a window onto Melanchthon’s broad network of learning and counsel. In 2011, the HAW-Forschungsstelle Melanchthon-Briefwechsel made available online the extremely helpful Register of the more than 10,000 letters in the correspondence. With its intuitive interface, reliable hyperlinks, and horde of information, this database is a welcome companion to the Texte volumes that appear annually. A revised edition of the Melanchthon biography by Heinz Scheible, founding editor of MBW, is also a timely guide.9 (William Weaver, Baylor University)


The Prolègomenes (18–133) offer fresh information about the jurist’s life and works, and correlate with the data that emerged from previous scholars’ reconstructions, carefully revisited by Prévost. Archival research allows the author to clarify, for example, that there is neither enough information about Cujas’ pre-university education (30) nor enough about his alleged participation in the Reformation, which rests on very fragile foundations (75–84). The study of the documents is integrated with the humanist’s entire body of work, from which Prévost draws information on the amplitude of Cujas’ readings, which were not limited to legal texts, but included Greek and Latin classics, medieval glossators and commentators, and contemporary humanists (a typical Renaissance encyclopaedic approach).

Despite its monumentality, the analysis of Cujas’ work is not limited to the edition published in Paris in 1658 by the French humanist Charles-Annibal Fabrot (which is the reference text for Prévost’s research). With notable philological rigor, the edition encompassed a ten-volume in-folio corpus, including both the works edited by Cujas and those published posthumously. Moreover, Prévost studies Cujas’ work as an editor of texts, which began with the concrete search for new

witnesses – new sources or different variants of already known texts, attested by the manuscript and printed tradition – mainly in French and Italian libraries. This continuous collectio lead him to assemble a vast library, which in 1590 (the year of Cujas’ death) numbered about two thousand volumes, of which 371 were manuscripts. Although partial lists of Cujas’ library have been published by Henri Omont (in 1885 and 1888), as reported by Prévost (88–89), some additional details on the thematic consistency of this library could be useful for the analysis of the humanist’s cultural background.

The last section of the Prolégomènes is entitled Jacques Cujas édité. Here Prévost provides a detailed analysis of all of the editions of Cujas’ works, which allows him to clarify some aspects of the humanist’s European fortuna. Like many other materials provided in this book, this section also allows the reader to anticipate further paths of research. It would be interesting, for example, to place the publication of the first Italian editions in Naples within the frame of the eighteenth-century Legal Enlightenment of southern Italy, clarifying the public for which these works were intended.

The body of the book is divided into two parts. The first is entitled L’humanisme juridique de Jacques Cujas (135–354), and it represents a broad interpretation of the data presented in the previous section. The first chapter (La poursuite de la critique humaniste) brings into focus Cujas’ role in the juridical tradition. Following in the steps of the best humanists, Cujas rejects any dogmatism towards tradition: he confronts the ancient, medieval, and contemporary traditions without any sense of inferiority, expressing “sa liberté, en particulier celle de recourir à toutes les sources disponibles.” In line with this assumption are Cujas’ relentless search for sources, his in-depth study of Greek, and the development of a critical method to analyse all the textual witnesses. Among the sources, Cujas does not reject a priori any exegetical works of the previous era. In fact he knows the works of medieval glossators and commentators, particularly the texts of Accursius, whose Great Gloss is presented by Prévost “comme base de travail” for the humanist. This is one of the main differences from his contemporaries, who often fiercely opposed the medieval interpretation of law in its entirety. Indeed, Cujas starts an extensive dialogue with Accursius, in which his work is appreciated or strongly criticized.
according to the specific circumstances, mainly due to methodological
differences. Because of his errors, Accursius could also be included
in a list of semijurisconsulti (159, n. 66), a term reminding the reader
of the iurisimperiti or legulei frequently reproached in Lorenzo Valla’s
Elegantiae linguae latinae.

Cujas’ classical knowledge, made apparent by the diversity and
the quantity of quotations present in his opera omnia, is impressive.
His readings primarily help him in the understanding of Roman
law, which Cujas believes cannot be studied outside of the context
in which the law itself was written. Therefore all of his texts are en-
riched by quotations from many different fields and free from any
chronological restrictions, from rhetoric to poetry and grammar to
religion and history. Quotations include, indeed, the works of medi-
eval and contemporary European scholars, all used for the benefit of
the law: philological analyses and historical studies are indispensable
for understanding legal texts. Almost surprisingly, the role attributed
to Italian humanists, like Valla (mentioned just once) and Poliziano
(mentioned three times), is not prominent in Cujas’ work, even if
Prévost shows their influence on the humanist’s thought. Nevertheless
their presence is not comparable to that of Andrea Alciato and Gregor
Haloander, for example, which cumulatively account for more than
three hundred citations.

The second chapter (L’apogée de l’humanisme historiciste, 233–351)
shows how Cujas’ use of history is “une véritable rupture” (156) that
separates the humanist from preceding jurists. Among the different
currents of Legal Humanism, Cujas fits precisely in with the histor-
ical one. Putting history at the core of his investigation, he bases his
interpretation of Roman laws on the historical context. From this
assumption, Cujas establishes his work method, founded on three main
stages: collatio, emendatio, and interpretatio. Collatio and emendatio,
which provide reliable critical texts, are based on what Prévost calls
the “critique externe” (238, i.e., the search for new sources and their
comparison with Latin and Greek predecessors) and the “critique in-
terne” (265, namely the correction of the texts on the basis of stylistic
and grammatical analyses, of historical reconstructions, and logical
criteria, which allow for the elimination of possible interpolations).
The subsequent exegesis has historical interpretation at its core. Of
course, this approach was not completely novel among the scholars of the ‘philological line’ of the so-called scuola culta. Nonetheless this methodology is rigorously systematized in Cujas’ work. Law, therefore, is not interpreted as a timeless reality with universal validity. Rather, it is always connected to a specific context. This results in an intense focus on history that went far beyond Rome, as Justinian’s reign is not a time limit for Cujas: Byzantine and medieval sources are just as important as those of the previous period for rebuilding different chronological frames.

The second part of the book, as clarified by its title La pratique juridique chez Jacques Cujas (356–500), focuses more specifically on the humanist’s forensic practice by analysing several of his responsa. Reversing many conclusions of previous scholars – who did not give any weight to practice in Cujas’ work – in the first chapter (Le droit des successions en pratique) Prévost shows not only Cujas’ commitment to legal practice and the pragmatic purpose of his theories, but also his great fame: the case of the succession to the throne of Portugal, for which Cujas was consulted around 1570, is a clear example. Moreover this underlines, once again, that Cujas’ study was not limited to Roman law, although it nonetheless constituted his primary reference, but he was deeply interested in successive legal practices, especially those related to the French kingdom and the feudal regime. Indeed Cujas mentions both French and feudal practices several times in his texts, and he also dedicates an entire work to this last specific topic: the annotated edition of Libri feudorum (published in 1566), carefully studied by Prévost in the second chapter (Le droit féodal. Entre pratique et critique historique).

The volume concludes with several pages of Conclusion that give the reader a useful synthesis of the impressive amount of research conducted by Prévost, a wide bibliography, and very helpful indices of the subjects that were studied, including the names and all the legal sources quoted in the book. (Clementina Marsico, Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Neo-Latin Studies, Innsbruck)