After the annexation by Germany in 1871, Alsace-Lorraine became a so-called Reichsland, with a population of 1.5 million, in which the Alsatians formed a clear two-thirds majority. It was a ‘state’ that became the property of the German Reich and was put under the tutelage of Prussia and the Emperor. Although the Reichsland was finally granted a genuine constitution in 1911, this did not mean full emancipation in terms of acquiring the rights as enjoyed by everybody else in the German Reich: the Emperor still had the ultimate say in the legislative and executive realms; the right to make amendments to the 1911 constitution (including the controversial issue of the use of the French language) lay only with the Reichstag and the Bundesrat and needed the Emperor’s consent; government and administration were still dominated by Germans, most of whom were Prussians; the Prussian-dominated military was powerful as ever; and the public display of Francophile sentiment, such as singing the Marseillaise or showing off the colours of the tricolor was still banned.

The topic of this chapter is to be seen within the context of the still contentious debate concerning to what extent Alsace had become ‘fully’ German by 1914 and what its national character was. This question has mostly been approached by means of merely applying the categories of

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2 As for the power of the military, see the notorious Zabern Affair of 1913/14: David Schoenbaum, Zabern 1913: Consensus Politics in Imperial Germany (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982).

3 See lists of court cases and convictions regarding seditious shouts and emblems (based on two French regulations of 1822 and 1848 respectively, confirmed by the German authorities after the annexation): Übersicht der auf Grund des Art. 6 Nr. 2 und 3 des Dekrets vom 11. August 1848, betreffend Tragen und Feilbieten verbotener Zeichen, verurteilten Personen, Tabelle B; Übersicht der auf Grund des Art. 8 des Gesetzes vom 25. März 1822, betreffend Ausstoßung aufrührerischer Rufe, verurteilten Personen, Tabelle A; both in ADBR (Archives Départementales du Bas-Rhin) 87AL5612.
Frenchness and Germanness. Despite coming to differing conclusions, most Canadian and American scholars of Alsace stick exclusively to the dichotomy of French/German. The German historian Hermann Hiery claims—based, however, only on an analysis of Reichstag elections—that by 1912 the population and political structures in Alsace-Lorraine were hardly any different from those states in Germany that had strong particularistic tendencies and regionalist traditions. Most recently, some American and Alsatian scholars have explored the notion of a specific Alsatian consciousness and identity that developed in the course of the Reichsland period. Alsatian identity is viewed as either a regional one within the wider concentric circle of a more or less German national identity, or in the sense of Allemand ne veux, Français ne peux, Alsacien je suis (I don’t want to be German, I cannot be French, I am Alsatian), identifying an Alsatian identity that is deemed to have been a crypto-French identity in a defence position against the Germanisation efforts of the Reich. I work with the notion of an evolving Alsatian national identity in its own right, transcending the dichotomy of French versus German. This view envisages a proto-national rather than a merely regional identity, with the potential for the region’s developing into a kind of Luxembourg. Subsequently it

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