

## Pitit and Litelman: an Onomastic Conundrum

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In the last few years of King Edgar's reign, in 973 or thereabouts, a reform of the English coinage took place, after which the moneyer's name on the reverse of the coin would always be accompanied by the name of the mint, thus showing in what borough that moneyer was working. Some other earlier coinages, such as the Northumbrian so-called 'stycas'<sup>1</sup> or the East Anglian St Edmund pennies,<sup>2</sup> are, though not mint-signed, self-localising, so that the names of the moneyers are easily placed in context. The main tenth-century coinage, however, from the accession of Edward the Elder in 899 to the reform of Edgar, which is potentially enormously interesting from an onomastic standpoint, has until recently been more intractable. The majority of the pieces do not carry a mint-name, and with the unification of the kingdoms and the English recovery of the Danelaw, many of the coin types are minted throughout Anglo-Saxon England—in fact a law of Æthelstan explicitly required the homogeneity of the coinage. Recently, a good deal of work has gone into refining our understanding of these kings' coinage, both to date the coins more closely than their regnal years, and to isolate stylistic groups and localise them, correlating them with find distribution and with the rarer mint-signed issues.<sup>3</sup>

The great interest of the tenth-century names is the large number of non-native origin. From at the earliest 910, but more from c.915 onwards, the first Scandinavian personal names begin to appear amongst the moneyers, and we can now plot their distribution. The other group of names has no such obvious historical context. These are names from continental Europe, mainly as far as we can tell, Frankish, and they

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<sup>1</sup> V. J. Smart, 'The personal names on the pre-Viking Northumbrian coinage', in *Coinage in Ninth Century Northumbria*, BAR, 180 (1987), pp. 245–56.

<sup>2</sup> V. J. Smart, 'The moneyers of St. Edmund', *Hikuin*, 11 (1985), 83–89.

<sup>3</sup> M. M. Archibald and C. E. Blunt, *Athelstan to the Reform of Edgar 924–c.973*, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles, 34 (London, 1986); C. E. Blunt, B. H. I. H. Stewart and C. S. S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England from Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform* (Oxford, 1989).

account for over 25% of all known moneyers' names in the period of Eadmund to Eadwig (939–957) before declining steeply at the end of Edgar's reign, though vestiges remain up to and past the Norman Conquest. It seems unlikely that this proportion is representative of names in the stratum of society from which moneyers were drawn, and the inference must be, that like the clerics who similarly bore continental names and following Bremmer's suggestion about Frisians in England connected with shipping, these were people drawn in by English rulers to assist in carrying out particular innovations.

Most of these, like Old English names, conform to the common Germanic practice of combining two conventional name-elements, and can be recognised either where one or both elements is not recorded in incontrovertible English nomenclature, or where the vestiges of non-Old English phonology survive the processes of recording. There is also a small group of names un-Germanic in vocabulary, Biblical, saints' names or nicknames of Romance language origin. Among these names are some rather curious ones, and so we come to *Pitit*, aka—or not—*Litelman*. The well-attested moneyer PITIT strikes coins for Edward the Elder, Æthelstan and Edmund. For most of the tenth century, as I have already indicated, mint-signatures are less common than un-mintsigned coins, and none of Pitit's coins is mint-signed. However, in the system established by Blunt, Lyon and Stewart, all the Pitit coins come into the group known as NE I, associated with Stamford or less likely Lincoln.<sup>4</sup>

On all the coins the name is found in the same form without spelling variation. This same form is found in the byname *Ælfric Pitit* in the Hyde *Liber Vitae*.<sup>5</sup> This would appear to be the same name, possibly the same man even, as *Alvric Petit*, also known as *Alvric parvus*, thegn of King Edward, in *Domesday Book*.<sup>6</sup> There seems no doubt that the name *Pitit*

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<sup>4</sup> Blunt, Lyon and Stewart, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*.

<sup>5</sup> *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, edited by S. Keynes, *Early English Manuscripts in Facsimile*, 26 (Copenhagen, 1996), Plate IX, London, British Library, Stowe 944, fol. 29r.

<sup>6</sup> J. Morris (general editor), *Domesday Book*, 4, Hampshire (Chichester, 1982), 69:53. *Alvric Petit* held land in Redbridge Hundred. *Alvric Parvus* appears in the same volume at New Forest 9:21. *Alvric Parvus*, *Alvric Parvus tegnus regis Edwardi* are found in Bedfordshire; see O. von Feilitzen, *The Pre-Conquest Personal Names of Domesday Book* (Uppsala, 1937), p. 179.

should be identified with the word we know in modern French as *petit* 'small'. Unlike much of the vocabulary of French, however, this word does not go back to classical Latin, but it seems likely it existed in late or vulgar Latin, as cognates appear in Catalan, Provençal and Old Italian, the last in both forms *petitto* and *pititto*. The *Oxford English Dictionary* suggests that the root might be Celtic *pett*, 'portion, piece'.<sup>7</sup>

Given that our moneyer bears the—probably original—by-name for 'little', I am intrigued by the moneyer Litelman, who appears to shadow Pitit in time and place. Pitit emerges first in Edward the Elder's reign, both names occur under Æthelstan and Edmund, and Litelman still appears on coins of Edwig. Under Æthelstan and Edmund, both Litelman and Pitit's coins are classified as NE I, the group associated with Stamford. In Edwig's reign the only coin of Litelman belongs to the group NE IV, but the difference is chronological, not geographical, in that NE IV is a later replacement for NE I and belongs to the same area. Both names are very rare. *Pitit* is otherwise unrecorded as a personal name, both in English and Continental sources. Searle records only one other instance of Litelman,<sup>8</sup> and this is the Ipswich moneyer who worked for Æthelred from (by Dolley's chronology) 979 to 1003. It would be satisfying to establish a family connection, as the interval would be about right for the alternation of generations which Pamela Nightingale established for genealogy in moneyer families.<sup>9</sup> However, an Ipswich connection for the earlier Litelman must be problematical, given that whilst his group NE I was being struck at Stamford, East Anglia was covered not by a different style but a wholly different coin type, the Crowned Bust issue, whereas NE I is a non-portrait type. There is interaction between the two groups, as late in Edmund's reign some of the NE I moneyers strike Crowned Bust coins, and in the subsequent reign of Edred, when neither the name *Litelman* nor *Pitit* occurs, the Stamford/Lincoln area seems to have largely been taken

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<sup>7</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary*, edited by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 2nd edn (Oxford, 1989), s.v. *petit*.

<sup>8</sup> W. G. Searle, *Onomasticon Anglo-Saxonicum. A List of Anglo-Saxon Proper Names from the Time of Beda to that of King John* (Cambridge, 1897; repr. Hildesheim, 1969), p. 343, s.v. *Lytelman*.

<sup>9</sup> P. Nightingale, 'Some London moneyers and reflections on the organization of English mints in the eleventh and twelfth centuries', *Numismatic Chronicle*, 142 (1982), 34–50.

over by moneyers previously from York, and by the Crowned Bust coinage. But although some connection is there, it is far from clear how the family of the earlier *Litelman*, who is primarily a Lincoln/Stamford moneyer, would have been connected with Ipswich about twenty years later.

Leaving aside the possibility of a connection between the two known *Litelmans*, we return to the coincidence. *Pitit* and *Litelman*, both extremely rare names, are borne by contemporaneous Stamford/Lincoln moneyers. In Edmund's seven-year reign (939–46), there are only twenty-seven other moneyers in this group. Which way, then, has the translation been made, if translation it is? There are some strange names in this period, and one looks very much like an instance of translation from a vernacular, Old English or Continental Germanic, to Latin. There are coins of Edward the Elder which read in the moneyer's name position BONVS HOMO, which also occurs in various blundered forms, and may well be behind the otherwise inexplicable BONSOM on coins of Edmund, again in this Lincoln/Stamford area. This itself is a conundrum as the obvious name it should represent would be *Godman*, and there is no Godman amongst recorded tenth-century moneyers. There is a Goding under Edmund and Eadred but if only the first element was significant for translation, surely the legend would read BONVS alone? Another possible Latinisation amongst tenth-century moneyers is the name PASTOR found on a coin of Edward the Elder, from the Forum hoard in Rome. Again, there is no obvious correlation with any vernacular name found on the coinage.

However, apart from perhaps showing a punning approach to personal names, these are not really a close parallel to *Pitit* and *Litelman*. If *Litelman* were the man's original given name, the obvious Latinisation would be the much more usual *Parvus*, and there is plenty of room for the *-us* ending if the Latin form were intended. Frequently the moneyer's name takes up the whole field but on the *Pitit* coins the name is followed by MONE for *Monetarius*. On the other hand, although there are no examples of translation the other way, there was always a tendency to express exotic names, Scandinavian and continental alike, in their Old English forms—*Æthel-* for *Adel-* and suchlike.

The scenario I am suggesting would go like this: A young continental with some expertise in minting comes to England around the 920s like several others, to assist in the expansion of the English coinage. At first he

uses his French name *Pitit*, but his colleagues discover the meaning of this and dub him *Litelman*, or he adopts the name himself. For a few years he uses both names, then after having lived here for some thirty years and being well and truly settled, he drops *Pitit* and becomes solely *Litelman*.

*Pitit*, *Bonus Homo*, *Pastor* are onomastic curiosities, but they shed some light on the cultural climate of tenth-century England, its ties with continental Europe and a lively awareness of language.

### Appendix: Pitit and Litelman

#### Pitit

PITIT MONE [Edward I, Horizontal legend and trefoils type (late in reign), NE I region]<sup>10</sup>

PITIT MONE [Æthelstan, Horizontal legend and trefoils type, NE I region]<sup>11</sup>

PITIT MONE [Edmund, Horizontal legend and trefoils type, NE I region]<sup>12</sup>

*Ælfric pitit* Hyde *Liber Vitae*<sup>13</sup>

*Alvric petit* ?= *Alvric parvus tagnus regis Edwardi* Domesday Book<sup>14</sup>

OED *petit* < \**pettitum*, cf. OIt *petitto*, *pittito* < ? Celtic *pett* 'piece, portion'

#### Litelman

LITILMAN [Æthelstan, Horizontal legend and trefoils type, NE I region]<sup>15</sup>

LITILMAN [Edmund, Horizontal legend and trefoils type, NE I region]<sup>16</sup>

LITELMAN MO [Edwig, Horizontal legend and trefoils type, NE IV region]<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> T. H. McK. Clough, *Museums in East Anglia*, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles, 26 (London, 1980), no. 161.

<sup>11</sup> Archibald and Blunt, *Athelstan to the Reform of Edgar 924–c.973*, no. 230.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 400.

<sup>13</sup> *The Liber Vitae of the New Minster and Hyde Abbey, Winchester*, edited by Keynes, Plate IX, London, British Library, Stowe 944, fol. 29r.

<sup>14</sup> See note 6.

<sup>15</sup> Archibald and Blunt, *Athelstan to the Reform of Edgar 924–c.973*, no. 222.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 394.

LYTELMAN [Æthelred II B2–C, c.979 × 997]	}
LYTLMAN [Æthelred II C, c.991 × 997]	} MO GIPS, GIPES, GIPE:
LITMAN [Æthelred II D c.997 × 1003]	} all Ipswich

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, no. 755.