

## Kleinbasel: a second town and a second economy

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Kleinbasel, founded by the bishop on the right bank after the construction of the bridge, developed as a town of its own. It received a wall, a council and a market, and it had its own guild organisation, whose three societies, the *Ehrengesellschaften* zum Rebhaus, zur Hären and zum Greifen, still exist and celebrate every January the *Vogel Gryff*, the festival of Kleinbasel.<sup>1</sup> The town was smaller and poorer than Grossbasel, inhabited largely by craftsmen, fishermen, boatmen and agricultural workers, and it lacked the great merchant families and religious institutions of the left bank.

Kleinbasel was, however, economically important. It controlled the right bank of the bridge and hence the traffic to and from the Black Forest and Swabia. It had water power from the canals derived from the river Wiese, which drove mills and workshops. And it lay on the side of the Rhine that belonged, in terms of the medieval political landscape, to the Habsburg and Baden sphere, which made it a point of contact with the territories to the north and east.

The purchase of Kleinbasel by the city of Grossbasel in 1392 united the two towns under one government and gave Basel control of both ends of the bridge. The union did not erase the differences. Kleinbasel remained, until the twentieth century, the poorer and more industrial part of the city. When the chemical industry developed in the nineteenth century, many of its plants settled in Kleinbasel and in the northern districts of the left bank, where land, water and access to the Rhine were available. The headquarters of Roche, with its two towers, the tallest buildings in Switzerland, stand in Kleinbasel on the site of the company's original factory; the Novartis campus occupies the former industrial site of St Johann on the left bank.<sup>2</sup> The medieval division of the city between the merchant town on the left bank and the working town on the right bank has thus given way to a new geography, in which the global headquarters of the life sciences industry occupy both banks of the Rhine.

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The relationship between Grossbasel and Kleinbasel is also a lesson in the integration of economic spaces. The purchase of 1392 was a financial transaction: the city paid the bishop a sum of money for his rights over the town. It was followed by a long process of legal, administrative and social integration, which took generations. The integration of economic spaces through the acquisition of rights, followed by the harmonisation of rules, is a pattern that recurs in the formation of the Swiss federal state in 1848, in the Swiss customs union and in the bilateral agreements between Switzerland and the European Union, which Part K examines.

### 1 Notes

1. On the three Ehrengesellschaften of Kleinbasel (zum Rebhaus, zur Hären, zum Greifen) and the Vogel Gryff festival, see HLS, article "Kleinbasel"; publications of the Drei Ehrengesellschaften Kleinbasels. To be verified. ↩
2. The Roche towers (Bau 1, 178 m, completed 2015; Bau 2, 205 m, completed 2022) on the Grenzacherstrasse in Kleinbasel are the tallest buildings in Switzerland; the Novartis Campus occupies the former Sandoz site at St Johann. Heights and dates to be verified. ↩

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