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A history of the Rhineland in the Napoleonic era. Napoleon's contribution to Germany's development was immense. Under his hegemony, the millennium-old Holy Roman Empire dissolved, paving the way for a new order. Nowhere was the transformation more profound than in the Rhineland. Based upon an extensive range of German and French archival sources, this book locates the Napoleonic episode in this region within a broader chronological framework, encompassing the Old Regime and Restoration. It analyses not only politics, but also culture, identity, religion, society, institutions and economics. It reassesses in turn the legacy bequeathed by the Old Regime, the struggle between Revolution and Counter-Revolution in the 1790s, Napoleon's attempts to integrate the German-speaking Rhineland into the French Empire, the transition to Prussian rule, and the subsequent struggles that ultimately helped determine whether Germany would follow its own Sonderweg or the path of its western neighbours.

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