



The Beginnings of English Law (Toronto Medieval Texts and Translations)

Lisi Oliver

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The laws of Æthelbert of Kent (ca. 600), Hlohere and Eadric (685x686), and Wihtrred (695), are the earliest laws from Anglo-Saxon England, and the first Germanic laws written in the vernacular. They are of unique importance as the only extant early medieval English laws that delineate the progress of law and legal language in the early days of the conversion to Christianity. Æthelbert's laws, the closest existing equivalent to Germanic law as it was transmitted in a pre-literate period, contrast with Hlohere and Eadric's expanded laws, which concentrate on legal procedure and process, and again contrast with the further changed laws of Wihtrred which demonstrate how the new religion of Christianity adapted and changed the law to conform to changing social mores.

This volume updates previous works with current scholarship in the fields of linguistics and social and legal history to present new editions and translations of these three Kentish pre-Alfredian laws. Each body of law is situated within its historical, literary, and legal context, annotated, and provided with facing-page translation.

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