

The Rütli in Switzerland: minor memory – major ambitions

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The Rütli is the mythological place where, around 1300, Switzerland was supposedly founded. Maybe it once was only, or primarily, a memory place in the sense that there was a common need for territorial fixing of the common founding myth. But once established in the common memory, reference to this site increasingly lost the function of remembrance and proportionally gained the function of a stage used for different current political ambitions. Historical analyses should distinguish two types of questions. Firstly, knowing how the Rütli gained its growing importance from the 16th century onwards, to climax at the end of the 19th century with the invention of the national day (the 1st August). Secondly, we need to ask about the different ways in which the Rütli has been used as a stage of national importance, albeit without a clearly staked out field of meaning. This contribution begins by showing how the real landscape gained in importance. In a second step, it examines the variation of usage this spot underwent, and the third part comments on more recent quarrels around this place in connection with the organisation of the “1st August” (basic information in Georg Kreis, *Mythos Rütli. Geschichte eines Erinnerungsortes*. Zürich Orell Füssli Verlag 2004. 271 S. 72 Abb.)