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Genève, Librairie Droz, 1998, 432 p.

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Stéphane Capot, *Justice et religion en Languedoc au temps de l'Édit de Nantes. La chambre de l'Édit de Castres (1579-1679)*, Genève, Librairie Droz, 1998, 432 p.

Stéphane Capot has produced a political and social history of one of the early modern French courts charged with those trials in which Protestants were involved. Founded during the time when France was attempting a sort of confessional co-existence, the courts were suppressed (by being reintegrated into the *Parlements*) when the country's politics took a turn towards an intransigent form of Catholicism. The court of Castres grew out of a chamber of the *Parlement de Toulouse*, a court of appeal that was competent for the area of this high court, covering the southwestern sixth part of France, inhabited by about 500.000 Protestants, corresponding to 10 percent of the population. The *chambre de l'Édit de Castres* is the only court of its type from which almost complete records of the decisions survive and have recently been inventoried; unfortunately no trial papers are left. On first sight, the character of the records might seem to limit the court's interest for the criminal historian, who asks for more than just *arrêts*, one fifth of which concern criminal trials.

Nevertheless, the monograph makes an important contribution to our knowledge of the possibilities and limits of a specially founded court under the specific restrictions of its political mission to pacify tensions within a bi-denominational territory. Capot first presents this highly political history of the institution and its links to general politics during the French experience of denominational coexistence. In the second part of his book, Capot describes the institution itself: half of its magistrates were Protestants with a long-term engagement, the other half were Catholics deputed for one year from the *Parlement de Toulouse* together with the representatives of the king, who also had a long-term engagement and were Catholics, too. Capot describes the places of work, the other court personnel and the competences, consisting mainly in decisions about the competence of lower courts to judge Protestants and in matters of appeal. The third part of the book is a very good methodological description of the day-to-day activities of the court and the structure of its workload, which fluctuates partly in accordance with the political situation: in the 1660s in particular, the number of cases rose because new laws severely limiting the public presence of Protestants created a great many new frictions and infractions of these laws. This could be considered as an interesting example of the criminalizing effects of legislation. During the entire exercise, 99 percent of the decisions were taken in common by the magistrates of the different confessions. Less than one percent were the politically especially interesting cases of « partition », which meant

that the magistrates of the two denominations could not arrive at a common decision and stated their dissent. In such a situation, the case was passed to another *chambre de l'Édit*, and later in the seventeenth century increasingly to the privy council, which thereby exercised an ever-more direct influence on denominational politics. A study of political rhetoric concludes this part of the study.

Part four is a social study of those Protestant judges and the Catholic representatives of the Crown that had a longer engagement in Castres. The fine elite prosopography, based primarily on notarial records, reveals a certain but not exclusive endogamy – thereby opening the way for recruitment of some new judges. The strong internal social ties of the judicial milieu together with the tendency of certain families to create dynasties of judges holding offices over three generations becomes evident. Marriage relations with other social strata are also considered. A study of fortunes allows the author to situate the members of this court within the society of Castres and in relation to the members of the *Parlement de Toulouse*, where economic chances opportunities and choice of marriage partners were wider. A certain number of internal cleavages in this semi-open milieu are traced. The judges of Castres were intellectually active as authors of texts on laws or jurisdiction and as members of a local academy that had ties with the finest Parisian salons of the time. The judicial milieu of Castres was ready to be completely integrated, but the political development was adverse. It also must be noted that the magistrates of Castres never developed a strong identity as a corporation because of the denominational divide within the court, which was exacerbated on several occasions when the court was obliged to move. The court was considered as temporary by the Crown and its Catholic members. In the end, the Protestant judges were forced to abjure or to quit the country and sell their office for a very low fee.

Stéphane Capot's book enriches our knowledge of the French legal system, and especially the effects of politics on the administration of law. It can contribute to a more precise understanding of the preconditions of tolerance and is as such very useful reading for anyone interested in the judicial elements of a resolution of actual inter-ethnic conflicts in the Balkans. Its strong points are the well-done political and social history of an institution – complemented by a number of *pièces justificatives* and a fine register (both appreciable traditional exercises of the *École des Chartes*). In my opinion it would not have been «criminal» to compare the results with R.M. Andrews' study of the *Parlement de Paris* (1994) or Gresset's older study of the *Parlement de Besançon*, even considering that both concern the eighteenth century. With his methodologically convincing *tour d'horizon*, Capot has laid the foundations for further research into the *arrêts* concerning the court's criminal trials, which might be an attractive object for quantitative discourse analysis or for a regional study on interdenominational crime.

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Frédéric Chauvaud (dir.), *Le sanglot judiciaire. La désacralisation de la justice (VIII^e-XX^e siècles)*, Crest, éd. Créaphis, 1999, 235 p. (Collection «Rencontres à Royaumont», 12). ISBN 2-907 150-96-0

Titre ambitieux, livre admirablement illustré, table des matières prometteuse. Dans une première partie sont indiqués « les chemins de la désacralisation » du VIII^e