



Anglo-Saxon Saints' Lives as History Writing in Late Medieval England

Cynthia Turner Camp

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The past was ever present in later medieval England, as secular and religious institutions worked to recover (or create) originary narratives that could guarantee, they hoped, their political and spiritual legitimacy. Anglo-Saxon England, in particular, was imagined as a spiritual "golden age" and a rich source of precedent, for kings and for the monasteries that housed early English saints' remains. This book examines the vernacular hagiography produced in a monastic context, demonstrating how writers, illuminators, and policy-makers used English saints (including St Edmund) to re-envision the bonds between ancient spiritual purity and contemporary conditions. Treating history and ethical practice as inseparable, poets such as Osbern Bokenham, Henry Bradshaw, and John Lydgate reconfigured England's history through its saints, engaging with contemporary concerns about institutional identity, authority, and ethics. Cynthia Turner Camp is an Assistant Professor of English at the University of Georgia.

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