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Abstract

The City and Republic of Bern was one of the most spacious city states north of the Alps throughout the early modern period. Within the 16th and 17th century firstly an aristocratic elite evolved and secondly built up political institutions which are both specific and typical at the same time. The analytical perspective of this thesis is the one of 'corruption'. Corruption is hereby not seen as the moral decline of a political entity but as a general feature of politics. This rather pragmatic view follows rather Anglo-American studies than current discussions in German historical sciences. However this study will examine corruption itself from three perspectives: first it will inquire informal structures within the political elites. Those structures have developed over time through family bounds, marriages and through patron and client relations. As a result of the growing influence of those structures it became increasingly difficult for parts of the Burger to participate in politics. Further, institutions which were found to administer the political sphere (e.g. election regulations) were invalidated. Second the formation of informal structures was mirrored in the administrative body of the city. A system of chambers accroached political power and challenged therefore the political rights of the Burger. This process will be subject of the thesis as well. Thirdly the study will elaborate on at least three examples which illuminate one aspect of the research. Summing up the thesis aims both to give a picture of the political condition of the City and Republic of Bern in the aftermath of the Reformation as well as to point out the relevance of corruption as an analytical category in the research on politics throughout time.