

## **Abstract**

This dissertation project aims to research how „the spectacle of suffering“ of the death penalty was practiced in Switzerland during the 19th century. Important as well is how, where and why these public executions were staged, especially the notion of having to educate and scare off the spectators, who seemed to show interest and were present at almost every execution, although not carried out regularly. To answer these questions of how it was organized in Bern, for example, we use the term „Ceremoniale“, whereby written evidence lists the procedure of a public execution and which rules needed to be followed. To generate action and set a warning example to the spectators, as Pieter Spierenburg discusses in his book, the spectacle of suffering had to take place in public, in front of an audience. To stage it otherwise would have made no sense [Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering, Executions and evolution of repression: from a preindustrial metropolis to the European experience*, Cambridge/London/New York 1984, S.81]. Significant in this context is which crimes were punishable with the executioner's sword? How did these methods change in time? To answer these questions, we have to consult historical and law testimonies, to see if a crime fit the death penalty and with which execution method. Other questions of equal importance include the social identity of the delinquent. If there are trends, how could they be explained? Interrogation protocols are very important testimonies. They can be located in the archives of Bern, Zurich and Lucerne. They generate information on the social background of the delinquent, his felony and his motive for committing the crime. These observations will be included in the social criminal profile, which will be compiled.