
Adding a careful reading of European legal contexts and local influence to the many previous studies on the topic, Walgenbach’s short, revised 2016 Yale dissertation fulfills a lingering desideratum in the field. Walgenbach argues in depth for a revision of the direction and chronology of influence between, on the one hand, ‘old’ ‘Germanic’ manifestations of outlawry and the terms and motifs that accompany it, and on the other, changing ecclesiastical and secular legal thought on excommunication and adjacent conditions. While still noticeably engaged with its own methodological limitations (such connections, as the author acknowledges, cannot be ‘proven’ under strict evidential criteria), the study suggestively traces parallel developments that seem plausible as markers of direct influence and unlikely attributable to chance resemblance.

The brief introduction outlines sources, mainly Latin and vernacular law codices and vernacular literary and historical texts, and methods and approaches, reducible to a general comparative approach with a sensitive eye for significant developments within relatively short time periods and how they may be reflected in both source types. Chapter 1 charts excommunication from its origins on the continent to its practice in Iceland, situating the act within changing theological-legal discourses from the earlier Middle Ages through the thirteenth century, a period of significant political turmoil as the Icelandic ‘commonwealth’ gave way to Norwegian hegemony. Excommunication is presented not only as a judgment leading to damnation, but also, as is well-known from other contexts, as a political tool. Walgenbach discusses several discourses surrounding excommunication, including penitential aspects, the concept of community harm, spiritual consequences (e.g., banishment from receiving sacraments), and the growth of overlapping secular sanctions. Developments in canon law, such as those introduced by Gregory VII, increasingly prohibited dealings with the excommunicant as themselves being grounds for excommunication. A comparative treatment of Latin and vernacular sources (primarily Old English) in the early Middle Ages reveals an early shared concern about damnation and consecrated or unconsecrated burial practices. In the twelfth century and onward, Gratian’s *Decretum* and other sources further shaped canon law regarding excommunication by defining gradations (major and minor), anathemas earned without formal procedures, excommunication for disobedience of church authority, and political consequences.

In the next section of the first chapter, the focus turns toward Iceland and highlights the availability of episcopal, epistolary, cartulary, legal, and literary sources in Latin and the vernacular. As on the continent, the story in Iceland begins with anxieties about damnation in the law code *Grágás* and the *Íslensk hómiliubók*. Already in the earliest vernacular attestations several terminological discrepancies arise: sanctions, outlawry, and words that could refer to various conditions appear within the same works in sometimes ambiguous contexts. From the late thirteenth century sources such as the *Kristinréttr Árna*, later law codices, entries from the *Diplomatarium Islandicum*, and *Biskupasögur*, particularly *Árna saga* and *Lárentius saga*, demonstrate understandings of excommunication reforms solidified earlier in the century. A focus on bishops and their communications is expected in the ecclesiastical and secular power matrix of Iceland during this period; less expected are the ways in which these sources are shown