

The Daig and the federal state

*Dr Alexander Ressos, TEP
Attorney-at-Law (Switzerland), Solicitor (Hong Kong),
Solicitor (England & Wales)*

The creation of the Swiss federal state in 1848 changed the political framework in which the *Daig* operated. The Federal Constitution of 1848, adopted after the brief civil war of 1847 between the liberal cantons and the conservative Catholic cantons of the Sonderbund, created a federal government with competences in foreign affairs, customs, the currency, the postal service and the army. It also guaranteed the freedom of establishment and of trade throughout the country.¹

The Basel elite had an ambivalent attitude to the new federal state. As conservative Protestants, they distrusted the radical liberals who dominated the federal government. As merchants and manufacturers, they welcomed the abolition of internal customs duties, the unification of the currency and the postal service, and the freedom of trade that the federal state brought. The Federal Coinage Act of 1850, which introduced the Swiss franc on the model of the French franc and ended the cantonal currencies, including the Basel currency that the city had struck since the fourteenth century, was of particular importance for the merchants, who had long suffered from the multiplicity of Swiss currencies.²

The federal state also brought the railways, which transformed the economy of Basel and which Part D examines. The Swiss Central Railway, founded in 1852 with its seat in Basel and financed in part by Basel capital, connected the city with the Swiss plateau through the Hauenstein tunnel. Basel became the northern gate of the Swiss railway network and a centre of railway finance.

The *Daig* adapted to the federal state as it had adapted to earlier changes. Its members sat in the federal parliament, served in the federal administration and participated in the development of the national economy. But they retained their attachment to the city and the canton, where their influence remained concentrated in Basel. The tension

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between local identity and national integration, which characterises Swiss federalism, is visible in the history of the *Daig*.

1 Notes

1. On the Sonderbund War (November 1847) and the Federal Constitution of 12 September 1848, see HLS, articles "Sonderbundskrieg" and "Bundesverfassung". To be verified. ↩
2. Federal Coinage Act of 7 May 1850, which introduced the Swiss franc on the French model and replaced the cantonal currencies. To be verified. ↩

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