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The Laws' Many Bodies

Studies in Legal Hybridity and Jurisdictional Complexity,
c1600–1900

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Across the West, a legal system centred on the state, the creation of general national laws, the elimination of competing jurisdictions, and the marginalization of non-legal norms was a very long historical process. This volume examines the »poly-juralism« of Europe's past – its legal hybridity and jurisdictional complexity – through case studies from a number of perspectives and traditions: Anglo-American, continental, Nordic, and mixed. The authors remind us that law precedes and surrounds the state, which is but one source of norms. They contest the anachronistic projection of modern legal nationalism, positivism, and centralism into the past. And these studies challenge both ideas of deep correspondence between laws, culture, and society and the division of Western traditions into reasonably discrete, closed legal families. Indeed, the lessons of this plural past can shed considerable light on the present, both in the West and across the globe.

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