Pax Boreo-Romana: Reflections on Roman Law with Icelandic and Global Legal Traditions

The Faculty of Law at the University of Akureyri is pleased to announce the publication of a special issue of *Nordicum-Mediterraneum* titled *Pax Boreo-Romana: Reflections on Roman Law with Icelandic and Global Legal Traditions,* edited by Sara Fusco, Adjunct Professor, and Elva Run Sveinsdóttir**,** teaching and editing assistant. Although the project grew out of the Roman Law course (SAG0176-H25), the volume reflects a much broader intellectual landscape. Contributions come not only from Icelandic law students but also from exchange students from Germany and China, as well as former Polar Law students. In this way, the issue engages with the Faculty of Law at its full capacity, showcasing UNAK's full potential for creating meaningful opportunities for students.

The special issue begins with two articles by the editors, Sara Fusco and Elva Run Sveinsdóttir. Their paper, *Retaliatory Justice and Roman Legal Order: A Comparative Study of Icelandic and Mediterranean Traditions*, examines how ideas of honour and legal order appear across Roman, Icelandic, and Mediterranean contexts. The article compares ancient concepts with modern customary systems, showing how societies negotiate the boundary between personal justice and formal legal authority.

Icelandic Students' Contributions

The second paper is entitled "*Citizen or Not? Roman Status, EU Nationality and the Nordic Courts on Who Counts*" and is authored by UNAK law students, namely
Álfheiður Rósa Stefánsdóttir, Hugrún Einarsdóttir, Ingibjörg Ýr Smáradóttir, Ragnheiður Anna Hallsdóttir, Rannveig Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, Salbjörg Ragnarsdóttir and Selma Karen Hólm.

In their paper, the authors compare Roman citizenship with contemporary debates on EU citizenship, Nordic nationality frameworks, and judicial approaches to inclusion and exclusion. Their analysis shows how ancient categories of status, rights, and belonging continue to resonate in modern institutional settings.

International Perspectives: German and Chinese Analyses of Roman Law

Two exchange students contribute comparative analyses that expand the issue's geographical scope.

Ke Zhang (China) contributes *Women's Legal Capacity and the Decline of Tutela Muliebris in the Late Republic and Early Principate*. This article argues that Roman women were already exercising substantial legal agency before the Principate, demonstrating, through Digest sources, that guardianship had weakened significantly in republican practice. Zhang shows that imperial reforms largely codified what daily life had already made customary.

Lara Broghammer (Germany) presents *Possession and Ownership – A Comparative Analysis of Roman Law and the BGB*, using the 125th anniversary of the German Civil Code as an opportunity to revisit the Roman origins of key property-law concepts. Her comparison highlights how the distinction between possession and ownership remains foundational in continental civil law.

Polar Law Programme: A *continuum* contribution to research

The issue also includes a wide-ranging study by Jonathan Wood, lawyer and PhD candidate at the University of Iceland, and former Polar Law student (as Sara Fusco). His article, *Legal Paradox: The Roman Republic's Legal Code's Influence and Manifestation in the Soviet Union's Jurisprudence*, examines how Soviet legal ideology selectively appropriated Roman legal doctrines. Wood shows that, despite official ideological distance, Roman ideas shaped Soviet codification, civil procedure, and doctrinal development throughout the twentieth century.

Final Reflection: A Northern Classroom with a Global Reach

The special issue concludes with an editorial reflection by Sara Fusco, focusing on the experience of teaching Roman law in an Icelandic law programme while engaging with students from diverse legal cultures.

An invitation to read this issue is given by statements written by the Icelandic students and faculty members involved in the course, which captures the intellectual purpose of the issue:

“Teaching Roman law in the Icelandic context highlights how foundational legal concepts, such as property, obligations, and procedure, continue to influence modern Nordic legal systems. It offers students a comparative lens, showing how seemingly distant historical norms underpin contemporary Nordic doctrines and legal reasoning. By engaging with Roman legal sources, Icelandic students at HA gain analytical tools that can deepen their understanding of civil law traditions and strengthen conversations across different legal systems. This, in turn, gives them a more in-depth understanding of how to apply the law once they graduate out into the real world.”

- Valgerður Guðmundsdóttir, Assistant Professor, and supervisory teacher of the course, Faculty of Law

“As both a former student and a teaching assistant, I find that Roman Law gives Icelandic students a clearer understanding of the foundations of modern law and of the many principles in Icelandic legislation that are derived from Roman legal tradition”

– Elva Run Sveinsdóttir , teaching and editor assistant, Faculty of Law

“We think that the study of Roman law becomes vital for Icelandic law students because it shows the historical development of fundamental legal principles which exist in our current system and provides understanding of the broader European legal frameworks. This study also reveals the ongoing impact Roman law has on modern law which makes us reflect more critically on why the law looks the way it does today.”

– Álfheiður Rósa Stefánsdóttir, Hugrún Einarsdóttir, Ingibjörg Ýr Smáradóttir, Ragnheiður Anna Hallsdóttir, Rannveig Sigrún Stefánsdóttir, Salbjörg Ragnarsdóttir and Selma Karen Hólm