

BOOK/PUBLICATION NOTICES

J.B. Given: *Society and Homicide in Thirteenth-Century England*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California 1977, \$ 12.50

J.S. Cockburn, Ed.: *Crime in England 1550-1800*. London: Methuen and Co., 1977, £ 6.95 (Paper)

D. Hay, P. Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson: *Albion's Fatal Tree. Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*. London: Allen Lane 1975, £ 7.50 (Cloth), Harmondsworth: Peregrines 1977, £ 3.25 (Paper)

E.P. Thompson: *Whigs and Hunters. The Origin of the Black Act*. London: Allen Lane 1975, £ 6.50 (Cloth), Harmondsworth: Peregrines 1977, £ 3.25 (Paper)

There has been a greatly increased interest into historical criminology within recent years, especially so among British and, partially, among American historians. The interest hereby ranges from qualitative to quantitative studies, from studies focusing on specific events or specific points in time to studies on broader periods in history. The data available for such kind of studies are often numerous and extensive in character. The period covered might be a rather early one in history: high quality data might exist in some countries even for the middle ages.

Court records containing information on 2434 victims and 3492 accused killers in London, Bristol and five English counties, are used by J.B. Given to analyze patterns of homicide in 13th century England. Drawing on these sources the author performs a quantitative analysis of the social characteristics of the killers, their victims and the sentences of the court. Special attention is given to the web of social relationship into which both the victim and his killer is embedded. Homicide turns out to be a collective act reflecting very much the social organization of society at that time.

Eleven studies of crime and the administration of law in England in the period between 1550 and 1800 make up the reader edited by J.S. Cockburn. The topics of the articles are diverse, focusing on topics like crime trends and economic conditions in the 16th and 17th century to studies on witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart Essex or patterns of sentencing in courts. The reader represents a rather representative collection of ongoing research and present interests in the field of historical criminology. It shows the diversity of data available and some of the problems that are connected with their study.

Five studies on specific types of crimes in 18th century England are contained in the volume edited by D. Hay, P. Linebaugh and E.P. Thompson. They refer to the Tyborn riot against the surgeons, sussex smugglers, wrecking and costal plunder, poaching and game laws and anonymous threatening letters. The studies usually represent detailed descriptive case studies with a few attempts to come to more general conclusions. Douglas Hay's introductory article on "Property, Authority and the Criminal Law" constitutes an outstanding deviation from this pattern by providing a more general and theoretically moreelaborated overview over the official response to crime and its social determinants.

An attempt to find out, how the notorious "Black Act" came about in 18th century England, is made by E.P. Thompson. The "Black Act", passed in 1723, introduced the death penalty for many new offences, ranging from dear steeling at night and in disguise to cutting down the heads of fish ponds, cutting down young trees and writing threatening letters. The author, in a first part, tries to examine the contingencies, the particular "emergency" which called forth a measure in the interest of Government's own supports. In a second part he describes the ideology, interests and sensibilities of those who responded to these contingencies. The book represents one of the few - whatever convincing - attempts to analyse the social determinants of law making in a historical perspective.

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