

BOOK REVIEW

Les forces de l'ordre invisible. Émile Tizané (1901–1982), un gendarme sur les territoires de la hantise [The forces of the invisible order. Émile Tizané (1901–1982), a gendarme in the territories of the haunting] by Philippe Baudouin. Paris: Le Murmure, 2016. 320 pp. €39. ISBN 978-2373060157.

Philippe Baudouin is a producer at Radio France Culture, and a philosopher working on the archaeology of the radio. He published an essay about Thomas Edison's interest in psychical research (Baudouin in Edison 2015, reviewed by Evrard 2015). He frequently contacts me with strange requests for information. One time, he urgently requested haunted house plans! I sent him digitalized archives of the poltergeist investigator Emile Tizané, which had been received by several organizations in France a few years ago (although nothing was done with them). Baudouin was an enthusiast of the material and soon contacted one of Tizané's sons, who sent him paper archives and invited him to explore other pieces, as he was close to destroying them because of the apparent lack of interest. Baudouin's work helped to preserve this collection, and this beautiful book is full of colorful pieces from the archives.

In 2015, Baudouin contributed to the Parisian exhibition *Dessiner l'Invisible* with a special room for Tizané's artifacts and paper archives, and this exhibition involved a public roundtable about Tizané and Baudouin's contributions to the catalogue (Baudouin 2015), from which this book is extracted.

This new book is in large-size format, with graphics on half of the 271 pages. It has a Foreword by Dominique Kalifa (specialist on the history of crime) and an Afterword by Héléne L'Heuillet (philosopher and psychoanalyst, assistant professor in moral and political philosophy at the University Paris–Sorbonne). These short contributions don't add much understanding but do give academic credibility. The book ends with 5 pages of chronology and 4 pages where sources are detailed. Baudouin is responsible for 6 chapters, the Introduction on "cursed archives" (pp. 25–60), and the Conclusion (pp. 235–248).

Discovering the Man Beneath the Képi¹

This book is by far the most exhaustive biography of Emile Tizané. Émile François André Tizané was born on June 29, 1901, in Algeria. In 1920, at 19, he volunteered to become a spahi, a rider in the French Army in Africa (Algeria and Morocco). At 28, he was promoted to lieutenant in the French cavalry, but chronic spinal pain following a riding accident shifted his career. Becoming a gendarme disappointed him, but he took it as an opportunity . . . *to investigate haunted houses*.

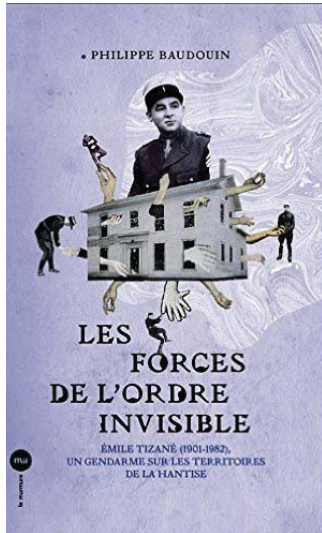
Since teenagerhood, he had developed a strong interest in occultism (Chapter 2:75–90). Between 1928 and 1932, he reproduced the neomagnetic experiments of the Count of Tromelin, Hyppolite Baraduc, and Paul Joire, with his own “fluidoscope” (paper cylinder). He did (unpublished) experiments on plant germination and on silkworms (see Pérot 1977:130), and other hypnotic experiments on birds and horses. Within his family circle, he practiced telepathy and spiritualist experiments (turning tables, automatic writing, oui-ja, planchette). And later he became interested in Marian apparitions (Tizané 1977a) and ufology. But he only become famous in France for his investigations of haunted houses.

Investigating Crimes without a Cause

Assigned to the mobile republican guard of Grenoble, Tizané’s attention was soon attracted by a haunted house in his region (Chapter 1:61–74). He conducted an unofficial investigation outside his district and collected testimonies of massive daily displacements of heavy objects at a farm. Marguerite Rozier, 13 years old, had scratch marks on her skin, and unusual nervous crises during which an unknown force ordered her to ransack dishes, while she tried to resist. The gendarme wondered: Who is responsible? Local gendarmes couldn’t find a trivial explanation, and the family left the house less than one year later.

There are 300 files of haunted houses in Tizané’s well-organized archives. But only a dozen are documented through his own field research. His main sources were newspaper reports and copies of police minutes. He tried to complete these files with written testimonies, pictures, and schematic drawings of the dynamic of the phenomena inside the haunted places. As a civil servant doing his administrative job, he obsessively used an ink stamp to authenticate all documents, an activity he called “poaching.”

In addition to these analogies with Tizané’s classic gendarme activities, Baudouin highlights some specifics of Tizané’s methodology (Chapter 3:91–110, Chapter 4:111–164). He tried to ally police knowledge with spiritualist tools. In some cases, he used automatic writing, oui-ja, planchette,



hypnosis, and telepathy to gather data about a poltergeist case. But, these peculiarities are marginal in comparison with the main methodology, which Baudouin compared with hunting (noting that Tizané was a safari enthusiast, with several hunting trophies in his house). Hunting is a methodology, whose scientific name is cynegetic (p. 118). And Carlos Ginzburg (1989) highlighted how the cynegetic paradigm was developed at the end of the 19th century, with the examples of Freudian psychoanalysis, Morelli's history of art, and Conan Doyle's mystery novels. In line with this last example, Bertrand Méheust (1999) claimed that psychical research was another example of the cynegetic paradigm:

Some parapsychological inquiries used an interpretative method based on marginal data usually judged as unimportant. Régine Plas (2000) even called parapsychology "a parallel history of the evidential paradigm." Critical analysis and classification of documentation, and collection and evaluation of testimonies were part of the usual material in psychical research journals. Baudouin evoked Bergson's SPR Presidential Address (Bergson 1913) about the "science of spiritual activity," and previous haunted-house investigators (Podmore 1896, Lombroso 1909, Bozzano 1920, Flammarion 1923) developed this specific methodology of suspicion that can be applied to hidden phenomena.

But using this methodology was not enough to convince his superiors. As he wrote in his own journal (1925–1933), Tizané was aware that: "We still do not believe in ghosts in the gendarmerie. Investigators must first of all look for a conscious hoax since they have been charged only with the purpose of discovering and arresting criminals" (Tizané 1971:51). Thanks to research into the Archives of the French national gendarmerie, Baudouin found the only remark on Tizané's parallel investigations: One of his superiors described him in 1944 as an "average intelligence officer, who works conscientiously, has an adequate general knowledge, and is interested in occult sciences" (p. 77).

Tizané did encounter resistance from his superiors. In 1937, he attempted to sensitize his colleagues to the haunted-house problem through a report on "the necessity to inform gendarme officers of the recommended solution to end some cases of so-called 'occult' phenomena." One of his superiors, Colonel Lavit, replied: "Gendarmes should not grant credit to

complainants, because, in such cases, hallucinations and hoaxes are very common”; “Gendarmes already know they should remove the person suspected of being consciously or not the cause of the disturbances.” Yet, Tizané was not allowed to publish his work before 1950 (with anonymization and concealment of sources), and his investigations remain non-official, except in one case we will discuss later (Frontenay-Rohan-Rohan).

Tizané’s Contributions to the Understanding of PK Phenomena

After World War II, Tizané published 6 books (Tizané 1951, 1962, 1971, 1977a, 1977b, 1980) that found a large public, even though the writing style is poor, i.e. similar to administrative documents. Baudouin identified 4 unpublished manuscripts, 11 non-peer reviewed articles (published in spiritist and occultist journals), and many interviews, some in mainstream media. Between approximately 1950 and 1980, Tizané was the French media target for haunting topics, before Hans Bender took over this role.

It’s clear that Tizané should not be regarded as an academic specialist on haunting, or even as a scientific writer. He contributed, however, to the development of knowledge on the subject. He identified 27 characteristics of the poltergeist, but his categories overlapped. His vocabulary was influential, as he named “little haunting” (*petite hantise*), the occasional manifestation of poltergeist activity, which was distinguished from recursive haunted houses. The person whose presence coincides with the maximum poltergeist activity was called the “epicenter subject” (*sujet épicerentre*), in a nice seismic metaphor. Indirectly, his observations on the elusiveness of poltergeist phenomena corroborate those of other researchers, and were integrated into Walter von Lucadou’s model (1982).

Tizané’s interpretations were a complex mixture of parapsychological and religious ideas. He was a careful reader of parapsychological research on unknown forces, especially Osty and Osty’s study of the medium Rudi Schneider (1932). But he departed from the psychokinetic interpretation by introducing the possibility of *another* intelligence, foreign to the psyches of those present. He called it the “Unknown Host” (*Hôte inconnu*), using the ideas of Belgian Nobel laureate Maurice Maeterlinck (1917). He was even supported by Maeterlinck with whom he had a correspondence starting in 1948. But he goes beyond any lay interpretation and comes back to his Catholic faith:

I conceive the Host in the guise of an intelligent invisible essence, born from a divine creative thinking and holding itself identical but with limited abilities, because there must be absolute distinction between God and his creatures. (Tizané 1977b)

All in all, Tizan  described a very Manichean picture with a delinquent host (poltergeists) versus a beneficial host (Marian apparitions) (p. 98). “The poltergeist is a delinquent” became his leitmotif. He thought the unknown host uses humans as feeder, as energy source, who provide him with what he needs for his evil deeds. And he retrospectively applied this interpretation to all previous parapsychological data.

Tizan ’s Strange Friendships

Baudouin’s book didn’t focus solely on what may interest parapsychologists, and he never tried to develop a scientific evaluation of the empirical material gathered by Tizan . Nevertheless, he provided good historical coverage of his trajectory, especially in the chapter on “Vichy and Its Occultist Constellations” (Chapter 5:165–196). He dug into any names found in his correspondence and revealed how paranormal topics were received by French society over half a century. In addition to the support given to him by Maeterlinck and the Ostys, Tizan  received support from philosopher Gabriel Marcel, and artist Jean Cocteau, among others. But he found strong support from French Physiology or Medicine Nobel Prize laureate Alexis Carrel. They had a correspondence between January 1942 and September 1944, i.e. during the Nazi occupation. At that time, Carrel was the regent of the French Foundation for the Study of Human Issues. Tizan  was fascinated by the project, described in 1937 as an institution to apply physiology and physics techniques to experimental research on clairvoyance and telepathic phenomena. Carrel dreamed of a man skilled with both a disciplined intelligence and telepathic abilities (Carrel 1935). There are no discussions about eugenics or antisemitism in their correspondence.

Tizan  seemed to have multiple contacts with researchers in occult circles. He was also in correspondence with Louis Lauliac, “teacher” at the “School of Psychology” and at the “Society of Metapsychical Sciences,” among other pseudo-scientific organizations during WWII. For instance, Lauliac believed that, through a new translation of the Gospels, Jesus’ return will be in France. . . . And Baudouin described Tizan ’s contacts with vicomte Bertrand de Cressac de la Bachelerie, an engineer with a strong interest in parapsychological phenomena. He was the co-founder in 1941 of the Association Fran aise d’ tudes M tapsychiques, a spiritist organization concurrent with the Institut M tapsychique International; but he used his society to hide meetings to organize Mar chal P tain’s propaganda. Finally, he was arrested in 1944 for “collaboration with the enemy.”

Baudouin rigorously examined Tizan ’s passage in the “dark zone.” His strange friendships seem motivated by parapsychological common

interests, but remain ambiguous. Also ambiguous was his role during WWII (Chapter 6:197–234). Promoted to Captain in 1935, Tizané was responsible for the section of Melle, in the Poitou. Following orders, he arrested in January 1944 at least one young Jewish woman (Ida Grinspan) who was sent to Auschwitz. She survived and was able to give details in an interview to Baudouin (2015). Despite that, Tizané was awarded medals and the Légion d'Honneur at the end of WWII, as he had helped leaders of the Resistance since 1942.

To understand Tizané's conduct, Baudouin makes a parallel between Ida Grinspan's arrest in January 1944 and the poltergeist case of Frontenay-Rohan-Rohan in November 1943. This was probably the best case of Tizané's field studies, and the only one for which he got permission for an unofficial investigation, outside his district. Some local gendarmes have confirmed the observations of the Auché family and their neighbors: strange noises, displacements of objects, but without any observation of the starting point or the trajectory of the objects. After half an hour there, he observed the displacement of a coffee grinder and a metal box over several meters, the sensational destruction of a lampshade, the disappearance of his gloves and his whip, and even the levitation of his képi. He made several drawings of the events and collected testimonies. He obtained more phenomena through oui-ja and automatic writing with Ginette, 15 years old.

Tizané's solution to stop the phenomena was to remove the epicenter subject from the haunted place, or "to discharge him/her through psychoanalysis or more complex operations (memory regression or personality dissociation)" (Tizané 1977b:11). But later a psychiatrist hired Ginette as a cook, and she admitted to him being the conscious author of these hoaxes, and confessed that to the gendarmes (on December 2, 1943). Immediately the press was unleashed and made fun of the naïve gendarmes who claimed to have observed paranormal phenomena. Ginette retracted this false confession in a letter to Tizané in February 1944. Tizané took this retraction as proof of her irresponsibility, but no legal authorities listened to him. According to him, Ginette was only a "victim of the invisible," i.e. she was not responsible because of Article 64 of the Penal Code: "There is neither crime nor offense where the accused was insane at the time of the action or when he was forced by a force he could not resist." Tizané attempted to restore order through restoring the truth, and therefore doing jurisprudence. Yet, because of his ambition, he sent his report to the press and entered into conflict with his superiors. He was sanctioned for a lack of reserve and discernment, and received a severe warning from the Commander of his Légion: "Your role and your comments have been judged with an ironic skepticism which spreads doubts about your perspicacity."

Conclusion

After this episode, Tizan  remained more discrete until his retirement in 1954. He then had a second career of 30 years as the author of several popular books on hauntings, at a time when French parapsychology was in decline and almost invisible itself (Evrard 2016). Tizan 's main objective was to "delimit the territories of the haunting" through a "penalist approach to occult phenomena." But he failed to introduce the subject of paranormal phenomena into the Law or into official organizations. Although he gave rational arguments about the way to deal with confessions and frauds, he said he also observed "Trickster" effects in haunting situations. As he failed to restore a rational order, he chose to believe in an autonomous Trickster entity, the Unknown host, who he blamed for all transgressions.

Studying his correspondence, Baudouin reveals the strange relationship between Tizan  and his objects of study (Conclusion:197–234). He perceived how his occult investigations had aftereffects on the mood and sleep of family members, and how he was close to burning all his files. His wife urged him to stop spiritualist practices in 1932, but he came back to them at the end of his life. After a meeting with a PK medium, he received phone calls from a synthetic voice, claiming to be "Simonus," an entity from another planet, urging him to write a book about it. But he soon died of a generalized cancer and his wife destroyed (parts of) this "demonic" material.

For any historian with an interest in paranormal topics, coming across this book is a marvelous event. Baudouin saved Tizan 's work from the scrap heap, and has given us direct and high-quality access to the treasures of his archives. We can only wonder about the many other private archives close to the bin, and hope that people with enough curiosity and epistemic courage will take them on.

Note

¹ A k pi is a French military cap with a flat top and horizontal visor brim.

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