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# Personal names in medieval *libri vitæ* as a sociolinguistic resource

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the potential of using a historical sociolinguistic approach to interrogate the extensive lists of personal names found in medieval *libri vitæ*. So far, these lists have mainly been exploited in historical and a few onomastic studies, with a focus on name etymology and personal naming practices. Both the linguistics of the names and sociolinguistic perspectives remain to date underexamined. In this contribution, we explore possible sociolinguistic research questions, and present methodological challenges and preliminary results on the basis of four case studies from two examples, the *libri vitæ* of Thorney Abbey and Reichenau. The case studies examine autographs, choice of script and language, and dialect adaptation. Our main interest lies in the modelling and explanation of graphic and linguistic variation in the names. Our particular focus is on the status of the respective vernacular languages involved (Old English and Old High German) and in the conclusions we can draw from these documents about their underlying writing traditions in general, and scribal training and practices in particular.

**Keywords:** historical personal names; *libri vitæ*; linguistic repertoires; scribal practices; script and language choice

## 1 Introduction

In this article, we present some preliminary results from studies that explore the medieval text type *libri vitæ* from a sociolinguistic perspective. The manuscripts are conglomerates of lists with personal names from different regions and social backgrounds, written by a wide variety of scribes at different times. Hence, they offer rich material for linguistic aspects that have so far received only limited attention.

The linguistic entities that are subject to sociolinguistic enquiry in our investigations here are personal names. Previous onomastic studies have shown that

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proper names, and especially personal names, are more flexible and adaptable than other linguistic elements. Therefore, they are particularly prone to innovations and variation (Coates 2016) and “appear to be a barometer of sociological changes in a rapid and flexible way [...]” (Van Langendonck 2007: 309). Moreover, personal names not only refer to, identify and individualise persons, but they also convey cultural, social and situational functions in their usage. However, despite their linguistic flexibility and the strong links between names, society and culture, names in general are still a neglected resource for historical sociolinguistic research. They are absent as a specific subject of study in current handbooks (cf. Heer 2022) and are only very rarely put at the centre of interest in historical sociolinguistic studies in general.<sup>1</sup>

The core of our following analyses is variation in the material form of personal names; that is, our starting point is the written name and variation at the (palaeo) graphic, graphemic, phonological and morphological level. Within name studies, and especially in its recently developing field of socioonomastics,<sup>2</sup> variation in the popularity of forenames and the changes (or “fashions”) in name giving in certain environments within and between certain social groups are studied (Ainiola 2016).<sup>3</sup> With regard to historical personal names, similar questions have been put forward from a prosopographical perspective (Clark 1978), to reconstruct the change of social trends (Chetwood 2018), or to show social belonging (Rolker 2014). Some studies have accessed social categories such as ethnicity through the etymology of names (cf. the studies within the project “Nomen et gens”<sup>4</sup>), while other research has investigated situational and genre-based variation (Sonderegger 1961a, 1961b, 2008).

However, while variation and change in name popularity would no doubt be fruitful as a research question for the *libri vitae* (see Chetwood 2018 as an example) and remains to be explored for the Continental *libri vitae*, this material offers considerable interest for investigating scribal practice, as it includes text which is demonstrably created and transmitted in various ways (e.g. face-to-face scripting, autographs, dictation and evolving practices of copying and textual arrangement). Therefore, we examine the choices of script and spellings of the names, and approach

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1 Clark (1992b: 453) notes that sources for name forms fall more into the remit of historical than English studies, and that findings are also orientated “at least as often towards socio-cultural or politico-economic history as towards linguistics”. For examples which do place name evidence at the centre of linguistic enquiry, see, for example, Clark (1992a); Colman (1992).

2 For an overview of the field and ongoing research see the website of the research network “New trends in Nordic Socio-onomastics” <https://www.nordicsocioonomastics.org/>.

3 While older studies clearly stand in a Labovian tradition and refer to macro social factors to explain variation, newer research also takes single actors, the expression of identity and the use of names in smaller social groups as its focus (cf. Akselberg 2012).

4 <http://www.neg.uni-tuebingen.de/>.

them by means of sociolinguistic questions. That is, we investigate the *writers* of the name material contained in the *libri vitæ*, rather than the *bearers*. This method will provide an insight into the sociolinguistic reality of the scribes, rather than into the name-giving and social practices of the named people, although in places there are overlaps, such as in the investigation of autographs.

In four case studies based on selected material from the *libri vitæ* of Reichenau and Thorney Abbey, we aim to demonstrate that the choice of the name form reveals different aspects of particular scribes' specific resources for writing, as well as language attitudes that are constituted by the medieval social context. More concretely, our case studies provide insight into individual writers' levels of literacy, training and language background, into changing writing traditions and language norms, as well as the interaction of oral and written practices in historical language contact.

The methodological approaches we take are different from those of previous research on *libri vitæ* and therefore widen the perspectives on this historical text type. Likewise, we introduce new material as a subject for historical sociolinguistic research that raises its own specific theoretical and methodological challenges, and contributes to the field with a focus on personal names and the profiling of varying conditions for historical situational writing.

In the following, we introduce the text type *liber vitæ* and present the two manuscripts we examine in Section 2 before giving an overview of *libri vitæ* as a resource for sociolinguistic research in Section 3. In Section 4, we present four case studies that explore sociolinguistic approaches to the *libri vitæ* of Reichenau and Thorney Abbey. Section 5 gives a summary of our main results and implications for further sociolinguistic research on text types containing name lists.

## 2 The text type *liber vitæ*

*Libri vitæ* are medieval manuscripts with extensive lists of personal names. Their layout and conception vary and none of the twelve manuscripts known today looks exactly like another. Some of them were created specifically as *libri vitæ* and use tables of contents, headings and columns as structural elements (e.g. the Reichenau *liber vitæ*, cf. Section 2.1), while others were added to already-existing manuscripts such as gospels, as is the case for the manuscript from Thorney Abbey (cf. Section 2.2).

The term "*liber vitæ*" goes back to the idea of a celestial book of life mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and the custom of maintaining *libri vitæ* in a monastic context became popular in Carolingia and in England during the ninth century. The manuscripts had a mainly liturgical and memorial function: if your

name was in the book, you would be included in the monastery's prayers. But they had also a political dimension, as different monasteries in Europe allied themselves by exchanging name lists of their respective monks or nuns (cf. Geuenich and Ludwig 2015).

One characteristic feature the *libri vitæ* share is the immense range of names and the dynamics of the name lists. In the lists, people could be grouped into larger communities, i.e. as belonging to different institutions, but also smaller social groups, such as living and dead monks of a specific monastery, a clerical rank group, a group of travelling pilgrims, a royal family, or couples. Some *libri vitæ* were intended to be extendable documents, as space was left on certain manuscript pages in order to add more names. This means the manuscripts could be in use for a long time period; in the case of Reichenau with more than 38,000 name entries, name records span more than 400 years, while the *liber vitæ* of Thorney Abbey in its current form has entries written over a period of about a hundred years.

## 2.1 The *liber vitæ* of Reichenau

The *liber vitæ* of Reichenau is the most comprehensive of all the *libri vitæ* and contains more than 38,000 personal name entries from the ninth to the fourteenth century. It was composed as a *liber vitæ* between 823 and 825 (cf. Zettler 2010: 65) including name lists that were collected following the synod in Attigny in 762, where leading clerics from various Continental monasteries agreed to memorise each others' deceased. For this oldest layer that is documented on folios 15v–58v, a table of contents<sup>5</sup> was created at the beginning of the codex. Each list is then introduced with the order number from the *capitula* and a title naming the respective monasteries in red ink, as shown in Figure 1. The lists are all neatly arranged in columns. In addition to these clerical lists, the oldest layer also contains lists with secular rulers, such as emperors and kings, and other benefactors and friends of the monastery on folios 62v and 63r (Autenrieth et al. 1979: XXVII). In later years, the systematic structure of the oldest layer was no longer followed and names, both of clerics and secular people such as friends, sponsors of the monastery and groups of pilgrims, were added piecemeal, presumably not following any systematic principle.

The entries in the original layer were written by five hands only and were copied from exemplars that had been sent to Reichenau by the respective monasteries (Autenrieth et al. 1979: LXIII–LXV). The entries were thoroughly planned and follow a clear content structure with regard to the institutional or social belonging of the

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<sup>5</sup> Entitled INCIPIUNT CAPITULA, folio 15r, see <https://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/en/zbz/Ms-Rh-hist0027/15r-3/0/>.

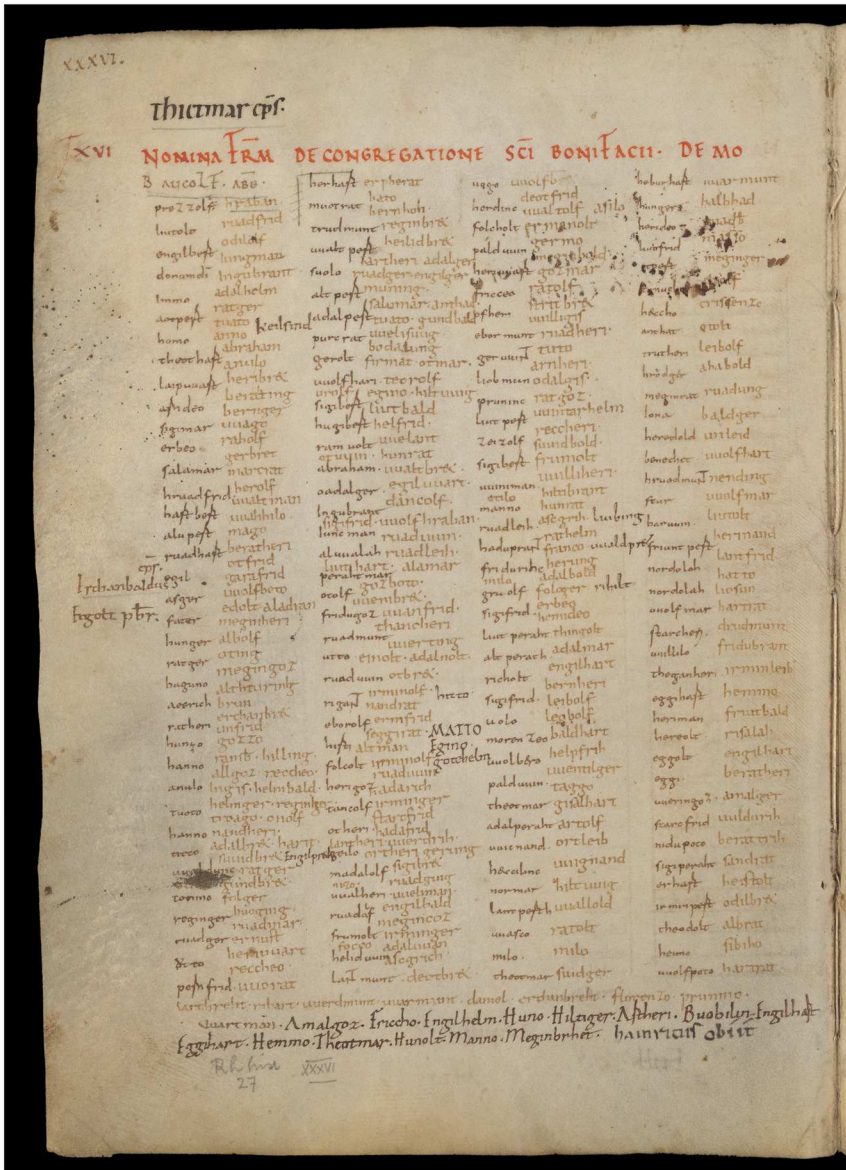


Figure 1: Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 31v – codex of fraternisation (www.e-codices.unifr.ch).

name bearers. The subsequent entries, on the other hand, show huge variability in layout, list length and technical execution, and are only rarely categorised. Among these entries are lists of several names recorded by a single scribe, but also single



entries of one name only. They include copies of exemplars, but may also be ad hoc entries that record a person's or a group's visit to the monastery (cf. Section 4.1). In fact, most of the newer name lists are still unexplored, palaeographically, linguistically and historically.

The book was compiled from the start as a “working document” that was intended to grow during later years. For instance, lists of further monasteries were added to the *capitula* and more names were added to existing lists, which gives some lists the character of proper bookkeeping when, for instance, new names were added continuously as new monks entered a certain monastery. The growing character is also mirrored codicologically in the later addition of more layers (quaterniones) to the original manuscript in around 830 and later in the tenth century.

The manuscript was kept at Reichenau Abbey until the dissolution of the Priory of Reichenau and the Diocese of Konstanz at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After a short stay at Rheinau Abbey, the book came to the Central Library of Zurich where it is stored with the shelf mark Ms. Rh. hist. 27.<sup>6</sup>

## 2.2 The *liber vitæ* of Thorney Abbey

The *liber vitæ* of Thorney Abbey is contained in the folios at the beginning of London, British Library MS Additional 40,000. The manuscript is an early-tenth-century gospel, with a probable provenance in Northern France (Gneuss and Lapidge 2014: 224–225). The gospels themselves were subject to Old English ink and drypoint glossing from the mid-tenth century onwards (Studer-Joho 2017: 145; Clark 1985: 51), suggesting that the manuscript had moved to England by that date. The palaeographical dating of these hands, however, predates Thorney's refoundation in 972 as part of the Tenth Century Reformation, and so it would appear that the glosses were added at another location before the book arrived at Thorney. Given Thorney Abbey's status as one of Bishop Æthelwold's East Anglian refoundations, it is possible that the manuscript was brought to the monastery at his behest, specifically to provide books for the new institution.<sup>7</sup> Between c.1090 and c.1200 around 3,200 personal names were added to leaves at the beginning of the gospel (ff. 1r–12v), which according to Gameson (2015b: 115) are “the work of a large number of scribes”.

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<sup>6</sup> The manuscript is digitally available at [www.e-codices.ch](http://www.e-codices.ch).

<sup>7</sup> This would not be the only example of bishops sourcing important religious and liturgical texts from continental sources to supplement shortcomings in individual Anglo-Saxon institutions. See e.g. Treharne (2009: 44) on Bishop Leofric's efforts to furnish Exeter Cathedral with books.

Thorney's *liber vitæ*, then, contrasts with Reichenau's in that it was not envisaged from the outset as an independent, standalone memorial document; its position in spare or additional folios at the beginning of a gospel marks it as a secondary text.<sup>8</sup> The very earliest entry, dated by Clark (1985: 51) to the 1060s or 1070s<sup>9</sup> in what was to become the *liber vitæ* is an inscription on f. 4r recording a gift to the abbey:

- (1) + Ælfric 7 wulfwine. Eadgife goldsmiðes geafen to broþer rædenne twegen orn weghenes goldes þ is on þis ilce boc her foruten gewired

[Ælfric and Wulfwine, Eadgifu's goldsmiths, gave to the brotherhood two oras of weighed gold, which is wired onto the outside of this book.]<sup>10</sup>

This entry stands out, as it clearly records the commemoration of the three individuals in exchange for a donation to the abbey, and is reminiscent of other inscriptions detailing the physical history of a book, for example that found in the Codex Aureus (Stockholm, National Library of Sweden, MS A.135). It is possible that this first inscription attracted later names to be added, and so in this respect the entry of the *liber vitæ* in the gospel had a more organic beginning. However, the earliest layer of true *liber vitæ* text, on ff 10r–v, is clearly set out for the purpose, as f. 10r begins with the short inscription “Hęc sunt nomina fr(atru)m istius loci”.<sup>11</sup> Five columns of equal width are ruled across the page, and a number of names were added in the same hand, dated palaeographically to the turn of the eleventh century (see Figure 2). Moreover, as Gameson (2015b: 116) notes, this ruling was also applied to ff. 2, 3, 11 and 12, showing that the project “was undertaken with a degree of foresight, some provision being made for future growth”. It is notable that this arrangement did not last long, as many subsequent entries fail to keep within the narrow columns, and half-way down the second column of f. 10v the arrangement is abandoned in favour of wider, sprawling columns that give way on later folios to long lines. It should also be mentioned that the folios were not completed in the order that they appear in the manuscript, but seem to have been added to in a rather ad hoc fashion, perhaps depending on the amount of space available on a given folio, both in the main writing area, and in the margins, which are frequently utilised.

<sup>8</sup> It should be noted however, that there was a tradition of inserting important documents such as manumissions into gospel books (see Gameson 2015a: 20–38).

<sup>9</sup> “Can only be dated in general terms but would sit comfortably in the later eleventh century” (Gameson 2015a: 35).

<sup>10</sup> All translations are by the authors unless otherwise noted.

<sup>11</sup> [Here are the names of the brothers of this place].



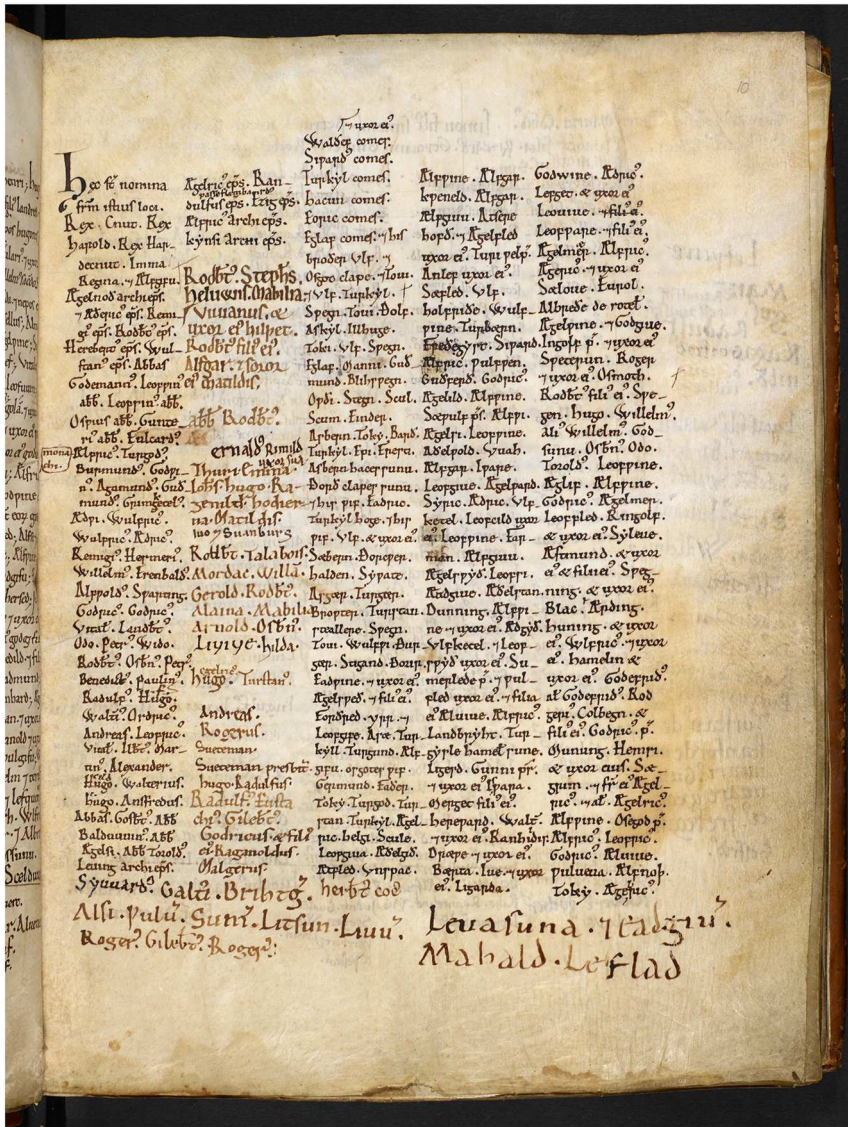


Figure 2: © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000, f.10r.

Thorney's name material is not straightforward to interpret. Although the *liber vitae* was originally envisaged by its creator(s) as a uniform work with a pre-conceived layout, later entries failed to adhere to the original planned form. There is clear evidence that the earliest entries have been rearranged and copied,

presumably from an earlier exemplar. For example, the first entry on f. 10r after the introductory heading is that of Cnut, king of England (1016–35), who is followed by members of his family. The list then proceeds down the social hierarchy, listing archbishops (Æthelnoð, archbishop of Canterbury 1020–38), bishops (Remigius, Bishop of Lincoln 1067–92), and then abbots of Thorney (Godemann, d.1013) (see Figure 3). These ecclesiastical entries end part way down the second column, the remainder of which was originally left blank, and filled with names in a variety of hands at a later date.

The third column starts with a group of individuals designated *Comes*: *Turkyll*, *Hacun*, *Eoric* and *Eglaf*; the East Scandinavian forms of the names prompted Whitelock (1945: 136) to suggest that this list represents Cnut's retinue, perhaps representing a visit to the abbey. The latest individuals mentioned in f.10r's rearranged list are Gunter, Abbot of Thorney (1085–1113) and Robert, Bishop of Lincoln (1093–1123), and by using their life dates this section can therefore be dated between 1093 and 1113. Clearly, the earliest of these individuals were not entered into the list during their lifetimes; the names have been arranged hierarchically and the text composed at a single time, by a single hand. The *liber vitæ*'s earliest layer of names,

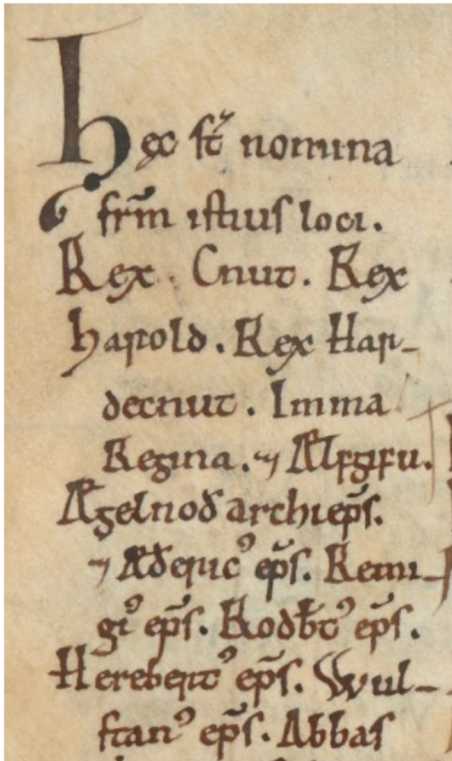


Figure 3: © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000, f. 10r.

then, although written around 1100, contains the names of individuals stretching back over the previous 90 years or so. Case studies 4.2 and 4.3 will focus only on this earliest layer of *liber vitæ* material.

### 3 *Libri vitæ* as a resource for sociolinguistic research

To date, *libri vitæ* have mostly been used for historical research and documents from England and the Continent have rarely been considered together. Historical research questions revolve around the custom of *libri vitæ* in the context of Christian memorial practices, manuscript history and prosopography, i.e. the history of persons and their social affiliations. While many Continental manuscripts were edited in the 1970s and 1980s with the *libri vitæ* of St. Gallen as the only exception (Geuenich et al. 2019), the English manuscripts benefit from having been edited more recently, with new editions of the New Minster (Keynes 1996), Durham (Rollason and Rollason 2007) and Thorney (Rollason 2015) *libri vitæ*. The focus of the scholarship on the English sources is primarily historical in nature, too, however, far more work has been done from a prosopographical and onomastic point of view (see, for example, the contextualising chapters to Rollason [2015]). In part that may be because the Norman Conquest provides a historical, political and linguistic break which has been a long-standing focus of historical scholarship, for example in studies of changing name trends in response to the Conquest (Chetwood 2018; Clark 1985; von Feilitzen 1937). In addition, there are some onomastic and linguistic case studies on name inventories or name groups, such as the Scandinavian names in the Thorney *liber vitæ* (Whitlock 1945), on name etymologies (Wagner 2011) or on the linguistic adaptation of foreign names in the Reichenau *liber vitæ* (Geuenich 2018; Geuenich and Ludwig 2018; Waldispühl 2017, 2018).

Nevertheless, the English and the Continental material has concentrated mainly on the bearers of the names, whether as objects of prosopographical study or as a record of changing name fashions. What scholarship has not yet addressed to any great degree is what this name material can tell us about its writers, that is, how the name entries reflect conflicting orthographical norms and changes in scribal training.

The *libri vitæ* remain an untapped source of information about the interactions of a wide range of people, both religious and lay, with literacy/literate practices. There is much to be explored about the different scripting situations which underlie the English and Continental *libri vitæ*, the different attitudes revealed towards orthographic norms, and information about scribal training. They are valuable

documents in that they record the scribal activity of a particular place over a substantial period of time, sometimes (but not always) continuously, and can therefore reveal something about the changing orientations of scribes towards linguistic/orthographic norms and changing institutional conditions for scribal practices. *Libri vitae* are particularly amenable to a historical sociolinguistic approach; by combining linguistic methods with the historical and social context of the texts' ongoing creation we can interpret the names meaningfully and exploit the full potential of these documents.

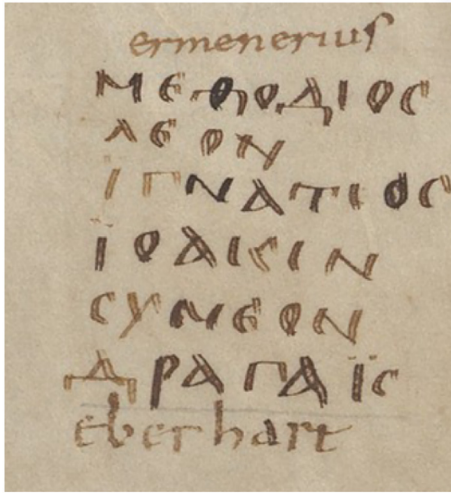
It is the sheer variability of the *liber vitae* material that presents the biggest challenge to researchers using this material – whether for linguistic or for historical enquiry. The names are added, very often without contextualising information. This fact restricts our ability to investigate naming trends on the basis of factors like social status or ethnicity. A more fruitful way of addressing the material is the investigation of its writers rather than the name bearers. In addition, detailed examination reveals that not all entries were made in the same circumstances; some entries bear marks of a face-to-face scripting situation, whereas others are clearly the product of some kind of textual reorganisation. This means that the text is not uniform in its mode of production and therefore, large-scale comparison is not always feasible.

## 4 Case studies

### 4.1 Autographs in Reichenau: varying distribution of writing resources

In this case study, we highlight three examples of autograph writing that demonstrate different levels of literacy and show that the manuscript was accessible for writing to a variety of people from various professional and regional backgrounds.

An autograph is usually defined as the hand of the author of a certain work (Long 2014; Overgaauw 2013). In the context of the Reichenau *liber vitae*, we classify as autographs entries which include the writer's name. This may be a single entry or a list with the writer's name and other names. It is important for the present context that autographs were always produced in the immediate presence of the writer who may have been a member of, or a visitor to, Reichenau Abbey. To identify and describe the autographs, we consider material aspects such as the writing instrument, palaeographic characteristics, the level of technical execution, the layout context of the entry as well as linguistic properties of the names and the historical context.



**Figure 4:** Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 40r (detail) – entries in Greek capitals (www.e-codices.unifr.ch).

The first example forms a list of six names in Greek uncials on fol. 40r (see Figure 4):

- (2) ΜΕΘΟΔΙΟΣ, ΛΕΩΝ, ΙΓΝΑΤΙΟΣ, ΙΟΑΚΙΝ, ΣΥΜΕΩΝ, ΔΡΑΓΑΪΣ  
*METHODIOS, LEON, IGNATIOS, IOAKIN, SYMEON, DRAGAIS*

The list is executed by a trained hand and earlier research has stated that the names belong to members of a group lead by Methodius, the archbishop of Pannonia and Moravia, who was kept as a prisoner in a Carolingian monastery, probably Reichenau, during the 870s (cf. Lilie et al. 2013; Zettler 1983). Interestingly, the names *ignatius*, *leo*, *ioachim* and *Simon* occur also in a sequence on fol. 16r (D3/4) as additions to the list of the living monks from Reichenau. They were all written in Caroline minuscule by one local scribe. The entry *methodius* is likewise written in Caroline minuscules and by a local scribe at the top of the same list on fol. 15v (A1).<sup>12</sup> The name SYMEON occurs elsewhere in rather big and tidily executed Greek capitals on fol. 15r (D3) and there is a third entry in Greek capitals on fol. 55r, ΚΟΚΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΚ that cannot be further identified. The well-done technical execution of all Greek entries indicates that these writers were used to writing. However, there are some open questions with regard to proficiency since both ΛΕΩΝ and CYMEON/SYMEON are usually spelled with Omega Ω instead of Omicron O.<sup>13</sup> The

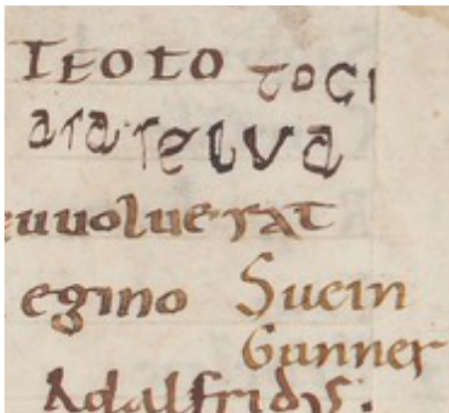
<sup>12</sup> Zettler (1983: 288–293) points out that another entry, *kyrilos*, on fol. 16v (B1) belongs palaeographically and etymologically to the group of Greek names in Caroline minuscule, a name that could identify Methodios' brother Konstantin who took the name *Kyrill* before he died in 869. Ziegler (1985) rejects this hypothesis, however.

<sup>13</sup> We thank Antoaneta Granberg for this observation. Further interdisciplinary research is needed to answer these questions.



probability is high that the same names in Latin script occurring in the list of the living members of the Reichenau monastery belong to the same persons, and that the local scribe adapted the names to the Latin alphabet when he wrote them down. Hence, he integrated the names into the existing Reichenau list and its linguistic conventions. Zettler (1983: 285, 290) considers the fact that Methodius is added high up in the list to be an indication of his higher status as an archbishop.

While the Greek examples probably give testimony of autographs written by professional scribes from the Eastern part of the medieval Christian world who chose their original writing system to represent their names, another subcorpus with foreign names, the North Germanic names, shows different features. The 743 names probably belong to Nordic pilgrims who travelled by the monastery of Reichenau between the eleventh and twelfth century on their way to Rome and Jerusalem. Most of the names were skillfully written by local scribes in Reichenau and some of them show signs of oral language contact which indicates that the scribes wrote the North Germanic names down by dictation (Jørgensen and Jónsson 1923; Naumann 2009; Waldspühl 2017, 2020). However, three North Germanic names, the male name *TOCI*, and especially the two female names *asa* and *selva*<sup>14</sup> on fol. 89r (see Figure 5) deviate from the other Nordic entries with regard to their technical execution. The writing is shaky and only partially follows the layout given by the ruled lines. The entries were produced by one or more inexperienced and untrained scribes and that is why we interpret them to be autographs by Nordic pilgrims. The entries themselves are difficult to date palaeographically, however judging by the surrounding entries on the same page they



**Figure 5:** Zürich, Zentralbibliothek, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 89r (detail) – autographs by Nordic pilgrims ([www.e-codices.unifr.ch](http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch)).

<sup>14</sup> For the interpretation of the names see the online database *NordiCon* where the whole corpus of North Germanic names in the Reichenau *liber vitae* is edited. The database is openly accessible at <https://spraakbanken.gu.se/karp/tng/?mode=nordicon>.

probably originate from the eleventh century. During that time, the most dominant and widely known writing system in the North was the runic alphabet. Hence, the choice of Latin script here might indicate an adaptation of the pilgrims to the script used in the Christian context at the expense of their locally used writing system.

Our last examples of autograph writing are a couple of instances of scratched entries that were discovered by Andreas Nievergelt and Michelle Waldispühl in October 2019 and reinvestigated in December 2022.<sup>15</sup> Two of them could be read partly: *uillimuat & liutma...* ‘Willimuat et Liutma...(?)’, two names coupled by the et-ligature, in the lower margin to the right on fol. 24r and *buRichard* ‘Burchardus’ in the lower margin to the right on fol. 69v. The other entries could not be decoded at the time. They were probably all scratched into the parchment by a metallic stylus, an instrument common for occasional writing in wax, and can hardly be noticed in normal light. Interestingly, the first entry on fol. 24r has been overwritten by an ink entry which indicates the invisibility of the names at the occasion of the later entry because normally, already-existing names were not overwritten in the manuscript. Dry-point glosses seem to be rare in the Reichenau *liber vitæ*. In other *libri vitæ*, only one instance has been discovered so far, in the younger *liber vitæ* of St. Gall (Erhart 2010; Geuenich et al. 2019). Scratched glosses certainly indicate autographs and suggest even that the name bearers used their personal writing instrument to execute the entry.

Geuenich (Autenrieth et al. 1979: LIX) states that autograph writing in the sense that the named persons wrote their names on their own is “obviously” an exception in the Reichenau manuscript. However, while this is certainly the case for the oldest layer from the 800s, the examples presented here from the younger layers clearly show that autographs are more common in these later times.<sup>16</sup> As Waldispühl (2019: 213–216) notes, the changes in the conceptualisation and structure of the name lists can be linked to a shift in function and usage of the *libri vitæ* from books of confraternity between monasteries in the 800–900s to books of general commemoration in later times. This functional change implies not only a tendency towards the inclusion of more and more names of lay people but supposedly also a wider accessibility of the book for reading and writing. The manuscript might have been located in a place accessible by visitors to the monastery. Moreover, the greater variety in scripting types and situations might mirror the fact that writing skills were more widespread in later times and people were able to make their own record. These observations tie in with Blommaert (2013)’s description of specific sets of resources that are required for writing and that are subject to patterns of social and

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<sup>15</sup> The edition of the entries is in preparation.

<sup>16</sup> At present it is unfortunately not possible to give a quantitative assessment of autographs in the manuscript since a systematic investigation of the palaeography of the younger layers is pending.

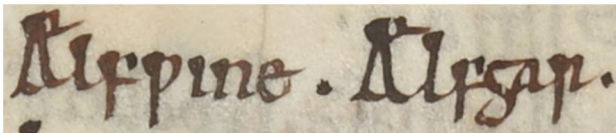


cultural distribution, of availability and of accessibility. In the younger layers, the manuscript was physically accessible to a wider range of people resulting in entries showing a variety of writers with different technical and graphic repertoires. Moreover, this variability also indicates that the manuscript as a written source was more widely available and that it was intended to include names of people from various backgrounds. The individual level of literacy and personal background was not important either for the writers or for the pragmatic function of the manuscript – the commemoration of people’s souls.

The choice of writing system and linguistic forms in the lists certainly results from the respective scribes’ graphic and linguistic resources and their community’s conventions. Entries in the Latin instead of the Runic writing system moreover guaranteed that the Reichenau brothers could read the names out loud and include them in their prayers of commemoration.<sup>17</sup> However, the use of the Greek alphabet in the autographs presented first could also be interpreted as a distinct choice by these writers to symbolically express their own identity and perform ethnic difference amongst all the other entries written in the Latin alphabet.<sup>18</sup>

## 4.2 Choice of script, corrections and language norms

Despite Thorney’s earliest layer being the result of a single scribal effort, the entries on ff. 10r–v display considerable orthographic variation, as might be expected from a text whose source material spans either side of the Norman Conquest. Thorney’s *liber vite* is a witness to the changing personal name trends of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, whereby the original stock of Old English and Scandinavian names was supplemented and subsequently replaced by names with Continental Germanic or Biblical origins. Reflecting this, the names entered on f. 10r–v show a mixture of orthographical and palaeographical traits, and this section will focus in particular on



**Figure 6:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Ælfwine* and *Ælfgar*.

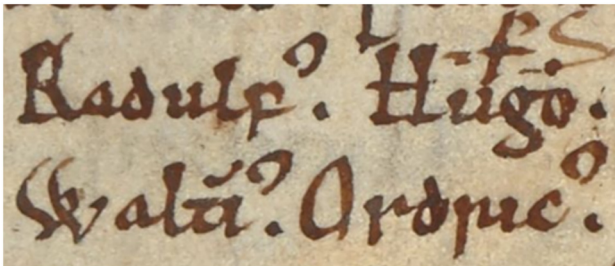
<sup>17</sup> For a similar argument with regard to graffiti in religious medieval places, see Butz and Zettler (2019).

<sup>18</sup> See Sebba (2009) for a theoretical account of symbolic uses of writing systems in a social context.

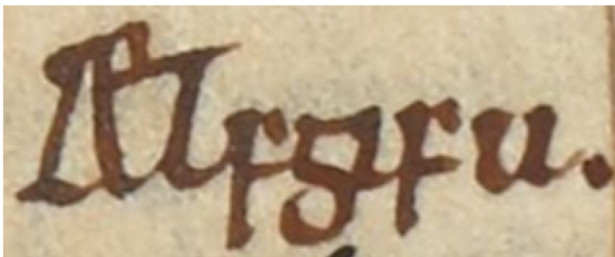
two orthographic variations: <f> or <u> for /v/, and <w> or <p> for /w/. In Figure 6, the writer enters the OE names *Ælfwine* and *Ælfgar* following Old English orthographical and palaeographical practices; note the use of graphs specific to Old English, such as initial <Æ>, <p> for /w/, and insular forms of <g> and <r>.

Evidence of Latin or French orthographical norms occurs throughout this earliest layer of *liber vitæ* material. In Figure 7 a succession of Continental names shows features such as caroline forms of <g> (*Hugo*) and <r> (the first <r> in *Ordricus*), and the initial <w> of *Walterius* rather than <p>.

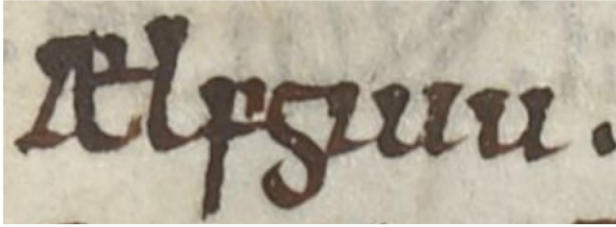
Not every name entry, however, follows the orthographic practices of its etymology, and there is evidence of variation at the palaeographical and orthographical level representing changing orthographic traditions. For example, the name *Ælfgifu* is made up of two OE elements, (*ælf*, ‘elf’ and *gifu* ‘gift’). Traditional OE orthography does not distinguish between voiced and unvoiced fricatives, and so <f> is used for [f] and [v], and <þ> or <ð> for both [θ] and [ð] (Campbell 1959: §50(1)). In the case of *ælfgifu*, the intervocalic [v] is represented by <f>, and this is the spelling we see in Figure 8. However, the spelling <Ælfgiuu> also appears on the same folio (Figure 9), this time showing the influence of Latin or Anglo-Norman orthographical



**Figure 7:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Radulfus*, *Hugo*, *Walterius* and *Ordricus*.



**Figure 8:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Ælfgifu*.

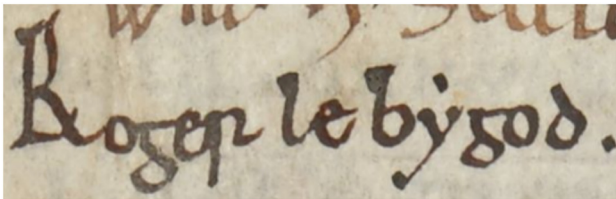


**Figure 9:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Ælfgiuu.*

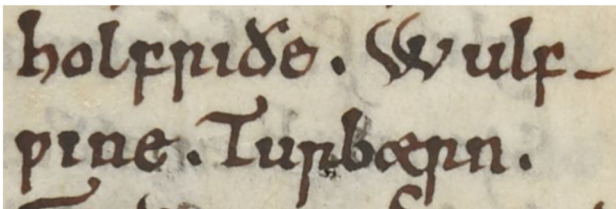
practices, both of which used <u> to represent the vowel [u] as well as the consonant [v] (Pope 1934: §691).

Most occurrences of <u> representing [v] occur in female names, however this is largely accounted for by the popularity of names with *-gifu* as their second element (13 out of 15 female names). Of the names ending in *-gifu*, only *Ælfgifu* and *Leofgifu* appear with <f>, and then only in what appear to be the earliest sections, on f. 10r columns a and c. Male names with <u> for [v] are rarer, most probably because elements with intervocalic [v] are rarer. The one OE instance is *Leuing* (*Leofing*), an archbishop, while Scandinavian examples include *Toui* (x3), *Vuah* (*Ofeig*) and *Iue* (*Ivo*).

It is not only OE names such as *Ælfgiuu* which show orthographical forms at odds with their etymologies, however. Examples of insular features appearing in a Continental name are the insular <g> and <r> of *Roger le bygod* on f. 10v (Figure 10).



**Figure 10:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10v: *Roger le Bygod.*



**Figure 11:** © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Wulfwine.*

For the scribe of this earliest layer of the *liber vitæ*, the distribution of <w> and <p> seems dependent on the placement of the graph within the name. The OE name *Wulfwine*, for example (f. 10r, Figure 11) has initial <w>, but medial <p>. This is broadly consistent with the scribe's behaviour in this section, where <w> is reserved for initial position (18×), regardless of the name's etymology (e.g. *Wulfstan*, *Walðef*, *Wido*). Initial <p> occurs only 3 times, each instance a female name (*Wulfled*, *Wulueua*). Medial <w>, however, is rare, occurring only once in *Godwine* on f. 10r column e, along with one instance of the digraph <uu> followed by an unstressed vowel rendered <u> in *Balduuuin*.<sup>19</sup> In every other name with medial [w], <p> is used (35×), though apart from *Dræwe* (*Drogo*) all these names are OE or Scandinavian. Interestingly, in Figure 11, *Wulfwine* is split across two lines, yet the second element is written with <p> rather than <w>, maintaining the pattern we have seen of initial <w> and medial <p>.

It is clear, too, that some notion of “correctness” was important to the scribe of Thorney's earliest layer. This could be a matter of factual accuracy, as he distinguishes carefully between individuals with the same name: *Ægelric*<sup>9</sup> .. ⁊ a<sup>p</sup> *Ægelric*<sup>9</sup> (column e) *Godefrid*<sup>p</sup> .. ⁊ a<sup>p</sup> *Godefrid*<sup>p</sup> (column e),<sup>20</sup> confirming that he was indeed intentionally entering these names twice, for two different individuals.

In Figure 12 an error in the text is carefully corrected. When copying, the scribe erroneously attached “et fili(us) ei(us)” [and her son] to *Leouie*, whereas it was in fact *Leofware* who entered into confraternity with Thorney with her son. The error seems to have been noticed immediately, as the passage is deleted, and carefully inserted into the correct position in the text. It is probable that this error was caused through eye-skip, as both individuals have names beginning with <L>; moreover an

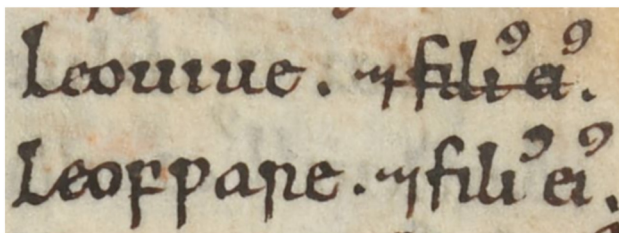


Figure 12: © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Leofgifu*.

19 Elsewhere in the Thorney *liber vitæ* the spellings <Baldeuuin> (3×), <Baldeuin> (2×) and <Baldepinus> (1×) appear.

20 [*Ægelric* and the other *Ægelric*; *Godefrid* and the other *Godefrid*].

exemplar which had the names in a similar column-layout, with *Leouiue* above *Leofware*, might also have contributed to the original error; such a slip would be an easy mistake to make for a scribe working from an original list formatted in this way.

A number of further corrections indicate a desire for correctness, though perhaps stemming from different motivations. In column a *Grimgetel* is corrected to *Grimketel* (Figure 13), while in column e *Egelmer* is emended to *Ægelmær*, and *Egeric* to *Ægelric* (Figures 14 and 15).

The spelling <Grimgetel> could be accounted for by influence of the initial voiced velar consonant on the second, unvoiced consonant. Bierbaumer (1988: 129–130) suggests that this kind of transmission error arises through the phonological



Figure 13: © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Grimketel*.

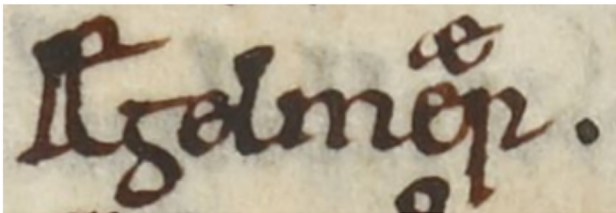


Figure 14: © British Library Board. London, BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Ægelmær*.

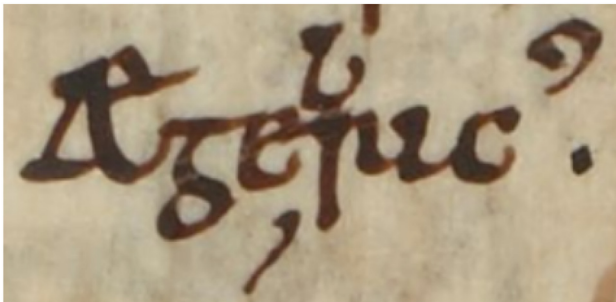


Figure 15: © British Library Board. BL MS Add. 40,000 f.10r: *Ægelric*.

misperception of a consonant. While Bierbaumer's hypothesis is based on the text in question being dictated, Benskin and Laing (1981: 66) suggest that such errors can also occur as a result of "silent" copying practices:

It may well be that in many such cases what happens is that the scribe moves from copying in a purely visual way to copying via "the mind's ear". Instead of reproducing a perhaps laboriously interpreted visual image, the visual image is now interpreted at a glance; and what is held in the mind between looking at the exemplar and writing down the next bit of text, is not the visual symbols, but the spoken words that correspond to them. What the scribe reproduces is then the words that he hears, not the visual images from which they arose: regardless of whether his lips move, he is writing to his own dictation.

Regardless of the origin of the error in copying Grimketel's name, the important fact is that the scribe noticed the error and corrected it, bringing the name in line with its more usual spelling.

The spellings <Ægelmer> and <Ægeric> are motivated by sound changes and developments in late OE name forms and found sporadically in the Thorney lists ([æ] > [e], and the loss of [l] in *ægel-* names; see Insley [2015: 270–274]). These two entries in their original form represent names which, by the time of their writing, sounded rather different from their etymological forms. It is possible, then, that the corrections to *Ægeric* and *Ægelmer* are motivated by conformity to spelling norms which have their roots in Late West-Saxon, though whether this conformity was motivated through an internalised adherence to such spelling norms or through faithful copying from an earlier exemplar is difficult to tell.

At this point a comparison with the entries on f. 9v is instructive. According to Insley (2015: 277), this folio was the next to be written after f. 10r–v, and contains a mix of conservative and late forms, leading him to suggest a composition date "possibly as late as 1120". While the scribe responsible for the earliest layer on f. 10r–v uses insular <g> with a fair degree of consistency, to the extent that we might surmise that this was his preferred form of the graph, the scribe of f. 9v only uses Caroline <g>. While f. 10r–v's scribe uses <p> frequently, but only medially, on f. 9v we find initial <w> mixed with initial <p> (including the form *palter*), and a more frequent use of <uu> (*uuiberti*, *leofuuini*, *Ægeluuard*). Thus, although both stints appear to incorporate material reaching back well into the pre-Conquest period and stretching up to the time of writing, each scribe demonstrates individual preferences at a graphic level. It is clear that at least some features are down to scribal preference, though it is difficult to judge the role of the exemplars in the compilation of Thorney's *liber vitæ*; some corrections point to the text being brought in line with exemplar forms (e.g. *Ægelmer* > *Ægelmaer*, or efforts to correct eyeskip errors), while others work to "modernise" particular entries (e.g. <hapapis> emended to <hapawis> on f.9v). A third group (e.g. *grimgetel* > *grimketel*) are clearly corrections of mechanical



errors, and are dependent neither on an exemplar for identification, nor on a newer form superseding an older one.

The evidence from Thorney's earliest layer reveals a mixture of relict forms and those imposed by the scribe, and this evidence takes the form of palaeographical variants alongside orthographic ones. The scribe's treatment of names ending in the element *-gifu* reveals a selection of spellings, from the conservative *-gifu* to forms such as *-iue* (e.g. *Æluiuē*), however *-gifu* forms only appear in the first three names with this element; after the *Leofgife* in column c, all versions of this element use <u> spellings. This could imply that the scribe was working first of all from the earliest sources at hand, and that as he progressed to more modern ones with more modern spellings, his literatim copying practice transmitted the changes in spelling faithfully. Alternatively, he may have copied his earliest sources faithfully, but progressively translated the forms in front of him into his own preferred spellings. The fact that he apparently maintained his preferences for insular <g>, initial <w> and medial <p> throughout his stint does not necessarily mean that he was in all respects a literatim scribe; it is possible that he was a progressive translator orthographically, yet had preferred palaeographical variants which he used more or less consistently, regardless of his exemplar.

### 4.3 Choice of language

The matrix language of the Thorney *liber vitæ* is not always consistently or even overtly expressed, as the vast majority of names appear with no other contextualising material. We have seen that the earliest inscription recording the donation of the goldsmiths is in Old English, while the original first section naming King Cnut and his royal party uses a Latin framework. However, if the document was originally envisaged with a Latin framework, this intention was not adhered to; although Latin and Old English are both represented in its earliest layer, neither language choice is maintained throughout the document, and unlike Reichenau there are no further headings organising the entries. Occasional information about the status or accompanying retinue of named individuals is expressed either in Old English or in Latin. Latin examples include *Eadwine. ⁊ uxor eꝑ*, or *Ægelsweð. ⁊ filij eꝑ*, where Eadwine and Ægelswið are commemorated with family members (wife and son respectively). Examples in OE include *Turkyl hoge ⁊ his wijf*, or *Turstan steallere*. In these cases, Thurkyl hoge's wife is remembered alongside him, while Thurstan the staller is distinguished from others bearing the same name by the inclusion of his office.

Example 3, however, makes use of more than one language:



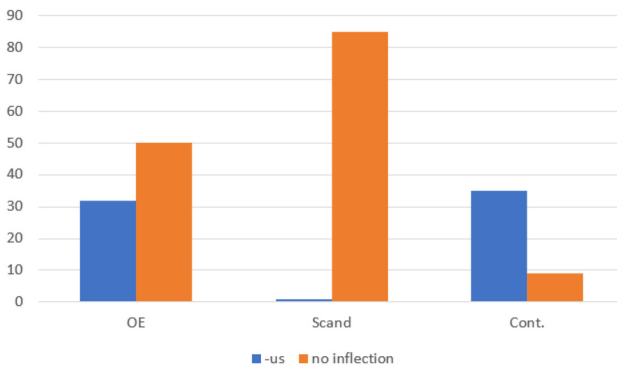
## (3) Eglaf comes. 7 his broðer Ulf.

[Earl Eglaf and his brother Ulf]

The title *comes* ('earl') is written in Latin, but the surrounding text describing Eglaf's relationship to Ulf is in Old English. Notably these two names are Scandinavian and borne by members of Cnut's retinue (Whitelock 1945: 134–135), demonstrating that the "ethnicity" of the bearer, the etymology of the name, orthographical tradition, and matrix language may not necessarily align.

Most morphological endings are Latin, though three names contain OE genitives: *Asbern haces sunu*, *Ðorð clapes sunu*, and *Ælfgifu osgotes wif*. The Old English genitives only occur in column c, the first two names in the section comprising Cnut's retinue, and *Ælfgifu* in the section following. This distribution would accord well with an underlying exemplar with an Old English framework, as *Ðorð* and another member of the group, *Turkyl hoge* are both recorded, in English, alongside their wives ("7 his piƿ"). Note also that *Ælfgifu*'s name is one of only three instances with the second element *-gifu* spelled conservatively with <ƿ>. Nevertheless, the appearance at the head of this column of four earls (*Turkyl*, *Hacun*, *Eoric* and *Eglaf*) designated *comes*, alongside the *Walðef comes* and *Siward<sup>ð</sup> comes* added above them, poses a problem for this interpretation.

Several names contain Latin abbreviation marks such as <ʔ> for the nominative masculine inflection *-us*. Of the male names eligible to take this inflection, 56% (84 out of 149 names) contain either an abbreviation or the nominative ending *-us*.<sup>21</sup> Name



**Figure 16:** Latin *-us* endings/abbreviation symbol for *-us* by name etymology.

<sup>21</sup> Only male names were included in this count; Continental Germanic names following group 3 declensions (e.g. *Wido*) were excluded, as were Greek names such as *Andreas*, abbreviated names such as *Will'* for *Willelm(us)*, and those with an Old English inflection (e.g. *osgotes*).

etymology plays a role in the distribution; while only one of the 86 Scandinavian names took a Latin inflection, 39% (32/82) of the Old English ones and 80% (35/44) of the Continental names did (see Figure 16).

Etymology, however, is not the only factor at play. It is notable that of the Old English second elements available, *-ric* seems to attract *-us*, whereas the elements *-wine*, *-sig* and *-wig* tend to disfavour *-us*. Among the names in *-ric* attracting *-us* are *Godric* (6×), *Ælfric* (4×), *Ædric*, *Ægelric* and *Wulfric* (all 3×); the only *-ric* not to take *-us* is *Syric* (*Sigeric*). Names disfavouring *-us* include *Ælfwine* (5×), *Ægelsi* (2×), *Kynsi*, *Leofsi*, *Wulfwi* and *Ælfwi*. It may be that frequency has an effect; the *-ric* names are all popular ones, in Thorney's *liber vitæ* and beyond, while (apart from *Ælfwine*, which occurs five times in the *liber vitæ*) the names avoiding *-us* are less popular.<sup>22</sup> A further factor governing whether an OE name takes a Latin inflection may be a desire to avoid vowel hiatus. Many names in this category end in *-sig* and *-wig*, with a palatalised <g> (Campbell 1959: §428). *Abbot Oswius* in column a is the one exception to this rule.

Finally, it appears that social status – and especially ecclesiastical status – also has a bearing on which individuals' names receive Latin inflections. Following the initial list of members of the royal family, columns a and b contain the names of archbishops, bishops, abbots and what has plausibly been identified as members of Thorney's monastic community in the late-eleventh and early-twelfth centuries. Of the twenty-four OE names listed there, eighteen contain either the abbreviation <ʷ> or – in the case of *Oswius* – have the inflection written out in full. Four of the six uninflected names – *Ædwi*, *Ægelsi*, *Ezig* and *Kynsi* – end with the elements *-sig* or *-wig*. Notably, the only Old English names attracting an abbreviation outside this list are those ending in *-ric* (14 instances), suggesting that in this layer of the *liber vitæ* final element choice is indeed an important factor, along with ecclesiastical status. A precedent for the Latinisation of the names of high-ranking ecclesiastical officials can be found in some charter texts. Seiler (2020: 129) notes that the writers of seventh- and eighth-century Anglo-Saxon charters use script and spelling variation in witness lists to “establish a visual hierarchy among the names of the attesters”. In these documents the names of the king and bishop(s) are in Latinised forms with Latin spelling, whereas the names of witnesses further down the hierarchy are rendered with more Old English characteristics: “if Latin is equated with ‘more formal’, then it makes sense to use the more ‘Latin’ features for the names of the king and bishop and the less ‘Latin’ style for the other, less prominent witnesses” (Seiler 2020: 129). It is possible that the higher rates of Latinisation for this group are down to the names

22 The later Old English period saw a decline in the range of individual names in use; see Chetwood (2018); Clark (1978).

being copied from charter witness lists, however among the monks with OE names only Alfwold<sup>9</sup> attests a surviving charter.<sup>23</sup>

Notably, of the thirty-two individuals whose OE names are recorded with a Latin inflection only one, the *Abbot Oswius* noted above, has the inflection written out in full. This has the effect of rendering the names as “language-neutral units” (Sebba 2012); the frequent use of abbreviation on these personal names pushes the language-specific grammatical information into the background, allowing the reader to access the names in either language (Wright 2002, 2011). From this perspective, then, the <?> symbols in the Thorney list also work as “matters of graphic decorum” (Clark 1992c: 549).

#### 4.4 Dialect adaptations in Reichenau

The final case study deals with the question of dialect choice and the influence the scribe might have had in adapting name forms from other German dialects to the dialect of the scriptorium. As mentioned above in Section 2.1, the oldest layer of the Reichenau *liber vitæ* from the early ninth century consists of lists from various monasteries on the Continent copied into the codex by five different scribes in Reichenau (Autenrieth et al. 1979: XXIII–XXXIV). This scripting context gives an excellent starting point for the analysis of the scribes’ copying practices of names from other languages and German dialects. Is it possible to see normative attitudes in the Reichenau scribes’ practice? Or do the name spellings reveal a freer handling of dialect features resulting in name forms in *Mischsprache*? What conclusions about dialect awareness and attitudes can be drawn from these practices? We introduce this section with the presentation of earlier research on these questions, followed by a methodological reflection and a case study of one specific list.

In previous research on the “agency” of the Reichenau scribes with regard to linguistic adaptation, we find contradictory judgements of the same records. In his recent summary of the potential contribution of early medieval Alemannic personal names to linguistics, Geuenich (2018: 2–3) compares variants of the name lemma *Rodbert* in the name lists from different monasteries copied into the Reichenau *liber vitæ*. The variants he cites clearly correspond to the regional linguistic realities at the original monasteries (e.g. *Hruadpertus* for a monk from Alemannic St. Gallen, *Ruodbraht* from Franconian Fulda, *Roppertu* from Nanantola in Italy and *Frotbertus* from Luxeuil-les-Bains in France). Hence, Geuenich arrives at the conclusion that the

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23 The majority of the community whose names survive as charter witness have Continental names, for example the *Landbert*, *Petr* and *Wido* who attest a charter of Siward of Arden at Thorney, dated some time before 1112 (Keats-Rohan 2015: 221–222).

scribes copied the names accurately from the exemplar lists without adapting them to the phonological and orthographical features of their own dialect. Conversely, in his earlier work on the linguistics of the early medieval personal names from the Fulda monastery, Geuenich (1976: 131, 206–208) excludes the lists of the Fulda brothers recorded in Alemannic Reichenau because they show adaptations to the local dialect (e.g. *Ruadbret* instead of *Ruodbraht*) and therefore cannot serve as sources for the Franconian dialect.

This contradictory interpretation of the same records not only shows the complexity of the name material in medieval *libri vitæ*, but also reveals some methodological pitfalls in variation analysis. In his 2018 article, Geuenich concentrates on the analysis of the spelling variants of one lemma and considers the regional origin of the name forms in different lists. He finds matching patterns because he only considers obvious examples and does not analyse the total of 69 variants for the lemma *Rodbert* (cf. h 499 *hrōth berht*, Autenrieth et al. 1979: 109) systematically. These variants also include adapted forms, e.g. the above mentioned *Ruadbret* in the lists from Fulda. In the current edition, the different name variants are only listed together with their place of occurrence in the manuscript, and possible factors for variation have to be extracted manually for each entry using the facsimile and the palaeographic commentary. Moreover, the macro-perspective analysis of one lemma across different lists that are in many cases written by different scribes as performed in Geuenich (2018) evidently yields other results than the micro-perspective on a small number of lists with names of people from the same monastery as conducted in Geuenich (1976). In the latter case, the regional origin of the name and possible scribal influence are more stable.

Considering these methodological constraints and with regard to the scope of this paper, we select a list from one monastery written by one scribe as an object of study. The oldest list from the Fulda monastery in East Franconia, the so-called “Baugulf-list”, has been chosen to investigate scribal influence on dialect adaptation. The list consists of 458 name entries (Schmid 1978a: 217–218; Schmid 1978b: 572–583) that are distributed over three manuscript pages and arranged in four columns on each page.<sup>24</sup> The list was recorded by one experienced, local scribe (HA4, Autenrieth et al. 1979: XXXIII, XXIV).

The Old High German Franconian dialect written in Fulda differs in various features from the Alemannic dialect of Reichenau. Most prominently, the diphthongised Germanic \**ō* (such as in the name element \**hrōþ-*) already appears as *uo* in the earliest Franconian texts, whereas in Alemannic, *ua* was present in the ninth century and only changed to *uo* in the tenth century (Braune and Reiffenstein 2004:

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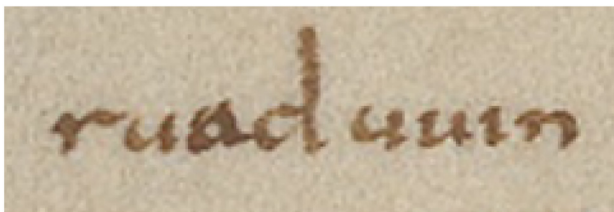
<sup>24</sup> The first page of the list is shown in Figure 1. The entries of the “Baugulf-list” are written in dark-brown ink and follow the column layout precisely.

§39a; Baesecke 1928: 104–106). Hence, for the time of the main body of the Reichenau *liber vitæ* we expect *ua*-forms, such as *-muad-* and *ruad-* for Alemannic and *-muod-* and *ruod-* for Franconian.

The names in the “Baugulf-list” from Fulda, however, do not correspond to this rule. Only 15 of the 33 instances with Germanic \**ō* display the expected Franconian *uo*-form (e.g. *tuoto*, *muotrat*, *buoso*, *hruoduuini*, *hruodo*) whereas 17 appear in the Alemannic form with *ua* (e.g. *hruadfrid*, *ruadger*, *ruaduuin*, *herimuat*) and one with *u* (*rudmunt*). In the Fulda necrologies, a contemporary local source from the Fulda Abbey (cf. Schmid 1978c: 37–95), the names of the same persons show exclusively *uo*. This clearly indicates that the occurring *ua*-forms in the “Baugulf-list” are adapted forms that must have been produced in the Reichenau environment. Hence, the scribe certainly played an active role in the copying process. However, the scribe did not adapt the Franconian forms systematically, but shows intra-writer variation. What parameters could explain this variation?

The cognitive linguistic explanation that lexical or semantic transparency of the Franconian names or name elements would lead to the adaptation of elements familiar to the Alemannic scribe can be falsified in several instances. For example, in the names with Germanic \**hrōth-* as a prototheme, a name element common in both dialects, variation is particularly obvious. Four forms were adapted to *hruad-* (e.g. *hruadfrid*, *hruadmunt*) whereas six forms (e.g. *hruodinc*, *hruoduuini*) remained unchanged.

More likely as an explanation is a change in scribal behaviour during the process of copying the list of over 400 names from an exemplar. Considering philological features, the *ua-* and *uo-*forms demonstrate two interesting patterns. First, corrections of an *o* to an *a* with the same ink colour in two instances (*ruaduuin* in column B, see Figure 17 and *hruadmunt* in column D on fol. 31v) suggest that the forms came to attention during the copying process. Second, the *ua*-spellings are concentrated on



**Figure 17:** The entry *ruaduuin* with a correction from an *o* to an *a*, Zentralbibliothek Zürich, Ms. Rh. hist. 27, fol. 31v (detail) ([www.e-codices.unifr.ch](http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch)).

**Table 1:** The distribution of *ua*- and *uo*-forms and different types of mistakes in the “Baugulf-list” from Fulda (Reichenau *liber vitæ* fols. 31v–32v).

	31v	32r_AB	32r_CD	32v
<i>ua</i>	7	6	1	3
<i>uo</i>	3	2	7	3
<i>misreading</i>	0	0	1	1
<i>slips of the ear</i>	2	2	0	0
<i>misspelling</i>	1	0	0	2
<i>corrections</i>	5	4	1	0

the first page (fol. 31v) and the first two columns of the second page (fol. 32r) whereas the *uo*-forms prevail in the third and fourth column on fol. 32r. On the list’s last manuscript page, the numbers are equal (see Table 1).

This distribution of *ua*- and *uo*-forms on the manuscript pages correlates with different types of errors that indicate a change of copying method in the scripting process (see Table 1). Slips of the ear, such as *Iona* for *Iuno* or *Liubin* for *Liubuuin*, and ad hoc corrections are both errors that suggest a copying process by dictation. These instances occur mainly on fol. 31v and columns A and B on fol. 31r, whereas misreadings from a written exemplar (e.g. *Arolf* for *Asolf*) can only be found in the later part of the list.<sup>25</sup> This distribution might suggest that the scribe noted down the first part of the list by dictation and the second by directly copying from an exemplar. This change of medial circumstance would explain the perception of a diphthong *ua* instead of *uo*. This spelling deviation might be due to the pronunciation of the person dictating, or based on the scribe’s spelling according to his own oral repetition, a process known from other instances of scripting by dictation in medieval contexts (cf. Bierbaumer 1988; Waldspühl 2020).

To sum up, the dialectal adaptations from Franconian to Alemannic identified in the Fulda list can certainly be attributed to local scribal influence. However, rather than being indications of linguistic attitudes or conscious normative approaches of the scribe, they are testimonies of oral transmission and the intra-writer variation between adapted and non-adapted forms is likely to show a change in the scripting method from writing by dictation to the copying of visual words during the writing process.

<sup>25</sup> On the categorisation of the errors occurring in the “Baugulf-list”, see Geuenich (1976: 208), on the scribal corrections, see Autenrieth et al. (1979: 185–186).

## 5 Conclusions

The examination of variation in the name forms recorded in medieval *libri vitæ* has led to a variety of sociolinguistic insights and, at the same time, revealed some of the methodological challenges this material poses for the sociolinguist. The conclusions we can draw from four case studies from two different manuscripts concern the individual level, the level of the text genre and the community level of language and script use.

Much of the name form variation reveals the respective technical, graphic and linguistic repertoires of the individual scribes. Relevant aspects we discovered in the case studies range from technical proficiency to orthographic preferences (conservative or progressive spellings). Furthermore, we also observed the symbolic and functional choice of written language features, different approaches to “correctness” and changing modalities in the copying process (written exemplar vs. dictation). On the level of the text genre we can assert that the change of the pragmatic function of the name lists led not only to changes in the mise-en-page of the names but also, in the case of Thorney Abbey, to the rearrangement of names in the lists according to social hierarchies. The changing of the Reichenau *liber vitæ* from a confraternity book to a book of commemorisation triggered the broader inclusion of names of people from varying social backgrounds. As a precondition, or perhaps also as a consequence, the manuscript and writing resources were more widely accessible and available at a communal, institutional level.

The comparative view of an Old English and an Old High German manuscript showed another effect of the frame provided by the linguistic community. The two vernaculars had different statuses with regard to their functionality at the time periods under investigation here. Old English had had a longer tradition of use in an official capacity, e.g. in charters, laws, prose and poetry and had developed a focused variety by the late-tenth century, while Old High German was still mainly employed as an auxiliary to the comprehension of Latin in the early-mid-ninth century examined here. These language situations dictate the kinds of analysis and results we can conduct and gain from the respective manuscripts. For instance, Old High German is more dialectally diverse which is mirrored in the name forms, whereas by the eleventh century Old English is more homogenous. Hence, the analytical focus for Old English is rather on textual transmission than oral/text interfaces and face-to-face scripting situations. We arrived at this conclusion by using a bottom-up approach in our analyses which utilised an explorative search for fruitful methodologies for each document.

The huge variety of name forms in the *libri vitæ* is related to the inclusion of names from people with various social backgrounds and to the usage of the



manuscripts over a long period of time. This opens up opportunities for the recovery of a variety of scripting situations and for the analysis of varying and changing graphic and orthographic practices. Some *libri vitæ* are, or become, “bottom-up” documents where the names and the writing repertoires of occasional writers are documented. Such data is missing in most other early medieval sources. Hence, the names in *libri vitæ* provide valuable data for the future examination of the onomasticon of less privileged social groups.

At the same time, the text type poses a variety of challenges. In the case of Thorney Abbey, it became apparent that it is difficult to identify the scribes’ agency in linguistic and graphic choices because of the unclear role of the exemplar that names were copied from. As long as these documents are not available, such questions are difficult to answer definitively.

Another methodological challenge of the material is that many of the name bearers are historically unidentified; we do not know who the persons were and therefore some sociolinguistic conclusions are restricted. This problem applies equally to historians who use the records in prosopographical studies. However, the philological, etymological and sociolinguistic study of the names can contribute in some instances to the identification of the social belonging of some persons as the autograph examples of Reichenau have shown.

For future analyses of medieval *libri vitæ* we envision Digital Humanities approaches as vital. These could facilitate factor analyses, visualise possible correlations and permit systematic comparison with names in other material, such as charters.

*Libri vitæ* have not previously been investigated in historical sociolinguistics. They provide rich data not only for the study of individual graphic and linguistic repertoires, but also for monastic copying and scripting practices, the status of vernaculars, for cross-linguistic comparisons and, not least, for variation and change in personal names.

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