

*A Companion to the Hanseatic League.* Donald J. Harreld, ed.  
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The golden age in which all historians had a working knowledge of German is surely long over by now. Anglo-American scholars are rarely able to read German with any facility, so that German historical scholarship falls under the *Polonica non leguntur* rule. This is a great pity, since good work continues to be produced, not least on the history of the Hanse. It is with the laudable intention of bringing “some of the more recent developments in Hanse history together for an international audience of scholars and students for whom the German language presents some difficulty” (5) that the volume under review was produced, and the editor has brought to this task a judicious selection of the best scholars in the field.

The book is divided into two parts, one offering a chronological sketch of Hanseatic history and the other focusing on specific topics. Rolf Hammel-Kiesow weaves together older and more recent scholarly views without losing the thread of the narrative of events that led to the emergence of the Hanse and its institutions. He places the nascent Hanse firmly in the context of trade and politics in the whole of the Baltic and the North Sea and the origins and development of its institutions in the context of contemporary law. This masterful overview provides a welcome foil for Lopez's *Commercial Revolution* (1971). By contrast, Sarnowsky and North opt for the traditional narrative of conflicts, negotiations, and treaties, closely following Dollinger's lead. There is nothing wrong with this, but it does fall short of the volume's stated purpose of presenting recent scholarship. To be sure, Sarnowsky does demonstrate how internal Hanseatic innovations (trade boycotts, poundage, etc.) emerged in response to external conflicts, but he does not deal with Rörig's hypothesis that the Hanse's success in the Peace of Stralsund contained the seeds of its own destruction. Nor does he deal with Dollinger's view that the Hanse defended its Baltic monopoly by adopting measures that ultimately harmed it. North fails altogether to discuss the reasons for the Hanse's decline and fall (and to mention much recent research at all), although he does carry the story of Hamburg's development down to the Napoleonic era.

The essays on special topics are disciplined, focused surveys. Burkhardt's contribution on *Kontore* would be a splendid basis for an essay comparing the Hanseatic institution with the Italian *fondaco* and the Arab *fonduq*. Ewert and Selzer present network theory and new institutional economics and apply it to the Hanse in such a way that novices will easily understand, a difficult task indeed. Finally, Jahnke covers the research on Baltic trade, its routes, emporia, and products, with accustomed aplomb. However, he does not mention Christina Link's *Der preußische Getreidehandel* (2014) on Prussian grain exports and could not have known of it, since his contribution was demonstrably completed no later than 2009; the same holds true for the articles by North, Burkhardt, and Ewert and Selzer.

Clearly, there was some sort of delay in publication, followed by a rush to print, which may account for the appalling lapses in English that assault the eye hither and yon. The seventh line of North's article reads "during which Colnun bakit walang qas ogne remained expelled from the League" (101). That sort of gobbledygook would have been expunged by the author had he seen proofs, but it never should have gotten past the copyeditor. There are sentences that make no sense; for example, "Beer was usually brown in Europe, but hopped beer in good quality was exclusively brown in the northern German towns" (217): the author means "brewed" (*brauen*, rather than *braun*). But the book's most grievous sin is to be just that little bit off from good English as to betray the fact that the author/translator is not fully in command of the language. This is particularly apparent in North and to a slightly lesser degree in Jahnke, whereas Sarnowsky and Ewert/Selzer are only slightly marred and Hammel-Kiesow and Burkhardt are virtually perfect. All of this suggests a lack of attentive copyediting, which is very uncharacteristic of Brill. It is a sad irony that a volume intended to present the Hanse to an audience "for whom the German language presents some difficulty" (5) should show incontrovertible evidence that, for many an author/translator, the English language presents some difficulty.

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