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**Tom, Dick and Leofric:  
The Transformation of English Personal  
Naming, c.800–c.1300**

**James Chetwood**

Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**University of Sheffield, Department of History**

**December 2016**

# Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my supervisors, Charles West, Máirín MacCarron and Simon Loseby, who have provided me with so much advice and guidance over the past three and a bit years. Their knowledge, enthusiasm and patience in the face of missing prepositions has been invaluable.

I am hugely grateful to the Wolfson Foundation who have provided me with the funding without which none of this would have been possible.

I would like to thank the University of Sheffield History Department for giving me the opportunity, institutional support and facilities to do my PhD, as well as countless members of staff who have helped me throughout my time here and answered questions that I should have really known the answers to, particularly Beky Hasnip.

I would also like to thank my fellow postgraduate students, both within the department and outside, who have provided me with an unbelievable amount of practical information and intellectual insight, and also been kind enough to talk to me in the pub. They are innumerable, but given the topic of this thesis I felt the inclusion of a long list of names was appropriate. So thanks go to Robyn, Jim, Katie, Kate, Helen, Hannah, Hannah, Hannah, Alex, Alex, Alyx, Liz, Harriet, Will, Ryo, Steph, Mirjam, Aaron, Imen, Tom, Tom, Ellie, Mark, Sarah, Harry, Carla, Matt, Gareth, Charlie, Dave and Leo. For any future historians, I apologise that this list is incomplete, but please consider it a representative sample.

Thank you to my family, who have humoured me throughout, and especially to Matthew, who actually read the thing.

Thank you to Amy and Sunny, for everything.

I would like to dedicate this thesis, for what it's worth, to Raymond, my Grandpa, who was as a kind and clever a man as you could ever wish to meet.

## Abstract

The personal naming system of England underwent a profound transformation during the medieval period. In the eighth century, a large number of unique, dithematic names of Old English origin were created for individuals. These names were rarely shared by people in the same family or community. By the fourteenth century, this system had changed into one where very few names, predominantly of continental or biblical origin, were shared unequally by the majority of the population, often combined with a byname or surname. The changes which took place have generally been examined through the prism of the Norman Conquest, and the change of system has often been seen to coincide with the imposition of Norman customs. This thesis reexamines the English case in the context of recent continental research. It carries out quantitative studies of 14 corpora of names collected from 11 different medieval English sources dating from c.800 to c.1300. These studies reveal a number of broad trends in the changes that took place to naming across the period. This quantitative analysis is combined with micro-analytical studies of naming decisions within specific families and communities. The results presented in this thesis suggest that the transformation to the English naming system was similar in many ways to that which took place across much of continental Europe during the same period, and it argues that the changes on both sides of the Channel had related systemic causes which had their roots in a fundamental reorganisation of the lived environments of the people of medieval Europe and the communities of which they were a part. As such, it has implications for the history of personal naming in both England and Europe, as well as the wider historiography of England during this period.

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## Conventions

This thesis examines personal names over a broad chronological span of time, using sources written in several different languages and dialects. This means names have been encountered at various different stages of their historical development and spelled in a variety of different ways.

The approach taken for this thesis has been to lemmatise each name based on its most common or historically appropriate form in each source – rather than to artificially freeze names at an early stage of their development, or to anachronistically use modern forms to refer to historical names. In some instances, earlier or later forms of names have been included in brackets as clarification, and many names are explained in more detail in the footnotes. When referring to well-known historical figures I have chosen to use the name that is most commonly used today, so Alfred the Great remains *Alfred* rather than *Ælfred*. I hope this approach is clear to the reader.

While this is a history thesis, not a linguistics one, there is a great deal of discussion of linguistic items. I have chosen to keep the notation as simple as possible, using italics to refer to a word or linguistic item or element, and hyphens to indicate where this is only part of a word or name. For example, the name elements in the name *Wulfstan* are referred to as *Wulf-* and *-stan*. I have deviated from this only when citing authors who have used different notation styles. Names are only italicised when they are discussed as linguistic items, not when they are used to refer to the individuals who bear them. For example: ‘Alfred gave his daughter the name *Ælffled*’.

The quantitative nature of this study has means that statistical results are referred to frequently. When discussing quantities, numbers under 10 have been written as words (as in the Sheffield University History Department Style Guide). When discussing percentages or statistical measurements which require the use of decimals, figures have been used throughout.

Primary and secondary sources from a number of languages have been consulted and cited in this thesis. When citing a work for which there is a reliable, modern translation, the

translation has been cited and the original text has been provided in the footnotes. Where no such translation is available, the original text has been cited untranslated.

## Introduction

*That which we call a rose,  
By any other name would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd,  
Retain that dear perfection which he owes  
Without that title: — Romeo, doff thy name;  
And for thy name, which is no part of thee,  
Take all myself.<sup>1</sup>*

Custom dictates that any exploration into personal names should begin with a reference to Shakespeare – and far be it from me to flout convention. But, I am not sure I agree with the Bard in this case. Would Romeo actually ‘retain that dear perfection’ were he not ‘Romeo call’d’? I doubt it. This passage wouldn’t have quite the same ring to it if the male protagonist of the greatest love story ever told were called *Gary*. And, for that matter, would Romeo even be the same if he were not a Montague? Possibly – but Romeo, like it or not, *was* a Montague. He’d spent his whole life in a city where bearing that name gave him a certain standing. It informed not just others, but Romeo himself of who he was. In many ways it defined who and what he was – as well as who and what he was not. So I would take issue with Juliet when she says ‘thy name is no part of thee’ – if our names are not part of us, why would we so often answer the question *Who are you?*<sup>2</sup> by answering with our name? Names are in fact an important part of who we are. At a very basic level they are tools which aid identification of individuals in a conversation – but they are much more than that. They are a fundamental part of our identities. They can tell us a great deal about the people who bear them, including family lineage, clan or group membership, social legitimacy, place of origin and religious belief. We can use them to distinguish between women and men, young and old, rich and poor. The choosing of a name for one’s child is never done by accident, in fact it is a decision on which people place a tremendous amount of importance, and one that will (usually) stay with a child and their parents for the rest of their lives.

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet* (Arden Shakespeare edn, London, 2012), 2.2.43-49.

Yet, behind these intensely personal, individual decisions lie systems of naming customs and traditions which inform the choices people make. Theoretically any word could be a name, or even any random collection of phonemes. Indeed, in a logical world this would be the best way of creating names which fulfil their supposed primary function of distinguishing people from one another – but this is not how we assign names. People do choose names based on their own personal tastes, preferences and aspirations, but these personal considerations are framed within a set of social and cultural rules that determine what constitutes an appropriate name within a given society or group, as well as what does not. As such, by examining the decisions people make in choosing names for their children, as well as the broader patterns that these individual decisions create, we can hope to discover something about the tastes and aspirations of individual people as well as the collective mindset of the society of which they are a part. This is precisely what I will attempt in this thesis.

The society in question is that of medieval England across a broad span of time between roughly 800 and 1300 – although in practice the sources examined spill over even these boundaries. This was a period in which both the naming system and the names within it underwent a great deal of change. It was also the period in which the modern naming system used across much of the western world came into being, in which a given name at birth is combined with a byname or surname. By the start of the fourteenth century, most people in England bore one of a limited stock of personal names, the distribution of which was highly concentrated around a small number of very popular names. This system differed greatly from the one used in the eighth and ninth centuries, where dithematic names constructed of two distinct themes helped ensure a large number of names were in use and names were rarely repeated. While a considerable amount of scholarship has been devoted to names in this period, the reasons behind many of the changes which took place have in some cases remained unexplored, while in others they have been obscured by a historiography which too readily distinguishes between the Anglo-Saxon world and a new one created by England's Norman conquerors in the years following 1066. Moreover, as in many areas of history, the fate of England has too often been looked at in isolation, seen as distinct from changes which took place on the continent. The aim of this thesis is to reassess the course of the transformation which took place to the naming system of the people of England during this period. In doing so, it will attempt to reposition it within the context of

a developing strand of historical name studies which began in Europe at the end of the twentieth century but has so far focussed little on England – perhaps because continental scholars also have a tendency to see England as distinct and different from their own histories.<sup>2</sup>

One particularly evocative story often cited as an example of the rapid transition from one system to another following the Norman Conquest comes from the early 1130s, when a young Northumbrian boy who was baptised with the name *Tostig* was teased so remorselessly by his playmates because of his unfashionable name that he adopted the more popular *William* to placate them.<sup>3</sup> This apparently shows the swiftness and completeness with which the Norman system of naming replaced that of pre-Conquest England, and to a certain extent it does. But it also hints at a more complicated picture. *Tostig* was not an English name, but a Scandinavian one, brought to England by a different group of invaders and settlers who had already altered the linguistic origin of the English name stock. Moreover, while *Tostig* was in its origin a compound name, by 1130 it is unlikely that it was being used as such.<sup>4</sup> Instead the name was probably repeated in its entirety as an indivisible name in its own right, and made popular in Northumbria due to its connection with its one-time Earl, Tostig Godwineson (†1066), the brother of King Harold (†1066) and member of the most powerful family in the kingdom. Importantly, it also demonstrates the growing power of the wider community to influence the lives of the people within it and the choices they made about naming.

The story of Tostig paints a picture of an England where names were copied, where influential local figures acted as reference points for naming, where names from numerous ethnic and linguistic origins were combined together in one system, and where horizontal pressure from the communities in which people lived affected the way they chose names for

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<sup>2</sup> This work has been spearheaded by a project called *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*, the aims and findings of which will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey of Coldingham, *Vita Bartholomei Farnensis*, printed as Appendix II in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Thomas Arnold (London, 1885), Vol. II, pp. 295-325. See p. 296 for the citation, which reads: 'Hic primo a parentibus Tostius dictus est, cujus nominis etymologiam socii ejus adolescentulis irridentibus, Willelmus dixerunt'. For more on this story and its significance on naming fashions, see Cecily Clark, 'Willelmus Rex? Vel Alius Willelmus?' in Cecily Clark and Peter Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names, and History: Selected Writings of Cecily Clark* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 281-298.

<sup>4</sup> *Tostig* was actually a short form of the compound name *Þorsteinn*.

their children. Each of these aspects will be looked at in more detail over the course of this thesis in the aim of showing that the changes that took place in England were in fact part of a Europe-wide transformation in the way people used personal names. It stands to reason that a Europe-wide transformation should have Europe-wide causes, so in looking for these common causes I hope to shed some light on the nature of the wider social, economic and political changes that were taking place in England at the time, and how they related to those taking place in Europe. In this sense, I want to use names as ‘documents of social history’ – a means to find out more about the people behind the names: what was important to them; how they valued family and the communities in which they lived; how they viewed their social superiors, or inferiors; and, to some extent, what their aspirations were for themselves and their children.<sup>5</sup> This is not to claim that what took place in England was exactly the same as what took place in France, or Germany or Europe as a whole. England is, and was, different in many ways – but surely it is necessary to understand in what way it was similar in order to understand how it was different. As such, the analysis in the following chapters builds on a methodology already successfully employed by European scholars such as Monique Bourin, Pascal Chareille and Dominique Barthelémy in their studies of continental sources. This will allow useful comparisons between the English case studied here and existing studies of naming patterns carried out on European sources.

This methodology will be employed to map the pace and course of the changes that took place to the naming system of medieval England and place this analysis firmly in the context of recent studies carried out on the naming patterns of continental Europe in the same period. These broad trends will then be combined with micro-level studies of naming decisions in individual families and communities to help understand how and why people chose names in the way they did, how these individual decisions influenced the wider naming system, as well as how the wider system influenced individual decisions. The results of these studies will be used to reevaluate the impact of the Norman Conquest on the personal naming patterns, and suggest that, rather than being caused by outside influence, they were brought about by internal changes to the structure of English society and the individual communities within it. In this sense, this thesis aims to contribute to the broader strand of scholarship that suggests that the fundamental transformation of the English

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<sup>5</sup> Monique Bourin, Jean-Maire Martin and François Menant, *L'anthroponymie document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux: Actes du colloque de Rome (6-8 octobre 1994)* (Rome, 1996).

landscape, the nucleation of settlements and the feudalisation of relationships between the lords and the people over whom they ruled were not transported across the Channel by continental invaders, but began long before the Conquest and progressed in parallel to those changes which took place on the continent. It will also propose that these wider changes that took place to the fabric of English society are reflected in the changes that took place to the personal naming system.

Chapter 2 will assess the current literature on the medieval naming transformation from an English perspective and how this fits into the wider historiography of the period. Much of the work devoted to names in this period has, intentionally or otherwise, done so in the context of the Norman Conquest – with studies either stopping or starting at this point, or using the Conquest as a means of exploring change. This chapter will therefore review previous work in the light of recent studies carried out on the continent and suggest that a new approach is needed to reexamine the English evidence – one that takes a long-term approach spanning the Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman periods to a better understanding of the true nature of the changes that took place. This approach will then be applied in chapter 3, which will feature studies of 14 corpora of English names originating from across the period under examination in this thesis. These macro-analytical studies will present a number of detailed snapshots of the naming system in a number of communities at specific points in time. The results presented will allow a reassessment of previously held assumptions around the changes that took place to names in this period, notably around the impact of the Norman Conquest.

Chapter 4 will provide a synthesis of the quantitative studies across the period as a whole in an attempt to identify broad trends in naming patterns from a chronological and geographical perspective, as well as digging deeper to examine changes in how names were constructed across the Anglo-Saxon period. The aim of this chapter will be to divorce the rapid changes that were caused by the outside influence of the Norman Conquest and its aftermath from the long-term, systemic changes that took place to the English naming system across a much broader span of time. It will show that, while the Norman Conquest did have a considerable impact on naming vocabulary in century following the Conquest, the broader systemic changes cannot be ascribed to the events of 1066, and in fact began well before this date. Chapter 5 will switch focus to examine names on a micro-analytical

level, carrying out detailed examinations of naming decisions in individual families and communities, as well looking at contemporary accounts of the significance of names and naming decisions. It will demonstrate how each individual act of naming was a complex decision which balanced the need to demonstrate individual, family, community and religious identities – while sometimes fulfilling all of these needs at once – but that the broader patterns of change identified in Chapters 3 and 4 are clearly visible, as people began to copy and reuse names of family members, local figures of authority, religious personages – both past and present – and respected members of their community.

Chapter 6 and 7 will then explore possible reasons for the changes observed. Chapter 6 will use scholarship from the fields of linguistics, sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics to look at names from a theoretical perspective, examining the linguistic and social roles they play, and will propose that names are more than words used for referring to individuals, but are in fact community items capable of demonstrating belonging to a ‘naming community’. Finally, chapter 7 will build on this theoretical framework by exploring changes which took place to the physical and social landscape, the lived environments of medieval England, in order to make the case that the causes behind the naming transformation lie in the formation of the close-knit, norm-enforcing communities around which the lives of medieval people came to revolve.



## The Medieval Naming Transformation

A fact that cannot be disputed is that, over the course of the medieval period, a fundamental transformation took place in the way people across England and Europe chose names for their children. It is a subject on which much has been written over the course of more than a century, not least because it coincides with so many other historiographically important events. This chapter will attempt to summarise the work that has been done so far on the changes that took place to the naming system of England, as well as how this has been influenced by wider historiographical debates.

### 1. The Old English naming system

It is widely agreed that, in the early ninth century, the people of England adhered to traditional Germanic principles of name-giving, where dithematic, compound names were created by combining two ‘themes’ taken from the language of everyday vocabulary. This was a feature inherited from Common West Germanic, although the genesis of such compound naming systems stretches much further back, having roots in Indo-European itself. Such systems were common to most of western Europe – or at least those areas where Germanic kingdoms had come to dominate in the wake of the fall of Rome in the fifth century.<sup>6</sup> Other than at its Celtic and Muslim edges, the evidence we have suggests that people across most of western Europe adhered to a Germanic compound naming system and had done so from at least the seventh century, even in areas where Germanic languages

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<sup>6</sup> Common West Germanic is the linguistic ancestor of the modern Germanic languages of English, Dutch, German, Frisian and Low German. It is distinct from the northern branch of Germanic languages which includes Danish, Swedish and Norwegian. Both branches are descended from Germanic which is, in turn, descended from Indo-European. See Cecily Clark, ‘Onomastics’ in Richard Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume I: The Beginnings to 1066* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 452-87, here pp. 456-9; also Richard Coates, ‘Names’ in Richard Hogg and David Denison (eds), *A History of the English Language* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 312-351 (see p. 319) and Fran Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England: The Linguistics and Culture of the Old English Onomasticon* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 101-150. For an overview of Roman naming practices prior to the fall of the Empire in the west, see Stephen Wilson, *The Means of Naming: A social and cultural history of personal naming in western Europe* (London, 1998), pp. 3-61.

never replaced Latin dialects.<sup>7</sup> In Anglo-Saxon England, which was Germanic linguistically, people at all levels of society overwhelmingly followed the rules of this system when naming their children.

The main features of this system ensured that, in general, each individual had a single name – with no surname – and names were predominantly created by combining two recognisable name elements, or ‘themes’, to produce ‘dithematic’ or ‘compounded’ names. There was a finite number of themes, but they could be combined in a multitude of ways, with some being used only at the start of names, like *Ead-* and *Cuth-*; some only at the end, like *-ric* and *-weard*; and others which could be used either at the start or the end, such as *Beorht-/ -beorht* and *Wulf-/ -wulf*. This flexibility allowed a huge number of names to be formed. In essence, a name was created for, rather than given to, each person. As a result, there was very little repetition of names and any two people within a community or family would be unlikely to share the same name. Régine Le Jan has suggested that Germanic belief in the indivisibility of body and spirit, and therefore the survival of a person after their death, meant that the name of that person could not be passed on to another.<sup>8</sup>

That is not to say that pre-Conquest English people did not use names to indicate belonging to a family or a group. Woolf’s survey of Old Germanic naming principles demonstrated the ways in which people used names to indicate family and group membership. One common strategy was alliteration, which simply entailed repetition of the initial sound of a name. This could be done through the repetition of a specific consonant, or the reuse of any vowel sound. The practice of variation took this one step further. Here, individual name themes were reused to demonstrate family or group belonging. This reuse could apply to both primary and secondary themes, so did not necessarily produce alliteration – although it often did. In some cases variation could be used to combine name elements from both the male and female lines of descent. Woolf cites the example of Wulfstan (†1095), Bishop of Worcester, who was the son of Wulfgifu and Æðelstan and so his name took one theme from

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<sup>7</sup> In areas where Celtic languages were spoken, including Wales, Cornwall, Ireland, Scotland and Brittany, it seems Celtic names were the norm, while Arabic names were used amongst the Muslim communities of the Iberian peninsula.

<sup>8</sup> Régine Le Jan, ‘Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship’ in George Beech, Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille (eds), *Personal Name Studies of Medieval Europe: Social Identity and Familial Structures*, (Michigan, 2002), pp. 39-40.

each of his parents.<sup>9</sup> One final way of marking family belonging was repetition – the passing down of full names. Woolf points to the frequent use of *Eadward* or *Edward* among the later kings of Wessex as an example of this, but repetition does not appear to have been common practice until the later Anglo-Saxon period and it will be suggested later in this thesis that this phenomenon represents a significant change in the way people selected names for their children.<sup>10</sup>

While dithematic names were certainly the norm for the people of Anglo-Saxon England, there was always a small proportion of ‘monothematic’ or ‘uncompounded’ names which did not follow this pattern. These included names simply containing an individual theme, such as *Beorht*, as well as extended or suffixed names, such as *Goda* or *Goding*. Some of these may have been monothematic in origin, while others are likely to have been hypocoristic formations – familiar forms of dithematic names.<sup>11</sup> In addition, original bynames or nicknames were occasionally recorded rather than a name given at birth. Insley has also suggested that a number of later forms found towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period which used suffixes such as *-cild* (child) and *-sunu* (son) could in fact have been hypocoristic forms themselves, even if their morphological construction adhered to the general dithematic pattern.<sup>12</sup> What is clear is that, at least at the beginning of the period of study of this thesis, the *thematic* nature of the Anglo-Saxon naming system is not in doubt – names were created by selecting from a set of name elements drawn from the everyday vocabulary of the language, whether they be dithematic or monothematic morphologically. Certain Anglo-Saxon scholars have suggested that the meaning of these themes was of little or no importance.<sup>13</sup> Whether or not this was the case will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, but what is clear is that the semantic areas from which Old English names were drawn was limited. Broadly, these areas were: religion, cult and supernatural beings; war, battle and

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<sup>9</sup> Although it seems equally plausible that he was named after his illustrious uncle, also Bishop of Worcester and Archbishop of York.

<sup>10</sup> Henry Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving* (Baltimore, 1939), pp. 2-3.

<sup>11</sup> For more details on name types see: John Insley, ‘Pre-Conquest Personal Names’ in *Reallexikon Der Germanischen Altertumskunde*, 23 (Berlin, 2001), pp. 367-396; Mats Redin, *Studies on uncompounded personal names in Old English* (Uppsala, 1919), pp. xxvii-xxxix; and Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 125-146.

<sup>12</sup> Insley, ‘Pre-Conquest Personal Names’, p. 379.

<sup>13</sup> Woolf, *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, p. 3 and Frank Stenton, ‘Personal Names in Place-Names’ in Doris Stenton (ed.), *Preparatory to Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1970), p. 88.

weapons; names of peoples; designations of places; collective consciousness; animal names; and adjectives denoting personal attributes.<sup>14</sup>

The aim of this thesis is not to provide an in-depth examination of Old English names from an etymological or morphological standpoint. Excellent studies of this kind have been carried out by numerous linguists and onomasts over the past century which allow us to determine with some degree of certainty how individual names have developed and what their original meaning was – notably those of Redin, von Felitzen, Sonderegger, Ström, Forssner and Insley.<sup>15</sup> What has been attempted in this short section is a brief overview of the key features of the Old English naming system as it functioned around 800. The overall picture of this system is of one which allowed for the creation of a unique name for each individual member of a community by combining two recognisable name themes. Whether name themes themselves were chosen for their specific lexical meaning is a matter for debate, but what seems clear is that they were recognisable as individual themes which could be selected and combined to form one name.

## 2. A transformed system

In contrast, by the end of the period of study of this thesis the way in which the people of England used personal names had been completely transformed. In the early fourteenth century the majority of the population shared a relatively small number of common personal names. These were not created by combining individual name themes, but constituted indivisible linguistic items in their own right. People chose and bestowed names in a completely different way.

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<sup>14</sup> Insley, 'Pre-Conquest Personal Names', p. 377.

<sup>15</sup> For monothematic Old English names, see Redin, *Uncompounded personal names*. Hilmer Ström, *Old English personal names in Bede's History: an etymological-phonological investigation* (Lund, 1939) provides a full survey of the early Old English names appearing in Bede's *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum*. Olof von Felitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday* (Uppsala, 1937) provides an etymological survey of later Old English names and themes appearing in Domesday. Stenton's 'Personal Names in Place Names' contains much valuable information on name and theme etymology. Thorvald Forssner, *Continental-Germanic personal names in England: in Old and Middle English times* (Uppsala, 1916) examines names of continental origin in England both prior to and following the Conquest. Insley's many works have corrected various errors contained in the the works listed above as well as listing many names not included, for example: 'The study of Old English personal names and anthroponymic lexika' in Dieter Geuenich et al. (eds), *Person und Name: Methodische Probleme bei der Erstellung eines Personennamenbuchs des Frühmittelalters* (Berlin, 2002), pp. 148-176 and 'Pre-Conquest Personal Names'.

Whereas five hundred years previously, the chances of any two people in the same family or settlement sharing the same name was relatively slim, by 1300 it is likely that not only would a person share a name with any number of members of their own family, but they would also share it with numerous other people in their immediate vicinity. People passed down family names from father to son, from mother to daughter, and shared names with their friends and neighbours. As a result, a small number of popular names came to dominate. In addition to what can now be accurately termed ‘baptismal’ names, the majority of people also bore a surname or byname. This was not, at this time, the system of fully hereditary surnames as we know them today, although in some cases surnames had most likely begun to be passed down through families. Instead bynames or surnames were typically coined for individuals, usually one of the following types: a surname of relationship, often but not exclusively a patronymic one; a descriptor of the office or occupation of the name-holder; an indicator of location or place of origin; or a nickname, providing a description, often comical and frequently insulting, of an individual’s character, appearance or economic situation.<sup>16</sup> Ekwall suggests that in London, while some nicknames were still being coined at the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth centuries, newly formed bynames were becoming rarer and the majority would have already become hereditary, although it is thought that truly hereditary surnames would not have been used everywhere in England until somewhat later.<sup>17</sup>

One immediately recognisable and inescapable change that had taken place by 1350 is the almost complete transformation of the linguistic origin of the English name stock. Whereas in 850, the vast majority of English names were of Old English origin, by 1350, with a few rare exceptions, these names had disappeared and had been replaced by names of continental origin – those introduced into England following the Norman Conquest, such as *William*, *Richard* and *Robert* – and ‘Christian’ names – those of biblical personages or popular saints, such as *Thomas*, *John* and *Adam*.<sup>18</sup> The few Old English names that did survive into the

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<sup>16</sup> Eilert Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names* (Lund, 1947), p. 118.

<sup>17</sup> Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, p.134.

<sup>18</sup> This is a change documented by many historians, philologists and onomasts, including: Cecily Clark, ‘Onomastics’ in Richard Hogg (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the English Language: Volume II 1066-1476* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 542-647 (pp. 551-554); David Postles, *Naming the People of England, c. 1100-1350* (Newcastle, 2006), p. 49 and Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings 1075-1225* (Oxford, 2000), pp.538-540.

later medieval period were also names associated with popular saints in most cases, such as *Edward* and *Edmund*.<sup>19</sup> Other than that, the only remnants we see of traditional Old English names are those which became surnames of relationship in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, such as *Lewin*, from *Leofwine*, *Goodwin*, from *Godwine* and *Aldred*, from *Ealdred*.<sup>20</sup> It is not until the Victorian era that we see a modest revival in a few names of pre-Conquest English origin, such as *Alfred*.

There is nothing contentious in what has been summarised so far in this chapter, and it is not my aim to call into question the fact that between 850 and 1350 the English naming system was transformed into one where a relative handful of indivisible names of continental and Christian origin were shared amongst the majority of the population.<sup>21</sup> However, it is my contention that previous studies have not accurately described the process by which this transformation took place, nor have they adequately explained the reasons which lay behind it. As a result, I believe we have missed an opportunity to understand more about the nature of medieval English society. The remainder of this chapter will highlight those areas where I believe existing research into the English naming transformation falls short and how my research will aim to shed new light.

### 3. Anglo-Saxons, Normans and the English

As with many of the changes that occurred in English society at this time, the most prominent explanation given for the transformation of the English naming system is the Norman Conquest and the subsequent replacement of the Old English ruling elite with a new French-speaking one, drawn from those areas of northern France which helped turn William from a Bastard into a Conqueror, predominantly Normandy, Brittany, Picardy and Flanders. This is an assertion made by a number of historians, philologists and linguists. Robert Bartlett has stated that:

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<sup>19</sup> Clark, 'Willelmus Rex? Vel Alius Willelmus?', p. 281.

<sup>20</sup> Ekwall notes some of these in Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, pp. 126-130 and Seltén provides a detailed survey of by-names formed using Old English personal names in medieval East Anglia in Bo Seltén, *The Anglo-Saxon Heritage in Middle English Personal Names* (Lund, 1972).

<sup>21</sup> The term 'uncompounded' here refers to the fact that names were no-longer being formed by the conscious selection of two name themes, even if many of the newly popular names would have been dithematic in their origin.

With the Norman Conquest, a small alien group took over the kingdom of England. Their names marked them out from the subject population just as clearly as their language... [The] process of cultural constraint was powerful enough to lead to the wholesale adoption of Norman names by the native population... This shift to Norman names seems to have been accompanied by a decline in the variety of available names.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Ann Williams suggests that:

One of the most striking, and uncontentious, results of the Norman Conquest is the almost complete replacement of the insular name-stock with names of continental origin... It was not, however, only the name-stock which was changed. Before 1066, each individual was identified by a single, distinctive name (an idionym). This contrasts very strongly with the present-day system of naming.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps the most significant contribution to the study of English naming during this period has been the work of the eminent onomast and anthroponymist, Cecily Clark. Clark's work on names was groundbreaking in many ways, and her efforts to use personal naming as a means to discover more about the 'social attitudes' of medieval people and the 'social composition' of the communities they lived in have been, to a large extent, the inspiration behind the writing of this thesis.<sup>24</sup>

Much of Clark's work was done with the aim of assessing the impact of the Norman Conquest on the names of the people of England and, through their names, the impact on the lives of English people. She also developed a set of working principles that she could apply in a range of historical contexts to ensure her studies yielded consistent results. She referred to these – possibly with her tongue in cheek – as 'Clark's First Three Laws of Applied Anthroponymics' in a paper given under this name in 1979. These principles state that:

In any homogenous community, naming-behaviour will remain constant, except when disturbed by outside influence... In any community previously characterised by uniform naming-behaviour, reactions to uniform outside influence will likewise be uniform... [and] ... In any community originally homogenous, any variations in the effects of an outside

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<sup>22</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, pp. 538-540.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest* (Woodbridge, 1995), pp.206-207.

<sup>24</sup> Cecily Clark, 'Early Personal Names of King's Lynn: Baptismal Names' in Clark and Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History*, pp. 258-279 (see p. 242.)

influence on naming-behaviour will be proportional to variations in the strength of that influence.<sup>25</sup>

While Clark's laws are undoubtedly useful for studying the impact of naming vocabulary, they are problematic when attempting to discern changes to the nature of the system itself. Their main premise holds that naming behaviour will remain constant within any community unless there is outside influence, and that by measuring the impact of naming changes on different locations we can determine the strength of the impact of outside influence on a naming system. Clark herself acknowledged that this law is tautologous in as much as a 'homogenous' community could be defined as either 'one where naming-behaviour is both uniform and constant' or 'one free from outside influence'.

Whether any society in any period can accurately be labelled 'homogenous' must be debatable, and particularly one in early medieval Europe, nor are societies unchanging. Moreover, we should remember that the naming system in all the areas of western Europe where Germanic naming had been predominant did change; and it did so along similar lines to that of England. The 'Norman' names that were adopted by English people were, in origin at least, dithematic. *Roger*, *Richard* and *William* were all compound Germanic names formed using themes cognate with those used in England. Yet, by the time English people adopted them, the system from which they originated had clearly moved to one where they were no longer dithematic formations, but rather indivisible names, and some of these names went on to be borne by a large proportion of the population. In Europe these changes occurred without any obvious outside influence and were instead brought about through internal societal changes.

The naming systems of England's continental neighbours were transformed through internal societal changes, so why was England so different that only the influence of military conquest and immigration could cause its naming system to change? While there is no doubt that the naming vocabulary of England was significantly influenced by the names of its continental conquerors, it is difficult to see how the influx of a few thousand Frenchmen caused the whole raft of changes that took place to the naming system itself. It has never been adequately explained how a 'fashion' for continental names caused the condensation of

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<sup>25</sup> Cecily Clark, 'Clark's First Three Laws of Applied Anthroponymics' in Clark and Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History*, pp. 77-83.



the naming stock, nor why people gravitated towards a few very popular names. Clark's wider studies actually present a far more nuanced picture than her laws suggest. She noted that 'the shift away from single idionyms...[and] reliance not merely on a finite stock of set forms but largely on a very few disproportionately favoured ones' seems to have arisen spontaneously across most of western Europe, even in late eleventh-century England.<sup>26</sup> On the subject of bynames and surnames she suggested that in England 'such specifying phrases had been in occasional use among the English people since well before the Conquest, and all signs are that shrinkage of the name-stock would in any case have soon compelled their general adoption'.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, Clark demonstrates that the name stock was already becoming more concentrated in her study of the names of Bury St. Edmonds shortly after the Conquest, with *Godwine*, *Godric*, *Ælfric*, *Ælfwine* and *Wulfric* standing out as common names.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, Clark herself acknowledged that 'although, to me, these "Laws" seem wholly consonant with the findings from my studies so far, I shall scarcely be surprised if they are called into question or even comprehensively refuted'.<sup>29</sup>

This being the case, this thesis will attempt to add to the significant contributions made by Cecily Clark, while on occasion aiming to reevaluate some of her conclusions. This study also builds on recent work carried out by David Postles, whose study of English naming between 1100 and 1350 describes how during this period English forenames 'were displaced by C-G (West Frankish) as well as Christian names' but also that 'by the end of the twelfth century, C-G forenames had considerably displaced insular personal names and signs of a concentration of forenames were already apparent'.<sup>30</sup> Postles notes that, in contradiction to the first of Clark's three laws, 'cultures are rarely homologous or homogenous', and much of his work is aimed at demonstrating regional differences in the development of naming practices across England. He also questions the linear manner in which the transformation

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<sup>26</sup> Clark, 'Onomastics' II, p. 553. (Clark's chapters of the same name in Volumes I and II of *The Cambridge History of the English Language* will be referred to as 'Onomastics' I and 'Onomastics' II).

<sup>27</sup> Clark, 'Onomastics' II, p. 553.

<sup>28</sup> Clark, 'Willelmus rex? Vel Alius Willelmus?', p. 284.

<sup>29</sup> Despite this, Clark's laws have on occasion been cited as statements of fact, rather than suggestions, for example, Richard Coates in 'Names', a chapter of Hogg and Denison's *A History of the English Language*, cites Clark's first law on p. 20 as an explanation for changing naming patterns following the Conquest, suggesting that explains that the naming system of pre-Conquest England was the traditional Old English one 'except as disturbed by the Scandinavian settlement'. For Clark's citation, see 'Clark's First Three Laws', p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 49.

to Norman naming is said to have taken place, suggesting instead that the impact of Norman naming-vocabulary was far less uniform and swift than has hitherto been supposed. He presents a picture of a hybrid naming system, where insular naming processes persisted for several generations after 1066, continuing for longer in some areas than in others, and where people used both insular and continental naming vocabulary without necessarily discarding one system in favour of another immediately.<sup>31</sup> This is a suggestion which will be considered in more detail in later chapters, but it is clear that Postles has made commendable efforts to ‘move away from a unifying narrative, and to restore to the elucidation of change the complexity which is perceptible’.<sup>32</sup>

Postles, however, defines the starting point of his study as 1100, this being the end of the first generation after the events of 1066.<sup>33</sup> In doing so he explicitly divorces the Old English past from everything that came later. Any changes and variations are measured against a post-Conquest benchmark, and any changes that had begun beforehand largely ignored. So, while Postles’ work is illuminating in many ways, by setting 1100 as the base from which he measures all changes I believe he fails to adequately explain key elements of the transformation that took place. Postles himself notes that, ‘whilst the extreme concentration of forenames by the end of the thirteenth century can be quantified, its causes remain to be investigated’.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, I believe that without extending the period of study back well before the Conquest, we cannot hope to understand the real impetus behind this change, nor the reasons for many of the changes that took place to the naming system.

A common explanation is that the English followed the ‘fashions’ of their new Norman rulers. Yet, why would the introduction of hundreds of *new* names to the name stock cause it to shrink? If, as has generally been suggested, the English at the time of the Conquest were still wedded to a naming system which was designed to create uniqueness, why would they abandon it so swiftly and so completely? The amount of new names introduced into England would have allowed most communities to preserve uniqueness – or something close to it – had they wished to do so, yet, apparently, they abandoned it at the first opportunity, settling on a few ‘fashionable’ names chosen from the ranks of invaders from across the

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<sup>31</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, pp. 10-29.

<sup>32</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> Postles, *Naming the people of England*, p. 66.

channel. What set these few popular names apart from the hundreds of other, equally continental names and caused the English people to choose them as their preferred names? Little consideration has been given to question of how this process took place, or how it related to the wider phenomenon that was taking place in Europe.

Even the supposedly clear-cut issue of naming vocabulary is not as transparent as it may seem. Clearly the influx of continental Germanic names, in French form, that took place in the eleventh and twelfth centuries can be attributed fairly directly to Norman influence.<sup>35</sup> Yet, the biblical and saintly names that came to be just as popular are also said to have done so through this same Norman influence. Ekwall explains that ‘the French names that supplanted the Old English ones were mostly names of Old German origin, such as *Hugh* and *Ralph*. But Biblical names such as *Andrew*, *John*, *Matthew* and *Simon* are also to be looked upon as French, for those names were only exceptionally used by the Anglo-Saxons’.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Clark suggests that ‘because ‘Christian’ names, although not unknown in pre-Conquest England, had been little favoured there, their post-Conquest popularity may fairly be ascribed to the reinforced continental influences’.<sup>37</sup> However, Christian names were not particularly popular in Normandy or the rest of Northern France at the time of the Conquest, and did not start to become popular in England before the beginning of the thirteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Again, it is a phenomenon that is common to the whole of western Christendom at this time – one that largely took place after 1066. Only in some areas of southern France were Christian names popular before this time.<sup>39</sup> It is true that the elites of England and Normandy were linked in many ways during the two hundred years following the Conquest, yet to assume that all and any changes in naming patterns came *par le biais* of French influence effectively removes all agency from the rank and file of English people. Why are developments that took place independently in other areas, or as part of a Europe-wide shift in the way people used names, seen through the narrow prism of an invasion that took place a hundred and fifty years previously?

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<sup>35</sup> Although not all ‘Norman’ names were of continental Germanic, many Scandinavian names, in French form, persisted – and not all of the newcomers were ‘Norman’, with people drawn from a larger area of northern France, including Brittany, from where a number of Celtic names were imported.

<sup>36</sup> Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, p. 91.

<sup>37</sup> Clark, ‘Onomastics’ II, p. 558.

<sup>38</sup> Postles, *Naming the people of England*, p. 63.

<sup>39</sup> Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, p. 88.

#### 4. The influence of the Norman Conquest

One reason for this is clearly the influence of the Norman Conquest – not on the people of medieval England, but on English history. This one event in 1066 has often been viewed as a cataclysmic event that changed every element of English society. It has created a great historiographical dividing line between what happened before 1066 and what followed. Ann Williams has pointed out that we even have a different name for the people who lived before 1066 – *Anglo-Saxons*, rather than *English* – and that ‘calling the people of pre-Conquest England by a different name from their post-Conquest successors encourages the assumption that ‘English’ history begins in 1066’.<sup>40</sup> Yet in reality there was no large-scale exodus of Anglo-Saxons after the Conquest, nor was there a particularly large number of Norman migrants – probably no more than 20,000, little more than one per cent of the population.<sup>41</sup> The English of 1150 were, by and large, the same people as in 1050 – or at least their direct descendants, but the study of their histories is too often carried out separately. It is quite possible that their names have a part to play in this artificial divide. The familiarity of the names we see among the English of the twelfth and thirteenth century seem, to most of us, identifiably English. *William*, *Thomas* and *John* could be people plucked from any period of English history over the last thousand years. As a result, the individuals behind these names seem, in some ways, more identifiable as people as well – more human perhaps. In comparison, the names of their pre-Conquest counterparts often seem alien and unfamiliar to us. Names such as *Beorhtric*, *Æðelweard* and *Leofgifu* lend the Anglo-Saxons an air of fantastical detachment. So there is a perhaps understandable tendency to see them as fundamentally different from what came later. As Williams has pointed out, ‘names matter’, whether they be personal names or the labels we apply to groups of people, and the quite glaring disparity between the names of the English people either side of the Conquest makes it easier to label those who came before it as Anglo-Saxons, distinct and different from the English who came after it.<sup>42</sup>

Every nation has dates and events, which, rightly or wrongly, are deemed to be crucial in the making of that nation and its people – and 1066 is such a date in English history. It has been

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<sup>40</sup> Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Douglas Kibbee, *For to Speke Frenche Trewely*, (Amsterdam, 1991), p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, p. 1.

seen as a point either side of which existed two decisively different worlds and, for almost the entirety of the thousand or so years which have followed it, a debate has raged over the world that was lost on the hill at Senlac. As with many significant events, the histories written over the course of this period are as much a reflection of the historical context in which they were produced as they are an account of the impact of the Conquest itself. Yet, whether lamenting the loss of Saxon liberties and the imposition of the Norman ‘Yoke’, or lauding the impact of Norman administrative innovation, the common theme throughout is usually the profundity of its impact. This dichotomy is perhaps best illustrated by Victorian attitudes towards the Conquest. It was described on one hand by William Stubbs as being the catalyst for the creation of modern government. Stubbs stated that Norman rule ‘invigorated the whole national system’ and ‘stimulated the growth of freedom and the sense of unity’ as well as supplying ‘a formative power which helped to develop and concentrate the wasted energies of the native race’ and brought the nation ‘at once and permanently within the circle of European’ interests.<sup>43</sup> This was shortly after his predecessor as Regius Professor at Oxford, Goldwin Smith, had asked:

Why was England in need of the Norman? Could not Harold, her own elected and heroic king, have ruled her the stronger? ... In what was the Norman so superior? The independent self-development of a nation purely Teutonic, not in blood only, but in character and institutions, were lost to humanity. A pure Teutonic language was wrecked... Civilisation generally was thrown back by the havoc.<sup>44</sup>

In both cases, the cataclysmic nature of the Norman Conquest is not in question, merely the beneficial nature, or otherwise, of the far-reaching consequences. Subsequent historians have argued on either side of this same divide ever since. J. H. Round stated that it was not the ‘unfamiliar look of Anglo-Saxon appellatives’ which caused the lack of interest shown in the people who bore them, but that:

There must be, surely, a deeper cause than this, an instinctive feeling that in England our consecutive political history does, in a sense, begin with the Norman Conquest... We thus exchange aimless struggles, told in an uninviting fashion, for a great issue and a definite

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<sup>43</sup> William Stubbs, *Constitutional History of England* (5<sup>th</sup>edn, Oxford, 1891), vol. 1, p. 269.

<sup>44</sup> Goldwin Smith, *The United Kingdom: A Political History* (London, 1899), vol. 1, pp. 21-23.

policy, on which we have at our disposal materials deserving of study. From the moment of the Conqueror's landing we trace a continuous history.<sup>45</sup>

Frank Stenton, the most celebrated Anglo-Saxon historian of the twentieth century, believed that:

Despite many...points of continuity, the fact remains that sooner or later every aspect of English life was changed by the Norman Conquest...it can at least be said that to the ordinary Englishman who had lived from the accession of King Edward to the death of King William, it must have seemed an unqualified disaster.<sup>46</sup>

Even in the twenty-first century we see these familiar arguments being restated by modern historians. Of William the Conqueror (†1087), Robert Bartlett has stated that:

His greatest achievement is 1066. The years that followed saw one of the most fundamental transformations in British history. The reign of William the Conqueror marks the end of Anglo-Saxon England. He imposed a new aristocracy, a new language, a new culture. He transformed England into a Norman stronghold... The political and cultural landscape of Britain and Ireland today was forged by the Normans.<sup>47</sup>

Similarly, Marc Morris affirms that he 'would agree with those historians who continue to regard [the Conquest] as the single most important event in English history'.<sup>48</sup> That makes it more important than the Roman Conquest of Britain, the coming of the Anglo-Saxon tribes, Alfred's defeat of the Vikings, the Protestant Reformation, the English Civil War, the Union with Scotland, the Battle of Somme and every single one of the key events that led to Britain's involvement in World War II, as well as her subsequent role in its eventual outcome – not to mention the entire history of the British Empire. That is quite some statement, but, as we have seen, Morris is far from the first – and is unlikely to be the last – to make it.

Of course, it must be acknowledged that there were clearly a number of significant changes associated with the Norman Conquest – changes in language, political allegiances, ruling elites and relationships with the rest of the British Isles and Europe – but the fact is that the

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<sup>45</sup> John Horace Round, *Feudal England: Historical Studies on the XIth and XIIth Centuries* (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 317-318.

<sup>46</sup> Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1971), p. 686.

<sup>47</sup> Robert Bartlett, *The Normans* [BBC Television Series], Episode 2: 'Conquest', (2010).

<sup>48</sup> Marc Morris, *The Norman Conquest* (London, 2012), p.9.

Conquest occurred during a time of considerable change across the whole of Europe. James Holt suggested that England should be considered as separate from the rest of Europe, insisting that ‘the Revolution of 1066’ means that, in England, change appears to us ‘not as the relatively gradual process which bedevils much of the continental evidence, but as a sharp antithesis, the new confronting the old across the divide of 1066’.<sup>49</sup> Yet during a period of such widespread change, it is very difficult to divorce those changes which occurred as a direct result of the Conquest from those which simply occurred around the same time, or even in spite of it. It is often far easier just to ascribe all changes as being down to Norman influence. Over the centuries the Conquest has been labelled as being responsible for almost innumerable changes including, but not limited to, the feudal system, lordship, knights, the nucleated village, parish churches, open field farming, centralised government, private property, the nuclear family and patrilineal inheritance. In recent years a number of historians and archaeologists have attempted to reexamine many of these changes. The combined efforts of scholars including, but not limited to, Ann Williams, Christopher Loveluck, Christopher Dyer, John Blair, Peter Sawyer, Rosamund Faith and Andrew Wareham have shown that the traditional picture of a violent break in all aspects of English life is far from accurate.<sup>50</sup> Instead their work has revealed that many of these changes were much more gradual than had previously been suggested and, in many cases, had begun to take shape well before William’s fleet landed at Pevensey Bay.

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<sup>49</sup> James Holt, ‘The Revolution of 1066’ in James Holt, *Colonial England, 1066-1215* (London, 1997), pp. 161-178 (see p. 167).

<sup>50</sup> Ann Williams has shed new light on the lives and changing nature of the English aristocracy and lordship, and drawn comparisons with their continental counterparts, in *The World Before Domesday: The English Aristocracy, 900-1066* (Woodbridge, 2008). Andrew Wareham’s study, *Lords and Communities in Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005), has also contributed in this area. Christopher Dyer has demonstrated the slow pace of economic change that took place across the British Isles from 850 onwards and its similarities with the economic development of the rest of western Europe in *Making a Living in the Middle Ages: The People of Britain, 850-1520* (Yale, 2002). John Blair has written extensively on the development of English parish churches from the tenth century onwards in *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005) as well as *Early Medieval Surrey* (Stroud, 1991) and *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire* (Oxford, 1994). A new explanation of changing settlement patterns over the Anglo-Saxon period has been developed by a number of authors since Peter Sawyer’s *Medieval Settlement: Continuity and Change* (Leeds, 1976), including those in Sawyer’s edited collection, *English Medieval Settlement* (London, 1979), as well as Della Hooke in *Landscape and Settlement in Britain: AD 400-1066* and Rosamund Faith in *The English Peasantry and the Growth of Lordship* (London, 1999). Christopher Loveluck’s work, *Northwest Europe in the Early Middle Ages, c. AD 600-1150* (Cambridge, 2013) has attempted to combine much of this historical work with archaeological evidence from across Britain, France and Germany in order to explain interconnected patterns of change across a wide area of Europe. These themes and their relation to naming practices will be examined in more detail in Chapter 7.

In their respective fields each of these authors has attempted to bridge the historiographical divide created by the Norman Conquest, presenting a view of English social, cultural, economic and religious history as one where change, while considerable and profound, was not necessarily swift nor violent. Nor was Anglo-Saxon England as different from the rest of western Europe as it is often presented. The divide between scholars of early medieval England and their continental counterparts is, in many ways, as deep as that between scholars of pre- and post-Conquest England, which is often seen as being fundamentally different to the rest of early medieval Europe – as if the twenty-odd miles of water between Dover and Calais isolated England from any of the wider changes taking place on the continent, with only the events of 1066 bridging the divide. Yet the divide created by the English Channel is as artificial and arbitrary as that created by that of the date 1066. Yes, England was different in many ways to France and Germany and Spain and Italy; but then, each of these places was different to the next in turn, and there were huge regional differences within England, as well as in each of those places just listed. This is why it is so important to look beyond regional and national boundaries.

Chris Wickham has suggested that, without comparison across these boundaries, we create ‘a Europe – a world – of islands, with no relationship to each other, in each of which not only are the patterns of social change wholly distinct, but so even are the questions historians ask’.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, these insularities ‘in nearly every case match up with national teleologies, the study in each country of the historical reasons why we are special, better – or at least different from – the others’.<sup>52</sup> I believe this is why the study of English names in this period has, in general, been looked at so often through the prism of the Norman Conquest. After all, it is ‘the single most important event in English history’ – it made England what it is, for better or for worse. Our names are such an important part of our identity, both personal and national, that it stands to reason this pivotal event caused such all-encompassing changes in the way we used them. This teleological view has precluded any wider comparative studies of the English naming transformation in a wider European context.

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<sup>51</sup> Chris Wickham, ‘Problems in Doing Comparative History’ in Patricia Skinner (ed.), *Challenging the Boundaries of Medieval History: The Legacy of Timothy Reuter* (Turnhout, 2009), pp. 5-28 (see p. 6.).

<sup>52</sup> Wickham, ‘Problems in Doing Comparative History’, p. 6.



The chapters that follow will attempt to rectify this by re-evaluating the transformation of English personal naming across the divide of 1066 and examining it in the context of recent studies carried out in continental Europe. In doing so, it aims to disentangle those changes which were brought about by the influence of the Conquest and those which were brought about by internal changes within English society. Hopefully the results will echo the sentiments of David Bates in as much as:

1066 ultimately matters because it has mattered so much for so many for so long. And because dates matter as symbols; they have resonance in national histories far beyond their actual historical significance. We should [acknowledge] that many of the changes which happened in England...were not transported in the fleet which crossed the Channel in the late summer of 1066.<sup>53</sup>

The period of study of this thesis is long and the geographical scope broad. I believe this is necessary in order to address the complexity of the problem presented. As Chris Dyer has said of British economic history:

We might say that 'Britain' is too big to be easily understood because of regional difference. But in a significant dimension it is too small...The offshore island of Britain cannot be separated from continental Europe...All parts of Europe experienced the same trends and setbacks...These parallel developments affected regions in different ways, which helped identify the special character of each.<sup>54</sup>

As such, in this thesis I will attempt to place the medieval history of English personal naming into a wider European context, comparing the changes that took place in England between c.800 and c.1300 to those which took place on the continent over the same period.

## 5. A new approach

This task is made much easier by the work of one particular group of European scholars who, over the last quarter century, have been brought together in an international project called *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. This project has sought to map the transformation in personal naming that took place in medieval Europe, as well as how it came about. They have carried out numerous regional studies that have gone some way

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<sup>53</sup> David Bates, '1066: does the date still matter?', in *Historical Research* 78 (2005), pp. 463-464.

<sup>54</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, p. 4.

towards tracing the course and pace of the naming transformation in a number of regions of medieval Europe. To carry out this collective study of European naming, the project developed a consistent methodology and a set of statistical indicators which enable comparison between diverse regions over a long time period. This methodology combined macro-analytical studies to determine broad trends in naming patterns at societal level, with micro-analytical studies of individual naming decisions at family and community level. Pascal Chareille has provided a detailed explanation of these statistical methods in Volume VI: *Le Nom: Histoire et Statistiques*, but a brief summary of the indicators seems appropriate here.<sup>55</sup>

Firstly, at the macro-analytical level, the project's primary aims have been to map the fluctuation levels of concentration and condensation in personal naming during the medieval period, as well the appearance of bynames of different types and, ultimately, hereditary surnames. These investigations involve a number of statistical indicators, both with regard to given names and additional bynames and surnames used to identify individuals. As this thesis will focus predominantly on given names, it will make use of those indicators designed to determine the condensation and concentration of the name stock. The 'condensation' (or 'extension') of the name stock examines the size of the name stock in relation to the number of people in the corpus – essentially, how many names there are to go round. The 'concentration' of the name stock, rather than looking at the number of names in circulation, examines the distribution of available names across the corpus. This allows us to see whether the names in use are distributed evenly across the population, or whether there are any names which are significantly more popular than others.

*La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* has found that the most efficient tool to determine levels of naming concentration is the 'hit parade of names' – the *palmarès*. From this it is possible to calculate the quantity and distribution of names according to the number of people who bore them. The hit parade is a league table of names ordered by the number of times they appear in a corpus. From it you can then calculate the level of concentration,

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<sup>55</sup> Pascal Chareille, *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne IV – Le Nom: Histoire et Statistiques*, (Tours, 2002). For a brief overview of these methods see Chareille, 'Éléments pour un traitement statistique des données anthroponymiques' in Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille (eds.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne II-2*, (Tours, 1992), pp. 245-297. Or for a summary in English see Chareille, 'Methodological Problems in a Quantitative Approach to Changes in Naming' in George Beech et al., *Personal Name Studies of Medieval Europe* (Kalamazoo, 2002), pp. 15-27.

which is done by determining the proportion of individuals designated by a set number of the most popular names.<sup>56</sup> This gives a good picture of the concentration of the name stock in a specific area over a defined period, which can be supplemented by the ‘rate of homonymy’ – the probability that any two individuals picked out at random from a corpus will have the same name.

Determining the condensation of the name stock can be done in two ways: by calculating the average number of individuals referred to by each name, or by calculating the average stock of names in use for 100 individuals. For example, if there were 100 individuals and 50 names, the average number of names per individual would be 2, while the stock per 100 individuals would be 50. Measuring the level of condensation in this way is not perfect – a fact acknowledged by Chareille. The result of this calculation can vary depending on the number of names in the corpus. As the size of the sample grows it becomes more difficult for the number of names to keep up, so very large samples tend to suggest a more condensed name stock than the reality (conversely a very small sample may suggest a stock much less condensed than it actually is). This is particularly a problem when looking at corpora in the later middle ages, where the stock of names was invariably very small. If, for example, there are only 50 or so names in use, the level of condensation suggested by a corpus of 150 individuals would be very different to a different corpus from the same time and place containing 800 individuals. That said, with some interpretation and allowances for the size of the stock it is still possible to draw some conclusions based on the results of such an analysis.<sup>57</sup>

The combination of these two measurements allows us to see the degree of variation in the name stock of a given corpus (and, as a result, a given community). Measuring condensation alone would not allow us to do this. A corpus of 200 individuals in which the five most popular names were used to designate 100 people and the remaining 100 people all had unique names would have the same level of condensation as a corpus of 200 individuals where 50 names were used to designate two people each, yet the distribution of the names

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<sup>56</sup> In ‘A Quantitative Approach to Changes in Naming’ Chareille suggests condensation should be determined using the five most popular names, however in most of the project’s earlier studies, the six most popular names are used. To allow an effective comparison the concentration in all studies undertaken in this thesis have taken the six most popular names.

<sup>57</sup> For more, see Chareille, ‘A Quantitative Approach to Changes in Naming’, pp. 16-19.

within the stock is radically different in these two cases. However, combined with the measurements relating to the concentration of the name stock, we can see that the naming system of the second corpus is much less geared to the creation of unique or rare names. Other measures which help to add nuance to this broader picture include: the minimum number of names needed to account for half of the individuals in the corpus; the number of rare names – those which appear only once in a corpus; the number of dominant names – those names which account for more than 2 percent of the corpus; and the proportion of the corpus that both these last two account for.<sup>58</sup>

A key part of the approach taken by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* has been to combine these high-level statistical analyses with micro-level studies aimed at determining the reasons behind individual naming decisions within specific families. This has generally been done through examining individual genealogies to see how patterns of naming have changed, or remained the same, from one generation to the next. While their statistical indicators have proved very effective at identifying broad trends, Chareille has acknowledged that, in general, these micro-level studies have been less successful. As such, their efforts to determine exactly what impact factors such as lordship had on naming decisions and their attempts to follow the development of surnames over several generations of a family have not always yielded the desired results.<sup>59</sup> Despite Chareille's reservations about the results of these micro-studies, the goal of combining high-level quantitative analysis with in-depth studies of naming decisions on the ground, at family and community level, should not be discarded. While statistical data may provide us with a picture of how a naming system changes over time, only by attempting to understand the reasons behind individual naming decisions is it possible to find out the causes behind the transformation. The aim should still be to find out what changed in the households, communities and societies in which medieval people lived to alter their perception of themselves, their children and each other in a way that caused them to use names differently. It is the accumulation of these millions of individual decisions which caused the system itself to change. As such, it is vital that we at least attempt to understand them. The methodology

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<sup>58</sup> See Dominique Barthélémy, 'Vendômois: le système anthroponymique' in Monique Bourin (ed.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne: Études d'anthroponymie médiévale, Ie et IIe Rencontres, Azay-le-Ferron, 1986 et 1987* (Tours, 1990), pp. 35-60, which suggests 2 percent as a measurement of a dominant name.

<sup>59</sup> Pascal Chareille, 'Introduction: Vingt ans après' in Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille, *Noms, prénoms, surnoms au Moyen Âge* (Paris, 2014), pp. 11-22 (see p. 12.)

used in this thesis to carry out micro-level analysis differs somewhat to those used by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*, and this will be explained in more detail in Chapter 5, but the ultimate goal remains the same: to understand why individual medieval people changed the way they made naming decisions.

One unfortunate consequence of this macro-analytic approach is that it makes it very difficult to carry out robust analyses of patterns amongst female names in this period. Statistical methods require a minimum amount of data to make an analysis meaningful. Unfortunately, the fact that so few medieval women's names were recorded – particularly in the period between c.800 and c.1100 – means that it has not been possible to carry out macro-analytical studies on female names using the corpora studied in this thesis. The results of such analyses would not produce meaningful, reliable results comparable to those provided by male names during the same period. It is therefore with regret that the studies in this thesis will focus predominantly on male names, and exclusively so when looking at the broad trends. In the micro-studies undertaken in Chapter 5, it has been possible to pay some attention to the names given to women and the potential influence of certain women on the names of family members and other people with whom they were associated.

The sparsity of sources of female names means that there remain many unanswered questions around the names of medieval women in England, particularly those of Anglo-Saxon England, as well as the impact of the Norman Conquest on female naming patterns. While some work on this subject has been carried out, notably by Elisabeth Okasha and Cecily Clark, more research into how women's names were used, how patterns and choices changed over time, and how the Conquest affected them is needed.<sup>60</sup> So too are comparisons with similar studies of male names to determine whether names of men and women were affected differently by gradual social transformations, as well as rapid social upheaval. Studies of this kind may reveal much, not just about names, but how medieval people viewed men and women (and boys and girls) differently, as well as the specific roles played by mothers and fathers in the naming process. Such a wide-ranging investigation is not possible within the scope of this thesis, but hopefully the studies presented here will be able to act as a point of comparison for future research of this kind.

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<sup>60</sup> Elisabeth Okasha, *Women's Names in Old English* (Farnham, 2011) and Cecily Clark, 'Women's Names in Post-Conquest England: Observations and Speculations' in David Postles and Joel T. Rosenthal (eds), *Studies on the Personal name in Later Medieval England and Wales* (Kalamazoo, 2006), pp. 65-102.

## 6. The European naming transformation

The approach of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* has seen individual scholars carrying out regional studies which have subsequently been brought together in order to compare differences and look for overall trends. The following examples will examine how these analytical tools have been applied by historians to a number of areas of medieval Europe.

Dominique Barthélemy's study of 2,900 names of the Vendômois between 1000 and 1300 revealed that the stock of names did not undergo a contraction as such, rather, it underwent a modification.<sup>61</sup> The proportion of the male population designated by the most popular name rose steadily, although it was not the same name in each case. At the beginning of the eleventh century, the most popular name (*Hugue*) accounted for 5.4 percent of individuals. This had risen to 7.6 percent by the twelfth century (*Guillaume*) and 12.5 percent by the thirteenth century (*Jean*). By 1355 *Jean* alone accounted for 27.5 percent of all names. Similarly, the proportion of the population served by the six most popular names rose from 22 percent to 54 percent over the period in question. Furthermore, even those names such as *Hugue* and *Geffroi*, that had been popular in the eleventh century but subsequently lost ground, were still increasing in real terms, if only slowly. This shows that the concentration was a general phenomenon, as an increasing number of names became shared and unique names became less common.<sup>62</sup>

Monique Bourin, in her study of the *Cartulaire du Chapitre Cathédrale d'Agde* from the tenth century to 1250, paints a picture of a more rapid change.<sup>63</sup> Bourin's study also highlights that the distribution of names becomes gradually more concentrated, with five or six popular names accounting for an increasing proportion of the population. This tendency seems to begin very early in Agde, with around half the individuals designated by one of the four most popular names as early as the eleventh century. Bourin suggests that this evolution is visible as early as the tenth century, but the key date where the acceleration begins seems

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<sup>61</sup> Dominique Barthélemy, 'Vendômois: le système anthroponymique', pp. 35-51.

<sup>62</sup> Barthélemy, 'Vendômois: le système anthroponymique', pp. 45-49.

<sup>63</sup> Monique Bourin, 'Les formes anthroponymiques et leur évolution d'après les données du cartulaire du chapitre cathédrale d'Agde' in Bourin (ed.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne I*, pp. 179-205.

to be around 1050.<sup>64</sup> Another key conclusion Bourin comes to in this study is that by 1050, while up to 75 percent of the names are of Germanic origin, the principles of the Germanic naming system were no longer understood, or no longer related to the aspirations of the people:

Tous les noms portés après 1050 ne sont sans doute plus perçus comme germanique. Les plus germaniques ont d'ailleurs disparus. Plus d'Aldegaudus, d'Ansimundus ni de Dodbertus. Mais Galterius, ou Arnaldus. Et Willelmus se mue en Guillelmus.<sup>65</sup>

Similar results were seen by Robert Durand in his study of the *Livro Preto* of the Cathedral of Coïmbra in Portugal, and Patrick Beck in his study of Burgundian charters. Again, there was a concentration of the name stock around a few popular names. The number of dominant names rose from two to thirteen in Burgundy and five to thirteen in Coïmbra between 1000 and 1130.<sup>66</sup>

These are just a few examples of individual studies carried out by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. Further studies have been carried out, incorporating areas as far flung as Brittany, southern Italy and Germany. As one would expect, studies from such widely varying areas of medieval Europe show numerous regional variations in the rhythms of the change that took place.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Bourin explains that bringing together these individual studies into a coherent whole without being reductive was a difficult task.<sup>68</sup> Yet despite the regional variations it is undeniable that these studies also reveal a number of overall trends that are common to all areas. From some point in the tenth century onwards, the naming system of western Europe underwent a significant transformation. The changes were not completely uniform, did not start at exactly the same time and did not all progress at precisely the same pace, but the general pattern of all the areas studied was broadly similar. In all places there was not so much an erosion of the repertoire of names as an initial step,

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<sup>64</sup> Bourin, 'Les formes anthroponymiques d'Agde', pp. 183-184.

<sup>65</sup> Bourin, 'Les formes anthroponymiques d'Agde', pp. 203-204.

<sup>66</sup> Patrice Beck, 'Évolution des formes anthroponymiques en Bourgogne (900–1280)' in Bourin (ed.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne I*, pp. 61-85 and Robert Durand, 'Données anthroponymiques du Livro Preto de la Cathédrale de Coïmbre' in Bourin (ed.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne I*, pp. 219-232.

<sup>67</sup> Monique Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête: de la Picardie au Portugal, l'apparition du système à deux éléments et ses nuances régionales' in Bourin (ed.), *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne I*, (Tours, 1989), pp. 233-248.

<sup>68</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', p. 233.

but rather a change in their distribution, with an increasing concentration on a few popular names being used more and more homogeneously.<sup>69</sup> As Pascal Chareille explains:

La concentration des choix sur certains noms très fréquemment portés est de plus en plus forte, alors qu'une multitude d'autres font figure de noms rares. Ce trait est caractéristique de cette nouvelle anthroponymie médiévale des XIe-XVe siècles.<sup>70</sup>

To begin with, the names which became popular were not new names, but were drawn from the existing name stock but, instead of being represented in small numbers, as in the ninth century, they were chosen by several families as names for their children.<sup>71</sup> In many cases, these were names connected to regional comital families who were particularly powerful in the surrounding area. For example, in Picardy, Burgundy and the Vendômois, *Robert*, *Hugues* and *Eudes* become popular, alongside *Geoffroi* in Anjou and *Baudoin* in Flanders. Similarly, in Gascony and Agde, people chose to call their children *Bernard*, *Raimond* and *Guillaume*.<sup>72</sup> This is not just a phenomenon noted by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. Karl Ferdinand Werner described something similar in Germany, where *Konrad* and *Heinrich* were originally rare names used by one East Frankish noble family in ninth and tenth centuries. Only following the rise of this family as the Konradiner dynasty did the names spread, first through the aristocracy and then the population as a whole, eventually becoming so common that they are now used in the German phrase '*Hinz und Kunz*', the equivalent of the English 'Tom, Dick and Harry'.<sup>73</sup> This initial concentration around a few Germanic names was followed by a second phase, which saw a rise in popularity of biblical names and saintly names, with *Peter* being the first to make an impact, shortly followed by *John*.<sup>74</sup> The irresistible rise of Christian names eventually took hold everywhere, although at different

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<sup>69</sup> Monique Bourin, 'How Changes in Naming Reflect the Evolution of Familial Structures in Southern Europe (950-1250)', in Beech et al., *Personal Name Studies of Medieval Europe*, pp. 3-13 (see pp. 4-5).

<sup>70</sup> Pascal Chareille, 'Histoire médiévale et anthroponymie' in Bourin and Chareille, *Noms, prénoms et surnoms*, pp. 25-36 (see p. 36). The same article appears originally as a part of his thesis: Pascal Chareille, *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne VI – Le nom: histoire et statistiques: quelles méthodes quantitatives pour une étude de anthroponymie médiévale* (Tours, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> Chareille, 'Histoire médiévale et anthroponymie', p. 20.

<sup>72</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', pp. 244-245.

<sup>73</sup> Karl Ferdinand Werner, 'Liens de parenté et noms de personne: Un problème historique et méthodologique', in Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff (eds), *Famille et parenté dans l'occident médiéval*, (Rome, 1977), pp. 25-34 (see pp. 26-27).

<sup>74</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', pp. 244-245.



speeds, with the end result being that, by the fourteenth century, more than one European in four was called *John* or *Peter*.<sup>75</sup>

The second part of the transformation in naming described by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* is the appearance of the system of double naming, whereby people combined a given first name with a surname. Just as with the concentration in given names, the development of a double naming system happened at varying times and at different speeds across western Europe. In Agde and the Vendômois, it began from the end of the eleventh century and gained ground rapidly, while in Normandy and Portugal, the process began slightly later. In Gascony, it began somewhat earlier, but progressed more slowly.<sup>76</sup> In Brittany it was noticeable that all aspects of the transformation took place considerably later – only in the mid-thirteenth century did half the population have surnames.<sup>77</sup> In all areas, the switch was not directly to hereditary surnames, but via a transitional phase where additional reference, such as a nickname or byname of some sort or other, was combined with a given name. Even in those areas where the transition was relatively swift, the naming system still went through this intermediary phase. As in England, several different types of byname were used, including nicknames, bynames of relationship, bynames of location and occupational surnames. Bourin notes that, in most areas, after an initially wide variety of byname types, those referring to location came to be the most common – although other types did persist in all places. The only part of continental western Europe where this was not true is Portugal, where surnames of relationship, specifically the *nomen paternum*, were the most common.<sup>78</sup> Gradually – although more gradually in some places than others – this system of *ad hoc* bynames fossilised, becoming hereditary and predominantly patrilineal.

One key point made by both Chareille and Bourin is that the common assumption that the appearance of bynames and surnames was caused by the increasing rate of homonymy in given names is not supported by their statistical analysis. There appears to be no obvious correlation between the increasing level of concentration in names and the increasing use of bynames:

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<sup>75</sup> Chareille, 'Histoire médiévale et anthroponymie', p. 36.

<sup>76</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', pp. 242-243.

<sup>77</sup> Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille, 'La seconde étape de l'enquête' in Bourin and Chareille, *Noms, prénoms, surnoms*, pp. 51-66 (see p. 58).

<sup>78</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', pp. 236-340.

It is an example of a good idea that proves to be wrong! It is clear that the classical explanation can be reversed and that one can argue that the appearance of surnames allowed an increasing number of individuals to bear the same, highly regarded first name.<sup>79</sup>

The results of their studies reveal that, in some regions, surnames began to appear before there was a level of concentration high enough to necessitate it. Yet, in other areas, surnames developed long after given names had become so concentrated that one would have expected surnames to be needed to help distinguish individuals more easily.<sup>80</sup>

These studies present a picture of a European naming transformation that was both long in the making and far reaching in its impact, touching all those areas of continental western Europe where the germanic system of naming had held sway. Furthermore, despite the regional nuances noted by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*, the overall pattern of change across the region was broadly similar, suggesting that the the naming system in all areas was responding to common pressures, and changed for related reasons. In light of this recent research, it seems important to ask what impact these studies might have on the long-held views on English naming during the same period.

## 7. Repositioning English naming in a European context

As noted earlier in this chapter, medieval English naming has predominantly been examined independently from that of medieval Europe. Bourin did note in her survey of the early studies of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* that the absence of England, as well as Normandy and the Empire, from their studies contributed to the partial nature of the survey.<sup>81</sup> While the other two notable gaps have since been filled, comparable English studies have been few and far between. Chareille acknowledges this fact, suggesting that one reason why no English study has been carried out as part of the project is because ‘des

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<sup>79</sup> Bourin, ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect the Evolution of Familial Structures’, p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> Chareille, ‘Introduction: Vingt ans après’, p. 20-21.

<sup>81</sup> Bourin, ‘Bilan de l'enquête’, p. 233-234.

historiens anglais avaient déjà leurs propres approches'.<sup>82</sup> This is emblematic of the historiographical divide that exists between historians of England and the continent, particularly during the Anglo-Saxon period. Chareille's comment suggests that not only are English historians happy to study medieval naming in isolation, using their own methods, but that continental historians are happy to let them do so. On both sides of the divide there appears to be an acceptance that, in some fundamental way, England and English naming was different.

Yet, this new body of work surely brings this into question. Why should English naming have been different, and if it was, why was it so? This new collection of studies into naming patterns on the continent provides us with an opportunity to re-examine the nature of the changes that took place in England in the context of a significant body of European evidence. Conducting comparable studies of English naming practices over the same period should enable us to determine whether there was something fundamentally different about England, and English society, that left it immune to the changes in naming patterns that took place on the continent – an immunity only altered through conquest and colonisation. Alternatively, it may show us that English naming was not as far removed from that of continental Europe as has been previously thought. The subsequent chapters of this thesis will attempt to argue precisely this.

The results should help identify the reasons behind the changes in both England and on the continent. If English naming was, as is generally suggested, different from that of Europe before the Conquest, we can begin to look for differences in English society that may explain this. Yet, if this is not the case, and English naming was, in fact, subject to the same mutations as the rest of western Europe, it stands to reason that the societal influences

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<sup>82</sup> Chareille, 'Introduction: Vingt ans après', p. 11. A recent thesis by Arnaud Lestremau has explored personal naming practices in England between 954 to 1066 and implemented some of the methods of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* – although this is not the primary focus of the work, which focuses on the expression of social and ethnic identity through names. The fairly restricted time span of the study means that it is hard to determine any change over the period based on his statistical results. Moreover, as Lestremau focuses on the names from each region within *PASE*, it is not easy to get a sense of the naming system at community-level – so differs from the methods of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* and this thesis in that sense. With regards to the name stock, Lestremau concludes that the eleventh century does not constitute a period of standardisation and homogenisation, but rather sees a real diversification of the stock compared to earlier periods. See Arnaud Lestremau, 'Pratiques anthroponymiques et identités sociales en Angleterre (mi-Xème - mi-XIème siècles)', Ph.D. thesis, (Université de Paris, 2013), p. 687.

behind changing naming patterns must have been similar. In searching for the underlying causes of the English naming transformation I hope that this thesis will not only add to the significant body of work already carried out on English naming by the likes of Postles and Clark, but also fill a significant gap in the works so far carried out by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* and potentially provide more insight on the systemic transformation in naming that took place right across western Europe in the middle ages.

## The Big Picture: Macro-studies of English naming

While it is clear that a number of changes took place to the personal naming system of England in the medieval period, clear quantifiable studies mapping these changes are currently lacking. This chapter will attempt to rectify this by charting the course and pace of the transformation of the naming system across a large part of the medieval period. It will present macro-analytical studies of the name stock using 14 individual name corpora drawn from 11 individual sources originating in England between c.800 and 1307. The results will allow us to see a snapshot of the naming system at specific places and points in time, as well as enable comparison between them. This chapter will demonstrate that our previous understanding of the broad patterns of change which took place has been inaccurate and, as a result, so has our understanding of the causes behind them. The results of the studies presented will therefore allow a reevaluation of these causes in later chapters.

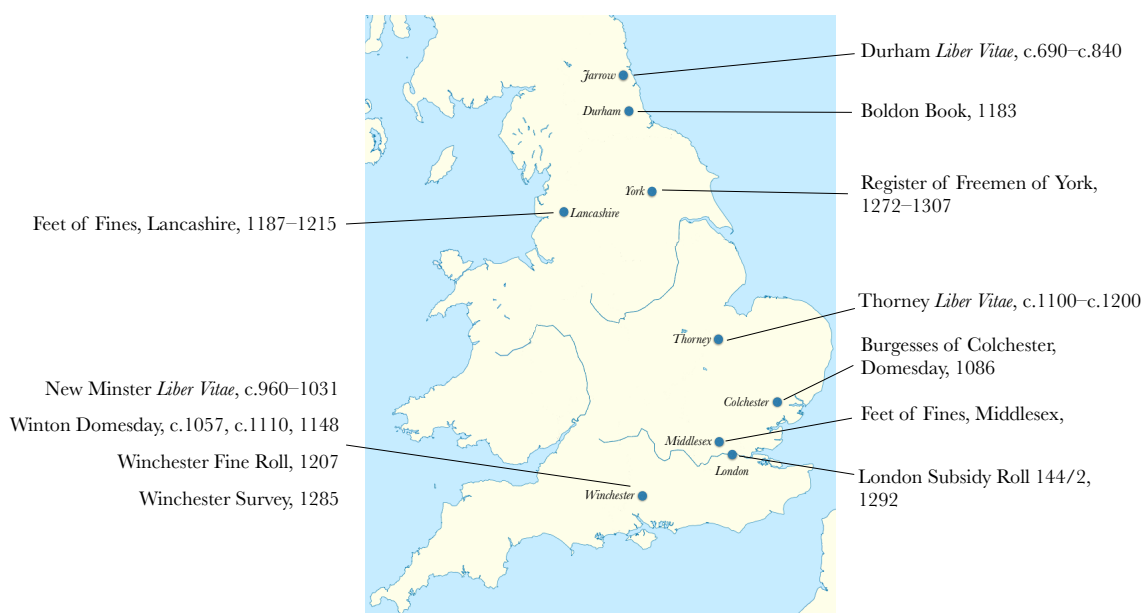
While the broad aim of this survey is to work through the various sources in roughly chronological order, this is easier said than done. Some sources of names were collected at a single point in time; others were collected over a period of years, decades, or even centuries; others still were individual surveys carried out at defined points in time, but decades apart. Similarly, some of the sources are original documents, with the names entered at or near to the time of collection, others are later copies of earlier lists (often alongside later names). This makes a simple chronological list hard to produce, but, as history is first and foremost a study of the sources available to us, this chapter will present the results in an order based of the date of the creation of the sources, rather than the names within them. A synthesis of these results will then follow in Chapter 4 in order to identify and explore the reasons for broad trends in naming patterns, including from a chronological perspective.

The statistical indicators used in this chapter have been selected with the aim of presenting a detailed yet clear analysis of the name stock in each corpora, demonstrating both the degree of condensation and concentration of the names, inspired by studies of *La genèse*

*médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* discussed in the previous chapter.<sup>83</sup> With regards to the extension, or size, of the name stock, the indicators used are: the number of individuals per name; the number of rare names; and the proportion of the corpus bearing rare names. With regards to the concentration of the corpus, the indicators used are: the proportion of the corpus accounted for by the most popular name; the proportion of the corpus accounted for by the top six names; the rate of homonymy (the probability that two names selected at random from the corpus will be the same); the number of dominant names; and the proportion of the corpus bearing dominant names. These figures will be presented in a table for each of the corpora below and will be used as the basis for the discussion throughout the chapter.

The map below shows where and when the corpora analysed in this chapter originate.

Map 3.1: Location of sources and date of corpora within the statistical studies



<sup>83</sup> In his thesis Pascal Chareille presents a plethora of indicators which could be used to carry out such analyses – it would be neither possible nor appropriate to present every one of these in relation to the 14 corpora examined here. Instead, those used here are the key indicators outlined by Chareille in ‘A Quantitative Approach to Changes in Name Giving’, pp. 15–27.

## 1. The Durham *Liber Vitae* – Original Core

The Durham *Liber Vitae* is the first of three confraternity books that will be looked at in this statistical study, the others being the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster and Hyde Abbey and the *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey.<sup>84</sup> These are the only three surviving English examples of *libri vitae*, or *libri memoriales*, a type of memorial register which was relatively common in continental Europe during the early middle ages. Around 732, Pope Gregory III wrote that:

It is the teaching of the Church that everyone should offer oblations for his dead who were truly Christians and that the priest should make a commemoration of them. And although we are all subject to sin, it is fitting that the priest should make a commemoration and intercede for dead catholics.<sup>85</sup>

This practice of liturgical commemoration and intercession was common, with names of people, both living and dead, being entered into the long lists of names that made up the *libri vitae*.<sup>86</sup> While initially the intention may have been to read out names individually, this would have become impossible as lists became longer. The names in the three English exemplars all number in the low thousands, which would be impractical enough, but some of the larger European lists reach into the tens of thousands. The largest, from Reichenau, contains some 40,000 names.<sup>87</sup> However, while each and every person may not have been named aloud, the book would have sat on the high altar in sight of the congregation and

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<sup>84</sup> The *liber vitae* survives in a single manuscript, BL: Cotton MS Domitian A VII. This is now available in a comprehensive edition including codicological, linguistic and prosopographical commentaries as well as a digital facsimile: David and Linda Rollason (eds), *Durham Liber Vitae: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A. VII: edition and digital facsimile with introduction, codicological, prosopographical and linguistic commentary, and indexes* (London, 2007). The ‘Original Core’ comprises fols 15r to 47v. The excellent linguistic commentary on the names, compiled by Peter McClure, John Insley and David Rollason, is contained within Volume II.

<sup>85</sup> Charles Talbot (ed. and trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon missionaries in Germany: being the lives of Saints Willibrord, Boniface, Sturm, Leoba and Lebuin, together with the Hodeporicon of Saint Willibald and a selection from the correspondence of Saint Boniface* (London, 1981), p. 86. The original reads: ‘Sancta sic tenet aecclesia, ut quisque pro suis mortuis vere christianis offerat oblationes atque presbiter eorum faciat memoriam. Et quamvis omnes peccatis subiaceamus, congruit, ut sacerdos pro mortuis catholicis memoriam faciat et intercedat.’ See *Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Epistolarum Tomus III: Merovingici et Karolini Aevi I* (Berlin 1957), Epistola 28, pp. 278-280:

<sup>86</sup> Giles Constable, ‘The Liber Memorialis of Remiremont’ in *Speculum* 47, (1972), pp. 261-277 (see p. 261).

<sup>87</sup> Constable, ‘Liber Memorialis of Remiremont’, p. 262.

acted as a reminder to those present of those, living and departed, for whom they prayed, whose names were contained within the pages of the book.<sup>88</sup>

While the aim of the *libri vitae* may have been to commemorate and intercede on behalf ‘of all dead catholics’, in reality it was not quite so straightforward to get one’s name included in the register. Confraternity books usually reserved special places for the great and powerful, with the names of kings, and queens, bishops and abbots often taking pride of place at the head of the lists, sometimes dating back long before the creation of the register itself.

Furthermore, entry into the confraternity of a religious foundation was very often received in return for gifts of money, land or favour of some other kind, but in addition to the great and good, the books also made space for the commemoration of the members of the religious houses themselves, usually in the form of lists of monks and other members of the religious communities who had devoted their lives to the work of the monastery.

Confraternity, or fraternity, could also take the form of an association between two religious houses, as well as through individual connections, through commitments by a monastic community to pray for their ‘brothers’ in connected monasteries – who would do the same for them in turn.<sup>89</sup> For example, the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster and Hyde Abbey contains lists of their brothers and sisters in the communities of Ely, Romsey and Abingdon.<sup>90</sup>

In this sense they were very much a record of a community chosen by the religious foundation, rather than a complete list of the whole congregation. That said, the sheer number of names in all three English *libri vitae* must allow us to assume the people they refer to were not exclusively drawn from the highest ranks of society. The original core of the Durham list contains 3,120 names, including over 2,600 names of priests, monks and other ranks of minor clerics. It is unlikely that all of these were from the loftiest reaches of the ninth-century Northumbrian elite – the sparsity of the population must preclude this. So, while we are not looking at a full cross-section of early Anglo-Saxon society, the names of the Durham *Liber Vitae* provide us with a glimpse of people somewhat further down the

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<sup>88</sup> Constable, ‘The Liber Memorialis of Remiremont’, p. 263. An account of the book in its place on the high altar can be found in John Davies, *The ancient rite and monuments of the monastical and cathedral church of Durham collected out of ancient manuscripts, about the time of the suppression* (London, 1672), p. 28.

<sup>89</sup> Lynda Rollason (ed.), *The Thorney Liber Vitae* (London, British Library, additional MS 40,000, fols I-I2R): *edition, facsimile and study* (Woodbridge, 2015), p. 12-13.

<sup>90</sup> Simon Keynes, ‘The *Liber Vitae* of the New Minster, Winchester’ in David Rollason et al. (eds), *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context* (Woodbridge, 2004), pp. 149-163, (see p. 159).



social scale than most written sources of the period allow. This supports, at least to some extent, Patrick Geary's suggestion that by studying personal names we are able to look more closely at the lives of ordinary people, not just kings and aristocrats, as we have become accustomed.<sup>91</sup>

The life of the Durham *Liber Vitae* is a long and complicated one in its own right. The first entries to the manuscript were made by one, or at most two, scribes in gold and silver ink, sometime in the first half of the ninth century – probably in the 830s or 840s.<sup>92</sup> The 3,120 names entered in this period constitute what is known as the 'Original Core' of the manuscript, comprising folios 15r to 47v.<sup>93</sup> This probably took place at either the monastery of Lindisfarne or that of Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.<sup>94</sup> However, the entries made in the early ninth century were almost certainly copied from earlier registers of names collected at some point in the preceding century at one or both of these two foundations. Both Lindisfarne and Monkwearmouth and Jarrow are known to have kept lists of names for commemoration in the eighth century, and it is likely that these formed the basis of the lists in the Original Core.<sup>95</sup> The contents of this Original Core consist of a number of lists arranged according to rank or clerical degree, from kings, queens and abbots, down to monks and anchorites. While it is likely that at some point there would have been lists of benefactors and friends of the monastic community contained within the Original Core, it appears that these entries were not preserved. Some lists, such as those of kings and dukes, begin very early, certainly earlier than the initial creation of the register. These would have been added to show the history of the kingdom and the monasteries themselves, perhaps copied from royal diptychs belonging to the church of Lindisfarne. The *Nomina regum uel ducum* begins with the names of Edwin (†633) and Oswald (†642), but the other lists seem to

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<sup>91</sup> Patrick Geary, 'Foreword' in Beech et al., *Personal Name Studies of Medieval Europe*, pp. vii-viii.

<sup>92</sup> Jan Gerchow, 'The Origins of the Durham *Liber Vitae*' in David Rollason et al., *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context*, pp. 45-61.

<sup>93</sup> Lynda Rollason, 'History and Codicology' in Rollason and Rollason (eds), *Durham Liber Vitae*, vol. 1, pp. 5-42 (see p. 7).

<sup>94</sup> Rollason, 'History and Codicology', p. 7.

<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth Briggs, 'Nothing But Names: The Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*' in Rollason et al., *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context*, pp. 63-68.

suggest a later beginning to the life of the book.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, with regards to the names of the lower ranking clerics, Elizabeth Briggs' suggestion that the first entries must have occurred no earlier than the late seventh century, probably the 690s, seems sound.<sup>97</sup> Based on these assumptions, the majority of names within the Original Core must have been borne by people who lived in Northumbria during the hundred and fifty year period between c.690 and c.840.

Somehow, the manuscript survived the upheavals and relocations of the monastic houses of Northumbria caused by the Viking raiding, invasion and occupation of the ninth and tenth centuries. The exact journey it took is not known, but by the end of the tenth century it, along with the community of Saint Cuthbert, had found a new home in Durham.<sup>98</sup> This period of upheaval coincided with a phase of disuse in the history of the manuscript and, between c.840 and c.1080, only an additional twenty-four names were added to the book – primarily names of kings and prominent visitors to the monastery.<sup>99</sup> Its use did not begin in earnest again until after this, sometimes as marginal additions to pages already written, sometimes as new lists on blank folios. This may have been instigated by the establishment of the Benedictine community at Durham Cathedral Priory, and many of the entries made following this date refer to members of the Benedictine community.<sup>100</sup> A large number of monastic names from other houses were added, as well as names of benefactors. This practice continued, on and off, for the remainder of the book's active life, from 1083 to the monastery's dissolution in 1539.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The *Nomina abbatum*, for example, starts with the name of Benedict Biscop, who died in 689 and the *Nomina abbatum gradus diaconatus* begins with Beornwine, a missionary active after 686, and Berthun, who was abbot of Beverley in 731. Briggs, 'Nothing But Names', p. 66-67.

<sup>97</sup> Briggs, 'Nothing But Names', p. 68.

<sup>98</sup> Rollason, 'History and Codicology', pp. 31-33. In addition to this introductory essay to the Rollason edition, Elizabeth Briggs' essay 'Nothing But Names' in *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context* (pp. 63-85) provides an excellent and fascinating account of the most likely route taken by the manuscript and its reasons for its periods of use and disuse. Jan Gerchow's essay 'Origins of the Durham *Liber Vitae*' in the same work (pp. 45-61) suggests an alternative, if less convincing, potential journey which is also worth consulting.

<sup>99</sup> Gerchow, 'Origins of the Durham *Liber Vitae*', p. 48.

<sup>100</sup> Rollason, 'History and Codicology', pp. 34-36.

<sup>101</sup> Alan Piper, 'The Names of the Monks of Durham' in Rollason et al., *The Durham Liber Vitae and its context*, pp. 117-125 and Rollason, 'History and Codicology', pp. 24-26.

To carry out a meaningful and achievable statistical analysis of the names in the Durham *Liber Vitae* within the scope of this thesis, it has been necessary to select an appropriate corpus of names to study. The aim of this first study is to get a picture of the traditional Old English naming system. As such, it will focus solely on the Original Core. As noted, the names in this section originate from Northumbria between c.690 and c.840. As with all the macro-level studies in this thesis, it will, unfortunately focus solely on male names due to the scarcity of female names. As such, the lists of queens and abbesses have not been included. Furthermore, to ensure that the sample is as representative as possible of the area during the period of study, the lists of kings, abbots and bishops have been discounted, as has the list of anchorites for similar reasons. The lists that have been chosen are therefore those of the mid- to lower ranked clergy associated with the monastery: the *Nomina presbyterorum*, *Nomina diaconorum*, *Nomina clericorum* and *Nomina monachorum*. These are the names of the priests, deacons, clerics and monks who were linked to the community of Saint Cuthbert. It is probable that a significant number of these were based in the monastic houses of Lindisfarne and Monkwearmouth and Jarrow, but Andrew Wareham suggests that the exceptionally high number of entries indicates that they also include names of monks and priests from associated churches and monasteries within Northumbria, and possibly beyond.<sup>102</sup> Nevertheless, these four lists of clergymen provide the best opportunity of analysing the naming system of early medieval Northumbria.<sup>103</sup> The study of the names in the Original Core will, therefore, act as a baseline against which subsequent studies can be measured. What follows is as comprehensive a representation as is achievable of the Old English personal naming system at the start point of the period of study of this thesis.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Andrew Wareham, 'The *Ordines* of the Original Core' in Rollason and Rollason (eds), *Durham Liber Vitae*, vol. III, pp. 7-12.

<sup>103</sup> The final number of individuals in the corpus selected from the *Nomina praesbyterorum*, *Nomina diaconorum*, *Nomina clericorum* and *Nomina monachorum* is 2,614. This differs from the 2,617 stated in the Wareham's 'The *Ordines*' (p. 12) purely as a small number of the names cannot be identified with certainty, and as such have not been included in the study.

<sup>104</sup> The names from the Durham *Liber Vitae* have all been collected from the Rollason edition which includes a printed and electronic version as well as a digital facsimile. All names and individuals have been dated using the palaeographical, codicological, linguistic and prosopographical dating suggested by the editors and contributors to this work which include Lynda Rollason, David Rollason, John Insley, Peter McClure, Andrew Wareham, Elizabeth Briggs, Michael Gullick and Richard Gameson. The categorisation and lemmatisation of the name forms has been carried out with the help of the extensive information contained within the Linguistic Commentary of the edition, in Volume II, by John Insley, Peter McClure and David Rollason.

Table 3.1: Naming system of the Durham Liber Vitae Original Core, c.690–c.840

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 2614               | 711          | 3.68                 | 520               | 29.00%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 1.95%           | 9.14%              | 0.04%                   | 0                     | 0.00%                  |

One thing that is immediately striking about the names of the Original Core is the sheer number of personal names in the onomasticon. The 2,614 individuals in the corpus shared 711 different names. This is a huge number of name forms. In the previous chapter it was pointed out that the *rate of condensation* is not always an accurate indicator of the relative size of the name corpus, given the inability for an onomasticon to grow at the same pace as the size of the sample, leading large samples to seem relatively less condensed than small samples because, in essence, there are only so many names to go around. Yet this tendency does not apply to the names of the Original Core. Despite the large size of the sample, each name on average only refers to 3.68 individuals. There are a considerable number of *hapax-legomena* in the sample, 349 – some 49 percent of all the name forms and 13 percent of all people in the corpus. Given the large sample size, the *dis-legomena* and *tri-legomena*, names that only appear two or three times, also constitute what *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* would consider to be ‘rare names’.<sup>105</sup> As such, it is appropriate that these are considered when examining the extension of the corpus of the original core. In addition to the *hapax-legomena*, there are 111 *dis-legomena*, accounting for 222 people, and 60 *tris-legomena*, accounting for another 180. In total, these very rare names account for 73 percent of all name forms, and 29 percent of all the people in the corpus.

The rare names are by no means outlandish or unexpected outliers. In fact, they are, in the main, what we might consider typical Old English dithematic names created using common name themes. The unique names include *Wulfgar*, *Ealhwine* and *Eadric*, and amongst the names which occur only twice we see *Osbeorht*, *Wulfhere* and *Ælfwine*. These are all names that are immediately recognisable to any student of early medieval England. *Ealhwine* is the

<sup>105</sup> Even names that appear three times in this corpus of 2,614 are proportionally less common than the *hapax-legomena* in the corpus of 759 names of the Freeman of the City of York (a very large corpus itself). A *tri-legomena* of the Original Core denominates only 0.11 percent of the total corpus, while a *hapax-legomena* from the York corpus denominates 0.13 percent.

name of one of the most famous Old English scholars, Alcuin of York, while *Osbeorht* and *Ælfwine* become two of the most often recorded names in the later Anglo-Saxon period, and are two of the Old English names that did remain relatively popular following the Conquest.<sup>106</sup> The naming stock of the Original Core is therefore extremely extensive and not condensed at all. It comprises a large number of name forms despite the considerable size of the corpus and a large proportion of these are rare names borne by a very small proportion of individuals. The huge variety of names suggests that the original function of the dithematic naming system, to produce names for their bearers that were as close to unique as possible, was being fulfilled – something that is also borne out when we examine the concentration of the name stock.

While the condensation of the names stock is not necessarily related to its level of concentration – a corpus may have a small number of names spread evenly, or a high number of names spread unevenly – the Original Core seems to be neither highly condensed nor highly concentrated. The hit parade of names shows that the most commonly borne name, *Eadwulf*, occurs only 51 times in the corpus of 2,614 individuals – comprising less than 2 percent of the total. This means that not a single name from the Original Core qualifies as a ‘dominant name’ – defined as those name accounting for 2 percent of the corpus or more. This being the case, it is no surprise that the proportion of individuals denoted by the six most popular names is also very low.

Table 3.2: Top six names in the Durham Liber Vitae Original Core, c.690–c.840

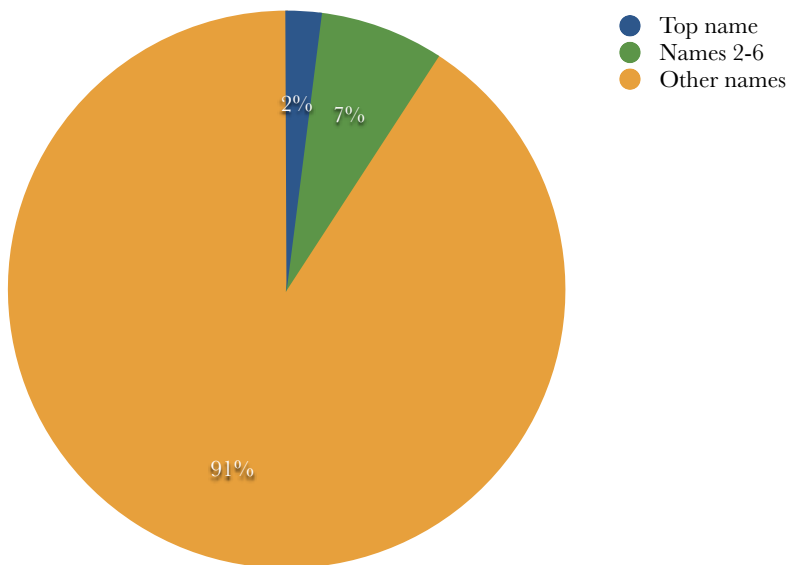
| <b>Name</b>      | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Eadwulf</i>   | 51                 | 1.95                    |
| <i>Eadbeorht</i> | 45                 | 1.72                    |
| <i>Ealdwulf</i>  | 39                 | 1.49                    |
| <i>Hygbeorht</i> | 39                 | 1.49                    |
| <i>Eanwulf</i>   | 36                 | 1.38                    |
| <i>Ælbeorht</i>  | 29                 | 1.11                    |
| <b>Total</b>     | <b>239</b>         | <b>9.14</b>             |

The other names making up the top six are *Eadbeorht*, *Ealdwulf*, *Hygbeorht*, *Eanwulf* and *Ælbeorht*. None of these appears more than 50 times in the corpus of over 2,500 people.

<sup>106</sup> For Ekwall’s list of Old English names in post-Conquest London see Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, pp. 5-73.

Combined, the top six names account for just 9 percent of individuals, while the rate of homonymy – the probability that any two people drawn at random from the corpus have the same name – is also almost non-existent at just 0.04 percent. Moreover, from a morphological point of view, the names in the Original Core are overwhelmingly dithematic Old English names, with some 2,295 of people bearing names which fall into this category – 88 percent of the total.<sup>107</sup>

Graph 3.1: Name distribution in the Durham Liber Vitae Original Core c.690–c.840



These figures therefore suggest that the names of ninth-century Northumbria are very much what we would expect from the Old English dithematic naming system. The names succeed in denominating a huge number of individuals without resorting to repetition, going a long way to ensuring that each individual would have had a unique name, created by combining two name themes, and different from other members of their family, their neighbours and their friends. Having established this, the results provided by this set of names can be used as a means for comparison with other corpora of names from later periods.

<sup>107</sup> I have included in this category four names with the deutertheme *-ing* which is a diminutive suffix, rather than a meaningful lexical item on its own, suggesting names in this form are hypocoristics of dithematic compounds. In his linguistic analysis, Insley lists these, correctly, as monothematic names. For more on extended monothematic names see Insley, 'Pre-Conquest Personal Names', p. 375 and for a discussion of the function of *-ing* see Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 139-143.

## 2. *Liber Vitae* of New Minster and Hyde Abbey

The first of these comes from a document similar in purpose and production, the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster and Hyde Abbey.<sup>108</sup> While there are many similarities, it is important to point out some key differences. Firstly, it was produced some two hundred or so years later, in 1031. The date of creation is referenced in the book itself and, thanks to the deductions of Simon Keynes clearing up a muddle surrounding the succession of the Abbots of the New Minster, there is no reason to doubt this.<sup>109</sup> The New Minster itself – as opposed to the Old Minster, or Winchester Cathedral – was founded by King Edward the Elder (†924) in 901 and reformed by King Edgar (†975) in 964. It was then patronised by Cnut (†1035) in the 1020s, and it was in his honour that the present version of the book was created. The grand covering image of Cnut and his queen Emma of Normandy (†1052) is testament to this.<sup>110</sup> Rarely, for a manuscript of this type, we know the identity of the main scribe, a monk named Ælfsige, who is also known to have been involved in the production of a prayerbook made for Ælfwine, dean of the New Minster.<sup>111</sup>

The book is emblematic of the mutually beneficial ties between Cnut, Winchester and its two abbeys. Winchester, which emerged as a political centre during Cnut's reign, became the preferred base of the Anglo-Danish regime. It was in the Old Minster that Cnut issued his code of laws at Christmas in 1020, and it was here that he was buried on his death in 1035. In the intervening period, Cnut was the primary benefactor to the New Minster, donating the magnificent cross pictured between him and Emma in the covering image, and it is likely the *liber vitae* and its imagery was created as an attempt by Ælfwine, the new abbot, to ingratiate himself and the abbey to Cnut on his accession in 1031.<sup>112</sup> While the book itself was created for this purpose, the contents of the *liber vitae* seem to have been based on

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<sup>108</sup> The *liber vitae* survives in one manuscript, BL: MS Stowe 944. All references to contents in this thesis are from the facsimile edition, Simon Keynes (ed.), *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey Winchester, British Library Stowe 944, together with Leaves from British Library Cotton Vespasian A.viii and British Library Cotton Titus D.xxvii*, (Copenhagen, 1996). The manuscript has also been digitised and made available online: The manuscript has also recently been digitised and made available online: [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Stowe\\_MS\\_944](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Stowe_MS_944) [accessed 26 October 2016].

<sup>109</sup> Keynes, 'The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster', p. 149-150.

<sup>110</sup> The covering image can be seen on folio 6r of BL: MS Stowe 944, viewable on line at [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Stowe\\_MS\\_944](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Stowe_MS_944) [accessed 26 October 2016].

<sup>111</sup> Keynes, 'The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster', p. 150.

<sup>112</sup> Keynes, 'The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster', p. 154-157.

an earlier register compiled during the reign of Æthelred II (†1016), probably during the 980s.<sup>113</sup> As in the case of its Northumbrian counterpart, the lists of names in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* contains a number of historical entries, including a regnal list of the West Saxon kings, and lists of bishops, saints, ealdormen and even æthelings. It is likely that these are included, in part, ‘to enhance the company in which the members of the community and their friends can all await the ending of the world’.<sup>114</sup> Unlike in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, there are substantial lists of lay benefactors and friends of the community. The most comprehensive registers comprise the names of ecclesiastic communities, including one of past members of the community at Winchester from 964 to 1030, as well as a complete list of the present members of the community at the date of compilation in 1031. In addition, there are lists of members of other monastic communities that were held in confraternity with the monks of Winchester – these being the monks of Abingdon and Ely, and the nuns of Romsey.<sup>115</sup>

The names of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* therefore give us an excellent opportunity to examine the personal naming system of the area around Winchester from them mid-tenth to the early eleventh century. The names that have been selected are those which refer to men who can be identified with reasonable certainty as being present in Winchester and its surrounding area in the 80 years or so prior to the creation of the book in 1031.<sup>116</sup> As such, names of women have been discounted, as well those mentioned in the historical lists stretching back beyond the original compilation in the middle of the tenth century, and people in places further afield, including the monks at Ely and Abingdon. The remaining names are, therefore, predominantly those of the monks of Winchester listed between 964 and 1031, and benefactors from the surrounding community, which provides a corpus of 455 individuals. An analysis of these names should provide us with a good means of comparing the naming system of late tenth-century Winchester and its surrounding area with that of ninth-century Northumbria. As Keynes points out, despite the fact that the two

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<sup>113</sup> Keynes, ‘The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster’, p. 156.

<sup>114</sup> Keynes, ‘The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster’, p. 159.

<sup>115</sup> Keynes, ‘The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster’, p. 159-161.

<sup>116</sup> Thanks to Simon Keynes’ remarks in the facsimile edition and his chapter in Rollason et al. *The Durham Liber Vitae and its Context*, as well as the prosopographical data available on the *Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England*, <http://www.pase.ac.uk/> [accessed 6 October 2013], it has been possible to reasonably accurately discount the names of persons from the sample who do not fit the criteria listed above.



*libri vitae* differ in date by over a century and come from different parts of the country, ‘the contrast between them is significant in itself, revealing much about the changes which had taken place between the ninth century and the eleventh, and much about the differences between the north of England and the south.’<sup>117</sup>

Table 3.3: Naming system of the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, c.950–c.1031

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 455                | 165          | 2.76                 | 88                | 19.34%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 4.62%           | 19.34%             | 0.20%                   | 8                     | 23.74%                 |

One immediately apparent difference between the corpus of names from the New Minster *Liber Vitae* and its Durham counterpart, is the number of names. While there are some 712 unique name forms in the Durham corpus, that of New Minster has only 165. This can be attributed, in large part, to the size of the Durham corpus – more people have the potential to bear more names – and the stock of names per individual is actually larger in the New Minster sample than in Durham, at 2.76 individuals per name. On the face of it, it appears that the naming system of late tenth- to early eleventh-century Winchester was as capable of creating unique names as that of ninth-century Northumbria. However, the number of rare names is far lower in the New Minster corpus. There are just 88 *hapax-legomena*, which account for 43 percent of all name forms and just 19 percent of the individuals in the corpus. This is considerably lower than in Durham, where the rare names accounted for some 73 percent of names and 29 percent of people.<sup>118</sup> So, while there are, potentially, more names to go round, the proportion of people with truly rare names is actually lower. The naming stock of the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster is, therefore, still extensive, but the reduced proportion of rare names in relation to the Northumbrian corpus suggests that the seemingly infinite capacity of the naming system to create unique names was not present to quite the same extent here – or at least not exploited to the same extent.

<sup>117</sup> Keynes, ‘The *Liber Vitae* of New Minster’, p. 163.

<sup>118</sup> In the New Minster corpus only *hapax-legomena* are considered to be rare names, whereas in the Durham corpus all names borne by three individuals or fewer are considered to be rare. One individual in this corpus accounts for 0.22 percent of the population, compared to 0.04 in the Durham corpus.

Table 3.4: Top six names in the New Minster Liber Vitae, c.950–c.1031

| Name            | Occurrences | % of individuals |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Ælfric</i>   | 21          | 4.62             |
| <i>Leofwine</i> | 17          | 3.74             |
| <i>Ælfsige</i>  | 15          | 3.30             |
| <i>Leofric</i>  | 14          | 3.08             |
| <i>Ælfwine</i>  | 11          | 2.42             |
| <i>Godric</i>   | 10          | 2.20             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>88</b>   | <b>19.34</b>     |

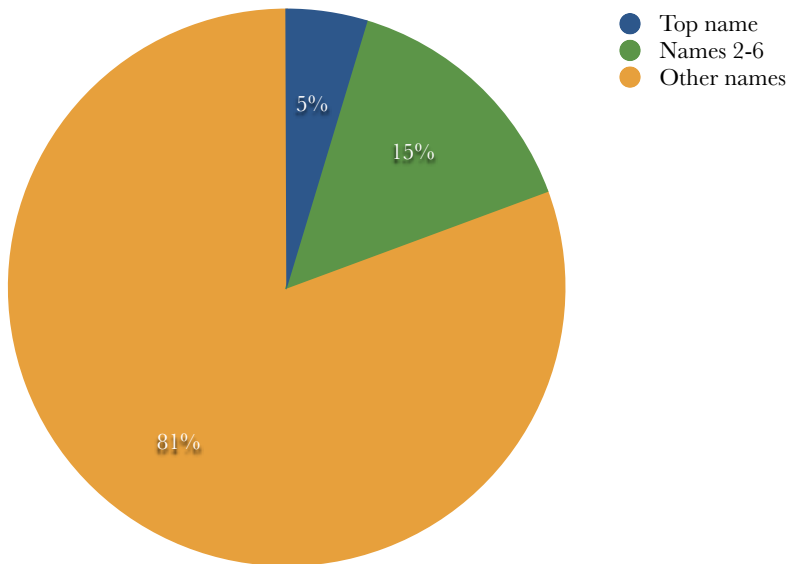
In fact, we start to see a number of the recognisably popular late Anglo-Saxon names standing out at the top of the list. The top name five names, *Ælfric*, *Leofwine*, *Ælfsige*, *Leofric* and *Ælfwine*, are all names that Ekwall note as being common amongst the names of post-Conquest London.<sup>119</sup> Three names lie jointly in sixth place: *Godric*, *Godwine* and *Wulfric* – all names which became increasingly popular towards the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, especially, as we shall see in due course, *Godwine*. Significantly, these popular names represent a far greater proportion of the people listed than their counterparts in the Durham *Liber Vitae*. The top name, *Ælfric*, appears 21 times and accounts for 5 percent of the population. And there are eight dominant names, which each account for more than 2 percent of the corpus. In total, the top six names account for 19 percent of individuals in the corpus. Both these indicators are more than double their equivalents for the Durham *Liber Vitae*.

This increased concentration can also be seen through the rate of homonymy, which is 0.2 percent, five times higher than the Durham sample. The New Minster corpus therefore sees the appearance of a number of popular, or dominant names. This is despite there being, proportionally, a very high number of possible names to choose from. Overall, therefore, the variation in naming is far less marked. What the names of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* show us is a naming system in which there is an increasing degree of similarity. Whether by conscious choice, or linguistic accident, the names of people have become more concentrated. Such changes, at this point in time, can certainly not be ascribed to outside influence. It is, of course, possible to ascribe the difference between the names in these two *libri vitae* to regional variation, rather than any change over time. An analysis of two later

<sup>119</sup> Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, pp. 1-69 – although these are usually in Middle English forms, such as *Alfric*, *Lewin*, *Alsi*, *Lefric* and *Alwin*.

eleventh-century sources will enable us to examine the naming system closer to the time of the Norman Conquest, and help to see whether this concentration is part of a general trend.

*Graph 3.2: Name distribution in the New Minster Liber Vitae, c.950–c.1031*



### 3. The Burgesses of Colchester – Little Domesday

One of the best sources we have for examining naming practices around the time of the Conquest comes from Domesday Book. Compiled in 1086, the great survey detailed in Domesday was largely a record of land and the people who held it, rather than the people living on it. It details what was on the land, who held it at the time of King Edward, and who held it two decades later in the time of the Conqueror. As such, while it holds a huge number of names, it does not, in general, give us the opportunity to look at the naming system in individual towns or villages. However, there is one community where this is possible to some extent. The majority of Domesday data is contained in condensed form within Great Domesday, but the data from the economically advanced and socially complex areas of East Anglia and Essex is provided in less condensed form in a smaller volume, Little

Domesday.<sup>120</sup> Amongst this data appears an uncharacteristically detailed list of the burgesses of Colchester which provides us with the names of some 274 eleventh-century Colchesterians.<sup>121</sup> The date at which it was made makes the list significant for a number of reasons. As already noted, names in Anglo-Norman England can only be very loosely equated with the ethnic origin of the bearer. So swiftly did some English people adopt continental names that, even two generations following 1066, a person bearing a French name would be almost as likely to be a native Englishman as a Norman settler. However, for an individual to be a home-owning burgess of Colchester in 1086, the likelihood is that they would have been born, and therefore named, either before 1066, or very shortly after. This being the case, in studying the list, we can also safely assume that we are examining pre-Conquest name choices. Indeed, the vast majority of names in the list, over 95 per cent, are of Old English origin or Anglo-Scandinavian origin.<sup>122</sup>

Table 3.5: Naming system of the Burgesses of Colchester, Little Domesday, 1086

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 251                | 119          | 2.11                 | 85                | 34.86%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 5.18%           | 28.69%             | 0.25%                   | 9                     | 37.05%                 |

This is a notably smaller corpus than those taken from the *libri vitae* of Durham and New Minster, although still more than adequate to give a good picture of the naming system. One inevitable result, however, is that there is a smaller number of names. There are 119 different names held by the 251 people listed – that is 2.11 individuals per name. There are,

<sup>120</sup> Sally Harvey, *Domesday: Book of Judgement* (Oxford, 2014), p. 7 and pp. 92-93. Harvey suggests that Little Domesday represents an intermediary stage between the collection of information and the compilation of Great Domesday itself. Another possible example of this is Exon Domesday which contains the records of Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall – although these entries are duplicated (in different format and less detail) in Great Domesday.

<sup>121</sup> The list of burgesses of Colchester appears on fols 104r–106r of Essex section of Little Domesday. This study has been carried out with the help of the following editions: *Domesday Book: Essex*, eds and trans. Alexander Rumble (Chichester, 1983) and *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation*, ed. and trans. Ann Williams and Geoffrey Martin (London, 2003). I have also been kindly provided with digital images of the folios by the *Open Domesday* project (<http://domesdaymap.co.uk/>), courtesy of Professor J. Palmer and G. Slater.

<sup>122</sup> The only names not included are those of the 23 women who appear in the list, leaving 251 male burgesses to be studied.

therefore, fewer names per individual than in the previous two corpora, but this is almost certainly partly due to the difference in sample size.

There are also numerous individuals known solely by original bynames: 17, accounting for 20 people, which is 8 per cent of the total.<sup>123</sup> One would assume the likelihood of all 20 of these people bearing 20 given names not already present in the list is very low, and their inclusion may alter the results slightly. Discounting these original bynames leaves us with 231 people and 102 names, increasing the condensation of the stock only slightly, to 2.27 individuals per name. Similarly, while 85 rare names appear only once in the corpus, accounting for 71 percent of all names and 34 percent of individuals in the list, original bynames account for 18 of these. Without original bynames, there are 68 *hapax-legomena*, accounting for 29 percent of individuals. So, despite the different sample sizes and the inclusion of a large number of original bynames, it is still fairly clear that there is no dramatic difference in the ability of the name stock to produce a large number of names. With little more than two names per person, preserving a high degree of name uniqueness would still have been easily achievable should it have been desired.

While there is little change in the number of names available, there is a significant shift in the way the available names are distributed amongst the population. The top name accounts for just over 5 percent of the individuals in the corpus, only slightly higher than its equivalent in the New Minster corpus, but there are three names which sit jointly in first place of the hit parade, with *Leofwine*, *Wulfric* and *Wulfwine* all appearing 13 times.<sup>124</sup> There are also two names which appear 12 times apiece, *Ælfric* and *Godwine*, while *Manwine* sits in sixth place, appearing five times.<sup>125</sup> In total, the top six names account for 72 individuals – 29 percent of the total, some 10 percent higher than in the New Minster corpus.

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<sup>123</sup> *Sefugel* appears in this corpus and may have been a byname, at least in origin, rather than a given name in its own right. It has not been counted as a byname here.

<sup>124</sup> The exact figures are 5.18 percent for the top name in the Colchester list, compared to 4.57 percent in the New Minster corpus. In the manuscript the non-lemmatised forms of these names are most often: *Lewin*, *Uluric* and *Uluwin*.

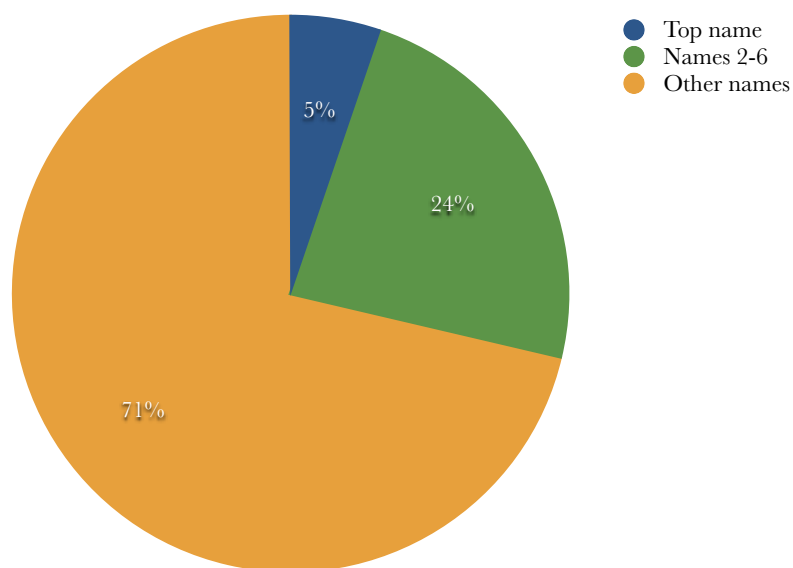
<sup>125</sup> In the manuscript the non-lemmatised forms of these names are most often: *Aluric* and *Goduin*.

Table 3.6: Top six names in the Burgesses of Colchester, Little Domesday, 1086

| Name            | Occurrences | % of individuals |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Leofwine</i> | 13          | 5.18             |
| <i>Wulfric</i>  | 13          | 5.18             |
| <i>Wulfwine</i> | 13          | 5.18             |
| <i>Ælfric</i>   | 12          | 4.78             |
| <i>Godwine</i>  | 12          | 4.78             |
| <i>Manwine</i>  | 9           | 3.59             |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>72</b>   | <b>28.69</b>     |

There was, therefore, an increased number of people bearing common names, something supported by the fact that there are nine dominant names in the sample. The rate of homonymy is also higher at 0.25 percent, so there was a considerable increase in the number of dominant names, as well as an increase in the proportion of people bearing them.<sup>126</sup>

Graph 3.3: Name distribution in the Burgesses of Colchester, Little Domesday, 1086



<sup>126</sup> As already noted, there are a number of original bynames, as well as several names of continental origin. Although it is by no means certain that all of the people bearing continental names belonged to Norman incomers, it is likely that many of them were. Removing bynames and continental names from the corpus increases the proportion of people denoted by the most popular name to 7 percent, and the top six names to 35 percent (from a sample of 223 people). In reality, the actual figure probably lies somewhere between these two results, however, for the sake of consistency, when comparing results from all the studies in subsequent chapters, the first set of figures, including bynames and continental will be used.

These results demonstrate that the naming system of Colchester around the time of the Conquest was considerably more concentrated around a small number of popular names than either of the other two earlier pre-Conquest corpora, suggesting that a general tendency towards the prioritisation of name similarity was increasing over time – a tendency which began before the Norman Conquest. While there were not, necessarily, fewer names to go round, the naming decisions of the people of England had clearly begun to coalesce around a number of increasingly popular names.

#### 4. The Winton Domesday

The manuscript for the fourth source examined in this study dates from some 62 years later than Little Domesday, in 1148, but the Winton Domesday actually contains entries that sit either side of the Domesday record.<sup>127</sup> Its purpose seems to be broadly similar to that of the Great Survey, to record the rights and value of property, in this case, within the town of Winchester and its surrounding borough. It actually consists of two surveys, the first of which was ordered by Henry I (†1135), who wished to recover the royal rights of King Edward the Confessor (†1065) in the town of Winchester.<sup>128</sup> This survey is thought to have been carried out in 1110, although its form mirrors Domesday by presenting land, rights and dues in the time of Edward, in addition to those at the time of writing. The first survey, therefore, actually consists of two registers, one of 1110, and an earlier one from sometime prior to the Conquest. The precise date of this earlier register has not been determined, but the inclusion of known moneyers within the list suggests the information dates from either c. 1047 or c.1057, with c.1057 being the most likely.<sup>129</sup> Sally Harvey suggests that the absence of an entry for Winchester in Great Domesday is likely to have been because of the pre-existence of accurate information of Edwardian tenements, and it is this information that we see reproduced in the *T.R.E.* entries of the c.1057 register.<sup>130</sup> The second survey dates

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<sup>127</sup> The manuscript is London Society for Antiquaries of London, MS. 154. The edition used for this study is Martin Biddle (ed.), *Winchester Studies I: Winchester in the Early Middle Ages – An Edition and Discussion of the Winton Domesday* (Oxford, 1976), with the edition and translation of the manuscript provided by Frank Barlow and the onomastic commentary provided by Olaf von Feilitzen.

<sup>128</sup> *Winchester Studies I*, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> *Winchester Studies I*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>130</sup> Harvey, *Domesday*, pp. 7-8, suggests that information of this kind must have existed for many places across England, which is why such swift collection and production of information into the Domesday survey was possible. She believes, the existence of a safely conserved Winchester survey precluded the need to incorporate the information into Domesday, which was itself compiled and stored in Winchester.

from the time of creation of the Winton Domesday manuscript itself, in 1148. This survey is somewhat wider in scope, having been instigated by the Bishop of Winchester, and includes records of lands belonging to the Bishop as well as the King, therefore covering the whole city.

The people listed in the surveys represent a fairly wide cross-section of the population of Winchester, including magnates, barons, moneyers, royal officials, clergy, tradesmen and merchants.<sup>131</sup> Information regarding people occupying the very lowest rungs of medieval society is difficult to find, but this list does allow a glimpse into the lives of butchers, carpenters and tanners, bakers, fullers and brewers.<sup>132</sup> We also see a number of wealthy magnates holding multiple properties across the city – particularly in the later survey – but the likelihood is that the majority of the people listed lie somewhere between these two extremes, being relatively well-off householders, not dissimilar from those listed amongst the burgesses of Colchester. The contents of the Winton Domesday, therefore, allow us to get a glimpse of the naming system in Winchester at three points between c.1050 and c.1150. It also enables a comparison with the naming system in the same area several generations before, as seen in the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, as well as with a comparable sample of names from Colchester (in the case of the first survey). Most importantly, the names of c.1057 allow us to establish the state of the naming system less than a decade before the arrival of the Conqueror, before any changes can be deemed to be the result of the outside influence of Norman settlers.

#### **4.1. *T.R.E names of Survey I: c.1057***

The *T.R.E.* entries of Survey I detail 285 separate named individuals.<sup>133</sup> In addition, there are four names which appear only in patronyms that have not been included. The only other names that have been discounted are those of the three women in the survey. This leaves a corpus of 277 male property holders of Winchester in c.1057.

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<sup>131</sup> Martin Biddle and D. J. Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', in *Winchester Studies I*, pp. 387-448.

<sup>132</sup> Biddle and Keene, 'Winchester in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', p 443.

<sup>133</sup> Some individuals in these surveys (and many later ones) are not named, but simply indicated through their relationship to other individuals. This is often the case for women, are frequently listed simply as the wife, former wife, daughter or sister of a man.



Table 3.7: Naming system of the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, c.1057

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 277                | 134          | 2.07                 | 98                | 35.38%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 10.47%          | 29.96%             | 1.06%                   | 8                     | 34.30%                 |

These 277 individuals are denoted by 134 different name forms. Proportionally, this is almost exactly the same as the Colchester list from around the same time, at 2.07 individuals per name.<sup>134</sup> The stock of names is therefore still very extensive – more so proportionally than either of the *libri vitae*. There is also a high number of rare names, with 98 people referred to with names that appear just once in the corpus, accounting for 73 percent of all names and 35 percent of individuals – although 16 of these are original bynames. Discounting these, there are 82 *hapax-legomena*, accounting for 69 percent of the names, and 31 percent of individuals.

Table 3.8: Top six names in the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, c.1057

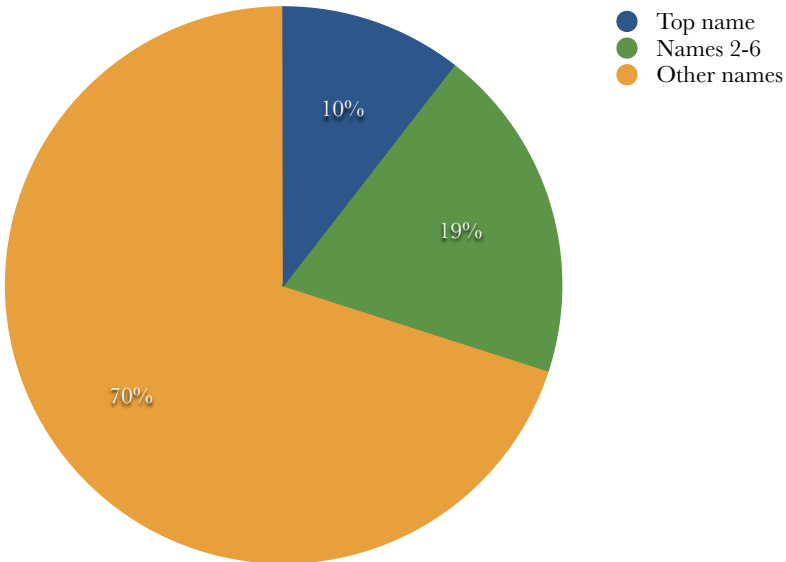
| <b>Name</b>                | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Godwine</i>             | 29                 | 10.47                   |
| <i>Alwin (Ælfwine)</i>     | 17                 | 6.14                    |
| <i>Lewin (Leofwine)</i>    | 12                 | 4.33                    |
| <i>Leving (Leofing)</i>    | 10                 | 3.61                    |
| <i>Burewold (Burhwald)</i> | 8                  | 2.89                    |
| <i>Alestan (Ædelstan)</i>  | 7                  | 2.53                    |
| <b>Total</b>               | <b>83</b>          | <b>29.96</b>            |

The similarities with the Colchester list here are striking. It is clear that there is no dramatic difference in the ability of the name stock to produce a large number of names, but the concentration of the name stock demonstrates that this potential is not being exploited. The top six names account for 83 individuals, 30 percent of the total. Even more striking is the

<sup>134</sup> This rises to 2.22 if original bynames are discounted.

popularity of one name in particular, *Godwine*, which appears 29 times and accounts for 10 percent of the people listed.<sup>135</sup>

Graph 3.4: Name distribution in the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, c.1057



This is considerably higher than all the other studies carried out so far, and this one name alone accounts for a greater proportion of people than the top six names in the Durham corpus combined. The other names in the top six are: *Alwin* (from the *Ælfwine* or *Æðelwine*), *Lewin* (from *Leofwine*), *Leving* (from *Leofing*), *Burewold* (from *Burhwald*) and *Alestan* (from *Æðelstan*). In total, there are eight dominant names in the list. Furthermore, largely because of the predominance of *Godwine*, the rate of homonymy is very high, at 1.06 percent – markedly higher than in the Colchester list.

<sup>135</sup> In the manuscript there are some common names which are abbreviated in a number of, but not all, cases. For example, *Alg'* is used frequently for *Algar*, *Osb'* for *Osbert* and *Alu'* for *Alured* (*Alfred*). *God'* appears nine times in the c.1057 names and it is assumed here that this is an abbreviation for *Godwine*, by far the most common name beginning with *God-*. It should be acknowledged that theoretically this could refer to one or more other names, but *Godric* and *Godman* appear only four times each in the list, and *Godnod* just twice, making this seem unlikely. Another possibility is that *God'* represents a monothematic or hypocoristic form, although this is also unlikely given the abbreviation indicated in the notation. One would expect even a monothematic or hypocoristic form in *God-* to have a suffix of some sort – indeed there is a *Goda* and a *Goding* in the list. The most plausible explanation is that most, if not all of these represent an abbreviated notation for *Godwine*. However, if we consider *God-* to be a monothematic form in its own right (essentially the same as *Goda*), this changes the overall figures only marginally. *Godwine* drops to 7 percent as the top name, with 20 appearances, and the top six names combined drops to 28 percent, with *God'/Goda* moving to fifth place in the list.

The name stock of Winchester on the eve of the Conquest was therefore significantly more concentrated than that of the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, a source from the same area from an earlier period. This suggests the phenomenon of increasing in concentration is one that progressed over time, rather than a reflection of any regional differences. This is supported by the similarity of the results from the Winton Domesday and the list of burgesses of Colchester, which date from around the same time and list people of similar social standing. In both corpora, while we do not see a restriction in the number of names in use, we do see an increasing reliance by a growing proportion of the population on a small number of popular names. The names themselves are not the same – although both areas show a penchant for *Godwine* and *Leofwine*. This suggests that the increased concentration cannot be ascribed to the impact of a number of individual names, but demonstrates a general shift in the way people were choosing names for their children. Importantly, it shows that the phenomenon of increased naming concentration clearly began in the centuries prior to the Norman Conquest.

#### 4.2. Survey I: 1110

The second set of entries of Survey I, detailing the holders in the time of Henry I, lists 209 separate named individuals. This is somewhat smaller than the c.1057 survey, despite pertaining to the same holdings, and is caused by an increase in multiple ownership following the Conquest. There are an additional 35 individuals who appear only as patronyms which have not been included in the study. The only other names that have been discounted are those of the two women in the survey. This leaves a corpus of 207 male property holders of Winchester in 1110.

Table 3.9: Naming system of the Winton Domesday Survey I, 1110

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 207                | 91                 | 2.27                    | 58                    | 28.02%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 8.70%              | 32.85%             | 0.72%                   | 11                    | 46.86%                  |

It is important to note that, by 1110, the Norman Conquest had clearly had a considerable impact on the naming vocabulary of the people of Winchester. Names of continental

Germanic origin had already begun to displace those of Old English origin during the intervening half century. Not only are there far more continental Germanic names than 50 years earlier, they account for a much higher proportion of the population. Of the people listed, some 62 percent bear names of continental Germanic origin, compared to 27 percent bearing names of Old English origin. This is a dramatic shift in the linguistic origin of the name stock, but there does not seem to have been such a dramatic impact on the way names were distributed amongst the population.

While there are fewer names in total, 91, this is in a smaller sample than the c.1057 survey. There are 2.27 individuals per name, which is only very slightly higher than 50 years earlier, and proportionally, the name stock is still larger than in the *libri vitae* of Durham and New Minster.<sup>136</sup> The immediate impact of the influx of Norman names does not seem to have significantly reduced the number of names in circulation, but there is a reduced number of rare names. There are only 58 *hapax-legomena*, and a smaller proportion of people are referred to by them: 28 percent (down from 35 percent). On the face of it, this might suggest that the increased tendency for people to bear common names has continued.

Table 3.10: Top six names in the Winton Domesday Survey I, 1110

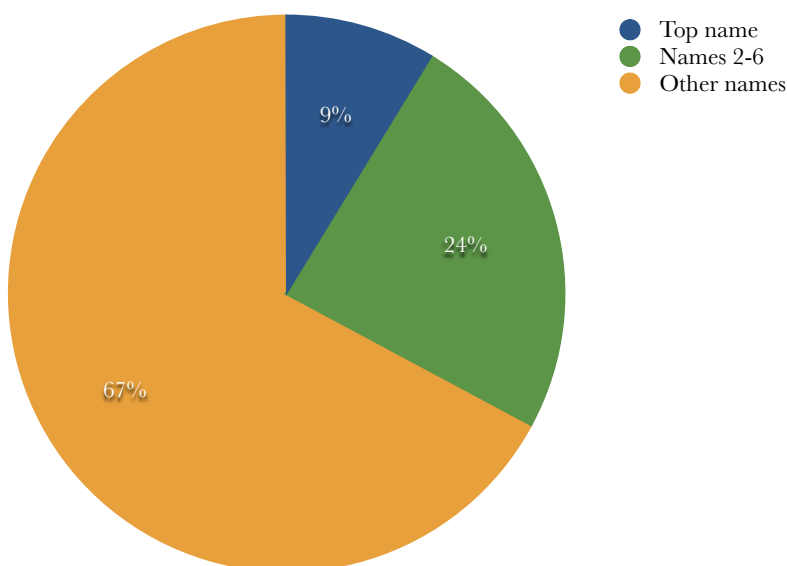
| Name                   | Occurrences | % of individuals |
|------------------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>Ralph</i>           | 18          | 8.70             |
| <i>Robert</i>          | 15          | 7.25             |
| <i>William</i>         | 13          | 6.28             |
| <i>Alwin (Ælfwine)</i> | 8           | 3.86             |
| <i>Geoffrey</i>        | 7           | 3.38             |
| <i>Godwin</i>          | 7           | 3.38             |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>68</b>   | <b>32.85</b>     |

Yet, while there is a reduced proportion of people referred to by rare names, the increase in the rate of concentration seems to have stalled. The top name, *Ralph*, occurs 18 times, accounting for 9 percent of people, 2 percent lower than 50 years earlier. It is joined by *Robert*, *William*, *Alwin*, *Geoffrey* and *Godwin* in the top six, and combined they account for 68 individuals, 33 percent of the individuals in the corpus. This is an increase of just 3 percent from c.1057, so the level of concentration is still rising, but not particularly quickly. Conversely, the number of dominant names has increased from nine to 11, and the

<sup>136</sup> When the three original bynames are discounted this figure remains the same after rounding.

proportion of people denominated by rare names has climbed significantly from 34 percent to 48 percent. While the rate of homonymy is also somewhat lower, at 0.74 percent, this is still considerably higher than all other corpora studied except Survey I of the Winton Domesday.

Graph 3.5: Name distribution in the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, 1110



So, the increase in concentration amongst the top few names has slowed, but the general increase in homogeneity has continued. Moreover, not all the most popular names in the list are continental imports. *Alwin* is the fourth most popular name, appearing eight times, while *Godwin*, so popular in the *T.R.E.* survey, has declined markedly, but still lies in sixth place, appearing seven times, but the remaining nine dominant names are all of continental origin.<sup>137</sup> This suggests that the influx of continental names has, to some extent, diluted the name stock – although the total number of names has not actually grown.

Before the Conquest, we saw name choices begin to coalesce around a small number of popular names. The reasons behind the selection of particular names will be looked at in later chapters. Whatever the reason for the increase in popularity, its focus seems to have shifted onto a wider number of names, predominantly new ones, but with some notable Old English hangers-on. If this was the case, it could be assumed that naming decisions will

<sup>137</sup> Although, as noted previously, some instances of *Osbert* and *Herbert* may be Old English in origin.

begin to coalesce once again around a few very popular names, and the remaining studies will aim to ascertain this.

### 4.3. Survey II: 1148

Survey II of the Winton Domesday, dating from 1148, is much larger than that of 1110, incorporating all of the holdings in the town of Winchester, including those owned by the Bishop of Winchester, as well as the King, and also the holdings in the surrounding burh which lay outside the town walls. As a result, the corpus is somewhat larger. The names omitted from the study are those of the 75 women named in the survey, as well as the 82 people named in patronyms. This leaves a total of 788 male property holders of Winchester in 1148.

Table 3.11: Naming system of the Winton Domesday Survey II, 1148

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 788                | 250                | 3.15                    | 101                   | 12.82%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 7.11%              | 26.78%             | 0.50%                   | 6                     | 26.90%                  |

The name stock of Survey II is larger in real terms than either of the corpora in Survey I, with 250 individual name forms, but these are shared by a far greater number of people. As such, the name stock is proportionally smaller, with 3.15 individuals for every name.<sup>138</sup> This is the second most condensed name stock of the study so far, but not a particularly high level of condensation given the large sample size. We can say with some degree of certainty the name stock is more condensed than that of the Durham *Liber Vitae*, but there are still a large number of names to go around. There is certainly not a lack of available names which would cause name repetition to be a foregone conclusion. That said, there does appear to be a significantly smaller proportion of people bearing unique names. There are just 101 *hapax-legomena* in the sample, accounting for 13 percent of individuals. This is significantly lower than all of the other corpora studied so far, and a 15 percent drop from the 1110 names of Survey I. Furthermore, discounting the 55 people referred to by original bynames leaves 46

<sup>138</sup> Removing the original bynames increases this to 3.75 individuals per name.

*hapax-legomena*, accounting for just 6 percent of the individuals in the sample. On the face of it therefore, it does appear that the number of names in circulation may have become so small that it makes repetition almost inevitable. If this is the case, it would make sense if the reduction in rare names were accompanied by an increase in dominant names.

Table 3.12: Top six names in the Winton Domesday Survey II, 1148

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 56                 | 7.11                    |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 43                 | 5.46                    |
| <i>Richard</i> | 33                 | 4.19                    |
| <i>Ralph</i>   | 31                 | 3.93                    |
| <i>Roger</i>   | 27                 | 3.43                    |
| <i>Herbert</i> | 21                 | 2.66                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>211</b>         | <b>26.78</b>            |

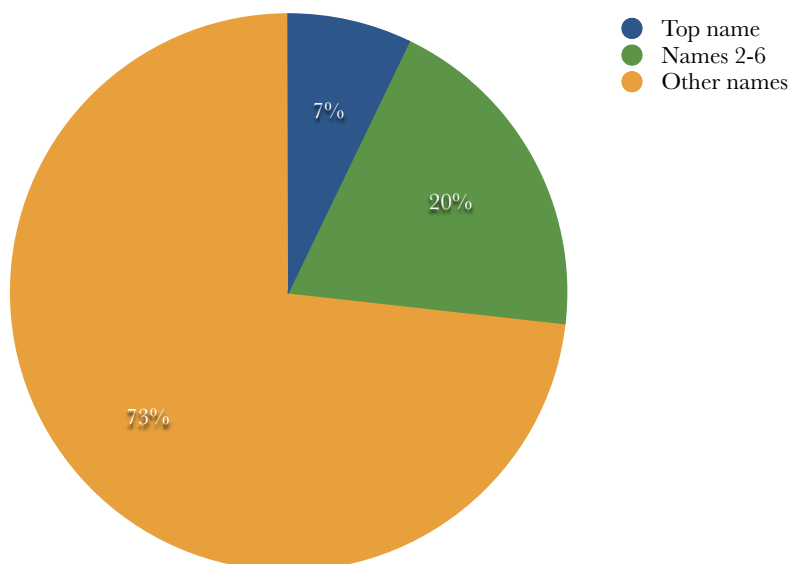
This is not the case. There are just six dominant names in the whole Survey: *William*, *Robert*, *Richard*, *Ralph*, *Roger* and *Herbert*. This is fewer than all of the corpora studied so far other than the Durham *Liber Vitae*, and five fewer than the survey of just 38 years earlier. The lack of dominant names is not due to an extreme concentration around the top few names. The overall level of concentration is actually significantly reduced from 1110, and not even as high as c.1057. The top name, *William*, appears just 56 times in the corpus of 788 individuals, accounting for only 7 percent of individuals. The top six names combined account for 27 percent of individuals, 6 percent lower than in 1110 and lower than the two eleventh-century lists from Winchester and Colchester. The rate of homonymy has dropped significantly over the 90 or so years covered by the Winton Domesday, from 1.05 percent in c.1057, to 0.74 percent in 1110, to just 0.5 percent in c.1148.<sup>139</sup>

The names in Survey II of the Winton Domesday therefore suggest that the apparent dilution of the name stock noted in 1110 has become even more marked by 1148. The size of the name stock is proportionally smaller – there are theoretically fewer names to be shared around more people, and there are far fewer people bearing rare names – yet there is

<sup>139</sup> Even discounting original bynames from the list does not alter the figures a great deal. The proportion of the individuals accounted for by the top 6 names increases to 29 percent, and the rate of homonymy to 0.58 percent.

a significant drop in the number of people bearing dominant names, and the most popular names account for a lower proportion of the population.

Graph 3.6: Name distribution in the Winton Domesday Survey II, 1148



The fact that both of these phenomena occurred at the same time supports the hypothesis that decline in naming concentration was not due to a renewed will amongst the people of Winchester to give unique names to their children. The influx of a number of new, Norman-influenced ‘high status’ names had widened the choices available. Clearly, a number of these names were becoming more popular, as all the dominant names were continental imports, and there was a Norman monopoly over the top six names, with *William* being joined by *Robert*, *Richard*, *Ralph* and *Roger*. But there was a much higher number that were not particularly popular, or did not remain so for long – names such as *Drogo*, *Durand*, *Oin*, *Ebrard* and *Herewic*. There were also a number of English names which did remain relatively popular. *Godwin* appeared 13 times, *Alwin* eight, while *Ailward* and *Edwin* appeared six times each.<sup>140</sup> This may have been because some small vestiges of prestige still clung to them, even 90 years after the Conquest, or there may have been individual, personal reasons for their survival in each case. However, it is likely that the primary reason for their persistence was simply a generational shift in naming fashions. The people bearing English names in Survey II may well have been part of an older generation, named in the

<sup>140</sup> Two of the ambiguous names, *Herbert* and *Osbert*, both appear frequently, 21 times and 9 times respectively.



last decades of the eleventh century or the early decades of the twelfth. If so, we would expect these names to decline further in the coming decades.

What is clear is that while the events of the Norman Conquest had clearly transformed the naming vocabulary of the English people, it did not cause a fundamental shift in the underlying naming system of the people of England – at least not in the areas studied in this survey so far, and not in relation to the distribution of names across the population. English names were not instantly replaced with already popular names from the continent, creating a system where a few names were used by a large number of people. In fact, if anything, the Conquest caused the concentration of the naming to stall, or even go into reverse, in the twelfth century. There were fewer popular names and names were generally spread more evenly than even in the years leading up to the Conquest. The most likely explanation for this is not a radical shift in the way people used names, but simply a change in the names that were being used within an already transforming system.

## 5. Boldon Book

The fifth source examined in this study is Boldon Book, which has often been included as a supplementary volume to Domesday Book, largely due to the fact that the area it covers, within the Palatinate of Durham, was absent from the Domesday Survey.<sup>141</sup> The survey of Boldon Book, like Domesday, did end up in long-term use in the Bishop of Durham's exchequer as a means to help administer his lands, but in most other aspects it is quite different. It is a survey cataloguing the holdings of the Bishop and the labour and money owed to him by custom as a right of his temporal lordship over the estate.<sup>142</sup> Moreover, Boldon Book was compiled some 97 years later than Domesday, in 1183.

The areas covered in the survey are all the lands of the bishops of Durham between the Tyne and the Tees, with the exception of two prominent lay fiefs, Barnard Castle (of the Baliols) and Hartness (of the Bruscs), as well as the lands of the Cathedral's monastic community in Billingham and the freeholders of the Bishop. The structure of the survey is a

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<sup>141</sup> The manuscript is BL. Stowe MS 930. The edition used for this study is a supplementary volume of the Phillimore edition of Domesday (vol. 35): *Boldon Book: Northumberland and Durham*, ed. and trans. David Austin (Chichester, 1982).

<sup>142</sup> *Boldon Book*, pp. 6-7.

settlement by settlement account of the the tenants' obligations to the Bishop, both individual and collective, following a roughly circular route around County Durham, clockwise from the north.<sup>143</sup> One similarity with Domesday Book is the focus on the obligations of the tenants and their land, rather than the tenants themselves. A number of tenants in many of the settlements are named, but by no means all, and in a number of cases the entry does not mention any named tenants at all, the entry for Tursdale being one example:

In Tursdale there are 24 bovates, each of 15 acres, and every 2 bovates yield 5s rent and 2 hens and 20 eggs, and they plough and harrow at Quarrington 1 acre and do obligatory days in the autumn with 2 men. The mill is in the hands of the Bishop and not yet put out to lease, similarly also the toft of the hall, and the copse, and the underwood and the meadows.<sup>144</sup>

In total, there are 268 named people in the survey. Clearly this is just a fraction of the total population, and the people listed represent a fairly random sample of people across an area spanning most of modern-day County Durham and part of Northumberland. In this sense, it is more like the first two corpora studied, the *libri vitae*, as the names are not all from within a single settlement, but it should still give us an indication of the naming system in Durham in the second half of the twelfth century. This in itself will act as a useful comparison to the names of the Durham *Liber Vitae*.

With regard to the type of people referred to in the list, they are most likely to be people from the middle ranks of rural society. They are not freeholders, who are not listed, and they hold their land from the Bishop, owing him rent and customary dues in return. That said, they often possess substantial holdings. Bernulf of the Peak, for example, holds 60 acres in Stanhope. In most entries, cottagers and villeins are not named, merely numbered, but we do see details of people who hold a fraction of the land of Bernulf. For example, in Escomb, Alan Pitunderake held 1 toft and 1 croft and 3 acres, and paid 24 hens and 300 eggs and did 3 obligatory days.<sup>145</sup> Some names have been discounted from the statistical

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<sup>143</sup> *Boldon Book*, p. 7.

<sup>144</sup> *Boldon Book*, fol. 39r. The original reads: 'In Trillesden' sunt xxiii bovatas unaquaque de xv acris et reddunt singule ii bovate vs de firma et ii gallinas et xx ova et arant et herceant ad Querindon' i acram et faciunt iiii precationes in autmpno cum ii hominibus. Molendinum est in manu Episcopi nondum ad firmam ponitu similiter et toftum aule et virgultum et nemus prata.'

<sup>145</sup> *Boldon Book*, fols 43v and 50v.

study, including two women, and a number of names which appear purely in patronyms, or belong to historical family members or past owners of a property. A decision on each name has been made on a case by case basis depending on the degree of distance, in time or place, between the landholder and the person listed. The aim of this selection process has been to identify the names of people who lived in the area around or just before the date of the creation of the survey, and discount those who cannot be said to have done so with any degree of certainty. As a result, some 30 individuals have not been included, leaving 235 male names for the purposes of the study.

*Table 3.13: Naming system of Boldon Book, 1183*

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 235                | 84                 | 2.80                    | 54                    | 22.98%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 10.64%             | 37.45%             | 1.09%                   | 13                    | 57.45%                  |

In terms of condensation, the Boldon Book corpus is relatively similar to what we have seen in the studies so far. There are 84 names used by the 235 individuals in the corpus, equating to 2.8 individuals per name. So there has not been any significant drop in the number of names available. There are, however, 54 rare names in the sample, accounting for 64 percent of names and 23 percent of individuals. This is some ten percent higher than that of Survey II of the Winton Domesday, although somewhat lower than both lists in Survey I and also the Colchester list. One might assume that, being roughly a generation later than Survey II, the disappearance of rare names might have continued, but this does not seem to have been the case.

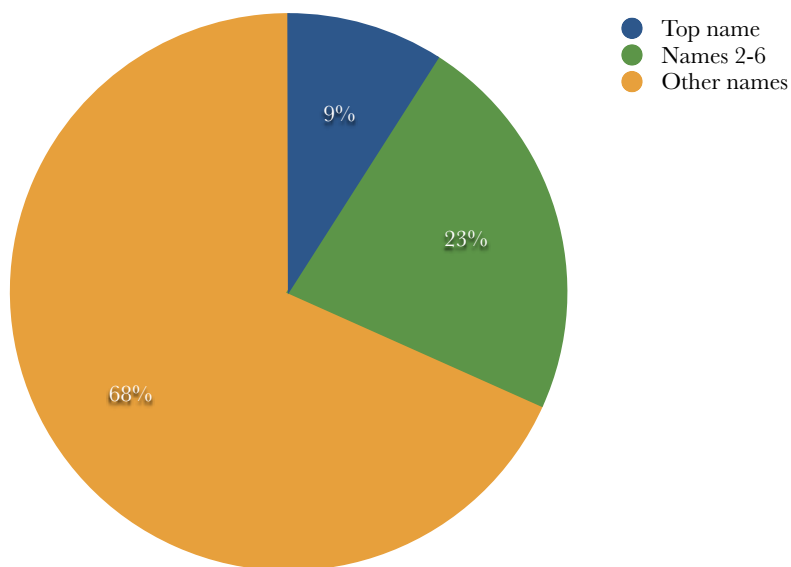
In general therefore, while there is a similar number of names available, the number of names that are very rare is somewhat lower than a century earlier – at least when compared to Colchester and Winchester.

Table 3.14: Top six names in Boldon Book, 1183

| Name           | Occurrences | % of individuals |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 25          | 10.64            |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 23          | 9.79             |
| <i>Walter</i>  | 11          | 4.68             |
| <i>Ralph</i>   | 10          | 4.26             |
| <i>Thomas</i>  | 10          | 4.26             |
| <i>Alan</i>    | 9           | 3.83             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>88</b>   | <b>37.45</b>     |

While there is a somewhat higher proportion of rare names in the Boldon Book corpus than in Survey II of the Winton Domesday, the name stock as a whole is more concentrated around a number of dominant names. For one thing, there are far more of them – 13, more than twice as many. They also account for a much higher proportion of the names – 57 percent. This is in fact more than any other corpus in the study so far. The names are also more concentrated around the few popular names at the top of the list than we have seen anywhere else. The top name, *William*, occurs 25 times, accounting for 11 percent of the total, while the top six names combined account for 37 percent of the individuals listed.

Graph 3.7: Name distribution in Boldon Book, 1183



The rate of homonymy is noticeably higher than any of the other twelfth-century corpora at 1.09 percent. It is also noticeable that the names at the top of the list are somewhat different. While *William*, *Robert* and *Ralph* are still very popular, all sitting in the top four

names, they are accompanied by *Walter*, *Thomas* and *Alan*. This may represent a regional difference in the onomasticon, or, in the case of *Thomas*, it may be due to a more general increase in popularity of ‘Christian’ names. *John* and *Adam* both also feature as dominant names, suggesting that this might be the case. On the other hand, while there are still a number of pre-Conquest names in the list, not one of them constitutes a dominant name, with the most popular, *Uhtred* and *Meldred* appearing just four times each. The names of Boldon Book seem to show us the next phase of the switch, with English names becoming increasingly marginal. This would explain the renewed increase in concentration around the top names, as the last generations of people still bearing previously popular English names died out, and their names with them.

## 6. *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey

The third *libri vitae* examined in this study is that of Thorney Abbey, which, unlike the previous two *libri vitae*, is a completely post-Conquest creation. The abbey itself dates from the later tenth century, but the *liber vitae* is not thought to have been created until c.1099, or in the years shortly after this.<sup>146</sup> As in the two previous confraternity books, the Thorney *Liber Vitae* was used as a receptacle for names of the religious community of Thorney and the wider community of benefactors to the abbey as well as prominent visitors. Unlike the previous two *libri vitae*, the Thorney book has no comprehensive list of the monks separate from other entries – although it is likely that many of the people listed were members of the religious community based at the abbey. It also contains lists of names dating to before the creation of the manuscript, notably a long list of names enumerating the family and retinue of Cnut. It is possible that the creation of the book was, in part, to document this past visit in a way that emphasised Cnut’s links to the area, and the abbey in particular.<sup>147</sup> After its creation, the *liber vitae* continued in regular use until the later twelfth century, when names of confraters ceased to be entered in the book (possibly as no new confraters were accepted into the community). A few subsequent entries were made, including obits and records of

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<sup>146</sup> Although there are unconfirmed sources from the seventh century that suggest a hermitage stood on the same place at this time. See Linda Rollason, ‘Historical Introduction’ in Linda Rollason (ed.), *The Thorney Liber Vitae: London, British Library, Additional MS 40,000, fols 1–12r – Edition, Facsimile and Study* (Woodbridge, 2015), pp. 1-19 (see pp. 3-5).

<sup>147</sup> Rollason, ‘Historical Introduction’ pp. 10-11.

significant masses, but the primary period of use is the hundred years between 1100 and 1200.<sup>148</sup>

The people listed in the *liber vitae* may be assumed to originate primarily from the area surrounding the abbey in the East Anglian fenlands. Much of the area was sparsely populated, but it lay adjacent to the wealthy and more populous lands in Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.<sup>149</sup> It seems likely that some of the names in the list are of notable visitors to the abbey, who may have originated from further afield. It is also likely that a number of the people listed, even if based in the vicinity of Thorney, originated from overseas, primarily in France. However, as so many ‘English’ people had come to bear continental names by this point, it is very hard to distinguish which people had come from overseas and which had not. Moreover, as these people were now in England, and their names in the onomasticon as a result, there is no reason to not include them simply because they may be difficult to analyse.

Many of the people listed in the *liber vitae* are most likely to be of relatively high social standing. This is particularly the case for those travelling long distances to visit the abbey and those making hefty donations to the community’s coffer, but, as with the other confraternity books, the size of the sample surely means that not all of the fourteen hundred people listed can have been great magnates or wealthy noblemen. There must also be a significant proportion of people from further down the social scale, including many local people who made smaller donations to the abbey. Moreover, a sample including Norman incomers and noblemen is not, in itself, uninteresting. If, as many have suggested, naming patterns changed due to the influence of this type of individual, the Thorney *Liber Vitae* should give us a chance to see this influence in action.

As with the two previous *libri vitae*, it has been necessary to identify a set of names to study from the multitude within the list. Names that appear in historical lists have been discounted, as have those of women and people referred to only in patronyms. To carry out

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<sup>148</sup> Rollason, ‘Historical Introduction’ pp. 18-19.

<sup>149</sup> The fenlands had a population density of between one and five persons per square mile, compared to between five and fifteen for the upland areas on the edge of the fen. See Rollason, ‘Historical Introduction’, p. 1. The catchment area and its immediate hinterland are illustrated in Maps 1 and 2 on of Rollason (ed.), *The Thorney Liber Vitae* (the maps lie on an unnumbered page facing p. 1.)

a feasible yet comprehensive study in keeping with the wider aims of this thesis, the names that have been chosen are those from the main period of use, falling between c.1100 and c.1200.<sup>150</sup> The resulting corpus amounts to a total of 1,403 people. This represents an extremely large corpus of names – second only to the the Durham *Liber Vitae* in this study. As already noted, a large corpus often means there are not enough names available to provide an accurate picture of the extension of the name stock, making it seem artificially condensed. In the Durham corpus, where the dithematic system was so effective, despite the large size of the corpus, rate of condensation remained low. This demonstrates just how extensive the name stock was. The Thorney corpus, dating from 400 or more years later, shows that there were also a large number of names used by the people in the corpus – 383 for the 1,403 individuals. This equates to 3.66 individuals per name – almost identical to that of the Durham *Liber Vitae*. As this corpus is still considerably smaller than the Durham list, it is possible that some shrinkage of the name stock has taken place, and the Thorney figure is somewhat higher than most of the other corpora. Despite this, relative to the size of the corpus, there were still a high number of names in use.

Table 3.15: Naming system of Thorney *Liber Vitae*, c.1100-c.1200

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1403               | 383                | 3.66                    | 220                   | 15.68%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 8.05%              | 29.15%             | 0.64%                   | 9                     | 36.99%                  |

Some 220 of the 383 names are rare, appearing just once. In total they account for 16 percent of individuals. This is lower than most of the other corpora, but it is significantly higher than Survey II of the Winton Domesday, another large corpus with a high number of names. Either there are not as many names to go around in Winchester, or there is less importance placed on having a name that no-one else has.

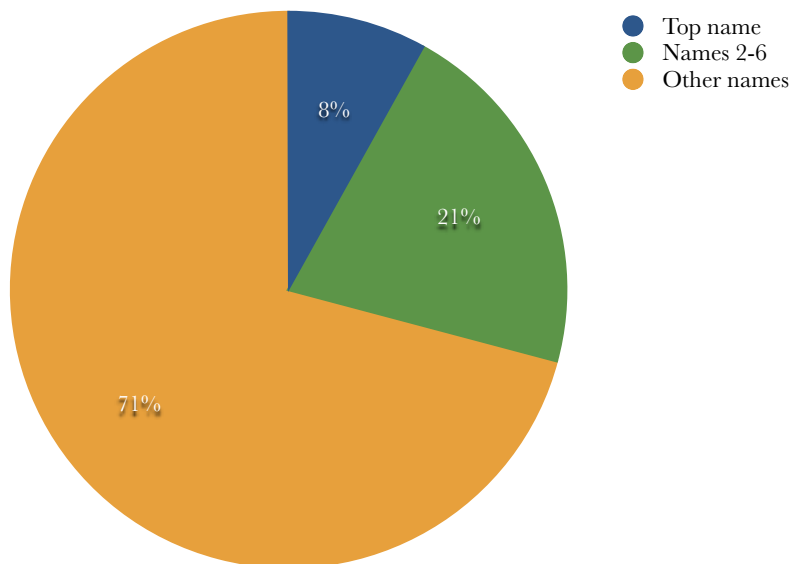
<sup>150</sup> The dating of the names has been carried out thanks to the diligence of Linda Rollason and the editors of the new edition. Each entry (stint) in the manuscript has been dated to a range as accurately as possible. Names entered in the stints which fall between the dates selected have been included in the study. Where the date range of the stint overlaps the start or end points of the period, they have not been included in the corpus.

This lack of condensation of the name stock is mirrored by a lack of concentration. The top name, *William*, accounts for just 8 percent of individuals, while the top six names combined – completed by *Robert*, *Richard*, *Peter*, *Roger* and *Adam* – represent just 29 percent of the people in the corpus. In comparison to the two pre-Conquest *libri vitae*, this is far higher – 10 percent higher than that of New Minster and 20 percent higher than that of Durham. If nothing else, the increase in concentration demonstrated in these three comparable sources clearly shows that it is a general phenomenon that took place over the period, and cannot be easily explained by the difference in the nature of the sources or sample size.

Table 3.16: Top six names in the Thorney Liber Vitae, c.1100-c.1200

| Name           | Occurrences | % of individuals |
|----------------|-------------|------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 113         | 8.05             |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 89          | 6.34             |
| <i>Ralph</i>   | 59          | 4.21             |
| <i>Roger</i>   | 55          | 3.92             |
| <i>Hugh</i>    | 47          | 3.35             |
| <i>Richard</i> | 46          | 3.28             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>409</b>  | <b>29.15</b>     |

Graph 3.8: Name distribution in Thorney Liber Vitae, c.1100-c.1200



Yet, while the level of concentration in the Thorney corpus is much higher than the other two *libri vitae*, it is not as high as we might expect. It is no higher than the Colchester list from 1086 or the c.1057 names from the Winton Domesday, and is considerably lower than



Boldon Book corpus from 1183. The rate of homonymy is also relatively low, at just 0.64 percent. It seems, therefore, that there is a similar dilution of the name stock in twelfth-century East Anglia to that already noted in Winchester. There are relatively few dominant names, just nine, which account for 37 percent of the population, no higher than the Burgesses of Colchester and 10 percent lower than the 1110 survey of Winton Domesday. As with the 1148 survey of Winton Domesday, it is noticeable that there are a number of names of English origin which are still relatively popular, including *Godwin*, *Alric* and *Godric*, appearing 18, 15 and 14 times respectively. These account for relatively small proportions of the sample, but sit eleventh, thirteenth and fourteenth in the list. As already suggested, this may therefore represent the point of changeover between English and continental names, with this generation being the last one to bear these once popular English derived names.

In fact, by splitting the names of the corpus into two halves c.1150, we can see some clear distinctions between the names of the first half of the century when compared to the second half.<sup>151</sup> The majority of the names fall on the first half of the divide, 1,217, with 196 falling into the second half, but this second sample should be enough to give an indication of any changes. The results clearly show that the names of the first half of the twelfth century are considerably less concentrated than those of the second half. The top name rises from 7 percent to 12 percent, and the total for the top six names combined rises from 29 percent to 35 percent. Similarly, there are just 9 dominant names accounting for 37 percent of the population in the first half of the century, compared to 10 in the second half, accounting for 45 percent. Moreover, the most popular English name in the second half of the century represents just 1 percent of the population, helping confirm the suggestion that those English names which had remained popular for a period after the Conquest had finally been replaced by new names. This does not mean English names dropped out of use entirely, or even that there were fewer English names in use, just that the names concentrated at the top of the list were no longer of English origin. It is also debatable to what extent the people choosing and using them would have made any such distinction between English names and those of foreign origin. They were all names within the English onomasticon – and *William* and *Robert* would, in all probability, have been seen to be as English as *Godwin* or *Leofric*.

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<sup>151</sup> Again, the dates have been estimated based on the stint dating in Rollason (ed.), *Thorney Liber Vitae*.

## 7. Winchester Fine Roll, 1207

The next corpus brings us back to Winchester. The names come from a fine roll drawn up in 1207, during the reign of King John (†1216).<sup>152</sup> Fine rolls were records of money paid to the King for concessions and favours, with a ‘fine’ referring to the amount agreed as payment for the receipt of the specified benefit. The earliest surviving fine rolls date from the beginning of John’s reign, in 1199, with the exception of one earlier roll dating from the 1170s.<sup>153</sup> During John’s reign, the entries were usually mere notices of the fines offered, unlike the more comprehensive records of memoranda and proceedings that we see in later reigns.<sup>154</sup> The memoranda of this specific fine include 389 citizens of Winchester who acted as pledges for the sheriff in 1207. The citizens in question are likely to be of similar standing to those people listed in the earlier Winchester surveys contained in the Winton Domesday, as well as the Burgesses of Colchester listed in Domesday Book. As such, they offer a chance to continue the long-term study of the naming patterns of Winchester, picking it up some 59 years later. The nature of the source ensures that all the people listed are known to be citizens of Winchester. As such, the selection process is relatively simple. There are no women present in the list of witnesses. In total, there are 27 recognisable names that appear in patronyms, none of which have been included in the list. The only individuals not included are those who bear name forms that cannot be identified, of which there are three. This leaves a total of 378 male citizens of Winchester as the basis of this study.

Table 3.17: Naming system of the Winchester Fine Roll, 1207

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 378                | 82                 | 4.61                    | 41                    | 10.85%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 10.32%             | 42.86%             | 1.04%                   | 13                    | 65.34%                  |

<sup>152</sup> The original roll is The National Archives, C60/4. It is printed in *Rotuli de oblatiis et finibus in Turri Londinensi asservati, tempore regis Johannis*, ed. Thomas Duffus Hardy (London, 1835), pp 371-464. See pp. 452-457 for the relevant list of names.

<sup>153</sup> David Carpenter, ‘Introduction to Rolls’, *Henry III Fine Rolls Project*, [http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/historical\\_intro.html](http://www.finerollshenry3.org.uk/content/commentary/historical_intro.html), [accessed 17 December 2015].

<sup>154</sup> *Rotuli de oblatiis*, p. ii.

The 378 individuals listed share a total of 82 names, equating to 4.61 names per individual. This is by far the highest degree of condensation so far, even in comparison to the Thorney *Liber Vitae*, where the sample was extremely large. It is also far higher than the Winton Domesday survey of 1148, where the corpus was twice as large but the name stock was comparatively much larger. Here there were just 3.15 individuals per name. The condensed nature of the name stock is confirmed by the low proportion of rare names in the list. There are just 41 in the sample of 378, accounting for just 11 percent of individuals – the lowest of any corpus so far. This suggests that some significant shrinkage of the name stock is finally visible and that by the thirteenth century the number of names used by the people of Winchester had started to decline. However, as shown by the previous studies, this phenomenon occurs after the name stock has started to become more concentrated. This confirms the findings of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*, in as much as it does not seem to be a shrinking of the name stock which caused names to become more concentrated.<sup>155</sup> If anything, it may be possible to infer the opposite. The concentration of the name stock clearly began long before there was any discernible shrinkage of the number of names in circulation, so perhaps it was concentration that caused condensation. This is a possibility that will be discussed in further detail later in the next chapter.

Table 3.18: Top six names in the Winchester Fine Roll, 1207

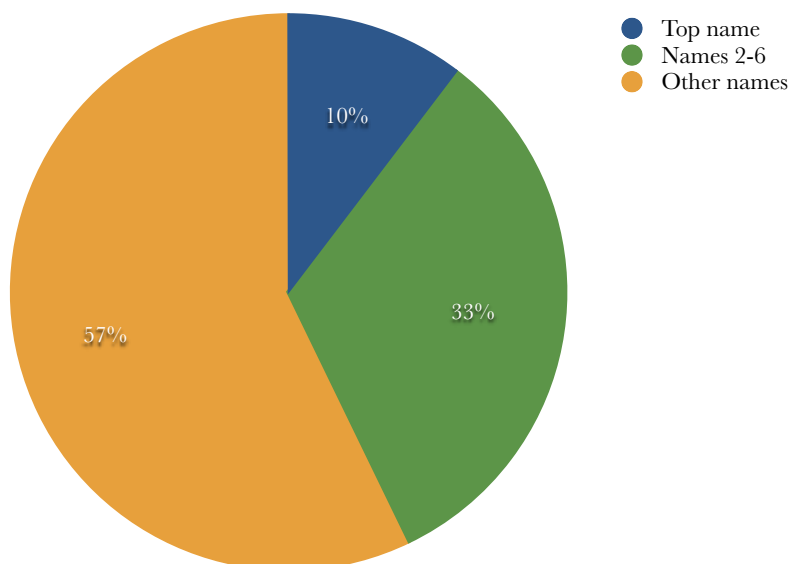
| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 39                 | 10.32                   |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 37                 | 9.79                    |
| <i>Richard</i> | 34                 | 8.99                    |
| <i>John</i>    | 19                 | 5.03                    |
| <i>Ralph</i>   | 17                 | 4.50                    |
| <i>Henry</i>   | 16                 | 4.23                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>162</b>         | <b>42.86</b>            |

By 1207, the concentration of the name stock in Winchester had also increased from its mid-twelfth-century level. The top name, *William*, accounts for 10 percent of the individuals in the corpus. This is comparable to the levels in Boldon Book, but considerably higher than the 7 percent of the 1148 survey of Winton Domesday. The proportion of the population accounted for by the top six names is also at the highest level we have seen to this point, at

<sup>155</sup> Bourin, 'How Changes in Naming Reflect the Evolution of Familial Structures', pp. 4-5.

43 percent, with the top six being completed by the names: *Robert, Richard, John, Ralph* and *Henry*. This is a huge rise from 27 percent, the figure 1148.

Graph 3.9: Name distribution in the Winchester Fine Roll, 1207



In total there are 13 dominant names which account for 65 percent of the population. Both of these figures are twice as high as in 1148 and the highest of any corpus so far. The rate of homonymy is also fairly high at 1.04 percent. This is lower than Boldon Book (1.09 percent) and also the c.1057 names of Winton Domesday, (1.25 percent), but it is considerably higher than for all those between 1057 and 1183. It is also noticeable that the decline in popularity of names of English origin was, by this point, just about complete. There are no English derived names that appear more than three times in the corpus, and only *Edward* and *Edmund* appear more than once – three and two times respectively. This confirms that the relative lack of concentration in the name stock during the twelfth century was caused largely by a period of changeover in naming vocabulary, as newly popular names replaced those English names which had been previously popular – a process that must have been all but complete by the end of the 1100s, when the last generation of people bearing English names passed away, taking their names with them. The influx of Norman names cannot, therefore, have been the cause of the acceleration in naming concentration which took place in the thirteenth century.

The names which do sit at the top of the hit parade have also now taken on a very familiar air. Five of them were names that we might consider to be ‘Norman’ names which became initially popular shortly after the Conquest – *William*, *Richard*, *Robert* and *Ralph* – but *Henry* and *John* are two relatively new additions to the top six. The popularity of *Henry*, another continental Germanic name, can also, perhaps, be linked to the prominence of the name within the Plantagenet royal family. *John* is the first name of biblical origin that we see borne by more than 5 percent of people in any corpus. Its popularity could also potentially fit into the category of royal association, being the name of the king at the time of the compilation of the list, but such an impact in such a short period of time from such an unpopular king seems unlikely.<sup>156</sup> *John*’s rise has, instead, been a slow but steady one over the period of about a century. It seems merely to be a symptom of the general rise in popularity of ‘Christian’ names. In addition to *John*, we also see *Peter*, with 14 appearances, *Adam* with 13, as well as a number of others further down the list, including *Stephen* (six), *Nicholas* (five) and *Luke* and *Matthew* (four each). Whether this general trend can be ascribed, as has often been done, to Norman influence is something that will be examined in more detail in later chapters.

## 8. Feet of Fines: Lancashire and Middlesex, 1187-1215

We will return to Winchester again later in this chapter, but at this point it seems important to get an idea of whether the concentration and condensation of the name stock visible in Winchester was taking place in other areas of England. The sources used to do this are the Feet of Fines of Lancashire and Middlesex. Feet of Fines, or final concords, are individual records of land transferral or conveyance, in the form of a compromise or agreement between two parties following litigation at the King’s court.<sup>157</sup> From 1195, to prevent fraud, these agreements were detailed in three chirographs – documents torn from the same piece of parchment, two of which were written alongside each other, with a third written below spanning the width of the parchment. One was given to the plaintiff, one to the defendant,

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<sup>156</sup> For a balanced view on John’s reign and his legacy, see Stephen Church, *King John: England, Magna Carta and the Making of a Tyrant* (London, 2015).

<sup>157</sup> *Final Concords For Lancashire, Part 1, 1189-1307*, ed. William Farrer (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. vii-xv, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lancs-final-concords/voll/vii-xv> [accessed 2 January 2016]. Note that here ‘fine’ is short for ‘final concord’ and is not analogous with the ‘fines’ detailed in fine rolls such as the 1207 example studied earlier in this chapter.

and the third – the ‘foot’ – was kept by the office of the treasury as a record of the transaction.<sup>158</sup> It is through these ‘feet’ that we have the opportunity to get a glimpse of the lives of thousands of medieval people. The fines primarily record the transferal of land or property from one party to another, or assure the rights of one party over the land. One might assume that the majority of such cases were between people of great wealth, in possession of great tracts of land. This is true in a number of cases, but the simplicity and security of the Fines meant that they were frequently taken advantage of to effect a family settlement with remainders. Typically, in these cases, the father would acknowledge that he relinquished the land for it to be given to his son, with remainders going to other sons. Occasionally, sons granted a portion of the land to their fathers for the rest of the duration of their lives.<sup>159</sup> There are also several examples of great lords asserting or reasserting their right to smaller parcels of land previously held by more humble tenants.

The details of many of the properties described in the fines also refer to numerous other individuals, including previous owners of the land and owners of neighbouring holdings. Similarly, people detailed in the fines were often described in terms of the land they possessed as much as they were by their relationships to family members. People and place were intrinsically tied together, and the Fines demonstrate just how much this was the case, and a by-product is that many more people were listed than just the defendants and plaintiffs involved in the litigation. For example, one entry into the Lancashire Fines explains that:

Richard acknowledged the land to be the right of Sabina. This acknowledgment Sabina granted the land to him, to hold of the chief lords of that fee, except two oxgangs of the said land, to wit, one with the messuage and other appurtenances, which Albin, son of Sired held, and another which Richard, son of Warin held, with the messuage which belonged to Roger Briton; ...; and except the homage and service of Roger, son of Gamel, from nine acres of land, which he holds of that land, to wit, 18 pence for all service; which 2 oxgangs, 10 acres of land, messuages and service shall quietly remain to Sabina and her heirs.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> *Final Concords For Lancashire*, pp. vii-xv.

<sup>159</sup> *Final Concords For Lancashire*, pp. vii-xv.

<sup>160</sup> Fine 61, ‘Lancashire Fines: 1-12 John’, in *Final Concords For Lancashire, Part 1, 1189-1307*, ed. William Farrer (Edinburgh, 1899), pp. 7-38. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/lancs-final-concords/vol1/pp7-38> [accessed 17 August 2016].

So the fines mention people from a range of social backgrounds, often using this legal tool to ensure that the land and property they possessed was passed on to the person or people they saw as their rightful heirs, as well as past and present owners of land in and around the possessions in question, and details of the family background and relationships. Therefore, while it should be acknowledged that the people listed in the fines were, by and large, from the wealthier sections of society, they perhaps give a fuller picture of that society than we might assume.

To get a picture of the naming system in Middlesex and Lancashire around the turn of the thirteenth century, two samples of names have been chosen from the respective collections of Feet of Fines. The names selected for this study start with those listed in the earliest recorded fines, beginning in 1187, and run to 1216, the end of the reign of King John, with records pertaining to estates and settlements from around the respective counties.<sup>161</sup> In this sense, they are more like the records in Boldon Book, listing a few people from each place, rather than a more comprehensive list of people in one settlement, as in the Winton Domesday or Colchester list. Women's names have been discounted, as have names that are included solely in patronyms unless there is some other evidence to suggest they were present in the area at the time or only recently deceased. Similarly, names of individuals clearly not originating, or living, in the area in question have not been included, such as lawyers representing cases at the King's court in London. The resulting name corpora consist of 188 names, in the case of Lancashire, and 218 in the case of Middlesex. An analysis of these names should help us get a picture of the naming system in place in these two regions at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

### **8.1. Lancashire**

As in the Winchester Fine Roll, the name stock observable in the Lancashire Fines is more restricted than the earlier sources examined in this study. There are just 46 names used by the 188 individuals in the corpus, equating to 4.09 individuals per name. Considering the relatively small size of the corpus, this is extremely condensed. There is a low number of rare names, just 19, accounting for a mere 10 percent of the population – the lowest of any

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<sup>161</sup> The recording of transactions using final concords began in Lancashire in 1187, although recording was infrequent at this point, and the practice began in earnest towards the start of the reign of King John, in 1199. See *Final Concords For Lancashire*, pp. vii-xv.

corpus to date. That these 19 *hapax-legomena* still represent nearly half of the name forms in the corpus suggests that the distribution of the names will also be extremely concentrated.

Table 3.19: Naming system of the the Lancashire Feet of Fines, 1187-1215

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b>       | <b>Inds per name</b>    | <b>Rare names</b>     | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| 188                | 46                 | 4.09                    | 19                    | 10.11%                  |
| <b>Top name</b>    | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b>  |
| 11.17%             | 48.40%             | 1.19%                   | 14                    | 71.81%                  |

This is indeed the case. The top name *Richard*, accounts for 11 percent of individuals in the corpus, and the top six names combined account for 48 percent – both the highest so far. This second figure is, in fact, some 5 percent higher than that of the Winchester Fine Roll. There are 14 dominant names, accounting for 72 percent of the people listed, and the rate of homonymy is 1.19 percent – again, the highest so far.

Table 3.20: Top six names in the Lancashire Feet of Fines, 1187-1215

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>Richard</i> | 21                 | 11.17                   |
| <i>William</i> | 21                 | 11.17                   |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 17                 | 9.04                    |
| <i>Roger</i>   | 14                 | 7.45                    |
| <i>Adam</i>    | 10                 | 5.32                    |
| <i>Henry</i>   | 8                  | 4.26                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>91</b>          | <b>48.40</b>            |

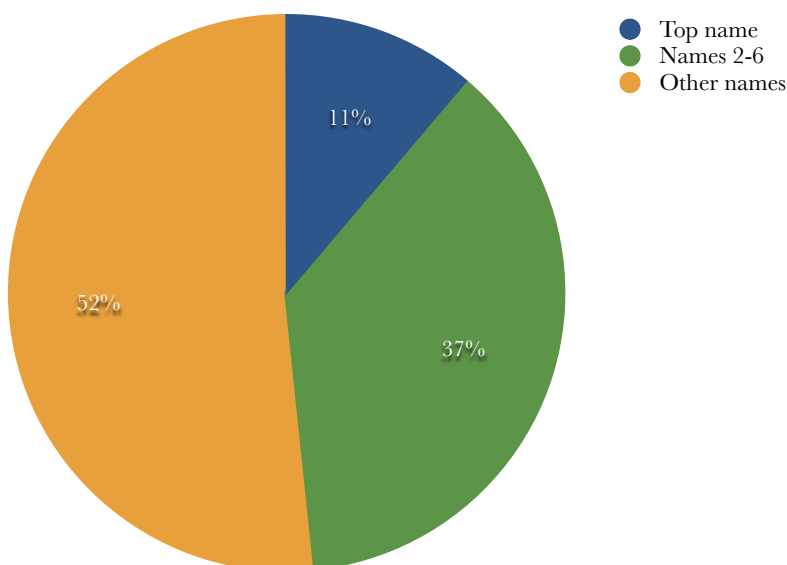
The names at the top of the list are, again, very familiar. *Richard* is joined by *William*, *Robert*, *Roger*, *Adam* and *Henry* in the top six, but we also see that the fashion for biblical and Christian names was growing in Lancashire at this time. In addition to *Adam*, there are a number of biblical and Christian names representing a significant proportion of people. *John* and *Thomas* both appear seven times each, *Benedict* appears five times, *Matthew* appears four times and a number of other biblical names appear lower down the list, including *Helias*, *Jordan*, *Peter* and *Michael*. Despite the similarities, there are a number of names that are notably different to those we have seen in the corpora from the south of England,



including three pre-Conquest names which appear to have retained at least some popularity: *Siward*, *Gospatrick* and *Uhtred*.

The persistence of these names in some areas of northern England (as well as southern Scotland) has already been noted by John Insley and David Postles, and their presence here confirms their observations.<sup>162</sup> Possible reasons for this will be discussed in later chapters, but this does demonstrate that, while the increasing concentration in naming patterns seems to have taken place across the whole of England – and there was an increasing homogeneity in name choice both within communities as well as across England in general – there were still regional variations which must have been caused by local factors and influences.

*Graph 3.10: Name distribution in the Lancashire Feet of Fines, 1187-1215*



## **8.2. Middlesex**

The names of the Middlesex Fines paint a very similar picture to their Lancashire equivalents. The corpus is slightly larger, at 219 individuals, and there are 56 names shared between them. This equates to 3.91 individuals per name, slightly lower than the Lancashire names, but still very condensed. There is similar proportion of rare names, 26 in total,

<sup>162</sup> John Insley, 'Some Aspects of Regional Variation in Early Middle English Personal Nomenclature' in *Leeds Studies in English* 18, (1987), pp. 191-210 (see pp. 183-190) and Postles, *Naming the people of England*, pp 36-37.

accounting for 12 percent of individuals. The size of the name stock in these two distant counties is, therefore, very similar, and in both cases is very restricted to a small number of names in proportion to the individuals listed.

Table 3.21: Naming system of the Middlesex Feet of Fines, 1187-1215

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 219                | 56           | 3.91                 | 26                | 11.87%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 11.87%          | 50.68%             | 1.36%                   | 12                    | 65.75%                 |

There is also a great deal of similarity in the levels of concentration of the name stock, although in Middlesex it seems to be even more pronounced than in Lancashire. The top name, *William*, accounts for 12 percent of individuals, while the top six names combined account for more than half the people listed – 51 percent. The exceedingly high levels of concentration in the Middlesex Fines are confirmed by the high number of dominant names, 12, which account for 66 percent of the population. This is lower than their Lancashire counterparts, but still very high, and the rate of homonymy is the highest we have seen so far at 1.37 percent.

Table 3.22: Top six names in the Middlesex Feet of Fines, 1187-1215

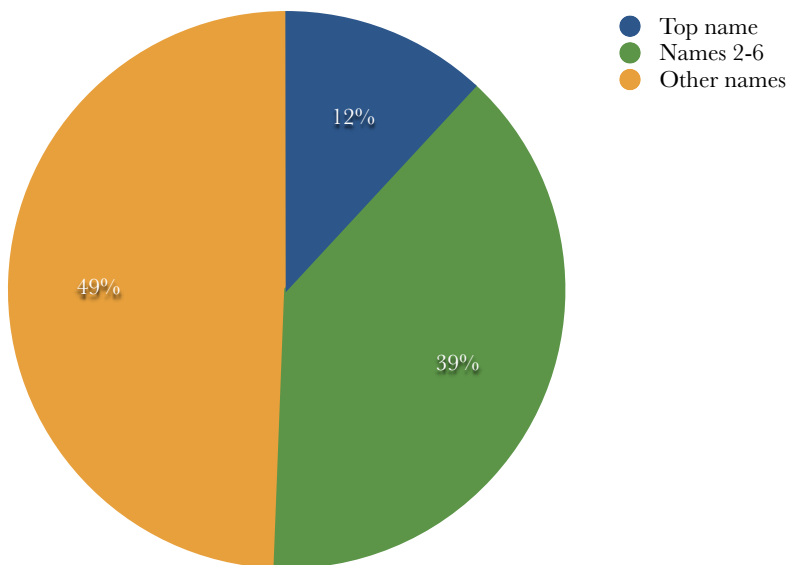
| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 26                 | 11.87                   |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 23                 | 10.50                   |
| <i>John</i>    | 21                 | 9.59                    |
| <i>Richard</i> | 18                 | 8.22                    |
| <i>Roger</i>   | 12                 | 5.48                    |
| <i>Henry</i>   | 11                 | 5.02                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>111</b>         | <b>50.68</b>            |

Bearing in mind that in the first corpus studied in this thesis, the Durham *Liber Vitae*, the top six names accounted for just 9 percent of people, this shows just how much the naming system of England had been transformed over the course of 400 years. This might sound like an obvious statement to make – of course it had changed; things are bound to change a huge amount in 400 years, so this is no surprise. Yet, in fact, the naming system in England,

and much of Europe, did not change a great deal in the 400 years following this, so the fundamental change that took place in the medieval period is not something that should be looked upon as insignificant.

The names at the top of the list are strikingly similar to those in Lancashire, with *Robert*, *John*, *Richard*, *Roger* and *Henry* joining *William* in the top six. This means there is only one difference between the two, with *Adam* absent from the Middlesex list, being replaced by the equally biblical *John*. In fact, nine names appear in the top twelve of each list, suggesting that the increasing conventionality we have witnessed so far within regional naming systems is, by the early thirteenth century, matched by a more general conventionality across the kingdom as a whole – at least when it comes to those names at the top of the list.

Graph 3.11: Name distribution in the Middlesex Feet of Fines, 1187-1215



The increasing tendency for people to bear names of biblical or Christian origin is visible in Middlesex, just as it was in Lancashire. In addition to *John*, with 21 appearances, *Adam* and *Nicholas* appear five times each, *Gervaise*, *Andrew*, *Martin*, *Peter*, *Thomas* and *Stephen* all appear three times, while *James* and *Luke* both appear twice. However, the regional differences are still visible further down the list. There are no instances of *Siward*, *Uhtred* or *Gospatrick*, unlike the names of the Lancashire Fines, but here are a few names of Old English origin still present, including *Ailwin*, *Ailward*, which both appear three times, and *Edwin*, which appears twice. These are less popular, proportionally, than their pre-Conquest counterparts in the

Lancashire Fines, but show that the persistence of certain names in certain areas must have had reasons rooted in the local history, families and personal relationships of the communities in question.

## 9. Winchester Survey, 1285

Now we return, one final time, to Winchester, where a survey carried out in 1285 provides us with further evidence of the changes taking place to the naming system of Winchester during the middle ages. The survey survives in one manuscript discovered in the middle of the nineteenth century amongst the Miscellaneous Exchequer Records of the Queen's Remembrancer's Office.<sup>163</sup> The document itself consists of a detailed specification of the sources of income that the king enjoyed in the city. Keene suggests its purpose was related to the granting of the city to its citizens by Henry III (†1272) in 1264 for 20 years – a term which would therefore have just come to its end. The survey is therefore probably an inquiry on behalf of Edward I (†1307) as part of a renegotiation of these rights for a further period.<sup>164</sup>

The individuals listed in the survey are those owing rents pertaining to the farm of Winchester. As such, they are likely to be of comparable social standing to those listed in the surveys of the Winton Domesday, as well as the 1207 Fine Roll. The names in the list should, therefore, allow us to see if further changes have taken place to the naming system of Winchester during the course of the thirteenth century. As in previous studies, the names discounted from this corpus are those belonging to the women listed in the survey, of which there are twelve, and those which appear solely in patronyms, of which there are two. This leaves a corpus of some 142 individuals to study. This the smallest corpus of any studied in this thesis, although still sufficient to give a picture of the naming system in Winchester in 1285. That said, it should be acknowledged that the results may not fully portray the degree of condensation of the corpus, due to the difference in sample size with many of the other corpora studied.

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<sup>163</sup> The manuscript is Public Records Office, SC6/1283/9, part 2, no. 206. An edition of the manuscript, with accompanying translation, is found in 'Appendix I: Thirteenth Century Surveys of Winchester', ed. and trans. D. J. Keene, in *Winchester Studies I*, pp. 511-519.

<sup>164</sup> Keene, 'Thirteenth Century Surveys of Winchester', pp. 511-512.

Table 3.23: Naming system of the Winchester Survey, 1285

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 142                | 41           | 3.46                 | 24                | 16.90%                  |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 15.49%          | 52.11%             | 2.31%                   | 13                    | 76.76%                 |

The degree of condensation does appear relatively low when looking at the bare figures. There are 41 names shared by 142 individuals, equating to 3.46 individuals per name. This is lower than all three of the other thirteenth-century corpora, including the Winchester Fine Roll from 1207, where the equivalent figure was 4.62. There also seems to be a relatively high number of rare names: 24. This is more than half the names in the list and accounts for 17 percent of the individuals listed, but the likelihood is that the true extent of the condensation is masked by the small size of the corpus, and it seems unlikely that the shrinking of the name stock has gone into reverse over the intervening 78 years. A look at the figures relating to concentration confirms this.

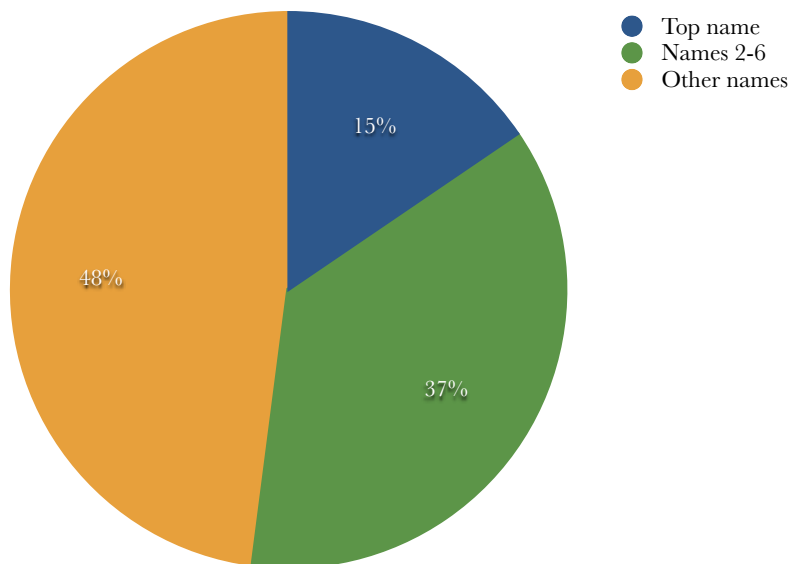
Table 3.24: Top six names in the Winchester Survey, 1285

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 22                 | 15.49                   |
| <i>John</i>    | 15                 | 10.56                   |
| <i>Richard</i> | 11                 | 7.75                    |
| <i>Henry</i>   | 10                 | 7.04                    |
| <i>Peter</i>   | 8                  | 5.63                    |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 8                  | 5.63                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>74</b>          | <b>52.11</b>            |

The top name, *William*, accounts for 16 percent of the individuals in the list – by far the highest of any corpus so far. The second most popular name, *John*, itself also accounts for over ten percent of the population alone – 11 percent – and the top six names combined account for 52 percent. It is therefore clear that the general trend towards increasing naming concentration and name similarity continued over the course of the thirteenth century. This is confirmed by the highest rate of homonymy in to date, at 2.31 percent, which is a whole percentage point higher than the next highest, the Middlesex Feet of Fines, as well as by the fact that the 13 dominant names in the corpus account for over three quarters of the

individuals listed: 77 percent. The names at the top of the list are, in general, similar to those of the earlier thirteenth century corpora, with *Richard*, *Henry* and *Robert* all in the top six, in addition to *William*. The notable newcomer is *Peter*, which appears in fifth place. This is a reflection of the continued rise in names of biblical or Christian origin. In addition to *John* and *Peter*, *Thomas* appears eight times, *Adam* and *Nicholas* both appear four times each, *Stephen* appears three times, and *Laurence* twice. Even the rare names have a distinctly Christian air, with *Gervaise*, *Martin*, *Michael*, *Paul*, *Samuel* and *Valentin* all appearing one time each. In total, over a third of all people in the list bear names of biblical or Christian origin. In comparison, there are now just two names of dithetic Old English origin in the corpus: *Edmund*, appearing twice, and *Alfred* appearing once.

Graph 3.12: Name distribution in the Winchester Survey, 1285



The Winchester Survey of 1285 therefore confirms the trends observed so far in the names of the people of Winchester during the middle ages, demonstrating the general increase in naming homogeneity and concentration around a few popular names. The more recent increase in the names with biblical or Christian connotations has also continued. Not only are there more Christian names, they are borne by more people, aiding their gradual rise to the top of the list of most popular names. This clearly shows that the phenomenon of naming concentration was not linked to a group of names – but was a general shift from one type of naming system to another. For whatever reason, people had become accustomed to bearing names which were the same as those of their family, friends and neighbours.

Over time, the names at the top of the list may have changed, but the general pattern of ever-increasing similarity and homogeneity continued. A brief look at two final corpora from the turn of the fourteenth century will confirm the extent to which this homogeneity continued into the later middle ages.

## 10. London Subsidy Roll 144/2, 1292

The first of these is a Lay Subsidy Roll from London, dating from 1292.<sup>165</sup> The lay subsidy was a tax on moveable property. Rather than taxing income, tax assessors evaluated the the aggregate value of certain items of property as a means of determining the amount an individual could pay. The tax was, in general, only levied on lay people, hence the term 'lay subsidy'. The subsidy was not levied annually, but granted by Parliament at intervals of a few years – although sometimes it occurred in two or three successive years.<sup>166</sup> Though undated, Roll 144/2 has been identified as relating to the lay subsidy of 1292, with the assessments made no earlier than the late summer of that year.<sup>167</sup> The individuals listed in the London rolls were clearly of a different nature to those of country districts, with the majority being merchants, tradesmen and handicraftsmen.

The lay subsidy was intended to be levied exclusively from freemen and, although there is evidence that some non-freemen were taxed in 1292, the vast majority of the individuals listed would have been freemen of the town, holding occupations ranging from wealthy merchants to less wealthy tradesmen, such as fishermen, fruiterers and chandlers.<sup>168</sup> In this sense, therefore, the people listed are likely to be from a similar social and economic status as those listed in the other urban surveys examined in this study. Discounting the names of women in the list, there are a total of 779 individuals in the corpus.

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<sup>165</sup> Public Records Office, E179/144/2. The edition used for this study is Eilert Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, (Lund, 1951).

<sup>166</sup> Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, pp. vii-ix. For a more detailed introduction of the subsidy see James Field Willard, *Parliamentary taxes on personal property, 1290 to 1334: a study in mediæval English financial administration* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1934), especially pp. 3-53.

<sup>167</sup> Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>168</sup> Ekwall, *Two Early London Subsidy Rolls*, pp. vii-ix.

Table 3.25: Naming system of London Subsidy Roll 144/2, 1292-1

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 779                | 80           | 9.74                 | 33                | 4.24%                   |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 18.36%          | 59.05%             | 3.35%                   | 13                    | 78.18%                 |

While the corpus from the Winchester Survey of 1285 may have been too small to get a clear view of the level of condensation in the late thirteenth century, it is clear from the Subsidy Roll that the name stock in London at this time was extremely condensed. There are just 80 names used by 779 people, equating to 9.74 individuals per name.<sup>169</sup>

For comparison, in a sample of a similar size from 150 years earlier, the 1148 survey of the Winton Domesday, there are 250 names for 788 individuals, just 3.15 individuals per name. The name stock of the Subsidy Roll is, in fact, more than twice as condensed as any other corpus studied so far. As might be expected in a corpus so condensed, the number of rare names is extremely small. There are just 33 *hapax-legomena*, which, although still accounting for some 41 percent of the names in use, only account for a tiny proportion of the population – just 4 percent. For comparison, the equivalent figure for the Middlesex Fines from less than a century earlier was 11 percent. It is clear that bearing a unique name in London at the turn of the fourteenth century was not just uncommon, but undesirable.

Table 3.26: Top six names in London Subsidy Roll 144/2, 1292

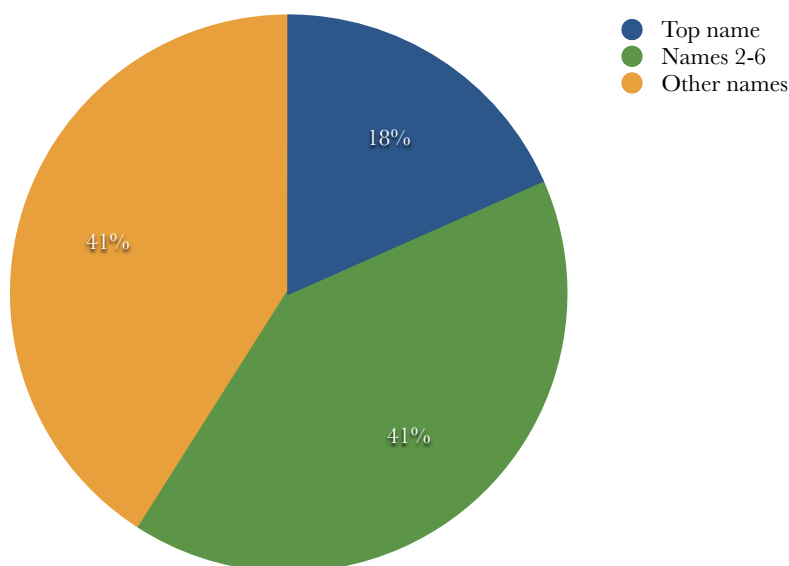
| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>John</i>    | 143                | 18.36                   |
| <i>William</i> | 117                | 15.02                   |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 63                 | 8.09                    |
| <i>Richard</i> | 57                 | 7.32                    |
| <i>Thomas</i>  | 42                 | 5.39                    |
| <i>Walter</i>  | 38                 | 4.88                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>460</b>         | <b>59.05</b>            |

<sup>169</sup> There are in fact four forms which are alternative versions or hypocoristics of names already in the list: *Peres* which is a form of *Peter* and appears three times; and *Jake*, *Hancock* and *Hankin*, which are all forms of *John* and appear twice, once and once respectively. These have been counted separately in this case, but they further confirm the small size of the name stock.



In contrast, the proportion of people bearing dominant names is very high. There are 13 dominant names in total, accounting for 78 percent of individuals. This is similar to that of the Winchester Survey of 1285, but the concentration around the top few names seems to be even more accentuated in London. The top name, *John*, is borne by 143 people, 18 percent of the total, and the second most popular name, *William*, accounts for over 15 percent of people on its own. In total, the top six names account for a huge 59 percent of all the people in the list and the rate of homonymy is 3.35 percent – almost 1 percent higher than in the 1285 Winchester Survey, which is itself a whole percent higher than any other corpus. The naming system of late thirteenth-century London was therefore both very condensed and very concentrated. A small number of names were shared incredibly unequally amongst the population – over half the population bore one of just five names. Conversely, only a tiny proportion of the population bore names that were not shared with other people and, as a result, the chances of two people bearing the same name were far higher than in any of the other corpora looked at in this study. Names appear to be less effective as markers of individual identity than ever before.

Graph 3.13: Name distribution in London Subsidy Roll 144/2, 1292



There is also an increasingly religious feel to the name stock. Amongst the most popular names we still see continental Germanic names – *William*, *Robert*, *Richard* and *Walter* all sit in the top six. But they are headed by *John*, and *Thomas* sits fifth, accounting for over five

percent of individuals, while *Adam*, *Stephen*, *Simon* and *Nicholas* were all borne by ten or more people.

## 11. Register of the Freemen of the City of York, 1272-1307

The final corpus of names comes from the Register of the Freemen of the City of York.<sup>170</sup> The ‘Freeman’s Roll’ consists of six registers listing all the individuals who took up the freedom of the city between 1272 and the present day.<sup>171</sup> The dating of the lists are, in the main, reasonably exact, with each one headed by the name of the mayor and the year of the reign of the king. Individuals were required to obtain freedom of the city in order to practice a trade within it. It could be gained in three ways: through servitude, by completing their time as an apprentice within the city; through patrimony, by inheriting the status as a birth right through their parentage; or through redemption, by payment or in return for service rendered to the city.<sup>172</sup> The period selected for examination is that of the reign of Edward I, between 1272 and 1307, a 35-year period which allows a good comparison with the names from the London Subsidy Roll and the Winchester Survey of 1285. The individuals listed were those wishing to ply a trade, or already plying one, in the city of York. We can therefore assume that they are of a similar social standing and wealth as the two urban lists just mentioned, ranging from wealthy merchants down to more humble artisans and tradespeople. The names listed include numerous *carnifeces*, *pistores* and *candelers* – butchers, bakers and candlestick makers. Women as well as men were bound to acquire the freedom of the city if they wished to practice a trade separate from that of their husbands, and there are three women listed in the register in Edward I’s reign (a *Mariota*, a *Margaret* and an *Emma*). These have been discounted from the study, but there have been no other omissions from the 762 freemen registered in this period, making the total number of individuals in the corpus 759.

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<sup>170</sup> York Civic Archives: Y/COU/3/1. This study has been carried out using the Surtees Society edition from 1897 which is available online: *Register of the Freemen of the City of York: Vol. 1, 1272-1558*, ed. Francis Collins (Durham, 1897), <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/york-freemen/vol1/> [accessed 26 February 2016], henceforth, *Freemen of York*.

<sup>171</sup> *Freemen of York*, pp. vii-xviii.

<sup>172</sup> You can still acquire freedom of the city in the same three ways today: [https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20039/lord\\_mayor/629/freedom\\_of\\_the\\_city\\_of\\_york](https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20039/lord_mayor/629/freedom_of_the_city_of_york) [accessed 26 February 2016].

Table 3.27: Naming system of the Register of Freemen of York, 1272–1306

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>Names</b> | <b>Inds per name</b> | <b>Rare names</b> | <b>Rare names % pop</b> |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 759                | 49           | 15.49                | 17                | 2.24%                   |

| <b>Top name</b> | <b>Top 6 names</b> | <b>Rate of homonymy</b> | <b>Dominant names</b> | <b>Dom names % pop</b> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|
| 16.43%          | 62.45%             | 2.65%                   | 13                    | 85.51%                 |

The names of these 759 people display an even greater degree of condensation than those of the London Subsidy Roll. They share just 49 names – a huge 15.49 individuals per name, confirming just how much the naming system of England changed over the course of the medieval period. The name stock has shrunk to such an extent that the level of repetition and reuse would be incredibly high – far higher than we would be familiar with today. This would be true if all the names were shared equally. Yet, even amongst this extremely small name stock, there are still 17 rare names, accounting for a third of all name forms – although the proportion of the population they denominate is just 2 percent.

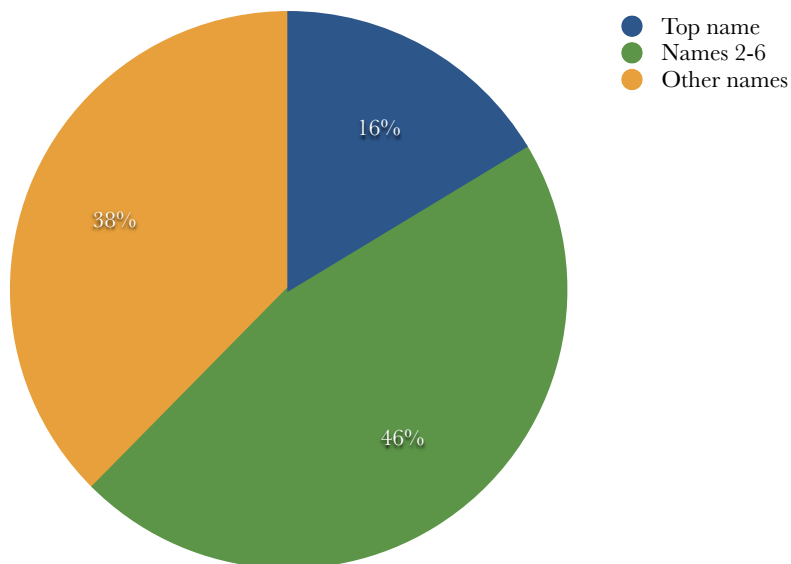
Table 3.28: Top six names in the Register of Freemen of York, 1272–1306

| <b>Name</b>    | <b>Occurrences</b> | <b>% of individuals</b> |
|----------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| <i>William</i> | 124                | 16.34                   |
| <i>John</i>    | 110                | 14.49                   |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 95                 | 12.52                   |
| <i>Thomas</i>  | 65                 | 8.56                    |
| <i>Richard</i> | 44                 | 5.80                    |
| <i>Hugh</i>    | 36                 | 4.74                    |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>474</b>         | <b>62.45</b>            |

In contrast, the names at the top of the list are extremely popular. The top name, *William*, is borne by 124 people, accounting for 16 percent of the people listed, and the top six names combined account for 62 percent. The rate of homonymy also points to an extremely concentrated name stock, at 2.65 percent. Once again, the most popular names are a mix of continental and biblical or saintly names, and bear a striking resemblance to those in London. *John* sits just behind *William* in second place, and *Thomas* once more sits in the top six, as do *Robert* and *Richard* – the only difference being *Hugh*, which is in sixth place, while *Walter* languishes down in eleventh. *Adam*, *Peter*, *Nicholas* and *Simon* all appear more than ten times, and there are several more names with religious connotations throughout the list.

One thing that may be worth noting here is that the number of dominant names has not risen a great deal. There are 13 dominant names in the York corpus. This is the same as the Subsidy Roll and the Winchester Survey of 1285 – the two other late thirteenth-century sources, but also the same as in those from earlier in the century. In fact, in all the corpora from 1183 onwards the number of dominant names ranges from just 12 to 14. There were 11 dominant names in the 1110 survey of Winton Domesday, and even the Colchester list of 1086 had nine. There is a significant drop in the number of dominant names during the twelfth century, but this appears to be an anomaly caused by the influx of names following the Conquest, rather than a systemic change.

*Graph 3.14: Name distribution in the Register of Freemen of York, 1272–1306*



Overall, therefore, there does not seem to be a great expansion in the number of popular names from the end of the tenth century. What does change is the proportion of people referred to by these dominant names. This figure increases steadily across the period, aside from the twelfth century dip, so that while the 11 dominant names in Winchester in 1110 account for 48 percent of the people in the corpus, and the 13 dominant names of Boldon Book in 1183 account for 57 percent, the 13 dominant names of the Freemen of York account for a huge 86 percent of all the people listed. This, perhaps more clearly than anything we have seen so far, shows just how homogenous the naming system of England had become by the end of the fourteenth century.

## 12. Summing up

The individual studies carried out on the names from these fourteen medieval corpora have presented a snapshot of the English personal naming system at various points in the medieval period. A number of gradual trends have become clear, as have a number of rapid transitions. It is clear is that, while the Norman Conquest clearly had an impact on the naming vocabulary of the English people, these changes do not –on the face of it at least – appear to correlate with the wider changes taking place to the concentration and condensation of the name stock. The following chapter will attempt to bring these individual studies together to create a broad overview of the changes that did take place, and delve deeper into the patterns that have become clear in order to gain a greater understanding of the complexities of the transformation.

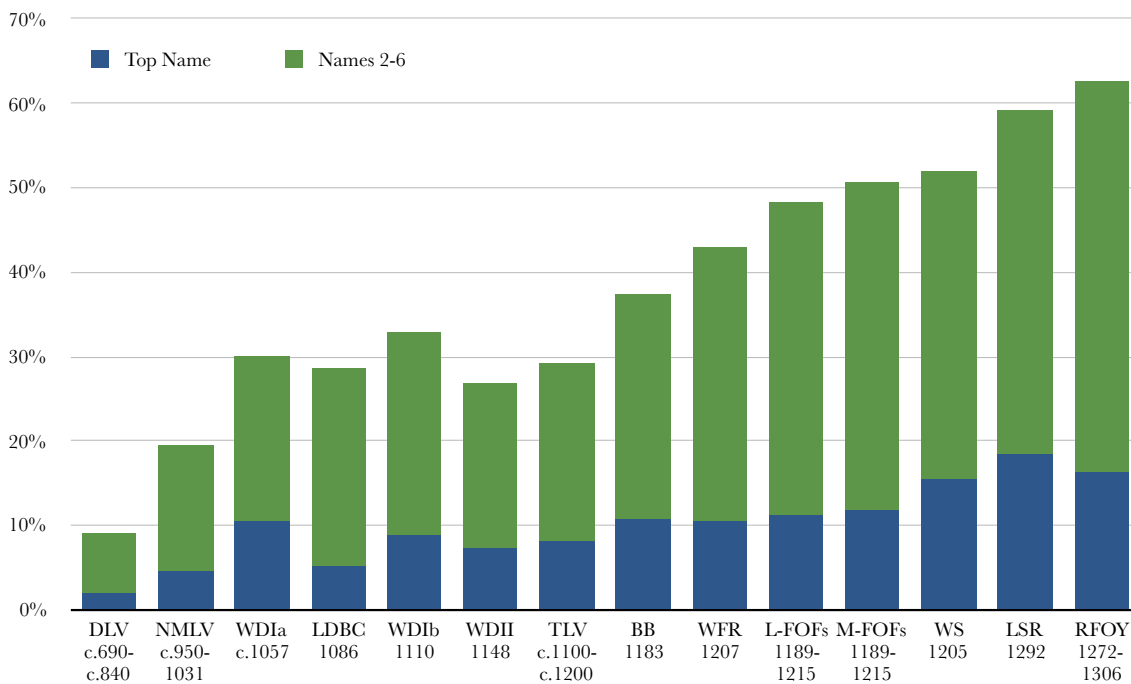
## Digging Deeper: Identifying Patterns of Change

The previous chapter presented an overview of the naming system in the 14 key corpora examined in this thesis. The results suggested that our traditional understanding of the transformation that took place to the English naming system during the medieval period is far from accurate. This chapter will build on these results by carrying out comparative analyses across the corpora in an attempt to draw out broader chronological and geographical trends. It will attempt to identify patterns of both internal and external changes to the naming system and the potential links between them

### 1. Chronological overview

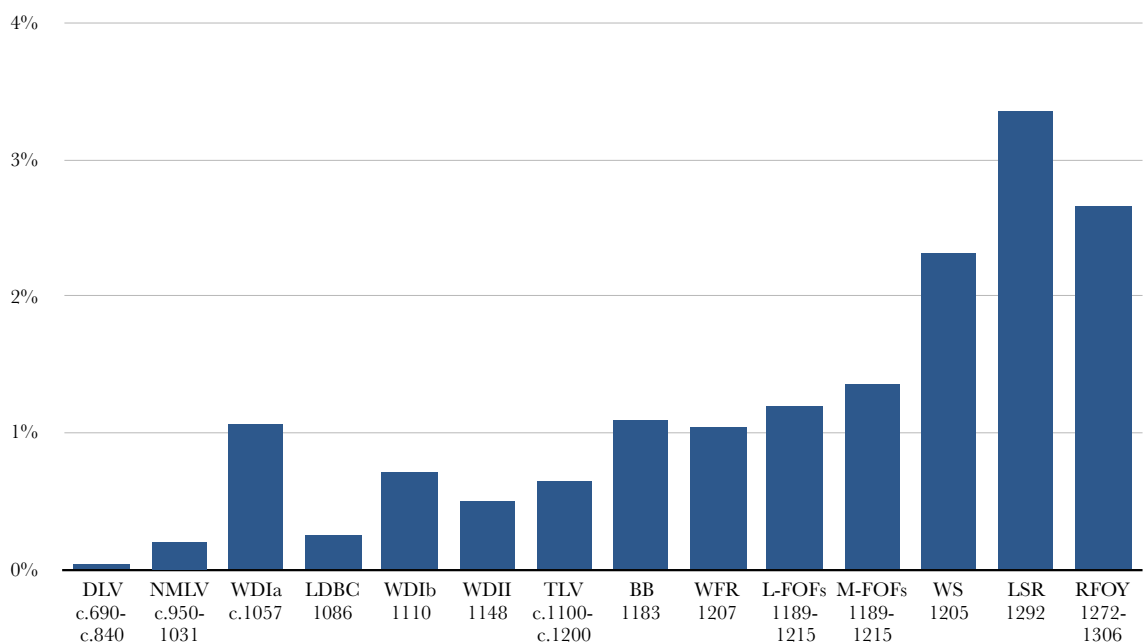
The analysis of Chapter 3 has given an indication of the changing nature of the naming system in medieval England on a source-by-source basis but a more detailed survey of how patterns changed over time is necessary to get as complete a picture as possible.

*Graph 4.1: Naming concentration across all sources c.690–c.1306*



Taking the primary indicator of naming concentration – the proportion of people bearing the top six names combined – we see that the general trend across the whole period is upwards. From a low point of under 10 percent in the ninth century, this rises to over 60 percent some 500 years later. The two mid-eleventh-century corpora, around the time of the Conquest, sit somewhere between these two points, at around 30 percent. This confirms that the increase in concentration clearly began before the Conquest, with a significant rise having taken place between the early ninth and the mid-eleventh centuries. It also confirms that this trend slows somewhat during the first 75 years of the twelfth century, then picks up again from the end of the twelfth century and continues to rise up to the beginning of the fourteenth. The most likely cause for this brief slowdown seems to be an influx of new names following the Conquest, which expanded the stock of names and, over the period of a number of generations, replaced the previously popular Old English derived names at the top of the list. During this 100-year period of coexistence, where something like the hybrid system as proposed by David Postles appears to have existed, the overall trend towards concentration is unlikely to have slowed – rather the names around which this concentration focused changed – and it was not until the last generation of people named when English names had still been popular died out that the full extent of the concentration of the name stock became visible once again.<sup>173</sup>

*Graph 4.2: Rate of homonymy across all sources c.690–c.1306*



<sup>173</sup> Postles, *Naming the people of England*, pp. 23–24.

The other indicators of concentration support this. The rate of homonymy, the probability that any two people from a corpus drawn at random would bear the same name, also sees a general upward trend, which peaks first in the mid-eleventh century, then drops until the late twelfth century, when it rises again sharply until the fourteenth. A similar pattern can be seen amongst the dominant names. The general trend shows the proportion of people bearing dominant names increased over time, but during the twelfth century the proportion of people bearing dominant names decreased fairly sharply, before rising again at the end of the century.

Table 4.1: Top six names in the Durham Liber Vitae Original Core, c.690–c.840 – first 200 vs. last 200

| First 200         |             |             | Last 200          |             |              |
|-------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Name              | Occurrences | % of inds   | Name              | Occurrences | % of inds    |
| <i>Æðelbeorht</i> | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Eadræd</i>     | 9           | 4.50         |
| <i>Hygbeald</i>   | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Beorhtæd</i>   | 5           | 2.50         |
| <i>Tilisi</i>     | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Eadwulf</i>    | 5           | 2.50         |
| <i>Tilwine</i>    | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Ealdæd</i>     | 5           | 2.50         |
| <i>Wigbeald</i>   | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Æðelwulf</i>   | 4           | 2.00         |
| <i>Wilbeorht</i>  | 3           | 1.50        | <i>Beorhtwulf</i> | 4           | 2.00         |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>18</b>   | <b>9.00</b> | <b>Total</b>      | <b>32</b>   | <b>16.00</b> |

Table 4.2: Top six names in the Freeman of York, c.690–c.840 – first 200 vs. last 200

| First 200      |             |              | Last 200       |             |              |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| Name           | Occurrences | % of inds    | Name           | Occurrences | % of inds    |
| <i>John</i>    | 27          | 13.50        | <i>John</i>    | 41          | 20.50        |
| <i>William</i> | 27          | 13.50        | <i>Robert</i>  | 31          | 15.50        |
| <i>Robert</i>  | 25          | 12.50        | <i>William</i> | 24          | 12.00        |
| <i>Thomas</i>  | 21          | 10.50        | <i>Thomas</i>  | 20          | 10.00        |
| <i>Richard</i> | 13          | 6.50         | <i>Hugh</i>    | 11          | 5.50         |
| <i>Hugh</i>    | 11          | 5.50         | <i>Richard</i> | 10          | 5.00         |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>124</b>  | <b>62.00</b> | <b>Total</b>   | <b>137</b>  | <b>68.50</b> |

Furthermore, examining change over time within some of the larger corpora shows this transformation just as clearly. It has already been shown in Chapter 3 that the name stock of



the people listed in the Thorney *Liber Vitae* was more concentrated in the second half of the twelfth century than it was in the first half.<sup>174</sup> An examination of the earliest and the latest corpora in this study shows similar results. This is the case even in the Durham *Liber Vitae*. The Durham corpus contains names spanning the period c.690 to c.840, so taking a sample from the start of this extremely long list of 2,614 names and another at the end, and carrying out the same statistical analyses, should allow us to see if any change has taken place over this 150-year period. Even though this is by far the earliest source examined, comparing the levels of concentration between the first 200 names in the list and the last 200 does suggest that some concentration of the name stock is taking place, even by c.840. Amongst the first 200 people listed, no name appears more than 3 times, and only six names appear this frequently, with all other names appearing only one or two times apiece. The proportion of people bearing the top six names is just 9 percent. In contrast, while still low compared to later sources, the level of concentration amongst the last 200 people listed is considerably higher, with the top six names accounting for 16 percent of individuals. One name, *Eadred*, appears nine times, meaning it almost qualifies as a dominant name, and nine names in total appear more frequently than any name in the first 200.<sup>175</sup> So it seems fairly clear that the increase in naming concentration in Durham had begun by the mid-ninth century.

Carrying out the same process on the names of the Freemen of York shows that the process of concentration has not yet reached its apogee in the early fourteenth century. Amongst the first 200 names from this list, dating from 1272-1283, the top six names account for 62 percent of the individuals listed. In contrast, amongst the last 200 names, dating from 1300-1306, the top six names account for 69 percent of individuals. The top name remains *John* across the period, but the proportion of people bearing it increases from 14 percent in the first sample to 21 percent in the last sample. So, while the level of concentration at this point was clearly very high, this by no means represents a high point, and the upwards trend appears set to continue into the fourteenth century.

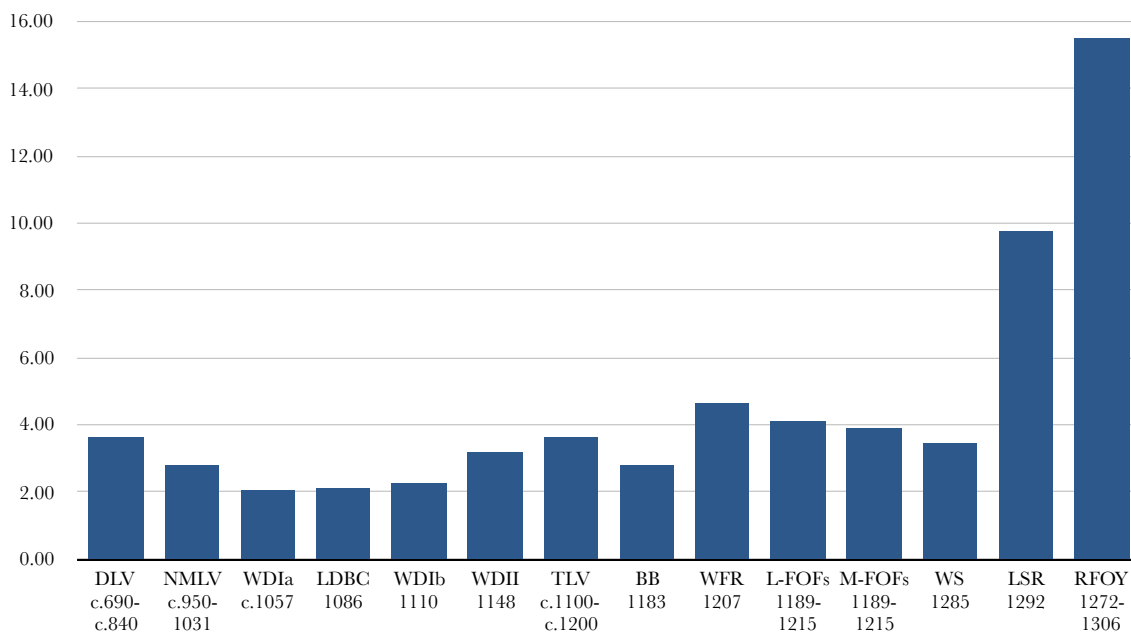
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<sup>174</sup> The top name rose from 7 percent to 12 percent and the total for the top six names combined rose from 29 percent to 35 percent.

<sup>175</sup> *Eadred* accounts for 4.5 percent of people in this list, just shy of the 5 percent required to make it a dominant name.

Examining the level of condensation of the name stock seems to demonstrate that there is no significant erosion of the name stock until the late late twelfth century at the earliest. For the majority of the period studied in this thesis, the number of names available in the name stock is relatively stable from the mid-Anglo-Saxon period through to the thirteenth century. The Durham *Liber Vitae* corpus is the least condensed, at 3.68 individuals per name. The level of condensation sits at 2.76 individuals per name in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* corpus, somewhat lower than the Durham corpus, but this is likely due to the very high number of names in the Durham list. The number of names per individual hovers somewhere between 2.07 and 3.67 until the end of the twelfth century, with the Thorney *Liber Vitae* being the most condensed – again, a very large corpus may have something to do with this.

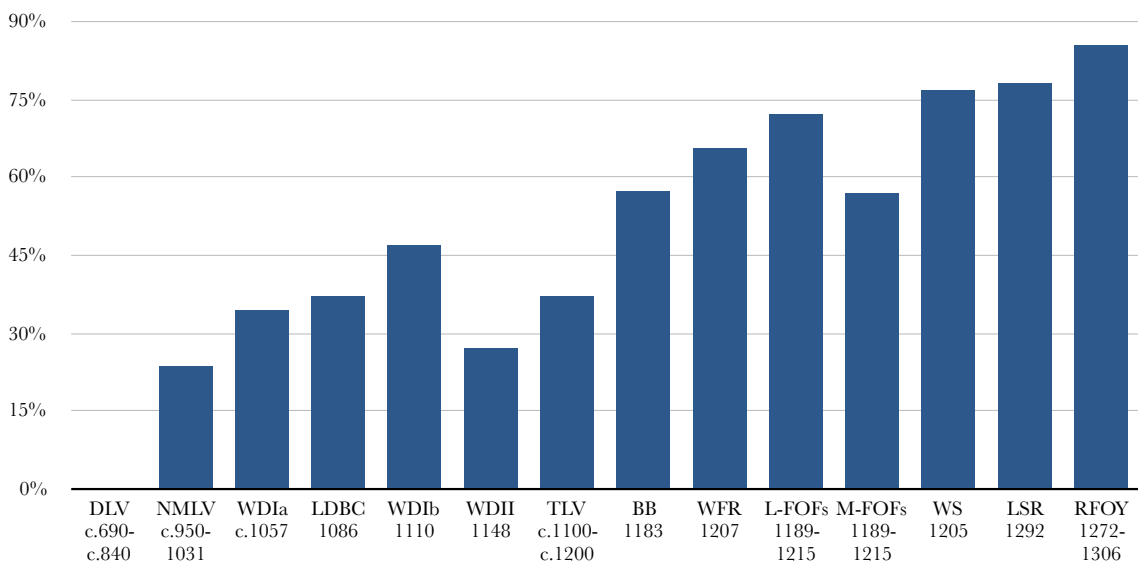
Graph 4.3: Average individuals per name across all sources c.690–c.1306



Only towards the beginning of the century do we see the level of condensation rise above 4, in the Winchester Fine Roll of 1207, and it does appear the the number of names in circulation declines in the thirteenth century. It is possible that some of the apparent stability was caused by the influx of foreign names and the period of coexistence – perhaps without the impact of the Conquest the name stock would have begun to shrink considerably a lot sooner. What is clear is that the number of names in circulation right up until the end of the thirteenth century was more than sufficient for people to have avoided excessive repetition of names. Sharing 100 names between 200 people without resorting to excessive repetition is

relatively unproblematic. This does change towards the end of the thirteenth century and the beginning of the fourteenth, as the number of names in use becomes insufficient to effectively distinguish between the individuals listed. The small size of the 1285 Winchester Survey corpus probably conceals some of this phenomenon, but the extent to which the name stock has shrunk is clearly visible in the final two corpora, those of the Freemen of York and the London Subsidy Roll.

*Graph 4.4: Proportion of population bearing dominant names across all sources c.690–c.1306*

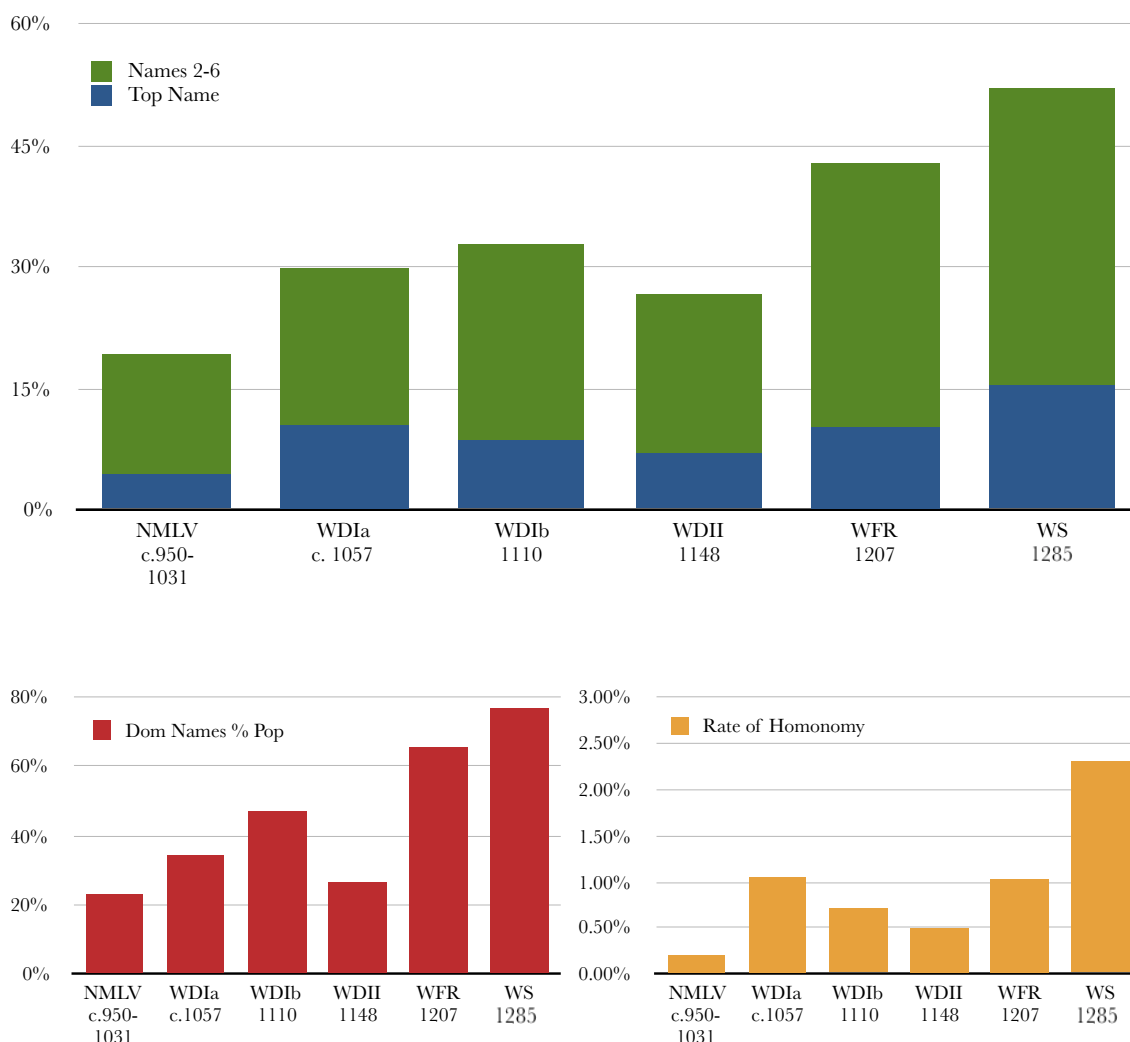


A telling comparison can be made between the increase in proportion of people bearing dominant names and the level of condensation. The proportion of people bearing dominant names increases steadily up to the start of the twelfth century, so that they account for nearly 46 percent of the individuals listed in the 1110 Winton Domesday survey. Despite this, there is no similar increase in the level of condensation. Then, while there is a steep drop in the level of dominant names throughout the twelfth century, we do not see a correlating drop in the level of condensation – just a redistribution of a name stock of roughly similar size. Finally, when the proportion of people bearing dominant names increases rapidly towards the end of the twelfth century, it is only belatedly followed by an increase in the level of condensation. Amongst the individuals listed in Boldon Book, there are still only 2.8 individuals per name, yet the proportion of people bearing dominant names has risen to 57 percent. It hardly seems likely that such an insignificant increase in condensation could cause such a dramatic increase in concentration. Instead, these findings

suggest the opposite, that the gradual rise in naming concentration eventually caused the erosion of the name stock – as more people gravitated towards popular names, rare names gradually dropped out of use.

While the collection of name corpora are selected from a number of areas across what is now England, there is one location where we can visualise the progression of changes across much of the medieval period at a number of key points: Winchester and its surrounding area. By looking solely at the sources originating in the town of Winchester, we can see that some trends are clearly visible, and clearly demonstrate the overall pattern of change.

Graph 4.5: Top six names and rate of homonymy across Winchester sources c.950–c.1285



Between the the tenth century and the end of the thirteenth, we see the gradual trend towards naming concentration, with the now familiar decrease in the mid-twelfth century.

This is mirrored closely by the progression in the rate of homonymy and also the proportion of the population bearing dominant names. So, taking Winchester as a geographical case study, we see that it fits very closely with the general trends seen in the wider survey.

It is therefore clear that, from a statistical point of view, the general pattern of transformation in the giving of personal names in England mirrors very closely the findings of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. The switch from a system of unique names, where name repetition was infrequent and apparently avoided as much as possible, to one where very few names were borne by the majority of the population, took place gradually and, in the English case, can be seen to have started by the mid-ninth century and continued up to the beginning of the fourteenth. Having established this broad pattern of change in the system of given names, the rest of this chapter will delve deeper to investigate more subtle variations in the patterns of name giving and potential causes for the wider changes.

## 2. Outside influence

One potential cause that should be examined is the linguistic origin of the names in use. This is an explanation often given for the majority of changes that took place to the English naming system in this period, as described in Chapter 2. It is a hypothesis that should be examined in more detail even if, on the face of it, the pattern of change that has been described so far does not seem to fit with the timing of the Norman Conquest. Indeed, during the 500-year period examined in this thesis, the English naming system was influenced by names from various linguistic origins other than English. The most prominent, and the most written about, are obviously the names introduced into England following the Conquest. These are by no means the only 'foreign' names incorporated into English during this period, nor are these names particularly easy to categorise as 'Norman', 'French' or 'continental'. Not only were the names drawn from a much wider area of the continent than Normandy itself, but also, those names which could be categorised as 'Norman' were not linguistically uniform in their origin, themselves being a *mélange* of Scandinavian and Germanic names originating from a wide area. The elements used to form both continental Germanic and Scandinavian compound names were also similar in form and meaning in many cases. As a result, any attempt to determine the origin of every

single name in a corpus from medieval England is problematic, as for certain names a case could be made for two or more possible origins.

That said, for the majority of names it is possible to ascertain with a reasonable degree of certainty where it originated, and in corpora of a large size, it is possible to get a good indication of the impact of names from one linguistic origin on the name stock of the population. What follows is a survey of when and how names of non-English origin had an impact on the naming vocabulary of the people studied in the corpora examined in this thesis. In doing so, it will help determine what impact names from overseas had on the naming vocabulary and the naming system of the people of England.

### 2.1. *Pre-Conquest*

To begin with the Original Core of the *Durham Liber Vitae*, we see that, while the majority of names in the corpus are of Old English origin, this is not exclusively the case.<sup>176</sup> There are a number of names of Celtic origin, including Irish names, such as *Dengus*, *Fergus* and *Finan*, and Brittonic names, such as *Arthan*, *Baeglog* and *Cundigeorn*. Paul Russell points out that the Brittonic forms in the Original Core have a greater tendency to be anglicised than those of Irish origin.<sup>177</sup> This could suggest that, while the Irish names belonged to Irish incomers, and so were less known to the Old English speakers of eastern Northumbria, the Brittonic names, which are likely to have originated in the Cumbric speaking areas of north-western England and south-western Scotland, were more recognisable, perhaps due to more regular contact with bearers of such names. It may even suggest that these names were, in fact, part of the wider onomasticon of Northumbria as a whole, Old English speakers included, and the bearers themselves may not necessarily have been incomers from further west.

Despite these exceptions, the name stock of Northumbria is still largely of Old English origin, and almost exclusively insular in nature. In total, almost 99 percent of names are Old English, while 1 percent of names are of Celtic origin. There are just three instances of names not of insular origin: *John*, appearing in its Latin form, *Iohannes*, and *Tobias* appearing as *Tobeas*. Yet, however small, what these exceptions do show us is that, even without

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<sup>176</sup> John Insley, 'The Old English and Scandinavian Personal Names of the *Liber Vitae* up to 1200' in *Durham Liber Vitae*, vol. II, pp. 9-12.

<sup>177</sup> Paul Russell, 'The Names of Celtic Origin' in *Durham Liber Vitae*, vol. II, pp. 5-8.

conquest and colonisation, names are highly portable. Whether it be through movement of people or movement of ideas, names not previously used can make their way into the naming vocabulary of a group of people. In some cases, they may only be present for the period of an individual's life. In others, they may become incorporated into the onomasticon of a community, and used again, becoming as much a part of it as any other. The presence of a *Tobias* demonstrates that the idea of giving (or possibly taking) a name from the bible was not unthinkable amongst the devout Christian communities of early medieval England, even if it was rare. So even as early as the eighth century, the naming system of England was not untouched by outside influence of various kinds.

In none of the corpora are all the names exclusively of Old-English origin – there are always some ‘foreign’ names. The nature and number vary depending on the date and place of creation of the source, but at no period was the English name stock completely isolated from outside influence. This becomes clear as we move further forward in time. For example, while the names of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* are also mainly Old English, there is a small number of names originating from other areas. *Siward* (*Sigvarðr*), *Swegen* (*Sveinn*) and *Tovi* (*Toft*) are three examples of the small minority of Scandinavian names in the corpus, of which there are seven Scandinavian names, accounting for ten individuals.<sup>178</sup> Despite the Cnutian influence on the creation of the manuscript, the names in this corpus only date to around 1030, just fourteen years after Cnut's invasion, and Winchester lay well away from the Danelaw, where the main centres of Scandinavian settlement had been before the eleventh century. So it is understandable that any influence on the naming vocabulary of the area would be slight, yet even here we see that Scandinavian names were in use. Clearly, some of these were Danish migrants – including at least two of the *Thoreds*, as well as the *Toca* and the *Tovi*, who were noted in the manuscript as being ‘*Dan.*’ (meaning ‘Danish’).<sup>179</sup> Yet there is no such notation for *Siward* who was a brother and deacon in the community of the Old Minster, nor for *Besa*, who was a priest.<sup>180</sup> In addition to these Scandinavian names, there are also four names of biblical origin or with saintly connotations, *Albinus*, *Stephan*, *Andreas* and *Leo*; as well as four names of continental Germanic origin, *Robert*, *Lantfred*,

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<sup>178</sup> *Thored* (*Pored*) appears three times.

<sup>179</sup> *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster*, fol. 25r.

<sup>180</sup> *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster*, fols 20r and 21r.

*Idesbald* and *Anderboda*.<sup>181</sup> So, while slight, the names of the New Minster *Liber Vitae* do show influence from outside what we might consider the traditional Old English name stock – and they show that this influence comes from both Scandinavia and continental Europe – but they also show that not all changes came from outside. As in the Durham *Liber Vitae*, the presence of Christian names shows that, while still uncommon, the names and stories of saints and biblical figures that would have been so prevalent in the lives of so many people also had an impact on their naming decisions. However, even taking into account these exceptions, it is still true to say that impact at this point (in this area) was minimal, and the overwhelming majority of names in the New Minster corpus were of Old English origin – some 96 percent in total.

As we move closer to the time of the Conquest we see the proportion of names of non-English origin increase, but the dominance of native names is never really threatened. In the list of burgesses of Colchester, from 1086, we can see the extent of the Scandinavian influence on the late Anglo-Saxon name stock, where 19 Scandinavian names comprise 7 percent of the total. Colchester had been in the south-easternmost reaches of the Danelaw, although it had returned to English hands in 917 when it was reclaimed by the armies of Edward the Elder.<sup>182</sup> Scandinavian naming in Colchester may therefore have been a legacy of this period – perhaps due to a continued presence of Scandinavian speakers in the area, although it is likely that the resumption of Danish rule under Cnut also strengthened this, and we cannot rule out some of these names belonging to recent settlers from Scandinavia. There is no way of knowing whether these names are of people who considered themselves to be ‘Danish’ or ‘English’, or whether they distinguished between the origins of the names. Many of these names had been present in England for two centuries or more – and assigning them an origin as anything other than ‘Anglo-Scandinavian’ is problematic.

As already mentioned, the existence of so many names of Scandinavian origin in the Norman onomasticon only serves to further complicate matters. In some instances, the previous absence of a name from English sources and its frequency in Norman sources can indicate that it is an import from across the Channel rather than the North Sea – or *vice versa*. For example, *Ainolf*, in the Colchester list, is a fairly common Scando-Norman name,

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<sup>181</sup> *Leo* and *Anderboda* both appear twice.

<sup>182</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, ed. and trans. Dorothy Whitelock (London, 1961), pp. 64-65.



which may lead us to assume it belongs to a Norman settler rather than a local East Anglian. Similarly, *Got hugo* may refer to a ‘Gauti son of Hugh’, and as *Hugh* is a continental name, it suggests Norman origin, rather than English or Scandinavian, but anything beyond an educated guess is not possible.

What is most likely, given the well-attested Scandinavian impact on Old English personal naming, is that most of the Scandinavian names in the list are not Norman imports, but names that were already present in the name stock of Colchester, and belonged to people that we would call, for want of a better word, ‘English’. One name that seems to confirm the Anglo-Scandinavian nature of the name stock is *Lefsesse*, which was a hybrid name formed by combining the Old English *Leof-* with the Scandinavian *Saxi*.<sup>183</sup> This is supported by the otherwise minimal impact of other continental names in this list. Only 12 of the other names in the list are likely to have been continental in origin, 5 percent of the total. Four of these are original bynames: *Blanc*, *Dublel*, *Demiblanc* and *Rosell*. These are likely to belong to newly settled French speaking incomers. The remaining seven are continental Germanic names, four of which stand out as names which were to have a profound impact on the naming of the English people over the coming centuries: *William*, *Walter*, *Roger* and *Ralph*. Another four: *Tesco*, *Calebot*, *Sunegod* and *Filiman*, act as a useful reminder that not all of the names that arrived in England following the Conquest were destined to become popular with the conquered masses. In addition, there are three names of Brittonic origin, which may also have belonged to new arrivals from Brittany.<sup>184</sup> Despite all these exceptions, even by the end of the eleventh century, the impact of non-English names on the name stock of Colchester is relatively small, with 86 per cent of people still bearing names of Old English origin.

This is also the case for the names collected in c.1057 in the Winton Domesday. As a proportion of the name forms, there is already a significant minority of non-English names

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<sup>183</sup> *Essex Domesday*, fol. 49r. See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, p. 352 for more on *-sese* and *Saxi*. A detailed discussion on hybrid names will be carried out in Chapter 5. Further examples can be found in Shannon Lewis-Simpson, ‘Assimilation or Hybridization?’ in *Assimilation or Hybridization? A study of Personal Names from the Danelaw* in Wendy Hoofnagle and Wolfram Keller (eds), *Other Nations: the hybridization of insular mythology and identity* (Heidelberg, 2011), pp. 13-44 and Henry Cecil Wyld, ‘Old Scandinavian Names in England’ in *The Modern Language Review* 5 (1910), pp. 289-296.

<sup>184</sup> This is almost certainly the case of *Lorchebret*, ‘Lorce the Breton’, however *Arthur* and *Owen* are more likely to be of Welsh origin.

in the name stock – some 26 percent of all name forms – even before the Conquest.<sup>185</sup> There are eight names of Scandinavian origin – of little surprise given the general influence of Scandinavian naming in many areas of England, especially in this former centre of Cnutian power. Some, including *Seward*, *Toki* and *Gauti*, appear in the other pre-Conquest sources in this study, while *Ulfketil* is regularly attested in English sources both before and after the Conquest.<sup>186</sup> There is also one instance of *Stanulfus*, which may be an Old English name, *Stanwulf*, a Scandinavian name, *Steinólfr*, or an Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid of some kind.<sup>187</sup> The relatively high number of continental Germanic names from across the Channel is more surprising, and there are 19 names which account for 20 people. These may, in part, be explained by the arrival of a number of Norman officials to Winchester during the reign of Edward the Confessor, but it also reinforces the fact that the naming system of England was not completely divorced from the continent and continental influence, even before the Conquest. Again, we see amongst them instances of those names which were to become so popular over the next few hundred years: *William*, *Henry*, *Geoffrey* and – to a lesser extent – *Guy*. Yet the majority are names which were destined to fade into obscurity, just like the majority of Old English names: *Engelric*, *Theoderic*, *Durand*, *Everwin* and *Anderbodo*, to name just a few.<sup>188</sup> There are also six names of biblical or Latin origin: *Peter*, *Martin*, *Adam*, *Dalphin*, *Paganus* and *Ficel* (probably an anglicised form of *Vitalis*).<sup>189</sup> *Dalphin* is most probably an arrival from the continent and while the other five may represent new arrivals they could equally belong to English people selecting names of this type.

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<sup>185</sup> Olaf von Feilitzen, ‘The Personal Names and Bynames of the Winton Domesday’ in *Winchester Studies I*, pp. 143-229, provides a breakdown of the linguistic origin of the names by both name form and proportion of the individuals listed (see p. 186). Due to some differences in interpretation, lemmatisation and also the discounting of certain names from the study, the figures in this study do not match exactly with those in von Feilitzen’s study, although the proportions are generally in line with his findings.

<sup>186</sup> See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, p. 364 for *Seward* (under *Sigwarth/Sighwardh*); p. 385 for *Toki*; p. 258 for *Gauti*; p. 399 for *Ulfketil* (under *Úlfkell/Ulfkil*).

<sup>187</sup> See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, p. 364 for *Steinólfr* and also p. 371 for more on Scandinavian influence on the element *Stan-*. *Stanulfus* has been counted as an Old English name in this case.

<sup>188</sup> There was also one individual known exclusively by a byname of French origin: *Picot*, a term for a type of pointed weapon.

<sup>189</sup> *Dalphin* is included here as an Old French rendering of the Latin name *Delphinus*, as suggested in von Feilitzen, ‘Personal Names of the Winton Domesday’, p. 154, although it could theoretically be *Dolfin*, a relatively common name in the north of England, southern Scotland and Ireland, being derived from the the Scandinavian *Dolgfimnr* (see von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, p. 225). There is also one name *Chitebaue*, which is unexplained and not included in any group.

It is clear that prior to 1066 the English name stock was neither isolated from nor immune to outside influence, both from the settlement of conquerors and migrants from overseas, as well as the exchange of culture and ideas. Yet, even in the pre-Conquest names of Winton Domesday, where we see the highest proportion of non-English name forms, their impact as a proportion of the people named is still low. Only two non-English names were borne by more than one individual: *Theoderic* and *Siward*, which appeared twice each. Overall, just 14 percent of the people listed bear names of foreign origin – leaving 86 percent bearing names of Old English origin. While this is somewhat lower than the 95 percent in the names of the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, the names of the people of Winchester prior to the Conquest were still, predominantly, Old English in origin.

## 2.2. *Post-Conquest*

The events of 1066 changed all this. The origin of names in England changes swiftly in the generations following the Conquest – although, as Postles points out, not as swiftly as has often been asserted. As he suggests, many English names remained in use for over a century following the Conquest, and it appears that a hybrid system functioned for much of this period.<sup>190</sup> It was not simply a case of swapping one ‘system’ of names for another. However, while many English names did persist for a long period following the Conquest, the corpora studied in this thesis show that the proportion of people using English names did diminish rapidly. The 1110 names of Winton Domesday saw a dramatic shift in linguistic origin from those of c.1057. Proportionally, English names still formed a considerable part of the name stock, with 34 names still in use, 37 percent of the total. Names such as *Alwin*, *Godwin*, *Alestan* and *Lewin* were still popular, but there were some 65 fewer name forms of Old English origin.<sup>191</sup> The shift has predominantly been towards names of continental Germanic origin,

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<sup>190</sup> Postles, *Naming the people of England*, pp. 23-24 The hybrid nature of the English naming system will be explored in the micro-studies of the following chapter.

<sup>191</sup> Discounting original bynames, of which there are 15 of English origin in c.1057 and just two in c. 1110, does however make this drop somewhat less marked, from 84 to 32.

of which there are 40 in use, accounting for 45 percent of all name forms.<sup>192</sup> These include the familiar *William, Ralph, Robert, Richard* and *Geoffrey* but also the less familiar *Wazo, Atser, Boselin, Goisbert* and *Gesord*.<sup>193</sup> While there is still a fairly large proportion of English name forms, the profound nature of the switch is clearly visible when considering the proportion of the population bearing them. There are 55 individuals bearing English names (27 percent), compared to 128 bearing continental Germanic ones (62 percent).

At this early stage following the Conquest there are still very few names of Latin and biblical origin, which have often been associated with Norman influence. In fact there are just seven: *John, Simon, Thomas, Alberic, Eustace, Constantine* and *Dalphin* (the same *Dalphin* as in the c.1057 list). This is only two more than in the c.1057 survey, although, *Dalphin* aside, they are all different names. In total, the seven names of biblical or Latin origin account for just 11 people, just 5 percent. This is a relatively sharp increase, although from a very low base (about 2 percent), and these names still only represent a small proportion of the total population. There is also only a slight increase in names of Scandinavian origin. There are just eight, the majority of which are well-attested in England before the Conquest: *Algot, Seward, Stigand, Sveinn, Ulf* (from *Ulfr*), *Atser* (from *Azur*) and *Turstin* (from *Þorsteinn*); only *Anschetil* (from *Ásketil*) is likely to have been a Norman import, having been popular across the Channel before 1066, but not in England.<sup>194</sup> Just *Stigand* and *Ulf* appear more than once (twice each) and in total the Scandinavian names account for 5 percent – just 1 percent higher than in c.1057.<sup>195</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Some names are very difficult to assign a definitive origin due to the similarity of the original formations. For example *Osbert* could be from the Old English *Osbeorht* or the continental Germanic *Osbeht*. The same applies to *Herbert*, which could be from *Herebeorht* or *Herebert*, *Wimund* which could be *Wigmund* or *Wimund* and *Odo* which could be *Odda* or *Odo*. Due to the absence of *Osbert*, *Herbert* and *Wimund* from the c.1057 list, instances of these names in c.1110 have been assumed to be of continental Germanic origin. This is supported, in the main, by the bynames associated with the individuals in questions, which are predominantly also of continental origin – with the notable exception of *Herbert filius Edwini*, who appears to be of English stock. In the case of *Odo*, which appears in c.1057 and not in c.1110 (although there are instances in the c.1148 survey), they have been counted as Old English names. Again, this is supported by bynames where they are present.

<sup>193</sup> There is also one original byname of Old French Origin – *Blondel*, meaning ‘fair-haired’.

<sup>194</sup> *Algot* is little attested in England prior to the Conquest, but as the individual named this in this instance is *Algot vir Alwii*, a servant of an Englishman, the likelihood is he is of Anglo-Scandinavian origin rather than a Norman settler (although this by no means certain).

<sup>195</sup> The remaining three names, each of which appear just once, are of Celtic origin. Two of these, *Judicel* and *Hoel* are most likely Breton names, while *Iwen* (from *Ywein*) is probably Welsh.

The Norman Conquest clearly had a considerable impact on the naming vocabulary of the people of Winchester. Names of continental origin – predominantly continental Germanic ones – had begun to displace those of English origin as early as 1110, just a couple of generations later. Not only are there far more continental Germanic names than 50 years earlier, they account for a much higher proportion of the population. And the 1148 names of the Winton Domesday show a continuation of this pattern. Although 81 of the 250 name forms are still of English origin – 32 percent, down from 37 percent – the number of people bearing Old English names drops even further, from 27 percent to 19 percent. Some are still relatively popular: *Godwin* appears 13 times, *Alwin* eight, while *Ailward* and *Edwin* appear six times each.<sup>196</sup> However, the majority of English names appear infrequently, with only five names appearing five or more times in the survey.<sup>197</sup> There is also a high number of people recorded just by their original bynames – 57 people in total, referred to by 55 distinct original bynames, 28 of which appear in English form, accounting for 29 individuals. Discounting these from the list shows that the decline in names of English origin is actually somewhat steeper, leaving just 27 percent of the remaining name forms and 17 percent of individuals.

The proportion of names of continental Germanic origin has also declined. There are 77 continental Germanic names borne by 424 people, which equates to 39 percent of the names in circulation and 57 percent of the the people listed – down from 45 percent and 62 percent respectively. Again, many of these are familiar names, with *William* standing out on top with 113 occurrences, and *Robert*, *Richard* and *Ralph* following not too far behind, but there are many more which are not particularly familiar to the modern English eye – even some which were relatively popular at this time – and some names that we might expect to see that are not so. *Drogo* appears ten times, *Durand*, *Gervaise* and *Oin* appear five times each, and there are four appearances of *Ebrard*, *Herewic* and *Girin*. On the other hand, *Henry*, the

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<sup>196</sup> Two of the ambiguous names, *Herbert* and *Osbert*, both appear frequently, 21 times and 9 times respectively.

<sup>197</sup> The fifth of these, *Selida* (from *Selida*), does not appear in any of the earlier lists, but appears five times in this survey. It is not a dithematic name in the traditional sense, but a term meaning ‘sailor’, so may potentially be an original byname, or have originated as such. See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, p. 353.

name of the king between 1100 and 1135, appears only eight times, the twenty-first most popular.<sup>198</sup>

In contrast, names of Scandinavian and Celtic origin, as well as those of biblical, Latin and Greek descent, were more popular. There were 27 names of Scandinavian origin in the survey, accounting for 70 people – 9 percent of the total.<sup>199</sup> This increase is likely to be down to continental influence, with notably Norman names such as *Anschetill*, *Ansger* and *Tuold* all appearing numerous times. Other names, such as *Stigand*, *Ulf* and *Seward* are all well attested prior to the Conquest, although Norman influence cannot be discounted completely. There is a very small increase in Celtic names, which account for 2 percent of individuals, and we see a number of new names of Breton origin, such as *Judichel*, *Alan* and *Conan*, the last of which occurs five times in the list.<sup>200</sup>

Perhaps the most significant rise is seen amongst the names of biblical, Latin and Greek origin. There are 27 of these in the survey, 10 percent of the name stock, and they account for 98 individuals, 12 percent of the total.<sup>201</sup> Some of these have links to particular saints on the continent, such as the two instances of *Samson* which, although a biblical figure, was also the name of a popular saint in Brittany. Similarly, *Gervaise* was the name of two martyrs, one from Italy in the third century, another from sixth-century Le Mans, who may well be the ultimate influence behind the five instances of the name in this list.<sup>202</sup> Again, it is striking how few of these names have little long term impact on the name stock of medieval England. Names such as *Boniface*, *Pain* (from *Paganus*), *Patricius*, *Symphorian*, *Clement*, *Enoch*, *Gervaise* and *Samson* fall into obscurity relatively quickly. Even names like *Martin*, *Bartholomew*,

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<sup>198</sup> There is also a high number of original bynames of continental origin, formed using French. There are 27 different names for 28 individuals, including *Porcel* ('little pig'), *Trued* ('foundling') and *Piefferret* ('ironfoot').

<sup>199</sup> Discounting original bynames sees the share of Scandinavian names rise to 14 percent and the proportion of individuals rise to 11 percent.

<sup>200</sup> Discounting original bynames sees the share of Celtic names stay at 2 percent, the proportion of individuals rises to 5 percent.

<sup>201</sup> Discounting original bynames sees the share of biblical, Latin and Greek names rise to 13 percent for both names and individuals.

<sup>202</sup> von Feilitzen, 'Personal Names of the Winton Domesday', p. 158.

*Benedict* and *Laurence*, which occur throughout the medieval period, do so relatively infrequently in comparison to the most popular names.<sup>203</sup>

In the 1148 names of Winton Domesday we do, however, see that a number of biblical and Latin names had become popular for the first time. *John* appears 13 times, while *Peter* and *Stephen* appear ten times apiece, although as of yet these are still relatively rare as a proportion of the total, and names such as *Thomas*, *Simon* and *Adam*, which become very popular in the centuries to come, are very infrequent, appearing just one, two and three times respectively. In contrast, *Silvester*, not particularly common in the later medieval period, appears 11 times, second only to *John* amongst the names of biblical, Latin and Greek origin. It is difficult to say whether the increase in these ‘Christian’ names can be ascribed, specifically, to Norman influence, or whether it is part of a wider European trend in naming, but it is clear that in the century following the Conquest names from the continent had a significant impact on the English name stock.

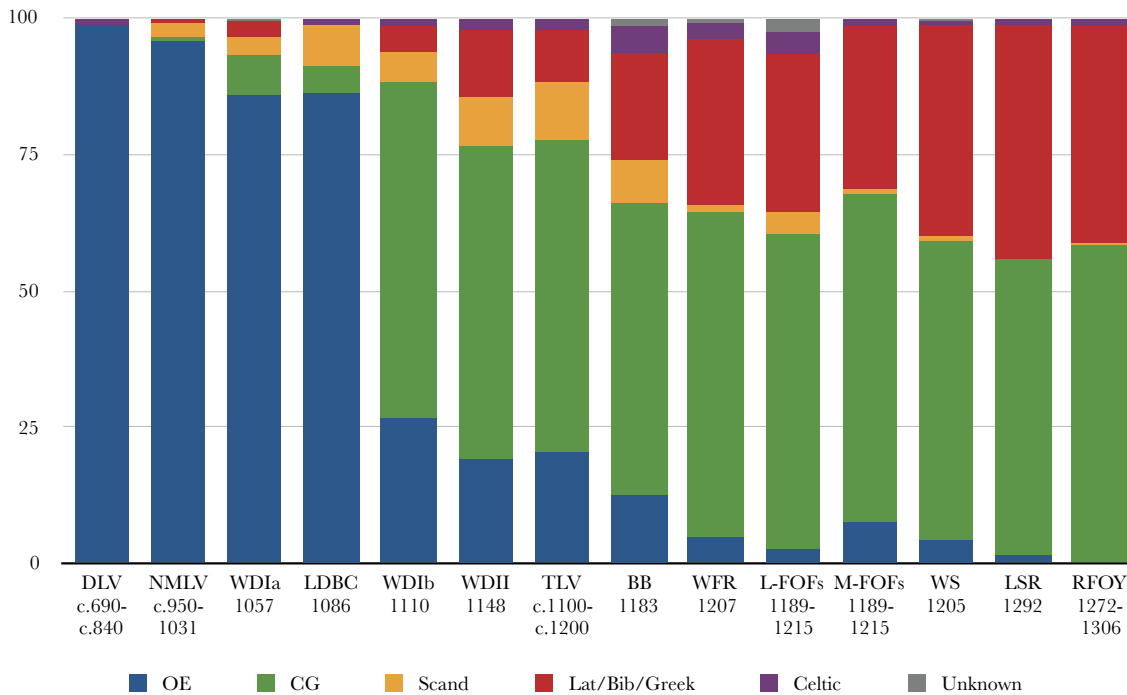
The post-Conquest fate of names of Old English origin has already been summarised in Chapter 2, so a full description of all the remaining sources will not be gone into here – instead a brief overview will be given. The trend already visible in Winchester by 1148 is overwhelmingly confirmed by the other corpora in this study. This is also the case amongst the twelfth-century names of the Thorney *Liber Vitae*, where 57 percent of individuals bore names of continental Germanic origin, another 11 percent bore Scandinavian names and 9 percent bore Latin, biblical or Greek names – in comparison to just 21 percent who bore Old English names. By 1183, of the 84 name forms in Boldon Book, only 21 were of English origin – less than 25 percent. These are borne by just 30 individuals out of the 234 listed, less than 13 percent. Similarly, in the Winchester Fine Roll of 1207, just 16 percent of name forms are of English origin, and these are borne by less than 5 percent of individuals. And the two corpora from the Feet of Fines, from the turn of the thirteenth century, show the picture is largely the same across England. In Middlesex, less than 8 percent of people bore English names, while in Lancashire, this was as low as 7 percent, and by the end of the

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<sup>203</sup> For example, George Reynolds surveys the names in the poll tax records of 1377-81 from East Yorkshire, Berkshire, Essex, Devon, Gloucester, North Lancashire Leicestershire, Sussex, Warwickshire and Shropshire. None of these names appears in any great number. Only *Laurence* is present in more than three of the counties, appearing in seven, and in each case it accounts for 0.4 percent of the individuals listed or lower. None of the names account for more than 0.4 percent of the individuals listed in any county. See George Reynolds, *Christian Names in Local and Family History* (Toronto, 2004), pp. 30-31.

period studied in this thesis practically no-one bore names of English origin. Only 3 of the 140 people of the 1285 survey of Winchester bore English names that were not original bynames, just 2 percent. The figure is the same in the London Subsidy Roll of 1292 and, in the list of Freemen of York (1272-1307), it is less than 0.5 percent.

Graph 4.6: Linguistic origin of names as a proportion of corpus across all sources c.690–c.1306

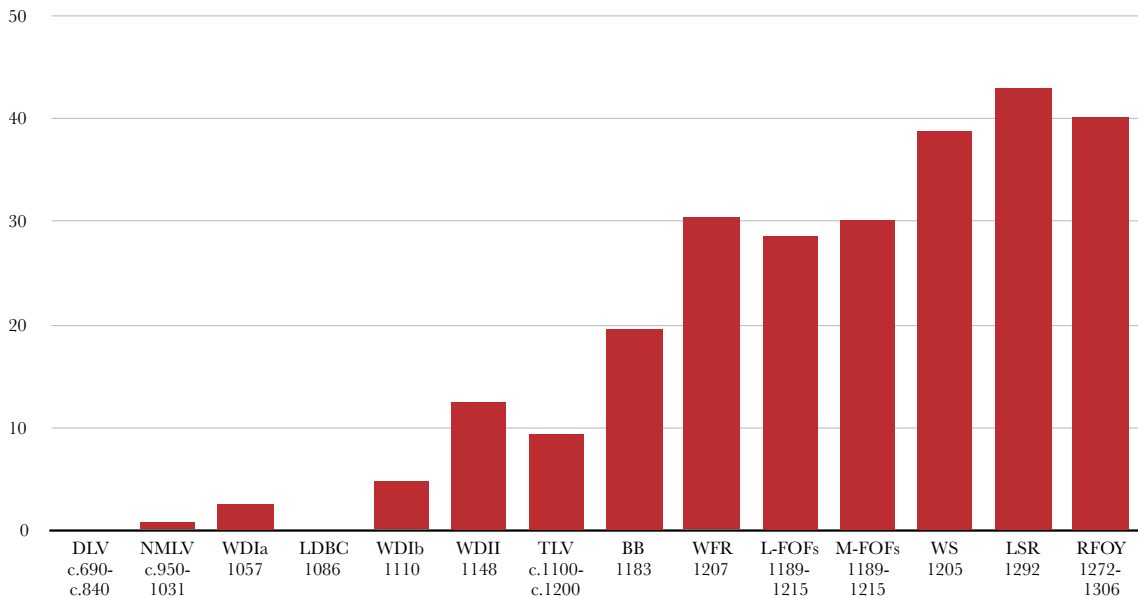


So, could the rapid transition away from Old English names have been a cause of the increasing concentration and homogeneity of the name stock? It seems unlikely. As shown at the start of this chapter, the increasing concentration of the name stock was a gradual phenomenon, beginning as early as the late ninth century, and progressing steadily until the beginning of the fourteenth, where this study ends. There is no sudden upsurge in naming concentration in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In fact, the rate of concentration actually seems to slow, or even stop, during a period where names from the continent were initially combined in a hybrid system alongside names of Old English and Anglo-Scandinavian origin. Moreover, many, if not most, of the new names that crossed the Channel in the eleventh and twelfth centuries suffered the same fate as the Old English and Anglo-Scandinavians that they joined. Amongst the 759 freemen of York, there was not a single *Everard*, *Herewig*, *Dalphin* or *Anderbodo* – there was not a *Boso* to be seen. There were, clearly, some very popular names of continental origin, but they were not anywhere near as



popular when they arrived in England. Of the people bearing non-English names in the 1148 survey of the Winton Domesday, *William* accounted for just 8 percent. In the 1285 Survey in the same city, this number was close to 16.

*Graph 4.7: Proportion of people bearing Latin, biblical and Greek names across all sources c.690–c.1306*



It is important to note that, while the influx of continental Germanic names was almost immediate, their frequency of use remained relatively stable from the twelfth century to the fourteenth, accounting for somewhere between 53 percent and 62 percent of individuals in each of the post-eleventh-century sources. The pattern of change amongst names from other linguistic origins is not quite the same. While Old English names suffered a rapid decline immediately following the Conquest, they were still borne by more than 25 percent of the population at the beginning of the twelfth century, and their subsequent demise is a much more gradual affair from this point on. The names of Latin, biblical and Greek origin do not rise rapidly either. Their introduction only really began in the middle of the twelfth century, and from then on they saw a gradual rise over time. So, although, the initial impact of the Conquest is evident, it is much less clear that the subsequent rise in religious names was due to the events of 1066.

The hypothesis that Norman invaders brought over a small number of very popular names is clearly not supported by the statistics. As shown in these studies, the Conquest introduced hundreds of new names to the name stock, some of which were only ever borne by a small

number of people. And many of the names which did become very popular by the end of the middle ages were hardly borne by continental invaders at all. *Henry*, *Thomas* and *Adam* were all but absent from the names of Winchester in 1148. They appeared just 11 times between them and accounted for just 1.7 percent of people – this is the same number as *Anschetill* did alone.<sup>204</sup> In comparison, in the list of Freemen of York, these three names accounted for 17 percent of individuals.

Clearly a case can be made for ongoing influence from Normandy and the continent for much of the medieval period, and this surely plays some role in the continued arrival of new names to England. But a continuous flow of ‘new’ names can hardly be blamed for the general phenomenon of concentration, nor for the shrinking of the name stock that we see by the end of the medieval period. Some names plus some more names does not equal fewer names. There must, therefore, have been another reason behind the systemic transformation that began well before the Norman Conquest, and continued through to the end of the medieval period. Moreover, as the broad pattern of the changes mirror closely those that took place on the continent, it stands to reason we should start looking for more potential similarities, as well as common causes.

### 3. Variation on a theme

One aspect of the transformation that should be considered is the transition which saw compound names, formed by combining two individual name elements (or themes), transformed into indivisible onomastic items – names in their own right. This is clearly what happened to the names of continental Germanic origin which became common in England following the Conquest, and much of Europe. In many, if not all, cases, this had already happened before their journey across the Channel. *William*, *Robert* and *Roger* had ceased to be created by combining the separate themes which had originally formed their names.<sup>205</sup> Monique Bourin, in her study of the names of Agde, comes to the conclusion that, by 1050, while up to 75 percent of the names are of Germanic origin, the principles of the

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<sup>204</sup> Even discounting all the names of English origin, these names still account for fewer than 2 percent of individuals listed.

<sup>205</sup> For etymologies of these three names see Sara Uckelman (ed.), *The Dictionary of Medieval Names from European Sources*, Edition 2016, no. 3: Sara Uckelman et al., “Robert”, <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Robert>; “Roger”, <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Roger>; “William” <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/William>, [accessed 15 August 2016].

Germanic naming system were no longer understood, or no longer related to the aspirations of the people using them:

Tous les noms portés après 1050 ne sont sans doute plus perçus comme germanique. Les plus germaniques ont d'ailleurs disparus. Plus d'Aldegaudus, d'Ansimundus ni de Dodbertus. Mais Galterius, ou Arnaldus. Et Willelmus se mue en Guillelmus.<sup>206</sup>

We may not be able to be as conclusive about Old English names of the same period, but it is an avenue worth exploring.

While most dithematic Old English names did eventually disappear after the Conquest, as we have just seen, this process did not take place immediately, and many names of English origin remained in use for up to 150 years. In fact, the majority of the names in circulation were originally compound forms, whether they be Old English, continental Germanic or Scandinavian. Even biblical and Celtic names would have also originally been names created from meaningful lexical items, either as compound forms or phrase names. It seems certain that a mid-twelfth-century English person would not have known that *John* was derived from the Hebrew phrase meaning 'Yaweh is gracious', nor that *Judichel* once meant 'generous lord' in Old Breton, in the same way that it seems unlikely that this person would have known that *Ailwin* originally signified 'noble friend'. Even if they did know such etymologies, the idea that people in this period were creating names of Old English origin using traditional name themes, in forms that bore little resemblance to anything in their everyday lexicon, seems incongruous. In the same way, it is unlikely that any modern day bearer of the name *Edmund* was given it by parents who combined the themes *Ead-* and *-mund*. At some point, people came to see previously dithematic formations just as names.

Generally, it has been assumed that, until the Conquest, the Old English system of dithematic naming remained intact. John Insley has examined the same list of burgesses of Colchester as studied in this thesis. While his study is predominantly a study of naming vocabulary, he nevertheless notes that the Old English dithematic system was, in 1086, still 'largely intact albeit in a process of strong concentration'.<sup>207</sup> In other words, he acknowledges that there is an increased level of concentration, but suggests that this still

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<sup>206</sup> Bourin, 'Les formes anthroponymiques d'Agde', pp. 179-205.

<sup>207</sup> Insley, 'Some Aspects of Regional Variation', p. 191.

occurs within the traditional dithematic system. In doing so he assumes that people were still creating names for their children by selecting and combining two name themes. It is a view echoed by both Postles and Clark when they speak of the late eleventh-century naming system in general. Clark stated that, ‘among the mass of the population, the name system of ca 1100 was still virtually the classic Late Old English one’.<sup>208</sup> And Postles agrees with ‘Clark’s correct identification’ that late Old English names ‘were predominantly dithematic’, even though many ‘displayed marked conventionality’.<sup>209</sup> Colman, in *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England* assumes that most dithematic names were, in fact, compound formations – created by combining two themes, rather than being indivisible linguistic items. In essence, for Colman, the onomasticon was not one made up of names, but of name themes, which were used in various combinations to form names, although she does acknowledge that this must have ceased to have been the case at some point, and even that in some cases it may have occurred before the time of the Conquest:

The inclusion in the onomasticon of themes, rather than full names, pertains as long as names in such a system remain perceived as composed of one or two elements, I am not suggesting any precise chronological cut-off point for such perception...It may be that the Domesday Book form <Æieua> for **Æthelgifu**...was not perceived as consisting of two parts, while <Alfsi> from the same source could have been recognised as a form of the dithematic...name **Ælfsige**. There is perhaps no way of knowing. But certainly, the onomasticon of Present-day English, a name such as **Richard** exists in its entirety, in the same way as **John**. The namer does not think ‘I’ll take **Rich** and add **hard**’ to make make a name for the purpose of nomination.<sup>210</sup>

Colman is perhaps correct to say there is no way of knowing for certain where that cut-off point occurs, but an analysis of the component themes in the names from our early corpora may help give us an idea if any changes to the system of creating names had taken place in the centuries preceding the Norman Conquest.<sup>211</sup> What follows in this section is an analysis of the use and distribution of the name themes within the corpora which can be called ‘Anglo-Saxon’, being those containing people predominantly named in England before

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<sup>208</sup> Clark, ‘Onomastics’ II, p. 552.

<sup>209</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 13.

<sup>210</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 197-198.

<sup>211</sup> Also see Wilson, *The Means of Naming*, p. 79.

1066.<sup>212</sup> It will examine the proportion of dithematic names, the number and distribution of themes within the corpora, and how these names were combined with each other to produce names. It will also attempt to ascertain how, if at all, any changes relate to the broader changes to the naming system that have been established so far.

### 3.1. *Durham Liber Vitae*

Starting with the names of the Original Core of the *Durham Liber Vitae*, we see that they were overwhelmingly dithematic in formation, with some 2,295 of people bearing names which fall into this category – 88 percent of the total and 89 percent of the individuals bearing Old English names.<sup>213</sup> The remaining names were monothematic and will not be looked at here.<sup>214</sup>

Table 4.3: *Dithematic names of the Durham Liber Vitae c.690 – c.840*

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>% of corpus</b> | <b>% of OE</b> | <b>Forms</b> | <b>Themes</b> | <b>Proto</b> | <b>Deutero</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 2,295              | 88%                | 89%            | 537          | 174           | 142          | 53             |

An analysis of the themes used in the compound names not only confirms that the number of themes in use was very high, but also that these themes were highly productive. In total there are 174 themes in use, with 142 of these used as protothemes and 53 as deuterthemes. This demonstrates the flexibility allowed by the dithematic system, which

<sup>212</sup> These are the corpora from: the Original Core of the *Durham Liber Vitae*, the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster and Hyde Abbey, the list of burgesses Colchester from Little Domesday and the *T.R.E.* names of Survey I of Winton Domesday. The selection process and dating of the names in these corpora are detailed in Chapter 3.

<sup>213</sup> I have included in this category four names with the deutertheme *-ing* which is a diminutive suffix, rather than a meaningful lexical item on its own, suggesting names in this form are hypocoristics of dithematic compounds. In his linguistic analysis Insley lists these correctly as monothematic names, however they are included in the dithematic names in this study to aid the statistical analysis of the name themes in the onomasticon. For more see Insley, ‘Pre-Conquest Personal Names’, p. 375 and Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 139-143.

<sup>214</sup> These include hypocoristic forms like *Ælla*, which is likely to be a short form of names with the first them *Ælf-*, and *Ealda-* a short form of names beginning with *Ealda-*. There are also a number of original bynames, such as *Snella*, meaning ‘quick’ or ‘bold’, and *Rudda*, meaning ‘red’. Some names could potentially belong to any of these three categories, for example *Beorht* could be a monothematic name, a short form of a compound containing this as one of its themes, or an original byname meaning ‘bright’ or ‘glorious’. The number of compound names in the name stock can therefore be assumed to be somewhat higher than the impression given by the names recorded in the sample. See the linguistic commentary in Rollason and Rollason (eds), *Durham Liber Vitae*, vol. II, pp. 45-246 for more on these names.

sees these themes combined to create 537 distinct compound name forms referring to some 2,295 people. The naming system in ninth-century Northumbria, and the people of ninth-century Northumbria, clearly prioritised the creation of unique names.

It is also worth noting the position of the various themes within the names. There is a clear disparity between the number of themes used as the primary name element and those used as the secondary name element, with only 53 being used as deuterothermes compared to 174 as protothemes. This suggests that much of the variation and innovation in the onomasticon is achieved through the variation of primary name theme, and some 54 of the protothemes only appear once in the corpus. Furthermore, 21 themes are used interchangeably as both first and second elements, so there are only 32 which appear exclusively as deuterothermes. This does, however, show that the practice of using some themes interchangeably as both proto- and deuterotherme was relatively common. This has often been seen as an important feature of Germanic naming systems – as noted by both Henry Woolf and Régine Le Jan.<sup>215</sup> The fact that some of the most common themes are employed as both first and second elements suggests that this was the case here. For example, *Beorht-/-beorht* appears in the names of 123 people as a prototheme and in the names of 380 people as a deuterotherme.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, *Frið-/-frið*, which appears one-hundred and ninety times as a second element also appears thirty-two times as a first element, and *Wulf-/-wulf* is used as a prototheme fifty-eight times and as a deuterotherme three hundred and fifty-nine times. So, while these themes were more commonly used as second elements (in part due to the smaller number of available deuterothermes), their use as first elements was clearly not out of the ordinary.

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<sup>215</sup> Woolf notes the ability in Old English to transposition name themes which enable families to link children's names to both male and female lines of descent as part of the practice of variation. See Woolf, *The Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, pp. 1-3. Le Jan notes that the same practice of variation was widely practiced in Frankish society from the sixth century and suggest it reflected the overlapping circles of kinship around the individual. See Le Jan, 'Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship', pp. 31-49.

<sup>216</sup> *Beorht-/-beorht* appears in 12 distinct name forms as a prototheme and as a deuterotherme in 49 distinct name forms.

Table 4.4: Concentration of name themes in the Durham Liber Vitae c.690 – c.840

| Protothemes    |                  | Deuterothemes  |                  |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Theme          | % of individuals | Theme          | % of individuals |
| <i>Ead-</i>    | 9.28             | <i>-beorht</i> | 16.51            |
| <i>Ean-</i>    | 6.06             | <i>-wulf</i>   | 15.64            |
| <i>Beorht-</i> | 5.36             | <i>-wine</i>   | 13.16            |
| <i>Cuð-</i>    | 4.49             | <i>-frið</i>   | 8.28             |
| <i>Cyne-</i>   | 4.36             | <i>-ræd</i>    | 7.32             |
| <i>Eald-</i>   | 4.36             | <i>-weald</i>  | 6.36             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>33.90</b>     | <b>Total</b>   | <b>67.28</b>     |

As would be expected, the name themes are more highly concentrated across the individuals in the Original Core than the names themselves. The most popular first theme, *Ead-*, accounts for just 9 percent of all protothemes in the corpus, with *Ean-* in second place on 6 percent and *Beorht-* in third accounting for 5 percent. The top six protothemes combined account for 34 percent of the total. The level of concentration among the deuterothemes is considerably higher than that of the protothemes. The most common second element, *-beorht*, appears in 17 percent of all dithematic names. This is closely followed by *-wulf* on 16 percent and *-wine* on 13 percent. In total, the six most popular deuterothemes appear in 67 percent of dithematic names. This is quite a marked disparity, with the second elements being almost twice as concentrated as the first elements, suggesting that a great deal of the variety in naming was achieved through variation of protothemes.

However, it is worth noting two things. Firstly, the use of deuterothemes is by no means excessively concentrated on a few popular themes. Just 17 second elements appeared only once, and there was no sudden drop from a few very common themes to a greater number used very infrequently – eight themes are used over 100 times, accounting for more than 4 percent of the total each, and there are 14 themes which each account for over 2 percent of the total. Secondly, even though the selection of deuterothemes may seem restricted in relation to the number of protothemes, and the size of the sample, the level of variation in the names produced is impressive: *-beorht* alone appears some 380 times in a sample of 2,295 people, but no single name appears more than 51 times, nor does *-beorht* even appear in the most common name. The most common name containing this theme is in fact *Eadbeorht*, the second most popular name, which appears just 45 times – less than 2 percent of all the

dithematic names. We can see, therefore, that the naming system of ninth-century Northumbria fits very well into the two-element structure that ‘was the engine which generated a constant supply of new names’ and was ‘geared towards the production of a large number of distinct names’.<sup>217</sup>

### 3.2. *New Minster Liber Vitae*

If we look at the names in the later Anglo-Saxon period, this ‘engine’ does not appear to be anywhere near as productive. In the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, the names are once again, from a morphological point of view, mainly dithematic in formation.<sup>218</sup>

Table 4.5: *Dithematic names of the New Minster Liber Vitae c.930 – 1031*

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>% of corpus</b> | <b>% of OE</b> | <b>Forms</b> | <b>Themes</b> | <b>Proto</b> | <b>Deutero</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 414                | 90%                | 95%            | 144          | 58            | 30           | 31             |

Of the 455 individuals in the New Minster corpus, 412 – some 91 percent – bear names of this type. There are far fewer themes than in the Durham corpus – just 58, compared to 174. While there are both fewer protothemes and deuterthemes, the most dramatic difference is in the number of primary elements, of which there are only 30 – this is in comparison to the vast number of protothemes in the Durham corpus, although this must be in part due to the disparity in the size of the two corpora. Relatively, the difference in the number of secondary elements is much less significant – there are 31, compared to 53. These themes are combined to create a much smaller number of compound names – 136 for 412 individuals – although in a far smaller sample. The number of names in the name stock of the New Minster corpus is still very high in relation to number of people bearing them, but there is clearly a far more restricted stock of name themes.

<sup>217</sup> Coates, ‘Names’, p. 319.

<sup>218</sup> There are a small number of monothematic names of hypocoristic type including *Dodda*, *Goda* and *Oda*, as well as a few names containing just a single theme, including *Sunu*, *God* and *Mann* – although these may themselves be shortened from dithematic names. There are also a handful of people bearing names with the diminutive suffix *-ing*, including five written as *Lyfing* or *Lyuing*, formed from the prototheme *Leof-*, and one *Cypping*. One name, *Sefugel*, may be an original byname meaning ‘seabird’, however this form and the monothematic *Fugel* both appear relatively frequently in later Anglo-Saxon sources, suggesting it may have been used as given name. It is included here in the dithematic names.



It is also notable how few themes appear as both first and second elements – just five: *Beorht-/-beorht*, *Sige-/-sige*, *Wig-/-wig*, *Wulf-/-wulf* and *Wine-/-wine*. Only two of these seem to be interchangeable to any degree: *Wulf-/-wulf* appears forty-seven times as a prototheme and nine times as a deutertheme, while *Wine-/-wine* appears five times in first position and fifty-five times in second position. *Beorht-/-beorht* is almost exclusively a prototheme, appearing thirty-nine times in first position and just three times in second, while *Sige-/-sige* and *Wig-/-wig* are almost exclusively deuterthemes, appearing fifty-three and eighteen times respectively in second position, and just once each as primary elements. The relatively small number of name themes, and their lack of interchangeability, seem to show a naming system that is less flexible than that of the Durham corpus.

Table 4.6: Concentration of name themes in the *New Minster Liber Vitae c.930 – 1031*

| Protothemes    |                  | Deuterthemes  |                  |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Theme          | % of individuals | Theme         | % of individuals |
| <i>Ælf-</i>    | 25.73            | <i>-ric</i>   | 18.45            |
| <i>Æðel-</i>   | 13.35            | <i>-wine</i>  | 13.35            |
| <i>Leof-</i>   | 13.35            | <i>-sige</i>  | 12.86            |
| <i>Wulf-</i>   | 11.41            | <i>-stan</i>  | 7.28             |
| <i>Beorht-</i> | 9.47             | <i>-weard</i> | 6.07             |
| <i>Ead-</i>    | 7.04             | <i>-mær</i>   | 5.83             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>80.34</b>     | <b>Total</b>  | <b>63.83</b>     |

A result of this – or potentially a cause – is a significantly higher level of concentration around a small number of common name themes. This is overwhelmingly true of the protothemes. While the Durham protothemes were remarkably varied, the concentration here around the top six protothemes is very high. *Ælf-* alone accounts for 26 percent of all first elements, appearing 106 times, and the top six combined account for 80 percent. There is also a much steeper drop from the most popular themes to the less popular ones. The seventh most popular prototheme, *God-*, appears 25 times and appears in 6 percent of dithematic names, while the eighth most popular *Cyne-*, appears only eight times, in under 2 percent. It seems that, in practice, only eight protothemes are used in any productive way: *Ælf-*, *Æðel-*, *Leof-*, *Wulf-*, *Beorht-*, *Ead-* and *God-*. Between them, these appear 356 times, in 86 percent of dithematic names. *God-* is a notable addition to the protothemes in use in the New Minster corpus. This is completely absent from the names of the Durham corpus, yet

appears 25 times here. However, it does not appear to be particularly productive in terms of creating ‘new’ names, appearing in only three dithematic name forms: *Godwine*, *Godric* and *Godemann*.<sup>219</sup>

The distribution of deuterothermes in the New Minster corpus mirrors that of the Durham *Liber Vitae* more closely, although the popularity is not concentrated on the same themes. The most popular second element is *-ric*, which is borne by 76 people, 18 percent – slightly higher than the 17 percent of the most popular prototheme in the Durham Corpus. The top six second elements are borne by 263 people, 64 percent – which is actually slightly lower than the 67 percent in Durham. Moreover, there is no steep drop from the popular to the less popular themes, but a more graduated decline. In contrast to the Durham corpus, therefore, the variation provided by the dithematic system seems to come from the deuterothermes, not the protothemes, but on the whole the variation in the use of name themes in the corpus is far less marked. Whether by conscious choice, or linguistic accident, both the names and the themes which are used to create them have become increasingly concentrated.

### 3.3. *Burgesses of Colchester*

The name themes in the list of burgesses of Colchester suggest that a decline in the use of the dithematic system had taken place by the mid eleventh century. By the time of the Domesday survey, we see that the number of dithematic names in use has declined as a proportion of total population – only 77 percent of the people in the Colchester list bore dithematic names.<sup>220</sup>

Table 4.7: *Dithematic names in the list of Burgesses of Colchester, 1086*

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>% of corpus</b> | <b>% of OE</b> | <b>Forms</b> | <b>Themes</b> | <b>Proto</b> | <b>Deutero</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 193                | 77%                | 89%            | 87           | 45            | 27           | 24             |

<sup>219</sup> There are also four individuals with names that are most likely hypocoristics formed from names containing *God-*: *Godus*, *God* and *Goda*.

<sup>220</sup> Although of a proportion of those people bearing Old English names the proportion is very high – 95 percent.

The number of themes and their use also suggests that they were no longer being combined in a way that prioritised the creation of unique names.<sup>221</sup> There were 193 people bearing dithematic names, using just 45 themes in total – 27 of these were used as protothemes, and just 24 were used as deuterthemes. Again, only a small number of themes were used as both proto- and deuterthemes: five, which were *Wulf-*, *Mann-*, *Sige-*, *Beorht-* and *Wine-*. But in practice, there appears to be very little degree of interchangeability, with *Sige-* and *Wine-* appearing just once each as protothemes, and *Wulf-* and *Beorht-* appearing just once each as deuterthemes. *Beorht-* and *Sige-* were, in fact, both used infrequently in either position, appearing just four and five times respectively. *Mann-* is the only theme which appears to have had any level of interchangeability, although even this was relatively rare, appearing twelve times as a prototheme and four times as a deutertheme. This suggests that there was a greater degree of conventionality in the way names and name themes were used – and shows the ability, or will, to create names by combining themes in imaginative ways was being lost, replaced by a more rigid system where the position of themes within a name is inflexible.

This conventionality can also be seen in the way name themes are concentrated around a small number of very common ones, which is even more marked in the Colchester list than the New Minster corpus. The most common prototheme, *Wulf-* (appearing exclusively as *Ul-* in the manuscript) appeared 39 times, accounting for 20 percent of all first elements, while the top six protothemes combined accounted for 73 percent of the total.<sup>222</sup> There are only nine that could be considered to be in wide use – the eighth most popular, *Gold-* appears just seven times, under 4 percent of the total, with no other theme being used more than four times in the corpus.

The concentration within the deuterthemes is even more marked, with *Wine-* alone accounting for 35 percent of all second elements, and the top six deuterthemes appearing in 81 percent of all names. In fact, the deuterthemes are almost exclusively concentrated around three incredibly popular themes: *-wine*, *-ric* and *-stan*, which between them account

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<sup>221</sup> 193 of the 251 people listed bear names which are dithematic in their original formation. This is somewhat lower than the *libri vitae* of New Minster (90 percent) and Durham (88 percent) – although, again, this may partly be influenced by the number of bynames. The names with the hypocoristic suffix *-ing* are included in this sample, of which there are seven.

<sup>222</sup> This rises to 79 percent if the easily conflated themes *Ælf-* and *Æðel-* are considered as one theme.

for 69 percent of the total. In comparison *-weard*, which is the fourth most popular second element, appears just nine times, in less than 5 percent of names, while the fifth and sixth placed in the list are *-ing* and *-sunu*, appearing seven times each. As mentioned previously, *-ing* is technically a diminutive suffix used to form a hypocoristic, rather than a theme in its own right.

Table 4.8: Concentration of name themes in the list of *Burgesses of Colchester (LD) 1086*

| Protothemes  |                  | Deuterothemes |                  |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Theme        | % of individuals | Theme         | % of individuals |
| <i>Wulf-</i> | 20.21            | <i>-wine</i>  | 34.72            |
| <i>Leof-</i> | 13.99            | <i>-ric</i>   | 23.83            |
| <i>God-</i>  | 12.95            | <i>-stan</i>  | 10.36            |
| <i>Alu-</i>  | 10.36            | <i>-weard</i> | 4.66             |
| <i>Al-</i>   | 9.33             | <i>-ing</i>   | 3.63             |
| <i>Ead-</i>  | 6.22             | <i>-sunu</i>  | 3.63             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>73.06</b>     | <b>Total</b>  | <b>80.83</b>     |

The theme *-sunu* (meaning ‘son’) may be seen as something similar, a suffixed hypocoristic form which was possibly a diminutive pet form, or indicated descent in some cases, rather than a theme in its own right – although names containing it may have become baptismal forms over time.<sup>223</sup> In practice, almost every man in Colchester bearing a dithematic name would have borne one ending in either *-wine*, *-ric* or *-stan*.

As in the New Minster corpus, the prototheme *God-* features heavily, appearing 25 times, 13 percent of the total. Predominantly, this appears in the names *Godwine* (12 times) and *Godric* (6 times), with another three appearances each in *Godsunu* and the diminutive *Goding*.<sup>224</sup> There are also five instances of the name *Goda*, being either a monothematic or hypocoristic form. So, aside from *Godwine* and *Godric* the theme *God-* only appears in at most three truly dithematic names. As in the New Minster Corpus, it is a popular, but not particularly productive, theme.

<sup>223</sup> Insley, ‘Pre-Conquest Personal Names’, p. 379.

<sup>224</sup> The other appearance of *God-* in dithematic names is in the one instance of *Goddæg*, in which the deuterotheme is *-dæg*, meaning ‘day’.

Insley notes of the Colchester list that ‘in keeping with the general tendency of the late OE period, the number of different first elements is restricted’.<sup>225</sup> However, as has been shown here, the number of first elements in the Colchester list is little different to that of the names in the *Liber Vitae* of New Minster, from several generations earlier. It is actually the secondary themes which show the most noticeable shrinkage. Most importantly, despite the reduced number of themes in use, the number of names within the corpus is no lower. In fact, there were still enough names and name themes to preserve name uniqueness comfortably, should it have been desired – yet the choices people made suggest no such desire. So the names of the burgesses of Colchester show that, by 1086, the naming system was no longer the classic Old English dithematic one. People were not selecting and combining themes in the aim of preserving name uniqueness, even though there were enough name themes still in use to achieve this goal. Instead, people’s names had begun to display a far greater degree of homogeneity, both in terms of full names, and their constituent name themes.

### 3.4. *Winton Domesday*

This phenomenon is observable in the pre-Conquest names of the Winton Domesday. In total there are 72 dithematic names in the corpus, accounting for 205 individuals – 74 percent of the total corpus, roughly the same as the Colchester list.<sup>226</sup>

Table 4.9: *Dithematic names in the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, c.1057*

| <b>Individuals</b> | <b>% of corpus</b> | <b>% of OE</b> | <b>Forms</b> | <b>Themes</b> | <b>Proto</b> | <b>Deutero</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| 205                | 77%                | 86%            | 72           | 45            | 25           | 24             |

There are just 45 different name themes in use, with 25 being used exclusively as protothemes, 24 being used exclusively as deuteriothemes, and four being used as both. Again, there seems to be very little true interchangeability of theme position, even amongst these four themes. *Wulf-/-wulf* and *Beorht-/-beorht* appear 10 times and six times respectively as protothemes and just once apiece as deuteriothemes, while *Stan-/-stan* appears 19 times as a deuteriotheme, but just once as a prototheme. The only theme which seems to be used to

<sup>225</sup> Insley, ‘Some Aspects of Regional Variation’, p. 191.

<sup>226</sup> They account for 87 percent of people bearing Old English names.

any extent in both positions is *Wine-/wine*, which is the most common deuterotheme, but also appears three times as a prototheme (and another two times in patronyms). Even this does not seem to show the theme is being used creatively, as each of these appearances as prototheme it is within the name *Winstan*. On the contrary, it suggests that *Winstan* is being used as an indivisible name in its own right, rather than being created by combining two themes.

Table 4.10: Concentration of name themes in the Winton Domesday Survey I TRE, c.1057

| Protothemes    |                  | Deuterothemes |                  |
|----------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Theme          | % of individuals | Theme         | % of individuals |
| <i>God-</i>    | 19.51            | <i>-wine</i>  | 34.63            |
| <i>Ælf-</i>    | 19.02            | <i>-ric</i>   | 11.22            |
| <i>Leof-</i>   | 15.61            | <i>-stan</i>  | 9.27             |
| <i>Æðel-</i>   | 9.76             | <i>-weald</i> | 8.29             |
| <i>Beorht-</i> | 6.83             | <i>-ing</i>   | 6.34             |
| <i>Ead-</i>    | 6.83             | <i>-mann</i>  | 4.88             |
| <b>Total</b>   | <b>77.56</b>     | <b>Total</b>  | <b>74.63</b>     |

The concentration amongst the themes is marked. The most common prototheme *God-*, appears in 40 names – 20 percent of the total – and the the top six protothemes combined appear in 78 percent of dithematic names.<sup>227</sup> The deuterothemes are only slightly less concentrated, with the top six accounting for 75 percent of secondary elements, however the most common, *-wine*, appears in 71 names alone – 35 percent. Again, the fifth most popular second element is the diminutive suffix *-ing*, which appears in 13 names. This shows that the use of deuterothemes outside the three or four most popular is very rare.

As in the previous two corpora, *God-* is a very popular theme, appearing 40 times in dithematic names – one ahead of the second most popular, *Ælf-*. Again its appearance is not evenly spread amongst a variety of names, but concentrated largely in the name *Godwine*, which appears 29 times. There seems to be a great deal of conventionality around the

<sup>227</sup> Furthermore, while the popular themes *Ælf-* and *Æðel-* are distinguished for the purposes of this study, in reality this distinction would have been much less clear, and in many cases impossible. They appear in a variety of forms that are difficult to distinguish: *Alwin*, *Alestan*, *Ailward*, *Alwi*, *Ailwi*, *Aluric*. Even *Eald-* often appeared in a form that could easily be confused with these two themes, for example in *Aldrect* (*Ealdred*). For the purposes of this study I have followed the etymologies provided by von Feilitzen in ‘The Personal Names of the Winton Domesday’.

names, further bringing into question their dithematicity. As already noted, *Wine-* only ever appears in first position when in the name *Winstan*, and *God-* appears predominantly in the name *Godwine*. These are not isolated examples. *Eald-* only ever appears four times in the name *Aldred* and not at all elsewhere. *Sæ-* appears six times, five of which are in the name *Sæwine*.<sup>228</sup> *Burh-* appears only in the name *Burewald*, which appears eight times. Similarly, *Brun-* appears eight times, but only ever in *Brunstan* and *Brunmann* – five and three times respectively – while *-mod* appears only in three instances of *Almod*.

There are some themes that do appear in a number of different names, notably the popular themes *Leof-*, *Ælf-*, *Æðel-*, *Ric-* and *Wine-*, but even amongst these we see a high degree of conventionality. *Leof-* appears with *-wine* as *Lewin* on 12 occasions and with *-ing* as *Leving* on another nine occasions, but only rarely in combination with other themes.<sup>229</sup> The same is true even of the most popular second element, *-wine*, which appears in the names of 72 individuals, but only in eight different names – and the vast majority of these are accounted for by *Godwin*, *Lewin* and *Alwin*, which appear 58 times between them.<sup>230</sup>

So, by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period, the way people were using and creating names was markedly different to some three hundred years earlier. Not only had names begun to display a far greater degree of homogeneity, but so had the constituent themes from which they were created. The names themselves had been reduced and contracted to such an extent that the name themes, in many cases, bore little resemblance to their original

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<sup>228</sup> The other time is in *Sæfugel* which, as noted previously, most likely originated as an original byname meaning ‘seabird’. Indeed there are just four containing *-fugel* in all the corpora in this study, and it is only ever found in *Sæfugel* (once each in the the New Minster *Liber Vitae*, the list of burgesses of Colchester and Winton Domesday), or alone as *Fugel* (once in the Durham *Liber Vitae*).

<sup>229</sup> It appears three times with *-ric*, twice with *-stan* and *-weald* and once apiece with *-mann*, *-ræd* and *-sunu*.

<sup>230</sup> *Eadwine* (*Edwin*) appears six times, *Sæwine* appears five times and *Ailwin*, *Beorhtwine* (*Brithwin*) and *Smeawine* (*Smiewin*) appear just once each. It is also possible that *Ælf-* and *Æðel-* have, in their reduced forms, become attached to specific protothemes. For example, *Alestan* appears seven times, but there are no occurrences of *Alstan*. There are 17 occurrences of *Ailwin* but only a single *Alwin*. There are *Alweds*, *Almars* and *Algars*, but no *Ailweds*, *Ailgars* or *Ailmars*. It is possible that the conflation is due, in part, to an ‘Anglo-Norman scribe’ not recognising the difference between similar English names, particularly as the manuscript was created in 1148. However, the regularity of the spelling throughout the manuscript and the fact that they must have been copying from previously collected, pre-Conquest material for the *T.R.E.* information would suggest that the renderings are, for the most part, at least reasonably accurate. There are, for example, accurately transcribed late Old English forms amongst the *T.R.E.* bynames, including *Godeman Bruncehngessone* and *Odo Ticchemannessone*. For more on Anglo-Norman scribes, see Cecily Clark, ‘The Myth of ‘the Anglo-Norman Scribe’ in Clark and Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History*, pp. 168-178.

dithematic formation, and one must question how far people would recognise that their names were even formed from two elements. The conventionality displayed in the distribution of the name themes in the names of the people listed in these two late Anglo-Saxon corpora clearly points to an onomasticon where many, if not all, names were indivisible linguistic items. It is certainly possible that name repetition occurred coincidentally, purely as a result of increasing theme popularity. But it is more likely that what we see is evidence that the naming system of England was undergoing the same process of transformation as that of continental Europe. Rather than choosing individual naming themes in order to create unique names, people were making naming choices that were beginning to coalesce around a few popular names – most likely repeated in their entirety as indivisible names, rather than dithematic constructions.

In reality, it is unlikely that the people of England, or anywhere in Europe, changed from one system to another overnight. Instead, it is probable that the transition happened over a period of time, with people gradually discarding the old method in favour of the new. To some extent, the question could be seen as irrelevant. Whether through accident of theme selection, or repetition of full names, the end result was a society, and communities, where a greater number of people shared a smaller number of names, with name repetition being more common. Once more, this suggests that the transformation that took place in England was similar to that which took place on the continent, not just in the patterns of distribution of names, but in the manner in which the names themselves became transformed from dithematic, created names, to indivisible linguistic items. Or at the very least, it suggests that this process of transformation had already begun before 1066. This further supports the theory that the causes behind the changes in naming patterns were predominantly internal and systemic and not, as has often been suggested, imported through outside influence.

#### 4. Nature of the sources

One factor that needs to be taken into account when looking for potential influences on the results in the statistical study is the nature of the sources themselves. The sources from which the names are drawn, being from such an extended timeframe, often differ in a number of aspects, including language, purpose and period of compilation. While, at the heart of each study, the fundamental items being studied remain the same in purpose – they are personal names – the variation in the way these names have been recorded, the reasons for recording



them and the manner in which they have been collected should be explored to identify any possible reasons for the differences between certain results. Some of these have already been addressed in Chapter 3, where the provenance of each source has been outlined and factors such as the relative socioeconomic backgrounds of the people listed have been taken into account. As such, each source will not be looked at in detail again. Instead, the following section will try to determine potential differences between types of source, before looking at some specific outlying cases where figures are in need of more explanation.

#### ***4.1. Changing documentary practices***

The clearest distinction between the types of source is the religious nature of the three *libri vitae* and the secular purposes of the other types of record. The divide, in part, is a reflection of the development of documentary practices in the medieval period and also demonstrates the difficulty in selecting sources of comparable nature across the 500 year span of this project. Clanchy, in *From Memory to Written Record*, charts the development of the uses of literacy in medieval England and details the explosion in the number and range of extant written materials in the period 1066 to 1307.<sup>231</sup> While it is not quite as clear-cut to say that the written word and record keeping passed from the clerical to secular sphere, it is certainly true that the twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw an exponential rise in the use of the written word for secular record keeping.<sup>232</sup> It is this proliferation of documentation from the late eleventh century onwards which provides us with such rich sources of onomastic evidence in the later middle ages. It is also why, for evidence of equivalent quality for the period c.800 to c.1000, it is necessary look to sources of a clerical nature.

#### ***4.2. Impact on the names***

The names written in the *libri vitae* were, therefore, recorded for a very different reason and for a very different audience than those in the secular sources in this study. This may have had an impact on the way names were recorded. The ultimate aim of the *libri vitae* was to remember the names of people, living and dead, to commend them to God, to memorialise

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<sup>231</sup> Michael Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record: England 1066–1307*, (3rd edn, Chichester, 2013). See chapters 1 and 2 for an overview of this explosion of written sources in this period.

<sup>232</sup> See Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, pp. 228-233 for a discussion of the changing meaning of the term *clericus*, which came to mean 'literate', as writing became exclusively the preserve of those in religious orders, then subsequently expanded to include anyone with the ability to write as literacy spread once more amongst the laity.

them in writing as part of the community for eternity. In some cases, they may have even been read out during the liturgy – at least in the early phases of use. As a result, it stands to reason that the names were compiled with great care and reverence, both for the persons being recorded and the practice of remembrance itself. Such reverence was by no means present in the secular sources, where names were recorded for much more prosaic reasons than commending a person's soul for eternal salvation. The secular sources are predominantly functional in nature, recording people's names not for posterity, but in a document that had practical, everyday use – whether that be to prove possession of a landholding or to list the duties and obligations of those living on one's land.

These differences in the reasons for and manner in which names were recorded may have had an impact on not just how names were written down, but the actual names used to refer to individuals. While clearly it is unlikely that *Thomas* would have become a *John*, it is quite possible that names recorded in a secular register of tenants, such as the Winton Domesday, may have been in more familiar form. It seems unlikely that, even if an individual being recorded in a *liber memorialis* had a rude or offensive byname, they would have been memorialised in this way in the book. Not only would it have been inappropriate to use such a name in this context, inclusion in such a list would have presumably have been voluntary – often in return for donations to the monastery. As a result, it is likely that individuals would have given their name of choice and that any unfortunate bynames would have been omitted in favour of names which, in their eyes, more appropriately represented their identity – be that by using only a given name, or by using bynames which referred to family relationships or place of origin. In contrast, surveys of the type carried out in Winchester and Colchester may not have been required people to *give* their names at all. Rather, the name recorded is more likely to have been the name by which they were known – the name the community used for them. Moreover, it seems that for sources such as Winton Domesday and the list of the Burgesses of Colchester the information was provided by people who originated from, or were at least familiar with, the people whose names and details they were recording or recounting.<sup>233</sup> They would have been more likely to have a personal relationships with the individuals in question. As a result, they would have been both more aware of the names used within the community for the people within it, and

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<sup>233</sup> See Harvey, *Domesday*, pp. 7-8 and *Winchester Studies I*, pp. 9-10.

more likely to record them by names which were not necessarily their original ‘given’ names, even if these names were insulting or unpleasant.

The names noted in these surveys were used simply to record the nature and amount of dues and duties owed by individuals on a certain piece of land. The individuals themselves were, in many cases, incidental. Boldon Book, for example, manages to record the duties owed by villages and villagers without, in many cases, resorting to using actual names of individuals – just numbers representing people, animals and yields. If, as in the case of many of the surveys, the aim was to ensure that landlords received the correct amount from present and future tenants, then the names of present individuals were of little consequence, other than as points of reference. In fact, personal names may well have been used, primarily, as a means of identifying particular parcels of land, more so than for recording the people who held them.<sup>234</sup>

The ultimate impact on the results of the statistical studies are likely to have been fairly minor for the most part – at least in relation to ‘given’ names. True, there seems to be a significantly higher proportion of people known exclusively by original bynames in certain sources, particularly the Winton Domesday. For example, in Survey II of Winton Domesday (1148), 57 of the 788 people listed are known exclusively by an original byname – around 7 percent. In contrast, in the *Liber Vitae* of Thorney Abbey, ten individuals are known solely by bynames, out of a total of 1,403 individuals – just 0.3 percent. Similarly, in Boldon Book, there are at most three individuals known in this way out of 235 – barely more than 1 percent. This suggests that the differences in purpose of the records, as well as the area over which the names were collected, may have an impact on which names for individuals were recorded. Both of these sources happen to include the names of a large number of people living in a relatively wide area. As a result, the individuals listed were not all part of the same community, but a number of communities from within a larger region. It is unlikely that people only ever had one name which was used in all contexts by all people.

The number and types of names people had almost certainly depended on the place, time and type of society they lived in, as well as, of course, the naming traditions of that particular culture, community or social group. But it is clear that, by the mid-twelfth century,

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<sup>234</sup> This is a concept that will be examined in further detail in Chapter 7.

bynames of various types were common in many places across England. Yet these sources originating from this period in English history display hugely differing rates of people known exclusively by these bynames, and it certainly seems that some of this disparity was caused by the difference in the nature of the sources, and the relationships between the people carrying out the survey and those people listed within it.

It may also suggest that, as has been proposed previously by Pascal Chareille, the apparently sudden increase in the use of bynames and surnames from the late eleventh century onwards is more a reflection of the explosion in the number of documents and the diversification in the uses of documentation itself.<sup>235</sup> Again, the timing of this expansion, as described by Clanchy, which begins in earnest shortly after the Conquest, muddies the water somewhat. As there are relatively few examples of pre-Conquest English bynames, it has sometimes been stated that they were not a feature of Anglo-Saxon culture and that this system of naming was introduced by the ‘Normans’ who had a fundamentally different social and familial structure – or at least fundamentally changed the way they were used.<sup>236</sup> However, Survey I of Winton Domesday is, to all extents and purposes, a pre-Conquest source, with the most likely date for the collection of the information being c.1057. In the list of 278 individuals, some 138 people are recorded with a surname or byname, or are recorded solely by their bynames – almost exactly half of the corpora. As the manuscript is a collation of information recorded over three separate dates – c.1057, 1110 and 1148 – it could be suggested that the bynames were acquired in the period following the Conquest and added by a later (possibly Anglo-Norman) scribe, either in 1110 or 1148. This seems an unlikely effort for a record-keeper to go to, and it is not supported by the names. The majority of the bynames recorded appear in English form, or Latin in the case of many

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<sup>235</sup> Chareille, ‘Introduction: Vingt ans après’, p. 18.

<sup>236</sup> See, for example, Gösta Tengvik, *Old English bynames* (Uppsala, 1938), pp. 8-9, and James Holt, ‘What’s in a name? Family Nomenclature and the Norman Conquest’ in James Holt, *Colonial England*, (London, 1997), p. 193. Reaney summarises this saying that ‘the rise of surnames, according to the accepted theory, was due to the Norman Conquest’ however he points out that ‘this is an oversimplification. Bynames – both English and Scandinavian – are found in England before the Conquest’ and ‘there is evidence that surnames would have developed in England even if there had been no Norman Conquest’ in Reaney and Wilson, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, pp. xlv-xlvi.

occupational names, with only a few appearing in French.<sup>237</sup> The types of name represented fit well within the well-established categories of surnames, with names of relationship, location and occupation appearing alongside nicknames.<sup>238</sup> The corpus in fact shows that, in Winchester at least, the practice of bynaming was well-developed prior to the Conquest. One individual, Godeman Brunechingessone, actually bore a patronymic surname formed using the nickname byname of his father; his name meant *Godman son of the Brown King*.<sup>239</sup> This shows that the tradition of bynaming had been present at least a generation prior to collection of Godeman's name.

While one possible explanation for the high number of bynames in the Winton Domesday is that there was a huge rise in the use of bynames from the middle of the eleventh century onwards, there is a much more likely reason. It is probable that much of this apparent explosion was actually caused by the changing nature of the documentation. In comparison to Survey I of Winton Domesday, there is a far smaller proportion of bynames recorded in the Thorney *Liber Vitae* – just 384 are recorded for the individuals listed out of 1,403, just 27 percent, while only ten individuals are referred to using only a byname, less than 1 percent. One potential reason for this is that fewer people listed bore bynames. But another must surely be the commemorative religious nature of the document, as well as the scribal practices of those creating it.

### ***4.3. Impact on the studies***

It seems likely that the differing nature of the sources did affect the way in which names were recorded. In the case of given names, the impact this has on the results of the statistical studies is likely to be minimal. While there is, in some studies, a higher proportion of original bynames recorded instead of given names, these alter the overall results little –

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<sup>237</sup> This in contrast to the later surveys in Winton Domesday, where bynames are increasingly recorded in French. Although, whether French was the original of coinage for all of these or a translation by a scribe for the purpose of record-keeping is unclear. Cecily Clark's 'The Myth of the Anglo-Norman Scribe' in Clark and Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History*, pp. 168-179 is enlightening on this issue, and suggests that translation may have often been the case.

<sup>238</sup> Bynames and surnames can be categorised in several ways but these four types generally encompass them all, as detailed in Percy H. Reaney and R. M. Wilson, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Surnames* (3rd edn, Oxford, 1997), pp. xiv-xlv. Ekwall distinguishes between surnames of 'office' and 'occupation', while relationship surnames are often referred to as 'patronymic', even though they do not always refer to the father of the individual. See Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>239</sup> *Winchester Studies I*, Winton Domesday entry I/36.

being relatively rare in proportion to the size of the corpora, they do not greatly influence the level of concentration. In some cases they make the number of rare names appear artificially high, which in turn makes the level of condensation of the corpus appear artificially low. Where this is the case, alternative figures have been provided discounting those individuals known only by bynames, thus hopefully providing a fuller picture.

Where the nature of the sources does appear to have more of an impact on the results is in the number and type of bynames and surnames. The three *libri vitae* appear less likely to record bynames than the localised secular sources and the dispersed nature of some of the sources may have also impacted the number and types of byname recorded.<sup>240</sup> However, even taking into account all these various factors there is no reason to believe that the difference in the nature of the sources should cause the overall trends revealed by the statistical analysis to be unreliable.

## 5. Geography

Based on the statistical studies carried out in this thesis, it is difficult to identify any clear differences between specific locations or regions within the survey. That is not to say that results do not show any variation, more that it would be presumptuous to ascribe them to regional differences as opposed to other potential causes, including the differences in source type, period of collection and size of sample. It is in fact striking how the results from all areas fit into the broad trends without any obvious anomalies. For example, it has already been noted how similar the results from Winchester in c.1057 and Colchester in 1086 were.

The results from the Feet of Fines evidence from Lancashire and Middlesex are also very similar, despite originating from two areas separated by a great distance and, one may assume, by significant cultural and social differences. The level of concentration and condensation are within a few percent of each other: 48 percent in Lancashire and 51 percent in Middlesex. The same applies to the rate of homonymy (1.19 percent and 1.36 percent), as well as the levels of condensation (4.09 and 3.91). This is despite the somewhat

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<sup>240</sup> While a full study of the bynames in these sources cannot be out of the scope of this thesis, it is clear that a study of this kind would add much to our understanding of how names and bynames were used in different social and documentary contexts.

different linguistic make up of the name stock: there is a noticeably higher proportion of Old English names in Middlesex, while there are far more Scandinavian and Celtic names in Lancashire.

The results from Boldon Book and the c.1150 to c.1200 names from the Thorney *Liber Vitae* also display few differences. The levels of concentration are 37 percent (Boldon Book) and 35 percent (Thorney), while the levels of homonymy are also relatively closely matched, 1.09 to 1.27. The levels of condensation are somewhat different (2.8 in Boldon Book and 2.06 in Thorney) but this is not a huge discrepancy and may well be explained by a higher number of individuals originating from outside the local area in the Thorney list. The names of the Winchester Fine Roll are considerably more condensed and concentrated than both of these sources, but being a source from a very specific time and place, rather than a collection of names from a wide area or extended time period, may account for some of these differences. The Roll dates from 1207, so a generation later than the two earlier sources, or possibly two in some cases. Given chronological progression of the changes, such a difference could simply represent the passing of time, rather than any regional variation, so, tempting as it may be to see differences between urban areas and rural locations, such a conclusion is not possible to make with any certainty based on the results of this study.

There are some differences in the results from the three latest sources in the study, the Winchester Fine Roll (1285), the London Subsidy Roll (1292) and the Register of the Freemen of the City of York (1272-1306), including notably higher levels of concentration in York (62 percent) and London (59 percent) compared to Winchester (52 percent).<sup>241</sup> Whether by this point such a difference between what are still three very high levels of concentration is significant is difficult to say – in all three cases six names or fewer accounted for more than half the population, after all. Once again, the rate of change may account for some of the difference, particularly between the Winchester figure and the York one, where 60 percent of entries date from 1290 onwards. That said, the name stock of York was clearly the most condensed of any in the survey, with just 49 names used by 759 individuals, restricted even in comparison to the London Subsidy Roll, where 79 names are shared by 778 people. Again, conclusions are difficult to come to, but it is certainly safe to say that the

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<sup>241</sup> As already noted, there is a large discrepancy between the level of condensation in the Winchester Fine Roll and these two late surveys, but the large discrepancy in sample size (142 compared to 779 and 759) can be assumed to be the cause of this).

north of England did not lag behind the south in this aspect of the naming transformation, and, if anything, the name stock may have been both more concentrated and more condensed than in other areas.

## 6. Summing up

Overall, therefore, it has not been possible to identify any particular regional trends based on the results of this study with regard to levels of concentration and condensation of the name stock. The broad pattern of change appears, instead, to have been largely similar across all the corpora studied. This is not to say that there were no regional differences, but to discern them would require comparative studies across a number of locations from the same period. Such studies would clearly be welcome, and would surely add nuance to the wider trends outlined in the last two chapters. That said, the studies presented in this chapter do demonstrate the broad patterns of change undergone by the English naming system between the eighth century and the beginning of the fourteenth.

These studies have shown that, regardless of the linguistic origin of the names within the name stock, and the variation in naming vocabulary that may have existed between different areas at a given time, the gradual trend towards a more condensed name stock concentrated around a small number of popular names continued throughout. The impact of external influence, as well as internal changes in fashions, ultimately seems to have had little effect. While there was a slow-down in the rate of change during the century following the Conquest, this appears to have been relatively short-lived and superficial. During this period new continental names were incorporated into the name stock, existing side-by-side with Old English names for a time, before traditional Old English names largely ceased to be used by the end of the twelfth century. Despite these radical changes to the name stock, the transformation to the underlying name system therefore carried on regardless, with only a relatively short period in the twelfth century which saw naming concentration due to the influx of new names from the continent.

The changes therefore, seem to mirror closely those which took place on the continent, and have been described by *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. Moreover, the thematic analysis of the component elements used to 'create' English names prior to and shortly after the Conquest suggests that the names within the system were undergoing a similar



transformation to their continental counterparts, no longer being formed through the combination of identifiable themes, but being repeated as indivisible names in their own right. This further supports the view that the changes that took place were internal changes occurring within the English naming system, but ones that were closely linked to those taking place on the continent at the same time.

In the next chapter, the broad trends outlined here will be examined using a number of micro-studies, looking at the naming decisions within individual families and communities across the period studied in attempt to see if, and how, such decisions reflected wider patterns of behaviour.

## Searching for Meaning in Everyday Name Choices: Micro-Studies of Medieval English Naming

The statistical studies described in the previous two chapters have demonstrated the broad patterns of change that took place to the naming system of medieval England and the names within it. The system changed from one based on the traditional principles of Germanic naming, where individual themes were combined to create unique names for each individual, to one where names had begun to be seen as indivisible items and a few names were shared by a large proportion of the population. This change took place over an extended period of time, beginning in the ninth century and continuing through the upheaval of the Norman Conquest, the transformation only temporarily slowed by the rapid influx of names from across the Channel. In this chapter the scale of investigation will pass from the macro to the micro. It will build on the approaches of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* in examining family genealogies from across the medieval period, as well as individual examples of name-giving. It will also examine contemporary commentary upon names, name meaning and name-giving in an attempt to understand, where possible, how people thought about the names they chose, used and bore, and if this changed over time. Finally, it will investigate the fate of specific names, or groups of names within certain communities. This will allow us to see if the broad patterns observed in the statistical studies are mirrored in the everyday naming decisions of individual people, as well as to see how these individual decisions impacted upon and were impacted by these broader trends.

### 1. In search of meaning

It has often been asserted that Old English name themes, while being lexical items, were essentially meaningless when combined together in a name. Frank Stenton said that ‘at an early time the sense which a compound name bore was a matter of little importance... personal or family reasons determined the choice of a name, and speculation as to its meaning, if it came at all, came as an afterthought’.<sup>242</sup> Cecily Clark similarly suggested that

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<sup>242</sup> Stenton, ‘Personal Names in Place-Names’, p. 168.

‘the combining of themes into compounds was ruled by onomastic not semantic choice’, and there are certainly examples of names in which the themes seem to carry contradictory meanings, or became nonsensical in combination.<sup>243</sup>

However, in their original creation, most names in all cultures and languages are derived from lexical items containing semantic meaning.<sup>244</sup> It seems an uncontroversial assumption to make that, at some point, the meaning within Old English names was transparent and meaningful both semantically and culturally to the people who used them. Cultures where personal names carry semantic meaning have been studied on numerous occasions. In his study of personal naming among the Hopi people of North America in the second half of the twentieth century, Peter Whitely describes a system where names ‘carry semantic content that narratively denotes cultural or natural occurrences, or historical or mythological events’.<sup>245</sup> Personal names of many African cultures are, or have historically been, meaningful.<sup>246</sup> The nineteenth-century missionary Josiah Tyler recounted that:

The names of persons in Zulu are derived from circumstances connected with their birth. For instance, if a small snake happens to be seen or killed when a boy is born he is called *Unyokana* ‘A little snake’. Should the infant be a large one, he receives the appellation *Ungagumuntu* ‘As large as a man’. If there happens to be a fire at his birth, the babe is named *Unomlilo*, ‘with fire’.<sup>247</sup>

Meaning is not always clear-cut – not even semantic meaning. Words can have multiple different senses and they can be understood, and translated, in multiple different ways. Stenton cites the examples of *Wigfrif* and *Friþuwulf* as two names in which the semantic meaning of the themes could not possibly be reconciled, as they seemed to mean ‘war-peace’ and ‘peace-wolf’.<sup>248</sup> Yet, while ‘peace’ is certainly one translation of *friþu*, it could

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<sup>243</sup> Clark, ‘Onomastics I’, p. 458. See also Woolf, *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, p. 25.

<sup>244</sup> Richard Alford, *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices* (New Haven, 1988), pp. 59-60.

<sup>245</sup> Peter Whitely, ‘Hopitutungwni: “Hopi names” as Literature’ in Brian Swann (ed.), *On the Translation of Native American Literatures* (London, 1992), pp. 208-227 (see pp. 208-209).

<sup>246</sup> Susan Suzman, ‘Names as Pointers: Zulu Personal Naming Practices’ in *Language in Society* 23.2 (1994), pp. 253-272 (see p. 254).

<sup>247</sup> Josiah Tyler, *Forty years among the Zulus* (Boston, 1891), p. 33.

<sup>248</sup> Stenton, ‘Personal Names in Place-Names’, p. 168.

also mean ‘protection’, ‘security’, ‘safety from harm’.<sup>249</sup> Indeed, in *freoþu dryhtnes* it could mean ‘in the safe-keeping of the Lord’.<sup>250</sup> ‘War-peace’ might sound like an ‘absurdity’ but ‘Safe-from-war’, or ‘Protector-against-war’ sounds less so, just as a name which evoked protection from wolves, or perhaps protection achieved by the power and courage of a wolf does not seem nonsensical.<sup>251</sup> This is of course not to state unequivocally that all names were created with the meaning of the themes as the most important consideration, but to dismiss it outright as unimportant seems hasty. Some investigation of how people thought about names and the meanings within them is surely necessary.

There are, in fact, numerous examples from Anglo-Saxon England of people reflecting on the aptness, or otherwise, of an individual’s name. In the *Life of Saint Guthlac (Guðlac)*, written by Felix, a monk of Crowland Abbey sometime in the mid-eighth century, the author explains how Guthlac (†714) took his name from that of the family from which he originated, ‘it being as though by divine plan, because by virtue of its formation, it fitted and matched his qualities’. According to Felix, ‘the name in the tongue of the English is shown to consist of two individual words’ which translated into Latin as *belli munus*, because ‘by warring against vices he was to receive the reward of eternal bliss’:

Igitur decursis bis quaternis dierum voluminibus, cum ad salutaris lavacri sacratas undulas propinquasset, ex appellatione illius tribus, quam dicunt Guthlacingas, proprietatis vocabulum velut ex caelesti consilio Guthlac percepit, quia ex qualitatis compositione adsequentibus meritis conveniebat. Nam ut illius gentis gnari perhibent, Anglorum lingua hoc nomen ex duobus integris constare videtur, hoc est ‘Guth’ et ‘lac’, quod Romani sermonis nitore personat ‘belli munus’ quia ille cum vitiis bellando munera aeternae beatitudinis cum triumphali infula perennis vitae percepisset...<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> See ‘friþu’ in *Dictionary of Old English: A to G Online*, eds Angus Cameron, Ashley Crandell Amos, Antonette diPaolo Healey et al. (Toronto, 2007), <http://tapor.library.utoronto.ca.eresources.shef.ac.uk/doe/dict/indices/headwordsindexf.html> [accessed 13 September 2016].

<sup>250</sup> See line 597 of ‘The Phoenix’ in *The Exeter Book*, eds George Philip Krapp and Elliot Van Kirk Dobbie (New York, 1936), p. 111.

<sup>251</sup> Stenton, ‘Personal Names in Place-Names’, p. 169, refers to these names as ‘absurdities’.

<sup>252</sup> *Felix’s Life of Saint Guthlac*, ed. and trans. Bertram Colgrave (Cambridge, 1956), pp. 76-79, along with the translation.

The author accurately translates *Guðlac* as *belli munus* in Latin, ‘gift of war’, and explains how the story of Guthlac’s life shows that he has lived up to the meaning contained in his divinely appointed name.<sup>253</sup>

A similar response to the meaning of a name comes from the reign of King Athelstan (†939), the grandson of Alfred the Great (†899). In 899 Alfred bestowed upon Athelstan a sword, jewelled scabbard, belt and cloak in a ritual of investiture which may have, in part, been an attempt to present him as a potential future king.<sup>254</sup> Athelstan was indeed destined to become king, and is sometimes known by the epithet ‘the Glorious’ – only a couple of rungs below his grandfather on the ladder of kingly sobriquets. Yet, while Athelstan’s glorious nickname was only applied posthumously, a poem written to commemorate the act of investiture described here suggests that the name given to Athelstan at birth foretold his illustrious future. In English translation, this poem reads:

Little prince, you are called by the name ‘sovereign stone’,  
 Look happily on this prophecy for your life.  
 You shall be the ‘noble rock’ of Samuel the seer,  
 Standing with mighty strength against the the devilish monsters.  
 Often an abundant cornfield foretells a fine harvest.  
 In times of peace your stoniness will soften, for  
 You are more abundantly endowed with the holy eminence of learning.  
 I pray that you may seek, and that God may grant, the promise of your noble names.<sup>255</sup>

The future king’s name was formed of the themes *Æðel-*, meaning ‘noble’, and *-stan*, meaning ‘stone’. So Athelstan was, nominatively at least, a ‘noble rock’. As in the case of

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<sup>253</sup> The name is formed using the themes *Guð-*, meaning ‘battle’, ‘combat’ or ‘war’, and *-lac*, which could mean ‘battle’, ‘sacrifice’ or ‘reward’, so Felix’s translation is accurate. See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, pp. 278 and 307.

<sup>254</sup> The story is recounted by William of Malmesbury in *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. See *William of Malmesbury: Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*, ed. and trans. Roger Mynors (Oxford, 1998), vol. 1, Book II, fol. 133. Athelstan’s accession as king was by no means guaranteed, with several sons of Alfred’s elder brothers being potential rivals to his own son, Edward the Elder. Indeed, one of these, Æthelwold, attempted to seize the throne upon Alfred’s death. Later, Athelstan would himself face opposition from his brothers from Edward’s second marriage amid claims of illegitimacy and low birth. See Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan: The First King of the English* (New Haven, 2011), pp. 30-33 for more on the context of the poem, and chapters 1 and 2 for Athelstan’s early life and accession to the throne.

<sup>255</sup> For this translation and the original which follows see Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature: 900–1066* (London, 1993), pp. 60-61.

Guthlac, the poet emphasises the prophetic nature of the name, suggesting that the lexical meaning within it was important – even if only on a symbolic, metaphorical level.

This is not the only name featured in the poem. In the original Latin version, the poem is an acrostic bearing Athelstan's name down one side, using the first letters of each line, while down the other, using the last letters, is the name IOHANNES, that of the poet himself:

‘ARCHALIS’ CLAMARE, TRIUMUIR, NOMINE ‘SAXI’  
 DIUE TUO FORS PROGNOSSIM FELICITER AEUO:  
 ‘AUGUSTA’ SAMU- CERNETIS ‘RUPIS’ ERIS -ELH,  
 LARUALES FORTI BELIALES ROBURE CONTRA  
 SAEPE SEGES MESSEM FECUNDA PRENOTAT ALTAM; IN  
 TUTIS SOLANDUM PETRINUM SOLIBUS AGNEM.  
 AMPLIUS AMPLIFICARE SACRA SOPHISTIMIS ARCE.  
 NOMINA ORTO- PETAS DONET, PRECOR, INCLITA -DOXUS.<sup>256</sup>

Interestingly, the spelling of the king's name in the acrostic appears as *Adalstan*. It is not uncommon for *Æ* to appear as *A* when rendering Old English terms into Latin spelling, and the same applies to *ð/b* as *d*, but there would have been no need for the *e* to be rendered as an *a*, as it is in the poem. There are many possible reasons for such a change – not least that the poet's choice of initial word in the third line of the poem. Changing *e* to *a* may simply have helped open up a different a set of vocabulary. However, it seems more likely that the poet was not, himself, an English speaker, but a speaker of a Low-German dialect. Lapidge concludes that this was probably Old Franconian, Old Frisian or Old Saxon, and that the *Iohannes* in questions is likely to have been ‘John the Old Saxon’, mentioned in Asser's *Life of Alfred*.<sup>257</sup> If, as seems likely, Iohannes was a German speaker, it is notable that he appears to both understand the meaning contained within Athelstan's English name, as well as see the equivalence between the Old English element *Æðel-* and its cognate *Adal-*, which was common in names across Germanic speaking areas of Europe, both in male names, such as

<sup>256</sup> See the commentary in Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 60-61, where he clarifies some of the more problematic elements in translation.

<sup>257</sup> Asser describes him as ‘Iohannem presbyterum et monachum, scilicet Eald-Saxonum genere’ See Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, pp. 63-65. An alternative John who may have been the poet is John, the abbot of the Breton house at Landévennec – see Foot, *Æthelstan*, p. 111.

*Adalbert* (giving the modern *Albert*) and *Adalheidis* (giving the modern *Adelaide* and *Alice*).<sup>258</sup>

The poem, written some 150 or so years prior to the point when Bourin suggests that the principles of Germanic naming were no longer in use in Agde, seems to suggest that they were still understood to some extent at this point, both in England and the Low-German speaking area from which the poet originated.

While Athelstan may have been *glorious*, the most famous of Anglo-Saxon royal epithets probably belongs to Æthelred II, whose long but tumultuous reign saw sustained periods of Viking raiding, invasion and high taxation in order to pay tribute to, or fund fighting against, these raiding Danes.<sup>259</sup> The disastrous events over which he ruled mean that Æthelred is known to us today as ‘the Unready’, but when his contemporaries called him *Æðelræd Unræd* they were not labelling him ‘unready’. They were mocking him for his lack of good advice, playing on the meaning of the second element of his name *-ræd* meaning counsel. Such a pun would not be possible if people were not aware that this second element of his name carried this specific meaning. Another example from the same period demonstrates that the meaning of some names was transparent enough for people to translate them into other languages. Felix of Crowland had accurately translated Guthlac’s name as *belli munus* in Latin, but there is no suggestion that this name was ever used to refer to Guthlac, and even in the Latin text the English form of the name is used. However, when Wulfstan (†1023), Archbishop of York, entitled his homily to the English people *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos*, ‘Sermon of the Wolf to the English’, he was clearly doing so in the knowledge that the first theme of his name did not just sound like, but signified, ‘wolf’.<sup>260</sup>

Whether and when there was any change in how people perceived the meanings within their names is difficult to ascertain. It does seem from these two early eleventh-century examples that, for some people, *Æðelræd* and *Wulfstan* were names where the semantic meaning in the themes were transparent and accessible. And the late tenth-century poem

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<sup>258</sup> See entries for “Alice” and “Albert” in Uckelman (ed.), *The Dictionary of Medieval Names*, <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Alice> and <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Albert> [accessed 26 September, 2016].

<sup>259</sup> Despite his apparent lack of counsel, Æthelred II’s reign lasted from 978 to 1016 (although with a short period of Danish rule and exile in 1013-1014 following his defeat at the hands of Sweyn Forkbeard). For more on Æthelred II see Ann Williams, *Æthelred the Unready: The Ill-Counselled King* (London, 2003). See pp. 119-123 for details on Sweyn’s campaign and Æthelred’s exile.

<sup>260</sup> Wulfstan, *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* in *Beowulf*, ed. and trans. Roy Liuzza (Toronto, 2000), pp. 185-189.

about Athelstan shows that, not only could the meaning of a name be important – if only symbolically – but also that there was some understanding that Germanic names in England and on the continent were derived from common roots and shared common meanings. Fran Colman is somewhat more sceptical, and has suggested that such practices may simply show that people were able to *take* or *create* meaning from a name in certain contexts, sometimes even re-etymologising them, and not that semantic meaning was present in every name, for every person, all the time.<sup>261</sup> In this sense such wordplay may have been nothing more than the medieval equivalent of a tabloid headline.

A later example, from the *Encomium Emmae Reginae* does suggest that, while the meaning of names remained important to some degree in the mid-eleventh century, the retrieval of such meaning was perhaps more of a matter for scholarly investigation than common cultural knowledge of name bearers and name users.<sup>262</sup> Written in 1041 or 1042, the *Encomium* honours the life of Emma of Normandy, who was married to both Æthelred and Cnut the Great, and was mother of two kings of England, Edward the Confessor and Harthacnut (†1042).<sup>263</sup> It is Harthacnut's name which is commented on by the Encomiast.<sup>264</sup>

And so they washed this very dear child, as is the custom of all Christians, in the sacred baptismal font, and gave him a name which conveyed in a measure an indication of his future excellence. For indeed he was called Hardecnut, which reproduced his father's name with an addition, if the etymology of this is investigated in Germanic, one truly discerns

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<sup>261</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 118-120. Stenton also says something similar, suggesting that 'long after Guthlac's time, people who were not learned could play upon personal names in a way that shows their meaning was understood', including those who referred to Æthelred as 'Unræd', however he suggests in this case 'the meaning of the name was obvious and the circumstances exceptional'. Quite what made this name more obvious than others, and these circumstances more exceptional, he does not expand upon. See Stenton, 'Personal Names in Place-Names', p. 168.

<sup>262</sup> Only one manuscript of *Encomium Emmae Reginae* survives: BL. Additional MS 33241. The edition cited here is *Encomium Emmae Reginae*, ed. and trans. Alistair Campbell and Simon Keynes, (2nd edn, Cambridge, 1998). The manuscript has also recently been digitised and made available online: [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add\\_MS\\_33241](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Add_MS_33241) [accessed 26 October 2016].

<sup>263</sup> See Campbell and Keynes's introductions in the edition cited above for more on the *Encomium*. For more on Emma's life, see Pauline Stafford, *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>264</sup> Harthacnut is an anglicised form of the Old Danish Harthaknut. See, von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, pp. 287.



his identity and greatness. ‘Harde’, indeed means ‘swift’ or ‘strong’, both of which qualities and much more could be recognised in him above all others.<sup>265</sup>

The Encomiast’s reflections here highlight a number of things, including the importance of the ritual of name-giving at the baptismal font, in which the giving of a name was an intrinsically Christian act which welcomed the newly named child into the Christian world. He also demonstrates that some vestiges the meaningfulness of Germanic names persisted, although, for the Encomiast at least, these are little more than vestiges. If his phrasing is to be believed, he seems possess to a less than perfect knowledge of the elements that made up Harthacnut’s name, and needed to find out the etymology of ‘Harde’ to understand its meaning. And while he goes as far as to explain the meaning of the first element of the name, he does not go to the same lengths for the second element. For the Encomiast, Harthacnut’s ‘strong’ first element was not combined with a second element meaning ‘knot’, but merely his father’s name, *Knut*.<sup>266</sup> It seems likely that, in this sense, he was right, and the *-cnut* of Harthacnut’s name was inherited as a symbol of connection with his father, rather than the importance of the meaning of the name. We see here elements of the evolutions described by Le Jan, in the increasing will, or need, to demonstrate family relationship through the passing down of names and name themes, yet with some acknowledgement that symbolic meaning was still important.

There are, of course, some caveats that should be stated before reading too much into these comments. Firstly, while Harthacnut and his father were both kings of England, they were not English in origin, and neither were their names. The naming traditions of Denmark and Scandinavia as a whole were, however, very similar to those of Anglo-Saxon England – at least historically – and the compound names used were formed predominantly using elements cognate with the other Germanic naming systems both in England and on the continent. People across much of England would have been familiar with Scandinavian names and the practices through which they were created, as noted in Chapter 4, thanks to extended periods of contact, intermixing and intermarriage of native English people and

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<sup>265</sup> *Encomium Ecomium Emmae Reginae*, II, 18-19. The original Latin reads: ‘Itaque dilectissimum pignus, uti mos est Catholicis, sacro abluunt fonte baptismatis, imponuntque ei uocabulum quodammodo optinens indicium futurae uirtutis. Uocatur siquidem Hardocnuto, nomen patris referens cum additamento, cuius si ethimologia Theutonice perquiratur, profecto quis quantusue fuerit dinoscitur. ‘Harde’ quidem ‘velox’ vel ‘fortis’, sui temporis uiros om[n]ium uirtutum prestantia antenuit.’

<sup>266</sup> von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, pp. 305 and “Knut” in Uckelman, (ed.) *The Dictionary of Medieval Names*, <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Knut> [accessed 13 September 2016].

Scandinavian conquerors and settlers over a period of some 200 years or more. That said, it is still possible that the *Encomiast* was less familiar with name meanings of Scandinavian names than he may have been with Germanic names of continental or English origin. Yet, even if this were the case, surely he would have had little trouble equating the ‘Harde’ of Harthacnut’s name with its cognates in Old English or continental Germanic names.

In any case, it does seem that the *Encomiast* was aware that Scandinavian names were part of the wider Germanic language system, referring to them as ‘*theutonice*’. Although it is likely that the writer was not English, it seems probable that he was familiar with the English language and would have either been a native speaker of, or at least had a high level of proficiency in Flemish – a West-Germanic language – and resided in a region where continental Germanic names were the norm.<sup>267</sup> It is also likely that he knew Emma personally, probably from her period of exile in Flanders from 1037-40.<sup>268</sup> The *Encomium* was undoubtedly written at Emma’s request to glorify both her and her family, Harthacnut included, and it seems unlikely that a story about his baptism and the bestowal of his name would have been made up with no basis in fact. Emma would have had a better understanding of the choice of her son’s name than anyone – even if that name reflected the heritage of her Scandinavian husband more than her own. She would certainly have been well aware of the symbolic importance of names, having been given an alternative English name upon her marriage to Æthelred, Ælfgifu.<sup>269</sup> Even this, to some degree, reflects the changing attitudes towards names of the time. Instead of receiving an English name that stood out, she was given one of the most commonly recorded late Old English women’s names, and this meant that she bore the same name as Æthelred’s first wife, Ælfgifu of York (†1002), as well as Cnut’s first wife, Ælfgifu of Northampton (†1036), and also one of Cnut’s own sisters.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>267</sup> *Encomium Ecomium Emmae Reginae*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii.

<sup>268</sup> It is believed that he was an inmate at one of the Saint Omer or Saint Bertin monasteries, meaning he may well have met Cnut himself at least once when he stayed there on his way to Rome in 1027. *Encomium Ecomium Emmae Reginae*, pp. xix-xx.

<sup>269</sup> Although there is no evidence that by marrying Emma Cnut’s union with Ælfgifu was invalidated, nor even that Ælfgifu’s status as consort was revoked. Indeed, Ælfgifu held high status throughout and her sons had been regarded as throneworthy. See Emma Mason, *The House of Godwine: The History of a Dynasty* (London, 2004), pp. 140-141.

<sup>270</sup> A similar situation existed during the reign of Harold Godwineson, who had a longstanding marriage *more danico* for six years before marrying a second wife shortly after acceding to the throne. Both Harold’s wives also bore the same name, *Edith*, or *Ealdgyð* – as, incidentally, did his mother.

While the reflections of a Flemish author on the name of a Scandinavian king on behalf of his Norman mother may not seem the most obvious avenue for understanding the naming system of England, it is actually a microcosm of the wider naming system of the period. As seen in Chapter 4, English names rubbed shoulders with names of Celtic, continental Germanic and, particularly, Scandinavian origin. This was true on a macro-scale, but also right down to the micro-level, within individual communities and families. It also demonstrates just how interlinked and interconnected England, its people and its names were with the rest of Europe, and reflects how people across England and the continent thought about names. It seems significant that Iohannes, a speaker of a similar German dialect to the Encomiast, clearly understood the principles of the Germanic naming system, but a century later, the Encomiast had a far from perfect understanding of how such names were formed, and had to carry out research to find out what they meant. It is possible that this is merely a reflection of the changing naming system on the continent, rather than in England, but a closer examination of how people used names in language contact situations such as this may help us discover more about how people understood their names, as well as those of others.

## 2. The melting pot: hybrid names and hybrid systems

We have already seen how Iohannes, the author of the poem to Athelstan, recognised the equivalence of the elements in Old English and continental Germanic names. This notion of equivalence is not as clearly seen in the writing of the Encomiast with regards to Harthacnut's Scandinavian name. Certainly, it seems that in some situations people of different linguistic heritage were aware that the elements in their names were transferable across languages – even that elements from two different languages could be combined within one compound, or suffixed, name. The creation of Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid place names of the *Grimston* type is well attested, most notably by Kenneth Cameron, and

demonstrates the intermixing of both people and languages within the Danelaw.<sup>271</sup> Shannon Lewis-Simpson has shown that hybridisation of personal names also took place, and suggested that this reflects a certain degree of hybridity of culture in some areas of the Danelaw, particularly in the north of England.<sup>272</sup> Lewis-Simpson notes a number of Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid names present in Domesday such as *Álfgrímr*, *Leofketel*, *Leofkoll*, *Garðúlfr* and *Uhtbrandr* as well as three names, *Bretakolbr*, *Purwine* and *Purweard*, which are all attested even earlier in the eleventh century.<sup>273</sup> There is also a potential Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid in the list of the Burgesses of Colchester, *Lefsesse*, formed using the Old English element *Leof-* and the Old Danish *Saxi*.<sup>274</sup> The presence of such hybrid names is largely confined to the Danelaw – predominantly Yorkshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk – and Lewis-Simpson notes that this is suggestive of a hybrid naming tradition fairly early on in the settlement process, which may have been facilitated by the similarities in naming practices between the native English and Scandinavian settlers.<sup>275</sup>

This type of hybridity is conspicuously absent from the names of post-Conquest England, where there does not seem to be any instances of hybrid compounds formed using Old English name elements and those of continental origin, despite the fact that these were, in theory, at least as closely related as those used in the Anglo-Scandinavian compounds. Moreover, by the time of the Conquest, we see little or no recognition of any equivalence between Old English names and name elements, and those used to form the names of continental incomers despite the fact that many were similar in form and meaning and, indeed, that the *Ric-* contained within the very common *Richard*, but also the less common *Richild* and *Richer*, was not just identical in appearance, but also original meaning, to the

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<sup>271</sup> See Kenneth Cameron, *Scandinavian Settlement in the Territory of the Five Boroughs: The Place-Name Evidence* (Nottingham, 1966). For a more recent discussion on the Scandinavian influence on English place-names, see Matthew Townend, *Language and History in Viking Age England: Linguistic Relations Between Speakers of Old Norse and Old English* (Turnhout, 2002), pp. 43-87, and for wider analysis on the nature of Scandinavian settlement of the Danelaw and their cultural impact, see Dawn Hadley, *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture* (Manchester, 2006), (including a map of *Grimston* hybrid place-names and names ending in the Scandinavian *-by* suffix on p. 3). Recent onomastic studies exploring the extent of Scandinavian settlement its impact on language include Eleanor Rye, 'Dialect in the Viking-Age Scandinavian diaspora: the evidence of medieval minor names', Ph.D. thesis, (University of Nottingham, 2016) and Rebecca Gregory, 'The Minor and Field Names of Thurgarton Wapentake, Nottinghamshire', Ph.D. thesis, (University of Nottingham, 2016).

<sup>272</sup> Lewis-Simpson, 'Assimilation or Hybridization', pp. 13-44.

<sup>273</sup> Lewis-Simpson, 'Assimilation or Hybridization' p. 29.

<sup>274</sup> *Essex Domesday*, fol. 104v. For more on *Sesse/Saxi*, see von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, pp. 352.

<sup>275</sup> Lewis-Simpson, 'Assimilation or Hybridization', pp. 29 and 31.

almost ubiquitous *-ric*, which was present in so many late Old English names. Instead, most commentators who did reflect on names in this newly multi-cultural and multilingual environment emphasised the dissimilarity between English names and their continental counterparts, even Orderic Vitalis (†1142), whose own name contained this very element.<sup>276</sup>

Orderic received his Old English name at baptism as a compliment to the priest who baptised him and also became his godfather in the ceremony.<sup>277</sup> This act in itself is an example of the increasingly common trend to name children *after* or *for* another person, whether it be a family member or esteemed member of the community.<sup>278</sup> It also suggests, in Orderic's case at least, that there was no creative process carried out to produce his name – no compounding of two themes into one individual name, rather the duplication of a complete name to honour another living bearer. Born in England in 1075 to an English mother and a French father, Orderic grew up in England but was sent to the monastery of Saint Evroul in Normandy at the age of 11. Despite the similarity between the roots of Orderic's name and those of a number of Germanic names in use on the continent at the time – including *Odric*, forms of which were in use in France in the eleventh century – it sounded alien and barbarous to the ears of his fellow monks of Saint Evroul.<sup>279</sup> So harsh did it sound to them that they used the name *Vitalis* instead, given to him upon entry to monastic orders.<sup>280</sup> Despite this story, the fact that he received an English name in 1075 demonstrates that the changeover from English to continental names was by no means immediate. The bestowal of an English name on Orderic is even more surprising considering his father Odelirus d'Orléans (fl. 1075) was not just a Frenchman, but a relatively high-born one – a follower of Roger de Montgomery (†1094), Earl of Shrewsbury. Odelirus clearly had little problem with his son's English name. Of course, Orderic's mother was English, and in the title of his great chronicle Orderic added to his two given names the

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<sup>276</sup> His name, *Odric*, was formed from the elements *Ord-* ('spear point') and *-ric* ('powerful'). See von Feilitzen, *Pre-Conquest Personal Names*, pp. 336-337.

<sup>277</sup> For more on the development of medieval godparenting practices see Bernhard Jussen, *Spiritual Kinship as Social Practice: Godparenthood and Adoption in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. and ed. Pamela Selwyn (Newark, 2000), especially pp. 145-239, and also Joseph Lynch, *Godparents and Kinship in Early Medieval Europe* (Princeton, 1986).

<sup>278</sup> See Marjorie Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis* (Oxford, 1984), p. 10 and , Vol. III, Book V, p. 6.

<sup>279</sup> *Odric* is was a continental Germanic name formed from *Od-* ('riches') and *-rih* ('ruler'). It is cognate with Old English *Eadric*. See "Odrich", in Uckelman (ed.), *The Dictionary of Medieval Names*, <http://dmnes.org/2016/3/name/Odrich> [accessed 13 September 2016].

<sup>280</sup> Marjorie Chibnall, 'Introduction' in *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis* vol. 2, p. xiii-xiv.

epithet *Angligena*, and consciously referred to himself as such throughout his later life.<sup>281</sup>

There is little known of Orderic's mother, so the decision to choose an English name does not, on the face of it, seem to stem from any prestige attached to her family or origins. Nor does the choice of Orderic's name fit with the idea that names were chosen purely out of admiration for (or fear of) one's lord or patron. Were this the case, Orderic should surely have been called *Roger*, or some other name linked to the Montgomery family. Yet, rather than choosing a name to honour his employer and demonstrate his links to a powerful family, Odelirus and his wife chose to give their son the name of a comparatively lowly English priest, the curate of the parish of Attingham.

Clearly, the decisions behind the giving of a name were complex. It was not merely a case of aping the names of one's social superiors. There were multiple points of reference people could look to to help make such a choice, and multiple aspects of an identity they could choose to emphasise. Family, power and patronage must all have played a role, but so must have friendship, religion and community ties. In the case of Orderic, it seems that religion and personal relationship were a greater pull than power, patronage or lineage in the choosing of his name. Orderic's own choice of epithet demonstrates this ability to emphasise one aspect of one's identity over another, giving precedence to his mother's English background, rather than emphasising patrilineal descent. He is not *Orderic d'Orléans* or *fils de Odelirus*, but *Angligena*, 'The English-born'. As a result, Orderic's name reflects a number of aspects of his identity: religious ones, through both his birth name and his name acquired upon entering the monastery; community ones, through taking the name of his community priest, but also a new name bestowed upon him by the monastic community; and a broader ethnic or 'national' identity through an additional byname, and the reference to his mother's origins that this may have evoked.

Orderic's names were able to communicate multiple aspects of his identity, but they did so in very different ways to the hybrid names of the tenth-century Danelaw. The compound nature of Old English and Scandinavian names facilitated the fusion of linguistic items of different origins – and perhaps linguistic and ethnic identities – into one name. This was not the case following the Conquest. It could be argued that the difference between the languages was too great, or that the two name systems were too far removed from each

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<sup>281</sup> Chibnall, *The World of Orderic Vitalis*, p. 3.

other for any hybrid names to be created – perhaps the indivisible nature of the continental names precluded them being incorporated into what was still a compound naming system used by the native Old English – but there is evidence on the continent to suggest that foreign name elements could be incorporated into such a compound system. Wolfgang Haubrichs and Hans-Werner Goetz’s study of the names of the Polyptych of Irminon demonstrates exactly this.<sup>282</sup> The polyptych is an inventory of the abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés and its possessions, which lay in the regions surrounding Paris between the Seine and the Eure. Irminon’s inventory, created in the 820s, contains the names of several hundred tenants inhabiting the 25 villages for which records survive. Amongst these names, Haubrichs and Goetz note a significant number of hybrid names combining traditional Germanic name elements with lexical items and suffixes from Gallo-Romance.<sup>283</sup> In some cases they combine a Romance first element, such as *Ben-* (from the Latin *Bene*), *Bon-* (from the Latin *Bonus*) and *Crist* (from the Latin *Cristus*), with Germanic second elements like *-gar*, *-hard* and *-wini* to produce the hybrid names including *Benegarius*, *Bonardus* and *Cristuinus*. There are even examples of non-Germanic names of parents being split up and used as elements in combination with Germanic elements within the names of their children, in keeping with the Germanic practice of variation as described by Woolf and Le Jan, producing names like *Elisabiris*, daughter of *Elisabet*.<sup>284</sup> Similarly, there are examples of Germanic first elements being complemented by a Romance suffix, for example the diminutive suffixes *-linus* (masculine) and *-lina* (feminine), producing names such as *Boislinus*, *Otlina* and *Frotlena*.<sup>285</sup>

These hybrid names were a product of the fusion of two cultural and linguistic traditions. Any state of bilingualism that may have existed amongst the people inhabiting the land between the Seine and the Eure had long since passed, yet they still adhered to the compound naming system that had been introduced by the Frankish elite who had ruled

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<sup>282</sup> Wolfgang Haubrichs and Hans-Werner Goetz, ‘Namenentwicklung und Namengebung in Ober- und Unterschichten des frühen 9. Jahrhunderts in der Ile-de France’ in *Namenkundliche Informationen*, 103/104 (2014), pp. 110-204.

<sup>283</sup> What exactly to term the language or languages spoken and written in France during this period is somewhat disputed. For more on this see Roger Wright, ‘Complex Monolingualism in Early Romance’ in *Linguistic Perspectives on the Romance Languages: Selected Papers from the 21st Linguistic Symposium on Romance Languages* (Santa Barbara, 1993), pp. 377-396.

<sup>284</sup> Haubrichs and Goetz, ‘Namenentwicklung und Namengebung’, pp. 129-130.

<sup>285</sup> Haubrichs and Goetz, ‘Namenentwicklung und Namengebung’, pp. 131-132.

Gaul since the fifth century.<sup>286</sup> They were not just able, but willing, to incorporate new elements into this system, including lexical items and suffixes from the spoken language of Gallo-Romance, as well as non-Germanic names, turning them into name elements in their own right. In the Île de France of the ninth century, people were clearly attached to the Germanic naming system they had inherited, and understood how it worked well enough to adapt it in a new linguistic and cultural environment, just as were the English in the ninth and tenth-century Danelaw. This suggests that, if the English of the late eleventh century were still truly using a dithematic naming system, it would have been possible to adapt it to the new cultural and linguistic environment they faced in the wake of the Norman Conquest. The fact that they did not suggests the opposite – that the naming system had, in fact, already changed.

Of course, it could be (and has been) argued that the ‘process of cultural constraint’ was in fact so powerful that what took place was a complete change in system – one where a new Norman system of naming replaced completely everything of the Old English system that preceded it.<sup>287</sup> I believe there is ample evidence to suggest that this was not the case. The statistical studies presented so far demonstrate that Old English names remained in use for over a century, and the work of David Postles has shown that, in fact, a hybrid system of a sort did in fact develop in England, reflecting the fusion of English and French cultural and linguistic traditions. Postles suggests that this hybrid system existed for a period following the Conquest and enabled families to incorporate some elements of the new ‘colonial’ culture by using both traditional English and new continental names within the same generation. For example, a family from Alvingham in Lincolnshire named their children *Thorold*, *Gamel*, *John*, *Ralph* and *Gilbert*, thus combining insular names with new continental and biblical names.<sup>288</sup> This hybrid system is clearly visible in the post-Conquest corpora of names examined in this thesis. In the Thorney *Liber Vitae* we see a couple bearing Old English names, *Dene* and *Stanburh*, who gave three of their children continental names – *Hugh*,

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<sup>286</sup> It is possible that the ruling elite still had some level of bi- or multilingualism combining a Germanic dialect, Latin and Gallo-Romance. See Haubrichs and Goetz, ‘Namenentwicklung und Namengebung’, pp. 129.

<sup>287</sup> Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings*, p.538.

<sup>288</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, pp. 23-24. The evidence for this family dates from between c.1190 and c.1220, showing how late some families were still using a combination of English and continental names.



*William* and *Emma* – and one an English name, *Leviva* (*Leofgifu*).<sup>289</sup> Similarly, in mid-twelfth-century Winchester a *Goda Hachemus* had a brother named *Robert*.<sup>290</sup> We also see numerous instances of individuals with continental names bestowing insular names on their children, for example *Svartling*, *Ulfi* and *Burewold* – all from twelfth-century Winchester – who each named a son *Ralph*.<sup>291</sup> In the same source we see a *Stigand filius Goscelin* and a *Heresie* (*Heresige*) *filio Warner*.

I believe it is also possible to take this notion of a hybrid system further. Just as the peasants of the lands of the Abbey of Saint-Germain-des-Prés mixed Germanic name elements with lexical items from their own language, the people of post-Conquest England mixed new continental names with English bynames and nicknames – and vice versa. By the first half of the twelfth century we already see individuals with continental names bearing English bynames, *Radulfus Holinessone* (‘son of Holin’), *Hugo Haccemus* (‘hack-mouse’), *Willelmus Piec* (‘peak’), *Willelmus Bruwere* (‘brewer’), *Ernold Adeling* (‘nobleman’) and *Willelmus Surlaf* (‘sour-loaf’) being just a small selection from the Winton Domesday.<sup>292</sup> In the same source we see an instance of someone with an English name apparently bearing a French nickname, *Goda Lamart* (‘la martre’, meaning ‘weasel’).<sup>293</sup> Several other examples of such bilingual, bicultural names were noted by Ekwall in twelfth-century London, including *Ædmund Seintier* (‘bell-founder’), *Godwin Ladubur* (‘clothes repairer’), *Lewin Besant* (from ‘besan’, a gold coin) and *Alric Dangier* (‘danger’).<sup>294</sup> In all these cases, names and bynames from both French and English mixed together and were combined in a hybrid system emblematic of the amalgamation of two cultures, two languages, two systems of naming. This was clearly not a complete replacement of one system by another. Just as England did not become another Normandy in 1066, the English naming system did simply become a continental one overnight. The English naming system of the fourteenth century was quite clearly not the same as that of

<sup>289</sup> See *Thorney Liber Vitae*, fol. 3r.

<sup>290</sup> See *Winchester Studies I*, Winton Domesday entry II/70.

<sup>291</sup> See *Winchester Studies I*, Winton Domesday entries II/197 and II/77.

<sup>292</sup> See *Winchester Studies I*, Winton Domesday entries I/178, II/18, II/56, II/188, II/243 and II/819.

<sup>293</sup> See *Winchester Studies I*, Winton Domesday entry II/954. The language in which bynames is recorded is not necessarily a reflection of the spoken form of the name, and in fact a large proportion of bynames in Winton Domesday are recorded in Latin, particularly occupational bynames, which are most probably translated from either English or French. Yet nickname bynames are often recorded in English or French, and it is well attested that nicknames were formed in both languages, many of which survive today as surnames, so it seems reasonable to assume *Lamart* was the form used. See *Marter/Martyr* in Reaney and Wilson, *Dictionary of English Surnames*, p. 300.

<sup>294</sup> Ekwall, *Early London Personal Names*, pp. 119-178.

1065, but nor was it the same as that which was used by William's conquerors when they crossed the Channel in 1066. It is my conjecture that it was in fact the similarities of naming traditions that allowed such a hybrid system to develop so easily, and enable people to so quickly incorporate new Norman onomastic items into the English onomasticon. New names and name elements were not fused into a compound system, rather new names were taken as whole indivisible items because, in large part, that was how the English naming system functioned by the mid-eleventh century.

### 3. Keeping it in the family

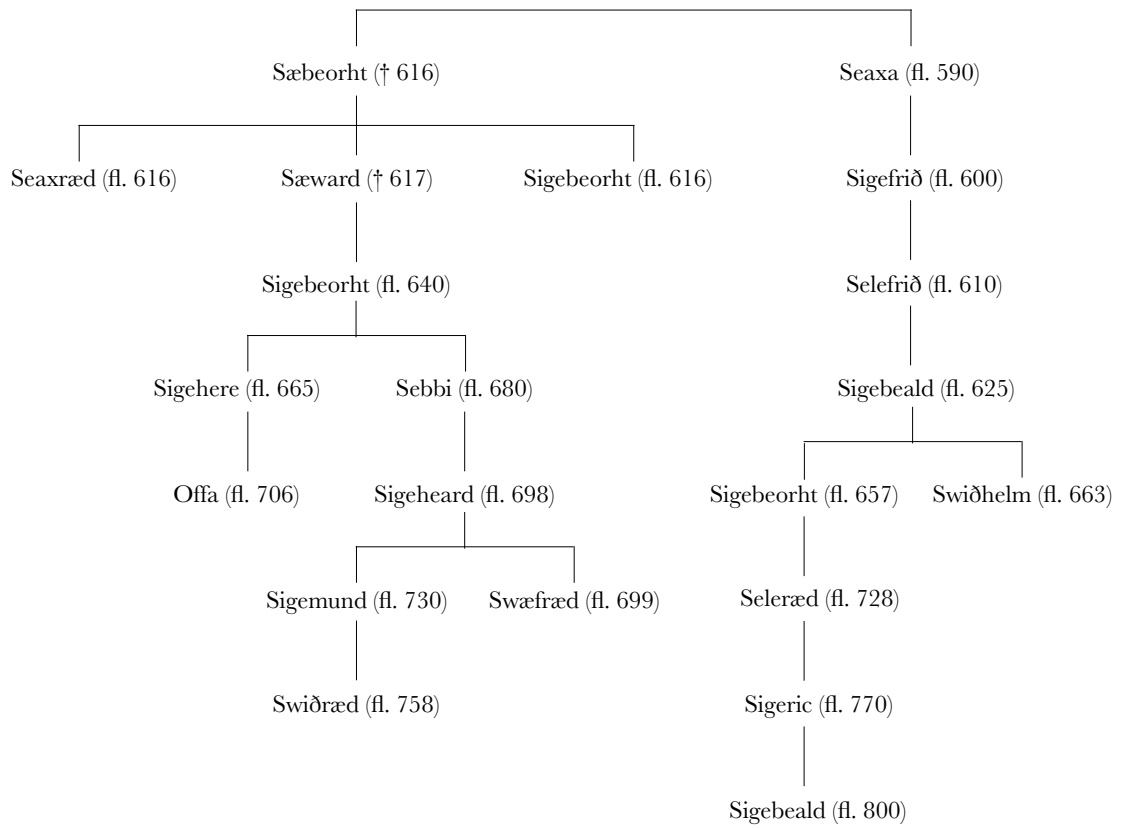
To explore this further, this section will carry out a more systematic study of the naming decisions of a number of families from the Anglo-Saxon through to the Anglo-Norman period, in order to see when and how the English naming system changed. It will examine the use of alliteration, variation and repetition of names within each family, to determine to what extent the dithematic naming system was in use, and look for evidence of the kind of hybridity described above.

Henry Woolf, in his *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, examined several royal and noble genealogies of Anglo-Saxon England, and noted that the early royal lines clearly show the use of alliteration and variation to demonstrate belonging to a family or lineage.<sup>295</sup> For example, the royal line of Essex in the seventh and eighth centuries overwhelmingly used names beginning with *S* and reproduced individual themes several times, but with very little full repetition of names.

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<sup>295</sup> The reasons behind the compilation of the regnal lists from which these genealogies have been recreated are discussed in detail by David Dumville in 'Kingship, genealogies and regnal lists' in David Dumville, *Histories and Pseudo-histories of the Insular Middle Ages* (Aldershot, 1990), pp. 72-104. As Dumville explains, in some cases such lists may obscure as well as reveal. They were not preserved for the sake of it, but to prove a number of things, including a king's right to rule. Individual regnal lists may therefore not always be as objective or accurate a simple list of names appears at face value. That said, they are still a valuable source of information, particularly in examining the early use and choice of personal names amongst elite families. The genealogies presented in this section have been compiled combining the work of a number of scholars, including Henry Woolf, Barbara Yorke, Richard Fletcher and Cyril Hart in order to provide tables as accurate and complete as is possible given the sources available to us. See: Woolf, *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, Barbara Yorke, *Kings and Kingdoms of Early Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1990); Richard Fletcher in *Bloodfeud: Murder and Revenge in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2003); Cyril Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (Leicester, 1975).

Table 5.1: Genealogical table of the royal family of the Kingdom of the East Saxons c.600–c.800



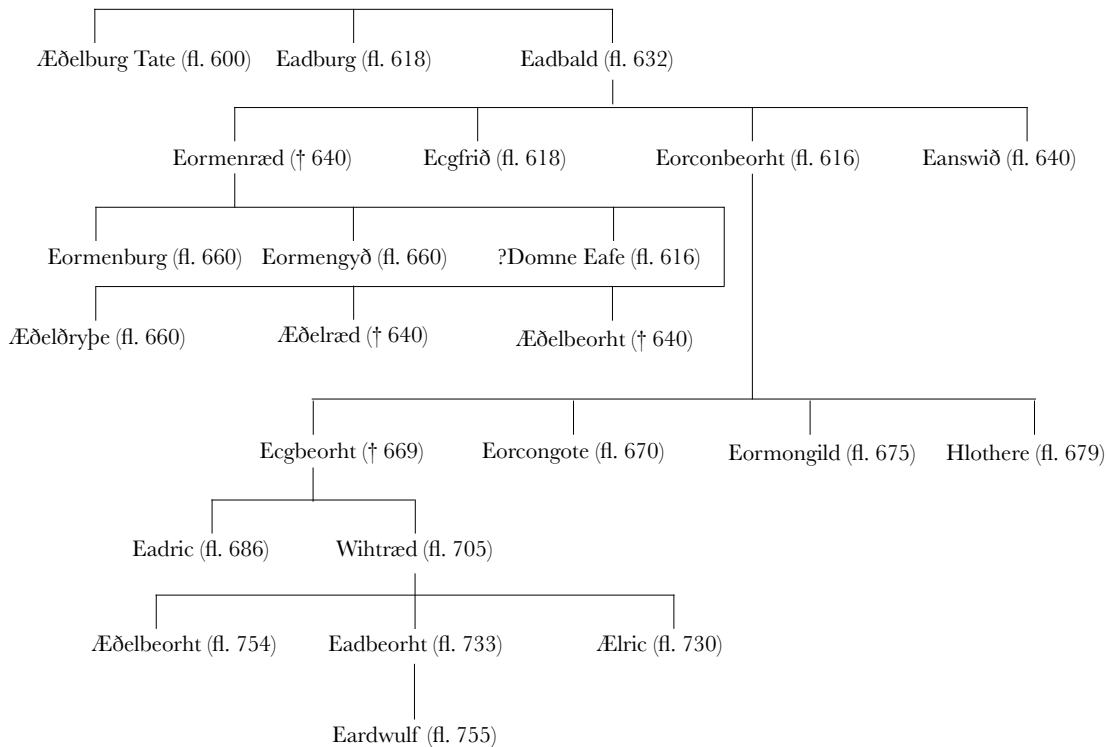
One line of descent, from Seaxa (fl. 590) in the late sixth century, passed through descendants named *Sigefrið*, *Selefrið*, *Sigebæald*, *Sigebeorht*, *Swiðhelm*, *Seleræd*, *Sigeric* and *Sigeræd*, while another line, descended from Sæbeorht (†616), included the names *Seaxræd*, *Sæward*, *Sigebeorht*, *Sigehere*, *Sebbi*, *Sigehæard*, *Sigemund*, *Swæfræd* and *Swiðræd*, with just one name, *Offa*, not adhering to the pattern.<sup>296</sup> Across all these names, just one is repeated, *Sigebeorht*, appearing three times, with an uncle and nephew bearing the name, as well as a distant cousin. This could have been caused by intentional repetition, and Sæward passing down the name of his brother to his son may be significant, but it is an isolated case. In light of the general pattern, the chance recurrence due to theme repetition seems more likely in the case of the third *Sigebeorht*.

A similar pattern can be seen amongst the royal family of Kent, where names beginning in *E* were used alliteratively for over a century and a half between c.600 and c.750, using the names *Eadburg*, *Eadbeald*, *Eormenræd*, *Ecgrifð*, *Eormenburg*, *Eorconbeorht*, *Eormengyð*, *Eanswið*,

<sup>296</sup> Woolf, *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, pp. 17-18.

*Ecgbearht*, *Eorncongote*, *Eormengild*, *Eadric*, *Eadbeorht* and *Eardwulf*.<sup>297</sup> The repetition of the protothemes *Eormen-* and *Eorcon-* across both male and female names seem to suggest a concerted effort to preserve the name theme above and beyond simple alliteration. In addition to *E* names, there are also a number of names beginning with *Æ*, which would have added to the alliterative effect, and there is a particular attachment to the prototheme *Ædel*, including three siblings named *Ædelðryþ*, *Ædelræd* and *Ædelbeorht*.

Table 5.2: Genealogical table of the royal family of the Kingdom of Kent c.600–c.755



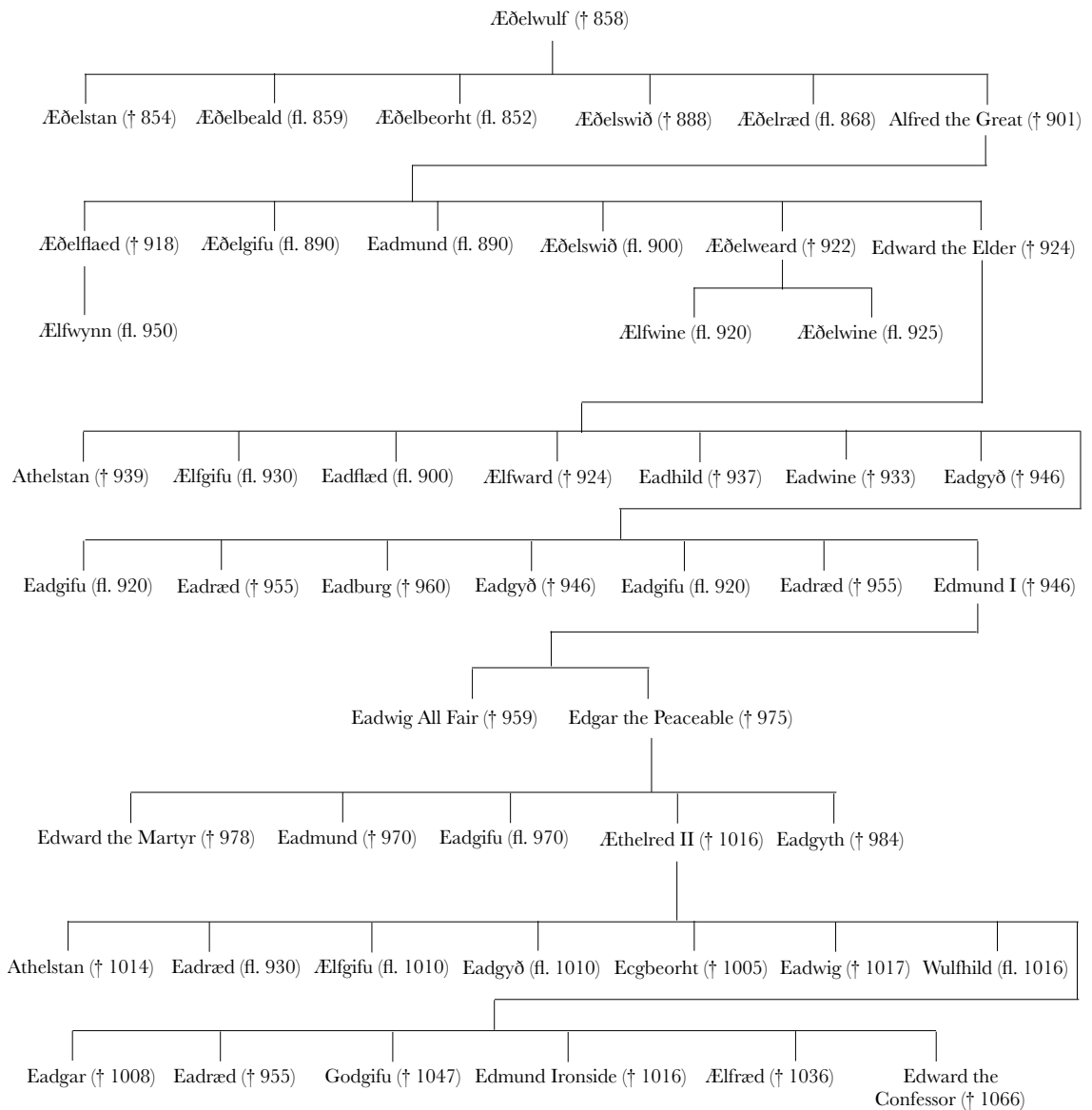
Once again, while we see some repetition amongst the protothemes, the way they were combined with deuteriothemes ensures that there was very little repetition of full names. Only one name, *Ædelbeorht*, appears more than once in the genealogy, and that only twice, some 100 years apart.

In both these examples, it seems clear that the dithematic naming system was in use, with alliteration and variation being used to demonstrate belonging to a family, or kinship group. These genealogies appear to fit within the type of naming system we saw in the Original Core of the Durham *Liber Vitae*, as the compound names incorporate themes in a way

<sup>297</sup> Woolf, *Old Germanic Principles of Name-Giving*, pp. 26-29.

which, despite a number being used frequently, means there is little repetition of full names. When combined with the statistical studies detailed in Chapter 4, these lineages seem to suggest that name repetition was avoided at both community and family level, with names neither shared between living members of a community, nor used to remember deceased members of a family.

Table 5.3: Genealogical table of the house of Wessex, c.850–c.1066



The royal lines of Essex and Kent were not fortunate enough to carry on into the late Anglo-Saxon period, but a look at a much longer lasting line, that of the House of Wessex, shows some significant differences. In the tenth and eleventh centuries we see a similar

pattern of alliteration – names beginning with *Æ* and *E* abound – and there are a number of themes used several times, including *Æðel-*, *Ælf-* and *Ead-*, but the descendants of Alfred also show a much greater tendency to reuse full names. The names of two of Alfred's brothers are repeated within the direct line of succession. *Æðelstan* was borne by Athelstan the Glorious, as well as Athelstan Ætheling (†1014), who died before being able to take the throne, while *Æðelræd* was borne by Æthelred II, the Unready (it was also the name of Æthelred Lord of the Mercians (†911), husband of Alfred's daughter, Æthelflæd (†918), perhaps adding to the prestige of the name). From this point on, the names of the royal house of Wessex begin to take on an increasingly repetitive air, with *Eadward* appearing as the name of Alfred's son, Edward the Elder, then again in the names of Edward the Martyr (†978), Edward the Exile (†1057) and Edward the Confessor. Similarly, *Eadmund* appears twice, in the names of Edmund I (†946) and Edmund Ironside (†1016), as does *Eadræd*, the name of another of Alfred's grandsons, who ruled from 946-955, and Eadred Ætheling (†1013), one of Æthelred the Unready's ill-fated heirs. In fact, Æthelred II achieved a full house (or at least a royal flush) by giving all of his sons names of previous West Saxon kings. In addition to *Æðelstan*, *Eadmund* and *Eadræd*, his remaining heirs were named: *Eadwig*, the same as Æthelred's uncle, Eadwig All-Fair (†959); *Ecgbeorht*, whose namesake (not shown in the table) was king of Wessex from 802-839 and grandfather of Alfred the Great; and, of course, *Ælfred*. The reign of the House of Wessex was brought to an end following the events of 1066, with first Harold then William usurping the rightful heir. The last king of the great house of Cerdic and Alfred was Edgar II (†1126), commonly called Edgar the Ætheling – although he was in fact elected king by the Witan in 1066 after Harold's death. He too had a namesake in the form of his great-great-grandfather, Edgar the Peaceful (†975), who reigned in much happier times between 939 and 946.

From the late ninth century onwards, there were in fact no male names not repeated at least once within the main line of the House of Wessex.<sup>298</sup> This is in stark contrast to the two earlier royal lines examined from Essex and Kent, and clearly represents a change in how names were chosen, at least amongst the great and the good. Name repetition, far from being avoided, appears to have become a conscious choice, with names of ancestors being chosen either to remember and commemorate them, or perhaps instil some of the prestige

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<sup>298</sup> The two exceptions are *Ælfveard* and *Eadwine*, the disinherited children Edward the Elder and his second wife, Ælflæd. The rest of this branch is not shown here, but the events following Edward's reign may well explain why the names were not repeated within the main line of family.

of a previous name bearer into their descendant (or quite possibly both). Although it is theoretically possible that there was no intention of the sort in the selection of these names, and their reuse occurred purely by chance, through the combination of common themes that happened to produce names of past family members, this seems unlikely given the broader trends already demonstrated in this thesis, and evidence from royal and noble families on the continent, where such name repetition was widespread. Even if it were accidental, it clearly shows that there was little attempt made to avoid name repetition.

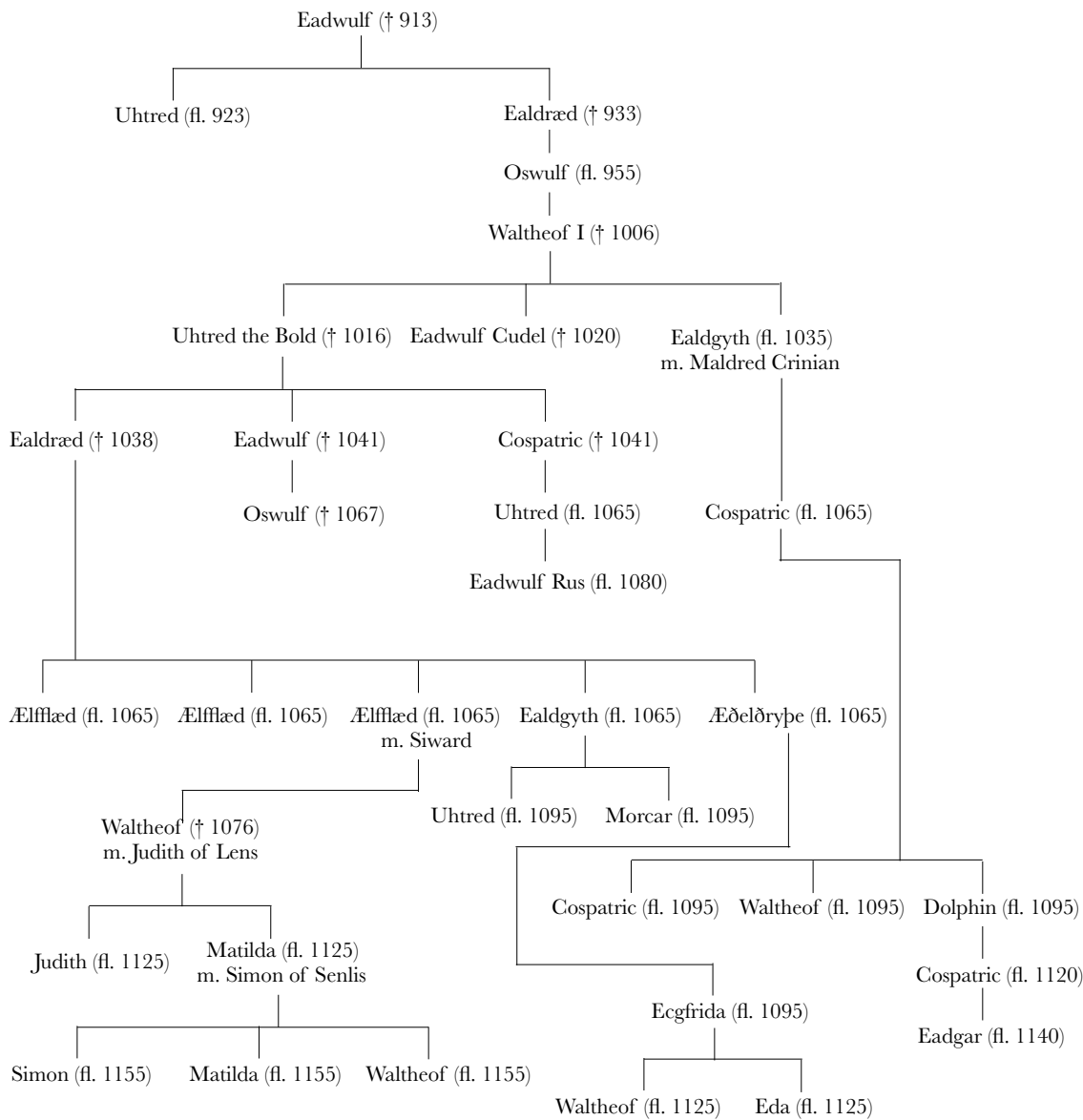
This trend towards passing down names within a family can be seen clearly in the genealogy of a non-royal late Anglo-Saxon family. The House of Bamburgh was a powerful northern family who had ruled independently over an ‘English’ principality carved out of Northumbria from their formidable stronghold at Bamburgh, even while the rest of the old Kingdom was controlled by Danes based in York. The *heahgerefa* (‘high-reeves’) of Bamburgh remained influential once Northumbria returned to English hands, with members of the family often fulfilling the role of Earl of Northumbria. Earldoms were not hereditary in pre-Conquest England – at least not in theory, although in practice earldoms did pass from father to son – and the rather bloody struggles of the family, including over who ruled the northern lands of England on behalf of the king, are described in the *De Obsessione Dunelmi*.<sup>299</sup> Despite these violent goings-on, the family remained influential up to the time of the Conquest and beyond, holding vast areas of land across Northumbria and Yorkshire as well as Northamptonshire and Huntingdonshire. Tracing the family tree from Eadwulf II (†913), who was earl from c.890 to c.912, confirms a number of patterns seen previously in this thesis. Firstly, there was little or no attempt to produce unique names during the period shown here. There is a high degree of repetition of names, with names being both passed down through the family, as well being shared by living kinspeople. Of the descendants of Eadwulf II (†913), three more bore the same name as him: his great-grandson, Eadwulf Cudel (†1020) whose nephew in turn bore the name, as well as a fourth *Eadwulf*, Eadwulf Rus (fl. 1080).<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> The text survives in only one manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139, and is printed in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. Arnold. The story it tells and much more related information is excellently and entertainingly recounted by Richard Fletcher in *Bloodfeud*.

<sup>300</sup> There was one more *Eadwulf*, Eadwulf Evil-Child, who was Earl of Bamburgh prior to Waltheof I but disappeared from the scene in 975. Little is known about him, so it cannot be certain that he was a relation, however this seems plausible. See Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, pp. 44-45.

Table 5.4: Genealogical table of the House of Bamburgh, c.900–c.1155



It seems clear that at least two of these men must have lived at the same time, and it seems likely that Uhtred the Bold (†1016) named his son *Eadwulf* after his own brother (at least he would have been aware of his brother's name when giving his son the same one).<sup>301</sup> *Uchtræd* was another frequently repeated name, being borne by Eadwulf II's first son, then Uhtred the Bold, as well as two more *Uchtræds*, who appear further down the family tree. There are more repeated names. *Oswulf* appears twice – as does *Ealdræd* – while *Cospatric* appears four times, and *Waltheof* five. This name repetition takes place without any

<sup>301</sup> Uhtred the Bold was famed for his military might and held the earldom of Northumbria on behalf of Æthelred II for ten years until his murder, aided by the connivance of Cnut, in 1016. See Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, pp. 1-12.



significant repetition of protothemes – or at least, themes are only repeated within specific names. *Eald-* only appears in the male name *Ealdred* and the female name *Ealdgyth* (or *Edith*), while *Ucht-* only appears in *Uchtræd* and *Ead-* only appears in *Eadwulf* (apart from one appearance of *Eadgar* in the twelfth century), and *Os-* only appears in *Oswulf*. It is true that there are two common deuterothermes which appear in these repeated names, *-ræd* and *-wulf*, but this does not mirror the practices of the earlier examples, where first theme repetition was much more common. Simply relying on repetition of deuterothermes seems a much less striking way of demonstrating a family connection, as it did not achieve an alliterative effect. A rather unconvincing case could be made for some alliteration amongst these names, with *Os-*, *Ead-*, *Eald-* and *Ucht-* all beginning with vowels, but this would be a stretch, and there are many other names used which do not fit even this pattern. It seems clear that the recurring names were repeated in their entirety, and not by any chance selection of name themes. Earl Cospatric (fl. 1065) himself gave all three of his sons ‘family’ names, *Dolphin*, *Cospatric* and *Waltheof*, all of which had been used previously, and some sources also suggest that he named one of his daughters *Uchtræda*, a clear sign of the importance of these names within the family – their repetition seems unlikely to have been a coincidence.

The three names Cospatric chose for his sons prove this particularly well, as they are of foreign origin, and not created using independent themes (at least not in this case). Cospatric clearly selected these three names, repeated from previous family members as indivisible names in their own right, and bestowed them on his sons. This demonstrates not only the increased tendency of people to repeat names as a whole, but also the hybridity of the naming system. It is striking how easily names of foreign origin were incorporated into the family tree – not just in isolated incidences, but as repeated names which seem to have been emblematic of family belonging. *Waltheof* was an Anglicised form of a Scandinavian name, *Valþjófr*. It is unclear how, or why, the name entered the family of the high-reeves of Bamburgh. Waltheof I (†1006) is likely to have been either the son of Oswulf I (fl. 955) or Eadwulf Evil-child (fl. 973), so it could be assumed that he had some Scandinavian ancestry through his mother’s side. Whatever its provenance, the name stuck and, when another Scandinavian, Siward (†1055), was awarded the Earldom of Bamburgh by Cnut some 35 years after Waltheof I’s death, he entrenched his position by marrying Æfflæd (fl. 1065), the daughter of the previous earl, and gave his son the family name *Waltheof*, one befitting the

head of the House of Bamburgh.<sup>302</sup> Henceforth the name appeared regularly, being used well into the thirteenth century, and its frequent use meant it was held by a number of family members at the same time, albeit at differing degrees of relation and across multiple generations. But the attachment of the name to the family, and the family to the name, seems clear. The same can be said for *Cospatric*, from the Cumbric *Gwæspatrick* ('servant of Patrick'), which was used widely within the family. It was the name of one post-Conquest earl, and was passed down directly from father to son on two occasions, including from Earl Cospatric to his own son, as seen above, as well as to his grandson via his son, Dolphin (fl. 1095).

The ability to incorporate foreign names into the family name stock shows the ease with which the naming system of this one family adapted to the changing social, cultural and linguistic environment.<sup>303</sup> Importantly, they did this by assimilating and repeating complete names, not by incorporating foreign name elements to create hybrid compound names. Moreover, the impetus for doing this had nothing to do with the transposition of a continental Norman naming system into England. The practice of name repetition was clearly present in the tenth- and eleventh-century naming decisions of the House of Wessex almost as much as it was in the House of Bamburgh. Once names had come to be seen as indivisible, repeatable items in their own right, the incorporation of foreign names into that system without alteration would have been not just easy, but natural.

The dearth of recorded female names precludes a statistical study of them, and this thesis focuses for the most part on male names as a result, yet an interesting quirk of this genealogy centres on the recurrence of one particular female name, *Ælffled*, which was given to three consecutive daughters of Ealdred II. As Simeon of Durham explained, 'comes Aldredus genuit quinque filias, quarum tres eodem nomine Ælffledæ vocabantur'.<sup>304</sup> The name appears nowhere else within the family tree, and the bestowing of the name on three daughters seems excessive. It is possible that the name was so revered by the family that three daughters all bore the same name into adulthood, although it may have been an example of a name being passed on from sibling to sibling in the event of the first dying in

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<sup>302</sup> Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, p. 131-132.

<sup>303</sup> Lestremau also notes the linguistic plurality of the names of the Earls of Bamburgh. See Lestremau, 'Pratiques anthroponymiques et identités sociales', p. 624.

<sup>304</sup> *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, vol. 1, p. 219.

infancy.<sup>305</sup> The fact that it was the third of these *Ælflæds* who married Earl Siward, and whose rights of inheritance were so keenly contested following her father's death, may suggest that this was the case. Either way, it does show a particular attachment to this name, yet the reasons for this are unclear. The name does appear a number of times in the names of the house of Wessex and *Ælgifu* (fl. 1010), third wife of Uhtred the Bold and mother-in-law of Ealdred II (†1038), was a daughter of *Æthelred II*, so the use of this name may have been an attempt by Ealdred to both please his mother-in-law and demonstrate the relationship his family had with the royal house of Wessex.

What is clear is that the name was important and, if the name was preserved despite the passing of the first two sisters, it demonstrates just how differently names were being used. From a system where names were created for each person, where the individual and the name were inextricably linked, we seem to have already come a long way towards one where the individual was, in a sense, born to carry a name. A number of names had become significant to this one family, their use and reuse not only demonstrating family belonging and memorialising former family members, but also legitimising the bearers of these names. *Uchtræd*, *Ealdræd*, *Eadwulf* and *Cospatric* were names fit to be worn by the Earls of Bamburgh, and they were passed down through the family with almost as much care as the lands and titles they were associated with. To a large extent, the provenance of these names was of little consequence to the family, as names of English origin mixed with Brittonic Cumbric names and names from Scandinavia within the same family, each holding as much prestige as the next. While there was clearly an attachment to a number of traditional Old English names, the ease with which new 'foreign' names were incorporated into this family shows how quickly a name, given an association to a prominent individual, family or group, could become part of the family onomasticon. Indeed, in a moment we will look more closely at how these same names, once associated with powerful individuals and families, were able to swiftly enter into the wider name stock of a community, a region or even a kingdom. First,

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<sup>305</sup> This is far from unknown. Henry I had three surviving daughters named *Matilda*, although only one of these (Empress Matilda, or Maude) was the legitimate product of his marriage to Matilda of Scotland. His other two daughters of this name, Matilda Countess of Perche and Matilda Duchess of Brittany, were born of two different mistresses. As each Matilda had a different mother, combined with the fact that Henry may have had as many as 16 daughters in total, does make the repetition of the name somewhat less remarkable than Ealdred's fondness for the name *Ælflæd*, which was given to three of his five daughters. For more on Henry I and his daughters, see Judith Green, *Henry I: King of England and Duke of Normandy* (Cambridge, 2006) and Charles Hollister and Amanda Frost (ed.), *Henry I* (London, 2001).

however, we will look at another prominent pre-Conquest family whose naming decisions reveal a similar tendency towards hybridity.

The family is that of Earl Godwine (†1053), a man who wielded huge amounts of power across England during the first half of the tenth century. He was indispensable first to Cnut, and then Edward the Confessor – although Edward tried his level best to dispense with him.<sup>306</sup> Rising from obscure origins, the son of a minor Sussex thegn, Wulfnoth Cild (†1014), by his death in 1053 Godwine and his family controlled land, estates and men across vast swathes of England: from their original southern power base in Sussex, to the earldom of Northumbria; from the fractious border regions in the west, where conflict with the Welsh was frequent, to the coast of East Anglia which was vulnerable to Scandinavian attacks.<sup>307</sup> Importantly, he was also exceptionally powerful in the traditional royal heartlands of Wessex, holding the earldom as well as large amounts of land and significant influence in Cnut's former stronghold of Winchester, even once the crown had passed to Edward in 1042.<sup>308</sup> The extent to which the Godwines' fortunes had risen is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1065, Harold Godwinson held 94 holdings more than the king himself, and the sons of Godwine between them held 224 more holdings than Edward across the whole kingdom.<sup>309</sup> He also ensured that, in addition to becoming rich, he became famous, by patronising a skald to publicise his achievements.<sup>310</sup>

While Godwine's family tree is not as long as some others examined so far, the naming patterns of the few generations of this powerful family that we know of are instructive. As we saw amongst the Earls of Bamburgh, there is a willingness to incorporate names from

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<sup>306</sup> See Mason, *The House of Godwine*, pp. 49-81 for more on Godwine's fractious relationship with Edward the Confessor

<sup>307</sup> See Robin Fleming, 'Domesday Estates of the King and the Godwines: A Study in Late Saxon Politics' in *Speculum* 58.4, (1983), pp. 987-1007 and Mason, *The House of Godwine*, pp. 31-57.

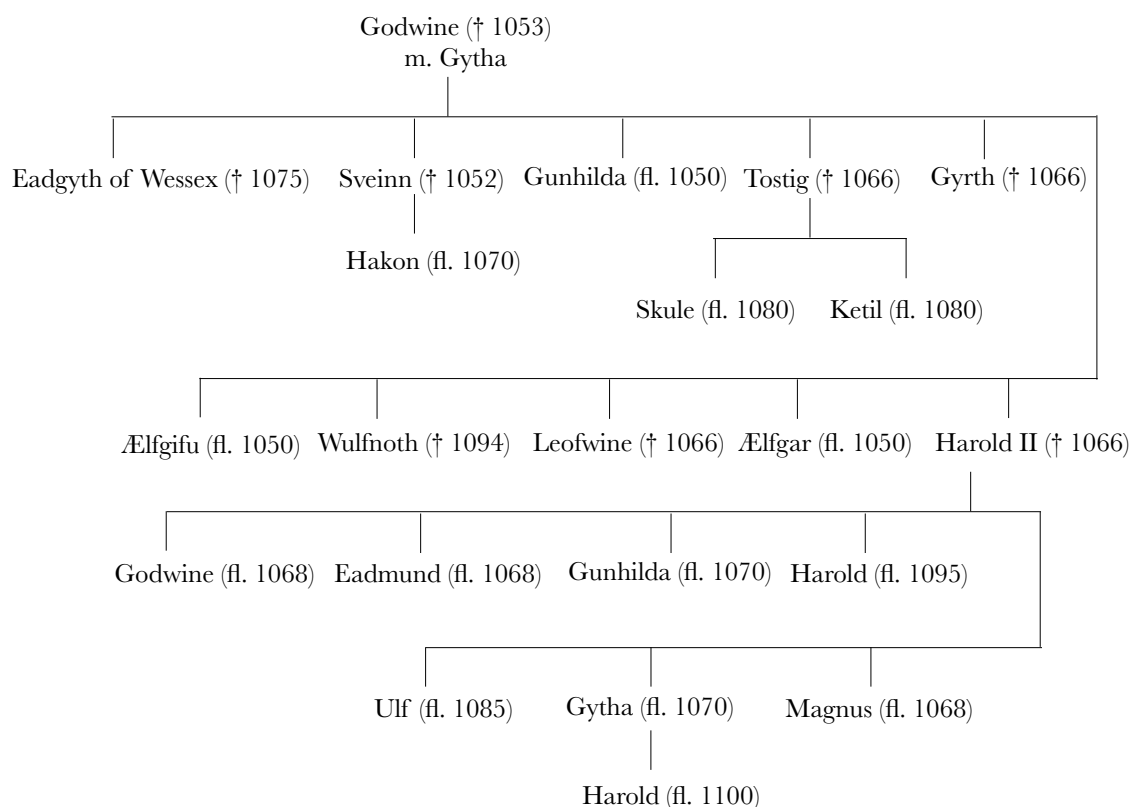
<sup>308</sup> The influence of the Godwines in Winchester may explain Edward's preference for London, epitomised by his personal project, the abbey at Westminster.

<sup>309</sup> Fleming, 'Domesday Estates of the Godwines' pp. 991-994 gives a detailed breakdown of the estates by county. The relative value of these holdings is disputed and, while Fleming suggests the total worth of the land held by the Godwinesons was greater than that of the king, Stephen Baxter disagrees, suggesting that Edward's lands were worth more. See Stephen Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 128-138. In either case, it is clear that the family of Godwine was exceedingly influential both in terms of land held and its worth, and was second only, if at all, to the royal household in influence (indeed, by both Fleming's and Baxter's calculations they held land valuing roughly twice as much as the Leofwinesons, the next most influential comital family).

<sup>310</sup> Mason, *The House of Godwine*, p. 31.

different languages and traditions. Godwine's wife, Gytha (†1069), was a Danish noblewoman, the daughter of Thorgil Sprakling (fl. 997) and sister of the powerful Earl, Ulf Thorgilsson (†1026) – who was in turn married to Cnut's sister, Estrid Svendsdatter (fl. 1056).<sup>311</sup>

Table 5.5: Genealogical table of the House of Godwine, c.1050–c.1100



The names of the children of Gytha and Godwine reflect their Anglo-Danish origins, although, as in the case of the descendants of Waltheof, this is not done by the hybridisation of the names themselves, but the selection of appropriate names from both languages. Of their eleven children, five bore Scandinavian names: *Sveinn*, *Tostig*, *Gyrth*, *Gunhilda* and, of course, *Harold* (*Haraldr*); while six bore English names: *Wulfnoth*, *Edith* (*Eadgyth*), *Ælfgar*, *Leofwine*, *Ælfgifu* and *Eadgifu*. This was a truly Anglo-Danish family, and there there must have been countless more like this across England at this time. However, most such families were unlikely to have had such a well connected matriarch as Gytha, and one must question

<sup>311</sup> See Mason, *The House of Godwine*, pp. 35-36 for more on Gytha and Godwine's family. In these bynames *Thorkel* and *Thorgils* refer to the same *Thorkel*, Thorkel Sprakling, or Thorgils Sprakalæg.

whether Godwine would have been so willing to embrace Gytha's Scandinavian roots had she not been the sister-in-law of Cnut – although equally one must also not dismiss the important role which any mother must have played in the selection of names for their children.

Amongst the names of Godwine's children there are several which we can link not just to Godwine and Gytha's immediate family, but also the extended kinship of which Cnut and his descendants formed a part. *Sveinn* was the name of Cnut's father, Gytha's father-in-law, as well as one of Cnut's sons. *Haraldr* was borne by a brother of Cnut, Harald II of Denmark (†1018), as well as Harald Harefoot (†1040), who was Cnut's successor as King of England and was born just six years before Godwine's son, Harold. *Gunhilda* was also the name of a daughter of Cnut, who was betrothed to Henry III (†1056), Holy Roman Emperor, from a young age, and destined to be Queen Consort of Germany (although her reign as queen was short, and she died just two years after her eventual marriage). While there are no obvious connections with the other two Scandinavian names, *Gyrth* and *Tostig*, there do seem to be clear similarities between the name choices of Godwine and Cnut, and these Cnutian connections seem to take precedence in the name choices of Godwine over those of his own heritage. It is not until c.1040 that he gives his sixth son the name of his own father, *Wulfnoth*. The name *Gytha* was passed down to one of Godwine's daughters as well, although she came to be known by the English *Ealdgyth* (*Edith*) following her marriage to Edward the Confessor.<sup>312</sup> The lack of information surrounding the family before Godwine's time means it is also difficult to make connections with the other English names amongst his children, but we do see more reuse of family names amongst the children of Harold, with *Godwine*, *Harold*, *Gunhilda*, *Gytha* and *Ulf* all being passed down from previous family members. Gytha, Harold's daughter, then named her own son *Harold* in turn.

The family of Earl Godwine demonstrates how, by the eleventh century, families and individuals were willing and able to incorporate names from different linguistic traditions into their onomasticon. They copied and passed down names through their family as markers of lineage and family identity. They used names to memorialise loved ones and, in

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<sup>312</sup> Mason, *The House of Godwine*, p. 35.

some cases, to demonstrate connection to, and fondness for, a lord or patron.<sup>313</sup> In many ways, the practices described here are exactly those outlined by David Postles when he talks of a hybrid system in post-Conquest England, but taking place a few generations earlier. It certainly appears that this is the case, and if families such as the Earls of Bamburgh and the Godwines are at all representative of the wider population of England, they show just how easily new, in this case continental, names would have been incorporated following the Conquest.

#### 4. Local names for local people

The practices we have seen so clearly amongst these individual families can also be seen at a broader level, at community, regional and even national level. This has already been demonstrated in the statistical studies of Chapters 4 and 5, where we saw the increasing trend towards concentration around a number of popular names across England, but also regional differences between the specific names which became popular. A closer look at some specific examples may help clarify this process further – how did names pass from being popular within one specific family to being popular across the broader population?

The names of the Earls of Bamburgh may well be a good place to look for answers. We have seen how a number of specific family names became repeated within this family over the course of the tenth and eleventh century, and in some cases new names were incorporated from outside the traditional Old English name stock. It also appears that a number of these comital names entered, and proliferated, in the wider name stock of the region over which the Earls of Bamburgh held land and influence. In a wide area of northern England, and southern Scotland, names including *Uchtred*, *Waltheof*, *Eadwulf*, *Cospatric*, *Siward*, *Dolphin* and *Meldred* all remained in relatively frequent use for a long period after the Conquest. John Insley and David Postles have both noted the persistence of these names, linking it to their connections with the comital family of Bamburgh, and Insley in fact refers to a ‘northern onomastic zone’, of which these names were characteristic.<sup>314</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Lestremau notes that there appears to be a rapid decline in practice of variation of name themes within families – a change which he dates from around the beginning of Æthelred II’s reign – but is of the opinion that the tendency to repeat names within families does not increase to take its place. See Lestremau, ‘Pratiques anthroponymiques et identités sociales’, pp. 686-687.

<sup>314</sup> Insley, ‘Some Aspects of Regional Variation’, pp. 183-190 and Postles, *Naming the People of England*, pp. 36-37.

Postles notes a number of examples from twelfth-century Durham, including *Dolphin filius Uhtredi* and *Maldred filius Dolfini* from the witness list of an *actum* transferring half a carucate of land from Geoffrey Bishop of Durham to his monks.<sup>315</sup> He also notes a Durham family where a *Gospatrick* was succeeded by an *Uhtred de Alverstain* then a *Thorphin de Alverstain*, as well as three free tenants of Dilston in Northumberland named *Walef filius Alden*, *Uhtred filius Bertrami* and *Cospatrick Hamel*.<sup>316</sup>

A name which only appeared once in the Bamburgh genealogy was that of Earl Siward. Yet, despite the fact that his name was not repeated within the family, it is a name which became widespread in many areas of England prior to the Conquest, and seemingly remained in use following it. Some 107 different *Siwards* are listed in Domesday. Its popularity was not confined exclusively to the north of England, and there are bearers listed in counties across the kingdom, including Shropshire, where *Siward the fat* held 63 holdings (as well as one in Worcestershire); and *Siward sot*, who held three holdings in Essex. However there is a particular concentration in northern and eastern areas of Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, including, *Siuuard father of Aki*, Lord of Welton le Wold, who held fifteen holdings, *Siward of Warlaby*, who held the two adjacent holdings of Warlaby and Kirkby Wiske, and *Siward of Holmpton*, who held one holding at Holmpton, nestled between the North Sea and the Humber estuary.<sup>317</sup> The widespread nature of *Siward* calls into question whether the impact of one earl could cause the proliferation and dispersion of a name over such a large area. It may just have been that the name itself was popular at the time, making the chances of a notable individual bearing it more likely (as is, of course, the case for all names).<sup>318</sup> However, the spread of such a specific group of names associated with one family seems unlikely to have been entirely coincidental. Siward most certainly would have been a

<sup>315</sup> See Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 36 for discussion and Hilary Offler (ed.), *Durham Episcopal Charters, 1071-1152* (Gateshead, 1968), p. 122 for the *actum*, which dates from between c.1133 and c.1141.

<sup>316</sup> As Postles notes, *Cospatrick Hamel* provides an example of hybrid naming in practice. See Postles, *Naming the People of England*, pp. 36-37 for discussion, J. C. Atkinson (ed.), *Cartularium Abbathiae De Whiteby* (Durham, 1879), vol I, pp. 35-37 for the family of Ulverston (County Durham) and William Farrer (ed.), *Early Yorkshire Charters* (Edinburgh, 1916), vol. 1, pp. 33-34 for the tenants of Dilston.

<sup>317</sup> A full list of these can be found on *PASE Domesday*, see Stephen Baxter, 'Siward', *PASE Domesday*, [http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/Domesday?op=5&nameinfo\\_id=947](http://domesday.pase.ac.uk/Domesday?op=5&nameinfo_id=947) [accessed 26 September 2016].

<sup>318</sup> It is also possible that some instances of the name are not from the Old Norse *Sigvǫðr* or *Sigurðr*, but the Old English *Sigeweard*, and its rise may have arisen completely independently of Earl Siward, although instances of *Sigeweard* are relatively infrequent, with only three individuals of this name being recorded in *PASE* prior to the eleventh century. See 'Sigeweard 1', 'Sigeweard 2' and 'Sigeweard 5': <http://www.pase.ac.uk> [accessed 19 August 2016].



well known figure across the whole of England, not just its northern counties. Sometimes known by the nickname *Digera*, an Old Norse term meaning ‘strong’, he was Earl of all of Northumbria from 1041, holding the lands of Bernicia in the north, but also Deira, the southern lands of Yorkshire, stretching down to the Humber Estuary and across to the mouth of the River Ribble. He was a renowned warrior, fighting frequently against the Scots, and winning more often than not – including a great victory over Macbeth (†1057) in 1054 which saw Malcolm III (†1093) installed as king.<sup>319</sup> Having also fought, and won, battles against the Britons of Strathclyde and Cumbria, he would have effectively ruled over the whole of the North of England. The fact that Edward the Confessor never ventured any further north than Gloucester suggests that he ruled with a free hand, with little interference from the king.<sup>320</sup>

The post-Conquest persistence of the names of the Earls of Bamburgh in a wide area of northern England is borne out by the corpora examined in this thesis. Amongst the individuals listed in Boldon Book we encounter several people bearing these names, with *Uhtred* featuring particularly heavily. There is an *Utredu*s at Hutton, and another at Middridge, as well as an *Utredu*s *de Boterwyk*, an *Uttredu*s *de Quilnerby* and an *Arnaldus filius Utrede* at Beddlington.<sup>321</sup> Another name which only appears once in the genealogy is *Maldred*, borne by Maldred mac Crínán. He was the husband of Edith, daughter of Uhtred I and Princess Æthelgifu, as well as brother of Duncan I of Scotland, Earl of Dunbar and eventual father of Earl Cospatric.<sup>322</sup> It is possible that his name also influenced the names of the people of Boldon Book. At Stanhope we meet a *Meldredus* and a *Meldredus Faber*.<sup>323</sup> There is a *Mildredus* at Lanchester, a *Robertus filius Meldredi* at Whessoe and even a *Meldredus filius Dolfini* at Stella in Ryton.<sup>324</sup> We also see an *Aldredus faber* and an *Edulphus* Palefrey, at Stanhope, an *Uxor Aldredi* at Little Haughton and a *Robertus filius Gospatricis* at

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<sup>319</sup> Indeed, his role was well-known enough for Shakespeare to name him as the leader of the English forces at Dunsinane, where his fictional son, Young Siward, dies at the hands of Macbeth.

<sup>320</sup> Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, p. 131 and pp. 141-148.

<sup>321</sup> *Boldon Book*, fols 46v, 39r, 42r, 49v and 41r.

<sup>322</sup> Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, pp. 76-77 and 148

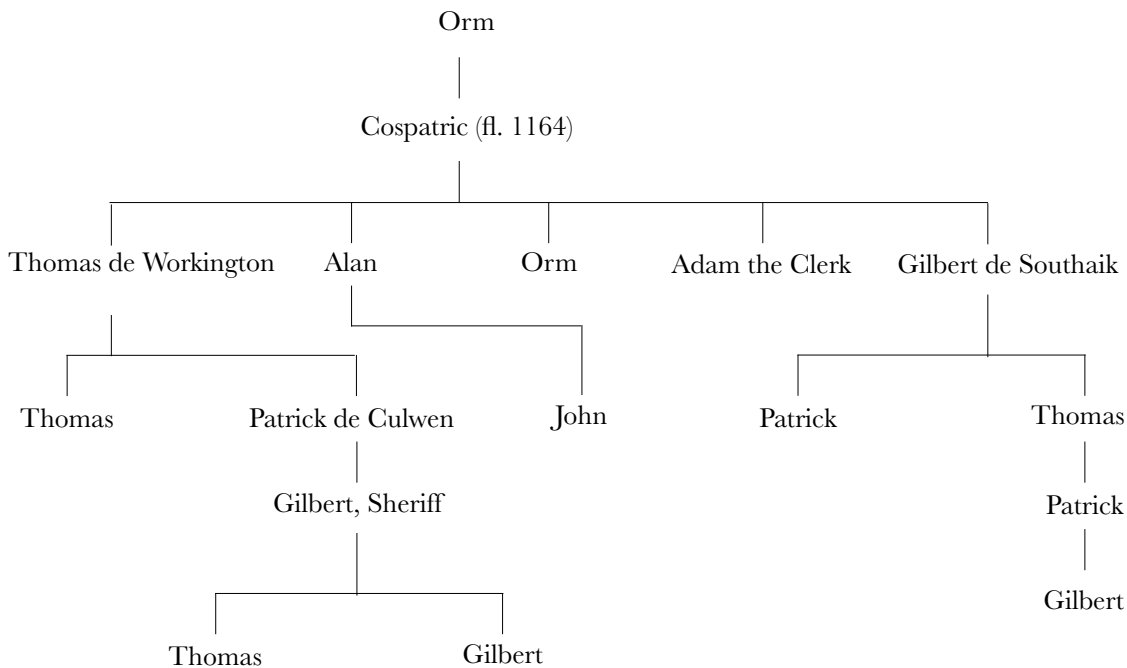
<sup>323</sup> *Boldon Book*, fol. 44r.

<sup>324</sup> *Boldon Book*, fols 44r, 49r and 46r. *Dolfin* was also the name of Maldred mac Crínán’s grandson.

Bedlingtonshire.<sup>325</sup> There is a *Patricius* at West Sleekburn, whose name may have simply shown the spread of the Latin name, but may also represent a later form of *Cospatric*.<sup>326</sup>

In fact, the name may have transformed into *Patrick* and survived in this form in many cases. Thomas de Workington, the head of a Kendal family who donated Flimby (Flemingby) to Holm Abbey in c.1180, was the son of a *Cospatric*.<sup>327</sup> He gave his son the name *Patrick*, as did his brother, Gilbert de Southaik, and another of Gilbert's sons, Thomas – suggesting that, in this case at least, the name *Cospatric* did become *Patrick*. Moreover, this once again shows the continued trend for familial reuse of certain names.

Table 5.6: Genealogical table of the Workington and Southaik families, c.1150–c.1307



In addition to *Cospatric/Patrick*, a number of names are repeated in the same family, notably *Thomas* and *Gilbert*, meaning these three names account for twelve of the seventeen male names shown in just this small branch of the family tree. This family demonstrates perfectly the continuation of pre-Conquest naming practices, both in the patterns of repetition of names within the family, as well as in the hybridity of the system. We see the provenance of

<sup>325</sup> *Boldon Book*, fol. 43v, 44r, 48v and 41r.

<sup>326</sup> *Boldon Book*, fol. 40v.

<sup>327</sup> 'The Register: Flimby', in *Register and Records of Holm Cultram*, ed. Francis Grainger and W. G. Collingwood (Kendal, 1929), pp. 18-21. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/n-westmorland-records/vol7/pp18-21> [accessed 9 September 2016].

the names being passed down change, and the frequency of the repetition increase, but ultimately the way in which they are being used remains largely the same as the Godwines and the Earls of Bamburgh. The sons of Cospatric show the extent to which the name stock of northern England in the period following the Conquest had become a linguistic amalgam. While his own name was Cumbric in origin, he passed down his father's Anglo-Scandinavian name, *Orm*, to one of his sons, while also choosing a Breton name, *Alan*, a continental Germanic name, *Gilbert*, as well as two biblical names, *Thomas* and *Adam* for his remaining sons (*Thomas* by this point was also, of course, the name of a popular saint).

It is impossible to know whether *Orm* or *Cospatric* consciously identified as having Scandinavian or Cumbric heritage, or if they were different to people in the same area who had Old English names, either culturally or linguistically. Nor is it easy to work out whether any of these names would have been consciously considered as being anything other than 'English', but even if this were the case, *Cospatric* clearly had no compunction about incorporating them into their family. Importantly, it is almost certain that *Cospatric* himself was no inspired linguistic innovator, radically altering the way his family had chosen names in the past to exemplify different aspects of the language and culture of north-west England, or even his family. Instead, it seems likely that, in his eyes, he (and presumably his wife) were not doing anything new, nor were they doing anything particularly differently to any of their friends or neighbours. People had clearly, over time, become used to naming their children after other people, whether they be physical members of their family or community, or imagined, spiritual personages from the bible and the canon of saints. Once this custom had become accepted, the incorporation of new names, whatever their conceived origin, would have been nothing out of the ordinary, and in a relatively short space of time, names that may have once been considered foreign, would have simply become names like any other. Within this framework, the gradual phasing out of certain, less fashionable names, such as *Orm* in this case, the incorporation of new, more fashionable ones, such as *Adam* and *Thomas*, and even the transformation of certain names into updated forms, such as *Cospatric* into *Patrick*, would have been neither revolutionary, nor even necessarily intentional.

Yet, as shown by the persistence of the names of the Earls of Bamburgh, despite the ease with which new names would have entered the name stock, there must have been something

about these particular names which made them stick. We even see a few hanging on into the thirteenth century, although in ever smaller numbers. In the Lancashire Feet of Fines, we still see several people bearing the names *Cospatric*, *Uhtred*, *Waltheof* and *Seward* in the early 1200s, including an *Uhtred de Chyrche*, a *Seward de Deuksbiri* and a *Gospatrick de Charlton*.<sup>328</sup> There is even an *Ughtred de Marton* among the freemen of York as late as the 1280s.<sup>329</sup> So what was it about these names that made them persist for so long? Bourin and Chareille believe that the continental evidence points to the influence of local or regional lords and magnates over naming patterns in certain areas.<sup>330</sup> Clark made similar assertions to explain why certain continental names, specifically *William*, *Robert* and *Richard*, became so popular in post-Conquest England, while certain royal names, such as *Henry* and *Stephen* had much less of an impact.<sup>331</sup> David Postles highlights an example from Kibworth Harcourt, Leicestershire, where in c.1280 tithing lists indicates that, while the three most popular male names were the fairly predictable *Robert*, *William* and *John*, the proportion of people bearing the name *Ivo* was surprisingly high, sitting seventh in the list accounting for 6 percent of individuals listed.<sup>332</sup> The unusual popularity of this name seems likely to have been down to the first honorial baron of Harcourt, Ivo, who died in c.1180 – something Postles ascribes to a ‘local collective remembrance’ caused more by habit than cognitive memory, and there are other examples of powerful local and regional lords who seem to have had an impact on the name choices of the people in a specific area.<sup>333</sup>

One such name may have been *Godwine*. As already seen, Earl Godwine’s influence, and that of his heirs, was significant over a huge area of England, particularly the southern shires of Sussex and Hampshire, where much of the family’s original power-base lay and Godwine held the earldom of Wessex. The popularity of *Godwine* as a name across much of England in the eleventh century is plain to see. It was one of the five most popular names amongst the burgesses of Colchester in 1086, occurring 12 times, just one fewer than the three most

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<sup>328</sup> *Final Concords For Lancashire*, John nos 14, 25 and 15. There are thirteen instances of these names in total, including five which were discounted from the statistical survey as they occur as patronyms to the people mentioned. *Waltheof* in fact appears just once, in the name of Waldef de Ulverston, who is listed as the father of William (*Final Concords For Lancashire*, John no. 22.)

<sup>329</sup> *Freemen of York*, p. 1-11.

<sup>330</sup> See, for example, Bourin, ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect Evolution’, p. 13 and Chareille, ‘Introduction: Vingt ans après’, p. 21.

<sup>331</sup> Clark, ‘Willelmus rex? vel alius Willelmus?’, pp. 280-298.

<sup>332</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>333</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 55.

popular names. Cecily Clark notes that it was the most popular name in a survey of 600 peasants of Bury St. Edmunds, appearing of 40 times, accounting for over 7 percent of all men listed. Perhaps the most striking though is the adoption of the name by a significant proportion of the people of Winchester in the eleventh century. Survey I of Winton Domesday was compiled in c.1057, just four years after Godwine's death, so a large proportion of the people listed would have been named during the Earl's lifetime. Winchester was the historical capital of Wessex, and the episcopal and administrative centre of the earldom. Godwine held significant influence in Winchester, and on his death he was buried in the Old Minster, as his former patron Cnut had been some 13 years previously.<sup>334</sup> It is possible that this influence is the reason why, in c.1057, some 11 percent of all the men in the town were called *Godwine*.

Certainly, there had not been such a great attachment to the name in the tenth century. It appeared only 10 times in the New Minster *Liber Vitae* corpus, dating from c.946 to c.1031, accounting for just 2 percent of all individuals. Nor did the name's dominance endure for a long period after Godwine's death, and the loss of the family's influence on English affairs. It accounted for just 7 men listed in the 1110 names of Winton Domesday, just 3 percent, and in the 1148 survey this had dropped to under 2 percent. Clearly, the decline of *Godwine* was little different to the fate suffered by most Old English names in the same period, in fact it survives for longer than most. There is even a *Godwinus le pheliper* present in the London Lay Subsidy of 1292. Yet, compared to the names of the Bamburgh Earls, it does not seem to endure to as great an extent, even in the southern areas where Godwine and his name had been so influential. From the mid-twelfth century onwards, we see very few instances of the name. There is a single *Godwinus* in Boldon book of 1183, a *Godwin Piscator* in the Winchester Fine Roll of 1207 and a *Godwinus* registered as a Freeman of the City of York in 1292, but that is all. Compared to the Lancashire Feet of Fines, where the names of the Bamburgh Earls featured fairly frequently, accounting for over 5 percent of individuals between them, *Godwine* does not appear once in the Middlesex Feet of Fines, nor does it appear in the 1285 Winchester Survey.

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<sup>334</sup> Barbara Yorke, *Wessex in the Early Middle Ages* (Leicester, 1995), p. 147 and Mason, *The House of Godwine*, p. 79.

## 5. Unanswered questions

The studies in this chapter can only ever touch the surface of the millions of naming choices people in medieval England made over a period of around 500 years, but they do allow us to glimpse into the minds of a number of families and individuals, and attempt to understand how and why they made the decisions they did. When looked at in conjunction with the broad patterns outlined in the macro-studies, these micro-studies suggest a gradual but significant shift in the way people selected, used and thought about names.

They have shown that, while perhaps not the most important factor in choosing a name, the meaning carried by name themes was perhaps more significant than some have suggested. Anglo-Saxons did have some knowledge of what their names meant – indeed for many that meaning would have been inescapable. The significance of these meanings may have declined over time, and this does seem to have been the case, especially as the forms of many name themes came to deviate so dramatically from the everyday lexical items from which they were originally formed. In addition to this disconnect between names and their meanings, we can also observe a reduction in the practices of alliteration and variation which originally enabled people to demonstrate family membership and lineage, while preserving name uniqueness. The increased repetition of names within the families examined here coincides closely with the increased concentration around a small number of name themes observed in the later Anglo-Saxon corpora examined in the previous chapter.

This process of concentration does not appear to have been, primarily, a way to demonstrate lineage and descent. As shown by scholars such as Woolf and Le Jan, demonstrating lineage was already possible within a dithematic system. Names were not just passed down through families, they were shared and copied between families, sometimes as marks of respect to patrons, religious figures or perhaps just friends. Other times this may simply have been a blatant attempt to ingratiate oneself with a lord or powerful connection. Whatever the individual reasons – of which there were clearly a vast range and would have often taken into account many of these factors – the ultimate result was that people came to discard the previously held tradition of creating dithematic names which avoided repetition as far as possible, and instead came to copy, repeat and share names within families, social groups and wider communities. This ability is epitomised by the ease with which people incorporated names from various linguistic origins and cultural traditions into their family

onomasticons to suit their needs, enabling them to present elements of their often diverse identities. In many ways, this demonstrates that David Postles' suggestion of a 'hybrid' naming system is accurate but also, importantly, that such a naming system was in fact functioning in England in the century prior to the Conquest – a fact which could not be shown more clearly than by the Godwinesons. We can therefore see the swift incorporation of hundreds of new names from across the Channel not as a revolutionary change in the naming system, but merely as a continuation of this already entrenched practice, although on a much larger scale. It is also important to remember that, ultimately, most of these names would have fairly swiftly ceased to appear as 'foreign', becoming names to be used and reused like any other.

This leads us to a number of questions that remain unanswered. It is clear that certain pre-Conquest individuals had an impact on the names of the people of England, making them become more popular than others. *Godwine* is one clear example, as are the names of the Earls of Bamburgh – *Seward* in particular, if Domesday Book is anything to go by. As has been well attested, this pattern continued with a number of continental names after the Conquest. However, as has been shown in previous chapters, by no means all continental names became popular – most passed into obscurity as quickly as their Old English counterparts in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There also seems a fairly stark contrast in the relative fortunes of names such as *Seward*, *Uhtred* and *Maldred* in the centuries following the Conquest, and that of *Godwine*. This leads us to ask what it was about certain names that made them stand out and allowed them to become popular in the first place, but also what it was about names such as *Seward* and *Maldred* that allowed them to retain at least some prestige, and remain in use in certain areas, in comparison to others that died out. Moreover, what is so striking about the names that were so popular by the end of the period examined in this thesis is their subsequent domination of the English name stock for centuries to come. What was it about these names – names such as *John*, *Thomas*, *Richard*, *William* and, to a lesser extent, *Henry* – that allowed them to stay so far ahead for so long? To answer these questions, it will be necessary to investigate the broader societal changes that took place in medieval England during this period, but also the nature of names, more generally: what they are, how they are chosen and how they are used.

## All About Names: What They Are and What They Do

The studies carried out in this thesis so far have outlined a number of systemic changes to the way in which the people of medieval England used names over an extended period of time, including the gradual concentration of names around a small number of popular ones, as well as an eventual shrinking of the name stock. These changes mirror to a considerable extent those of much of western Europe, as described by the studies of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne*. Yet, in spite of the efforts of this European project, there has so far been no definitive explanation given for this continental transformation, and it has been little considered in England outside of the context of the Norman Conquest. The next two chapters will attempt to reexamine the explanations that have been put forward by a number of scholars in light of this new body of English evidence in an attempt to find out what the common causes for these apparently connected transformations were. To do so, it will be necessary to ask some more fundamental questions about names: namely what they actually *are*, and what they actually *do*.

This chapter will explore scholarship from the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics, sociology and anthropology in order to better understand how names function as linguistic items as well as items of social and cultural importance to the groups in which they are used. It will explore how the changes in family and social structure impact naming systems. In doing so, it will present a theoretical framework which sees names as more than just elements of language, but as ‘community items’ capable of demonstrating belonging to a ‘naming community’ – a framework which I believe is essential in understanding the changes which took place to the English names system during the medieval period.

### 1. Possible causes

Theories of what happened to English personal naming have been largely covered in Chapter 2. As previously noted, David Postles points out that ‘whilst the extreme concentration of forenames by the end of the thirteenth century can be quantified, its



causes remain to be investigated'.<sup>335</sup> On the continent, a number of possible explanations have been given by Régine Le Jan, Monique Bourin and Pascal Chareille for the transformation in personal naming. One explanation for the abandonment of unique naming revolves around the changing nature of kinship relations.<sup>336</sup> A transformation in kinship in Europe between the tenth and thirteenth centuries is a phenomenon that has been described by historians such as Georges Duby, Jacques Le Goff and Michael Mitterauer.<sup>337</sup> This transformation saw the European family develop from a horizontal assembly of kinsmen and kinswomen, into a much smaller unit governed by agnatic principles.<sup>338</sup> According to Le Jan, it is such a change that precipitated the transformation in naming – and she believes this can be seen in the changing patterns of name variation and repetition, beginning as early as the sixth century. Le Jan believes that these two strategies represented two different kinds of kinship relationship. Variation integrated an individual into a kinship group which shared a stock of name elements. It reflected the overlapping circles of kinship around an individual and bilateral descent, where both the male and female side of the family were important. The integrative nature of name variation was suited to these large, horizontal kinship groups held together by criss-crossing marriage alliances. In contrast, name repetition stressed one-on-one links of direct family relations by reinforcing specific ties between one person and an ancestor, relative or saint, a practice which coincided with the spread of Christianity in the Germanic world. It also emphasised the ideological aspect of a name, as demonstrated by the Merovingian repetition of their ancestor Merovech (†453/457) and his son Childeric (†482), which, through its repeated use, also ended up being the name of the last Merovingian king. Repetition served the interests of a family in the creation of a dynasty by creating a linking between a royal or ducal name and the capacity to rule.<sup>339</sup>

Monique Bourin disagrees with this explanation, suggesting that there was no clear relationship between the forms and evolution in naming and kinship structures, nor in

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<sup>335</sup> Postles, *Naming the people of England*, p. 66.

<sup>336</sup> Le Jan, 'Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship', pp. 31-49.

<sup>337</sup> Georges Duby and Jacques Le Goff (eds), *Famille et parenté dans l'occident médiéval*, (Rome, 1977) and Michael Mitterauer, *Why Europe?: The Medieval Origins of its Special Path*, (Chicago, 2010), pp. 58-98.

<sup>338</sup> Andrew Wareham, 'The transformation of kinship and the family in late Anglo-Saxon England', in *Early Medieval Europe* 10 (2001), pp. 375-399 (see p. 376).

<sup>339</sup> Le Jan, 'Personal Names and the Transformation of Kinship', p. 45.

inheritance practices.<sup>340</sup> In her opinion ‘the hypothesis of a shrinkage in the variety of names due to the establishment of a strict system of transmission is an interesting one, but it does not appear to have been linked exclusively to the introduction of the names of spiritual kin’.<sup>341</sup> She remarks that, in Languedoc at least, a systematic primogenital repetition from the father to the eldest son cannot be seen until the thirteenth or fourteenth century at the earliest.<sup>342</sup>

While Bourin does acknowledge the increasing importance of lineage in the naming of families across all levels of society, she suggests that the most likely cause for the transformation was a process of feudalisation, or *encellulement*, which in her view took place from the tenth century onwards. She asks: ‘are not the rapidity and profundity of the onomastic evolution in Catalonia or Languedoc in perfect accord with a time of rapid and profound feudalisation?’<sup>343</sup> She presents two sides to this theory. Firstly, she suggests the concentration of given names around the names of powerful members of the nobility represents a wish to imbue a child with the eponymous power and charisma of its namesake. This shows, for Bourin, both the influence of an increasingly powerful and visible aristocracy, but also a concentration of the name around the individual, engendering a ‘liberation of choice’.<sup>344</sup> Secondly, the eventual crystallisation of surnames at all levels of society around a place of origin, in most areas, demonstrates a wish to place the individual within a network representing both time (through their lineage) but also place. For the aristocracy, this place was an estate, a castle or a village – their possessions and their inheritance – and often a more prestigious identifier than a reminder of parenthood, while, for the lower levels of society, this place would have been their place of residence, or their own possessions – however small in comparison to that of their lord.<sup>345</sup>

Bourin does hint at a community role in this process: ‘Le triomphe du nom de lieu ne traduit-il pas aussi l’insertion de l’individu dans un réseau de liens horizontaux de solidarité, fondés sur le voisinage, relayant des repères personnels?’ But her view largely stresses

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<sup>340</sup> Bourin, ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect Evolution’, p. 12.

<sup>341</sup> Bourin, ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect Evolution’, p. 11.

<sup>342</sup> Bourin, ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect Evolution’, p. 11.

<sup>343</sup> Bourin, ‘Bilan de l’enquête’, pp. 244-245 and ‘How Changes in Naming Reflect Evolution’, p. 13.

<sup>344</sup> Bourin, ‘Bilan de l’enquête’, p. 264.

<sup>345</sup> Bourin, ‘Bilan de l’enquête’, p. 243.

downward pressure from an increasingly dominant and dominating aristocracy. In her words:

C'est ainsi que l'organisme seigneurial assujettit le vilain...Mieux nommer pour mieux dominer. Sans doute cette anthroponymie autoritaire s'ajoute-t-elle à une onomastique vécue en interférant avec elle. Le triomphe du nom de lieu ne traduit-il pas l'indice de la stabilisation de la seigneurie et de ses sujets?<sup>346</sup>

This is a sentiment echoed to a large extent by Pascal Chareille. He explains that the new system of naming reflected a number of coexisting desires:

Attirer la protection sur l'enfant, non plus seulement des ancêtres, mais aussi des grands saints et de l'autorité princière, mieux se situer les personnes dans l'espace, mieux contrôler les sujets. Elle est contemporaine de l'organisation de l'espace, des pouvoirs et des communautés à une échelle plus fine (c'est-à-dire à grande échelle), bref de l'encellulement.<sup>347</sup>

Both Bourin and Chareille are talking here of given names in combination with bynames or surnames of some type. According to Chareille, this took place at a point where, across Europe, *la seigneurie* had begun to control and dominate its subjects to an increasing extent – a Europe where increasingly a given name and surname were subtly combined to create an identity which represented the individual, the family and the social environment all at once.<sup>348</sup> Yet Chareille also states, somewhat contradictorily, that collective constraints actually decreased in the face of increased individualism, causing a retreat of the family back to the nuclear level. With less pressure to conform, the family, in particular the nuclear family of husband and wife, were freer to choose names that represented their family and their lineage, helping ensure the transmission of heritable goods to their children. For Chareille, this retreat of the family back to the nuclear level also led to the introduction of hereditary surnames as a marker of collective identity at familial level.<sup>349</sup>

These potential explanations will be looked at in the context of medieval English naming in due course, but it seems pertinent at this point to explore the theories of Bourin, Chareille and Le Jan in a wider context by looking at how naming functions in other societies, both

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<sup>346</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', p. 243.

<sup>347</sup> Chareille, 'Introduction: Vingt ans après', p. 21.

<sup>348</sup> Chareille, 'Introduction: Vingt ans après', p. 21.

<sup>349</sup> Chareille, 'Introduction: Vingt ans après', p. 33.

modern and historical, and examining how and why naming systems react to societal change.

## 2. Meaningless marks (not *Marks*)

It has been the assumption throughout this thesis so far that names have at least *some sort of* meaning. This is not, by any means, an assumption shared by many of the linguists, philosophers and philologists who have studied names. John Stuart Mill viewed proper names as ‘meaningless marks set upon things to distinguish them from one another’ and ‘only capable of being truly affirmed of one thing’.<sup>350</sup> To a large extent, in the field of linguistics, this is a view that persists today – at least on a theoretical level. Names are seen primarily, if not solely, as a means through which to differentiate people – a practical tool used in communication to talk to, or about, a person.

In her recent work, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, Fran Colman provides an excellent summary of the debate around to what extent Mill’s statement is true – and does so in a level of detail which it will not be possible to replicate here.<sup>351</sup> However, I will highlight some statements from a number of scholars which epitomise this view. For example, Sweet states that:

However imperfect the result may be, the intention is the same in all proper names, that is, to exclude ordinary individuals of the same class, and it is this intention which puts the ambiguous John on a level with the unambiguous Plato’.<sup>352</sup>

Similarly, Jespersen states that the value of a proper name ‘to both speaker and hearer is that of denoting one individual only, and being restricted to that one definite being.’<sup>353</sup> It is to Cecily Clark who I will turn to provide the most useful definition of the linguistic function of names. She asserts that:

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<sup>350</sup> . For Mill’s original explanation, see John Stuart Mill, *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* (London, 1895), pp. 16-17.

<sup>351</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*. Her discussion of the theory of names spans sections is the topic of ‘Part I: On names’, pp.19-95.

<sup>352</sup> Henry Sweet, *A New English Grammar, Logical and Historical* (Oxford, 1900), p. 58.

<sup>353</sup> Otto Jespersen, *The Philosophy of Grammar* (2nd edn, Chicago, 1992), p. 65.

The essential thing about any and every personal name, at whatsoever date and in whatsoever society current, is that, within its own proper context, it signifies one unique individual. Names are in practice often duplicated; but such accidents in no way impugn the principle that each instance is necessarily intended to specify one, and only one, unique individual.<sup>354</sup>

This is a definition of personal names to which the medieval historian and prosopographer Katherine Keats-Rohan also subscribes.<sup>355</sup> Yet, while this view of names is entirely logical, it is not unproblematic – a fact made clear by the statistical studies carried out in this thesis.

Richard Coates has, in various works, attempted to come up with a new theory of properhood. Coates conveys the problem with Clark's definition perfectly when he states that, 'for a linguist, the everyday fact that the same name may apply to more than one individual uniquely must be a fatal blow to the notion that to be "proper" is to denote uniquely'.<sup>356</sup> Yet, he argues that, to all intents and purposes, Mill's seminal idea that 'names have no meaning' is sound.<sup>357</sup> He explains that the act of naming, 'nomination', is the 'bestowal of an expression on an individual to serve as a distinguishing mark'.<sup>358</sup> Coates explains how the paradox caused by the sharing of personal names does not negate the logical primary goal of nomination – to refer uniquely:

As a result of my nomination, *Richard* is 'my' name, but it is one I share with a large number of other people. The paradox is that *Richard* is not 'my' name in the exclusivist sense of *my* which we see in *my house, my dog, my bank account*... If you, another Richard, say *my name*, you mean the same one as mine. Even more oddly, if I had named my son *Richard*, I would have given him my name... but it would still have been mine too.<sup>359</sup>

So, for Coates, what appears to be a paradox is not one at all. While people may share the same name, they are not in fact sharing *the* same name. They merely have *a* name which happens to be the same as that of a number of other people. As a result:

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<sup>354</sup> Cecily Clark, 'Socio-economic status and individual identity' in Clark and Jackson (ed.), *Words, Names and History*, pp. 100-116 (see p. 109).

<sup>355</sup> Katherine Keats-Rohan, 'Biography, Identity and Names: Understanding the Pursuit of the Individual in Prosopography' in Katherine Keats-Rohan (ed.), *Prosopography approaches and applications: A handbook* (Oxford, 2007), pp. 139-182 (see pp. 154-155).

<sup>356</sup> Richard Coates, 'Properhood', in *Language*, 82, pp. 356-382 (see p. 360).

<sup>357</sup> Richard Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach to the Definition of Proper Names' in *Mind and Language*, 24, (2009), pp. 433-444.

<sup>358</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 434.

<sup>359</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 434.

Once nomination has taken place, address and reference are conceptually easy. I can use your name to catch your attention, and I can use it to ensure that others, with a high degree of probability in a particular context, will understand which person I am picking out from all the others.<sup>360</sup>

Coates' focus here on context here is key. It is with this that he modifies Mill's theory slightly, by reconceptualising the relationship between a name and the person or thing to which it applies as one involving reference (the act performed by a language user in picking out an entity in the world) rather than denotation (the semiotic relation between an expression and what it stands for). This allows him to redefine properhood as a mode of reference – something speakers do – not something expressions have. Furthermore, as the act of reference is, by definition, the picking out of an individual, this means that, for Coates at least, 'names are truly for an individual' and as:

All human activity is judged by its success or otherwise...properhood, *onymic reference*, is therefore successful if it picks out an intended individual in context. If there exists more than one individual with the same name...that does not in itself damage the idea that names are "for" individuals.<sup>361</sup>

As this demonstrates, many linguists have devoted huge amounts of effort to reevaluate Mill's claim that names have no meaning and have, by and large, fallen on his side of the fence. Even in Coates' reconceptualised theory of properhood, names are conceived as little more than sounds people make to get someone's attention, or refer to a specific person when talking to another person. The linguistic logic behind these arguments is largely flawless, but that does not stop it being questionable in practice – when it comes to the way people choose and use names in their everyday lives. When we look at names in context, they clearly do more than just refer uniquely. I would therefore like to follow the guidance of Peter McClure who, when writing on medieval bynames, explained that the one dimension lacking from many studies is that of local and biographical history leading the name to be 'treated as a "word" rather than a "person", as a manifestation of linguistic form rather than of social life'.<sup>362</sup> This is surely as true of given names as it is of nicknames or bynames.

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<sup>360</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 434.

<sup>361</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 437.

<sup>362</sup> Peter McClure, 'The interpretation of Middle English nicknames' [review article of Jan Jönsö, *Studies on Middle English Nicknames* (Lund, 1979)], *Nomina* 5, (1981), pp. 95-104.

Names perform social functions, in fact they are inherently social items, used primarily within social situations.

Fran Colman, after much soul searching, goes some way to accepting in her recent work that the function of names is not purely referential, acknowledging the increasing acceptance that the giving of names serves other functions as well – specifically, ‘encyclopaedic classificatory functions’ which reflect social norms.<sup>363</sup> These ‘encyclopaedic classificatory functions’ that Colman refers to are things which, to most people, would appear fairly obvious. For example, I know that someone called *James* is, usually, if not always, a man, and someone called *Jessica* is probably, although not always, a woman. This is because, at least in most societies, there is a group of names deemed acceptable for female children, and another group for male children (although there are often a smaller number which are acceptable for both). More generally, despite the fact that names are theoretically malleable – anything can be a name if we want it to be – people have very precise ideas about what can, and cannot, be used as a name in a given context. *Fido* is a perfectly good name for a dog, but we would probably be surprised if a friend used it as a name for their child. And, apparently, no matter how much we might like *Nutella*, using it as a name for our daughter is not acceptable (at least not in France anyway).<sup>364</sup> This is because names do have *some* sort of meaning. It might not always be ‘lexical-semantic’ meaning, but it is meaning nonetheless.<sup>365</sup> We know some words are names, or are more suitable to be used as names than others. We know some names are for boys and others are for girls. We can often know by someone’s name whether they are English, or French, or Chinese. We might even guess that *Raymond* and *Maud* are from a different generation to *Gary* and *Sharon*, or that *Mohammed* holds different religious beliefs to *Peter*. Of course, we might be wrong about some or all of these things – but we might well not be. More importantly, the fact that it is possible to make assumptions about people because of their names shows quite clearly that names do carry meaning to some extent.

Coates refutes such suggestions with unbridled disdain:

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<sup>363</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 40.

<sup>364</sup> In 2015 a French couple were prevented by a court ruling from naming their daughter *Nutella* on the grounds that it was ‘contrary to the child’s interest to have a name that can only lead to teasing or disparaging thoughts’, cited from ‘French court stops child from being named Nutella’, *BBC News*, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-30993608> [accessed 27 April 2015].

<sup>365</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 125.

You can categorize the individual named, and by a weaselly implicature, every individual with the same name: Archibald is a male human (possibly quite elderly, unless Scottish), and Boston is an inhabited place. Therefore names convey something, either through shared sociocultural knowledge or through linguistic structure. It is amazing that arguments of this type persist, and they can only persist because we equivocate what counts as meaning. If these ‘mean’, they do not do so in a logically secure way. If I call (nominate) my daughter Archibald, it is hard luck on her, but I have committed no sin against logic or semantics, and it will be her name.<sup>366</sup>

Yet, were Coates to do this, he would surely be doing so *in spite* of the very clear conventions set out for the bestowal of personal names within a specific language and culture. Whether he chooses to adhere to them or not is clearly his choice, but by flouting convention he does not prove convention does not exist. Language is full of conventions that people may choose by design to flout, or accidentally transgress in error, yet that does not remove those conventions. As Anderson points out, ‘linguistic systems are as a whole largely conventional’.<sup>367</sup> Giving one’s daughter the name *Archibald* may not be committing any sins against logic or semantics, but that does not mean it is without consequence for the child in question. An inappropriate name may well affect attitudes towards the child and to the parent from the wider social group or people outside it with whom they come into contact. Whether Coates likes it or not, people see *Archibald* as a boy’s name (and a particularly Scottish one at that). Forcing this name upon his daughter may cause her experience bullying or ridicule, which may in turn lead her to resent her parents for giving her such a name. Even if this is not the case, friends, family and any acquaintances of Archibald’s father might think him cruel to bestow upon his daughter such an unsuitable name. Behind all of these possible consequences lies the fact that names, whether we like it or not, carry some form of meaning. If they did not, then why are there so few girls named *Archibald*?

It is clear from the above discussion that even when there is no clear lexical-semantic content present in a name it does not preclude it from having meaning of some sort, even if this is largely perceived through linguistic and social convention. At this point, it seems relevant to look more closely at how and why such conventions exist in the first place.

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<sup>366</sup> Coates, ‘A Strictly Millian Approach’, p. 435.

<sup>367</sup> John M. Anderson, *The Grammar of Names* (Oxford, 2007), p. 113.



### 3. Names and social meaning

Whether Coates is right or wrong about the ability of names to carry semantic meaning, what is clear is that names have the ability to carry a great deal of social and cultural meaning in a particular context. This has, to some extent, been demonstrated by the hypothetical problems a young girl called *Archibald* might encounter.<sup>368</sup> The fact that names are meaningful in some way is self-evident to most people. How people experience names is surely a truer test of whether names carry meaning than the rules of logic or semantics – at least when studying names in their social context. Colman explains that in this way names are ‘associated with lexical information as secondary categories’.<sup>369</sup> We make assumptions about things such as a person’s sex, ethnic origin, family status and social status – and sometimes even their character – based on their name. Colman also points out that, in addition to this secondary lexical information, quite often, certain names come to take on pleasant or unpleasant associations or connotations in the mind of an individual.<sup>370</sup> And there is evidence to show that these connotations can be influential at group and community level, not just in the minds of individual people.

It is not uncommon for individuals to be poorly disposed towards a specific name, and even persons with that name, purely based on the fact that *I used to know someone called Rebecca at school – I never liked her*. This may seem like insufficient reason to completely disregard a name for one’s own child – yet personal experience would surely, for most people, prove that this is not the case. An aversion to a particular name due to a personal, emotional response is not uncommon.<sup>371</sup> This may simply be due to the fact that, as a parent, one would not want a beloved child to remind you of an unlikeable person from one’s past. Or it may be that one does not want one’s child to *turn out like them*. Or it may be a combination of the two. Either way, while Coates is right to state that we *should* not ‘categorise the individual named, and...

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<sup>368</sup> Whether or not she *should* is another matter completely.

<sup>369</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 39.

<sup>370</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 39 – here she is relying, in part, on the work of Scott Smith-Bannister, *Names and Naming Patterns in England 1538-1700* (Oxford, 1997).

<sup>371</sup> See Barbara Buchanan and James Bruning, ‘Connotative Meanings of First Names and Nicknames on the Three Dimensions’ in *The Journal of Social Psychology* 85, (1971), pp. 143-144 and Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 146-147.

every individual with the same name’, the reality of everyday life suggests that categorising individuals with a particular name is something people do all the time.<sup>372</sup>

Such individual cases of emotional association may not have any significant effect on the name-bearer. They might not even have an overall effect on the wider naming patterns of a whole population. However, it is clear that the positive or negative associations of an individual with a particular name can have an effect on its popularity for these very reasons. The name *Richard* is a good example. Not only is it a continental Germanic name which became popular in England in the years after the Norman Conquest, it is also a name that has been very popular in England and most English speaking countries, including the United States, for hundreds of years – that is until fairly recently. Between 1940 and 1970, *Richard* was consistently one of the ten most popular names given to boys in the United States – until Richard Nixon’s fall from grace appears to have had a negative impact on the name’s prestige in the eyes of Americans. From sitting in a perfectly respectable eleventh place in 1971 *Richard* declined rapidly in popularity following the Watergate scandal in 1972, when it dropped immediately to fourteenth. By 1977 it had fallen to twentieth and by 1982 it had dropped as low as twenty-seventh. In 2014 it did not even make the top 100.<sup>373</sup> The popularity of any given name may depend on many factors – but it seems too much of a coincidence to suggest that Nixon’s unpopularity did not have anything at all to do with the declining fate of *Richard*. In the collective consciousness of America, the name *Richard* appears, for a certain time at least, to have become tainted through association with one particular individual.

Another example of collective associations with a particular name can be seen amongst the Ashanti of southern Ghana.<sup>374</sup> Every Ashanti child is given a name referring to the day of the week on which they were born. For example, *Kwadwo* stands for ‘boy on a Monday’, while *Kwako* means ‘boy on a Wednesday’. This in itself poses a problem for those who deny the presence of meaning, semantic or otherwise, in personal names, as these names do contain semantic meaning relating to the day of an individual’s birth. And, while for the majority of these names there is nothing within them which is intended to encourage any

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<sup>372</sup> Coates, ‘A Strictly Millian Approach’, p. 435.

<sup>373</sup> The fate of Richard (and any other name in the United States) can be mapped on ‘Popularity of a Name’, *USA Social Security*, <http://www.ssa.gov/cgi-bin/babynome.cgi> [accessed 1 May 2015].

<sup>374</sup> The description which follows of this 1954 study is taken from Alford, *Naming and Identity*, pp. 62-63.

particular qualities in the person bearing them, *Kwadwo* and *Kwako* do contain meaningful roots. The word for ‘Monday’ means ‘day of peace’, while the word for ‘Wednesday’ makes reference to death. As a result it is widely believed that Monday’s boys are likely to be peaceful and quiet, while Wednesday’s boys are more likely to be aggressive and end up being trouble-makers. In a study carried out by Gustav Jahoda of juvenile court records in 1954, it was shown that boys called *Kwadwo* were in fact significantly less likely than all others to have any record of delinquent offences, while boys called *Kwako* were significantly more likely to have a record of this type of offence.<sup>375</sup>

What these examples show is that the names can take meaning and association from a number of possible sources, whether that is just for one person, a community, or a whole culture. This is because names are more than just words. They are more than lexical-semantic content. Indeed, language is more than just lexical-semantic content. Even words that are agreed to have clear, unambiguous dictionary definitions, do not simply relay lexical-semantic content. Not only do words regularly have multiple denotative meanings, but they also carry connotative meaning which goes beyond their dictionary definition, into the realm of emotions and associations. For example, here is how the verb *to lynch* is defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary*:

lynch, *v.*

1. *trans.* To condemn and punish by lynch law. In early use, implying chiefly the infliction of punishment such as whipping, tarring and feathering, or the like; now only, to inflict sentence of death by lynch law.

2. *App.* misused for: To render infamous.<sup>376</sup>

This is a clear, accurate description of the semantic meaning of the verb *to lynch*. Yet, this word also carries with it inescapable racial connotations originating from the particular socio-historical events that took place during the half-century following the American Civil War, and the lynching of African-Americans in the American South. This association is, in many ways, as meaningful, or perhaps even more so, than its rather contextless dictionary definition, and conjures up emotional, disturbing images of racial hatred and violence.

<sup>375</sup> For full details of the study, see Gustav Jahoda, ‘A note on Ashanti names and their relationship to personality’ in *British Journal of Psychology* 45, pp. 192-195.

<sup>376</sup> ‘lynch, v.’, *OED Online*, March 2015, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/111639?redirectedFrom=lynch&> [accessed 15 May 2015].

Language is more than lexical-semantic content, and even when names do not mean something in a logically secure way, it does not mean they are meaningless.

#### 4. What do names do?

So we need to move past the idea that the primary, if not sole, function of names is reference – differentiating one person from another.<sup>377</sup> A number of studies in fields such as anthropology, sociology and sociolinguistics have done exactly this. In his work *Naming and Identity: A Cross-Cultural Study of Personal Naming Practices*, Richard Alford examined naming practices in a number of societies around the world. The results of Alford's wide-ranging study are revealing about the way names are used in human societies, some of which will be examined here.

To begin with, it is worth stating that names are linguistic and cultural universals. They exist, and have existed, in all human societies, and in no society are names applied unsystematically or randomly – they are conventionalised or institutionalised, following more or less specific rules.<sup>378</sup> These conventions often vary widely from one society to another. Alford provides us with a list of different ways he saw names used in the societies he studied:

In some societies individuals receive a single given name; while, in others, they receive one or more given names, along with one or more patronyms, matronyms or surnames. Names are bestowed to a rigid timetable in some societies; while in others, weeks, months or even years may pass before a child is given a name. In some societies, personal names are very diverse and serve well to distinguish different individuals; while in other societies, a small stock of conventional personal names is applied to a large number of individuals, and personal names cannot clearly distinguish particular individuals. And, finally, in some societies personal names are freely used in social interaction; while in other societies, personal names are regarded as intimate and private.<sup>379</sup>

So there is clearly a wide variety of ways names are used in different societies, but Alford's list demonstrates that despite these differences there are some fairly common variations. It in

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<sup>377</sup> Colman, for example, says precisely this: 'The primary function of names is that of fixing identity'. See *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 198.

<sup>378</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 1.

<sup>379</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 2.

fact takes Alford just one paragraph to summarise the principal different naming practices he has observed in the many societies he has studied. This suggests that naming practices are not completely unique to each and every society – rather that they lie within a widely varying, but still ultimately recognisable, range of possible systems. This is something also attested by Ellen Bramwell:

The culturally specific features, as individual anthroponymicons themselves, are too numerous to list. However, there are no naming structures which only belong to one community. Different naming structures seem to have the potential to exist in many societies but whether they do or not appears to be largely related to socio-cultural factors.<sup>380</sup>

As such, by examining the naming practices of a number of societies, we may not just be able to find out about the individual societies in question, but also something about the nature of human society in general – how human naming practices reflect the different types of society in which they are used, and how these practices change as the society in which they are used transforms. In comparing these findings with naming practices in past societies, we should also be able to find out how names were bestowed and used, but also something about these societies and the people within them. As Alford puts it: ‘knowing how names are selected and applied will, with luck, reveal something about the process of inducting children into their societies and providing them with social identities’.<sup>381</sup> One key premise behind Alford’s work is that names are not just ‘a direct and pragmatic means of distinguishing one individual from another’, but also a symbolic act signalling a child’s membership of a society, identifying the child as a legitimate member of the group, as well as symbolising an individual’s identity: ‘First, they provide messages to the members of the society at large about who an individual is. Second, they provide messages to the named individual about who he or she is expected to be’.<sup>382</sup>

In fact, in contrast to Mill and Coates, Alford’s study suggests that, far from being a means to distinguish individuals from one another, many naming systems are actually very bad at distinguishing individuals. This is a phenomenon noted by a number of anthropologists,

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<sup>380</sup> Ellen Bramwell, ‘Naming in society: a cross-cultural study of five communities in Scotland’, Ph.D. thesis, (University of Glasgow, 2012), p. 382.

<sup>381</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 29.

<sup>382</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 30 and p. 51.

including Harold Feldman.<sup>383</sup> If the primary function of naming is to distinguish individuals, then why are so many naming systems so bad at it?<sup>384</sup> If differentiation was the primary function of naming, then everyone would just have a different name. Given the flexibility of human language, this would certainly be possible. As we have seen, in early ninth-century Durham, some naming systems are able to bestow names on people that would have been unique within their community. In this context, perhaps we can reevaluate Coates' statement that 'all human activity is judged by its success or otherwise... properhood, *onymic reference*, is therefore successful if it picks out an intended individual in context.'<sup>385</sup> The anthropological evidence seems to show that, either humans are not particularly successful at this activity, or the intended aims of naming are not as clear-cut as Coates assumes.

In practice, naming serves two primary functions: differentiation and categorisation. These aims may seem antithetical, but they are essentially complementary. The need to distinguish individuals for clarity exists alongside an equally powerful need to categorise people and to 'fit them into a social matrix that highlights their similarities rather than their differences'.<sup>386</sup> While differentiation is achieved through the use of unique names, categorisation is served through a number of practices, many of which may be used simultaneously. These include: naming people after relatives or important or famous people; sharing surnames or patronyms; using names that refer to one's region or home; choosing names drawn from a limited stock of personal names; using names that are sex-typed; and using role terms in place of names. In all these cases, it is not the individuality of the person that is being highlighted, but their position within a social group. There remains a need to distinguish individuals, but societies place varying degrees of importance on these two functions.<sup>387</sup>

It is the second of these functions that Colman refers to as, 'encyclopaedic classificatory functions'.<sup>388</sup> They allow names to indicate membership of a family, clan or group, in the same way as other stamps of culture. They can indicate, amongst other things: social

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<sup>383</sup> Harold Feldman, 'The Problem of Personal Names as a Universal Element in Culture' in *American Imago* 16, 1959, pp. 237-250 (see pp. 238-239).

<sup>384</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 69.

<sup>385</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 437.

<sup>386</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 69.

<sup>387</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 69.

<sup>388</sup> Colman, *The Grammar of Names in Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 40.

legitimacy; kin-group lineage; property rights; legal duties; ritual responsibilities; status, position and role within a group; and parenthood.<sup>389</sup> These are functions above and beyond the referential functions espoused by Mill and Coates. Names are clearly not meaningless marks – but meaningful symbols that signify a number of things about an individual and their place within their social environment. There also appears to be an element of predictability about how personal names are used in different types of society – particularly in regard to how names are distributed amongst members. Alford notes how those societies which value identification through the use of unique names tend to be smaller and less complex organisationally, often lacking in social classes and being more individualistic in religious beliefs. They also tend to use names which highlight kinship relationships.<sup>390</sup>

Susan Suzman also observes this phenomenon in her study of changing Zulu naming practices. Her study uses qualitative and quantitative approaches to investigate how transforming naming patterns reflect wider social changes.<sup>391</sup> Traditionally, prior to the late twentieth century, Zulu society consisted largely of ‘isolated homesteads’ in which the male head of the family was accompanied by a number of wives, each of whom ‘had her own house, cattle, and field and participated in an extended family’.<sup>392</sup> This is in contrast to another large ethnic group of South Africa, the Sothos, who settled in villages. During the period studied by Suzman there had been a significant shift away from these dispersed, isolated homesteads towards larger, usually urban settlements. This shift in settlement types was accompanied by a shift from a system of unique naming to one where personal names were chosen from a stock of recognisable names. In general, the shift from country to town also meant a shift towards smaller, more nuclear family units. At the same time, Suzman notes how the stock of personal names shrank, becoming more condensed, and was increasingly reliant on religion and a redefined family as primary points of reference in naming.<sup>393</sup> Suzman’s study seems to support Alford’s suggestion that smaller, less organisationally complex societies tend to value name uniqueness, but, equally importantly,

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<sup>389</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 30-33.

<sup>390</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, p. 72.

<sup>391</sup> See Suzman, ‘Names as Pointers’, pp. 254-257 for more on accounts of Zulu society and naming between 1890 and the mid-twentieth century. Suzman’s study relied on interviews with living participants aged between 20 and 85, so demonstrates change over the course of the twentieth century.

<sup>392</sup> Suzman, ‘Names as Pointers’, p. 254.

<sup>393</sup> Suzman, ‘Names as Pointers’, pp. 267-270

that a societal shift towards a more complex social organisation can cause changes in naming practices.

Names, therefore, cannot be understood purely as a means of distinguishing individuals from one another. Although this referential function is clearly one purpose of names, it would be reductionist to see this as their sole purpose. Names play a vital role as markers of both individual and group identity. They place the name bearer in a social matrix where categorisation is often as important as identification, if not more so. In a sense, the role of a name is not to refer to a person simply by pointing out who they are *not*, but to tell us who that person *is*. A name, in a multitude of ways, can and does demonstrate aspects of a person's identity: their family, their place of origin, their sex, quite possibly their age. Most importantly, they have the potential to demonstrate to both the name bearer and the other members of a group, community or society that they are one of them – that they belong.

## 5. Names as community items

In this light, we can begin to see names not just as matters of individual taste, or even family tradition (although these may obviously play a role in many naming decisions), but as items of language and culture that belong to a community. Bramwell suggests that a naming system should be seen in sociolinguistic terms, as a 'construct of many voices and of society'.<sup>394</sup> An early pioneer of sociolinguistics, Dell Hymes, suggested that language is not just an instrument through which we demarcate the world, but an instrument of human action.<sup>395</sup> Bramwell points out that names are both of these things – they are 'a product of individual human decisions and actions resulting from individual and collective motivations'.<sup>396</sup> These collective motivations may function at two levels, that of community or that of society.<sup>397</sup> The distinction between community and society, as defined by Ferdinand Tönnies' concepts of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, can be seen as one which contrasts ties forged by real, organic life – through shared locality, kinship or co-operation towards a common goal – and ties created by imaginary and mechanical structures,

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<sup>394</sup> Bramwell, 'Naming in society', p. 32.

<sup>395</sup> Dell Hymes, 'Linguistic problems in defining the concept of 'tribe'', in June Helm, *Essays on the Problem of Tribe* (San Francisco, 1968), pp. 23-48 (see p. 44).

<sup>396</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', p. 32.

<sup>397</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', p. 42.



established deliberately and with specific intentions.<sup>398</sup> Hymes combines this with a sociolinguistic explanation of community, stating that:

Clearly the boundary (and the internal organisation) of a speech community is not a question solely of degree of interaction among persons...but a question of equally attributed and achieved membership, of identity and identification.<sup>399</sup>

This definition ties in closely with the findings of Suzman and Alford described above, suggesting that, as with language as a whole, names play an important role in defining and creating individual identity and group membership. If this is the case, it certainly seems likely that the size, nature and degree of closeness within a community should have a bearing on the type of naming system functioning within it. In this sense, the community can be seen as a social network, and the degree of closeness within this network will affect not only the relationships between people, but also the nature of the network itself and the actions of its members. Lesley Milroy and Li Wei define a social network as ‘a boundless web of ties which reaches out through a whole society, linking people to one another, however remotely’.<sup>400</sup> They state that ‘a fundamental postulate of network analysis is that individuals create personal communities which provide them with a meaningful framework for solving the problems of their day-to-day existence’.<sup>401</sup> Furthermore, ‘variation in the structure of different individuals’ personal social networks will, for a number of reasons, systematically affect the way they use [language] in the community repertoire.’<sup>402</sup>

The strength or weakness of ties within a social network (resulting in what are usually termed close-knit or loose-knit networks) plays a role in the maintenance (or loss) of language, dialect and other linguistic customs. J. K. Chambers emphasises this norm-enforcing role of social networks, stating that ‘the loyalty of an individual to the network is directly related to that person’s conformity to its collective values’.<sup>403</sup> Moreover, the strength of the ties within a social network have a particular capacity to maintain and even enforce

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<sup>398</sup> Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Association (Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft)*, ed. and trans. Charles Loomis, (London, 1974).

<sup>399</sup> Dell Hymes, *Ethnography, linguistics, narrative inequality: toward an understanding of voice* (London, 1996), p. 32.

<sup>400</sup> Lesley Milroy and Li Wei, ‘A social network approach to code-switching: the example of a bilingual community in Britain’ in Lesley Milroy and Pieter Muysken (eds), *One Speaker, Two Languages: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Code-Switching* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 136-157 (see p. 138).

<sup>401</sup> Milroy and Li, ‘A social network approach to code-switching’, pp. 137-138.

<sup>402</sup> Milroy and Li, ‘A social network approach to code-switching’, p. 138.

<sup>403</sup> J. K. Chambers, *Sociolinguistic Theory: Linguistic Variation and its Social Significance* (Oxford, 1995), p. 67.

local conventions and norms, including linguistic norms. In contrast, those with weaker ties are less effective at enforcing norms.<sup>404</sup> There are a multitude of possible, sometimes overlapping relationships that combine to create a social network. In a dense network people may know each other in more than one capacity, perhaps as a friend, a neighbour and a relation all at once, particularly in a localised and socially homogenous community.<sup>405</sup> In this type of community, the norm-enforcing capabilities of the social network are likely to be strong. And it seems plausible to suggest that changes in the type and strength of the social ties within a community would affect the nature of the naming system within it.

Bramwell's recent study of five modern-day communities in Scotland certainly seems to support this assumption. Bramwell compared naming patterns in five diverse communities, each with different degrees of interconnectedness and social cohesion. Her results showed that within close-knit communities with a high degree of social cohesion there was a higher degree of pressure to conform to traditional norms of name-giving, with names generally being chosen from a traditional common stock and often referring to a close family relation. This was the case of both an indigenous rural Scottish community and a city-based immigrant Muslim community, suggesting that it was the close-knit, stable nature of the communities, rather than their size or location, which created the norm-enforcing effect. In contrast, the more loose-knit societies studied by Bramwell showed a higher degree of choice in name-giving, with less emphasis on traditional naming practices (where there had been an emphasis previously) and freer choice for name-givers. Her study included a community where a traditional system of naming had been in place and there had previously been a high degree of social cohesion, but recent social developments and a loosening of social ties seemed to have led to an abandonment of traditional naming practices and less reliance on a common stock of names.<sup>406</sup> According to Bramwell, the pressure to conform to naming practices was created by the community, rather than the family itself, even when naming practices were family-oriented:

Some communities (and generations) had far more free choice than others. The older indigenous generations had to overcome social pressure if they wanted to give their child a name which was not that of a relative.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Milroy and Li, 'A social network approach to code-switching', p. 139.

<sup>405</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', p. 46.

<sup>406</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', pp. 362-382.

<sup>407</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', p. 362.

Community, therefore, seems to play an integral role in the creation and maintenance of naming systems. Valéria Tóth has attempted to examine the role of community in the cognitive-linguistic process of name-giving and usage, in order to provide a theoretical basis to aid the study of naming in past societies.<sup>408</sup> Tóth points out that language, and by extension the naming system, is not an autonomous structure independent from its users. As such, language, and names, should be analysed in the broader context of language and name usage, as they are closely associated with extralinguistic functions as well as the cognitive abilities of people. Naming, while a linguistic and cultural universal, is also a component of culture, which is ‘conventionalised and handed down through the process of socialisation’.<sup>409</sup> Tóth separates the naming system into three components: the *name-user*, the *name-bearer* and the *names* themselves. The combination of these three components constitutes the *name community*:

The name is a community phenomenon...The individual (the name user) learns the names denoting people – simultaneously with getting to know those people – as part of his/her socialisation through communicating with his/her environment. Thus, in this context of relations, the environment constitutes the socio-cultural criteria for the individual’s knowledge, and within that, his/her knowledge of names. The environment can also be referred to as a *name community*.<sup>410</sup>

The knowing and using of anthroponyms helps emphasise different aspects of the community and the people within it. In some cases, these may be horizontal (spatial) aspects, through the incorporation of toponyms, while in others it may be vertical (social) components, through the incorporation of other anthroponyms. Tóth differentiates between family-oriented name communities and those which are socially organised. At the heart of communities organised around families sits the individual, who can be described as a member of constantly expanding concentric circles of several name communities, the closest, most direct of which being the immediate family. Such naming communities are therefore likely be less bound to locality, as the use of anthroponyms is linked to the context of familial relationships. In contrast, the socially organised name community is one where

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<sup>408</sup> Valéria Tóth, ‘The questions of name theory related to the giving and use of anthroponyms’, paper delivered at the XXV International Congress of Onomastic Sciences (29th of August 2014). The text of this paper was kindly provided to me by the author. This paragraph largely paraphrases the relevant points of the paper. Verbatim citations have been referenced with page numbers from the version supplied to me.

<sup>409</sup> Tóth, ‘Name theory’, p. 2.

<sup>410</sup> Tóth, ‘Name theory’, p. 2.

the system of relationships among individuals is based on socio-cultural factors, where different name communities do not constitute expanding concentric circles, but rather partially overlapping circles, more closely tied to a locality.<sup>411</sup>

Tóth's insights therefore help us expand on the findings of Suzman, Alford and Bramwell, by placing their observations in a theoretical framework which combines names, community and people into one unified and indivisible network. Names do not exist purely as items of language. They belong to the community in which they are created, the people who bear them and the people who use them. They are tools to help people understand their environment, their community and their personal relationships. In the same way that toponyms allow us to create a mental map of our physical environment, anthroponyms help us create a mental portrait of the community, combining individual identification with social position, spatial location and family relationships. At this point it seems relevant to return briefly to Richard Coates, who explains that there is nothing in a personal name that links the multiple bearers of a name together, other than the name itself. He states:

*My name* also has something of the quality of *my culture, my nation, and my home town*, expressions for things that I share with others whether I like it or not. But it is different... I identify – and there is another problematic concept – with other people of my culture, my nation, or my home town in a way which I do not with other people who share my name. There is no state of mind analogous to xenophobia which divides people with whom I share a name from those people with whom I do not share one.<sup>412</sup>

But as shown by the works of Alford and Tóth, amongst others, this is not quite true. Names, as community items, and the naming communities in which they exist perform precisely this function. The bearing of a recognisable name drawn from a stock demonstrates to both name-bearers and name-users that they are part of that naming community – and, in many cases, part of a real or imagined community connected to it. Names have the power to both include and exclude individuals from a group, whether this be through the carrying of an unrecognisable or foreign given name, or through the unwanted assignation of a byname or nickname. The degree to which this is done in any given community or society may well depend on the depth and strength (and potentially, length) of the ties which bind the social network together. In the communities of fourteenth-

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<sup>411</sup> Tóth, 'Name theory', p. 3.

<sup>412</sup> Coates, 'A Strictly Millian Approach', p. 434.

century England, carrying the name *Richard* may very well have fulfilled the very function Coates refutes. As Alford points out:

A unique name emphasises or proclaims a person's individuality and uniqueness. But in all societies, individuality in excess may be socially destructive, divisive or dangerous... High reoccurrence names... do not emphasise a person's individuality or uniqueness. In fact they do just the opposite. They call attention to similarities between namesakes.<sup>413</sup>

In a close-knit community, where social cohesion – and quite possibly economic survival – might depend on the close and continued cooperation of community members, a naming system that highlights the similarities of name-bearers may well be more desirable than one which highlights individuality and difference. As Tóth states:

In smaller communities, the creation of name forms is not only determined by the need for identification, but the expression of a sense of togetherness is just as important; therefore, names have a strong community-building function.<sup>414</sup>

## 6. Community names in medieval Europe?

This discussion of names as linguistic items and their function within society has been carried out in the aim of shedding light on the changes that took place to the naming system of medieval England and – by extension – medieval western Europe. There are a number of similarities in the causes suggested by historians such as Bourin, Chareille and Le Jan, and scholars from other disciplines, from sociology, anthropology and sociolinguistics. The role played by names in symbolising individual, family and community identity seem to be common threads at which we must pull to develop a clearer picture of the society behind a particular naming system. However, while the historians of *La genèse médiévale de l'anthroponymie moderne* have gone some way to identifying the causes of the European naming transformation, I do not believe any one of their explanations is completely satisfactory – at least not in isolation. Le Jan's theory that the preservation of family and lineage seem to fit neither the timing of the transformation identified by the group's quantitative studies, nor those in this thesis. Moreover, while a naming system which emphasised the distinction of one's family and descent as its primary function may explain why particular names became

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<sup>413</sup> Alford, *Naming and Identity*, pp. 73-74.

<sup>414</sup> Tóth. 'Name theory', p. 3.

passed down through families – it does not explain why *all* families came to share the same small stock of names. How does a *John* passing his name down to his first son help distinguish his family from his neighbours, if half his neighbours, and their first sons, are also called *John*?

That is not to say that the family, in its increasingly nuclear form, was not important in name-giving. It is clear from all the studies looked at in this chapter that family plays an important role as a point of reference for name giving, and many naming decisions are consciously rooted in a desire to name one's child after a family member. But we would do well here to distinguish between conscious decisions and the framework in which they are being made. Suzman noted in her study of changing Zulu naming patterns that, although the names people chose and their dispersion had changed dramatically, there had been little change in the reasons people gave for choosing those names.<sup>415</sup> We must therefore assume that there are wider forces at play than descent. The nuclear family does not function on its own. It is still bound to other parts of society in any number of ways: extended family members, neighbours and friends, as well as less emotional, more practical ties of economic necessity. This thesis proposes that the strength or weakness of these ties has an impact on people's naming practices. And this is why it seems to me that, while Chareille and Bourin are correct to state that medieval naming came to portray an identity which combined the individual, the family and the social environment, as well as to identify the cellularisation of the medieval landscape as a contributory factor, I would argue that their hypothesis that the driving force behind the naming transformation was not downward pressure from an increasingly powerful aristocracy. Instead, I believe that the best explanation for the increasing homogenisation of naming decisions is that it was caused by increasing *horizontal* pressure from the communities in which people lived – their own social network. The close-knit, stable and interdependent nature of the communities which characterised the landscape of later medieval England, and Europe in general, appear, to me, not as hot-beds of individualism, but exactly the type of intensely norm-enforcing units where social pressures would cause people to choose names which highlighted their similarities, rather than their differences. The next chapter will investigate this further, examining fundamental changes that took place to patterns of settlement and the social organisation of communities

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<sup>415</sup> Suzman, 'Names as pointers', p. 268.

in England and across much of the continent in the centuries either side of the first millennium.

## Shifting Horizons

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, the system of English personal naming changed dramatically during the medieval period. Yet, while this change was dramatic, it was by no means rapid – rather it was a gradual transformation that took place over a period spanning four centuries or more. The transformation that did take place was multi-faceted, incorporating a number of developments which fit neither into a neat consecutive chain of events, nor a wave of concurrent adaptations instigated by one single cause. As Chris Dyer has argued when speaking of the early medieval economy:

Change was based on combinations of interconnected movements...selecting which came first, or which dominated over the others is often a fruitless exercise. Those who advocate a single explanatory mechanism...are usually oversimplifying. We know the difficulties in tracing the origins of the industrial revolution, or the slump of the 1920s, and the argument that single causes can be applied to an earlier period...suggests a patronising attitude which underestimates the varied and interlocking nature of the medieval economy.<sup>416</sup>

I would extend this to include not just the economy, but medieval society as a whole, of which the economy was an inseparable part. A search for one single cause for the multitude of developments that took place to the medieval naming system would inevitably be reductionist. Names and naming systems are inextricably linked to the societies in which they are used. They are not merely labels attached to people for reference, but representations of where and how those people fit into their society – how they see themselves and how they are seen by other people. As such, it is reasonable to assume that the causes behind the changes in naming lie in changes taking place within English society, but it would be presumptuous to assume that all they all stem from one single development. Family must have certainly played a role, but does the shift to a more nuclear family alone explain why the name stock became so concentrated? Continental names clearly became fashionable in the century following the Conquest, but why did such a small number of these eventually become so much more popular than the rest, while so many others died

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<sup>416</sup> Dyer, *Making a living*, p. 8.



out? And why did a few specific pre-Conquest names survive in the face of this Norman nominative onslaught?

It is clear that simple answers are insufficient to explain the breadth of changes that took place. Instead, it is necessary to examine a number of transformations that took place in the social, economic and cultural make-up of English society to make sense of what happened. In this chapter, I will attempt to synthesise these transformations with a view to explaining how they affected the naming system. However, the aim of this thesis has not simply been to find out why the naming system changed, but also to examine the changing naming system as a way of better understanding the people and society represented by it. As such, I will also attempt to use the results of these studies to shed some light on the, still often contentious, historiographical discussions taking place around the transformation of the English landscape in this period. In doing so, I hope to add to the significant body of scholarship which suggests that the late Anglo-Saxon period saw the beginnings of a fundamental reorganisation of the English landscape – one that is reflected in the changes we see taking place to the personal naming system at the same time.

One thing that has been made clear by the studies presented so far is that the changes that took place to the English naming system were not disconnected from the transformation that took place in the rest of western Europe in the same period. In this sense, this thesis places itself amongst a growing body of historical scholarship which sees the history of England and the British Isles as part of a common history of Europe – one in which the broad progression of social, cultural and economic development followed parallel and interlinked paths. The unique events that took place in England in 1066, and the preeminence of these events in the national historiography of England, mean that this is a more difficult task than perhaps it should be. Furthermore, England is far from the only national historiography which emphasises an apparent uniqueness in its medieval past. As Chris Wickham points out, different countries often have different historiographical concerns, which usually correspond closely with the grand epics of national identity.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Chris Wickham, 'Le forme del Feudalesimo' in *Settimane di Studio 47: Il feudalesimo nell'alto medioevo*, (2000), pp. 15-51. See this article for an overview of the different definitions of feudalism and the debates which surround it. For a more detailed discussion, see also Susan Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* (Oxford, 1994).

## 1. A feudal revolution?

One area of medieval history where this is particularly prevalent is with regard to the phenomenon (or phenomena) we call ‘feudalism’. Wickham noted 13 different meanings of the terms ‘feudal’ and ‘feudalism’ in the works of just 11 historians, and he suggests that, when using these terms historians often end up discussing different things without realising it, not least ‘nel tradizionale dibattito inglese che cercava di stabilire se la Conquista Normanna avesse o no portato il feudalesimo in Inghilterra’.<sup>418</sup> The debates surrounding feudalism seem relevant here as Bourin and Chareille have suggested that the transformation in naming on the continent was brought about largely due to the changes it caused, particularly the creation of an increasingly predatory aristocracy based around newly built castles who used their positions of dominance to subject the peasants on their estates. This view of ‘feudalisation’, and the *encellulement* it entailed, is in part born from a particularly French historiographical tradition that sees events in France in a short period of the tenth century as playing a pivotal role in the development of a feudal economic and social system of Europe.

The debate over the existence or otherwise of a ‘feudal revolution’ in Europe around the year 1000 has provoked impassioned arguments on both sides. Some, such as Thomas Bisson, have claimed that a violent rupture took place around this point, provoked by a breakdown in public order following the collapse of the Carolingian Empire. This rupture was characterised by the growth of localised lordships, centred around the newly built castles that began to dot the landscape, spreading internecine violence across the countryside as rival castellans vied for prominence.<sup>419</sup> This explosion of violence is said to have seen the rise of the Peace and Truce of God movements: spontaneous responses to feudal aggression, instigated by the clergy in an attempt to restore order.<sup>420</sup> The end result of this violent episode was a rapid transformation of the landscape, with great counties fragmenting into smaller and smaller territories, the lords of which took on responsibilities previously held by the state as their own. Crucially, this is seen to have led to a feudalisation

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<sup>418</sup> Wickham, ‘Le forme del Feudalesimo’, p. 15.

<sup>419</sup> Thomas Bisson, ‘The “Feudal Revolution”’ in *Past and Present* 142, (1994), pp. 6-42 and Thomas Bisson, ‘Medieval Lordship’ in *Speculum* 70, (1995), pp. 743-759.

<sup>420</sup> Herbert Cowdrey, ‘The Peace and Truce of God in the Eleventh Century’ in *Past and Present* 46, (1970), pp. 43-67.

of the relationship between lord and peasant, with an increase in the direct ties of rights and obligations between the two and, also crucially, an intensification of demands from above on the people below.<sup>421</sup> One important element of this is seen to be a transformation in the size and type of settlement in the areas affected. Along with the foundation of castle-based local lordships came a pattern of nucleated settlements which sprang up around them. These nucleated settlements, in time, became the stereotypical medieval village, complete with castle, church and cluster of houses from which the lord could dominate the peasants who worked his land around it, largely for his benefit.

Arguments against this catastrophic version of events have come from historians such as Dominique Barthélemy, who has described a gradual social evolution around 860 at a more modest pace. Barthélemy questions how much store can be set on the contemporary reports of uncontrolled seigneurial violence, as well as the logic behind taking France as a model of the whole of Europe.<sup>422</sup> It certainly seems strange that a relatively short period of violence in certain areas of France should be the model when there is little evidence that this same process took place across the whole of Europe, as much as some people have tried to find evidence for it.<sup>423</sup> Timothy Reuter has voiced similar opinions around the shortcomings of such a Franco-centric view of the phenomenon, stating that, if ‘we are dealing with a European or at least a pan-Carolingian affair, then the Mâconnais will hardly serve as a metonym for the whole of European history between 950 and 1050’.<sup>424</sup> Indeed, it does not even fit the pattern of the whole of France. Yet, while there is little doubt that significant changes did take place across western Europe between 850 and 1150, this violent ideal-type, closely linked to castle building, has been the model most often applied, or searched for, in a wider European context. In Italy, as in France, the process of cellularisation is linked, historiographically at least, to the phenomenon of castle building – so much so that the term coined by Pierre Toubert for it was *incastellamento*.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Bisson, ‘The “Feudal Revolution”’, p. 7.

<sup>422</sup> Dominique Barthélemy and Stephen White, ‘The “Feudal Revolution”’ in *Past and Present* 152, (1996), pp.196-205.

<sup>423</sup> For example, see Cowdrey, ‘The Peace and Truce of God’, pp. 59-67 and also Monique Bourin and Michel Parisse, *Europe de l’an mil* (Paris, 1999), pp. 13-16, which, while only a short survey, shows the place given to the movement in French historiography – even when looking at a European context.

<sup>424</sup> Timothy Reuter and Chris Wickham, ‘The “Feudal Revolution”’ in *Past and Present* 155, (1997), pp. 178-208 (see p. 188).

<sup>425</sup> Pierre Toubert, *Les structures du Latium médiéval: le Latium méridional et la Sabine du IXe siècle à la fin du XIIe siècle* (Rome, 1973), pp. 321-348.

## 2. English *incastellamento*?

Anglo-Saxon England does not seem to fit into this model of rapid, violent fragmentation. Patrick Wormald and James Campbell described how the English kingdom had a rigorous institutional structure and strong state cohesion.<sup>426</sup> Indeed, the ease with which first Danish then Norman conquerors successfully appropriated and manipulated the levers of state apparatus seems to demonstrate the extent of royal authority over the kingdom. This clearly does not, on the face of it, match the model of a breakdown in central authority leading to the rise of increasingly numerous and ever smaller castellanies, headed by a group of newly empowered petty-nobles intent on using violence to impose their authority. If anything, the last decades of Anglo-Saxon England were characterised by the rise of a few, increasingly powerful earls, such as Godwine and his heirs, as well as the Northumbrian earls of Bamburgh and the Mercian brothers, Edwin and Morcar. While there were plenty of violent episodes between rival earls vying for their share of power – even against the king in the case of Godwine – this was ultimately in the aim of gaining as much power as possible within the existing system of earldoms, perhaps even acquiring the crown. These rivalries did not propel the kingdom into chaos and, far from a breakdown of authority into smaller parcels of territory, the danger to the king and his kingdom seemed to come more from the concentration of land and power in the hands of a few individuals families, allowing them to become potential rivals.<sup>427</sup>

England has therefore often been regarded as separate from the feudalising process that which took place on the continent. Andrew Wareham has pointed out that the feudal transformation has ‘on the whole...not been taken up as a point of debate in relation to the history of the British Isles’ and suggests that ‘strong historiographical connections between the Norman Conquest and the establishment of feudalism within England account for this lack of interest’.<sup>428</sup> The impetus for the transformation of England into a feudal kingdom has traditionally been seen as coming from the Norman Conquest and the imposition of new economic, political and military systems, which in turn led to the social transformations

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<sup>426</sup> Patrick Wormald, ‘Germanic power structures: the early English experience’ in Len Scales and Oliver Zimmer (eds), *Power and the Nation in European History* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 105-124 (see pp. 105-106) and James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), p. 31.

<sup>427</sup> See, for example, Fleming, ‘Domesday Estates of the Godwines’, Fletcher, *Bloodfeud* and Baxter, *The Earls of Mercia*.

<sup>428</sup> Wareham, *Lords and Communities*, p. 1.

that had taken place across the channel being copied by, or enforced upon, an Anglo-Saxon population to which they were completely alien. This was originally proposed by J. H.

Round in 1895:

In approaching the consideration of the institutional changes and modifications of polity resulting from the Norman Conquest, the most conspicuous phenomenon to attract attention is undoubtedly the introduction of what it is convenient to term the feudal system.<sup>429</sup>

But it is a view which was predominant for the greater part of the twentieth century. Charles Homer Haskins argued that Normandy was ‘the channel through which the stream of Frankish and feudal custom flowed to England’, while Frank Stenton stated that, from 1086 onwards, there was ‘a consolidation of feudal lordship and blurring of ancient traditions [which] destroyed the ancient simplicity of social relationships’.<sup>430</sup> This view has been gradually modified in the last fifty or so years, as historians have been minded to move the focus of research away from the technicalities of feudal tenure and military service, to more everyday concepts such as lordship and family relationships, and David Bates’ paper, ‘England and the “feudal revolution”’ represented a noble effort to kickstart this process.<sup>431</sup> However, even in the late twentieth century, the view of English ‘feudalism’ as an economic and social system that was, if not imported from Normandy, then at least a product of the events of the Conquest, was not uncommon.

James Holt used the term ‘Revolution of 1066’ to refer to the Norman Conquest, and described the change as not appearing as ‘the relatively gradual process which bedevils much of the continental evidence, but as a sharp antithesis, the new confronting the old across the divide of 1066’.<sup>432</sup> According to Holt, through this clash of the old and the new, ‘the Norman Conquest imposed on England an entirely novel system of family nomenclature’.<sup>433</sup> Whereas the pre-Conquest Anglo-Saxon family ‘stood at the centre of a

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<sup>429</sup> Round, *Feudal England*, p. 317.

<sup>430</sup> Charles Homer Haskins, *Norman Institutions* (Harvard, 1918), p. vii.

<sup>431</sup> David Bates, ‘England and the “feudal revolution”’ in *Settimane 47: Il feudalesimo nell’alto medioevo*, pp. 611-646. See also Marjorie Chibnall, *The Debate on the Norman Conquest* (Manchester, 1999), pp. 79-111 for a brief but excellent summary of the arguments around the Norman Conquest and the development of English feudalism.

<sup>432</sup> Holt, ‘The Revolution of 1066’, p. 167.

<sup>433</sup> James Holt, ‘What’s in a name? Family Nomenclature and the Norman Conquest’ in Holt, *Colonial England*, pp. 179-198 (see p. 193).

set of bilateral relationships, which embraced not just ancestors and children, but all the kin, siblings, cousins, uncles, nephews and nieces, and all their spouses in any generation', the conquering Normans brought with them a system of naming that was 'associated with the exercise of feudal lordship and the title to all those rights...which we later call property...so this fits the lineal family in which both name and property have descended from ancestors to heirs.'<sup>434</sup> For Holt, the Norman Conquest did not just replace one aristocracy with another, but one set of family relationships with another, completely transforming the internal organisation of the family unit and its role within wider society. The driving force behind this was the importance of the physical possessions of the family – their land.

The idea of an expansionary Frankish elite radiating out from a Franco-German core to the European peripheries, spreading the feudal system and all that went with it, is also the central theme of Robert Bartlett's *The Making of Europe*. He tentatively suggests that:

By the eleventh century, the Frankish aristocracy, a relatively small military elite organised into strongly patrilineal or dynastic houses and rooted firmly in the landed estate, contrasted sharply with the aristocratic kin structures of the surrounding world into which it was beginning to expand.<sup>435</sup>

However he is much firmer in stating that:

Whether the aggressive dynamism of the Frankish knightly class can be explained by feudal tensions or not, there is no doubt that the dissemination of feudal forms of tenure and obligation was one of its consequences.<sup>436</sup>

Bartlett's core-to-periphery model of the Europeanisation of Europe is appealing, and clearly has an element of truth to it, yet his 'conquest and colonisation' model only goes so far in explaining many of the changes which took place. As he acknowledges, Scandinavia only fits into this explanation through a process of voluntary cultural and technological appropriation on their part – no conquest or colonisation took place. Furthermore, his positioning of England within this model is at times ambiguous: sometimes acting as an agent of change from within the Frankish core, spreading the feudalising initiative; other times being a peripheral recipient of Frankish culture and practices (he even uses personal

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<sup>434</sup> Holt, 'What's in a name?', p. 185-186.

<sup>435</sup> Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change, 950-1350* (London, 1994), p. 51.

<sup>436</sup> Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 51.

names as an example of this).<sup>437</sup> The difficulty is, as Bartlett expresses, that it is often difficult to delineate the boundaries of ‘colonial’ expansion because “‘internal expansion’ – the intensification of settlement and reorganisation of society within western and central Europe – was as important as external expansion’.<sup>438</sup>

### 3. A nuclear explosion

Indeed, over the past thirty years, the work of a number of historians and archaeologists has painted an alternative picture of the English society and economy which places much more emphasis on the parallel development of ideas, technology and way of life, and fits it into the wider context of change across a large area of Europe. Andrew Wareham has suggested that ‘the processes associated with the feudal transformation operated on a Europe-wide basis rather than being defused from core to periphery’, and his work on East Anglia has gone some way towards proving this.<sup>439</sup> Similarly, Chris Dyer has stated that:

The ninth century...marks the beginning of a great formative period, when the essential elements in the political, social and productive system were put in place. The pattern of villages and towns which provided the place of residence of many medieval (and modern) people was established in the period 850-1100. The basic principles of the social hierarchy, with a dominant aristocracy living on the rents and services of a subordinate peasantry, and network of exchange based on towns, all owe their origins to this period.<sup>440</sup>

While medieval England in many ways does not match up with the Franco-centric view of *la révolution féodale*, many of the end results suggested by Dyer were in fact the same: a more clearly defined hierarchy, with those at the top more dominant over those at the bottom, and a reshaped landscape which caused people to gather together in larger, more nucleated villages and small towns. Whatever the mechanisms behind these transformations, the most important consequences must surely be those which affected the everyday lives of people – at least in the context of this study. However it was brought about, the transformation of the English landscape into one where people’s lives revolved increasingly around the local church and the local manor house – and interactions with the people who shared these spaces with them – was a fundamental change. That it was brought about through gradual

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<sup>437</sup> Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 271.

<sup>438</sup> Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 2.

<sup>439</sup> Wareham, *Lords and Communities*, p. 4.

<sup>440</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, p. 2.

transformation, not widespread violence and political disorder, does not necessarily alter the end results. Moreover, perhaps the fact that these changes were able to take place without such disruption should suggest that their violent context in a few areas is the exception, rather than the rule.

Perhaps it is wrong to conflate the process of nucleation with an ‘encastellation’ of the landscape – or at least in a way which puts castle-building as a necessary first step, rather than one part of a multi-faceted and often varied process. While before 1066 an Englishman’s home may not have actually been a castle, there is plenty of evidence for the development of manorial-type estates with a central residence during the two centuries leading up to the Conquest. Ann Williams has suggested that the term *burh* in many cases referred not to the large fortifications instigated by Alfred, designed to protect England’s larger towns, but to smaller yet still substantial fortified residences which sat at the centre of manorial complexes.<sup>441</sup> *Burh* therefore did not necessarily signify a fortified *town*, despite its modern connotations, but simply a place which was fortified and defensible.<sup>442</sup> *Gefýncdo*, a late Anglo-Saxon treatise on estate customs, suggests that for a *ceorl* to gain the rank of a thegn, not only would he require at least five hides of land, but also a residence which exemplified this status – namely a ‘*bellhus*’ and ‘*burhgeat*’.<sup>443</sup> Williams suggests that the use of the term *burh-geat*, or ‘gate-house’, points to the fact that the gate-house was the most prominent feature of the defensible thegnly residence.<sup>444</sup> The *burh* was not one individual structure but a complex of connected buildings which were all enclosed by a ditched boundary or hedge.<sup>445</sup> We can see this described in *Gerefa*, an eleventh-century tract on the duties of a reeve, or estate manager, which explains that:

[The reeve] can always find something to repair in the *burh* – he need never be idle when he is in it... [he can] put the house in good order, set it to rights and make it clean, and

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<sup>441</sup> See particularly Ann Williams, ‘A Bell-house and a Burh-geat: Lordly Residences in England before the Norman Conquest’ in Christopher Harper-Bill and Ruth Harvey (eds), *Medieval Knighthood IV: Papers from the fifth Strawberry Hill Conference* (Woodbridge, 1990), pp. 221-240.

<sup>442</sup> Williams, ‘A Bell-House and a Burh-geat’, p. 222.

<sup>443</sup> *Gefýncdo* is the name of the tract, seemingly composed by Wulfstan of York, also known as *Be wergildum 7 be geðindum*. It exists in a number of manuscript collections including BL, MS Cotton Titus A.XXVII, fols. 149v-150r. This translation is from Williams, *The World before Domesday*, p. 88. See Felix Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, vol. 1 (Halle, 1903), pp. 456-468 for the original, which is also available online with additional commentary on *Early English Laws*: <http://www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/laws/texts/geynco/> [accessed 4 November 2016].

<sup>444</sup> Williams, ‘A Bell-House and a Burh-geat’, p. 226-227.

<sup>445</sup> Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, p. 89.



fence drains, repair breaches in the dykes, make good the fences, root out weeds, make walkways between the houses, make tables, benches, provide horse-stalls and maintain the flooring.<sup>446</sup>

The picture painted by *Gerefa* is one not too dissimilar to that which we see in areas undergoing *incastellamento* on the continent – even if the defensive nature of English *burhs* may have been of less importance than in a continental context of prolonged public disorder. However, it does suggest that the process which saw this increasing nucleation of the English landscape was linked closely to changes that took place in the nature of lordship and the creation of manorial-style estate centres.

There is also growing archaeological evidence for the existence of pre-Conquest manors, or *burhs*. Excavations at Goltho in Lincolnshire revealed a complex of buildings which mirror the description of *Gerefa* remarkably closely, and it seems likely that they formed part of a fortified aristocratic residence.<sup>447</sup> The original Anglo-Saxon settlement at Goltho was built on the site of a former Roman-British settlement which had been abandoned in the fifth century. At some point between the mid-ninth and mid-tenth century a small homestead was replaced by a succession of larger houses and complementary buildings that developed into a manorial centre.<sup>448</sup> Over a period of around a hundred years a complex came into being comprising a hall, domestic offices, weaving sheds, kitchens and a bower which stood around three sides of a courtyard, all enclosed by substantial fortifications made up of a rampart and ditch.<sup>449</sup> While no remains were found, the strength of the defences suggest that there must have been a substantial gate, or *burh-geat*, leading from the village into the

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<sup>446</sup> *Gerefa* exists in one manuscript, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 383, fols. 63v-69r. This translation is from Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, p. 89. See Michael Swanton (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Prose* (London, 1975), pp. 25-27, for a full translation of the text, and see Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, pp. 453-55 for the original, from which this citation reads: ‘he mæg findan, hwæt he mæg on byrig betan – ne ðearf he na unnyt beon, ðonne he ðær binnan bið –: oððe hus godian, rihtan 7 weoxian 7 grep hegian, disceard betan, hegas godian, weod wyrtwalian, betweox husan bricgan, beoddian, bencian, horsan styllan, flor feormian oððe synnes sum ðing ðe to nyte mæge.’ This is also available online with additional commentary on *Early English Laws*: <http://www.earlyenglishlaws.ac.uk/laws/texts/rspger/> [accessed 4 November 2016].

<sup>447</sup> See Guy Beresford and Jane Geddes (ed.), *Goltho: the development of an Early Medieval Manor – English Heritage Archaeological Report no. 4* (London, 1987).

<sup>448</sup> While the processes he describes are not disputed, the dates provided by Beresford have been called into question by a number of scholars. Beresford suggests that this development began in the mid-ninth century, however a more likely date for the beginning of this process is some time in the first half of the tenth century. See Peter Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Lincolnshire* (Lincoln, 1998), pp. 6-7 and David Stocker [review], ‘Guy Beresford, *Goltho: the development of an early medieval manor c. 850–1150* (London, 1987) in *Archaeological Journal* 146 (1989), pp. 627-629.

<sup>449</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, pp. 29-35.

complex.<sup>450</sup> Such a residence must have belonged to an influential individual, most likely a thegn, and as Beresford points out, Goltho clearly shows that a fortified thegnly residences existed as early as the ninth century, going as far to suggest that ‘it is inconceivable that it is an isolated example’.<sup>451</sup>

One of the causes of this process in England seems to have been the fragmentation of the ‘great estates’, which were the most common form of economic organisation in the seventh and eighth centuries. These great estates, or ‘multiple estates’ are thought to have functioned through a system of ‘extensive lordship’ where a dispersed peasantry inhabiting small, scattered settlements paid service or tribute to a lord or dominant family who exercised power over substantial territories.<sup>452</sup> In this system of extensive lordship, a family might rule over a land unit the size of a small *scir* or ‘shire’. These small-shires were not the later administrative units which were to turn into modern-day counties, but smaller territories, usually delimited by natural boundaries such as rivers.<sup>453</sup> Evidence of these can be seen today in the names of places such as Hallamshire, Richmondshire and Aucklandshire.<sup>454</sup> Authority over small shires was based on the power to command goods and services from the population of the area, rather than ownership of the land by a particular family.<sup>455</sup> This was to change over the next two centuries as the changing nature of political power and notions of land ownership transformed the relationship between a lord and the people over whom he ruled.<sup>456</sup> As John Blair has pointed out, in Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire settlement changed ‘from a pattern of shifting farms and hamlets to one of larger, more regular and more settled villages’ which clearly ‘coincided with the emergence of a more intensive and more exploitative seigneurial regime’.<sup>457</sup> The great estates were split up, partly by inheritance and marriage settlement, but crucially through part of a Europe-wide process

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<sup>450</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, p. 35. Archaeological evidence for *buth-geats* is lacking, although it is possible that the stone tower of the church at Earl’s Barton was originally such a thegn’s gate before its incorporation into the church. See Andrew Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Stroud, 2002), p. 96 and Michel Audouy, Brian Dix, and David Parsons, ‘The Tower of All Saints’ Church, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire: its construction and context’ in *Archaeological Journal* 152 (1995), pp. 73-94.

<sup>451</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, p. 36.

<sup>452</sup> Faith, *The Growth of Lordship*, pp. 1-14 and Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 428-433.

<sup>453</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>454</sup> Faith, *The Growth of Lordship*, pp. 9-10 and Dyer, *Making a Living*, p. 27.

<sup>455</sup> Faith, *The Growth of Lordship*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>456</sup> Mark Bailey, *The English Manor c.1200–c.1500* (Manchester, 2002), p. 12.

<sup>457</sup> Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, p. 143.

whereby a new level of minor lords came into possession of gradually smaller parcels of territory. Thegns who had previously been rewarded by a place in the household of a royal magnate began instead to be given parcels of land they could call their own and pass on to their descendants.<sup>458</sup> This also relieved greater magnates of the responsibility for personally supporting retainers directly. Instead of collecting tribute themselves and passing on a portion of this to the men in their household, great lords could grant chunks of their own lands to their thegns, essentially providing them with a permanent salary. Thegns could then administer this land, taking rent and tribute themselves, providing loyalty and military support to their great lord in return. This was not just a tactic of the lay aristocracy. Religious leaders were involved in similar practices. In ninth and tenth-century Worcester, successive bishops systematically broke up the monastery's estates to create smaller units for their thegns who provided them with protection.<sup>459</sup> While these grants may have been initially intended as long-term leases, they were often renewed and gradually developed into permanent rights. Moreover, if they were lucky, a thegn may have received their land as *bockland*, or 'bookland', meaning they held it in complete security, able to pass it on to their heirs or transfer it via charter themselves, potentially breaking up estates even further.<sup>460</sup>

There is evidence to suggest that these changes in lordship were accompanied by a parallel transformation in the religious landscape. John Blair's extensive work on the organisation of the Anglo-Saxon church describes what he sees as a transition from a system of worship dominated by large monastic centres, or 'minsters', to one where each village was served by a local church – which would often come to form the basis of a later medieval parish.<sup>461</sup> Blair suggests that regional minsters developed in the seventh century and had come to be the primary source of salvation for the people of England. These minsters housed communities of monks and priests who served the extended lay community from distant 'mother parishes'.<sup>462</sup> However, from the ninth century onwards England began to fill up with local churches, each of which had their own priest and rights of tithe and burial. This was so overwhelmingly the case that by the creation of Domesday Book it was assumed each village would have its own church and priest, and instances where this was not the case were

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<sup>458</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, p.30.

<sup>459</sup> Bailey, *The English Manor*, p. 12.

<sup>460</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, p.30 and Faith, *The Growth of Lordship*, p. 159-161.

<sup>461</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 368-371.

<sup>462</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 80-83.

recorded.<sup>463</sup> The minster system was well-suited to extensive lordship as it was extremely extendable and flexible, but it was a system that was largely replaced by 1066. This was caused, in large part, by the nucleation of the landscape and rise of localised lordship. As new, private landlords enforced their power over local communities they felt the need – or saw the opportunity – to build their own church to serve the needs of the people on their land (and receive their tithes as a result).<sup>464</sup> This period of transformation brought into the village a type of building that most people would have not have seen other than at a local minster or in the main town of their shire. This refocused local loyalties around their own little minsters – buildings that were more intentionally communal, designed to accommodate the whole of the congregation. As such, serving the lay community became the main function of the local manor church, rather than the incidental one it had been for minsters.<sup>465</sup>

So, while this picture of late Anglo-Saxon England may appear, in some ways, very different to that of France – and it is clear that many of the latter’s violent aspects are absent – there is also evidence which suggests some striking similarities. In combination, the work of Blair, Dyer, Williams and Wareham describes the development of a more nucleated landscape, where a newly formed level of minor aristocracy placed increasing burdens on the people below them. Furthermore, behind these two suggested transformations, the fundamental economic and demographic reasons behind them may have been the same. Population pressure, and an increased need to exploit the land more intensely, are problems which would have most efficiently been solved by gathering people together in centres able to produce the surpluses needed. As Chris Dyer suggests, one reason English economic history should be looked at in a European context is due to ‘characteristics that were common across Europe, which meant that people solved problems in similar ways, such as adopting open fields with intermixed strips’ and ‘these parallel developments affected regions in different ways, which helps to identify the special character of each’.<sup>466</sup> In fact, the changes that we see in England are part of a larger process of nucleation that took place across much of Europe, beginning in the ninth century. Christopher Loveluck has used archeological evidence to suggest that the growth of fortified manorial centres and the

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<sup>463</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 368-369.

<sup>464</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 369-370.

<sup>465</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 456-461.

<sup>466</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, p. 4. See also, Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, pp. 142-144.

development of open field farming in England was, in fact, very similar to that of much of northwest Europe.<sup>467</sup>

Like the changes in naming patterns, the transformations in settlement have often been presumed to be primarily top-down processes, driven, or even enforced, by the actions of an elite. Yet we should not discount the possibility that relationships, both competitive and cooperative, between people lower down the social scale played a significant role. Rather than a coordinated restructuring carried out by an elite, change is most likely to have emerged from a combination of uncoordinated actions involving people at all levels of society. Moreover, where change was part of a coordinated process it may not have been exclusively elite-driven, but accomplished through cooperation between elites and peasantry, or even as largely peasant-driven projects.<sup>468</sup>

Agency from below may have manifested itself in a number of ways. The newly formed lordships, in most cases, came into the possession of new thegns, and many of those who came to dominate the peasants on these newly formed estates had only recently risen from the ranks of the peasantry themselves. That is not to say that they would have risen from nowhere. It is more likely that there would have been little to distinguish a lower thegn from a prosperous peasant landowner, and their ascent to the rank of thegn was the end of a gradual process of 'betterment' (for want of a better word). As Ann Williams points out, the description in *Gehyncðu* explains the importance of the requirement for a man to possess five hides for him to gain the rank of a thegn: 'even if he prospers so that he possesses a helmet and a coat of mail and a gold-plated sword' without five hides 'he is a *ceorl* all the same'.<sup>469</sup> This reaffirms the importance of ownership of a landed estate in the acquisition and outward manifestation of social status, but also suggests that the practical difference between ranks – other than land ownership – may not always have been great. Furthermore, if a wealthy peasant, or *ceorl*, was not all that different to a lower-ranked thegn, that same wealthy peasant must have been a great deal better off than many other people in his

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<sup>467</sup> Loveluck's *Northwest Europe* provides numerous examples of how settlement archaeology and material culture suggest that these changes were part of a series of parallel developments across a wide area including, but not limited to, Britain, northern France, Belgium and Holland. John Blair has also suggested that his study of English churches is comparable to much of the evidence from France during the same period. See John Blair, 'Les recherches récentes sur la formation des paroisses en Angleterre: similitudes et différences avec la France' in *Médiévales* 49, 2005, pp. 33-44, trans. Bruno Lacroix.

<sup>468</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, pp. 284-290 examines agency around development of new village settlements.

<sup>469</sup> Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, p. 4 and Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, pp. 456-468.

vicinity who were theoretically of the same rank. One key impact of the fragmentation of the great estates from the mid-ninth century onwards seems to have been the more overt manifestation and growth of the ‘middling’ ranks of society – local notables and wealthy peasant families who ‘tried to break away from the social apex of the peasantry, and transformed themselves into local lords over the very people from whom they had recently separated’.<sup>470</sup> In Chris Wickham’s imagined yet evocative depiction of an early medieval village, Malling, this was a feat achieved by Ælfwine and his heirs:

Ælfwine...accumulated more surplus and land parcels from his neighbours...His son negotiated with the bishop to build a small church in the village...his local status was more permanent as a result. A generation later Ælfwine’s family, by now rich enough to be letting out many of its fields in Malling for rent, obtained a *len*, a lease of all the village tributes from the bishop...By 900 Ælfwine’s heirs were regarded, by themselves and their neighbours, as *owners* of Malling; some of their higher-status neighbours owed them relatively little, but others, both free and unfree, owed them a lot, both in rent and labour. As small aristocrats, called *thegnas*, they were well placed to serve in the newly crystallising English state.<sup>471</sup>

This increasingly hierarchical social structure, with some rising up to, quite literally, lord it over others, must have led to a situation where secondary elites of local notables and wealthy free peasants chose to emulate certain lifestyles of the high aristocracy, without having the same quantity or quality of resources to support such lifestyles. More effort was being gone to by those on the rise to distinguish themselves from the the people just below them and to emulate those above.

It seems that something similar to this happened at the manorial complex in Goltho, Lincolnshire. The establishment of an Anglo-Saxon settlement at Goltho probably took place at some point in the ninth or early tenth century, and the original group of houses probably the homes of a number of *ceorls*.<sup>472</sup> Over the course of the next century, however, one *ceorl* managed to amass enough wealth and influence to replace these original dwellings with a much larger hall, clearly setting himself and his family apart from the rest of the village. This gradually grew to be a fully-fledged aristocratic residence, with all the

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<sup>470</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 274 and Robin Fleming, *Britain After Rome: The Fall and Rise, 400 to 800* (Harmondsworth, 2010), pp. 284-287.

<sup>471</sup> Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, p. 432.

<sup>472</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, p. 23.

associated buildings and fortifications one might expect, and by the mid-eleventh century the owner was able to undertake the reconstruction of all the principal buildings, including the hall, add a number of new ones, as well as extend the courtyard. At the same time, the fortified ditch and rampart were destroyed and new ones added of similar size but enclosing a much larger area.<sup>473</sup> This eleventh-century hall was in fact the third incarnation of the main house at Goltho, the original one having itself been replaced at some point in the late tenth century, one assumes to befit the increasing wealth and status of the occupants over the period.<sup>474</sup> The eleventh-century developments seem to coincide with a marked increase in the prosperity of the occupants, or perhaps a change in ownership, as attested by the scale of the new buildings as well as the increased number of artefacts found in these remains, including a number of iron objects which ‘may be compared to those named in the *Gerefa*’.<sup>475</sup> It is clear that, whoever inhabited the hall at Goltho by the time of the Conquest, they were positioned at the top of the local hierarchy, probably enjoying the rank of *thegn*, and their hall, its surrounding buildings and its fortifications were the physical manifestation of their wealth, power and influence, setting them apart from the dwellings of the people who lived in the surrounding village.

The competition created by this period of social mobility is, paradoxically, likely to have been the cause of an increasing need for cooperation in many places. The intensification of demands on the land caused by the need to extract enough surplus for new lords to justify their thegnly status, or wealthy peasants to reach the next rung on the ladder, would have been felt keenly by the people below them. To meet these demands, peasants would have needed to find more efficient ways of working the land. It is this which led to the relocation of settlements around manorial centres and saw the beginning of cooperative techniques, such as open field farming, some of which would already have been in place by the tenth century.<sup>476</sup> Peasants would have found it efficient to move their dwellings to the centre and gradually they organised their holdings, and houses, in more efficient and systematic ways. In some cases, this may have been done at the direction of a lord – some particularly uniform settlements point to a concerted re-planning of a settlement – but the impetus towards more nucleated settlements was not only provided by the higher ecclesiastical and

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<sup>473</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, p. 71.

<sup>474</sup> It would, in turn, be replaced by a Norman motte and bailey castle following the Conquest.

<sup>475</sup> Beresford et al., *Goltho*, pp. 71-72.

<sup>476</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 19-22, Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, p. 86.

secular authorities. In many cases it would have simply been the best way peasants themselves found to respond to the greater demands placed upon them. Similarly, not all 'manorial' centres need necessarily have been aristocratic. Some may have been formed around the residences of wealthy free peasants who had their own subordinate agricultural workers and played the leading role in their local community, even if they did not have the rank of thegn.<sup>477</sup>

Whatever the impetus behind the change, it is clear that these new village formations followed an economic logic, particularly in places where arable farming was common and there was a close connection between the villagers and their fields. In this system, just as new lords would have considered their estates their own property even if it was theoretically held by lease from a higher lord, peasants would have ploughed and harvested their own holding of land and regarded it as their own property. By scattering each family's holding across the village territory, and rotating between different crop types and fallowed land, villagers could ensure their arable land was more productive than keeping it in constant use, and also that the large fallow areas could be used for common grazing.<sup>478</sup> The planned, or perhaps negotiated, nature of these settlements can be seen in the layout of estates, which were clearly laid out in response to resource availability, sometimes even sharing resources with neighbouring estates where it was mutually beneficial, which may go some way to explaining the detached parts of some parishes visible in later sources.<sup>479</sup> The necessity to cooperate with other members of a community in order to prosper, or at least survive, represents the beginning of a new way of living for the majority of the English population, but one that would only intensify over the medieval period.

The nucleation of settlement which took place at Raunds in Northamptonshire shows how this process may have taken place. Lying within the central belt of 'champion' villages, excavations have shown how the dispersed pattern of early-middle Saxon settlement changed from the mid-ninth century, becoming increasingly nucleated.<sup>480</sup> Settlement before

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<sup>477</sup> Fleming, *Britain After Rome*, pp. 280-284, Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 279 and Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>478</sup> Andrew Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 154-156. See also Fleming, *Britain After Rome*, pp. 281-282 and Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>479</sup> Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>480</sup> Michel Audouy and Andy Chapman (ed.), *Raunds: The origin and growth of a midland village, AD 450-1500* (Oxford, 2009).



this period was largely dispersed across the Nene Valley, suggesting a pattern of open, unplanned settlement of low density and no formal demarcation or boundaries between settlements.<sup>481</sup> From around 850 onwards settlement became nucleated around central villages and associated hamlets. The newly nucleated settlements were made of regular plots of roughly one acre, delineated by boundary ditches – a move which epitomises the change from ‘individual settlements within their own field systems to a communal approach in which defined areas of settlement were set apart from the field system’.<sup>482</sup> It is not clear at exactly what point an open field farming system became fully implemented – it may have begun in the late tenth century – but it is the shift from dispersed to nucleated settlement, clearing the fields of dwellings, which made it possible. Moreover, the seemingly planned nature of the resettlement suggests that it took place in a concerted episode of resettlement.<sup>483</sup> The implementation of a new farming system seems the most likely reason for such a shift. The ninth century also saw the creation and expansion of a manorial-style complex, including hall, courtyard as well as a possible ‘thegn’s gate’, with the likely owner of such a complex being a minor thegn.<sup>484</sup> The new hall was followed, perhaps only a decade or so later, by the final piece of the jigsaw: a church, with its own churchyard containing a cemetery that was used not just for the thegn and his family, but for the inhabitants of the newly established plots in the village surrounding it.<sup>485</sup> While the village and its surrounding hamlets continued to grow in population over the coming centuries, the general settlement pattern remained largely unchanged the later middle ages – the village became rooted in the landscape.<sup>486</sup>

In some ways village formation represents the end of a process of expansion. Villages developed within fixed limits and many of the tenth-century village limits coincide with modern parishes. Standardised peasant holdings served the interests of landowners, as

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<sup>481</sup> Audouy et al., *Raunds*, p. 26.

<sup>482</sup> Audouy et al., *Raunds*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>483</sup> Audouy et al., *Raunds*, pp. 30-33.

<sup>484</sup> Audouy et al., *Raunds*, pp. 34.

<sup>485</sup> Audouy et al., *Raunds*, pp. 34.

<sup>486</sup> For further examples of nucleation in the late Anglo-Saxon period see Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 111-157. See also the *Viking and Anglo-Saxon Landscape and Economy* project to examine the society and economy in England and Wales from the early eighth to the mid-eleventh century using metal detecting finds, field surveys and archaeological excavations, the findings of which support a change in settlement patterns from c. 850 across a wide area of England: <http://www.york.ac.uk/archaeology/vasle/vasleoverview.html> [accessed 12 September 2016].

standardised rents could be levied from them. But the same systemisation also protected the families who occupied these holdings from impoverishment. No-one was likely to become particularly rich, but they probably would not starve either. Scattering strips meant that everyone had a fairly equal share of good land and bad land. Poor harvests would affect everyone relatively equally and they would have shared other resources, such as woods, streams and mill ponds.<sup>487</sup> Most importantly, as these holdings were now recognised as being their own, the security created by the system also guaranteed the same benefits for their children, as ‘an established holding ought to descend in the blood of the men who had held it of old’.<sup>488</sup> As Faith suggests, despite the wide variety of inheritance practices that became solidified across England by the later middle ages, from partible inheritance to primogeniture, the overriding preoccupation of all peasant landholders would have been the concept of ‘keeping the name on the land’.<sup>489</sup>

#### 4. A sense of place – the growth of communities

The results of this threefold transformation in lordship, economic organisation and patterns of worship went much further than a reorganisation of settlement. It fundamentally changed the way people lived. Andrew Reynolds points out that ‘by the end of the Anglo-Saxon period the sight of a thegnly residence adjacent to a small church with an enclosed cemetery would have been commonplace.’<sup>490</sup> These three components did not exist in isolation – they formed a centre around which a new way of life emerged. From isolated, impermanent settlements in which loyalties were divided largely between a far-flung lord and extended family members and where the rituals of devotion were carried out infrequently at distant minster churches, people were gradually brought together into permanent settlements based around the residence of an ever-present lord, a church with a resident priest and, perhaps most importantly, a community made up of dozens of other families. As Blair points out, the gulf between peasant and priest must have been greater in a world where priests were concentrated in far-flung minsters than in one where they were scattered through the countryside.<sup>491</sup> The local church became a focal point for the life of

<sup>487</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 23-26.

<sup>488</sup> Rosamond Faith, ‘Peasant Families and Inheritance Customs in Medieval England’ in *The Agricultural History Review* 14, (1966), pp. 77-95 (p. 86).

<sup>489</sup> Faith, ‘Peasant Families and Inheritance’, p. 86.

<sup>490</sup> Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 130.

<sup>491</sup> Blair, *Anglo-Saxon Oxfordshire*, pp. 137-141.

the village which would punctuate the stages of life with key ceremonies, including burial in their own churchyard, and baptism at their own font, where children would have been given a name (and, in the process, a social identity).<sup>492</sup> These religious staging posts would have been memorable landmarks in the lives of individuals, families and entire communities. But equally important would have been everyday occurrences, tasks and interactions, the mundanity of which may have meant they barely registered in people's consciousness.

Similarly, a distant lord of a great estate, of whom most people would see little and to whom they would pay tribute just a few times a year, must have had been a very different proposition from an ever-present thegn who lived in a central hall around which the life of the nascent manor had started to revolve. Even if this local thegn was comparatively less powerful than his predecessor from a century or two before, at least in terms of the breadth of his territorial possessions, the permanence of his presence and the immediacy of his actions must have made his impact on the lives of the peasants who worked on his land exponentially more powerful – and made his influence both more effective and affective. Part of this would have been down to simple economic necessity. A lord of a dispersed great estate would only have needed to collect fairly irregular and relatively undemanding amounts of tribute – just enough to supply his largely itinerant household – from areas as wide as 50 or 100 square miles. In contrast, a new thegn of a compact estate would have needed to extract enough wealth to keep him and his family in the style to which they hoped to become accustomed on a permanent basis – all from an estate which may have been as small as 2 or 3 square miles.<sup>493</sup> The need to gather the returns required to do this, as well as perform their primary function of supplying military support to their greater lord, would have meant this ascendant minor aristocracy needed to exploit their lands and their tenants with much greater intensity. As a result, the level of control of lords over the lives of the people who worked their land must have been that much greater.

Just as the proximity of a local priest and a local lord would have changed the relationships of everyday people with them, so too would the proximity of these other people with whom they would have needed to cooperate on a day-to-day basis, but with whom they may have also been in competition. Open field agriculture, by its very nature, relies on the co-

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<sup>492</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, pp. 456-461.

<sup>493</sup> Dyer, *Making a Living*, pp. 31.

operation of a community in order to maximise yields and profit margins.<sup>494</sup> The transformation of the English landscape relocated a large part of the population from a position of relative independence and isolation, both geographical and social, to one where daily ties of dependence and interdependence would have been inescapable. One key consequence of this change must have been an increased attachment of people to the land on which, and the community in which, they lived.<sup>495</sup> In short, it must have created a much more profound *sense of place*. When we talk of a ‘sense of place’ today, we do not necessarily mean it in a purely geographical sense. It often means a sense of belonging or attachment, whether it be to a group of friends, a job or some other type of organisation or community – either independent of, or in conjunction with, an actual geographical location. We also use almost exclusively locational terms when trying to situate an individual in a social order. We *position* them in social hierarchies and *place* them at the heart of communities. And much effort has been expended throughout history on ensuring certain groups and individuals ‘know their place’. The social worlds we live in are often organised in geographical terms, even when groups and communities do not inhabit a clearly-defined geographical space, but for the people of later medieval England, their sense of place must have been inextricably linked to the location in which they lived and the people who inhabited it with them.

In a medieval village, social cohesion and social distinction must have been an acutely visible phenomenon. It is well attested that the castle, or *donjon*, of the medieval landlord was as much a symbol of status, power and ceremony as it was a practical means of military defence.<sup>496</sup> A castle, or manor house, would have been an inescapable demonstration of domination over their land and the people on it. However, the contrast between the feudal lord’s castle and a cottager’s meagre dwelling must have only been the most obvious physical manifestation of an increasingly delineated social hierarchy, not just between lords and peasants, but also between different members of the community. The homes and holdings of richer, landowning sokemen and free peasants would have been clearly distinguished from those of poorer families, perhaps including those of local officials who worked for the landlord or a permanent reeve who looked after the estate of an absent lord.<sup>497</sup> Even in the

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<sup>494</sup> Reynolds, *Late Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>495</sup> Helena Hamerow, *Rural Settlements and Society in Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 164-168.

<sup>496</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 222.

<sup>497</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 286.

communal cemetery, more prominent stone gravestone markers and covers would have been used for higher status members of the village.<sup>498</sup>

Yet, within the same space, overtly communal focal points would have been used by everyone on a daily basis. People would have needed to share common grazing land and the open fields in which they worked. The local church, its font and its cemetery would have marked not just the key moments in people's lives, but the key moments of every year, every week, every day through the routine of religious ritual. And it is unlikely that they would have acted as purely religious buildings, but also as community centres for secular celebrations and other more mundane activities.<sup>499</sup> Wulfstan of York's insistence that priests should not allow dogs, horses or pigs inside the churchyard suggests that people were regularly using it for other purposes.<sup>500</sup> Similarly, Ælfric of Eynsham bemoaned the fact that men 'act foolishly very often, in that they will watch and madly drink within God's house, and play shamefully and with foolish talking defile God's house'; his disdain for the non-religious use of houses of God is plain when he suggests that 'he who will drink, and make a foolish noise, let him drink at home, not in the Lord's house'.<sup>501</sup>

There have been recent attempts to show that the medieval world was, in fact, more interconnected than often imagined, and that more people may have traveled outside their local area more than traditionally thought.<sup>502</sup> While these efforts are commendable and their results important, it is inescapable that, for most people, travelling long distances would have been a rare, or possibly unknown, experience. The local landscape of the village – its fields, its buildings, its people and its rhythms – would have been, for the majority of people, the setting in which almost the entirety of their life took place. The connection people had with their local surroundings must have been profound. Furthermore, this sense of place

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<sup>498</sup> Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, p. 285.

<sup>499</sup> Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society*, p. 458.

<sup>500</sup> *Wulfstan's Canons of Edgar*, ed. Roger Fowler (Oxford, 1972), no. 26 (p. 7). The original reads: 'ne binnan cyricstune ænig hund ne hors ne cume, ne swyn þe ma, þæs þe man wealden mæge'.

<sup>501</sup> *Ælfric's Lives of the Saints: Being a set of sermons on saints' days formerly observed by the English Church*, ed. and trans. Walter Skeat (London, 1881), vol. 1, xiii, ll. 75-77 and 84-85 (pp. 288-289). The original reads: 'Nu doð menn swa-þeah dyslice foroft þæt hi willað wacian and wodlice drincian binnan godes huse and bysmorlice plegan...and seðe wile drincan and dwæsliche hlydan, drince him æt ham, na on drihtnes huse.'

<sup>502</sup> Many excellent examples are included in Peregrine Horden (ed.), *Freedom of Movement in the Middle Ages: Proceedings of the 2003 Harlaxton Symposium* (Donnington, 2007), and Horden's own introductory chapter, 'Towards a History of Medieval Mobility', pp. xvii-xxxiv, is particularly persuasive. Further such studies are included in Marianne O'Doherty and Felicitas Schmieder (eds), *Travels and Mobilities in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2015).

must have encompassed both place and community, which were inextricably linked.

Anthropologist Setha Low describes a sense of place, or ‘place attachment’, as:

The symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land that provides the basis for an individual’s and group’s understanding of and relationship to the environment... [It] is more than an emotional and cognitive experience, and includes cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place.<sup>503</sup>

People, their names and the system of naming in general make up part of these ‘cultural beliefs and practices that link people to place’. Attachment to place can come in a number of ways, which are often interlinked, and usually strengthened through the processes of interaction. One form of attachment is *genealogical attachment*, a connection to a place through history or family lineage, which is often strengthened by living in a place, a household or a community for a long period of time. Another is *economic attachment*, which is created through land ownership and inheritance, but is strengthened and reinforced when a person works in a place, or when the resources of a place are the means of a group’s economic survival. *Narrative attachment* is created through storytelling and place naming – the linguistic act of talking about a place is the process through which attachment occurs. One other key form of attachment is *cosmological attachment*. This is formed through religious or spiritual links of a community to a place and strengthened through the experience of living with the physical presence of religious beliefs.<sup>504</sup>

All four of these forms of attachment would have been extremely strong for the inhabitants of a medieval village, whatever their rank. The attachment to one’s property, quite probably the same property that had been owned by one’s parents and grandparents, would have been reinforced by the everyday lived experience of the environment, stories told by other members of the community about events, both recent and past, and the economic reality that their lives depended on their land. These personal attachments would have combined with a strong communal sense of economic attachment created through the sharing of economic resources, the farming of open fields and the communal responsibility for economic survival. Finally, the daily rituals of religious life provided by the local church, its

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<sup>503</sup> Setha Low, ‘Symbolic Ties That Bind: Place Attachment in the Plaza’ in Irwin Altman and Setha Low (eds), *Place Attachment* (New York, 1992), pp. 165-185 (see p. 165).

<sup>504</sup> Low summarises these different sources of place attachment in ‘Symbolic ties that bind’ pp. 166-175 (as well as one other type, attachment through destruction or loss).

cemetery and its font would have created a spiritual, or cosmological, sense of attachment. This sense of attachment to a locality must have been all the greater for the infrequency with which most people would have strayed from it. The village, its landscape and its inhabitants would have, for the vast majority of people, been ever-present and would have formed the basis of how they understood the world.

The importance of place and space in the medieval world is something that has been noted by Anita Guerreau-Jalabert. She has coined a term, *topolignée*, which refers to what she sees as a reorganisation of society around the year 1000 which was more than the simple shift *from* kinship to lineage as suggested by many, but as a transformation which incorporated both of these, refocusing them around a sense of place and space.<sup>505</sup> In the same vein, Alain Guerreau notes that:

Jusqu'au dixième siècle les aristocrates devaient leur position avant tout à leur intégration dans un réseau de parenté, à partir du douzième siècle la qualité d'aristocrate dépendit de l'ancrage dans un terre...la prééminence d'une logique d'un système de parenté a succédé celle d'une logique foncière.<sup>506</sup>

This chimes with Ann Williams' portrait of the pre-Conquest English aristocracy, as well as the description of landholding as a pre-requisite of status in *Gebyncðu*. It also mirrors closely Andrew Wareham's suggestion that:

Status within the elite was becoming more a matter of houses occupied, lifestyles maintained and social connections in local contexts, than of position within a national framework of *Königsnähe*. These developments were establishing themselves as an independent social category...while the great lords were increasingly looking towards frameworks of power focused upon upon locality and lineage.<sup>507</sup>

And as we have seen, it is not just the aristocracy that would have been rooted to the land. Nor would they have been the only ones whose status was determined by how much land they held (and how they held it). The whole of medieval society would have been governed

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<sup>505</sup> Anita Guerreau-Jalabert, 'El sistema de parentesco medieval: sus formas (real/espiritual) y su dependencia con respecto a la organización del espacio' in Reyna Pastor (ed.), *Relaciones de poder, de producción y parentesco en la Edad Media y Moderna* (Madrid, 1990), pp. 85-105.

<sup>506</sup> Alain Guerreau, 'Quelques caractères spécifiques de l'espace féodal européen' in Neithard Blust, Robert Descimon and Alain Guerreau (eds), *L'État ou le Roi. Les fondements de la modernité monarchique en France* (Paris, 1996), pp. 85-101 (see pp. 88-89).

<sup>507</sup> Wareham, *Lords and Communities*, p. 94.

by a *logique foncière*. Guerreau also suggests that the reorganisation of settlements into nucleated parishes would have had a profound effect on social relationships:

La paroisse était un élément de structure ecclésiale, indissolublement matériel, rituel et social, dont l'effet (non la cause ni le substrat) était un espace fortement organisé comme point de valorisation et d'ancrage.<sup>508</sup>

As with Bourin and Chareille, Guerreau places a great deal of emphasis on the vertical relationships between lords and peasants, and the dynamics of domination between the two – while this nucleation ensured the lower orders were divided, immobile and disconnected, the dominant aristocracy were connected and cooperative, enabling them to further enforce their dominance and subjugate those below them.<sup>509</sup> There is certainly some truth in this, yet, as mentioned earlier, it would be wrong to remove all agency from everyone below the ranks of the nobility. Within each community, there must have been a degree of connection and cooperation among people lower down the scale. Indeed, their very survival would have depended on it.

It was not just village communities that came into being in this period, and from the ninth century onwards England saw the establishment and development of urban communities for the first time since the fall of Rome. Some of these developed inside the fortified *burhs* established by Alfred and his successors as a response to Viking invasion, others around trading emporia, or *wics* such as Southampton (*Hamwic*) and Ipswich (*Gippeswic*).<sup>510</sup> While both *burhs* and *wics* are likely to have been, to some extent, planned and maintained for specific military or economic purposes, some towns do seem to have developed naturally, such as that of Colchester, which had been largely abandoned during the Early Saxon period, as people seemed more inclined to inhabit the rural areas around it rather than the old Roman town. Colchester was not listed as a *burh* town, but the settlement which grew up on the former Roman site from the late eighth century onwards developed into a town prominent enough for Athelstan to hold his *witan* there in 931, and by the end of the tenth

<sup>508</sup> Guerreau, 'L'espace féodal', p. 90.

<sup>509</sup> Guerreau, 'L'espace féodal', pp. 85-101.

<sup>510</sup> Some urban settlements ended up incorporating a *wic* and *burh*, including London, where *Lundenwic* lay adjacent to later *Lundenburh*, which itself inhabited the same space as Roman *Londinium*. See Francis Pryor, *Britain in the Middle Ages: An Archaeological History* (London, 2006), pp. 164-166.



century it had its own mint.<sup>511</sup> By the end of the eleventh century, its status as a town can be in no doubt. It is referred to in Domesday as a *burgus*, and the 218 individuals surveyed in Chapter 3 of this thesis are listed as ‘burgesses’ (*burgenses*).

As with the nucleation of village settlements, the increasing propensity for English people to gather together within the growing number of urban settlements which dotted the landscape seems to have been, in most cases, a natural, organic process – and one that coincided with similar developments in continental Europe.<sup>512</sup> Many of these ‘towns’ were actually rather small, such as Steyning in Sussex which by 1086 consisted of 123 houses and a population of about 600 people, and there would probably have been little difference between the lives of the people who lived in these towns and those of the people in the villages surrounding them.<sup>513</sup> Only a few towns would have had substantial populations – Winchester, Norwich, London, Lincoln and York may have had around 5,000 inhabitants or more by the twelfth century, for example.<sup>514</sup> However, whether it be in a nucleated village or small town, one thing all these new settlements had in common was the fact they brought people together into communities.

Joseph Morsel has hypothesised about what he describes as the development of ‘*communautés d’habitants*’ in an attempt to refocus the disparate national historiographies around the ideas of *encellulement*, *kommunalismus* and *incastellamento* – and all the other, seemingly unconnected explanations for this phenomenon of nucleation and settlement change.<sup>515</sup> He suggests that these *communautés d’habitants* developed across western Europe in a number of forms – villages, parishes and towns – whose characteristics may have differed from region to region, but whose fundamental characteristics were the same:

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<sup>511</sup> Pryor, *Britain in the Middle Ages*, pp. 151-157. The unplanned nature of the settlement is supported by the somewhat haphazard layout of the streets that developed within the town walls.

<sup>512</sup> See Loveluck, *Northwest Europe*, pp. 328-360.

<sup>513</sup> Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 170-171 and Mark Gardiner and Christopher Greatorex, ‘Archaeological excavations in Steyning, 1992-95: further evidence for the evolution of a late Saxon town’ in *Sussex Archaeological Collections* 135 (1997), pp. 143-177.

<sup>514</sup> Reynolds, *Later Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 177.

<sup>515</sup> Joseph Morsel, ‘Introduction’ in *La formation des communautés d’habitants au Moyen Âge: Perspectives historiographiques, Textes des communications faites lors de la table ronde de Xanten, les 19-22 juin 2003*, accessed online on *Laboratoire de Médiévistique Occidentale de Paris*, <https://lamop.univ-paris1.fr/spip.php?rubrique211> [accessed 28 March 2014].

L'avènement des communautés d'habitants correspond ainsi à celui d'une structure sociale spécifique: un ensemble de feux (plus ou moins aggloméré) dont la cohésion ne repose pas sur des rapports de parenté (même s'il peut y avoir une certaine endogamie) mais sur l'idée d'appartenance commune à un même espace (référé à un lieu); l'articulation des feux correspond essentiellement à l'organisation productive, dont la reproduction à long terme est assurée par la fixation accrue des populations à l'espace habité.<sup>516</sup>

Here Morsel perfectly encapsulates the multi-faceted transformation that took place within all levels of medieval society caused by the increasing tendency, or necessity, for people to gather together in communal settlements – be they villages, towns, or even interconnected polyfocal settlements – around which developed communities anchored in the landscape with a real sense of communal and local identity.<sup>517</sup>

Most importantly, the impact on the people living within these communities would have been to create cohesive, inter-connected and close-knit social networks. Not all social networks necessarily map onto a physical community, but in the medieval settlements described by Morsel, amongst others, the physical space in which people lived, and the social network they made up, would have been inextricably inter-linked, and in many ways, inescapable.

## 5. The medieval naming community

So far in this chapter I have attempted to show that, beginning around the ninth century, there took place a reorganisation of English settlement and, as a result, a restructuring of English society. This saw the creation of internally cohesive communities with an increasing sense of local identity which engendered the creation of close-knit social networks. However, the changes described here are by no means accepted by all scholars. Eric Cambridge and David Rollason, for example, have called into question John Blair's 'Minster Hypothesis', which they see as 'disregarding some of the most significant elements of development in the early English church in the first three centuries of its existence' as well as 'the achievements

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<sup>516</sup> Morsel, 'Introduction', p. 14.

<sup>517</sup> Chris Wickham has recently said something similar in *Medieval Europe* (New Haven, 2016). See, for example, pp. 252-257.

of the kings of late Saxon England in the area of Church organisation'.<sup>518</sup> Yet, while this view of late Anglo-Saxon England may not be accepted in all quarters, I believe the studies carried out in this studies go some way to supporting the changes suggested by this group of scholars.

Names, at their heart, are tools to be used within a social context. It stands to reason that a change in the social structure in which names were used would change how people used them. I believe that the changes we see to the personal naming system represent a reflection of wider changes taking place to the way English society was structured. As the social and physical landscape of English people changed, their anthroponymic system changed to fit the needs of their new social environment. The micro-studies of Chapter 5 demonstrated how families gradually moved away from the practice of choosing unique names for their children, and instead began to repeat whole names, passing them down through their families. This was, clearly, in some respects linked to lineage and the overt demonstration of family belonging – but this type of demonstration was possible within the dithematic systems used in earlier Anglo-Saxon England, through alliteration and repetition of name themes, as seen in the genealogies of royal dynasties such as Essex and Kent. It could be argued that the change represented a shift from bilateral, cognatic kinship systems to a more agnatic, patrilineal system of family descent, but in many families the repeated names seem to have marked connections of a much broader nature than simple linear descent, with names being shared by cousins and uncles and nephews, as well as grandfathers and grandsons. In fact, in comparison, the direct passing of name down from father to son was actually very rare. It has also been shown how, where politically expedient, female names could equally show off links with powerful family members, as the case of the three daughters of Earl Waltheof named *Ælfflæd* seems to demonstrate.

Kinship can only go so far to explain the changes that took place. If you want to differentiate your family by using names linked to your lineage, choosing names that are used by everyone else is not the best way to go about it, so the increasing concentration of choices around a small number of popular names seems to work against this theory. Instead, the more significant change seems to be the practice of copying names from other people within a social network, be they the local priest, as in the case of Orderic, or the family of a

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<sup>518</sup> Eric Cambridge and David Rollason, 'Debate: The pastoral organization of the Anglo-Saxon Church: a review of the "Minster Hypothesis"' in *Early Medieval Europe* 4 (1995), pp. 87-104 – cited from p. 104.

powerful lord or patron, as in the case of the Godwinesons. This, if anything, suggests a shift away from a one dimensional, family-based system of name giving, to a multi-dimensional one where family and lineage were just one element in a more complex social network. This new social structure came about in large part through the shifting settlement patterns which brought more people into daily contact with one another, increasing ties of cooperation and competition, and creating communities more permanently rooted in the landscape with a more profound sense of place. In many ways, it ties in with Anita Jalabert-Guerreau's theory of *topolignée*, as people's horizons shifted away from the purely familial, and refocused around a sense of place and space, incorporating family and kinship into the wider social networks these new communities created.<sup>519</sup>

While cooperation was essential in such interdependent communities, competition would also have been unavoidable. The changing landscape brought with it a period of relative social mobility made possible through the more intensive and extensive exploitation of the landscape. As new thegns rose up from the ranks of the peasantry, and wealthy peasants became more clearly distinguished from those below them, appearance would have been increasingly important. Setting oneself apart from those immediately below was done in a number of ways – bigger houses, better clothes, more elaborate graves in the cemetery would have been obvious manifestations of social status – but a name could have been as valuable a tool as any, not least because of its inherent ease of acquisition. We have seen how aristocratic families used and reused names which were seen as fit for the head of a dynasty. For an aspiring thegn, carrying a name befitting of a lord (or giving one to one's child) could have been as much part of a thegn's armoury as a 'helmet, a coat of mail and a gold-plated sword'.<sup>520</sup> Indeed, Arnaud Lestremou points out that:

Le nom permet de révéler l'existence de groupes liés par une identité commune et de formes de solidarité horizontale, mais il peut aussi refléter de façon très nette les formes de hiérarchisation du corps social. Partant du principe que le nom est un objet de consommation linguistique et un moyen de présentation de soi, il constitue, au même titre que les vêtements, la nourriture ou le lieu de résidence un des éléments qui permettent de marquer son rang et son rôle dans la société.<sup>521</sup>

<sup>519</sup> Guerreau-Jalabert, 'El sistema de parentesco medieval', pp. 85-105.

<sup>520</sup> Williams, *The World Before Domesday*, p. 4 and Liebermann (ed.), *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, pp. 456-468.

<sup>521</sup> Lestremou, 'Les pratique anthroponymiques et identités sociales', p. 693.

It is therefore not quite as simple as Clark's suggestion that English peasants took to 'aping' the names of their social superiors. The copying of names from people above them in the social hierarchy is likely to have been done as much as part of their own social advancement, as it was in reverence of their 'betters'.<sup>522</sup>

Whatever the reason, it is clear that such 'aping' was becoming increasingly common in the century prior to the Conquest. The names of powerful pre-Conquest figures such as *Godwine*, *Uchtræd*, *Siward* and *Maldred* certainly seem to have had a significant impact on the name choices of people in large areas of England, just as *Richard* and *William* did after the Conquest, and *Geoffroi*, *Baudoin* and *Raimond* did in Anjou, Flanders and Toulouse in the eleventh century.<sup>523</sup> In this sense, the naming of children after the Williams, Richards and Roberts who replaced the Anglo-Saxon land-owning aristocracy was nothing new, and hardly revolutionary in anything other than the linguistic origin of the names. Furthermore, as pointed out by Clark, it was not always kings or even the most powerful lords whose names became popular. It is likely that in many cases it was lesser, local figures who became the reference points for name-giving – as in the case of the Ivos of Kibworth-Harcourt – but as the number of Williams proliferated, so did the number of people after whom children could be named.

It seems likely that the relative survival of the names of the Bamburgh Earls was not due to some long-held memory of Waltheof, Siward and Uhtred, nor even out of a sense of resistance to the Norman invaders, as Postles has suggested.<sup>524</sup> It seems much more likely that there were simply far more people of local significance who bore 'pre-Conquest' names in the post-Conquest north of England. While the descendants of Waltheof and his kin swiftly took on continental names themselves, there is evidence to suggest that the lower levels of the English aristocracy remained in place in many northern areas over which William had little control. It was with the cooperation of these lesser lords that Ann Williams has suggested the new Norman elite eventually consolidated their power, and many of these may well have remained as local points of reference for name-giving,

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<sup>522</sup> Clark, 'Willelmus rex? vel alius Willelmus?', p. 281. Clark correctly points out that it is not clear exactly who people were naming their children after, but of the assumption that it was a 'banal aping by the lower orders of the customs of their betters' she agrees that it was "true enough" no doubt'.

<sup>523</sup> Bourin, 'Bilan de l'enquête', pp. 244-245.

<sup>524</sup> Postles, *Naming the People of England*, p. 46. Postles suggests that 'at the very least, the preservation of insular names at a significant level in the North owed much to a positive attachment to the insular tradition, but also to resistance in peasant social groups to external influence'.

ensuring that a few pre-Conquest names did survive longer than others.<sup>525</sup> It is unlikely that Uhtred de Chyrche and Siward de Deuksbiri were named after two earls who died some 150 years earlier, but rather that they were named after two contemporary bearers of these names from the local area.<sup>526</sup>

The perverse effect of this new practice of copying names, as is often the case with fashions, is that what seems to have begun as a strategy to differentiate oneself, eventually led to the creation of a number of very popular names, making differentiation more difficult.

Popularity breeds popularity. However, unlike most fashions – where what was once rare and fashionable becomes ubiquitous, something new comes along to its place – the later medieval period saw names become even more concentrated and those names at the top even less likely to be replaced. The period of relative social mobility which was brought about by the reorganisation of the landscape eventually ended as the new communities and social hierarchies it created solidified. Ælfric of Eynsham wrote about the three orders of society, the *oratores*, the *bellatores* and the *laboratores*, as early as the year 1000, generations before the Conquest:

*Laboratores* are they who obtain with toil our subsistence; *Oratores* are they who intercede with God for us; *Bellatores* are they who protect our towns, and defend our soil against an invading army. Now toils the field-labourer for our subsistence, and the worldly warrior must fight against our enemies, and the servant of God must always pray for us, and fight spiritually against invisible enemies.<sup>527</sup>

Whether such a clearly ordered society was actually in place at this or any time is debatable, yet it is clear that by the High Middle Ages the differentiation between the aristocracy and the people over whom they ruled had become clearer and less surmountable.

Bourin and Chareille have suggested that this transformation of settlement engendered a liberation of choice which had hitherto been absent. Yet the homogeneity of their naming decisions surely suggests that, if they had any newfound freedom of choice, they did not use it on their children's names. Instead, the social environment of medieval England clearly

<sup>525</sup> Williams, *The English and the Norman Conquest*, pp. 95-97.

<sup>526</sup> *Final Concords For Lancashire*, John nos 14 and 25.

<sup>527</sup> Ælfric's *Lives of the Saints*, vol. 2, xxv, ll. 815-822 (pp. 120-123). The original reads: '*laboratores* synd þa þe urne bigleafan beswincað; *oratores* synd þa ðe us to gode geðingiað; *bellatores* synd þa ðe ure burga healdað, and urne eard be-veriað wið onwinnendne here. Nu swincð se yrðling embe urne begleofan, and se woruld-cempa sceall winnan wið ure fynd and se godes þeowa sceall symle for us gebiddan.'

created a similarity of outlook that restricted the options for naming creativity, causing people to fall back time and time again on the same names. Modern studies of naming have shown that much of the pressure to conform to naming customs is created through horizontal pressure to conform from fellow members of the community. Ellen Bramwell's study revealed how, as the traditional social structure of the village communities she examined broke down, the pressure to select names from a small common stock was reduced.<sup>528</sup> In certain ways, the traditional villages she examined showed strong parallels with those which developed in the middle ages. Such communities, in which dozens of families resided together in close-knit social networks, created naming systems which prioritised the categorisation of individuals over differentiation, where the bearing of a common name that proved your membership of the community was more important than standing out from the crowd. In this transforming environment, just as amongst the Zulu participants of Suzman's study, the reference points for naming would have been numerous, but relatively fixed: the nuclear family, prominent local figures, such as the local lord, and religious role models, in the form of the local clergyman and the saints evoked in the daily religious services.

There is, of course, the practical consideration which meant that, as names became more concentrated, there would be more people with the same name who could be used as reference points for names. In many places it may have been the case that one's priest, father and lord all bore the same name anyway, which may also have happened to have been the name of a saint. So naming after one specific figure would not always have been possible, or even necessary – you could kill multiple birds with one stone, whether you intended to or not. Moreover, these were merely the conscious reference points for name-giving that would have existed within medieval communities. Naming is always a conscious choice – no-one gives their child a name by accident – but there are clearly structural factors at play that have an unconscious impact on the seemingly conscious decisions of individual families. In this sense, naming sits at the intersection of structure and agency, or *habitus* and field, allowing us to see how such an important, individual decision is impacted on by the wider social framework in which that decision is made. What we see at play over the 500 years covered in this thesis is a fundamental restructuring of the social frameworks within which people lived – a transformation which appears to have been broadly similar across a large

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<sup>528</sup> Bramwell, 'Names in society', pp. 362-382.

area of Europe, England included, and subsequently caused a fundamental transformation in the way people chose names for their children.<sup>529</sup>

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<sup>529</sup> These conclusions stand in stark contrast to those of Alan Macfarlane in his work *The Origins of English Individualism: The Family, Property and Social Transition* (Oxford, 1978), in which he explains how England's economy and society developed in a completely different way to elsewhere in Europe.



## Conclusion

Throughout this thesis the aim has been to look beyond names simply as linguistic items and instead to analyse the wider social role they play in the lives of the people that chose them and the people that bore them. It has aimed to examine the system in which those names were used, and the wider social system to which they were inevitably and inextricably linked. In this sense, it has not been a study of names, but the people to which those names are attached. This is not always easy, partly because often the only things we know about medieval people are their names, but also because a large portion of this thesis has been done on a macro-level, examining broad trends created by the combination of individual naming decisions. However, I believe that examining these trends has allowed us to at least glimpse into the lives of such people, and understand more about the changing nature of the world that they lived in. It has not been possible to address the full scope of the changes to the English personal naming system in this thesis, indeed it has only scratched the surface of the development of bynames and hereditary surnames during this period, and there is clearly much more to say about the rise of a specific type of ‘Christian’ name in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. There are also several unanswered questions around how women’s names changed in this period. These are all areas where future work is required – yet the developments presented in this thesis have gone some way to mapping the nature and pace of the transformation of the personal naming system.

Firstly, the swift and dramatic shift from names of Old English origin to names imported from the continent has, to a large extent, been confirmed. Indeed, by the early twelfth century roughly 60 percent of people bore names of continental Germanic origin. However, following this initial influx, the replacement of Old English names was perhaps not quite as rapid or complete as has often been thought. Old English names remained as a fairly large proportion of the name stock for another century, and the subsequent decline in usage was actually a gradual affair not complete until the beginning of the thirteenth century. This, to a large extent, supports the views of David Postles who suggests that there was a period of ‘hybridity’, where names Old English origin were used in combination with new continental names, often within the same family. In contrast, the proportion of people bearing continental Germanic names remained relatively stable from the twelfth century onwards.

This suggests that there was no continuous flow of names from the continent – at least not of continental Germanic or Scando-Norman origin. Instead the names which gradually replaced the insular names of Old English and Anglo-Scandinavian origin were Christian names of the type that were becoming popular across Europe.

The rise of these names was gradual – they were not brought over by Norman conquerors, but grew steadily in popularity from the mid-twelfth century onwards. Of course it is possible that such names only entered the English name stock through the top-down influence of a distinctly Norman ruling elite, whose links to France and the continent led them to adopt the increasingly fashionable Christian names which they subsequently transported across the Channel. Yet, even by 1148 only 12 percent of individuals in the Winton Domesday bore Christian names, and it is not until the thirteenth century that people bearing Christian names made up more than 20 percent of any corpus. Far reaching the consequences of the Conquest may have been, but for it to have been the sole cause of the uptake in Christian names in England some 100 to 150 years after the event could be seen as overstating the case somewhat.

Robert Bartlett has suggested that the period in question saw the ‘Europeanisation of Europe’, in which a shared European culture and consciousness was created – one which was progressively more homogenous and linked to an increasingly centralised and ever-present Christianity.<sup>530</sup> In truth it was not ‘Europe’ which was being created, but western Christendom. In this I would not wish to argue with Bartlett – in fact much of this thesis goes a long way to confirming this hypothesis. However, rather than through a process of conquest and colonisation from an expansionary Frankish core, many of the changes which combined to produce this increasingly homogenised European culture – of which names were a part – came about through parallel developments that saw people across the continent responding to the same economic challenges and opportunities, and being influenced by the same cultural stimuli, in similar ways. Indeed, Scandinavia began to be incorporated into this homogenising European culture around the same time as England was conquered by the Normans, but it suffered no conquest and experienced no colonisation. Yet here too people began to bear Christian names. The assumption that England – a kingdom which had been closely connected to continental Europe for centuries,

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<sup>530</sup> Bartlett, *The Making of Europe*, p. 51.

which shared a religion and whose aristocratic elite intermixed and intermarried with their European counterparts – would not have responded to the developments in western European Christian culture by adopting Christian names, is one which could only be made when looking at the issue through the prism of a historiography dominated by the Norman Conquest. It in fact seems reasonable to assume that English people gradually adopted Christian names in the same way, and for the same reasons, as people in France, Germany, Spain, Italy, and even Scandinavia did – an assumption that the statistics presented in this thesis support.

Moreover, this general Europeanisation is only one aspect of the progressive homogenisation of European society – or, more accurately, European societies. The gradual decline of the system of dithematic names which preserved name uniqueness, and the creation of steadily more concentrated and condensed name stocks, demonstrates this as well as anything. While some regional and national trends still persisted, over the course of the medieval period people everywhere gradually abandoned unique names and – consciously or otherwise – began choosing names which demonstrated their similarity to their neighbours. This change, I believe, was brought about by a fundamental restructuring of the physical communities in which people lived, and the subsequent reorganisation of the social framework to which these communities were connected. The appearance of more substantial communities, more permanently rooted in the landscape and with more hierarchical social structures fundamentally changed the way people went about their lives. They created new ties based around economic interdependence and everyday interaction in communal spaces – the fields and common land they shared; the church, with its cemetery and its font where they worshipped, buried their dead and baptised their children. These ties combined to form close-knit social networks within which bonds of kinship must still have been important, but where they consisted of just one form of connection within a complex social matrix made up of friends, neighbours, godparents, lords and servants (as well as rivals and enemies). Over time, the intensely norm-enforcing nature of such close-knit social networks created an environment where similarity was more desirable than individuality – a fact clearly demonstrated by the way people chose names for their children. By the end of the thirteenth century, far from enjoying ‘a liberation of choice’, the people of medieval England acted under considerable horizontal pressure to conform to the increasingly restrictive social norms surrounding name-giving. As Chambers pointed out, in such

networks ‘the loyalty of an individual to the network is directly related to that person’s conformity to its collective values’, and the outright flouting of such conventions could have inadvertently demonstrated the opposite.<sup>531</sup> Conversely, the bearing of common names recognised by the community would have performed the ‘strong community-building function’ described by Tóth.<sup>532</sup>

Importantly, the time-span of the transformation in naming began long before the arrival of the Conqueror on English shores – perhaps as early as the ninth century. The influx of new names after the Conquest actually artificially obscured this process in the century following it. If, as argued in this thesis, the changes in naming patterns were linked to the transformation of the landscape, it would go some way to confirming that the ‘feudal transformation’ was not a phenomenon which took place in a central Frankish core before being transported to its peripheries at the tip of sword. As such, it adds weight to the work of scholars such as Wickham, Dyer, Williams, Loveluck and Wareham who have presented various aspects of this process in England in the centuries spanning the Conquest, and contributes to the growing body of evidence which calls into question the long-held assumptions about the impact of the Conquest. In the realms of naming, this impact was dramatic only on the surface, as a new Norman veneer was added to an existing system which was already in the process of a long-term transformation. I hope that this thesis has also contributed something to the wider historiography of personal naming on the continent by adding much needed English studies to those already compiled by European scholars. Moreover, by applying their methods to a region of medieval Europe hitherto neglected by such studies, I believe it has been able to add nuance to the analysis provided by the likes of Bourin, Chareille and Le Jan.

Nevertheless, there is clearly much more work that needs to be done before this process is complete. Further studies of a more comparative, geographical nature may be the key to determining whether the pace of changes was different in those areas which first experienced the nucleation of the landscape, as opposed to areas where dispersed settlement persisted for longer – something the studies in this thesis have been unable to do. Such studies would go some way to proving whether the two processes of change were, in fact,

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<sup>531</sup> Chambers, *Sociolinguistic Theory*, p. 67.

<sup>532</sup> Tóth. ‘Name theory’, p. 3.

linked. In addition, the development and use of bynames in this period requires a great deal further work. While bynames have only featured briefly here, it seems clear to me that the development of bynames and surnames can no longer be assumed to be a knock-on effect of the Conquest – indeed, Andrew Wareham has stated that ‘the traditional view that Anglo-Saxon toponymic bynames lead towards villages, whereas their Norman counterparts were associated with castles and lordships no longer passes muster.’<sup>533</sup> Systematic analysis of the number and form of bynames needs to be carried out on sources from either side of the Conquest to determine when, how and why they developed.

What seems certain is that, when looking for such explanations, we should do so within the wider context of the European naming transformation and note the similarities which are undoubtedly present, rather than looking exclusively for differences. It is possible that such research into bynames may shed more light on the communitarian aspect of the transformation in naming, for bynames truly are ‘community items’, formed by the group for individuals within it. They are tools used to situate individuals in the social hierarchy of their communities and have the ability to demonstrate belonging as well as emphasise marginalisation. Anthropological studies into the practice of nicknaming have proposed that such practices are particularly prevalent in settlements of a particular size and social structure:

When a person must live out a life within the confines of a traditional village or small town in which personalistic ties predominate, he is acutely sensitive to the opinions of his fellow community members because he knows that it is to them that he must give account and upon them that he must rely...The nicknaming phenomenon flourishes where settlements are small, egalitarian, and traditional enough to provide for moral unity and effective informal sanctioning mechanisms; they reach their greatest fruition where such settlements are large enough to support some internal differentiation through formation of strong voluntary friendship bonds.<sup>534</sup>

The settlements which came into being in medieval England from the ninth century onwards certainly seem like places where such practices would flourish, and it is these same

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<sup>533</sup> Wareham, *Lords and Communities*, p. 41.

<sup>534</sup> Stanley Brandes, ‘The Structural and Demographic Implications of Nicknames in Navanogal, Spain’ in *American Ethnologist* 2, (1975), pp. 139-148 – cited from pp. 147-148. See also Richard Barrett, ‘Village Modernisation and Changing Nicknaming Practices in Northern Spain’ in *Journal of Anthropological Research* 34, (1978), pp. 92-108.

personalistic ties and opinions of fellow community members which I believe lay behind the wider transformation of the naming system in medieval England. Further studies of bynames in a medieval English setting may well enable us to understand not just more about how they were used, but more about the development of the naming system as a whole, as well as the everyday lives of the people they belonged to.

Beat Kümin has described the period between 1100 and 1800 in western Europe as a ‘communal age’, which witnessed the ‘steady – and ultimately extensive – communalisation of local society’.<sup>535</sup> I believe we can see the beginnings of this process even earlier, and this developing communalisation is reflected in the naming patterns of the individual people who made up the communities of medieval western Europe. Surely it is no coincidence that it was not until the industrial revolution – when the pattern of stable, settled and homogenous communities was again transformed – that naming patterns across Europe began to change once more. Stanley Lieberman describes this as a transition from a system where naming was motivated by ‘custom’ to one where naming was motivated by ‘fashion’.<sup>536</sup> This phenomenon saw name stocks become less concentrated across the industrialising world. Names at the top of the list displayed also began to show more variety, changing regularly in line with tastes. As the communities in which people lived changed, and the nature of their relationships with other people were transformed, naming decisions once more adapted with them. The balance between differentiation and categorisation had shifted.

Ultimately, names are for individuals. But they are also inextricably linked to the community and society of which an individual is a part. They are a reflection not just of personal taste, but social expectations. The medieval development of a naming system which overwhelmingly emphasised similarity, I believe, mirrors the transition of English society into one based around local communities, in which demonstrating that you belonged was far more desirable than standing out from the crowd.

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<sup>535</sup> Beat Kümin, *The Communal Age in Western Europe, c.1100–1800: Towns, Villages and Parishes in Pre-Modern Society* (Basingstoke, 2013), p. 120.

<sup>536</sup> Stanley Lieberman, *A Matter of Taste: How Names, Fashions and Cultures Change* (New Haven, 2000), pp. 31–68. Lieberman’s study shows that these changes took place around the same times as the industrialisation, modernisation and urbanisation of western societies, and that it did so initially in England and Wales, which were the first areas to undergo these processes.

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