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Emmanuel Droit and Pierre Karila-Cohen, eds., *Qu'est-ce que l'autorité? France-Allemagne(s), XIX^e-XX^e siècles*. Paris: Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2016. viii + 249 pp. Notes and bibliographies. 20 € (pb). ISBN 978-2-7351-2038-3.

Review by Sean Kennedy, University of New Brunswick.

In 2008, Pierre Karila-Cohen observed that while historians often study authority in specific contexts, they have not contributed as extensively to the scholarly conversation on concepts of authority as one might expect. Though historical studies have influenced work in other fields, theories of authority have often been rooted in disciplines such as political science, philosophy, sociology, and social psychology.[1] In the present volume, which has its roots in a research seminar held at the Université de Rennes 2 from 2009 until 2011, the contributors interrogate the evolution of theories of authority and, through a series of case studies, illustrate the promise of an “histoire sociale de la relation d'autorité” (p. 5). The editors also envision the book as highlighting the potential of *histoire croisée*, “crossed” or “intercrossing” history. *Histoire croisée*, broadly defined, seeks to go beyond standard comparative analysis to focus “on empirical intercrossings consubstantial with the object of study, as well as on the operations by which researchers themselves cross scales, categories, and viewpoints.”[2] Some of the contributions to this challenging collection adhere to this approach more than others, but as a whole *Qu'est-ce que l'autorité?* offers a thought-provoking reconnaissance of its subject.

The first section further grounds the reader in theory by exploring the contributions of Max Weber, Michel Foucault, and Pierre Bourdieu. Catherine Colliot-Thélène traces the evolution of Weber's concept of “domination,” tackling previous interpretations of his work and the challenges of translation in the process. Her careful reconstruction of the chronology of Weber's writings leads to some interesting conclusions, among them that “c'est assez tardivement que la notion de légitimité a acquis dans l'appareil conceptuel wébérien l'importance que l'on sait” (p. 36). In his chapter on Foucault's conception of power, Michel Senellart contends that there are points of contact, despite profound differences in outlook, between Foucault and Weber. Foucault's development of the problematic of governmentality, he explains, led him to more fully consider processes of institutionalization, and to alter his approach to understanding the acceptance of domination. These shifts converge, Senellart concludes, with a reading of Weber that underscores how consent is achieved through a variety of strategies. The sociology of Pierre Bourdieu is also highly relevant, as François Buton explains in the chapter rounding out the first section. He notes that while the concept of “domination” is explicitly addressed in only some of Bourdieu's works, relationships of domination are central to his key concepts of symbolic violence, habitus, and field.

Case studies of everyday authority constitute the second section of the book. Henri Courrière's examination of the shifting nature of political power in the Alpes-Maritimes department during the early Third Republic does not explicitly adopt a *histoire croisée* approach, but the insights he has to offer are valuable. His account, which relies upon careful scrutiny of the local press and other sources, outlines how, following the establishment of the Third Republic in 1871, political success was first

attained through “clientélisme politique” (p. 161), including patronage and strong ties with local elected officials. By the mid-1880s this system came under pressure, in part from an electorate that had grown better-acquainted with the principles of the system, and because deputies exercised a more circumscribed influence. However, Courrière rejects the notion that the cultivation of political clienteles should simply be regarded as a backward practice, destined to die out; it can be used in various contexts, and different forms of political practice do not necessarily follow one another in rigid chronological sequence.

Quentin Deluermoz’s exploration of police authority in Paris and Berlin from 1848 to 1914 is the most systematically comparative chapter in the book, and provides a valuable demonstration of the challenges and potential rewards of *histoire croisée*. Synthesizing previous research, he outlines how the evolution of police forces in each city was shaped by selective appropriations of the British model filtered through particular political contexts, such as the aftermath of the Revolution of 1848 in Prussia and Haussmann’s restructuring of Paris during the Second Empire. Current research on the characteristics of the Paris and Berlin police forces at the turn of the 20th century confounds expectations of sharp national distinctions or linear processes of evolution, Deluermoz observes. But he goes on to suggest that scholars still highlight a contrast between a Parisian police force that had at least partly adopted more subtle methods, while its Berlin counterpart remained more heavily engaged in struggles for control of the streets. Such an interpretation, he contends, could be further nuanced. The creative reworking of established theories—for instance, adopting the concept of “charisme du fonctionnaire” (p. 103) to better grasp sources of state legitimacy, and exploring more deeply the materiality of authority as embodied in perceptions of uniforms—could provide a more rounded understanding of police power. “C’est la une histoire difficile, riche tant s’y mêlent d’aspects souvent disjoints, tant jouent de dimensions qui peuvent être questionnées Mais elle offre ce faisant une prise pour penser à nouveaux frais le type de rationalité qui s’impose alors en Europe, une rationalité dont l’armature conceptuelle forgée alors gêne aujourd’hui l’intelligence” (p. 106).

The remaining two chapters in this section explore quotidian authority in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the perspectives of teachers and industrial supervisors (*contremaîtres*) respectively. Drawing upon the theories of Hannah Arendt and the Russian-French philosopher Alexandre Kojève, Emmanuel Droit argues that many East German teachers avoided deploying the political-ideological authority invested in them by the state, instead seeking to consolidate their status as professionals. In the chaos of the early postwar years, better conditions and attaining further credentials were of primary concern to thousands of newly recruited and often under-qualified teachers, thrown into turbulent classrooms. Most of these teachers, it seems, did not appreciate the growing presence of officials from the Free German Youth (FDJ) organization and often sought to avoid political disputes for the sake of keeping classroom peace. FDJ officials strongly denounced the apparent passivity of many teachers during the anti-regime uprising of July 1953, but a later cohort of teachers remained focused on sustaining professional authority, as their cautious classroom behavior in the aftermath of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, and the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, indicates. A trend towards cautious conformity is also evident in the experiences of East German industrial supervisors, studied by Renate Hürtgen. As the intermediaries between managers and workers they occupied a crucial but tension-ridden position, particularly within the context of a “workers’ state.” While noting variations according to gender, age, and industrial sector, Hürtgen concludes that SED policies encouraged workers to see supervisors as akin to party bureaucrats rather than technical experts. While some supervisors were defiant, the general trend was towards conformity and enjoyment of the material benefits associated with their position. In the long term, the politicization and bureaucratization of their position undermined their influence over workers. “Comme toujours et en tous lieux, les structures ont en RDA créé exactement le type d’acteurs dont elles avaient besoin pour assurer leur reproduction” (p. 158).

The final section of the book focuses in on challenges to authority, with the contributors advocating the utility of various conceptual frameworks. Thomas Lindenberger promotes the concept of *Eigen-Sinn*, a term whose meaning has long been contested: in the Grimms' 1859 dictionary it is associated with being difficult or obstinate, while for Goethe it denoted a more admirable kind of persistence. In the late 20th century it was adopted by proponents of *Alltagsgeschichte* in the Federal Republic of Germany, at first in studies of working-class responses to industrialization. However, as historians turned their attention to the vexed question of working-class responses to Nazi rule *Eigen-Sinn* came to denote, in contrast to conscious opposition, the "pertes par friction" (p. 193) that occur as individuals accommodate themselves to a system while seeking to protect their interests. More recently employed within the context of studying everyday life in the GDR, *Eigen-Sinn* has come to be associated with a "sense of self" (*quant-à-soi*) that encompasses a wide variety of attitudes and comportments derived from relations of power. With a careful appreciation of particular contexts and understanding of its malleability, *Eigen-Sinn*, Lindenberger concludes, could be employed to powerful effect in studying a wide range of social relations and political systems.

Paul-Yves Cohen also advocates the more conscious use of theoretical frameworks as he evokes pioneers like Durkheim, but also less familiar figures such as interwar experts on managerial leadership from the United States, to make the case for a more fluid conception of authority. He provides a case study of a series of strikes at the Schneider factories located in Le Creusot-Montceau-les-Mines at the turn of the 20th century to illustrate the complexity of power relations in the workplace. While employing the general categories of 'primary' and 'secondary' authorities, in the end he calls upon scholars to "se livrer à une investigation plus périlleuse qui consiste à tenter d'identifier dans tel ou tel site la variété des autorités qui y opèrent, si petites soient-elles, et dont des compromises qu'elle 'signe' avec elles permettant à l'autorité en titre de jouer sans être à chaque instant remise en cause" (pp. 218-219). Michel Christian returns to the East German context in the final chapter to suggest the utility of studying authority through the concepts of *quant-à-soi* and domination. He details the case of "Comrade J," a veteran worker and Socialist Unity Party (SED) member, who aroused the ire of the central party bureaucracy by ignoring protocol when he sent a complaint against a rental increase in his apartment building. While the ruling party's attempts to discipline Comrade J and his persistent refusal to cooperate may seem banal upon first inspection, the amount of effort devoted by the party to dealing with the matter and the justifications provided by Comrade J have much to say about the character and extent of SED power. Totalitarian theory, or an approach that emphasizes rational self-interest, fails to capture key dynamics and motivations. Comrade J did not reject the Communist system, nor were his motivations primarily economic. Rather, his sense of self as a party member and experienced worker from a left-wing background shaped his response to, and shaped in turn, the relationship of domination in which he was situated.

This is a short but dense book. The contributions are clear but the range of concepts introduced, deployed, and critiqued, and the explorations of questions of translation and etymology, mean that careful reading is in order. Those historians who tend to shy away from theory—including the present reviewer—may find *Qu'est-ce que l'autorité?* to be a challenge, but it is certainly a worthwhile one. While the examples from the early Third Republic and East Germany may initially seem disparate, the utility of the individual case studies soon becomes evident. It is difficult to say whether the concepts and theories advanced in this volume will gain the degree of influence that the contributors hope for, but they collectively make a strong case for scholars to be more aware of, and potentially adopt, the approaches discussed.

NOTES

[1] Pierre Karila-Cohen, "Éditorial: l'autorité, objet d'histoire sociale," *Le Mouvement Social* 224 (2008), 3.

[2] Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire croisée* and the Challenges of Reflexivity,” *History and Theory* 45:1 (2006), 30-50; quotation from abstract, 30.

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