

explanation of key English terms used in the translation, alongside the Old Danish terms. The general introduction discussed the challenges of translating laws from a period with very different political and social structures, not to mention a different legal language. By adding an annotated glossary, Tamm and Vogt further explain their many choices and also open these complex issues of translation to further discussion.

When translating medieval texts in general, and especially Nordic medieval texts, a choice has to be made: to be true to the wording and structure of the language, or to make the text comprehensible to a modern reader. For *The Danish Medieval Laws*, the choice has been to “be as close to the original as possible without losing legibility” (14). The translated laws are hence not necessarily easy reading. However, maintaining their medieval flare, the laws become a gateway to Danish medieval law and society. The thorough introductions and the extensive vocabulary make this choice workable. Indeed, *The Danish Medieval Laws* must be considered a model for future translations of Nordic medieval laws.

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Sergei Antonov, *Bankrupts and Usurers of Imperial Russia: Debt, Property, and the Law in the Age of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016. Pp. 386. \$49.95 cloth (ISBN 9780674971486).

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When Richard Wortman wrote his *The Development of a Russian Legal Consciousness* in 1976, readers needed to be informed that Russia had a legal system, functioning courts, talented lawyers, and visions of justice in the nineteenth century; the Great Reforms of the 1860s occupied center stage. A long generation later, Sergei Antonov’s inquiry into the practices of borrowing, debt, enterprise, and adjudication plunges us deeply into a sophisticated network in which lenders, borrowers, nobles, merchants, lawyers, and scribes interacted to make commercial growth possible, while at the same time creating a legal framework for prosecuting debt. Antonov examines, in turn, the “culture of credit” itself, and the legal mechanisms erected to deal with it. He argues that “informal personal credit pervaded all aspects of life in imperial Russia” and underpinned the private property regime.

Moreover, credit was regulated by “reasonably effective legal arrangements” oriented toward protecting private property interests. Thus, by means that delve into minute details of specific transactions, Antonov also addresses the big picture of the significance of private property in Imperial Russia.

Part One, “The Culture of Debt,” brings a plethora of examples to bear on Antonov’s contention that real-life lenders, unlike Dostoevsky’s famous old lady, “were exceedingly well integrated into society.” Some cases are dramatic, such as the St. Petersburg murder of a usurer whose client did not know that the former had forgiven his debt as a wedding present (39), but most are prosaic. Nobles borrowed from their servants, merchants borrowed from their customers, and the majority of transactions (many of them crossing estate lines) occurred outside the purview of the government, using registered loan letters, loans, *Wechsel* notes, and oral agreements. Legal practice, as portrayed also in literature, combined “traditional” rules of trust with “rational” accounting. Bankruptcy was regulated as an institution, trust could be created through social respectability (and abused in order to swindle), and family and kinship ties provided a mechanism to negotiate debt, particularly in a world where women’s property rights were strongly protected. Part Two, “Debt and the Law,” turns to the legal structures underpinning borrowing and lending, examining negotiations between borrowers and the police, the practice of imprisoning debtors, the role of lawyers and scribes in the pre-reform courts, and multiple examples of borrowers and creditors using the courts to defend their interests. Antonov shows that the pre-reform legal system “was reasonably efficient in protecting the system of private credit and of private property more generally” (185).

One of the most delightful aspects of Antonov’s book is its intelligent use of Russian literature as a window onto “real life.” Not only classics such as the Tolstoy and Dostoevsky novels mentioned in the title, but also Dmitri Mamin-Sibiriak’s far less well-known *Bread*, for example, gives us first-hand insight into the operations of a modern joint-stock bank in a small town in the Urals (9). In addition, Antonov, who holds a J.D. from New York University, brings his legal expertise to bear on questions such as the use of “proof” in debt trials, the structure of the pre-reform legal profession, the use of witnesses, and civil procedure. Most of all, however, Antonov’s open-minded immersion in individual cases and stories garnered in the archives allow us to see the richness of daily experience in the nineteenth century, and gives us a tactile sense of the ways in which individuals managed and manipulated the commercial landscape and the court system to achieve their own ends. From this material emerges an increasingly resonant theme of recent scholarship: contrary to a long-held view that “a politically conscious ‘middle class’ was ‘missing’ in Russia,” we can observe, together with Antonov, that “urban Russians were able to deploy their wealth, their social status, and their knowledge of legal and other bureaucratic procedures to protect their property and to engage in a complex relationship with administrative authorities” (195).

It is not generally appropriate to ask authors to accomplish goals outside of their stated aims; yet, I will indulge myself by noting that I frequently wanted to know not only about the mechanisms of credit, which are presented in detail, but also about why people needed it. It is true that in a fascinating and entertaining example, Antonov tells us about the officer who needed to borrow from his own servants to pay for his uniform. However, there were hundreds and thousands of small-scale entrepreneurs throughout Russia who might or might not have found a source of microcredit to purchase supplies needed for next year's batch of rakes and hoes, for example. This link between borrowing and enterprise (in some cases on a subsistence level) could be a valuable question to develop further.

Bankrupts and Usurers is an important study that helps us understand how debt and property worked in Imperial Russia, but also goes further by using this understanding to re-create the social universe of Russia's cities and provinces. It joins such exciting works as Alexander Martin's *Enlightened Metropolis* (2014) and Jane Burbank's *Russian Peasants Go to Court* (2004) in promoting what is by now an established and highly productive direction in the recent historiography of Russia: the reconstruction of society and the law with an eye to "what was there" rather than what was not, and re-contextualizing Imperial Russia in the European sphere on this firm basis.

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John O. Haley, *Law's Political Foundations: Rivers, Rifles, Rice, and Religion*, Cheltenham/Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2016. Pp. viii, 256. \$108.00 cloth (ISBN 9781785368493).
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Comparative law and legal history are both fields with their own difficulties and challenges. When they are combined, their challenges can compound. The wider the chronological, geographical, and linguistic scope, the more arduous the challenge becomes. When the account covers systems ranging from Ancient China and Japan to Western Europe and Hispanic America, the challenge appears gargantuan. Haley's book meets this challenge and is certain to impress. It tells grand historical stories of the development of political systems and their concurrent legal institutions.

In this extraordinarily sweeping volume, Haley analyzes and discusses how certain legal and political systems historically evolved in varying ways.