Studies in the History of Law and Justice 7
Series Editors: Georges Martyn · Mortimer Sellers

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Anthony Musson
Heikki Pihlajamäki
Alain Wijffels *Editors*

The Formation and Transmission of Western Legal Culture

150 Books that Made the Law in the
Age of Printing

Springer

Studies in the History of Law and Justice

Volume 7

Series editors

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In collaboration with Naoko Seriu

Springer

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Preface

It was around five years ago that we all first met together in Helsinki and later Ghent to discuss our mutual proposal to edit a volume, the first of its kind on an international scale, introducing a ‘canon’ of legal works that have most influenced Western legal culture and that best represent the legal literature genres of the periods covering its development. We envisaged it providing a resource for researchers working in various fields, such as law, legal history, general history, book history, history of mentalities, communications sciences, and law and literature as well as something that students and practitioners interested in learning about the roots of their trade would equally find stimulating and invaluable.

Since we could not hope to complete such an undertaking on our own we first needed to enlist the support of a scientific committee comprising eleven distinguished European and American legal historians, who together with the editors would form the steering group of the project. Prof. Martin Avenarius (University of Cologne), Prof. Emanuele Conte (University of Roma Tre), Prof. Gero Dolezalek (University of Aberdeen), Prof. Thomas Duve (University of Frankfurt, Director of the *Max-Planck-Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte*), Prof. Jean-Louis Halpérin (*École Normale Supérieure*, Paris), Prof. em. António Manuel Hespanha (New University of Lisbon), Prof. Dirk Heirbaut (Ghent University), Prof. Michael Lobban (London School of Economics), Prof. Aniceto Masferrer (University of Valencia), Prof. Dag Michalsen (University of Oslo), Prof. Matthew Mirow (Florida International University, Miami) and Prof. Peter Oestmann (University of Münster) kindly agreed to serve and we are sincerely grateful for their generous time and input. Convening in Lille, the committee was responsible for drawing up a long list of key books that made the law and for suggesting a bank of potential contributors who could write the individual entries. The criteria for the entries were themselves the subject of much debate and suitably honed to provide a template for each contributor to write to.

While recognising the cosmopolitan and multilingual background of both legal book authors and contributors, we considered it crucial for the volume to be in English and for the focus not to be on the legal authors as such (other than a brief biography), but their prime contribution to the field. The significance of each book

was to be measured not only from today's point of view (influenced by hindsight and posterity) but also its contemporary significance. We also wanted the project to be more than a compilation of book entries: so in addition to individual articles on the works chosen, the tome includes general introductory articles on the different genres of legal literature, treating their subject not from a national but a more global angle, including not only Europe but also the Americas and other colonial outposts of former imperial powers.

As the completed entries emerged so too did further editorial headaches, but we soldiered on and refined the volume during successive plenary meetings in Ghent, Exeter, Oslo and Oxford and via that invaluable tool of the modern communications revolution, email, and working closely with our publishers, Springer, have finally brought this massive undertaking to fruition. In addition to our dedicated team of 119 contributors, we are indebted to a number of institutions for their financial support and administrative assistance which we gratefully acknowledge here: the Academy of Finland, CNRS France, the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Ghent University, University of Exeter, University of Helsinki and University of Lille.

We would also like to thank Dr. Naoko Seriu (formerly University of Lille) for coordinating the first period of our activities, as well as Prof. Anne Simonin of the *Maison Française* in Oxford and Prof. Dag Michalsen of the University of Oslo for hosting one of our meetings.

Summer 2016

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- AMEND-TRAUT Anja, *Universität Würzburg (Germany)*: 113
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- AVENARIUS Martin, *Universität zu Köln (Germany)*: 138
- BALDUS Christian, *Universität Heidelberg (Germany)*: 99
- BARÓ Pazos Juan, *Universidad de Cantabria (Spain)*: 92
- BECK VARELA Laura, *Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Spain)*: 58, 111
- BEHRENDTS Okko, *Georg-August-Universität Göttingen (Germany)*: 121
- BERCOVICI, Gilberto, *Universidade de São Paulo (Brazil)*: 140
- BIROCCI Italo, *Università Sapienza di Roma (Italy)*: 69, 82
- BJÖRNE Lars, *Turun yliopisto (University of Turku) (Finland)*: 137
- BRIESKORN Norbert, *Hochschule für Philosophie München (Germany)*: 48
- BRYSON William Hamilton, *University of Richmond (United States)*: 49, 135
- CAÑIZARES NAVARRO Juan, *Universidad CEU Cardenal Herrera, Elche (Spain)*: 80
- CAPDEFERRO Josep, *Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona (Spain)*: 47
- CASAGRANDE Agustín, *Universidad Nacional de La Plata (Argentina)*: 44
- CAZALS Géraldine, *Université de Rouen (France)*: 30
- CHALMERS James, *University of Glasgow (United Kingdom)*: 97
- COCKS Ray, *Keele University (United Kingdom)*: 115
- CONDORELLI Orazio, *Università degli Studi di Catania (Italy)*: 11
- CONETTI Mario, *Università degli Studi dell'Insubria (Italy)*: 9
- CONTE Emanuele, *Università degli Studi Roma Tre (Italy)*: 2, 77
- CORDES Albrecht, *Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main (Germany)*: 148

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- DAUCHY Serge, *CNRS – Université de Lille* (France): 84
- DEBAENST Bruno, *Universiteit Gent* (Belgium): 134
- DE BRUIJN Niels, *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam* (The Netherlands): 38
- DE CHAMPS Emmanuelle, *Université de Cergy-Pontoise* (France): 95
- DECOCK Wim, *Katholieke Universiteit Leuven* (Belgium): 24, 40
- DE RUYSSCHER Dave, *Vrije Universiteit Brussel* (Belgium): 31
- DESCAMPS Olivier, *Université Paris II Panthéon-Assas* (France): 101
- DHONDT Frederik, *Vrije Universiteit Brussel - Universiteit Gent - FWO* (Belgium): 88
- DILCHER Gerhard, *Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main* (Germany): 118
- DOZHDEV Dmitry, *Moscow School of Social and Economic Sciences* (Russia): 123
- DU PLESSIS Paul, *University of Edinburgh* (United Kingdom): 62
- DURELLE-MARC Yann-Arzel, *Université Paris 13 – Sorbonne Paris Cité* (France): 136
- DYSON Matthew, *University of Oxford and Corpus Christi College, Oxford* (United Kingdom): 127
- FIORAVANTI Maurizio, *Università degli Studi di Firenze* (Italy): 139
- FIORI Antonia, *Università Sapienza di Roma* (Italy): 1
- FORD John, *University of Aberdeen* (United Kingdom): 68
- FREDA Dolores, *Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II* (Italy): 74
- GARLATI Loredana, *Università degli Studi di Milano Bicocca* (Italy): 39
- GIALDRONI Stefania, *University of Helsinki* (Finland): 25, 116
- GIARO Tomasz, *Uniwersytet Warszawski* (Poland): 129
- GIULIANI Adolfo, *Università degli Studi di Perugia* (Italy): 22, 37
- HAFERKAMP Hans-Peter, *Universität zu Köln* (Germany): 110
- HALPÉRIN Jean-Louis, *École Normale Supérieure, Paris* (France): 124, 132, 142, 146
- HARMS Andreas, *SWKH Rechtsanwälte, Berlin* (Germany): 143
- HEIRBAUT Dirk, *Universiteit Gent* (Belgium): 4, 119
- HESPAÑA António, *Universidade Nova de Lisboa* (Portugal): 60, 96
- HEWETT Margaret, *University of Cape Town* (South-Africa): 65
- HOEFELICH Michael, *University of Kansas* (United States): 93, 107
- HUGHES Julia, *University of New Brunswick, Fredericton* (Canada): 125
- IBBETSON David, *University of Cambridge* (United Kingdom): 76, 83
- JONES Neil, *University of Cambridge* (United Kingdom): 13, 16
- KIM Marie Seong-Hak, *St. Cloud State University* (United States): 20
- KOCH Arnd, *Universität Augsburg* (Germany): 98
- KOCH Sören, *Universitetet i Bergen* (Norway): 78, 81
- LEPSIUS Susanne, *Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München* (Germany): 18
- LESAFFER Randall, *Tilburg University* (The Netherlands) and *University of Leuven* (Belgium): 56

- LEUWERS Hervé, *Université de Lille* (France): 100
- LITZINGER Heike Kathrin, formerly *Max-Planck-Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main* (Germany): 130
- LOBBAN Michael, *London School of Economics and Political Science* (United Kingdom): 106, 109, 126
- MACMILLAN Catharine, *King's College London* (United Kingdom): 122
- MACNAIR Mike, *University of Oxford* (United Kingdom): 87
- MAIHOLD Harald, formerly *Universität Basel* (Switzerland): 26
- MARTYN Georges, *Universiteit Gent* (Belgium): 10, 61
- MARZAL Pascual, *Universitat de València* (Spain): 85
- MASFERRER Aniceto, *Universitat de València* (Spain): 28
- MATSUMOTO Naoko, *Sophia University, Tokyo* (Japan): 141
- MAZZACANE Aldo, *Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II* (Italy): 64
- MCGLYNN Margaret, *Western University, London-Ontario* (Canada): 34
- MEYER Christoph H.F., *Max-Planck-Institut für europäische Rechtsgeschichte, Frankfurt am Main* (Germany): 73
- MEYER-PRITZL Rudolf, *Christian-Albrechts-Universität Kiel* (Germany): 89
- MICHALSEN Dag, *Universitetet i Oslo* (Norway): 103
- MILETTI Marco Nicola, *Università degli Studi di Foggia* (Italy): 21
- MILLARD Eric, *Université Paris-Ouest, Nanterre – La Défense* (France): 149
- MINNUCCI Giovanni, *Università degli Studi di Siena* (Italy): 42
- MIROW Matthew, *Florida International University, Miami* (United States): 112
- MODÉER Kjell, *Lunds Universitet* (Sweden): 66
- MUSSON Anthony, *University of Exeter* (United Kingdom): 52
- OBARRIO Juan, *Universitat de València* (Spain): 67, 70
- OESTMANN Peter, *Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster* (Germany): 36, 43
- OOSTERHUIS Janwillem, *Universiteit Maastricht* (The Netherlands): 117
- PADOVANI Andrea, *Università di Bologna* (Italy): 12
- PARISE Agustín, *Universiteit Maastricht* (The Netherlands): 105
- PASCIUTA Beatrice, *Università degli Studi di Palermo* (Italy): 7
- PÉREZ MARTÍN Antonio, *Universidad de Murcia* (Spain): 54
- PIHLAJAMÄKI Heikki, *University of Helsinki* (Finland): 55, 120, 147
- POLDNIKOV Dmitry, *National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow* (Russia): 114
- PORWANCHER Andrew, *University of Oklahoma, Norman* (United States): 133
- PREST Wilfrid, *University of Adelaide* (Australia): 91
- PRÉVOST Xavier, *Université de Bordeaux* (France): 29, 46
- QUAGLIONI Diego, *Università degli Studi di Trento* (Italy): 35
- RAMOS VÁZQUEZ Isabel, *Universidad de Jaén* (Spain): 90
- RAMSAY Nigel, *University College London* (United Kingdom): 5
- REID Charles, *University of St. Thomas, Minneapolis* (United States): 104
- ROWAN Steven, *University of Missouri, St. Louis* (United States): 15
- RUDOKVAS Anton, *St. Petersburg State University* (Russia): 128

- SCHMOECKEL Mathias, *Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität Bonn* (Germany): 17, 27
- SCHRÖDER Jan, *Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen* (Germany): 71, 79, 102
- SEIPP David J., *Boston University* (United States): 19
- SERNA VALLEJO Margarita, *Universidad de Cantabria* (Spain): 145
- STEBBINGS Chantal, *University of Exeter* (United Kingdom): 108
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- TAMM Ditlev, *Københavns Universitet* (Denmark): 53, 150
- TAU ANZOÁTEGUI Victor, *Academia Nacional de la Historia de la República Argentina*: 33
- THOMAS Philip, *University of Pretoria* (South-Africa): 72
- TREGGIARI Ferdinando, *Università degli Studi di Perugia* (Italy): 8
- TWINING William, *University College London* (United Kingdom): 144
- VALLEJO GARCÍA-HEVIA José María, *Universidad de Castilla – La Mancha* (Spain): 86
- VAN NIFTERIK Gustaaf, *Universiteit van Amsterdam* (The Netherlands): 32
- VAN RHEE C.H. (Remco), *Universiteit Maastricht* (The Netherlands): 63
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