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A resource for the History of Justice, Crime and Punishment : The Zoummeroff Collection on Criminocorpus

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The Zoummeroff Collection on Criminocorpus **collectionzoummeroff.org**

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The Zoummeroff Collection on Criminocorpus

collectionzoummeroff.org

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- ¹ The **Zoummeroff Collection**, accessible on Criminocorpus at collectionzoummeroff.org, contains over **6,000 images** including archival records, rare prints, engravings, unpublished manuscripts, letters, posters, laments, and photographs. These documents date from the 16th to the 20th century and are supplemented by **one hundred video interviews** relating to the history of criminal justice¹.

The Zoummeroff Collection is the most important publically-accessible French private collection relating to the history of criminal justice. In 2014, Philippe Zoummeroff gave Criminocorpus the responsibility for its distribution, valorization, interoperability and long-term conservation.

Here, we would like to describe the origins of this recently-digitized collection. By explaining the choices that defined its creation, we can better grasp its wealth, its limits, and several of its possible uses.

Damiens : Relazione della sentenza eseguita (1757)



Collection Philippe Zoummeroff/Bibliothèque Criminocorpus.

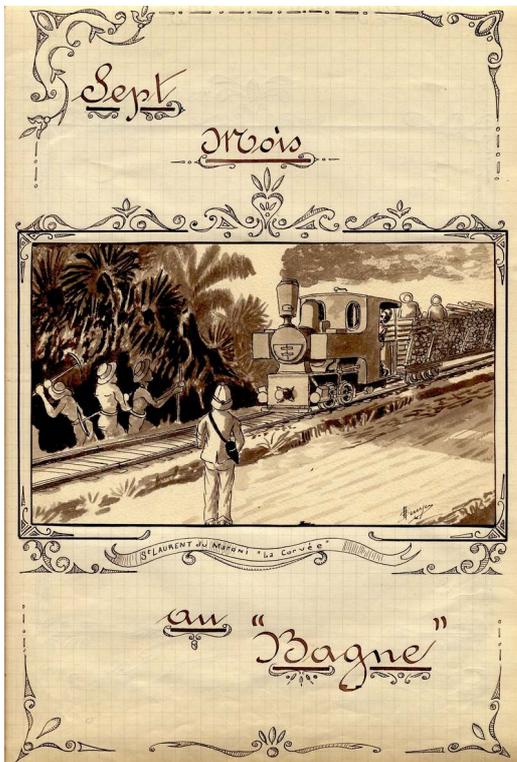
From a private library to a public collection: the story of a unique approach

- 2 A retired manufacturer and former director of the FACOM, Philippe Zoummeroff started collecting works related to criminal justice starting at the end of the 1990s. My first meeting with Philippe Zoummeroff was in May 2001. I was invited by Michelle Perrot to explore his private library that was in the process of being set up, where I experienced its wealth without being able to truly grasp it as a whole. Everything was organized in one room with three-layer shelves and the inventory, created on a local database, was yet to be finished.
- 3 Philippe Zoummeroff was guided by both documentary and political goals. His documentary objective was the acquisition of documents that would constitute a reference library on crime and justice, which would eventually be housed in a (yet to be founded) scientific institute or foundation. His political objective was to promote the adoption of penal laws improving penal conditions and the criminological care of those imprisoned.
- 4 Philippe Zoummeroff was – and remained for a long time – open to the possibility of donating his documents. He searched for a space and appropriate partners for a significant amount of time. In 2001, I thought that the ENAP's relocation at Agen could provide the opportunity to create a history of criminal justice library based on a partnership between the Minister of the Justice (Penal Justice and Social Justice) and the

department of Lot-et-Garonne or the region of Aquitaine. This media library project based on a regional level was never realized.

- 5 The proposition that I made to Philip Zoummeroff in June 2001 included digitizing the parts of his library that would be of potential interest to researchers and a larger public. Such an operation allowed us to distinguish Philippe Zoummeroff's wish to share his documents and the larger, more complex issue of its material future. It wasn't until 2005, when the CNRS and ENAP partnered to help put Criminocorpus online, that this digitalization process began to take form. Endowed with a scientific committee and an editorial board, this online portal was created to simultaneously address the scientific community, those involved in penal justice, and the general public. Unfortunately, the online possibilities for researchers were limited by the technical constraints of that time.
- 6 Having found neither a space nor fitting partners to create a foundation about criminal justice, Philippe Zoummeroff decided to create his own website: collection-privee.org. It had a triple mission: to show the inventory of his private library via an online catalogue, to share the rarest documents of his library by making virtual exhibits themed around important criminal cases, and, later, to show filmed interviews with witnesses and individuals of the criminal justice system in order to raise public awareness of the questions at hand.

Henri-Marie-Pierre Berryer, *Sept mois au bagne* (1931)



Collection Philippe Zoummeroff/Bibliothèque Criminocorpus.

- 7 The two websites thus developed alongside one another, following similar objectives with different editorial strategies. They occasionally cooperated on the digitization of certain documents (manuscrit Berryer, in 2006) and on virtual exhibits (*Histoire des prisons de Paris, de la Bastille à Fresnes* in 2010, *Les « vrais » Tontons flingueurs* in 2014), with all while trying to avoid redundancy. This cooperation became more explicit starting in

2012. As the sale of the library became prioritized over the idea of a donation, Philippe Zoummeroff searched for a partner that would potentially take on and maintain the documents on collection-privee.org which he no longer wished to be in charge of managing.

Quai des Orfèvres. Vue de la Delahaye 135 MS "Coupe des Alpes" ayant servi à la fuite de Pierre Loutrel, Henri Fefeu et Jo Attia



Collection Philippe Zoummeroff/Exposition Les « vrais Tontons flingueurs »

- 8 The management of an original website holding a massive amount of data needs long-term maintenance. Left alone, it would become obsolete quickly, even faster than a book would. It was neither possible nor desirable to keep up two websites that could potentially contain identical information with different features and technologies. The practice of “flattening” or “freezing” collection-privee.org was not considered (nor was it appropriate) because its evolving data that, notably, had to remain compatible with editorial concerns and the web interface. To solve this issue, Criminocorpus’s editorial board proposed to take control the original historical documents included in the 13 exhibits of collection-privee.org, and then to additionally take control of the filmed interviews, as testimony of the history of criminal justice.
- 9 Our editorial board also accepted to work under two goals: to ensure the longevity of the digitized data and to maintain their attribution to the collection of Philippe Zoummeroff. Criminocorpus thus acquired and has since managed the domain name collectionzoummeroff.org, allowing direct access to the collection, which is hosted on our website. This was not an urgent matter, however, because out of respect of the site collection-privee.org, we did not want to publish doubles of any image. Furthermore, having discussed the collection and its future with Philippe Zoummeroff on numerous occasions, I was certain that the virtual exhibits themed around important criminal cases revealed only a portion of the total value of his library. This collection of 2,600 images

gathered in 14 galleries deserved a serious supplement as well as another type of presentation.

2014: the “Philippe Zoummeroff Collection” takes shape

10 The fact that the library was to be sold at Drouot on May 16th 2014 precipitated the digitization of library documents which hadn't previously been digitized and uploaded to collection-privee.org. In the spring of 2014, four factors contributed to this final act of conservation:

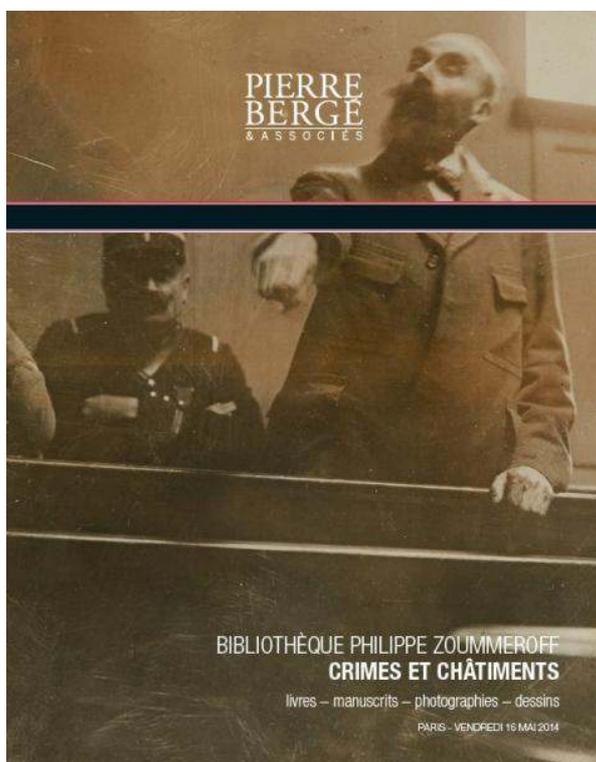
1/ The knowledge that the data would be permanently dispersed in the near future

2/ The creation of a beautiful catalogue that gave, for the first time, a description and general appreciation of the totality of the collection

3/ The advances made in technology and accessibility of reproduced documents since 2001

4/ The warm welcome and cooperation that experts Benoît Forgeot (Librairie Forgeot, Paris), Thierry Bodin (Librairie Les Autographes, Paris), and the office of Pierre Bergé and Associates gave to our project.

Couverture du catalogue de la vente Crimes et Châtiments (16 mai 2014)



11 We compared the texts in the sale catalogue to the document descriptions that our team had made at Philippe Zoummeroff's house for the purposes of a future digitization. Our intention was not, and was never, to digitize the entire collection: many reference libraries consider the digitization of their own collections as part of their mission, Criminocorpus does not have this aim. Our goal was to reproduce the rare items and the iconographic documents.

- 12 Priority was given to manuscripts (documents from criminal cases, letters, unpublished work.), photographs, engravings, drawings, paintings, laments, posters and several publications that had high contextual value for the history of criminal justice (rare brochures, legal texts, collections of clippings from the press..).
- 13 This digitization campaign led to the creation of several thousand photographs (APN, scanner) of around a hundred sale lots. These photos were taken without much equipment, *in situ*, without any significant manipulations or extra lighting². In order to accelerate their availability on the internet, the retouching was kept to a minimum: one example of each photograph was saved, photos were labelled using a code system that followed the lots of the sale, image size was reduced before upload, and – on a case to case basis, retouching, cropping on a black background, and automatic or manual correction of the presentation and coloring were done.
- 14 In many cases, you can notice that certain faults in our photographs could have been avoided if another shot had been taken. In general, our photographs have a less professional quality than those taken for the virtual exhibits of collection-privee.org. The latter were taken and treated by a professional studio (studio 90, Paris), which also annotated the images. This quality difference is due not only to the abilities of our photographers, but also to our initial shots, which were often taken in poor (feeble or partial) lighting.
- 15 Although the sale catalogue functioned as an inventory and thus guided our shots, we sometimes strayed from this format when we presented the photographs on the internet. Here, it is important to note that the presentation of historical documents on collection-privee.org was always linked to a unique gallery that served as an exhibit space. With only one exception (Dessins de détenus et de surveillants), the exhibits of the site were created on a thematic basis and not on a media-specific one (published documents, manuscripts, photographs, etc). The organization of sale lots for the catalogue also principally follows this same thematic logic.
- 16 On Criminocorpus’s website, the internal search engines allow themes to be made visible. When we treated the data, we clearly marked its accessibility and its “valorization”. We conserve the document in our virtual library, while the document’s “valorization” can include its use in an online exhibit, a slide show, or an article in our journal. Two additional reasons justify the surplus conservation value of this new digital Zoumeroff Collection in the virtual library of Criminocorpus: 1. It allows a type of finer, sieve analysis than that which is allowed by the strictly-thematic image galleries, 2. It allows the user to link one document to the whole of the Zoumeroff Collection and also to link it to the whole of Criminocorpus’s virtual library.

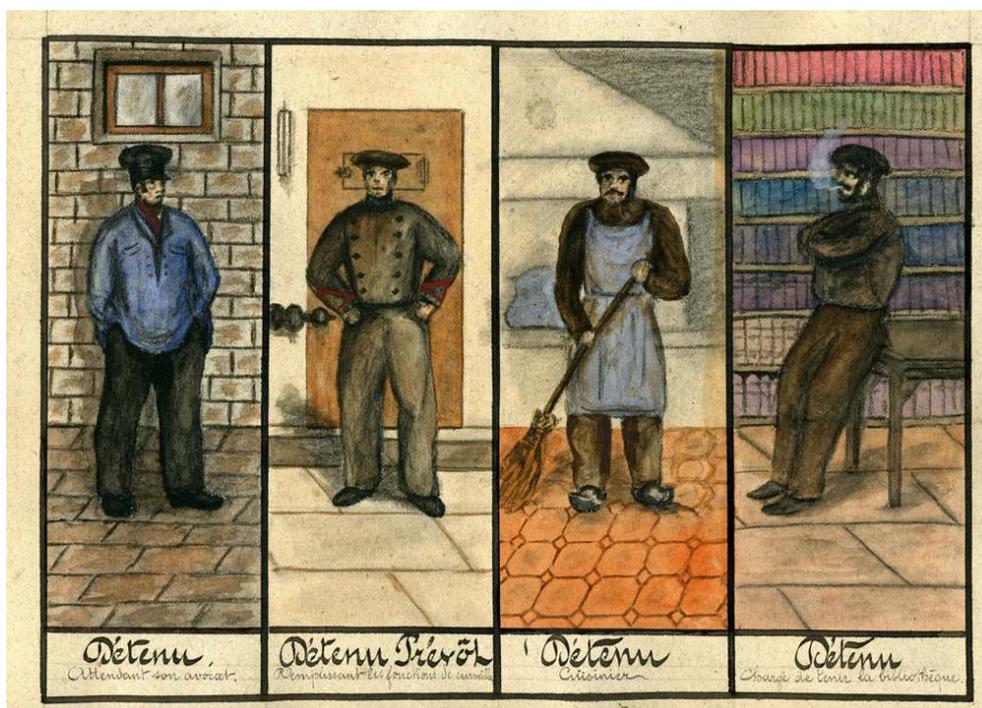
The public and the possible uses of the Philippe Zoumeroff collection

- 17 Who can consult the Phillippe Zoumeroff collection on Criminocorpus? And what can they do with it?
- All of the documents online are accessible for free and free to use for non-commercial work under condition that the source is cited (Zoumeroff Collection/Criminocorpus). The digitized documents are licensed as open-access CC-BY-NC-ND (Intellectual Property Rights, Commercial use prohibited, no modification). Not all documents can be accessed

directly. Certain photos may shock a sensitive or young public because of violence or nudity. They are indicated with a warning requiring a user confirmation before the images appear.

- 18 Other photographs belonging to the collection are not available online, like certain mug shots, photos of victims, and scenes of private life. This is also the case for photographs taken to facilitate the creation of an index for source documents (notes regarding previous sales, the cover or general view of a work, captions, pages of text, etc). Researchers using the Zoummeroff Collection are invited to contact the editorial board to see if the lot they study could have complementary information or documents.

Marc Chauchard, Mazas en dessins (1890)



Collection Philippe Zoummeroff/Bibliothèque Criminocorpus.

- 19 Aside from general education and exploration, many uses of the collection can be envisioned, from the promotion of cultural events (posters, exhibits, editorial project) to pedagogy and research. Many of the documents could be useful in classes or could function as illustration for a lecture or reading. Their description can be enriched and complemented with analytical work or the translation of sources, and any and all proposed cooperative projects will be considered. Criminocorpus can provide (limited) access to a documentary sale lot in order for it to be indexed, described or translated. Finally, we would like to announce a call for virtual exhibits and thematic articles. If accepted, they will be published in a specific column of Criminocorpus. Feedback, comments and questions regarding the use of the Zoummeroff Collection are welcome. Devoting years of his life to the acquisition and the reproduction of rare documents, Philippe Zoummeroff never stopped searching for ways to make his collection as accessible as possible, hoping to promote reflection and debate about how to make penal

justice more fair and humane. The Philippe Zoummeroff Collection, managed by Criminocorpus, intends on continuing this legacy.

NOTES

1. <https://criminocorpus.org/bibliotheque/livre/475/>
 2. Shooting: Marc Renneville, Jean-Lucien Sanchez, Sophie Victorien. Retouching: Marc Renneville, Delphine Usal. Indexing and online presentation: Marc Renneville, Hortense Rossi, Sophie Victorien
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AUTHOR

MARC RENNEVILLE

Directeur du CLAMOR et de la publication de la plateforme Criminocorpus depuis sa création, Marc Renneville est chercheur au CNRS, membre du centre Koyré. Il mène depuis 2003 des projets de valorisation numérique de l'histoire de la justice, des crimes et des peines. Ses recherches portent sur l'histoire des sciences du crime et du criminel et le rapport entre les savoirs criminologiques et l'application des peines (XIX^e-XX^e siècles). Il est notamment l'auteur de *Le langage des crânes. Une histoire de la phrénologie* (Empêcheurs de penser en rond, 2000) et de *Crime et folie. Deux siècles d'enquêtes médicales et judiciaires* (Fayard, 2003).