

Panel review: «Pour une histoire globale du Corps helvétique. Crises, acteurs et appartenances (XVIe-XVIIe siècles) », Friday 8 February 2013, 3 Swiss Congress of Historical Sciences 2013.

*Organizers: Marco Schnyder / Bertrand Forclaz*

*Participants: Andreas Behr / Bertrand Forclaz / Thomas Maissen / Marco Schnyder / Anne Vernat*

### **Compte rendu de: Kristin Twedt-Mottier**

In the context of the overall theme of the Congress, “Global-Local”, the question of a Swiss national identity is indeed complex and polycentric. In order to better understand the intricacies of this identity and its roots and origins, the organizers of the panel felt it essential to regard this subject as part of a wider context that is the “European” history of Switzerland. Through the analysis of several different moments of crisis and the actions and reactions of the parties involved, a better analysis of the process of Swiss “nation-building” can be undertaken.

**ANNE VERNANT**, University of Neuchâtel, addressed the diplomatic role of the comté of Neuchâtel and its relations with France during the mid-1500s. Her presentation, “Le service étranger dans le comté de Neuchâtel au temps des guerres de religion,” highlighted the complexity of the situation in which the comté found itself at this time. The reputation of Swiss infantrymen made them desirable recruits for foreign powers, notably for France. However, the legitimacy of this type of service became more and more questionable with the intensification of the divide between Catholic and Protestant Christians. Neuchâtel, as territory friendly to the Reformed Christians, found itself trapped in the contradictory relationship of satisfying official treaties signed with catholic France, the treaties of *combourgeoisie* signed with Berne, while also attempting to satisfy internal confessional demands. Furthermore, the comté was subject to increasing external political pressure to allow, or internal pressure to forbid, the raising of troops. Thus, the role of the soldier evolved from more or less mercenary, to that of matter of international importance—the question of furnishing of troops to catholic France became a profound question of identity for the comté. Such that, beginning in the 1557, the civil authority of Valangin began pronouncing sentence on soldiers who participated in the French conflict on behalf of the king, punishable as an act against the faith. The religious and political differences exacerbated by this conflict within the comté of Neuchâtel and impacted on the development of identity.

Equally complex, the repercussions of political attachments and the foreign service in the Jura also invoked many profound questions as to the nature of the identity and affiliation of *jurassiens* during the early 1600s. **BERTRAND FORCLAZ**, Universities of Neuchâtel and Geneva, examined the question of political affiliation during the Thirty Years War. His presentation, “Les retombées locales d'un conflit global: appartenances politiques et service étranger dans l'arc jurassien pendant la Guerre de Trente ans (1618-1648),” emphasized the highly complex state of affairs in the Evêché de Bâle. Contradictory affiliations between the Evêché, which was

forbidden to raise troops against the Holy Roman Empire, while at the same time, troops were being raised secretly in support of the Franco-Swedish side. Furthermore, with the occupation of part of the territory of the Evêché by Franco-Swedish troops, the question of identity in terms of religious affiliation and national affiliation becomes more blurred. The occupying troops were regarded as “Swedish,” without regard to their actual make-up - frequently an assortment of men of diverse nationalities, frequently Swiss themselves. Thus hinting at a notion of unity among the *jurassiens* and a notion that the enemy was clearly defined as an outsider and a foreigner.

The question of the sense of a collective identity of a more migrant population was addressed by **MARCO SCHNYDER**, University of Geneva, in his presentation, “Du village au monde: conjonctures extra locales, protection des migrants et appartenances. Les bailliages italiens en Europe (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles).” He emphasized the global-local nature of the Italian bailiwicks through the petitions written to foreign ambassadors or governmental officials to request assistance in the defense of their rights. Frequently, these petitions were addressed to political persons or entities quite geographically removed from the bailiwicks. Thus, the bailiwicks felt themselves the repercussions of actions taken by powers a great distance away. These documents also reveal a region he characterized as 'politically closed and economically open.' They worked vigorously to defend their lifestyles, privileges and autonomy, while also seeking to economic cooperation with foreign or outside communities. Moreover, the presence of successful citizens from the Italian bailiwicks in large European cities aided to expand the horizons of the bailiwicks, while they, at the same time, retained a sense of identification with the same bailiwicks.

**ANDREAS BEHR** further explored the question of identity and affiliation through the case of Carlo Casati, Spanish Ambassador to Switzerland of Milanese origin. In his presentation, “Vom Habsburger zum Bourbonen. Der Seitenwechsel des spanisch-mailändischen Botschafters in der Alten Eidgenossenschaft (1700-1704),” he illustrated the complex and often contradictory alliances between European powers at the time of the death of the last Habsburg ruler of Spain, Charles II. The balance of power in Europe was profoundly affected in 1700 with Charles II's death, as he left no heir. The arrival in Spain of Phillip V, of the house of Bourbon, changed the dynamic and engendered a repositioning of the key players at the time. Casati's ability to adapt his identity/affiliations on a micro-level, in addition to his diplomatic skills, enabled him to survive this period. The relationship of the Swiss cantons with Casati and his negotiations are illustrative of the balancing act undertaken by Switzerland at this time. Audience questions confirmed the significance of Switzerland to both the Habsburg and Bourbon kings in Spain.

In the commentary provided by **THOMAS MAISSEN**, University of Heidelberg, he questioned the accurateness of the title “Global-Local,” citing that global implies a system outside of Europe. However, he agreed that European borders are an understandable limit for this time period. He found the description of the Confederation as defined by foreign entities and the implications of foreign powers, as well as foreign persons, to be pertinent. Furthermore, he emphasized the role of religious affiliation in Swiss regional history, as well as its role as a key factor in Swiss identity. Despite the complex, multi-faceted history of identities and affiliations in Switzerland, he reiterated the need to create a national history in order to commence its de-construction.

Kristin Twedt-Mottier

### **Panel Overview:**

Anne Vernat: Le service étranger dans le comté de Neuchâtel au temps des guerres de religion

Bertrand Forclaz: Les retombées locales d'un conflit global : appartenances politiques et service étranger dans l'arc jurassien pendant la Guerre de Trente ans (1618-1648)

Marco Schnyder: Du village au monde: conjonctures extralocales, protection des migrants et appartenances. Les bailliages italiens en Europe (XVIIe-XVIIIe siècles)

Andreas Behr: Vom Habsburger zum Bourbonen. Der Seitenwechsel des spanisch-mailändischen Botschafters in der Alten Eidgenossenschaft (1700-1704)