covered with stripling forests (this is one of the reasons why even in 1944 forests constituted 36% of the Alsace area).⁷⁰

In 1649, despite the great devastation of Alsace, peasants there were required to help pay back loans incurred to support the armies, feed the soldiers, pay taxes—plus try to start over—find money to buy a horse or a cow, etc.⁷¹ This financial need, Gallois explains, helps to account for Jewish toleration in Alsace.

Historian David A. Bell explains that between 1648 and 1697, the kingdom of France acquired large populations “that were alien to France in their history, social structure,

⁶⁸ Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace*, 5.

⁶⁹ This 1954 approximate 233,000 Alsace population number based on much older sources is a significantly lower estimate from McQuillan’s more recent citation of 350,000.

⁷⁰ Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews*, 5.

Szajkowski notes also that in Lorraine, conditions were not better, where 80 percent of the population existed no longer, and part of those who remained alive escaped into the woods.

⁷¹ Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews*, 5.

government, patterns of trade—even in their language and religion.”⁷² Such assimilation of the populations conquered that was necessary to assure security became preliminary to transforming “peasants into Frenchmen.”⁷³ Bell states that even in 1789, on the brink of the French Revolution, “nearly all Alsatians of native stock still grew up speaking a Swabian German dialect, and outside of the largest towns the French language was virtually unknown.”⁷⁴

“Culturally,” Bell states, at the time of the French Revolution, Alsace still resembled the German regions far more than the French ones. “Nearly half of all Alsatians still belonged to the Protestant Church of Augsburg rather than to the French Catholic church.”⁷⁵ In trade, Alsace had the status of a *province d’ étranger effectif*,⁷⁶ “which placed it outside the kingdom’s tariff boundaries, encouraging trade with Germany and discouraging it with France.”⁷⁷

Bell explains that Alsace did assimilate some. Alsace’s literate elite, the French administration, soldiers, tradesmen, and Huguenot refugees adopted French manners and speech. In 1782, both German and French books were published in Alsace. Bells states that in one recent study of books stocked by a 1780s’ Strasbourg German-speaking bookseller stocked, 66.4 percent were in German, and 20.0 percent were in French.⁷⁸

Bell asks “how did Alsatians react to the various pressure on them to be “totally incorporated into France?”⁷⁹ The author notes that the concept of “nationality” was still forming and did not yet have the same “unambiguous meaning it would acquire in the next

⁷² David A. Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism in Eighteenth-Century France: The Case of Alsace,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 1, no. 4 (Summer, 1988): 472.

⁷³ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 472.

⁷⁴ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 473.

⁷⁵ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 473.

⁷⁶ Meaning province of effective foreign one.

⁷⁷ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 473.

⁷⁸ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 474.

⁷⁹ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 475.

century when language, “national character,” and political allegiance would all be discussed under the same heading.”⁸⁰

One group of prominent Alsatians who formed a modest “German Instruction Society” (*Deutsche Uebungsgesellschaft*) demonstrate one type of reaction. The Society first gathered weekly at bookseller Johann Daniel Salzmann’s house and then, in 1775, evolved into a larger Society for the Promotion of the German Language (*Gesellschaft zur Ausbildung der Deutschen Sprache*). Approximately 30 members next met weekly at the large home of Johann von Turckheim, banker and *Ammeister* in Alsace, to discuss the German language and “were drawn together in a plethora of other “enlightened” cultural projects as well.”⁸¹ The group was not hostile to France, states Bell. They spoke both German and French, and often discussed French literature. Bell adds that Society member Friedrich Rudolf Saltzmann (1749-1821) founded Strasbourg’s most important bookstore, the *Librairie Académique* (1782), and “it was through Saltzmann’s bookstore that Alsace encountered the Enlightenment.”⁸²

Bell believes that unlike Society members’ preference for maintaining and continuing their German language, when it came to politics, they expressed definite allegiance to France and enjoyed benefits of French rule.⁸³ Members did however conceive of an Alsatian German “cultural sphere” to exist under French sovereignty.⁸⁴

The Society members represented two currents of Alsatian intellectual thought that related to the Enlightenment and particularism. First, men of letters took pride in German literary achievements of Strasbourg during the city’s Humanist gold age in the 15th and 16th centuries. Also, Strasbourg’s oligarchic system of government still survived largely under

⁸⁰ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 475.

⁸¹ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 477.

⁸² Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 477.

⁸³ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 477-78.

⁸⁴ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 479.

French rule and enabled citizens to identify primarily with Strasbourg and Alsace versus the nation of France. Secondly, Bell states, increased amounts of German was brought to Strasbourg by writers Goethe, Herder, and Jakob Michael Lenz, who met with the Society. Herder, the oldest, had published ideas unique from universal ones of the Enlightenment. Herder believed that human genius was firmly embedded within different national spirits and different language and wrote:

Nature obliges us to learn only our native tongue, which is the most appropriate to our character, and which is most commensurate with our thought. . . We cannot be educated otherwise than in the language of our people and our country; a so-called French education in Germany must by definition deform and misguide German minds.⁸⁵

Bell states also that young Goethe was beginning to dislike French education because of its rigid French classicism and the condescending manner used with foreigners.

Society member Lentz believed that pure German dialects needed to be preserved from foreign corruption in order to maintain German identity.⁸⁶ Lentz also urged creation of an Alsatian dictionary. The Society disagreed with Lentz's desire to cleanse Alsace of French influence and resisted his attempt to buy German-only books for the Society's small library.

The Society ended in 1777 due to lack of youth interest and other interests of the group that led Salzmann in to publish *Strasburger Gelehrte-und Kunstnachrichten* that popularized French literary works in Germany. Others—the Evangelical Church, the University, and the city oligarchy—moved into dominant positions in publishing.⁸⁷

When the regime changed with the French Revolution, Bell explains that some past members of the Society (Koch, Saltzmann, Blessign, and Oberlin) then held various offices in the local revolutionary administration. Their ally, Baron Friedrich de Dietrich, who had rallied

⁸⁵ Bell, "Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism": 479.

⁸⁶ Bell, "Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism": 480-81.

⁸⁷ Bell, "Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism": 483.

for the proposed Alsatian Academy, became the new Strasbourg mayor. Even with the change in regime, Bell states that the group’s concept of sovereignty remained the same:

To them, the nation remained a purely political and legal entity (now infused, to be sure, with a new spirit and new principles) that had no rights to Alsace’s autonomous cultural sphere.

Bell states that for the first three years after the Revolution, the Strasbourg intelligentsia worked harder than ever to enforce the Alsace German character because the local dialect was



the only way to communicate with most people in the province.⁸⁸

Following The Terror and anti-German campaign that followed in Alsace, imprisonment of some, closing of the university and gymnasium, and multiple efforts to enforce the French language then, the anti-German laws were repealed, and France became an increasingly multilingual French Empire. Bell states that “by [this] fluke of history” –referring to 1871 German annexation of Alsace—“Alsace

Fig. 1. Plate 95c. “Late Nineteenth Century Alsatian Folk Dress: Oberseebach, Aschbach (Sultz), Outskirts of Strasbourg c. 1861-1880.” *The History of Costume*. (Braun & Schneider). (<http://www.siu.edu/COSTUMES/>).

alone of all French provinces never underwent the full process of homogenization described by Eugene

Weber in *Peasants into Frenchmen*.⁸⁹ Today, in Strasbourg and Colmar, visitors may still hear the German dialect. Bell sees Alsatians as the least assimilated citizens in the French nation,

⁸⁸ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 484.

⁸⁹ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 489.

with a strong Christian Left still in place as well. He writes, “[O]ne can still hear the echo of a period when the word “nation” had a very different meaning.”⁹⁰

During the 1871 Alsace-Lorraine cession to Germany, Gallois demonstrates Alsatians strong reaction against leaving France. Gallois estimates that more than one-quarter of the region’s 1910 population, an estimated 500,000, fled rather than submit to separation from France.⁹¹ Gallois cites August Bebel (1840-1913), one of the founders of the German Social Democratic Party, who “never ceased to protest the great wrong that had been done.”⁹² As late as 1907, Bebel stated to the Socialist Congress at Stuttgart:

Alsace and Lorraine revolted against the idea of separation from France because they had participated in her development for centuries, because they had benefited by the victories of the great Revolution, because, for a cultural point of view, they were closely identified with the spirit and soul of France.⁹³

History professor Samuel Goodfellow writes that French philosopher and writer Ernest Renan once wrote, “Getting its history wrong is part of being a nation.”⁹⁴ “By this,” Goodfellow writes, “he meant that groups construct their own national identity, usually at the expense of reality.”⁹⁵: Goodfellow warns about history perspective:

From 1870 to the present, Alsace has been an arena of conflicting constructions of nationalism. French and German nationalists created different versions of Alsace’s past that mirrored their respective identities, excising inconvenient portions of Alsatian history for their own purposes. The Germans ignored, for example, the two hundred years of French rule over the region prior to 1870. For their part, the French pretended that Alsatians spoke French, not German.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ Bell, “Nation-Building and Cultural Particularism”: 490.

⁹¹ Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 103.

⁹² Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 93, 103.

⁹³ August Bebel quoted in Gallois, “Alsace-Lorraine and Europe”: 103.

⁹⁴ Ernest Renan quoted in Samuel Goodfellow, “From Germany to France? Interwar Alsatian National Identity.” *French History* 7, no. 4 (Dec. 1993): 450, *ProQuest Database*, University of Michigan Graduate Library, Ann Arbor, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb> (accessed April 3, 2008).

⁹⁵ Samuel Goodfellow, “From Germany to France? Interwar Alsatian National Identity.” *French History* 7, no. 4 (Dec. 1993): 450, *ProQuest Database*, University of Michigan Graduate Library, Ann Arbor, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb> (accessed April 3, 2008).

⁹⁶ Goodfellow, “From Germany to France?”: 450.

English professor Nicholas Hudson examines the origin of the word “nation” and adds more context to the 1681-1871 time in France and Germany.⁹⁷ Hudson states that although historians widely claim that the modern concept of “nation” and associated “nationalism” began to exist only in the 18th century and after the French Revolution, this requires “considerable qualification.”⁹⁸ Hudson points out that the first edition of *The Dictionnaire de l’Academie Francaise* (1694) already contained a “roughly modern” definition of “nation”:

Tous les habitants d’un mese Estate, d’un mesme pays, qui vivent sous les mesmes loix & usent de mesme language, etc. (All the inhabitants of the same State, of the same country, who live under the same laws and use the same language, etc.)⁹⁹

Hudson explains that European travelers of the 17th century were aware of “national” differences associated with “the different political systems, languages, and temperaments of various peoples.” Hudson, however, agrees with recent scholars who maintain that prior to the 18th century Europeans identified with their monarch, religion, or native region more strongly than with the abstract concept of “nation.”¹⁰⁰ During the Enlightenment, the author explains, Europeans began to imagine a community of like-minded individuals sharing a “general will” or “a common national ‘soul’” during the expansion of print culture that stabilized national languages and offered a wide, common literary tradition.¹⁰¹

Denmark European Studies professor Wolfgang Zank, Associate Professor in the European Studies Programme at the University of Aalborg, discusses early German “nation”

⁹⁷ Nicholas Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: The Origin of Racial Classification in Eighteenth-Century Thought,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Spring and Balance: Enlightenment Binaries, 29, no. 3, (Spring, 1996): 247-264, *JSTOR Database*, <http://www.svsu.edu/library/links.jstor.org/> (accessed March 8, 2008).

⁹⁸ Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: 255.

⁹⁹ Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: 255-56.

¹⁰⁰ Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: 256.

¹⁰¹ Hudson, “From “Nation” to “Race”: 256-57.

building. Zank mentions regional identity that appears applicable to the early French Alsatians, who identified strongly with the Alsace region that came under French rule.¹⁰²

Many Germans feel a deep sense of regional identity, and the German regions vary very much from each other as to customs, mentalities, food and drinking habits, architecture or dialect. But regional identity easily goes together with a national identity, here understood as a sentiment of belonging to one nation.¹⁰³

Zank also discusses the 1695 time period when the loose confederation of the “the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation” existed prior to Germany as a nation-state and helps with understanding of French Alsatians of that period.¹⁰⁴ At that time, Zank explains, areas included part of today’s Czechia, Belgium, France, Italy, former Yugoslavia, and Poland.¹⁰⁵ While the emperor headed the confederation, the princes of numerous territories in the empire held the political power; there was no linguistic unity because the population at large used mutually incomprehensible dialects.¹⁰⁶ As with the Strasbourg intellectuals mentioned by Bell, Zank states that German intellectuals were creating a standard speech¹⁰⁷. Interestingly, he adds: “[B]ut the educated classes mostly used French or Latin. And given the massive impact which religion had upon daily life and the perception of the world, the confessional gaps deeply separated mental worlds.”¹⁰⁸ Zank, like McQuillan, points out that religion differences affected daily life and perceptions of the world.¹⁰⁹

The study of “nation” is as complex as was its inauguration. Discussing the formation of the Alsace-related German nation-state in 1871, Zank states, “Germany was at last united—or divided for good”:

¹⁰² Wolfgang Zank, *The German Melting Pot: Multiculturalism in Historical Perspective* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998).

¹⁰³ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 3.

¹⁰⁴ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 3.

¹⁰⁵ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 4.

¹⁰⁶ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 4.

¹⁰⁷ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 4.

¹⁰⁸ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 4.

The new Germany juridically made many people into Germans who did not want to be so—among others, Poles in the east, Danes in the north, and Alsations and Lorraines in the west. But at least the word ‘German’ had from then on a precise juridical meaning. Culturally, however, the new Germany crossed all hitherto existing definitions.¹¹⁰

Discussing the shaping of Germany further, Zank states:

Cultural bindings alone do not bring about unification. . . . [T]he cultural bindings of common language were nothing ‘natural’. The German language was . . . an artifact. In this respect there has been a ‘congruence’ between language and nation-state: both were artifacts.¹¹¹

“Surely members of one nation share the feels of belonging to one group,” writes Zank.

Common symbols such as the national flag, language, military, country leader, national sports, currency, and anthem all help citizens to feel a sense of national identity and belonging.¹¹²

Members of a nation remain unique, however, Zank explains. Even though citizens of a nation speak fluent similar languages and have much similar knowledge, they may be quite different in other ways: “[O]ne might be atheist and rationalist, the other deeply religious; the one open-minded, the other xenophobic; the one humanist, the other misanthropic; the one very erotic, the other afraid of sex.”¹¹³

Zank warns against many researching methods to measure the components of a culture.

The onion-type model is popular with researchers, Zank states, but is more appropriate to anthropological studies in primitive societies. In this model, the *symbols* of the culture (language, other nation symbols) are at the outermost layer, *heroes and rituals* (not common among all in modern societies) appear in deeper layers, and values (not common among all in modern societies) are at the center core of the culture.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 93.

¹¹¹ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 93.

¹¹² Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 6.

¹¹³ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 7.

It is not possible to find a fixed, common definition for “nation,” which has a living, everchanging meaning, defined differently in areas around the world. Historian Lloyd Kramer surmises that the historiography of nationalism does not allow definite conclusions, “much as nationalism itself eludes definitive narratives.”¹¹⁵ Kramer states that it is impossible to, in his opinion, to select one superior theory, although he thinks that recent cultural histories of nationalist ideas are most innovative.¹¹⁶ Kramer anticipates new theories to emerge because nationalism remains strong and the evolving institutions are required to manage new problems associated with dynamic culture.¹¹⁷ Kramer notes recent years’ discussion of redefining nationalism that draws from new theories “about gender, sexuality, literary narration, and the cultural construction of identity.”¹¹⁸

Social Sciences professor Craig Calhoun discusses the modern complex discourse of nationalism and traces “nationalism” discussions to several sources: the 17th century British rebellion against the monarchy, the 18th century struggle of New World elites against Iberian colonialism, the French Revolution of 1789, and the German reaction to that revolution and to German disunity.¹¹⁹ Calhoun cites G. Best from *Honour Among Men and Nations, Transformations of an Idea* (1982):

Historians of nationalism agree to differ in their estimates of how much of it (and what sorts of it) already existed in the Atlantic world of 1785. They are at one in recognizing that the world by 1815 was full of it, and that although each national variety had of course its strong characteristics, those varieties had enough in common for it to constitute the most momentous phenomenon in modern history.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Lloyd Kramer, “Historical Narratives and the Meaning of Nationalism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 58, no. 3 (Jul. 1997): 525-545 *JSTOR Database*, <http://www.svsu.edu/library/links.jstor.org/> (accessed March 3, 2008).

¹¹⁶ Kramer, “Historical Narratives”: 545.

¹¹⁷ Kramer, “Historical Narratives”: 545.

¹¹⁸ Kramer, “Historical Narratives”: 545.

¹¹⁹ Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 212, *JSTOR Database*, <http://www.svsu.edu/library/links.jstor.org/> (accessed March 28, 2008).

¹²⁰ Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity”: 212-13.

Calhoun explains that in the early modern era the idea of nation referred to a collective of people “linked by co-residence or common sociocultural characteristics [that] took political and cultural connotations in struggles with and between states and over state-building.”¹²¹

In discussing boundaries of nations, mixed social relations, and international exchanges of “ideas, language, and cultural productions,” Calhoun states that probably, “in principle,” we should avoid using the term “society” to unitary, clearly demarcated subjects. This would inevitably drive people to speak of societies or peoples “in proper nouns of Indians and Germans, Korean and Kenyans.”¹²²

Calhoun expands to explain one reason why “nationalism” and terms like “nation” have been “notoriously hard concepts to define”:

We live in a world-system which is organized into states and which organizes certain cultural differences at constituting “culture,” while others are suppressed as unimportant internal or cross-cutting variations. This world system makes both nationalism and claims to ethnic identity as problematic as they are imperative, even while it makes it hard to escape enough from the power of received categories to understand why they are problematic.¹²³

German-speaking Alsatians from the 17th to later 19th century made strong efforts to retain their German language and customs, yet acknowledged and supported French sovereignty. As a group, the Alsatians strongly resisted reunion with Germany in 1870. Many Alsatians fled to other areas to avoid it. Nearly five decades later, when Alsace-Lorraine was reunited with France in 1919, post World War I, German affiliations mattered. The French government expelled many Alsatians and initiated an A-D category campaign to determine loyalty of Alsatians. Nation and ethnicity had gained definitions.

¹²¹ Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity”: 213.

¹²² Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity”: 215.

¹²³ Calhoun, “Nationalism and Ethnicity”: 215.

Historian and writer Jena M. Gaines discusses more about the 1871 German myth about Alsatians. German nationalism, Gaines writes, was rooted in the concept of the *Volk* (nation or people), “a cultural community united invisibly through blood and soil, and audibly through language.”¹²⁴ Without a populace agreement, Gaines states, German annexationists believed that the Alsace region legally belonged to the Holy Roman Empire and “that Alsatians wanted to be German whether they realized it or not.”¹²⁵

Gaines believes that the Alsatian identity was forged stronger in the annexation of 1871 than in the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia or the 1789 French Revolution. As the question of nationalism rose after World War I, Alsatians who had so long been proud of their regional cultural personality then suffered shame from one perspective or another in the mixed French and German nationalistic claims that demanded national patriots. French nationalist ideology construed “homeland” to be incidental to fatherland, meaning French nation—at least until after World War I, when Alsace again became a part of France until post World War II (five years). Alsatians who had stayed under German control and not emigrated or fled from Alsace were not so openly welcomed back to France and viewed with suspicion and/or rejected.¹²⁶ At the war’s end, Alsatians re-entering France were classified into four groups according to degrees of French Alsatian blood line.¹²⁷

Czech political leader, dramatist, and essayist Vaclav Havel was a leader in democratic opposition to communism that collapsed in Czechoslovakia in 1989, the year that he first became its president. In June 1992, prior to January 1993 dissolution of the nation into the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Havel published a human-based concept of home and state, “At Home in

¹²⁴ Gaines, “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace”: 99.

¹²⁵ Gaines, “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace”: 99.

¹²⁶ Gaines, “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace”: 99-100.

¹²⁷ Gaines, “The Politics of National Identity in Alsace”: 107.

the World,” in *American Theatre*.^{128 129} An onion concept of sorts, Havel discusses a civil society and each person’s relationship to “home.”¹³⁰¹³¹ Havel writes:

For everyone, home is a basic existential experience. What a person perceives as home (in the philosophical sense of the word) can be compared to a set of concentric circles, with one’s “I” at the center. My home [even a prison cell] is the room I live in for a time, the room I’ve grown accustomed to and have in a manner of speaking, covered with my own invisible lining. . . .

My home is the house I live in, the village or town where I was born or where I spend most of my time. My home is my family, the world of my friends, my profession, my company, my workplace. My home is also the country I live in, and its intellectual and spiritual climate, expressed in the language spoken there. The Czech language, the Czech way of perceiving the world, the Czech historical experience, the Czech modes of courage and cowardice, Czech humor—all of these are inseparable from that circle of my home. . . . it is also my Czechoslovakness, which means my citizenship. Beyond that my home is Europe and my Europeaness and—ultimately—it is this world and its present civilization and for that matter the universe.

. . . My home is also my education, my upbringing, my habits, my social milieu. And if I belonged to a political party, that would indisputably be my home as well.

Every circle, every aspect of the human home, has to be given its due.¹³²

Havel reasons that such a philosophy of home and civil society that extends equal rights to each person is in tune with our natural world and to deprive oneself of all the aspects of home, “man would be deprived of his humanity.”¹³³ Havel warns about an imbalance that can result from establishing a state based on a single principle of ideology, nationality, or religion—of making single aspects of “home” superior to others and “detracting from us as a people.” If this occurs, Havel writes, “The outcome is always bad. Most wars and revolutions, for example,

¹²⁸ Václav Havel, “At home in the world,” *American Theatre* 9, no. 3 (June 1992): 72.

¹²⁹ This writing of Havel is expanded more in Havel’s *Summer Meditations (LetníPrémítání)* by Odeon, Prague, 1991), trans. 1992 by Paul Wilson (Vintage Books, Toronto), 30-33.

¹³⁰ Havel, “At home in the world”: 72.

¹³¹ Havel quoted in Nancy Manning, “Why do some people cherish memories of their childhood homes so much?” Research paper, Library 195W, Spring 2002, Delta College, University Center, MI.

This study relates to home on varying levels, and Havel’s theory was nearest to the definition that I sought.

¹³² Havel, “At home in the world”: 72.

¹³³ Havel, “At home in the world”: 72.

come about precisely because of this one-dimensional concept of the state.”¹³⁴ Havel believes that a state based on citizenship, respecting all people will be basically peaceful and humane.¹³⁵

Zank discusses the increasing “Melting Pot” assimilation process that Germany has been experiencing since the late 1800s. He states that today [1998], Germans are of many ethnic origins: “Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Frankish, Alaman, Danish, Frisian, Obodrite, Polabic, Pomeranian, Kashubian, Sorbian, Old-Prussian, Mazurian, Polish, French Huguenot, Jewish, Czech, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Yugoslav and Turkish.”¹³⁶ Zank demonstrates Havel’s theory relating to one-dimensional views of religious ideologies by stating that cooperation and coexistence have been possible whenever different cultural groups find peaceful ways to cooperate: One of the most important set of regulations of this kind was the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, by which the conflict between Catholics and Protestants lost its murderous character.” It was also then that Alsace began its new history as “French.”¹³⁷

In August 1874, the *New York Times* published an article regarding the recent German census and the 3,240,000 “non-German inhabitants of the Empire”:

They consist of 220,000 French speaking people in Alsace-Lorraine, and 10,000 French and Walloons in the Rhine Provinces, 2,450,000 Poles, 150,000 Lithuanians, 150,000 Danes in North Schleswig, 88,000 Wends in Brandenburg and Silesia, and 52,000 in Saxony, 50,000 Moravians and Czechs in Silesia, and 80,000 foreigners.¹³⁸

Non-German members in the 1870s’ multicultural German Empire struggled to retain their regional identities and sense of “home.” Notably, these included Alsatians.

“Nation” is perpetually redefined outwardly and inwardly by humankind. Man-made “French” or “German” national/ethnic labels such as those used in Alsace carry complex lexical

¹³⁴ Havel, “At home in the world”: 72.

¹³⁵ Havel, “At home in the world”: 72.

¹³⁶ Zank, *The German Melting Pot*, 243.

¹³⁷ Zank, “Conclusion” in *The German Melting Pot*.

¹³⁸ “The Population of Germany, *New York Times*, p. 2, *ProQuest Historical New York Times Database*, August 25, 1874, <http://0-proquest.umi.com.library.svsu.edu/> (accessed April 3, 2008).

meanings that vary with time periods and require broad understanding of history that incorporates multiple aspects such as political attitudes, ethnicity, language, religion, cultural practices, and globalization. Many “German” Alsatians from 1681-1870 adapted to life in France and *chose* to be “French” in a somewhat broadly contrasted way to today’s immigrants who *choose* to be “American” yet strive to retain deepest meaning aspects they attribute to “home.”



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