



Between Betrothal and Bedding. Marriage Formation in Sweden, 1200–1600

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Between Betrothal and Bedding. Marriage Formation in Sweden, 1200–1600

MIA KORPIOLA

Leiden, Brill, 2009

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This study by Mia Korpiola is about marriage formation in Sweden as a process constituting several legal acts, as betrothal, wedding, transfer of the bride to the bridegroom's house, putting the couple to bed, and the morning gift, given after the first night together where the groom became the wife's legal guardian. The book, published here as volume 43 in the series of *The Northern World. North Europe and the Baltic c. 400–1700 A.D. Peoples, Economies and Cultures*, is an updated version of the doctoral thesis in Law, published in Helsinki in 2004. This is a study of Swedish medieval marriage formation, in a broad European context. The medieval Catholic marriage doctrine, which focused on mutual words of consent, is presented in detail, as well as the later Lutheran marriage dogma. This study is a contribution to the history of marriage formation during medieval and early modern times, explaining the pragmatic and rural character of the Swedish case. It is divided into four main parts, the first one dealing with the process of formation of traditional marriage in Sweden, the second on the act of marriage according to canon law, the third part focuses on the challenge of controlling marriage formation in medieval Sweden, and the last part deals with the ecclesiastical versus traditional control of marriage formation in Sweden. This last part of the book is empirically mostly concentrated on the Reformation and the post-Reformation until 1600.

This is a valuable study, where the broad focus is both the strength as well as the weakness of the work. It is an achievement to present the study of marriage formation in Sweden over 400 years, in a canon law context. The author is well versed in international research and the list of references is an achievement, which will also benefit further study in the field. Many international studies on canon law influence on marriage have demonstrated how this process took place over a long period of time, but those studies have also shown great regional variation. The weakness of Korpiola's work is that, especially in the first part of the book, she uses many different sources, as well as scholarly research, without raising the question of historical and regional differences. An example can, for instance, be taken from the discussion about 'Guardians, Abductions and Peace Legislation' (pp. 35–9). Some of the results are also presented in rather descriptive way, without explaining the mechanism of historical change.

The last part of the book is the most interesting one, especially the discussion of sexual crimes and how the mechanisms of control was exercised through the practice of baptism as well as through the churching of the mother after childbirth. This last part of the study will without doubt stimulate further comparative studies in other Scandinavian countries.

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