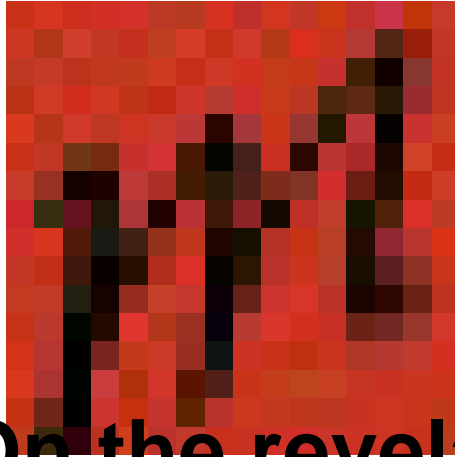


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XII.17 On the revelation of conspiracies

- The Spirit of Law - Book XII. On laws that constitute political liberty in its relation to the citizen -

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XII.17 On the revelation of conspiracies

"When thy brother, or thy son, or thy beloved wife, or thy husband who is like thy soul, shall whisper to you : 'Let us go to other gods', thou shalt stone them." This law from Leviticus [1] cannot be a civil law among most of the peoples familiar to us, because it would open the door to every crime.

In several states, the law that makes it obligatory on penalty of death to reveal conspiracies, even ones in which one has not been involved, is hardly less harsh. When it is carried over into a monarchical government, it is highly appropriate to restrain it.

There it must be applied in all its severity only to the crime of lese-majesty in the first degree. [2] those states it is very important not to confuse the different degrees of this crime.

In Japan, where the laws overturn every notion of human reason, the crime of non-revelation applies to the most ordinary cases.

One relation [3] tells us of two young ladies who were locked up to die in a coffer studded with spikes, one for having had some gallant intrigue, the other for having failed to reveal it.

[1] [In fact, Deuteronomy 13:6-9.]

[2] [*Au premier chef* : a crime of lese-majesty in the first degree concerns the king's own person ; in the second degree it concerns the state, as in counterfeiting (Furetière).]

[3] *Recueil des voyages qui ont servi à l'établissement de la Compagnie des Indes*, p. 423, book V, part 2.