

Textual and Linguistic Variation in Latin Inscriptions in Estonian Churches

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Corpus:

- 440 inscriptions in Latin or with Latin part from 14th c. - 1918
- systematically collected 2014-2017 from Estonian Lutheran and Catholic Churches and secondary sources
- on grave slabs, church bells, liturgical vessels, sarcophagi, epitaphs, altarpieces, chancels, crucifixes, etc.
- numerous fragmentary materials
- several false readings and translations in circulation



Epitaph in lapidary style from Ridala Church (1713);
Photo: A. Arukask



Churchbell from Vigala Church with multilingual inscription
ЗАВОДЪ ВЪ Г. ГАТЧИНА Л. С. ЛАВРОВА 25П. 11Ф
GLORIA DEO IN EXCELSIS FICKEL 1894.
"MORTUOS PLANGO SURNUID LERNAN WIWOS
WOCO ELAWAID HÜÜAN" (1894)
Photo: M. Uudevald

Textual variation (from diachronic aspect)

- In the medieval objects: a) large proportion of formulaic invariable phrases (*Anno Domini*, *orate pro eo*, *requiescat in pace*) incorporated into newly created texts for personal purposes (e.g. grave slabs); b) biblical quotations and names of saints and Church Fathers
- in the Early Modern times (ca 1550–ca 1750): most creative texts, e.g. versified inscriptions in classical quantitative meters, chronograms, biographies in lapidary style, detailed dedicative inscriptions etc.
- from ca 1750 onwards: quotations from the Bible without contextualization (INRI, *Soli Deo gloria*, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*); *termini technici* marking authorship (*Me fecit*, *pinxit*) or date (*Anno*, *Aetatis suae*); short impersonally formulated dedications.
- => Textual variation was characteristic of written epigraphical Latin used in Estonia from the very beginning of literacy (13th c.), yet the most intensive variation occurred during the Early Modern times.



Commemorative plaque with Chronogram
MDCLLVVVVVVVIII in Märjamaa Church (1739);
Photo: M. Uudevald

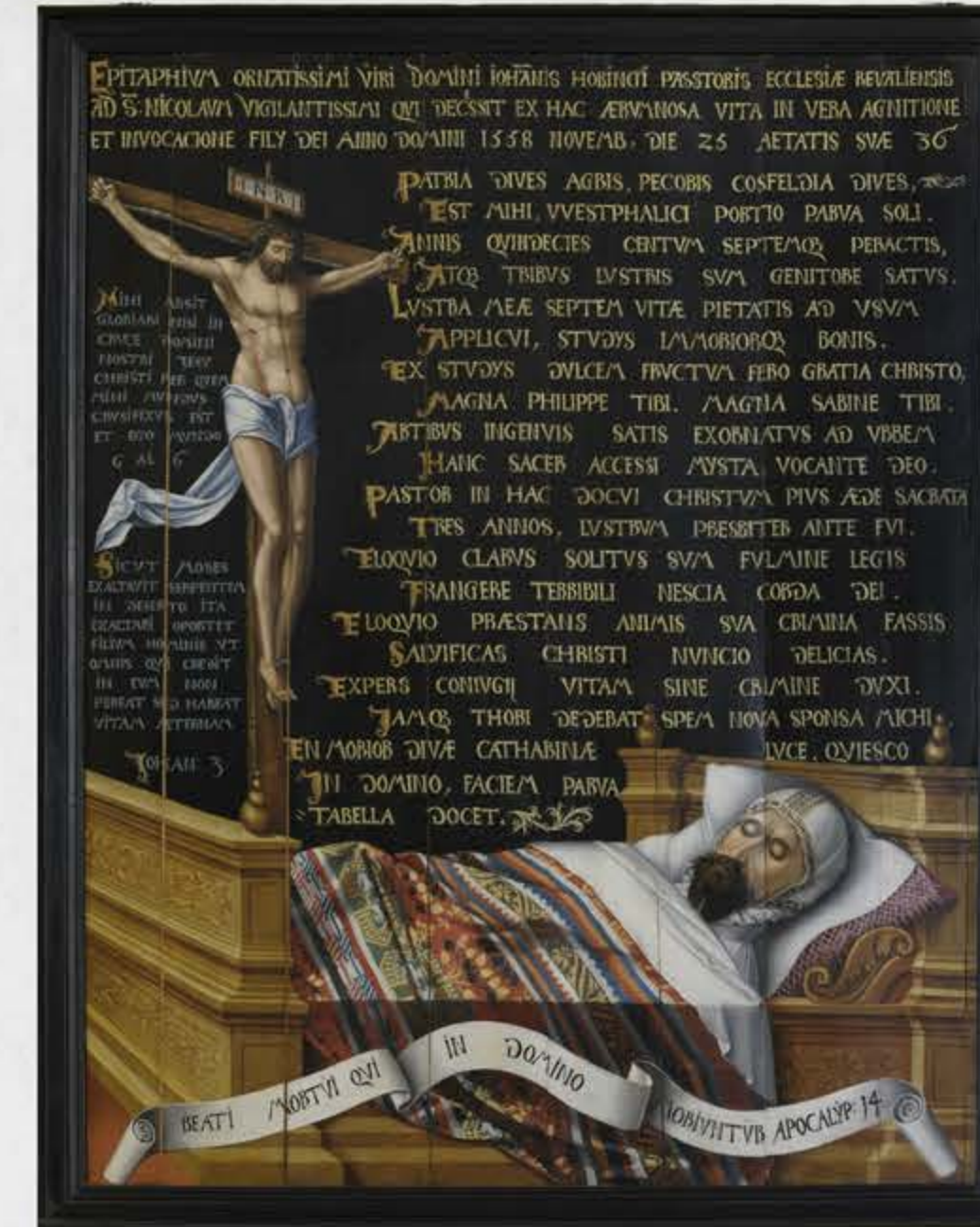


Multilingual dedication on the organ in Kihelkonna Church (1805);
Photo: A. Arukask

Linguistic variation

- diachronically, the epigraphs mostly follow the linguistic norms of the era, incl. linguistic variation: until 1550/1600 medieval Latin; since ca 1550/1600 classical Latin, in the biblical quotations church Latin.
- the most representative periods of linguistic variation were:
 - a) orthographical variation – the transitional period from medieval to classical Latin 1550–1600;
 - b) switching of languages: intersentential multilingual practices 1430es–20th c.; intrasentential multilingual practices (since 1590es–20th c.): mainly insertion, seldom alternation

Research questions: Which varieties occur in the texts in a fixed language, in a specific ecclesiastical context? Why?



Verse epitaph to Johan Hobbing in St. Nicholas' Church in Tallinn (1558);
Photo: S. Stepaško



Multilingual inscription on the old altarpiece from Varbla Church (II half of the 17th c.): VIXIT -Minnaellan (sic!) ja teje peate Ka ellama. SURREXIT -Nüüd Kristus surmast tounnud on Sest keigel rahwal tulleb õn.
Photo: A. Arukask

Factors influencing linguistic variation

- Latin texts for ecclesiastical objects were compiled by learned persons but executed mostly by illiterate craftsmen (incl. of Estonian origin), e.g. *Verbum Dei manet in aeternam pro aeternum* in church bell from Kaarli Church Tallinn.
- Paleographical developments (incl. the spread of new fonts in printed books) and etymological interpretations influenced the orthography of diphthongs (E~Æ~AE) and double consonants (*causa~caussa*), and interpunctuation.
- Influences due to contacts with German, Swedish, Estonian languages. Esp. their pronunciation (e.g. *Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum* pro *Iudaeorum* – altarpiece in Kuusalu Church; *me fezit*, *me fesit* pro *me fecit* on many objects).
- Rare attempts to correct the incorrect variants on the object (e.g. *Iudaeorum* on the altarpiece in Vahastu Church was later corrected to *Iudaeorum*).
- => In addition to regular linguistic change from medieval to the early modern Latin, the individual level of variation with mainly *ad hoc* variants dominated.



Name plaque on altarpiece in Kuusalu Church (1864);
Photo: M. Uudevald



Name plaque on altarpiece with later correction in Vahastu Church (1840);
Photo : I. Akkatus