

**Sophie BACCAUNAUD, “Rise and decline in the eighteenth century: The Casaux Presidents, an honorable parliamentary family in Bordeaux”, master thesis of contemporary history, directed by François Cadilhon, university Bordeaux Montaigne, 2016.**

Revealed by the correspondence of the bailiff Pierre Bourdet after having disappeared for two hundred years, the Casaux family has embodied, all along the Age of Enlightenment, an ideal of the parliamentary nobility in Bordeaux. Judges in the *Palais de l'Ombrière* between 1685 and the Parliament's dissolution in 1790, the Casaux family have hauled themselves to the top of Guyenne's noble society, being *Présidents à mortier* for about eighty years. Enriched by several marriages involving social and economic issues of that time, and combining the rise of the merchant world with the prestige of the old nobility of the sword, the Casaux presidents invested in land and property, leaving their mark on the eighteenth century Bordeaux area. Guillaume Joseph Casaux, the last president of the family to sit in Parliament, had an extraordinary destiny. Married in 1780 to the Marquis of Taillefer's daughter, the kind Marguerite Thérèse Fortunée, heir of his family and of the wealthiest man in the Bordeaux area at the time – the General Lawyer François Armand Saige- owner of a vast mansion in the heart of Bordeaux, of a nice property in the countryside at Mérignac, of islands on the Garonne and lord of Anglade and Saint-Androny – he perfectly represented the Nobles of the Robe during the Enlightenment. After having survived the French Revolution, and in spite of several months of incarceration during the Terror, Guillaume Joseph climbed up to the top of the Parisian society during the *Directoire* and the *Consulat* and lived with his wife in the prestigious *faubourg Saint-Germain*. Marguerite Thérèse Fortunée became a famous *salonnière* in the society of the “Incroyables and Merveilleuses” and their daughter, Laure Casaux, was the “richest heiress of Paris” according to her childhood friend, the duchess Laure of Abrantès. Nevertheless, behind such an idyllic picture, intoxicated by his personal wealth, incapable of managing his heritage and orphan of his faithful and skilled bailiff Pierre Bourdet, Guillaume Joseph multiplied financial mistakes, causing the sudden and irreversible social decline of his family in the early 1810s, letting the name Casaux disappear.

Beyond having highlighted the incredible destiny of the Casaux presidents and resurrected one of the most important family from the Bordeaux Nobles of the Robes of the eighteenth century, ignored up to then by the traditional historiography, the seventy letters written by the bailiff Pierre Bourdet between September 1787 and September 1788, show how the pre-revolutionary Guyenne postal organizations worked, as well as the numerous and diverse rules of epistolary correspondence between members of the nobility in Bordeaux during the Age of Enlightenment. Witnessing the wealth of private writings, Pierre Bourdet's correspondence is about social history as well as economic and political history and shows not only all the concerns, issues and mentalities of that time, but also the essential function of the bailiff-intendant in the big wine estates in modern-times Bordeaux.