Mucchielli (Laurent), Spierenburg (Pieter), *Histoire de l'homicide en Europe. De la fin du Moyen Âge à nos jours*

Paris, La Découverte, 2009, 334 p., ISBN 9 782707 157140.

Manuel Eisner

Electronic version

URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/chs/1379>
DOI: 10.4000/chs.1379
ISSN: 1663-4837

Publisher

Librairie Droz

Printed version

Date of publication: 1 December 2012
Number of pages: 121-123
ISBN: 978-2-600-01642-1
ISSN: 1422-0857

Electronic reference

Manuel Eisner, « Mucchielli (Laurent), Spierenburg (Pieter), *Histoire de l'homicide en Europe. De la fin du Moyen Âge à nos jours* », *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies* [Online], Vol. 16, n°2 | 2012, Online since 13 March 2013, connection on 22 September 2020. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/chs/1379> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/chs.1379>

This text was automatically generated on 22 September 2020.

© Droz

Mucchielli (Laurent), Spierenburg (Pieter), *Histoire de l'homicide en Europe. De la fin du Moyen Âge à nos jours*

Paris, La Découverte, 2009, 334 p., ISBN 9 782707 157140.

Manuel Eisner

REFERENCES

Mucchielli (Laurent), Spierenburg (Pieter), *Histoire de l'homicide en Europe. De la fin du Moyen Âge à nos jours*, Paris, La Découverte, 2009, 334 p., ISBN 9 782707 157140.

- 1 This volume with eleven contributions of leading scholars in their fields is a most welcome and important contribution to the growing field of historical violence research. It is based on a seminar held at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam in 2007 and provides an excellent overview of innovative research on the history of homicide across Europe. The eleven contributions to the volume can be subdivided into three parts. The first part consists of three papers that cover the period from the 13th to 19th centuries. The second part comprises five papers on homicide in the 19th and 20th centuries. The third part, finally, groups together articles that are particularly concerned with the “longue durée”.
- 2 The first part comprises three contributions by leading experts on crime and violence in pre-modern Europe, namely Tomas A. Mantecon, Pieter Spierenburg, and François Ploux. The contribution by Mantecon is remarkable in that comparatively little research has yet been published on the history of homicide in Spain, despite rich archival material. The contribution by Mantecon is an important step towards closing this gap as he presents new data on the development of homicide in Madrid, Segovia, Seville and Cantabria between 1580 and the early 19th century. He also presents the first

thoughtful and nuanced analysis of the Spanish case in relation to the idea of a European civilizing process. Importantly, the Spanish data consistently indicate a strong decline in homicide rates during the 17th century. This suggests that the simplistic notion that Mediterranean countries lagged behind the North-West of Europe in respect of the control of violence may be in need of revision. Spierenburg asks whether the self-image of the Dutch as being a society based on tolerance, compromise and cooperation rather than violence is effectively true. Re-examining the historical evidence – much of which is a result of his own impressive work – he finds that the Dutch trajectory of homicide usually reflected broader European trends. Interestingly, he also identifies important deviations in the behaviour of the elites and the broader population, in particular with respect to attitudes towards duelling. Ploux presents a critical examination of the French historiography on homicide and more generally on violence between the 16th and 19th centuries. Similarly to other contributions, he shows that France seems to reflect broader trends with European societies in general, but at the same time experienced highly specific developments. These include, for example, the surprising trend, documented in the *Compte Général*, of slightly increasing levels of homicide in the late 19th century.

- 3 Laurent Mucchielli discusses the evolution of homicide in France between 1970 and 2007. His comprehensive review of the evidence shows important links to economic and social dynamics in France. For example, it is remarkable that the peak in homicides in 1992 was exclusively a result of killings linked to robberies. Also, I was fascinated by the maps on the regional distribution of homicide across the départements, but would have liked some discussion of the similarities and differences to the famous maps produced by Guéry in the 1830s.
- 4 Efi Avdela reviews the evidence on violence and homicide in Greece in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite important gaps in the literature she outlines how change in the manifestations and levels of homicide – e.g. the bandits in the 19th century – were related to the political history of Greece. In a similar way, Raffaella Sette shows how the massive fluctuations in levels of homicide in post-war Italy can only be understood if one takes the wider political and social context into account. In the case of Italy this means that one needs to understand the changing influence of organised crime and shifts in the legitimacy of the Italian state.
- 5 Christoph Birkel presents findings from a large comparative study on the evolution of criminal violence in Germany, Great Britain, and Sweden between 1950 and 2000. Importantly, he shows that the three countries had many trends in common, meaning that explanations of violence are likely to be found in transnational dynamics. Birkel suggests, that the increase in violence results from an increasingly disintegrating individualism in the second half of the 20th century.
- 6 The contributions to the third part of the volume have been written by outstanding experts on the topic in England, Sweden and Belgium. The contributions by James Sharpe and Dag Lindström provide valuable overviews of the empirical research in England and Scandinavia, respectively, and the theoretical debates regarding the interpretation of the empirical findings. An important contribution by Xavier Rousseaux and his collaborators discusses new evidence on homicide and its control in Europe's urban societies between 1300 and 1800. In particular, the paper provides an extremely informative overview of doctoral studies conducted under his direction which would otherwise be difficult to access. Amazingly, this work now provides a

comprehensive analysis of homicide in four cities of the Brabant and Flanders regions between about 1300 and 1800. They suggest, amongst others, a complex long-term change in the levels and manifestations of homicide, probably associated with shifting techniques of social control by the cities and the state authorities.

- 7 All in all, the book will be an important resource for historians of crime and criminologists interested in the history of violence.

AUTHORS

MANUEL EISNER

University of Cambridge
mpe23@cam.ac.uk