

## Turning Memories into Power: Swiss Archives as a Tool of Republican Policymaking in the Second Half of the Early Modern Period

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**Abstract.** Although research has greatly contributed to our understanding about the creation and managing of early modern archives, their role as the state memory institutions is still rarely discussed. Even in the relatively well-researched case of the early modern Swiss Confederation (also known as the Old Swiss Confederacy), the role remains little studied in some states, particularly rural microstates. Drawing on sources from two city-states (Zurich and Lucerne) as well as two rural microstates (Obwalden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden), the article aims to analyze the reciprocal relationship between the archives and political decision-making bodies, namely the respective councils in the age of republicanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. An archive was widely considered “the soul of the state” and a cornerstone of political decision-making. As such, it was not only seen as a source of guiding and legitimization, but also as a correcting force. Recollections of the past were a typical feature of republicanism with its Roman and Greek models. It was believed that the correction of the present was to be found in the past; therefore, the councils assigned great importance to the keeping of minutes and other records, which, once they entered the archive, ensured a long-lasting political influence. However, archival materials were not supposed to mirror reality but rather an ideal *de facto* aristocratic state. If the reality did not fit this picture, the records were not created, or alternatively, destroyed or manipulated in order to reinforce the predominant social structure to mirror the ideal.

**Keywords:** archival history, Old Swiss Confederacy, early modern history, administrative history, Republicanism, political history, memory studies, Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Lucerne, Zurich, Obwalden.

### Atsiminimų pavertimas galia: Šveicarijos archyvai kaip respublikos politikos formavimo įrankis Naujųjų laikų antroje pusėje

**Santrauka.** Nors moksliniai tyrimai svariai prisidėjo prie supratimo apie Naujųjų laikų archyvų kūrimą ir tvarkymą, archyvų, kaip valstybės atminties institucijų, svarba yra retai aptariama. Net ir palyginti nuodugnai ištirtu Naujųjų laikų Senosios Šveicarijos konfederacijos atveju, kai kuriose šiai konfederacijai priklaususiose valstybėse, ypač kaimo tipo mikrovalstybėse, archyvų svarba tyrinėta mažai. Remiantis dviejų miestų-valstybių (Ciuricho ir Liucernos) bei dviejų mažųjų valstybių (Obvaldeno ir Apencelio-Auserodeno) šaltiniais, straipsnyje nagrinėjamas ryšys tarp archyvų ir politinių sprendimų priėmimo teisę XVII ir XVIII a. turėjusių institucijų, konkrečiai – tarybų. Respublikų amžiuje archyvas buvo laikomas „valstybės siela“ ir netgi politinių sprendimų priėmimo pagrindu, todėl vertintas ne tik kaip tam tikrų gairių ir teisėtumo šaltinis, bet ir kaip koreguojanti jėga. Prisiminimai apie praeitį buvo tipinis respublikoniškumo, kurio sektini pavyzdžiai – romėnai ir graikai, bruožas. Buvo tikima, kad dabarties korekcijų turi būti ieškoma praeityje, todėl tarybos teikė didelę reikšmę protokolų

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ir kitų dokumentų saugojimui, nes patekę į archyvą jie užtikrindavo ilgalaikę politinę įtaką valstybėje. Vis dėlto kaupiama archyvinė medžiaga neturėjo atspindėti realybės, greičiau idealią *de facto* aristokratinę valstybę. Jei realybė neatitikdavo siekiamo įvaizdžio, dokumentai tiesiog nebūdavo kuriami arba būdavo sunaikinami, jais netgi būdavo manipuluojama siekiant sustiprinti vyraujančią socialinę struktūrą, kad ši atspindėtų idealą.

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** archyvų istorija, Senoji Šveicarijos konfederacija, Naujųjų laikų istorija, administracijos istorija, respublikoniškumas, politinė istorija, atminties tyrimai, Apencelis-Auserodenas, Ciurichas, Liucerna, Obvaldenas.

## Introduction

The archival turn has led to a significant shift in the perception of archives among historians. In the last thirty years, archives have gained a more prominent place instead of merely being a provider of sources and acting only as a background player. From the Mesopotamian collections of clay tablets to questions of digital preservation of information, archives have been relevant to researchers of all epochs. Especially early modern historians have shown great interest in the development of document collections, which in the early modern period had grown to previously unimaginable size and importance.

The archives in Switzerland are comparatively well researched. Partially this is due to the comparative work of one of the leading experts on archival history, Randolph C. Head, who has used Swiss archives many times, especially those of the republics of Zurich and Lucerne as central case studies.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, comparative research is still uncommon and remains highly desirable. Archival studies remain mostly focused on a single archive as case studies. This has been the norm ever since the first nineteenth-century publications on archival history, which were usually produced by the state and town archivists or their colleagues to describe the history of an archive and its development as part of some jubilee. In addition, certain topics are significantly better researched than other no less important topics. Besides the historic emergence of single archives, their structuring and inventories have been one of the main interests covered by many researchers.<sup>2</sup> Thus, the archival turn has not even come close to answering most of the important questions concerning early modern archives in Switzerland and beyond.

The practical use of government archives has been rather underrated. It is common knowledge that the document collections helped power holders to secure their rights in judicial cases as well as when making demands to other states and subordinates. The article aims to show several other functions and uses of the archives that have been neglected, such as the guiding and justification of political options, the representation of the state and the shaping of collective memory.

Important works on shaping of collective memory have already been published by Jeannette Rauschert<sup>3</sup> and Regula Schmid.<sup>4</sup> However, since both researchers are medievalists, they have focused on the late middle ages when the archives differed significantly from the forms and extents they had taken in the second half of the early modern period, which is the period researched in this article. Although the time after 1650 is

<sup>1</sup> The most relevant publications include Head, R. C. *Knowing Like a State: The Transformation of Political Knowledge in Swiss Archives, 1450–1770*. *The Journal of Modern History*, 2003, Vol. 75, No. 4, p. 745–782, <https://doi.org/10.1086/383353>; Head, R. C. *Making Archives in Early Modern Europe: Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108620659>; Head, R. C. Archiving the Swiss *Tagsatzung* in the Early Modern Era: From Distributed Protocols to Confederal Archive. *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire*, 2023, Vol. 30, No. 4, p. 537–553, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2023.2201268>.

<sup>2</sup> The most important examples with relevance to Switzerland and beyond are Head, R. C. *Knowing Like a State*, p. 745–782; Head, R. C. *Mirroring Governance: Archives, Inventories, and Political Knowledge in Early Modern Switzerland and Europe*. *Archival Science*, 2007, Vol. 7, p. 317–329, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-008-9062-1>; Rück, P. Die Ordnung der herzoglich savoyischen Archive unter Amadeus VIII. (1398–1451). *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, 1971, Vol. 67, p. 11–101.

<sup>3</sup> Rauschert, J. *Herrschaft und Schrift: Strategien der Inszenierung und Funktionalisierung von Texten in Luzern und Bern am Ende des Mittelalters*. Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> See Schmid, R. Die Chronik im Archiv: amtliche Geschichtsschreibung und ihr Gebrauchspotential im Spätmittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit. *Das Mittelalter*, 2000, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 115–138; Schmid, R. *Geschichte im Dienst der Stadt: Amtliche Historie und Politik im Spätmittelalter*. Zurich: Chronos, 2009.

unstudied, the eighteenth century has been researched even less.<sup>5</sup> A further imbalance rests in the research of city-states and rural cantons, the *Landsgemeindeorte* (the *Landsgemeinde* cantons), where the *Landsgemeinde* and not the councils acted (at least officially) as the most powerful institution of the state.

The archival history of those rural cantons has been poorly researched when compared with the city-states like Lucerne and Zurich. Contrary to the city-states of Lucerne and Zurich, the rural cantons were microstates, with a manageable budget, lower concentration of population, and worse infrastructure, which offered very different conditions to administer them. In the attempt to close the gap, in addition to the two city-states already mentioned, I also focus on the rural cantons of Appenzell Ausserrhoden and Obwalden. The first being Protestant and the latter Catholic, they serve as a perfect supplement to the Protestant Zurich and the Catholic Lucerne.

Contrary to the analysis of rural cantons, which, due to their much smaller administrative apparatus and fewer regulations, mostly focused on council minutes, the city cantons offer additional interesting sources, which include administrative documents, such as the files of the registry commission in Zurich, and even early modern paintings from the chancery<sup>6</sup> in Lucerne.

Drawing from these sources, the main objective is to contribute to a general understanding of potential ways in which early modern Swiss archives contributed to the exercising of power by the state. Furthermore, the focus on the second half of the early modern period as well as the usage of sources from Obwalden and Appenzell Ausserrhoden will expand the general overview of archival practices in the Old Swiss Confederacy.

This article consists of four chapters. The first chapter examines the central role of the archives in the state, which the respective councils assigned to them during the republicanism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Drawing on several iconographic sources, I show how this idea was presented to others and that it can still be observed today. In the second chapter, I closely examine the concrete use of archival materials and especially council minutes for political decision-making and its legitimacy. Building on the insights on perception, staging and the use of archives, chapters three and four address the topics of access to and use of archival materials by both internal and external actors. While chapter three examines internal tensions between different councils and their members as well as severe measures, such as deliberate destruction and manipulation of archival records, chapter four focuses on strategies and hopes linked to the access of archival materials by chroniclers. The conclusion provides a synthesis of the research results and sheds light on further desiderata.

## 1. Orientation Towards “the Soul of the State”

Upon entering the chancery of Lucerne government, finished in 1698, in the city’s town hall, one immediately notices the luxurious interior with masterfully crafted wood furniture.<sup>7</sup> As the eyes follow the

<sup>5</sup> While older literature is predominantly focused on the centuries-spanning development of archives, Head for example, has mostly been interested in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. His most recent monograph on archives, *Making Archives in Early Modern Europe: Proof, Information, and Political Record-Keeping, 1400–1700*, is explicitly dedicated to the period of 1400–1700. Rück’s article on the Savoy archives (*Die Ordnung der herzoglich savoyischen Archive unter Amadeus VIII. (1398–1451)*) is yet another important study on the topic.

<sup>6</sup> When researching Swiss sources in the early modern archives, one must keep in mind that often the terms “registry” (Ger. “Registratur”) or “chancery” (Ger. “Kanzlei”) were used without a clear distinction to “archive” (Ger. “Archiv”), even though in other contexts, contemporaries attached different meanings to them. For practical reasons the terms were most often used synonymously. The best example is Lucerne, where the chancery and the archive were located in the same room and managed by the same people. As the difference between the two institutions only existed theoretically, both “archive” and “chancery” were used without a clear distinction between the sources. In the article, I refrain from explaining those cases at every mentioning of “chancery” or “registry.” Unless it is stated otherwise, both terms mean the archive (in the case of Lucerne, the same room).

<sup>7</sup> For better visualization, I recommend to take a virtual 360-degree-tour of the chancery rooms: *City Lucerne / virtual tour of the town hall, the Am Rhyn-House, and the Kornschütte*, undated. Retrieved from <https://www.suisse-view.ch/360/rathausLU/> [accessed 14/02/2025]. To start the tour, click on the pulsing point I above the bridge. On the left, select “Rathaus” (town hall) and then the “Neue Kanzlei” (new chancery).

two-story shelves with its numbered drawers reaching towards the ceiling, one notices three paintings, which are no less representative than the rest of the interior. The first painting is placed almost immediately above the door and would require the visitor to turn 180 degrees to see it. It can be assumed that it was intended to be viewed when leaving the chancery. The two other paintings are placed in such a way that they can be viewed while advancing into the room.

Placed below crowned Lucerna, the allegory of the city, surrounded by several angels and other allegorical figures, e.g., Justicia on her right, the text reads as follows (see also Figure 1):

*Lux Amor et Timor est Lux est SAPIENTIA Virtus  
Lux est nam recti Lux ea monstrat iter.  
Virtus inest Virtute rego sic nominis omen  
Sortior et merito jure LVCERNA uocor*



**Figure 1.** Crowned Lucerna surrounded by other allegorical figures and angels.

Screenshot retrieved from <https://www.suisse-view.ch/360/rathausLU/> [accessed 14/02/2025]

Its rough translation is “Light is love and fear, light is WISDOM, light is virtue, for the light of the righteous shows the way. Virtue is within me, through virtue I rule. Thus, I earn the omen of the name, and with deserved right I am called LUCERNA.”<sup>8</sup> The text not only verbally but also optically determines wisdom—or in this particular context, “knowledge” as the central quality of rule in Lucerne. The writing of both “SAPIENTIA” and “LVCERNA” in golden capital letters makes this clear. As this was intended to

<sup>8</sup> I thank Larissa Stadelmann for helping me with the translations from Latin. For a more detailed description of the paintings and the history of the town hall building, see Reinle, A. *Die Kunstdenkmäler des Kantons Luzern. Band III: Die Stadt Luzern: II, Teil*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 1954, p. 35–40.

be the first painting and verbal message for the visitor of the chancery to see, it could be said that “SAPI-ENTIA” referred to the information stored inside the drawers of the room.

After passing this first painting, the visitor was immediately confronted by a second message.



**Figure 2.** *Depiction of an ancient council session.* Photo by Jan Haugner.

Another painting on the ceiling portrays an assembly of men in ancient clothing (see [Figure 2](#)). On the right, a scrivener in early modern attire, holding a feather pointed towards the center is depicted. He seems to be taking minutes of the assembly. While everybody else are in conversation with each other, the scrivener is the only person looking straight at the spectator. His right hand holding a feather looks like an admonition against neglecting the writing. The text in early modern German below the scene reads as follows:

*Rath Ohne That  
Sagunth die Statt  
Verlohren Hat*

It translates as “[A] Council without action [...] Sagunth the city has lost.” It is a reference to the Carthaginian siege of Saguntum under Hannibal in 219 BC, when the city besieged asked the allied Romans for help, but the senate did nothing to help its allies. The Carthaginian advance in the Second Punic War led Hannibal *ante portas* and almost to the downfall of Rome. The message of the painting is

that a council that acts actively and resolutely is a political necessity. The presence of the early modern scrivener can be interpreted in different ways; however, it seems obvious that he is intended as a symbol of the importance of writing for a successful government. The overall message of the paintings seems to be that the decision-making of a state should be based on knowledge collected in its archive. A well-organized archive can therefore, be considered the foundation of successful policy.

The reference to an episode in the history of the Roman republic is not surprising as around 1700 a number of Swiss cantons were eager to stage themselves as independent republics and, therefore, tried to fit in with republican traditions. For example, Lucerne first used the term *respublica* (*DVCATVS REIPVPLICAE LVCERNENSIS*) on one of its coins in 1695.<sup>9</sup> Another example is Zurich's town hall built in 1698, which features clear iconographic references to prominent figures of Roman republicanism.<sup>10</sup> Archives played a central role in this new self-portrayal of cantons as republics. In 1696, two years before the chancery was finished, the Secret Council of Lucerne called the chancery "the soul of the state" and "my lords most precious gem."<sup>11</sup> A very similar phrasing can be found in Zurich. There, in 1692 the highest officeholders of the state propagated a reformation of the chancery to the Great Council as the "appointment of the chanceries, which are like the soul of the state," would be of great importance.<sup>12</sup> Even though not immediately realized, the endeavor finally proved successful, and from 1701, the archival system took major steps towards becoming professional, which was aimed at securing the order and usability of the documents.<sup>13</sup>

As it was the case in each of the cantons under consideration, multiple attempts were needed to finally achieve the lasting and desired order of the archive. Archival disorder was perceived as a problem of both internal and external dimensions. In 1726, the Country Council of Obwalden deemed a reform of its archive highly important "so that several old writings will not fall into oblivion or total disaster, also that our owned authentic papers will be known."<sup>14</sup> Just a year later, in the neighboring canton of Lucerne, the Small Council remarked that "for several years," the archive, "which was very famous and valued for its good order and many precious authentic papers and writings not only in our state but in all Swiss confederacy," had fallen into disarray.<sup>15</sup> Apparently, the states considered it a problem that their archives could not be properly used for their political decision-making and that the "soul of the state" could no longer contribute to the representation of the republic.

<sup>9</sup> See Anon. *Luzern (Kanton) 1 Dukat, ND (1695)*. uCoin.net, undated. Retrieved from <https://de.ucoin.net/coin/lucerne-1-ducat-1695/?tid=142041> [accessed 08/03/2025]. To my knowledge, it is the first use of the term *reipublica* or its equivalent or abbreviation on a coin from Lucerne. As the website is hosted by a non-scientific institution, and the coin does not bear a year of its minting, the dating can be questioned. However, Thomas Maissen has shown that the republican terminology was used continuously from 1698 onwards. See Maissen, T. *Die Geburt der Republic: Staatsverständnis und Repräsentation in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006, p. 516, <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666367069>.

<sup>10</sup> See *ibidem*, p. 579.

<sup>11</sup> Minutes of the Secret Council, Lucerne, 28 June 1696. State Archive Lucerne (hereinafter, StALU), COD1427, p. 42v. The original quote: "Mgh: beste Kleinody, ia des Standes Seel."

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Honorary Commission to the Great Council, Zurich, 18 June 1692. State Archive Zurich (hereinafter, StAZH), A66. The original quote: "...Einrichtung der Cantzleyen, als welleche gleichsam die Seel eines Standes sind..." Most likely, here both the chancery and the archive are meant.

<sup>13</sup> For a compact overview of the measures taken, see Weiss, R. "Die Registratur der Archiven"—zur Entwicklung des Zürcher Archivwesens im 18. Jahrhundert. *Zürcher Taschenbuch*, 2002, Vol. 122, p. 443–489, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-985021>. Other important and very recent publications on the archival history of Zurich in the eighteenth century include Murer, S. Das "Weisse Register" des Staatsarchivs Zürich: Aktenerschliessung im 18. Jahrhundert. "Eine neüwe exacte Erlöbung." *Zürcher Taschenbuch*, 2025, Vol. 145, p. 261–313, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1075696>; Richner, F. Die Staatskanzlei im Alten Zürich des 18. Jahrhunderts: ein Beitrag zur Zürcher Verwaltungs- und Personengeschichte. *Zürcher Taschenbuch*, 2025, Vol. 145, p. 121–260, <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1075695>.

<sup>14</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 9 February 1726. State Archive Obwalden (hereinafter, StAOW), 02. RP.0022, p. 333. The original quote: "auff das nit einige alte schriften in völlige Vergessenheit od gänzliches Verderben gerathen, man auch unsere habende authentica eigentlich wüssen möge." For more thorough exploration of the state of the Obwalden archive in the eighteenth century, see Haugner, J. Alles in Ordnung? Zustand und Zugänglichkeit des obrigkeitlichen Archivs im frühneuzeitlichen Sarnen. *Archivfensler des Staatsarchivs Obwalden*, 29 Januar, 2025. Retrieved from <https://www.ow.ch/themenalle/thema/6715> [accessed 03/02/2025].

<sup>15</sup> State Minutes, Lucerne, 8 August 1727. StALU, RS1, p. 265.

Especially Lucerne and Zurich as the leading cantons of the Catholic and Protestant parts of the Old Swiss Confederacy respectively bore responsibility. Their confessional importance, economic power and the size quickly made their archives surpass the ones of the rural cantons by a multiple. However, in Obwalden and Appenzell Auserroden, the authorities also knew the political value of an archive.

## 2. Archive as a Correcting Force

In 1712, the tension between the Catholics and Protestants in early modern Switzerland erupted one last time into a war that engulfed the entire Confederacy. The Swiss Civil War of 1712 put the republics to the test in several ways, leading to quickly changing circumstances. The political system of the city-states like Lucerne and Zurich was more or less appropriately suited for the changing circumstances during wartime. In the aristocratic system of Lucerne and Zurich, the power mainly rested on the shoulders of the Small and Great Councils, which came together regularly. In rural cantons, however, the most powerful institution was officially the *Landsgemeinde*, the assembly of all citizens, which usually met once or twice a year. Such model was too cumbersome for a wartime, with daily or even weekly assembly not being a realistic option. The councils, which due to insufficient regulation of their power were *de facto* the most important political organs in day-to-day affairs, were officially bound to the decisions of the *Landsgemeinde*.

However, the Great Council of Appenzell Auserroden saw a potential loophole:

*Just as in this case, in the 16th as well as in the 17th century there have been multiple war councils, which concluded and ordered all what is best for our lovely fatherland. This is aimed at all emergencies and [is] appropriate as it can be seen from the official mandates and edicts, found in the archive in Trogen.<sup>16</sup>*

Even though the means of secret policy and the overstepping of the *Landsgemeinde* were seen as highly suspicious, the Great Council deemed its decision to install a secret war council just.<sup>17</sup> In this case, the archival holdings not only served as the basis for potential acting options based on precedents, but also offered legitimacy by referring to history and the authority of former power holders. In addition, the age of documents did not necessarily lessen their political value, on the contrary, might have strengthened it. The above-mentioned archive in Trogen contained many precedents from two centuries ago and, therefore, carried a strong and long-lasting political tradition of occasional overthrow of the fundamental division of powers in times of crisis.

The archival precedents were not only a measure used in times of crisis, but rather a common practice in day-to-day business in the Old Swiss Confederacy. In 1779, Salomon Wolf, the registrar of the Zurich archive, noted that several old and new examples would show how the states did not spare any expenses or efforts to make their archives secure and usable:

*it is known how much light a well-ordered archive can shed onto the *Iure publico*, the state-, civil- and policy-constitution, and how much the resulting science and experience can ease even the hardest council decisions.<sup>18</sup>*

<sup>16</sup> Mandate Book, Herisau, After 1755. State Archive Appenzell Auserroden (hereinafter, StAAR), Ab. 38–20, p. 105. The original quote: “Es sind sowohl in dem 16ten Seculis, als aber indem (sic!) 17ten nebst hier beschriebenen, mehrere Kriegs Räte gehalten worden an welchen ebenfahls alles dasjenige Conclussiert und verordnet, was Zum besten unsers liebwerthen Vatterlands, und behörge Verfassung auf alle Nothfahl abgeziehlet und abgezwecket hat, wie in denen hochobrigkeitlichen Mandata und Edicta, welche in dem Archiv in Trogen vorbefindlich zuersehen seyn wird.”

<sup>17</sup> Some of the council's secret decisions came back to haunt its members almost twenty years later in the *Appenzeller Landhandel* (country dispute), domestic power struggle in Appenzell Auserroden. However, as most of the decision-makers from the 1712 war were no longer in power, and one of the parties involved raided the state's archive, it is debatable whether access to archival documents could have potentially helped the former members of the War Council in an attempt to justify their deeds. On the *Appenzeller Landhandel*, see Brändle, F. *Demokratie und Charisma: fünf Landsgemeindekonflikte im 18. Jahrhundert*. Zurich: Chronos, 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Memorial of Salomon Wolf, Zurich, 1779. StAZH A67, No. 97, p. 13. Notice the use of iconographic element of light in connection with the archive and the state or its policy-making (compared to the chancery of Lucerne).

As Wolf's enumeration makes it clear, the archive was supposed to be a source of guidance in all matters the authority had to decide.

As the archive was considered "the soul of the state," it could also serve as a memory institution of its own history. In 1692, several council members in Zurich were ordered to make suggestions on how to reform the archive. A natural way of researching appropriate measures led them to

*...remember the well-thought council decisions, which were brought to paper, and especially a decision from 7th January 1665 as well as an advice to the council from 15th January 1667 were read out...*<sup>19</sup>

This self-referencing in the council minutes can be regularly observed in both Zurich and Lucerne, where they were seen as important tools for policy-making—just remember the early modern scrivener in the Lucerne painting, who seems to admonish to keeping minutes! Often one can find marginal glosses hinting at the consulted council decision. To secure this possibility, minutes were provided with the list of contents to ensure the option of finding relevant decisions quickly. However, here lies a significant difference when compared to the *Landsgemeindeorte*. Neither in Obwalden nor in Appenzell Auser-rhoden do early modern lists of contents for the council minutes seem to have existed. However, in both cantons, private and official books with extracts from the minutes and occasionally containing their own lists of contents have survived.<sup>20</sup> For the lack of registers, one can make two assumptions. Firstly, both cantons had an extremely small administrative apparatus, which likely could not handle the effort,<sup>21</sup> and secondly, the council minutes were, at least in Obwalden, kept with much less professionalism and were, therefore, often incomplete.<sup>22</sup> Apparently, there was an awareness for the importance of keeping minutes, which could be accessed at least partially. However, those books only covered the most important topics, whereas minor themes went unreported.

Nevertheless, this was sufficient to secure one of the most important benefits of an archive and well-kept minutes for the authority. As the example of the secret War Council in Appenzell Ausserrhoden has shown, archives offered an overview of possibilities how to act in the current situation and legitimized them. By constantly referring to the past and former authorities, the councils managed to avoid changes in the balance of power and, therefore, could solidify their power and status.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, an emphasis on the accurate keeping of minutes ensured that the present council's decisions were made accessible for future generations. Decades- and even centuries-old documents were regularly consulted by the members of the council, therefore, the keeping of minutes and archival order was an efficient way of securing a long-lasting influence on politics.

Such practice was already widespread in the early modern period. In his 1669 treatise on archives, Georg Aebbtlin highlighted several advantages of a well-ordered archive:

*8. The registry holds its due respect for the chancery where the entire political regiment is dictated. It preserves it in its entirety, in all offices and businesses, orders and deeds. And if there is any disruption, mischief or decline seen by the registry, it will soon change, advance, and improve to restore it to its former state.*

<sup>19</sup> Council Advice, Zurich, 17 June 1692. StAZH, A66, No. 3. The original quote: "...über eben disere Materi wolbedächtlich Zu papier gebrachter Rathschlägen erinneret, Und dieselbe, absonderlich Eine Erkantnuß Vom 7te January 1665, Und einen Rathschlag Vom 15te January 1667 abläsen laßen."

<sup>20</sup> In Appenzell Ausserrhoden, the books contain signatures Ab.38–18 until Ab.38–21. In Obwalden, they can be found in the archival holdings under "02.PN Protokollauszüge."

<sup>21</sup> Until 1670, Appenzell Ausserrhoden employed one and from 1670, two clerks (see Witschi, P. *Das Staatsarchiv Appenzell Ausserrhoden: Führer durch Geschichte und Bestände*. Herisau: Staatsarchiv Appenzell Ausserrhoden, 2012); whereas Obwalden employed only one clerk up until 1709 (see Garovi, A.; von Flüe, N. Obwalden. *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, 7 February 2018, p. 1–33. Retrieved from <https://hls-dhs-dss.ch/de/articles/007410/2018-02-07/> [accessed 04/02/2025]).

<sup>22</sup> See more, Haugner, J. *Alles in Ordnung? Zustand und Zugänglichkeit des obrigkeitlichen Archivs im frühneuzeitlichen Sarnen*.

<sup>23</sup> This applied to certain offices and structures, but usually not to specific people. Because of this, the patricians could secure a lasting influence of their social class, even though there was still enough room for power struggle to achieve the most powerful positions among the families.

9. *On the other hand, the chancery can trust and build on the registry as all kinds of help and examples of the ancestors' well-thought concerns, writings, and concepts can be acquired there.*<sup>24</sup>

Aebbtlin not only describes the archive as the base of building political decision-making, he declares it to be a higher power and truth as it possesses the ability to recognize and even correct any misguided political action. He also specifies how this correction should look, as it would be “its former state” built on “the ancestors’ well-thought concerns, writings, and concepts.” Therefore, the ideal state is always to be found in wisdom, or to use the term from the Lucerne sources, *sapientia* of the past. Such a perception of archives perfectly fit the upcoming republicanism in Zurich and Lucerne, where the admiration for the Roman republic was manifested in the design of the town halls.<sup>25</sup>

### 3. Accessing and Protecting Past Knowledge

The past stored in the archive needed its agents in order to make real or claimed political corrections. As the *Landhandel* in Appenzell Ausserrhoden has shown,<sup>26</sup> political decisions could come back to haunt their proponents even after decades. Therefore, the power holders occasionally showed great interest in trying to influence memory preserved in the archive. When in 1569 so-called *Pfyffer-Amlehn-Handel*, a power struggle between the members of elite, split the councils in Lucerne, they ordered to burn all documents related to the case. Although important council minutes were meant to be spared from the manipulation of memory, ultimately they also got lost. Even the diligent town clerk Renward Cysat was unable to find them. Because of his testimony, we know about the destruction of documents for the sake of “friendship and peace.” Cysat’s report can only be found in the introduction of later council minutes as the destruction of the documents aimed at erasing any evidence of the power struggle and concealment of the discord and vulnerability of the patriciate.<sup>27</sup>

The destruction of documents was not the only efficient way of trying to alter historical memory stored in the archive. In 1728, the Great Council of Lucerne complained that its decisions were not sufficiently documented in the state minutes, which included the resolutions of both the Small and the Great Council. As a result, a commission was appointed, which had the task to review the keeping of minutes.<sup>28</sup> The decision that everything was in order had not been further elaborated; however, as the Small Council

<sup>24</sup> Aebbtlin, G. *Anführung zu der Registratur-Kunst: vorderist denen Hoch-loeblichen Herrschafften und Obrigkeiten zu underthaenigem Bericht und Erinnerung: wie auch deroselben Registratorm, Secretariis, Cancellisten / Verwaltern / Amptleuthen und Schreibern zu Dienst*. Ulm: Kühn, 1669, p. 35f. The original quote: “8. Die Registratur, hat ihren gebuehrenden Respect auff die Cantzley, in welcher schier das gantze Politische Regiment dirigiert wird, erhaelt sie in ihrem gantzen statu, in all ihren officiis & negotiis. Ordnungen und Handlungen, und warinn Zerruettung, Unwesen oder Abgang sich erregen wolte, wird solches von der Registratur bald wargenommen, geandert, getrieben, gebessert, und wieder in vorigen Stand gebracht.

9. Hinwiderum kan die Cantzley, auff die Registratur trauen und bauen, auß derselben allerley gute Behelff und Exempel nemmen und der Vorfahren wolgefassen Bedencken, Schriften und Concepten, sich stattlich bedienen.” Here, “chancery” means chancery, whereas Aebbtlin seems to use the term “registry” synonymously with the word “archive.”

<sup>25</sup> For further examples, see Maissen, T. *Die Geburt der Republic: Staatsverständnis und Repräsentation in der frühneuzeitlichen Eidgenossenschaft*, p. 389 and 521.

<sup>26</sup> The “correction” of the past during the *Landhandel* was that the winners of the power struggle officially cancelled a secret defensive alliance, which the secret War Council formed in 1712 with the city of St. Gallen. Even though this had long lost its relevance, as it referred to the neighborly help during the war of 1712, the new government attached importance to “correcting” history by cutting off the seals of the treaty and sending them back to St. Gallen as the official cancelation of the alliance. See Schläpfer, W. *Appenzell Ausserrhoden: (von 1597 bis zur Gegenwart)*. Urnäsch: E. Schoop, 1972, p. 177. The desire to return to the old order was further emphasized when the citizens (in this case mostly the ones who supported the victorious party of the *Harten*) declared in their first assembly, organized after the conflict, “that we want to maintain the old freedoms, rights, and justice.” See Minutes of the Great Council, Herisau, 29 March 1733. StAAR, Ab. 04-02, p. 253r/v. As for the *Landhandel*, knowledge the citizens had about the archive and its contents was specifically given to them by the leaders of *die Harten*, the powerful Wetter family. Therefore, one must be cautious when making assumptions about the citizens’ views on the archive and its relation to their rights, because they were influenced by new power holders.

<sup>27</sup> See more, Messmer, K.; Hoppe, P. *Luzerner Patriziat: sozial- und wirtschaftsgeschichtliche Studien zur Entstehung und Entwicklung im 16. und 17. Jahrhundert* / mit einer Einfuehrung von H. C. Peyer. Luzern: Muenchen: Rex-Verlag, 1976, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> State Minutes, Lucerne, 8 October 1728. StALU, RS1, p. 338.

was much more powerful and had significant control over the clerks, the chancery and the archive, it is probable that it had some influence on the decision. As already mentioned above, the presence of councils' decisions in the council minutes was a powerful tool to exert a long-lasting influence on the policy of the state. Therefore, it must have been in the interest of every council to be represented as much as possible.

It is no surprise that council minutes received special and at the same time, ambivalent treatment when it came to the guarding and accessing archival material. On the one hand, their quick and efficient use was desirable and on the other hand, they were among the state's most important documents, which were usually kept out of reach. The Country Council of Obwalden was leaning towards the latter, restricting its access even for its highest officeholders. When in 1754, Captain Nikodemus von Flüe asked the council for permission to borrow the documents from the archive for making personal notes, the council decided:

*Client and captain von Flüe is allowed to take home the old writings piece by piece from the archive, except for the minutes to take notes from...*<sup>29</sup>

The minutes had an exceptional status among the entirety of the archive's collection. Over time, the Country Council's stance might have softened, as in 1773, the *Landammann*, the highest officeholder of the state, was allowed to take home council minutes from 1722, but not without the admonition of "treating them faithfully and ... making no changes in them."<sup>30</sup> That such loan needed the approval of the Country Council, still very cautious about 51-year-old council minutes, which manipulation it feared, is further proof of the importance of council minutes as key elements of the state's political decision-making.

The city-states, by comparison, seem to have been less strict. Whereas the lending catalogues from Zurich feature borrowed minutes regularly, in Lucerne, it seems they rarely left the archive, even though in principle they were available for a loan.<sup>31</sup> There is one revealing case, when minutes left the archive in Lucerne without official authorization. The disappearance of council minutes from 1623–24, which apparently disappeared during the night, was on the 3 February 1762 agenda. Although the states usually had no illusion of being able to keep all information in their archives secret, the disappearance of the documents was a different story.<sup>32</sup> The council members ordered the immediate search of the houses of every chancery clerk, followed by placing them under the house arrest if the minutes would not be found.<sup>33</sup> It was only after this drastic yet unsuccessful measure that the council ordered several archive employees to thoroughly search the archive to see if the minutes had been misplaced.<sup>34</sup> As the sources are silent on the resolution of the issue, the measure it seems to have proven successful. The example serves not only as proof of the importance of council minutes, but also testifies to the fact that the age of the documents did not diminish their relevance.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 5 October 1754. StAOW, 02. RP.0025, p. 155. The original quote: "dem hr. Bauherr und Hauptm: von Flüe ist bewilliget die alte im Archiv ligende Schriften aussert dene prothocollen Stukh weis nach haus und notata daraus zumache..."

<sup>30</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 15 October 1773. StAOW, 02. RP.0028, p. 189. The original quote: "Hr Landtaman Landfendrich Nicodemus von flüe wird bewilliget die Raths Prothocl. de 1722 und hernach nach haus zu nemmen, unter dem anerbieten, das Er darmit treulich Umgehe Und hierin nicht verändern Wolle."

<sup>31</sup> Due to the lack of a lending catalogue or registers for the council minutes, it is impossible to make any evidence-based statements on Appenzell Ausserrhoden. There seems to be no ground for comparing Zurich to Lucerne, as the return of the borrowed documents apparently was successful.

<sup>32</sup> For a study of this particular topic in Lucerne in the 1750s, see Haugner, J. Unbefugte im Kanzleiarchiv: Staatliche Informationskontrolle und ihre Lecks im Luzern des 18. Jahrhunderts. *Jahrbuch der Historischen Gesellschaft Luzern*, 2024, Vol. 42, p. 3–12.

<sup>33</sup> Council Minutes, Lucerne, 3 February 1762. StALU, RP109, p. 284f.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 285.

<sup>35</sup> The description of the minutes is also revealing. They are referred to as "state and council minutes from the years 1623–1624, in which the case of a hospital master Utenberg is included." See *ibidem*, p. 284. This not only shows that there must have been an inventory about the content of the minutes, but also what specific information was used in the inventory to describe the contents of minutes. The case of Utenberg, who was accused of negligent, perhaps was inserted in the register to serve as a precedent in case of similar cases in the future.

#### 4. Archives and Their Access from the Outside

So far, the article has focused on the direct use of archival collections by the authorities who owned them; however, the states could also loosen their monopoly on the access to documents to indirectly shape collective memory. This was usually the case when the chroniclers were given access to archival documents.<sup>36</sup> Such cases can be observed in all four cantons under consideration. The first important similarity uniting all four cantons is related to sources. In every republic, almost all traces of use by the chroniclers can be found in the council minutes. The preserved decisions on the chroniclers' requests show that it was the councils and not individuals who decided whether certain documents should be given to a supplicant.

The city and country clerks usually held the power of decision-making in cases where somebody was part of the authority or requested documents based on the official order.<sup>37</sup> However, there were also exceptions, as the case in Obwalden shows, where even the highest officeholders sometimes had to ask the council for permission.<sup>38</sup> In the case of outsiders, the councils always made the decisions. Although it is not surprising, it raises the question, what arguments convinced the councils to grant access to documents and in what forms the access was granted.

While the attempts of several chroniclers can be suitable case studies, the case of the deacon of Frauenfeld, Johann Kaspar Lang, who appealed to the Country Council of Obwalden, is particularly interesting. As his letter has not been preserved, one first reads about Lang's supplication in the minutes of the Country Council's meeting that took place on Saturday, 5 June 1683.<sup>39</sup> The deacon informed the Council that he plans to write an anti-Protestant treatise and he hopes to be given access to the copies of relevant documents from the archive in Sarnen. Shared confession was generally almost always a precondition and the prospect of supporting the Catholic cause affected the council in a favorable way. However, although anti-Protestant propaganda was desirable but not a rarity, and since Lang did not request specific documents, the council ordered the bailiff and the country clerk to search for suitable documents that could be sent to Lang.<sup>40</sup>

As the case was not urgent, no deadline was set and apparently, the whole matter was forgotten. It took over a year for the issue to reappear in the council minutes, as the next entry concerning Lang dated Friday, 23 June 1684 demonstrates.<sup>41</sup> Even though no new letter by Lang is mentioned, one can guess that he had written again, as the topic resurfaced with a completely new perception by the council members. This time the entry is shorter, but more concrete:

<sup>36</sup> Most supplications to access the archival documents that came outside the aristocracy and which were usually discussed by the councils were written by chroniclers. However, if one did not want to go the official way or had no hope of succeeding, there were other, usually illegal ways to gain access. More relevant case studies can be found in Haugner, J. *Unbefugte im Kanzleiarchiv: Staatliche Informationskontrolle und ihre Lecks im Luzern des 18. Jahrhunderts*, p. 3–12. See also, Friedrich, M. *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge* / Translated by J. N. Dillon. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.3998/mpub.9394529>.

<sup>37</sup> This is true for almost the entire second half of the early modern period. However, one should remember that at the end of the eighteenth century, first important steps were taken towards general usability of archives. Zurich, where the regulations for the registrar from 1794 specified that he was allowed to demand a fee, in case a supplicant would request information or copies from the archive simply for the sake of their own interests or advantages, serves as a good example. See Weiss, R. "Die Registratur der Archiven"—zur Entwicklung des Zürcher Archivwesens im 18. Jahrhundert, p. 465.

<sup>38</sup> Another noteworthy example of exceptions is found in Lucerne. In 1727, the Small Council released new regulations concerning the documents from the "inner chancery," the more secret part of the archive. It stated that no one should be given documents without knowledge of a town clerk, who was further ordered to only give them in case he was one hundred percent sure that they were given into safe hands and did not contain sensible information. Otherwise, he was specifically ordered to refer a supplicant to the Small Council for a final decision. This indicates the tension between individual and collective responsibility for secrecy in early modern archives. See State Minutes, Lucerne, 8 August 1727. StALU, RS1, p. 265.

<sup>39</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 5 June 1683. StAOW, 02. RP.0019, p. 82.

<sup>40</sup> The minutes do not make it clear whether the documents needed the approval of the council before being sent to Frauenfeld.

<sup>41</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 23 June 1684. StAOW, 02.RP.0019, p. 142.

*Next Thursday, the foremost men shall come together to reflect what glorious and memorable events from our country are deemed necessary to be (... included) in the planned project of Deacon Lang from Frauenfeld.*<sup>42</sup>

The “foremost men” are in all likelihood so-called *Ringherren*, composed of the most important offices of the state, which formed an unofficial Small Council. Now, it was their task to come together and make a concrete decision about the documents. Drawing from the sources, only one change compared to the previous situation can be identified, i.e., the perception of the prospects offered by Lang’s project. If previously the talk focused on anti-Protestant propaganda, the council members now saw a chance to communicate something “glorious and memorable” to the world, in other words, to influence the public perception for the better. Apparently, this was a much bigger motivation to act as the most important officeholders were assigned the task right away, with concrete and nearby date being set.

It is possible that the change of mind was caused by a draft version, which Lang might have sent to Obwalden. The final entry in the council minutes dated 2 August mentions that Lang will receive his “slightly corrected and supplemented project together with a complimentary letter.”<sup>43</sup> Most likely, it must have been a draft, as it would be difficult to imagine that he sent his whole manuscript. However, perhaps the text was not too short, as the “slightly corrected” indicates censorship usually used by the states. No matter what Lang sent, it apparently changed the perception of the council members. Their actions reveal that it was highly attractive for the aristocracy to share copies of documents if this led to influencing collective memory. This must have been especially true for a smaller state like Obwalden, which had limited resources and could not afford a chronicler of the state.<sup>44</sup>

However, in the city-states, which had the needed resources, there were almost no cases of the chroniclers’ requests being rejected. This strongly indicates that it was common knowledge among the chroniclers what they had to offer to win the favor of the state. As the case of Deacon Lang shows, submission to censorship and, therefore, the delivery of state’s propagandistic desires were a strong argument. Finding the right balance could not only open the doors to the archive but also reduce the amount of post-censorship work and lead to rewards and future work for the authorities.

Concerning the shared confession in Lang’s case, it is notable that it was helpful but not mandatory. The most famous example is Aegidius Tschudi, who cited documents from several Protestant archives. However, Tschudi used the archives in the middle of the sixteenth century, a time when the control of the archive was less regulated and personal connections might have mattered even more. In addition, he was widely acclaimed as a respectable intellectual and historian. Christian Sieber has pointed an important fact about him, which can be considered yet another strong argument why he was allowed to access the archive. Tschudi himself was a patrician and felt a lifelong commitment to his social class<sup>45</sup>; therefore, his works would have strengthened the predominant social structure, which, in turn, was highly desirable to the members of elite across the confessions. While the case of Deacon Lang receiving copies of

<sup>42</sup> The original quote: “Nechstkünftig donstag sollen sich die Vordersten Herren zu sammenfüegen Umb nachzutrachten, was ruhem- oder denkh würdiges etwan Von Unserem Landt Ob dem Wald in des Hrn. Decan Langen zu Frauenfeld Vorhabendes Werkh Zu (... inkludieren) nothwendig erachtet werden möchte.”

<sup>43</sup> Minutes of the Country Council, Sarnen, 2 August 1684. StAOW, 02.RP.0019, p. 149.

<sup>44</sup> It was not common for a Swiss republic to have a more or less official chronicler working for the state. Valerius Anshelm of Bern, who was employed by the state and had a lot of freedom when using the archive, serves as a good example. See Schmid, R. *Geschichte im Dienst der Stadt: Amtliche Historie und Politik im Spätmittelalter*, p. 239f. Another notable example from the second half of the early modern period is Johann Jakob Bodmer of Zurich, who in 1731, was ordered to continue a chronicle. See Council Decision, Zurich, 21 June 1731. StAZH, A67, No. 36. However, it must be noted that Bodmer was not officially employed by the state for this task and his work was highly criticized by the authorities, because he pledged to a return of old moral values, which he claimed to have found in the archival material. See Weiß, L. *Die politische Erziehung im alten Zürich*. Zürich: Verlag der Neue Zürcher Zeitung, 1940, p. 138.

<sup>45</sup> See Tschudi, A. *Chronicon Helveticum. Teil 1 / verzeichnis der dokumente, verzeichnis der lieder*; bearb. von C. Sieber. Basel: Kommissionsverlag Krebs, 2001, p. 22.

documents without ever setting a foot in the archive in Sarnen was the usual procedure, Tschudi not only metaphorically saw the doors being open for him. Even though he was also dependent on receiving copies so he did not have to travel all the time, Tschudi was granted access to the archives themselves. Especially in Obwalden, his visit was well documented. Tschudi's praise for the diversity of documents found in Sarnen is a testament to his extensive use of documents there.<sup>46</sup> However, the freedom he was granted to use early modern archives in the Swiss republics is unprecedented.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, the high social status and the anticipated strengthening of the social structure can be identified as helpful factors when trying to achieve access to archival documents.

### Conclusions

As I began my analysis by looking at the paintings, which one could see upon entering the chancery in Lucerne, I invite to look at the third painting (see [Figure 3](#)), which was intended to be seen when exiting the room.



**Figure 3.** Deucalion and Pyrrha creating new humans. Photo by Jan Haugner.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 95f.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, p. 10.

While the meaning of the picture is not as obvious as it was in the previous paintings, the text below summarizes one of the main functions of the archives in the Old Swiss Confederacy:

*Artibus ut possim populos reparare paternis  
Ista patrum populis domonumenta meis*<sup>48</sup>

The translation of the two lines is as follows: “So that I can restore the people through patriotic science / arts, I give these monuments of the ancestors to my peoples.”

The desire to restore the people or, most likely, the republic through the wisdom of ancestors echoes the main thesis of the article. The Swiss republicanism of the late early modern period led to massive advancement of archives as the new doctrine saw them as the surfaces for projections of the desired ideal state, which were supposed to influence the policy of the state. In other words, the archives were not intended to be memory institutions of the real state; instead, they had to contain memories that were related to the desired ideal state. As the quote from Aebbtlin and references by the councils have shown, this ideal was to be found in the past. Such return to former times, propagated using the Roman iconography in the town halls of Lucerne and Zurich, was a typical feature of republicanism. However, it is important to understand what this ideal state was based on. Niccolò Machiavelli’s words help to understand it:

*And it is mere clear than the light, that these bodies not being renewed, last not; and the way to renew them is (as is said) to reduce them to their first beginnings; for all beginnings of Sects, Commonwealths and Kingdoms, must needs contain some goodness in them, by means whereof they recover their first reputation and increase: for in process of time that goodness grows corrupt, and unless something happen, that reduces it to the just mark, that body must needs be destroyed.*<sup>49</sup>

Aristocracy is the “rule of the best.” Its essence, or “beginnings” to use Machiavellian terminology, is the fundamental supremacy of a small group of people, who hold the most power in the state, because they are best suited to do so. The archive as a force that could always be activated to correct a drifting away republic back to a state that is based on legitimate decisions of the best was desirable. It is this context, in which we must understand “the soul of the state.”

As the article shows, the council minutes, a testament of the decision-making power of the patriciate, were a central and carefully treated referencing point for policymaking, used to solidify the predominant social structure. However, the archive was not a memory institution of the real state, but rather a useful tool for those who controlled it. As the reaction to the *Pfyffer-Amlehn-Handel* in Lucerne shows, when the evidence of separation and vulnerability of the patriciate was destroyed, memory conserved in the archive needed to serve this goal. Consequently, only the chroniclers who proofed to be suitable in delivering a positive image of the predominant state could hope for support in their endeavors.

The example of Obwalden indicates that the support was to be granted by the councils, even though the *Landsgemeinde* was officially more powerful in rural cantons. However, they were hardly ever interested in the archives, which were under the control of the councils, thus giving testimony of who held the most power in the state. As the archive reflected the ideal state desired by those who controlled it, it is not surprising that, when the secret War Council was formed in 1712 in Appenzell

<sup>48</sup> It seems to be a reference to Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. See Ovid. *Metamorphoses, Volume I: Books 1-8* / Translated by F. J. Miller. Revised by G. P. Goold. Loeb Classical Library 42. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916, Book 1, v. 363–364, <https://doi.org/10.4159/DLCL.ovid-metamorphoses.1916>.

<sup>49</sup> Machiavelli, N. *Machiavel’s [sic] Discourses Upon the First Decade of T. Livius* / Translated out of the Italian. To which is added his Prince. With some marginal animadversions noting and taxing his errors. By E. D. London: printed for G. Bedell, and T. Collins, and are to be sold at their shop at the Middle-Temple Gate in Fleetstreet, 1663, p. 333f.

Ausserrhoden, the archive contained documents that helped to overcome the power of the *Lands-gemeinde*.<sup>50</sup> After all, the councils were also very interested in minutes, their accessibility and safety, although the smaller administrative apparatus prevented to use them as effective as they were used in the city republics.

Finally, the eighteenth century was also a time of increasing challenges to the state's *arcanum*, and occasionally to aristocracy itself. The Swiss republicanism of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries attached great importance to archives as means of representation, decision-making and legitimation. Especially in Zurich and Lucerne, the new political doctrine went hand in hand with concrete archival reformations. It is highly desirable that the future research will not only deepen our understanding about this topic, but also research the challenges, which the aristocratic republicanism and its secret archives faced in the course of the eighteenth century.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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<sup>50</sup> In this context, the *Landhandel* must not be forgotten. It is true that by cancelling the contract with St. Gallen and removing it from the archive, the position of the aristocracy as such might have been slightly weakened. However, when returning to the “old rights,” the archival documents do not seem to have played a role as a reference. Further, it must be considered that the *Lands-gemeinde* was heavily influenced by the victorious aristocratic party of *die Harten*, who used their knowledge to get rid of competitors and rise to the highest offices. It would be of interest to further investigate how the *Landhandel* was documented in the archival sources to see whether there were attempts to avoid an image of a weakened and divided aristocracy (or to stylize the overcome policy as a *tyrannis*, which needed—as stated in Machiavelli’s quote—to be erased). Certainly, the situation was not treated as the *Pfyffer-Amlehm-Handel* in Lucerne, as the archive in Herisau still holds documents of the power struggle.

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