

Anglo- Saxon England 17



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Was the earliest English prose really divided into a Mercian tradition and a separate West Saxon one? What is the full roll-call of extant texts containing late Old English 'Winchester' words? How far was Anglo-Saxon medicine hocus-pocus and how far the fruit of deliberate experimentation? How much Greek vocabulary was known in Anglo-Saxon England, and how was it known and how used? How did Anglo-Saxon land law work in practice? This volume breaks new ground concerning all these fundamental questions and more. Advances in scholarship, application of modern scientific knowledge of a type normally not available, new directions of thought, original analysis, stricter criteria, greater scope of survey, and additions to the stock of primary evidence all characterize this book.

Etymology, old and new, is one of the topics which receive valuable treatment. Aelfric's thematic employment of this technique in his homilies and Holthausen's citation of Frisian analogies in his *Altenglisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* of 1934 are examined, the latter in the light of much fresh knowledge achieved by Dutch scholars (the author among them) during the last two decades. Various sustained Anglo-Saxon initiatives in the domain of vocabulary, both native and exotic, are brought out: the resourcefulness of physicians in devising loanwords, loan formations, simple descriptions and the like for plants of Mediterranean origin; the extent (more fully plotted than before) to which teachers at Winchester succeeded in standardizing words of their choice in late Old English prose texts; the scale on which scholars accumulated Greek words in all branches of study from sources such as Isidore's *Etymologiae*, and the use they put them to (without benefit of Greek grammar and syntax). The Anglo-Saxons' creation of a vernacular literary prose is chronicled more clearly and convincingly than ever before: the rise of two styles, plain and mannered, is traced in a radically redefined pre-900 corpus, neither tradition emerging exclusively in either Mercia or Wessex, and the first major combination of the two coming with the works of King Alfred and the

(continued on back flap)

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Her mon mæg giet gesion hiora swæð

ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

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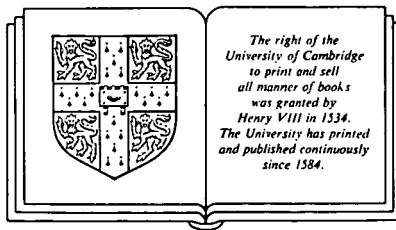
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Versions of the four items immediately following the record of the third conference of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists were read at that conference. Professor Bately read a version of her item to the Society in 1985 and Professor Bodden a version of hers in 1983

Abbreviations listed before the bibliography (pp. 283–5) are used throughout the volume without other explanation