THE THREE KINGS OF COLOGNE:

a diplomatic edition of the unabridged English version of

John of Hildesheim's Historia trium Regum

in

Durham MS Hunter 15,

with

a reconstruction of the translator's Latin text on facing pages

based on Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 275,

and a study of the manuscript tradition

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ABSTRACT

The Middle English Three Kings of Cologne is a translation (c. 1400) of the Historia trium Regum (1364-75) attributed to John of Hildesheim, a much copied work setting the story of the biblical Magi in a wider context.

The edition of C. Horstmann (EETS, 1886) printed parallel texts of abridged English versions. With the discovery of many new MSS -- 20 manuscripts of the 15thC and several early prints are now known -- it is possible to define the stemmatic relationships within each of Horstmann's three groups, and to clarify the relations between the groups. Notably, the Royal MS is confirmed as the archetype of the 1st group; subgroups of the 2nd group are defined; the archetype of the 3rd group is identified as Stonyhurst MS B.23; and the 1st group text is shown to depend directly on a 3rd group base.

The present edition presents a diplomatic transcription of Durham MS Hunter 15 pt.2, of particular interest among the recently discovered witnesses as being the unique, albeit defective, witness of an unabridged version of the translation. The many thousands of words of hitherto unpublished text contain antedatings and other lexicographic discoveries. However, the identification of this witness further complicates the evolutionary problems relating to the text, the central dilemma being whether the unabridged version is the primary version of the translation or whether an abridged translation was later...
expanded. On a number of grounds, including an analysis of a number of closely related Latin versions, the present study argues in favour of the latter alternative, a conclusion which has obvious bearing on the edition of the text. Finally the problems surrounding the nature of the prototype abridgement are explored, if not fully resolved (Horstmann's verso text is probably the closest approximation to this prototype).

A better understanding of the Latin MS tradition allows a reconstruction of the exemplar used by the ME translator, and permits a detailed examination of the problems of translation. The Latin text printed in parallel with the Durham version aims to reconstruct this exemplar.

This thesis is thus principally the study of a manuscript tradition. However the Latin original, which attained widespread distribution in the 15thC, constitutes an important document concerning the extent of contemporary Western knowledge and interest in the historical, religious, and cultural background of the Orient, matters which are covered in the annotations. The present edition includes a fresh examination of the author's sources, with a tentative reconstruction of a lost source.

A summary of other ME versions of HTR, and a survey of the other works included in the Durham MS, are also included.