

The rulers, the titles and the dates

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The following table summarizes the eight bailiwicks, the cantons that ruled them and the dates of acquisition and loss. The dates of acquisition are those of effective occupation and of the legal title, which often differ by several years.

Bailiwick Ruling cantons Acquired Ended Leventina Uri 1403/1439; title 1480 March 1798 Blenio Uri, Schwyz, 1495; Arona 1503 April 1798 Nidwalden Riviera Uri, Schwyz, 1495; Arona 1503 April 1798 Nidwalden Bellinzona Uri, Schwyz, 1500; Arona 1503 April 1798 Nidwalden Lugano Twelve cantons 1512/13; Peace 1516 February 1798 Locarno Twelve cantons 1512/13; Peace 1516 1798 Vallemaggia Twelve cantons 1512/13; Peace 1516 1798 Mendrisio Twelve cantons 1512; definitive after 1517 1798 Ossola Twelve cantons 1512 lost 1515

The "twelve cantons" were Zurich, Bern, Lucerne, Uri, Schwyz, Unterwalden (Obwalden and Nidwalden counting together), Glarus, Zug, Fribourg, Solothurn, Basel and Schaffhausen. Appenzell, admitted to the Confederation in 1513 after the campaign, had no share in these four bailiwicks.¹ The table therefore records three different constitutional arrangements: a bailiwick of a single canton (the Leventina), bailiwicks of three cantons (Bellinzona, Riviera, Blenio) and bailiwicks of twelve cantons (the four bailiwicks of the lakes and of the Maggia valley). The Leventina, Blenio and the Riviera are also known as the *Tre Valli* or the Ambrosian valleys, because they followed the Ambrosian rite of Milan and belonged to its archdiocese.

1 Motives: passes, grain, pensions and prestige

Why did the Confederates want the south at all? Four motives recur in the sources and the literature. The first was the control of the Gotthard route, which gave Uri its tolls and its carrying trade and which could be closed by

whoever held Bellinzona (Chapter A.IV). The second was access to grain and salt from the Lombard plain, on which the Alpine cantons depended in years of poor harvest and which, once the bailiwicks had been conquered, the ruling cantons were bound to secure for their new subjects as well.² The third was the market for military service: the wars in Lombardy were fought with Swiss mercenaries, and the cantons used the southern territories as bargaining chips in their negotiations with Milan, France, the Pope and Spain over pensions and recruitment rights. The fourth was prestige and the revenue of office. Because the *landfogto* was normally chosen from among the members of the councils of the canton whose turn it was, a bailiwick was a source of posts for the leading families of the ruling cantons, whose members expected to serve as *landfogto* at least once in a career.³

The weight of these motives shifted over time. In the fifteenth century the pass and its tolls dominated the policy of Uri. After 1516, when the Confederation abandoned great-power politics in Italy, the bailiwicks became above all a domestic asset of the ruling cantons: a source of offices, fees and grain supply, administered in common and largely left to itself. That shift explains why the Confederates never tried to integrate the Italian territories into their own political order. The bailiwicks were property to be managed, which the cantons did as co-owners.

2 Notes

1. André Holenstein, "Gemeine Herrschaften", in HLS, version of 21 September 2021, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/009817/2021-09-21/>; Hubler, "Ennetbirgische Vogteien" (above), on the four bailiwicks of the twelve cantons. Daniela Pauli Falconi, "Vallemaggia", in DSS, version of 5 January 2015, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/008548/>, describes the valley as a bailiwick of the twelve cantons from 1513 to 1798 ("i 13 meno Appenzello"). ↩
2. Fritz Glauser, "Capitolati di Milano", in DSS, version of 13 January 2011, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/017199/2011-01-13/> ("I cant. sovrani, in seguito alla conquista dei baliaggi it., furono tenuti a garantire a questi ultimi sufficienti approvvigionamenti di alimenti, soprattutto di cereali provenienti dalla pianura padana, e rifornimenti di sale"). See also Raffaello Ceschi, *Nel labirinto delle valli. Uomini e terre di una regione alpina: la Svizzera italiana* (Bellinzona: Casagrande, 1999). ↩

3. Waltraud Hörsch, "Balivo", in DSS, version of 13 November 2008, <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/it/articles/026435/2008-11-13/> (German: "Landvogt", <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/026435/2008-11-13/>), according to which the landfogto was chosen from among the members of the council and sworn in for a fixed term, and in the common bailiwicks each sovereign canton nominated in rotation. ↩

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