



Detail from a map of Banat of Temesvár from 1790

INVITATION TO THE PRESENTATION

AUSTRIANISM, REGIONALISM, NATIONALISM

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION ON THE HABSBURG FRONTIER

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When German-speaking colonists arrived in the Banat of Temesvár and southern Hungary in the 18th century, ethnicity was often less of a defining factor than religion. The onset of the "Age of Nationalism" in the 19th century changed the status quo and forced these German-speakers to navigate the increasingly complex ethno-political situation created by the rise of nations. In response, leading Germans based their collective identity on ideas of industriousness and progress, attempting to offset their numerical inferiority (vis-à-vis Romanians and Serbs) and political impotence (vis-à-vis the Hungarians) and to justify their presence in the region. This response laid the groundwork for an enduring regional identity that demarcated them both from the surrounding ethnic groups and from Germans in other parts of Europe. The rise of National Socialism in Germany challenged this regional identity. While some Banaters sought to retain a unique sense of community connected to the region, others sought to more closely connect Germans both in and out of Germany proper, an effort supported by the Reich's propaganda machine. After the war, and continuing to this day, there has been a rebirth of the regional identity, even as the region has lost most of its German-speaking population. Through this developmental arc, we can see various strategies undertaken by a regional minority in an effort to maintain group cohesion and identity.

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