

Municipal Magdeburg Law (“Ius municipale Magdeburgense”) in Late Medieval Poland: A Study on the Evolution and Adaptation of Law. Maciej Mikuła.

Medieval Law and Its Practice 30. Leiden: Brill, 2021. xx + 470 pp. \$173.

The great social and economic transformation of territories in east Central Europe during the twelfth and following centuries that has now become commonly known as the *Melioratio terrae* brought with it the need for new forms of administration and governance. In the regions where the Piast, Přemyslid, and Árpád families ruled, legal systems in particular required modification and innovation. In general, what emerged was the adoption of German law, *ius Theutonicum*, with its many variants, one of the most important of which—especially in the towns and settlement of Silesia, Lesser Poland (*Polonia minora*), and other Piast lands—was that known as Magdeburg law.

It is this process that Maciej Mikuła, a faculty member at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, focuses upon in this careful and detailed study. His concern is to identify the legal elements that were adopted and implemented in Poland during the thirteenth through early sixteenth centuries. These were, as he carefully points out, the *Sachsenspiegel* (*Speculum Saxonum*), the *Weichbild* (a comprehensive compilation of the received law that underwent modifications and transformations over time), and the Magdeburg judges’ case law, their *Urteile* (known in Polish as *ortyle*). Together they provided guarantees of personal freedom, a written catalogue of the duties and rights of parties to contracts, and a collegiate court system (3) and thereby “constituted a trio of prime sources of law in the Kingdom of Poland” (7).

Following a useful introductory chapter (enhanced from that in the version previously published in Poland) that defines his research agenda, addresses problematic aspects of legal history and methodology (including its sometimes controversial aspects), provides an overview of the study to follow, explains terms key to his text, and synthesizes the contents of Magdeburg municipal law, Mikuła traces in chapter 1 the developments of the manuscript and printed texts of legal compilations in Silesia and Lesser Poland. Chapter 2 analyzes the evolution of the Latin text of the *Weichbild*, particularly in its two major versions, that of Sandomir and Kraków. (A sixty-nine-page appendix—one of four—is devoted to a concordance of divergences between these two versions.)

This is followed by a chapter that focuses upon the *Weichbild* as it developed over time until, in the early stages of the Renaissance in Poland, it was effectively codified in 1506 when printed in the *Commune incliti* of royal chancellor Jan Łaski (the uncle of the later religious Reformer of the same name). This work became the definitive edition of Poland’s laws. In chapter 4, Mikuła treats additions to the text over time: glosses, cross-references, annotations, and the like. These suggest tantalizingly how the *Weichbild* was actually used in practice. The final, concluding, chapter recapitulates

the findings of previous chapters, setting them in the larger context of change over time while observing that there is as yet no critical edition of the Latin *Weichbild*, an important desideratum in Mikuła's judgment. He also shows here how important print culture was in stabilizing the legal tradition.

This is not an easy volume to read. It is technical in nature and makes numerous assumptions about one's legal competency. Moreover, it does not provide a very full understanding of the way law actually functioned in medieval Poland's society, economy, and politics. But it is a fundamental work that lays the foundation for such an eventual understanding and is clearly an outstanding technical study of the evolution of the texts of a legal system. In addition, it shows how contingent the stages of adoption and adaptation of Magdeburg law were.

Only a few editorial problems exist in the book. In the bibliography some of the entries are alphabetized by the first rather than the last name of the author, and the works of a few Polish authors are cited in their original Polish title when translations making their contribution more accessible are available. But these are minor matters. This book is an important contribution to general legal history, to the process by which the *Melioratio terrae* took place in Poland, and to the evolution of law until it was stabilized at the time of chancellor Łaski. It is good to have it available in English translation (smoothly done by Andrzej Branny).

Paul W. Knoll, *University of Southern California, emeritus*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2023.453

The Scandinavian Early Modern World: A Global Historical Archaeology.

Jonas Monié Nordin.

Abingdon: Routledge, 2020. xvi + 292 pp. \$160.

Scandinavia has long been considered the periphery of Europe. Nordin's book demands a reevaluation of this understanding as it explores a multifocal early modern world whose constituents, be they political entities, individual actors, or cultural attributes, are entangled materially, socially, politically, and culturally. The work seeks to disentangle that world from an archaeological perspective, and material culture, particularly that of metal, is a central theme. However, Nordin integrates archaeology with historical documentation, microhistory, and biography to reveal connections between people, spaces, and things, thus demonstrating Scandinavia's important role in the development of the modern world. Throughout Nordin's book, metal forms links that stretch from Scandinavia, through Europe, to India, Africa, and North America. Scandinavian silver, iron, and copper motivated economic development, migration, politics, exploration, colonization, encounters, and connections and propelled profound social, cultural, and environmental change.