

Old English *sāta* and *sātan* names

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1. Introduction

The subject of this article is OE *sāte* or *sāta*, ‘a dweller, resident, inhabitant’. When used in the plural, it denotes the inhabitants of various kinds of settlement or land-unit, and it can also be used in coining names for communities, usually the inhabitants of considerable districts. These are sometimes referred to as ‘folk’- or ‘tribal’ names, but are here generally called by the more neutral ‘community-names’. Names formed with *sāta* and other so-called ‘folk-names’ have been of particular interest to historians of the early medieval period, apparently providing an insight into the socio-political structure of early- to middle-Anglo-Saxon England. As do other Old English group-names, those in *sāta* can appear in two separate declensions:¹ as strong masculine i-stems in *sāte* (nom.pl. *-sāte*, gen.pl. *-sātena*, dat.pl. *-sātum*),² and as weak masculine n-stems in *sāta* (nom.pl. *-sātan*, gen.pl. *-sātena*, dat.pl. *-sātum*).³ When denoting a community, however, they occur always in plural form and often in an oblique case; and since the genitive and dative plurals in both paradigms are identical, it is rarely possible to distinguish between strong *sāte* and weak *sātan* (Campbell 1959, 245–46, §610.7).⁴ For simplicity, and to avoid confusion with the weak feminine noun *sāte* ‘a house’ (B&T supplement, 693), the weak *sāta* (nom.pl. *sātan*) is used here for all reconstructed forms. It is names in *sātan* that form the particular focus of the present analysis, but in order to gain a more complete understanding

¹ Compare for example *Seaxe* and *Seaxan* ‘Saxons’, and see Bliss 1985, 104; Campbell 1959, 245–6, §610(7).

² Hogg (GOE 2, §2.70) takes gen.pl. *-ena* to be a survival of the Germanic n-stem inflexion, generalised through analogy with OE *Seaxe*, an original n-stem transferred to the i-stem declension, but which retained its n-stem gen.pl.

³ Thus the *Ordinance of the Dunsæte* seems to treat *sāte* as a strong noun (*Dunsæte* in the nom.pl., while *Dunsætan* and *Dunsetan* must stand for the dat.pl. **Dunsætum*); the late ninth-century A-text of the *Chronicle* (nom.pl. *Wilsætān*) and the Old English translation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (nom.pl. *Wihtsætān*) treat it as weak.

⁴ Smith (1956b, 94) conflates the two, apparently setting out the paradigm *sāte* (nom.sg.), *sātan* (nom.pl.), *sātna* (gen.pl.), *sātum* (dat.pl.).

of this class of community-names a survey of the lexical use of the term is also required.

Much of the historical discussion of *sǣtan* names has focused on their geographical location, their distribution forming the basis for assessments of their historical significance. Communities with *sǣtan* names have been variously interpreted as the last survivals of British culture in early Anglo-Saxon England (Higham 1993, 85); as reorganised territories newly acquired from the Welsh by the West Saxons and Mercians in the eighth century (Yorke 2000, 83–84; see also Yorke 1995, 84–93); as lands recently acquired from the Welsh in the eleventh century (Lewis 2007); or as a part of eighth-century Mercian defensive arrangements along the Welsh border (Gelling 1989, 199–201; 1992, 118–20, and fig. 48). The fact that four eminent scholars have addressed the same class of community-names and produced such different interpretations is problematic. It seems likely that the reason for this divergence of views is that previous analysis has been founded not on a comprehensive corpus of *sǣtan* names, but on select examples. As Gelling (1982, 69) and Yorke (1999, 28) have observed, the explanation for the distribution of names in *-sǣtan* may lie partly in a regional preference for such formations over semantically similar alternatives, names in *-ingas* and *-ware*. Yet the significance of this observation cannot be assessed on the basis of a partial corpus of *sǣtan* names, or in isolation from the wider lexical use of *sǣta*.⁵

This contribution has two principal aims: first, to examine the use of OE *sǣta*, especially in plural compounds, as evidenced in written sources, and to gain an understanding of the geographical and chronological distribution of its usage, an undertaking that has not routinely been carried out in previous analyses of community-names; second, to establish a reliable corpus of community-names containing OE *sǣtan*, which might form the basis for future discussion of the groups that possessed such names. A fuller analysis of their historical significance is much needed, but is beyond the scope of the present discussion and will be returned to elsewhere.⁶ If the aims seem restricted, it is worth noting that a full corpus of *sǣtan* names has not been assembled before. Indeed, this has rarely been done for any type of name within the wide category of ‘folk-names’, in spite of its centrality to historical analyses of early

⁵ While Gelling was clearly aware of the importance of that final point in particular, she provided only the briefest of assessments of the material (Gelling 1982, 69).

⁶ Baker forthcoming.

Anglo-Saxon England, and the approach and conclusions set out here will, it is hoped, have wider implications.⁷

2. Documented plural instances of OE *sāeta*

In singular form, *sāeta* seems to be unattested except in compounds such as *ende-sāeta* ‘one stationed at the extremity of a territory’ (DOE), which occurs once in *Beowulf* in the sense ‘coastguard’, *hāsāeta* ‘rower’, used in a single *Chronicle* entry (ASC 1052)⁸ and *landsāeta*, also attested just once, in the phrase *oðres eardes landseta* ‘settler [?] land-dweller] from another land’, which is glossed as Latin *colonus* (B&T 619; DOE *sub eard* 1.a.iv.a). This last usage is comparable to the use of *sāeta* as a plural noun to denote communities of various types and sizes. The evidence for this, however, is much more extensive. If the primary sense of the word is ‘dweller, inhabitant’, in plural nouns and noun phrases it seems to have at least three distinct applications.

2.1. *Inhabitants of a single settlement, local community*

The first of these relates to the inhabitants of an individual settlement and can be found in the compound *burhsāetan*, which glosses Latin *oppidani* ‘citizens, town-dwellers’ (DOE; B&T). It is most frequently encountered in Old English charter bounds where *sāeta* is sometimes used to form a noun phrase designating a boundary or other feature associated with the inhabitants of a single settlement (Table 1).⁹ These usages are paralleled by other group-name forming elements, including *-ingas*, *ware* and *hāeme* (Wheeler 1916; VEPN 2 89 *sub burh-ware*). In such instances, *sāeta* is always inflected for genitive plural, usually though not always defining a

⁷ Ekwall (1923; 1962) brought together place-name evidence for *-ingas* compounds. Another possible exception is OE *walh*, the material for which was comprehensively collated by Cameron (1979–80). While *walh* was included in Ekwall’s discussion of the ‘tribal’ element, it has been much debated and it is not clear that it should be considered part of the community-name category.

⁸ B&T 511 suggests literally ‘thole dweller’; Campbell (1959, 121 (§566) treats it as a loanword from Old Norse.

⁹ Karlström (1927, 170–71, 179–80) posited further occurrences of *sāeta* in two charters relating to lands near Romney, Kent: *Caping sæta* in the bounds of S 1288 and *Rumening seta*, part of the lands granted in S 21. They belong in fact to the cluster of (*ge*)*set* names around Romney Marsh, including Brenzett, probably denoting animal enclosures attached to pasture land (Wallenberg 1931, 81–82, 224; EPNE 2 120; Cullen 1997, 217, 235, 256, 274–75).

(*ge*)*māere* ‘boundary’.¹⁰ The compounds are, it seems, invariably formed on the basis of shortened settlement-names, so the *Cruddesetene imere* of a charter for Brokenborough, Wiltshire (n.d. (13) S 1577) refers to the boundary ((*ge*)*māere*) of the inhabitants of Crudwell. The settlements whose names form the basis of these *sāeta* noun phrases can very often be identified as the neighbouring units to the ones being described in the bounds, and they seldom have any known, wider administrative significance.¹¹ The importance of this last point will become clear when comparison is made with *sāetan* community-names discussed below. For now, these points underline the spatially limited significance and therefore currency of each individual usage of this kind—describing small, local communities in a way that would have been recognisable to their immediate neighbours and to the surveyors of their estates, but would have had little meaning further afield.

Table 1: *sāeta* noun phrases¹²

Early forms	Co.	Sources	Refs	Qualifying feature
<i>on/of badsetena gemære</i>	Wo	840×852 (12) S 203	PN Wo 260–61	PN Badsey
<i>æþelrede, se was ær cyning; was ða Beardsætena abbud</i>	Li	OEBede v.19		PN Bardney
<i>bi beonetset(e)na gemære</i>	Wo	851 (l.11) S 201; 961×972 (?969) (e.11) S 1370	PN Wo 141–2	PN Bentley
<i>to bocsaetena hig wege</i>	De	1031 (e.11) S 963	PN D 225	PN Buckland
<i>in brad setena selle</i>	Wo	961×972 (?969) (e.11) S 1370	PN Wo 103	PN Broadwas
<i>on bradsetena gemere</i>	Wo	n.d. (12) S 1591a	PN Wo 103	PN Broadway
<i>on camp-sætena gemære</i>	Gl	1005 (16) S 911	PN Gl 1 237–8	PN Chipping Campden
<i>Cregsetna haga</i> <i>Cræg sætena haga</i>	Ke	862 (l.9) S 331 987 (l.10) S 864	KPN 83, 208 n2	RN Cray, PN Crayford

¹⁰ Other terms so defined are *mearc* ‘boundary’, *haga* ‘hedge’, *hig wege* ?‘hay road’, *sele* ‘dwelling, hall’.

¹¹ Certainty on this point is nonetheless impossible, since settlements can change status over time, and perhaps not all once-important administrative centres have left evidence of their former position in the hierarchy of settlements.

¹² In the tables, DN = district-name, PN = place-name, RN = river-name, and LF = landscape feature.

<i>Cruddesetene imere</i>	Wi	n.d. (13) S 1577	PN W 56	PN Crudwell
<i>Crysteten more</i>		n.d. (13) S 1579		
<i>on Elmesetene</i> (<i>elmsetene, -a</i>) <i>gemære</i>	Wo	n.d. (lost) S 1597; 980 (e.11) S 1342	PN Wo 240	PN Elmley Lovett
<i>thanen on</i> <i>fromesetinga hagen</i>	So	964 (14) S 727		RN or PN Frome
<i>of grimsetene</i> <i>gemære</i>	Wo	969 (e.11) S 1323	PN Wo 126–7	PN Grimley
<i>Hiisetena munecas</i>	Argyll	OEBede v.22	Schram 1928–9, 202; DOE Corpus	DN <i>Hii</i> (Iona)
<i>Eadhæð he gesette</i> <i>to biscope</i> <i>Hrypsetna cirican</i>	YW	OEBede iv.12	DOE Corpus PN WRY 5 164	DN <i>Hrype</i> or PN Ripon
<i>on ig setna mearce</i>	Ha	868 (12) S 340	Wheeler 1916, 219; DOE Corpus; Grundy 1926, 183–4	PN <i>Igtune</i> in same charter
<i>on incsetena lande;</i> <i>on/of incsetena</i> <i>gemære</i>	Wo	963 (e.11) S 1305	PN Wo 324–5	PN Inkberrow
<i>Lilsætna ge mære</i>	Sa	963 (12) S 723	PN Sa 6 121	PN Lilleshall
<i>on locsetena</i> <i>gemære</i>	Wa	985 (e.11) S 1350	PN Wa 231 n1, 235	PN Loxley
<i>swa to/big mos</i> <i>setena gemære</i>	Wo	851 (1.11) S 201	Wheeler 1916, 219; PN Wo 128	PN Moseley
<i>to mos setnæ</i> <i>gemære /bi</i> <i>mossetna gemære</i>		961×972 (?969) (e.11) S 1370		
<i>on ombersetena</i> <i>gemære</i>	Wo	980 (e.11) S 1342	PN Wo 268–9	PN Ombersley
<i>on Ombersetene</i> <i>gemæres</i>		n.d. (lost) S 1597		
<i>to wordig saetena</i> <i>mearc, andlang</i> <i>Wordi haema mearc</i>	Ha	904 (14) S 374	Miller 2001, no. 7	PN Worthy

This is illustrated especially clearly by the recurrent use of the formula in geographical clusters of charter bounds. For example, the **Elmsætān* and **Ombersætān*, which appear in the same charters (S 1597; S 1342), the **Beonetsætān* and **Mossætān* of the Holt and Grimley charters (851 (1.11) S 201; 961×972 (e.11) S 1370), and the **Grimsetsætān* of Grimley are all from a small area north-west of Worcester. The **Brādsætān* of Broadwas are from the same part of Worcestershire (PN Wo 103, 126–

28, 141–42, 240, 268–69), while another small cluster is located just to the south-east of Evesham, including the **Badsǣtan* of Badsey, the **Brādsǣtan* of Broadway in Worcestershire (PN Wo 103, 260–61) and the **Campsǣtan* of Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire (PN Gl 1 237–8). The **Locsǣtan* of Loxley, Warwickshire, are just a short distance to the north-east (PN Wa 231 n1, 235).

As Wheeler (1916) noted, in forming compounds of this kind (as well as comparable ones in *-ware* and *-ingas*) no attention seems to have been paid to the morphology of the underlying place-names, so that only the first element remains, stripped of any inflexional endings, and in many cases only the first syllable of the place-name is preserved. This process also gives rise to identical formations that seem to denote different communities. The *bradsetena gemere* of an Evesham charter (n.d. (12) S 1591a) is probably the boundary of Broadway (PN Wo 191; Hooke 1990, 377–82); so the people denoted by **Brādsǣtan*, literally ‘broad dwellers’, are ‘the dwellers at Broadway’. The identical *sǣta* compound, noted in the previous paragraph, is found in the boundary clause attached to a charter concerning lands at Grimley, Moseley, and Wick Episcopi. These estates are also in Worcestershire but some 30km to the north-west (961×972 (e.11) S 1370). In this case, the clause makes reference to various rights over salt boiling taking place *in brad setena selle* ‘in the hall (salt-house) of the Broad-dwellers’; but the elliptical place-name on this occasion is usually assumed to be the nearby Broadwas (less than 10km to the south-west of Grimley and Moseley), which shares the same first element as Broadway, OE *brād* ‘broad’ (PN Wo 103; Hooke 1990, 286–90; Maddicott 2005, 38–9). The recurrence of the same compound, denoting two different communities in the same shire, is good evidence that *sǣtan* in these instances is being used in a one-off formation, to describe the inhabitants of single settlements for bureaucratic purposes; not as part of enduring names for the communities themselves.

Two examples differ significantly from the others considered in this section: (*on*) *fromesetinga hagen* ‘(to) the hedge of the Frome-dwellers’ of a charter for Steeple Ashton in Wiltshire (964 (14) S 727),¹³ and (*to*)

¹³ The spelling *fromesetinga* is not straightforward. On the one hand, it might be a garbled form, resulting from later scribal misreading of *-setena* and no doubt influenced by the parallel use of *-inga-* compounds. On the other hand, it might reflect the development of an otherwise unattested district-name **Fromesete*, comparable with neighbouring Somerset and Dorset, used as the basis of an *-inga-* compound, thus meaning ‘inhabitants of **Fromesete*’. Such a form is not impossible, and may be compared with *West Centingas* ‘people of West Kent’ (999 ASC) and *Fifburgingas* ‘people of the Five Boroughs’ (1013 ASC CE), and ON analogues such as *Íslendingar*

wordīg saetena mearc, (andlang) Worði saetna mearc ‘(to/along) the boundary of the Worthy-dwellers’ of a charter for Micheldever, Hampshire (904 (14) S 374). These two examples follow the same formula as the vast majority of those listed in Table 1: place-name + *sāeta* (gen.pl. *sāetena*) + word referring (directly or indirectly) to a boundary, but they differ in an important way. King’s Worthy was a royal vill (Sawyer 1983, 298) and Frome was certainly partly in royal hands at the time of Domesday (Thorn and Thorn 1980, §1.8; Costen 1992, 90, 101–2; see also Sawyer 1983, 281–82). Both Worthy and Frome purport to be the sites of charter assemblies as well (931 (13) S 413; 934 (12) S 427), and were clearly settlements of importance. The *sāetan* here might again simply be the inhabitants of the settlements themselves; the single Middle English attestation of this type of construct seems also to denote the inhabitants of a town, Lazamon’s *Dorcestre-seten* (Lazamon’s *Brut* 14780). However, the jurisdiction of these settlements is likely to have extended much further than that of the other settlements discussed in this section, and the possibility that these two noun phrases denote the inhabitants of larger districts should at least be entertained. If so, there is potential overlap with the application of *sāeta* discussed in the next section, since many judicial central places were also ecclesiastical foci, and there is likely also to have been some correspondence between judicial and ecclesiastical districts. There are also similarities between these two instances and the use of *sāetan* as a name-forming element, discussed further below.

2.2. *Inhabitants of an ecclesiastical settlement, perhaps monastic community*

In a small number of cases, this type of noun phrase seems specifically to denote the *sāetan* ‘dwellers’ associated with ecclesiastical centres. The settlements on which they are dependent were not, therefore, insignificant. The three clearest examples are from the Old English translation of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum* (henceforth OEBede). One is a reference to ‘the monks of the community of Iona’ (*Hiisetena munecas*; OEBede v.20), one a reference to Æthelred ‘the Abbot of the community of Bardney’ in Lincolnshire (*Beardsætena abbud*; OEBede v.17), and the third is a reference to ‘the church of the community of Ripon’ (*Hrypsetna cyrican*; OEBede iv.16), which is

‘Icelanders’ and *Norðhymbringar* ‘Northumbrians’ (EPNE 1 300). Either way, the element *sāeta* seems to be present.

mentioned with reference to the appointment of a bishop. It is important to note that none of these noun phrases denotes the boundary of the *sāetan* concerned, and so, while they could be references to the inhabitants of the monastic settlement itself, they may represent an extended use of *sāetan* to denote the community of a wider pastoral jurisdiction.¹⁴ The three early monastic foundations were clearly important central places in some sense, and it would not be entirely surprising to find major districts centred on them.¹⁵

¹⁴ The only other use of *sāeta* in the text is *Wihtsætan* ‘the Wight dwellers’ (OEBede i.12), discussed below.

¹⁵ This application of the *sāeta* formula might find parallel in a number of other instances listed in Table 1. Most notably, *Cregsetna* in the bounds of a Bromley (Kent) charter (862 (19) S 331) might refer to the ‘Crayford dwellers’. Crayford was also the site of a minster and the feature described as *Cregsetna haga*, ‘hedge of the Cray(ford) dwellers’, presumably lay on the boundary of the minster parish (Everitt 1986, 194). Inkberrow (Worcestershire), the settlement that gives rise to the *incsetena gemære* (963 (e.11) S 1305), may well have been the site of a minster (Sims-Williams 1976; Blair 2005, 89), and the abbey of Lilleshall (Shropshire), which is connected with the *Lilsætna ge mære* (963 (12) S 723), though not firmly attested before the early twelfth century, has a tradition of an earlier, Anglo-Saxon foundation (VCHSa 11.166). In the last two instances, however, the boundaries being described are clearly those of Inkberrow and Lilleshall as neighbouring estates to the subjects of the grants, rather than as larger ecclesiastical districts; and the Lilleshall tradition may not have any substance behind it (Steven Bassett, pers. comm.). One other potential instance is worth brief discussion. A charter concerning land at Woodchester in Gloucestershire (896 Sawyer 1441) includes an extensive narrative preamble in which reference seems to be made to ‘the priest of the **Ceastersāetan*’ (*ridan mid Ceastersetna pre’o’ste Wulfhun hatte [...] 7 þus se Ceastersetna preost hit gerad*). At first glance, this might be a reference to the inhabitants or dwellers dependent on either Worcester (*Weogernaceastre*, possessor of the lands in question), or, less likely, Woodchester itself (PN Gl 1 115–16). This might place **Ceastersāetan* in the same category as the instances discussed in the preceding paragraphs. There are, however, significant problems with this. DOE (on the basis of this single occurrence) considers *ceastersāetan* to be a compound meaning ‘town-dwellers, citizens’ (compare *burhsāeta* ‘citizen, town-dweller’, which glosses *oppidanus* (*burhseta*) and *oppidani* (*burhsetan*)), in which case this is not a noun phrase with *sāeta* but with a *sāeta* compound, describing the citizens of Worcester. Significantly, however, the grammar of the phrase in which *ceastersāetan* occurs—*se ceaster setna preost*—suggests that this is not in fact a noun at all. The case of the definite article here agrees with that of the masculine noun *prēost* (nominative singular) rather than with that of *sāete* (genitive plural *sāet(e)na*), and this might suggest an adjective *sāeten*, perhaps denoting things that pertained to the community or citizens (compare Kitson 1993, 61–3; and see B&T, 778; Campbell 1959, 272 (§656)). Thus *se ceaster setna preost* might be rendered ‘the civic priest’, and is probably not relevant to the present discussion.

A sense development of this kind may be relevant to the emergence of *sāetan* as a name-forming element. It seems unlikely, however, that the three instances from OEBede are themselves community-names. For a start, the fact that Iona is included here shows that the translator cannot be reproducing local practice at those monasteries, at least not in every case. Certainly the inhabitants of Iona cannot have been in the habit of calling themselves by the Old English name **Hiisāetan*. Furthermore, there are certainly no traces of the *sāeta* formations in the Latin original. OE *Hiisetena munecas* translates Latin *Hiienses monachi* in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* (v.22; henceforth *EH*), while *Beardsaetena abbud* is extra information and not a translation from the Latin, which simply identifies Æthelred as a former abbot (*tunc autem abbas*) of no specific foundation (*EH* v.19). Finally *Hrypsetna cyrican* renders Latin *Hrypensis ecclesia* (*HE* iv.12; cf. B&T 812). However the districts denoted in these instances are defined, it is nevertheless clear that they are being described by means of one-off noun phrases, and that this is still a lexical rather than an onomastic use of *sāeta*. It presumably reflects usage local to Bede's translator, who seems to have had links to the west midlands (Miller 1890, vol. 1, xiii–lix; Whitelock 1962; Rowley 2011, 36–56).

3. Onomastic occurrences of *sāetan*

The use of *sāeta* that has attracted most attention, particularly in historical discussion, is as an element in the names of wider communities. That the term could be used to denote the inhabitants of a district is clear from the compound *hundredesāete* (DOEC; 971 (12) S 783), which describes the inhabitants of a district known as a hundred, 'the hundred-dwellers' (DOEC). This sense, and the use of *sāetan* in names referring to communities, may have evolved from one of the applications discussed in §§2.1–2.2, where the settlement also held a central place in secular or ecclesiastical spheres, and where *sāetan* could denote the inhabitants of the settlement or of its wider dependent district.

Identifying examples of *sāetan* names is not as straightforward as is sometimes assumed, and the establishment of a corpus is challenging. The sources in which *sāeta* occurs are listed in Table 2. They pose different problems of interpretation and provide varying contextual information. It is much easier, for instance, to identify OE *sāeta* in narrative and bureaucratic sources than it is in place-names. Even so, it might reasonably be asked whether it is possible to differentiate *sāetan* names from lexical uses of *sāeta*. Taken in isolation, *tomsetna gemære*

(849 (e.11) S 1272) might be a one-off reference to the boundary of the inhabitants of Tamworth rather than an onomastic use of *sæta*. In place-names, on the other hand, it can be very difficult simply to differentiate *sæta* from OE *sæte* ‘house’ (also, in late OE, ‘seat’) or (*ge*)*set* ‘fold’, and not every supposed identification of a *sætan* name included in earlier work can be upheld under close scrutiny. In the present discussion, then, it is necessary to outline two sets of criteria: one for defining onomastic uses of *sæta* in narrative and bureaucratic sources; the other for identifying genuine instances of *sæta* in place-names.

Table 2: sources for *sæta*

Provenance	Source	Recorded <i>sætan</i>
Abingdon	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle C</i> only	* <i>Scrobsætan</i>
Canterbury, Christ Church	Sawyer 1264	* <i>Magonsætan</i>
Evesham	Sawyer 203 (bounds)	* <i>Badsætan</i>
	Sawyer 1591a (bounds)	* <i>Bradsætan</i>
Eynsham	Sawyer 911 (bounds)	* <i>Campsætan</i>
Exeter (ex. Crediton)	Sawyer 963 (bounds)	* <i>Bocsætan</i>
Glastonbury	Sawyer 347	* <i>Dornsætan</i>
	Sawyer 442 (bounds)	* <i>Sumorsætan</i>
Gloucester, St Peter’s	Sawyer 1782	* <i>Magonsætan</i>
Malmesbury	Sawyer 1577 (bounds)	* <i>Cruddesætan</i>
	Sawyer 1579 (bounds)	* <i>Cruddesætan</i>
Peterborough (ex Breedon-on-the-Hill)	Sawyer 197	* <i>Tomsætan</i>
Peterborough	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle E</i>	* <i>Magonsætan</i>
Rochester	Sawyer 331 (bounds)	* <i>Crægsætan</i>
	Sawyer 864 (bounds)	* <i>Crægsætan</i>
Romsey	Sawyer 727 (bounds)	* <i>Fromesætan</i>
Wells	Sawyer 677	* <i>Magonsætan</i>
Winchester	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A</i> (and other MSS)	* <i>Dornsætan</i> * <i>Wilsætan</i> * <i>Sumorsætan</i>
Winchester, New Minster	Sawyer 374 (bounds)	* <i>Worþigsætan</i>
Winchester, Old Minster	Sawyer 723	* <i>Wreocensætan</i>
	Sawyer 723 (bounds)	* <i>Lilsætan</i>
	Sawyer 340 (bounds)	* <i>Igsætan</i>
	Sawyer 860 (bounds)	* <i>Bilsætan</i>
Wolverhampton	Sawyer 1380	* <i>Bilsætan</i>
Worcester	John of Worcester, Appendix	* <i>Magonsætan</i>
	Laʒamon’s <i>Brut</i>	<i>Dorchestre-seten</i>
	Sawyer 190	* <i>Bēansætan</i>
	Sawyer 206	* <i>Wreocensætan</i>
	Sawyer 633	* <i>Fepsætan</i>

Worcester (cont.)	Sawyer 201 (bounds)	* <i>Beonetsāetan</i> * <i>Mossāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1272 (bounds)	* <i>Pencersāetan</i> * <i>Tomsāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1305 (bounds)	* <i>Incsāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1323 (bounds)	* <i>Grimśāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1342 (bounds)	* <i>Elmesāetan</i> * <i>Ombersāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1350 (bounds)	* <i>Locsāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1370 (bounds)	* <i>Beonetsāetan</i> * <i>Bradsāetan</i> * <i>Mossāetan</i>
	Sawyer 1597 (bounds)	* <i>Elmesāetan</i> * <i>Ombersāetan</i>
Unknown	Sawyer 712a	* <i>Pēacsāetan</i>
?Staffordshire	Tribal Hidage	* <i>Arosāetan</i> * <i>Cilternsāetan</i> * <i>Elmedsāetan</i> * <i>Pēacsāetan</i> * <i>Wreocensāetan</i>
?Gloucestershire	Ordinance of the <i>Dunsæte</i>	* <i>Dūnsāetan</i> * <i>Wentsāetan</i>
?Staffordshire	OE <i>Bede</i>	* <i>Wihtsāetan</i> * <i>Beardsāetan</i> * <i>Ripsāetan</i> * <i>Hiisāetan</i>
Various	Domesday district-names (shires, hundreds)	* <i>Dornsāetan</i> * <i>Meresāetan</i> * <i>Rhiwsāetan</i> * <i>Stepelsāetan</i> * <i>Stursāetan</i> * <i>Sumorsāetan</i>
Various	Other place-names	* <i>Bilsāetan</i> * <i>Fepsāetan</i> * <i>Grantasāetan</i> * <i>Halhsāetan</i> * <i>Putsāetan</i> * <i>Temesāetan</i>

3.1. *Sāetan* in narrative and bureaucratic sources

One of the clearest contexts in which *sāetan* names can be identified is when they occur in Latin texts, sometimes even given Latin inflexional endings. This indicates quite clearly that they are being treated as discrete names rather than lexical compounds that could be translated. Examples

of this are *in pago Pecset* (963 (17; lost original) S 712a), *quando fuerunt pagani in Wreocensetun* (855 (e.11) S 206), *cum Magesetensibus* (John of Worcester, *s.a.* 1016, 1041), and *principibus Tonsetorum* (844 for 848 (12) S 197). Had these been nonce uses of *sǣta*, a translation of the word into Latin might have been expected. Comparison with the original Latin also helps identify OE Bede's *Wihtsætan* 'the Wight dwellers' as a genuine *sǣtan* name. This occurs in Bede's famous passage linking Wight with Jutish invaders (*EH* i.15; OE Bede i.12), and it is indisputably a reference to the inhabitants of a large district.¹⁶ Bede's original *De Iutarum origine sunt Cantuari et Uictuarii, hoc est ea gens quae Uectam tenet insulam* becomes *Of Geata fruman syndon Cantware 7 Wihtsætan; þæt is seo ðeod þe Wiht þæt ealond oneardað*. The translator preserves Bede's *Cantuari* as *Cantware*, but presumably makes an editorial decision in substituting *Wihtsætan* for Bede's *Uictuarii*, which could easily have been rendered **Wihtware*. It seems probable that the translator was reflecting accepted ninth-century practice of the locality in which the OE Bede was produced, that is to say the midlands.

Another criterion is recurrence in more than one type of source. For instances, the **Bilsǣtan* are recorded in a boundary clause and also in a place-name;¹⁷ the **Pēacsǣtan* and **Wreocensǣtan* in an apparently bureaucratic list and also in charters; the **Magonsǣtan* in charters and in narrative sources; and the **Tomsǣtan* in a charter boundary clause, but also in the main body of another charter. While repeated occurrence in different charter boundary clauses dealing with the same estates need only show that a one-off description, once committed to writing, might be perpetuated in future iterations, recurrence of a *sǣta* compound in more than one source suggests that those compounds had a wider currency, the most likely explanation of which is that they were established *sǣtan* names.

Other onomastic occurrences of *sǣta* may be assumed from the context in which they are recorded. Several occur in lists of names. There are five genitive plural *sǣta* compounds, for example, in the text known as the Tribal Hidage, two of which (**Pēacsǣtan* and **Wreocensǣtan*) have just been shown, on other grounds, to be names rather than one-off noun phrases. The **Arosǣtan*, **Cilternsǣtan* and **Elmedsǣtan* can also

¹⁶ 'The people of Kent and the inhabitants of the Isle of Wight are of Jutish origin' (Colgrave and Mynors 1969, 50–51).

¹⁷ While all the *sǣtan* names discussed here are attested in some form, their headforms are presented with appropriate length marks and with the weak nominative plural inflexion of *sǣta*. They are therefore essentially reconstructed forms, and this is indicated by a preceding asterisk.

be included here. The **ScrobsĀetan* of the C text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: into Staeffordscire 7 into Scrobsæton 7 to Legceastre* (11th ASC C 1016; PN Sa 4 xv) is also likely to be a *sĀetan* name, even though this is its only record. The D and E recensions differ only in having *Scrobes byrig* ‘Shrewsbury’ for *ScrobsĀeton*. The item in question comes between a district-name (Staffordshire) and a place-name (Chester); whatever the original reading, the context is again a list of names.

Whether or not the **PencersĀetan* should be included is a matter of less certainty. Their boundary is mentioned in the same bounds that record the boundary of the **TomsĀetan* (849 (e.11) S 1272). The latter, as noted above, should be taken for a name rather than a noun phrase, and it would seem strange (though not entirely incredible) to find a lexical use of *sĀeta* immediately following an onomastic one.¹⁸ Finally, the **DūnsĀetan* and **WentsĀetan* must have been established names of some currency: for the legal text in which they occur to have had any force there must have been an assumption that the entities described within it were meaningful beyond the immediate moment in which it was drawn up.

Comparison with the lexical use of *sĀeta* discussed in §2 allows a further observation to be made. Where the plural of *sĀeta* is used in one-off noun phrases, it seems always to be in the genitive and with a dependent noun, thus *of badsetena gemære* (840×852 (12) S 203), and *wæs ða Beardsætena abbud* (OEBede v.19), and other examples from Table 1. It is of note that instances where *sĀeta* is not inflected for genitive plural and followed by a dependent noun are entirely absent from Table 1. Constructions of that kind, for example *on somersete . of somersete* (938 (14) S 442), are likely to contain *sĀetan* names—there is no need for any reference to the boundary (e.g. (ge)mære) of the **SumorsĀetan*, because the compound is understood as the name of an established community within an established district. It is probably difficult to be categorical on this point. *SĀetan* names could of course be used in noun phrases, and it must also have been possible for an Old English speaker to use dative plural *sĀeta* compounds without dependent nouns in non-onomastic contexts. Nevertheless, at least in the specific circumstances of documentary records relating to land rights and boundaries, dative plural occurrences seem to have been confined to established names, denoting communities attached to known districts. Thus the form of *on Dor sætum*, *on Magonsetum*, *into Scrobsæton*, and of other comparable examples

¹⁸ *primum tomsetna gemære 7 pencersetna.*

listed in Table 3 may in itself indicate that these are onomastic rather than lexical compounds.

Table 3: securely identified *sǣtan* names: written sources¹⁹

<i>sǣtan</i> name	Co.	Early forms	Sources	Refs	Qualifying feature
* <i>Arosǣtan</i>	Wa	<i>Arosætna syx hund hyda</i>	TH	Dumville 1989; PN Wa xviii, 195	RN Arrow
* <i>Bēansǣtan</i>	?Wo	<i>On Beansetum</i>	836 (e.9) S190	Finberg 1972; Hooke 1990, 97–8; Bassett 2010, 88–90	?
* <i>Cilternsǣtan</i>	Ox/Bk Bd/Hrt	<i>Ciltern sætna feower þusend hyda</i>	TH	Dumville 1989	HN Chiltern
* <i>Dornsǣtan</i>	Do	<i>Dornsæte</i> <i>in paga qui dicitur Dorset</i> <i>(on) Dor sætum, -um</i>	1.9th ASC A s.a. 837, 845 891 (14) S 347 11th ASC C s.a. 978, 982	CDEPN 192; Carroll and Parsons 2007, 125–6	PN Dorchester
* <i>Dūnsǣtan</i>	He	<i>Dis is seo gerædnes, ðe Angelcynnes witan 7 Wealhðeode rædboran betweox Dunsetan gesetton</i> <i>Hwilan Wentsæte hyrdan into Dunsætan</i> <i>Eac Dunsæte beþyrfan, gif heom se cyning an, þæt man huru friðgislas to heom læte</i>	Duns, Prologue Duns, §9 Duns, §9.1	Liebermann 1903, 374–9	HN * <i>Dūn</i>
* <i>Elmedsǣtan</i>	WRY	<i>Elmed sætna syx hund hyda</i>	TH	Dumville 1989	DN Elmet
* <i>Magon-sǣtan</i>	He/Sa	<i>on Magonsetum</i> <i>Nodehardus præfectus et comes regis in Magansetum in pago Magesætna</i>	811 (e.9) S 1264 823–62 (?823–5) (14) S 1782 958 (10) S 677	Thorpe 1848, 177, 195, 238–9; Gelling 1997, 101–5; 1992, 82; Freeman 2008	?RN Maund

¹⁹ In Tables 3–5, DN = district-name, HN = hill-name, RN = river-name, LF = landscape feature and PN = place-name.

		<i>Da dyde Eadric ealdorman swa he oft ær dyde . astealde þone fleam ærest mid Magesæton</i>	11th ASC 1016		
		<i>cum Magesetensibus Roni Magesetensium ... com(es)</i>	John of Worcester, s.a. 1016, 1041		
		<i>Hecana. Nomina Praesulum Magesetensium; civitas Wigornia ... totius Hwicciæ vel Magesitaniae metropolis extitit famosa</i>	John of Worcester, 12th-century Appendix		
* <i>Pēac- sāetan</i>	Db	<i>Pecsætna twelf hund hyda</i>	TH 963 (17; lost orig.) S 712a	Dumville 1989 Gelling 1992,145	HN/DN * <i>Pēac</i>
* <i>Pencer- sāetan</i>	?St/ Wo	<i>primum tomsetna gemære 7 pencersætna foranrehtes</i>	849 (e.11) S 1272		?PN Penkridge
* <i>Scrob- sāetan</i>	Sa	<i>into Scrobsæton</i>	11th ASC C 1016	PN Sa 1 267–9; PN Sa 4 xv	DN * <i>Scrobb/P</i> N Shrews- bury
* <i>Sumor- sāetan</i>	So	<i>(mid) Sumor sæton, Sumursætna</i>	1.9th ASC A 845, 878	CDEPN 559	PN Somerton
		<i>on somersete . of somersete</i>	938 (14) S 442		
		<i>Sumersetescir</i>	1122		
* <i>Tom- sāetan</i>	St/ Wa/ Wo	<i>primum tomsetna gemære</i>	849 (e.11) S 1272 844 for 848 (12) S 197	PN Wa xvii–xviii	RN Tame/PN <i>Tomtun</i> or Tamworth
* <i>Went- sāetan</i>	Gwent	<i>Hwilan Wentsæte hyrdan into Dunsætan</i>	Duns, §9	Liebermann 1903, 374–9	DN Gwent/ PN Caer- went
* <i>Wiht- sāetan</i>	Wt	<i>Wihtsætan</i>	OEBede i.15		DN Wight
* <i>Wil- sāetan</i>	Wi	<i>Wilsætum, Wilsætan</i>	1.9th ASC A 800, 878	PN W xvi– xvii, 1	RN Wylve/ PN Wilton

<i>Wreocen sāetan</i>	Sa	<i>Wocen sætna is syfan þusend hida</i>	TH	Dumville 1989	HN Wrekin
		<i>quando fuerunt pagani in Wreocensetun</i>	855 (e.11) S 206	PN Sa 6 120	
		<i>in provincia Wrocensetna</i>	963 (12) S 723 (not bounds)		

In light of this, it is worth considering one further possible *sāetan* name, recorded in a Worcester charter relating to the lands of Hanbury minster (836 (e.9) S 190). In the charter, ten hides of land at an unidentified place called *felda* are said to be *on Beansetum*, apparently ‘in or among (i.e. in the district of) the **Bēansāetan*’. This formula is thus comparable to those used of other, better attested *sāetan* groups listed in Table 3. In spite of the difficulty in identifying several of the charter’s place-names (PN Sa 1 264), the putative **Bēansāetan* are usually taken to be named from Beanhall in Feckenham, Worcestershire (Finberg 1972, 101), the first element of **Bēansāetan* being an elliptical form of that place-name. Unfortunately, the later history of that settlement does not suggest that it was once the centre of a territory from which a ten-hide estate could be granted, but Steven Bassett has argued that Beanhall may formerly have been a more significant unit (2010, 88–90).²⁰ On the other hand, some have taken *Beansetum* to be a compound noun, apparently with the second element (*ge*)*set*,²¹ translating it ‘bean land/field’ (DOE *sub* **bēan**; TOE *sub* **bēanset**, 206 (§04.02.03.02.02.02), 783). That, however, seems unlikely to be the name of a district; and the formula *on Beansetum* certainly suggests a district-name. There is in fact no reason why the first part of this *sāetan* name needs to be an elliptical form of a place-name Beanhall in preference to any other place-name with OE *bēan*

²⁰ Hooke (1990, 97–8) points out that there are other places called Beanhall in Hanbury parish. Bassett (2010, 88–90) suggests that all the Beanhall names should be taken together as remnants of a once much larger estate, and that the district of the **Bēansāetan* once covered a more extensive area, including Hanbury’s core landed endowment. This may well be the best explanation, but is not without difficulty. The compound *bēan-halh* ‘bean nook’ is recurrent in place-names—including Benhall in Suffolk (Gelling and Cole 2000, 130), Binhall in Fretherne & Saul (Gloucestershire; PN Gl 2 180), and Bannolds in Waterbeach, Cambridge (Reaney 1943, 185)—so the various instances in Hanbury and Feckenham might have arisen separately as minor names.

²¹ Or perhaps with an unrecorded, but occasionally postulated **seta* ‘pasture’ (cf. Karlström 1927, 170–71).

as the specific or whose first syllable could give rise to forms in *Bean-*. Since the precise location of the estates being granted is uncertain, an alternative would be to seek the **BēansĀetan* (or the feature from which they were named) elsewhere. The **BēansĀetan* are included in the present survey.

Names preserved in pre-Conquest sources that meet one or more of the above criteria are listed in Table 3. The material gathered there confirms earlier observations about the limited range of types these names fall into (e.g. Schram 1927–8; EPNE 2 94). Two general comparisons with the examples in Table 1 can be made. Firstly, none of those in Table 1 is qualified by a topographical element or district-name, but always by a place-name, almost always shortened. The type of formation where *sĀeta* is qualified by reference to a topographical feature seems to be confined to *sĀetan* names. It might further be observed that the types of topographical element used in *sĀetan* names tend to be of significant magnitude—the sort of features that might define substantial districts—and that, with one or two possible exceptions, those features are themselves named rather than simply described: the Tame, the Arrow, the Chilterns, the Wrekin, and so on, rather than *burna* ‘stream’ or *hyll* ‘hill’. While previous commentators have differentiated topographical qualifiers from pre-existing district-names, this may be an unnecessary distinction. Those names for major topographical features may in fact have served as district names. So the **CilternsĀetan* and **ArosĀetan* are in fact ‘dwellers in the Chiltern district’ and ‘dwellers in the district of the River Arrow’. Secondly, the settlement names used elliptically in the formation of *sĀeta* compounds show a marked divergence. The three clear examples of major *sĀetan* names containing place-names, **DornsĀetan*, **SumorsĀetan* and **WilsĀetan*, and three additional probable examples, **PencersĀetan*, **ScrobsĀetan* and **TomsĀetan*, all contain the names of Anglo-Saxon royal vills: Dorchester, Somerton and Wilton, and Penkridge, Shrewsbury and Tamworth (or the lost *Tomtun* of S 1804, whether or not the two places are connected).²² This is in stark contrast with those instances of *sĀeta* that form part of one-off noun phrases.

²² Somerton and Dorchester were the locations of royal assemblies in the ninth and tenth centuries and Dorchester was the site of a mint (Sawyer 1983, 289–99; Carroll and Parsons 2007, 120–26). Again, Tamworth and Wilton were important central places—a Mercian royal stronghold and a Burghal Hidage stronghold respectively, both also venues for royal assemblies. Shrewsbury too was an important settlement, perhaps a stronghold and the site at which Æthelred and Æthelflæd held an assembly in 901 (S 221; see also Bassett 1991).

Given this information, it is worth revisiting the **Fromesāetan* and the **Worþigsāetan*, both of which, as noted above, contain the names of important places. The wording of the clause in which the latter occurs probably indicates that it is a noun phrase rather than a name, since **Worþighāeme* ‘inhabitants of Worthy’ is also used as an alternative to **Worþigsāetan*. **Fromesāetan* is a stronger candidate, however, since the first element is both a settlement-name and the name of a major topographical feature, the River Frome. It is just possible that the form *Fromesetinga hagen* is a rare *-inga-* formation based on a pre-existing *sāetan* district-name.²³ A case might be made for including **Crægsāetan* here too, since the first element could be interpreted as the river-name Cray, or as a short-form of Crayford, which was the site of a minster. That a *sāetan* name might be recorded only in a charter boundary clause is strongly suggested by the case of the **Pencersāetan*, discussed above; on the other hand, **Crægsāetan* and **Fromesāetan* do not meet the criteria for inclusion as onomastic occurrences of *sāeta*. They can be treated as possible instances only.

3.2. *Sāetan* in place-names

The case of the **Bēansāetan* highlights the difficulty of differentiating *sāeta* from its homonyms OE *sāete* ‘house’ and late OE *sāete* (< ON *sáeti*) ‘seat, residence’, or from OE (*ge*)*set* ‘dwelling, fold, stable’.²⁴ The first of these is apparently rare, Smith (1956b, 94) citing only *on Beornwoldes sætan of Beornwoldes sætan* (S 786), although *on bicce sætan; Ondlong bicesætan* (S 1322) may belong here too. In these examples, *sāetan* represents a weak dative and genitive singular and this must therefore be *sāete* ‘house’ rather than *sāeta* ‘dweller’, which ought to occur in the plural—a meaning ‘Beornwald’s dweller’ is most unlikely. The other two are better evidenced in place-names and charter boundaries. In Kent, for example, *caping sæta* (S 1288), *Ruminig seta* (S 21) and Brenzett all seem to contain OE (*ge*)*set* (Wallenberg 1931, 81–82, 224; EPNE 2 120; Cullen 1997, 235, 256, 274–75), and Mawer derived names such as Causey Hall (Durham) and Corsenside (Northumberland) from *sāete* (< ON *sáeti*) (Mawer 1920, 41, 55, 237).²⁵

²³ See footnote 13.

²⁴ ON *sáetr* ‘a mountain pasture, a shieling’ might be included here, although this is more common as a first element in place-names, often compounded with other Old Norse elements or personal names, and of limited distribution. It is a possible alternative to *sāete* (< ON *sáeti*) in some instances (EPNE 2 95–6).

²⁵ See also Ekwall 1918, 32–3.

The genitive plural form in *-ena* at least sets *sāeta* apart from *(ge)set*, which would not have had an ending *-ena* in any grammatical case. This can help in the identification of *sāeta* names such as the **Bilsāetan*, whose name is preserved in the place-name Bilston. Fortunately that place-name is preserved in a pre-Conquest charter: *Bilsetnatun* (996 for 994 (17) S 1380).²⁶ The interpretation of the first element is a matter of uncertainty, but it is very clear that this is **Bilsāetena-tūn*, probably ‘the farm/estate of the **Bilsāetan*’. Certainly the second element cannot be *(ge)set* since the inflexion is wrong; while a meaning ‘the farm/estate belonging to the place called **Bil*-houses’, taking *sāete* ‘house’ as the second element, seems unlikely. Most triple compounds in *tūn*, where *tūn* is essentially qualified by another place-name, do not contain a second habitative element. In general, the qualifying compounds in such instances refer to topographical features, often fords. On the other hand, *tūn* is sometimes qualified by a community name (EPNE 2 195, 197). So the combination of genitive plural inflexion and habitative generic is more or less diagnostic. It is probably safe to assume that Bilston does contain a *sāetan* name. However, had the name occurred only in post-Conquest sources—*Billestune* 1086, *Billistan* 1173, and so on (Horovitz 2005, *s.n.*)—there could have been no such certainty. Similar to Bilston in having early, diagnostic spellings pointing to *sāeta* are Phepson (Worcestershire) and Poston (Herefordshire), where the earliest forms show a genitive plural inflexion followed by the generic *tūn*.

Formally, however, *sāete* and *sāte* (< ON *sāeti*) are often indistinguishable from *sāeta*, and the problem of differentiating them is increased in place-names, where processes of attrition can be well advanced by the time of first attestation and where grammatical endings can therefore be much reduced. While Bilston seems to contain *sāeta* inflected for genitive plural, *sāeta* names with the dative plural ending *-um* might sometimes stand alone as place-names, ‘(place) among the X-dwellers’, and this ending is quite likely to have been reduced to *-e* and then lost completely during the late Old English and Middle English periods. Even where a name is transparently in the dative plural, this does not rule out a compound with OE *(ge)set* or *sāete*, ‘(at the) huts’ or ‘(at the) houses’ as noted above for *Beansetum*. Grantchester (Cambridgeshire), for example, is *Grantasete*, *Grantasete*, *Grentasete* 1086, *Gransete* 1199, *Grantaset(e)* 1203–8 (Reaney 1935, 75), while Elmsett (Suffolk) is (*æt*) *Ylmesæton* 962×91 (11), *Ylmesætun* 1000 ×

²⁶ Note also on *Bilsatena gemæro* (985 (12) S 860).

1002 (11), *Elmesetā* 1086 (S 1494; S 1486; Watts 2004, 214). In each case the generic might be *sāeta*, *sāete* or *(ge)set*, all of which would take the dative plural inflexion *-um*.

Other means of identifying genuine instances of *sāeta* are therefore required. A relatively straightforward criterion for inclusion is that of names not attached to any individual settlement but only to districts. The very fact that they are district-names rather than settlement-names increases the likelihood that they contain *sāeta* rather than *sāete* or *(ge)set*. Words meaning ‘hut’ or ‘house’ are appropriate generics in settlement-names, but not in district-names. Sometimes the name of a settlement is transferred to the district dependent on it, but in such cases the settlement-name itself usually also survives. If this is not the case, it is very likely that the element in question is *sāeta*.

Where the name refers to a settlement, other criteria are required. To include all names that might, on orthographical grounds, go back to *sāeta* could dilute the corpus and therefore seriously undermine its reliability. One way of assessing the likelihood that particular place-names contain *sāeta* is by comparing their first elements with those of the more clearly established examples set out in §3.1, to see if they fit broadly into the wider corpus. To be included in the corpus, their first elements should be either pre-existing district-names (including major topographical features that might have served as district-names), or reduced forms of attested place-names.

The strength of such an approach is that it uses the form of recorded *sāeta* in pre-Conquest sources as a means of assessing the probability that the same element occurs in place-names for which the early forms allow other interpretations. The weakness is that it privileges *sāetan* names that referred to the inhabitants of large districts. To judge from the examples identified in §3.1, most instances in documentary sources could be described in that way: some can be shown to have occupied large areas, while the Tribal Hidage assigns them considerable hidages; and others were overseen by high-ranking officials.²⁷ That does not mean, however, that all *sāetan* names were possessed by communities that occupied such large areas. It is not that a small topographical feature simply could not have given rise to a *sāetan* name. Bilston, Phepson and Poston may all take their names from relatively small topographical features, or even from earlier compound place-names—Gelling posits a lost **Fepfeld* or **Feplēah* as the basis for the name **Fepsāetan* in Phepson (Gelling 1982, 70–71). They are included here because a *sāetan* name can be assumed on

²⁷ This aspect is explored further in Baker forthcoming.

other grounds. The point is that a minor topographical feature could also have formed the specific of a compound in *sāete* ‘dwelling’ or *(ge)set* ‘fold’. On the other hand, the name of a very large topographical feature—of a major river for example—could give rise to a *sāetan* name, but is unlikely to have been used to define a single dwelling or a fold. Smith gives no examples of OE *(ge)set* compounded with river-names or hill-names, or with words denoting landscape features of a size that might define a district;²⁸ while his only firm example of *sāete* is compounded with a personal name (EPNE 2 94, 120). Mawer’s examples of *sāete* (< ON *sėti*) in Northumberland and Durham have the qualifying elements OE *alor* ‘alder’, OE *cald* ‘cold’, ON *jarl* ‘earl’ and personal names (Mawer 1920, 4, 15, 41, 55, 69, 93, 180, 193, 237; 1930, 50–51).

Some qualifying elements are simply inappropriate for *sāetan* names referring to communities of any size. An element meaning ‘dwellers’ is unlikely to be compounded with a personal name (unless the personal name is actually part of a reduced place-name), and all the evidence from attested lexical compounds, noun phrases and names in *sāeta* suggests that adjectives were inappropriate qualifiers as well. When *sāeta*, *sāete* and *(ge)set* are all possible, both formally and semantically, it will be safer, for present purposes, to assume that the place-name in question contains *sāete* or *(ge)set* rather than *sāeta*. There is of course a risk of excluding many *sāeta* place-names simply because the communities they record were only of local renown. However, historical analysis of *sāetan* names focuses on the large communities, since these are the ones of particular interest in assessments of the administrative make-up of early medieval England and the survival of possible ‘folk’-groups. This rather ruthless approach to judging the likelihood that a place-name contains *sāeta* rather than *sāete* or *(ge)set* is therefore justified.²⁹

On this basis, the example of Grantchester, noted above, looks to be a very strong candidate for inclusion. The first element is either a reduced form of the place-name Cambridge (earlier **Grantacæster*), or an attested river-name, Granta, which in Anglo-Saxon times referred to what is now the River Cam and perhaps also one or more of its three major branches, and was a major topographical feature. A **Granta-sāete* or **Granta-(ge)set* ‘Granta dwelling or fold’ seems improbable. A name

²⁸ It must be noted that some of Smith’s examples are interpreted by others as OE *sāeta* names. Allowing for this does not, of course, increase the likelihood that *(ge)set* was ever compounded with words denoting significant topographical features.

²⁹ A principle of this kind seems to have guided Ekwall’s interpretation (DEPN xiii, 399, 412).

**Grantasætan* ‘Granta (district) dwellers’, on the other hand, would be entirely in keeping with the more established corpus. Elmsett takes its name from OE **ylme* ‘elm-tree copse’, a very minor topographical feature and not one likely to have been used as a major district-name; on the other hand, it is one that could qualify words meaning ‘dwelling’ or ‘fold’. Grantchester can therefore be included, but Elmsett is best omitted.³⁰

3.2.1. Post-Conquest district-names

The first group discussed here is the more easily handled of the two, since it consists not of settlement-names, but district-names that survive in post-Conquest sources. Included here are the names of four Domesday hundreds and one Welshry. The five names in question are *Estursete* (so named in 1086) and *Tempsiter* (*Themecestre* 1284, *Teneset*, *Tenseten*, *Temesete* 1291–2), named from the Kentish River Stour and the River Teme in Shropshire respectively (Anderson 1939, 148; Morgan 2008, 73); *Mersete* (1086), probably named either from **Mere* ‘lake (district)’ or from a reduced form of the place-name Maesbury (Shropshire);³¹ *Reweset* (Shropshire) and *Stepleset* (Herefordshire; both attested in 1086), named from a Brittonic hill-name **Rhiw* and the OE word *stēpel* ‘steep place’, which might feasibly have been used here as a hill- or district-name (Anderson 1934, 155–6, 165). Domesday also has a single reference to a *Sulcet* hundred in Herefordshire, and Freeman interprets this as another *sætan* name, perhaps the **Sulucsætan* ‘Sellack dwellers’, Sellack or *Lann Suluc* ‘church of Suluc’ being a place-name. Its location close to several of the hundreds discussed above may count in its favour, but it could also be explained as a palaeographical error for Sellack itself (Anderson 1934, 161 fn1, 163 fn1; Thorn and Thorn §29.10 (note); Freeman 1986, 62–3). Given its fleeting appearance in the record, it may be wise to include this only as a possible rather than a probable *sætan* name.

A sixth example, *Alcester* or *Halceter* (*Halchseten* 1249), which seems also to be the name of a small district rather than a single settlement (Eyton 1860, 73, fn2), is usually taken to contain OE *halh* in the sense ‘meadow’, hence ‘the meadow (district) dwellers’ (Gelling 1992, 119). While this might have been a suitable description of the lands

³⁰ Mills (2003:176) does take *Elmsett* to contain *sæta* and Watts (CDEPN 214) allows that as one possibility.

³¹ This point is argued in Baker 2015, against the traditional interpretation of the first element as OE (*ge*)*mære* ‘boundary’.

beside the rivers Camlad and Caebitra, the element *halh* had a much wider range of senses (EPNE 1 223; Gelling and Cole 2000, 123–8), and could have been used in the sense ‘nook, corner of land’. Either way, this looks to be another *sāetan* name.

The name of Bassetlaw Wapentake is more problematic. The first element has been connected with OE *bærnet* ‘land cleared by burning’, giving **Bærnetsāetena-hlāw* ‘the mound of the dwellers at the land cleared by burning’; but in truth, the early spellings of the name do not allow secure identification of the first element and this in turn leaves interpretation of the second element open to doubt (Wallenberg 1934, 476–7; Anderson 1934, 39–40; PN Nt 23). That the name became associated with a large district counts in favour of *sāeta*, but in fact this is probably only the name of the *hlāw* or ‘mound’ at which the freemen of the wapentake met, which was subsequently transferred to the whole district. By the strictest criteria, this cannot be considered with certainty to be a *sāetan* name, but might be included as a possible candidate.

3.2.2. *Settlement-names first recorded in post-Conquest sources and excluded from the present corpus*

Both Skeat (1913, 84–86) and Schram (1928–29) posited large numbers of *sāetan* place-names in East Anglia and elsewhere, and some of these are also included in Udolph’s analysis of the same element (Udolph 2012, 40–43), in spite of Ekwall’s reservations (DEPN xiii, 399, 412). Most of them should probably be ruled out on semantic grounds. Bricett in Suffolk—*Brieseta* 1086, *Brisete* 1198, *Breset* 1203 (Ekwall 1936, 101)—has been taken to contain OE *sāeta* (Skeat 1913, 84; Schram 1927–8, 208–9), but this involves interpretations of the first element as *beorht* ‘bright’, which is out of step with the qualifying elements of other *sāete* names and unconvincing on grounds of phonology (given the run of early spellings). Another suggestion is that it is a *sāeta* qualified by Brittonic *brigā* ‘hill’, which compares more favourably with other *sāeta* names, but which Ekwall (1936, 101) thought topographically doubtful. The most convincing explanation is probably Ekwall’s OE *brēosa* ‘gadfly’ with *(ge)set*, hence ‘fold infested with gadflies’ (Ekwall 1936, 101; DEPN xiii, 399, 412; Mills 2003, 76; CDEPN 84).

Other instances posited by Skeat or Schram but also ruled out here on the basis of an inappropriate first element are, in Suffolk, Hessett (OE *hege* ‘fence’), Wissett (personal name); in Norfolk, Tattersett (personal

name), and Forncett (perhaps a personal name),³² as well as Ossett in West Yorkshire (personal name or OE *ōsle* ‘thrush’), and Tarsset in Northumberland (personal name). Stradsett in Norfolk is named from a significant landscape feature, OE *stræt* ‘Roman road’, but not a feature comparable with the Wrekin, the Tame, or the Granta, and one that would not have distinguished this site from others near to Roman roads.³³ The first element of Lissett (East Yorkshire) has not been interpreted with certainty, but is probably OE *læs* ‘meadow’. That feature might have defined a distinctive landscape locally; whether or not it could define a wider district is less sure and the element *læs* might easily be compounded with OE *sæte* or (*ge*)*set*. It too is omitted here.

Wetheringsett (Suffolk), which Karlström (1927, 179–80) took to contain *sæta*, Letheringsett, and Whissonsett (both Norfolk) seem unlikely to be *sæte* names since they already contain group-names. The first two are *-inga-* formations, one based on a personal name, the other an elliptical formation on a place-name, while the third may have *wicing* (gen. pl. *wicinga*) ‘pirates’ as first element (DEPN xiii, 399, 412; Mills 2003, 296, 492, 494; CDEPN 370, 668, 672). Putative folk-names meaning ‘dwellers of the pirates’ or ‘dwellers of the people of Lēodhere’ seem unlikely, and ‘dwellers of the people of Wetherden’ even more so. Bannister (1916, 210) floated the idea that Witsets in Herefordshire was a *sætan* place-name, but was unable to find any early forms to support this or any other possible etymology, and so the name must be left out of the present discussion. Histon, in Cambridgeshire, was interpreted as a *sætan* name by Ekwall, who is followed by Udolph (DEPN; Udolph 2012, 42). This, however, is based on the misidentification of the form *Hestitona* with Histon; it seems in fact to be a spelling for Hinxtun, and without it there is no reason to suggest that Histon belongs here (PN Ess 153; Mills 2003, 244; CDEPN 307). Merstham in Surrey (*æt Mearsæt ham*, *mearsætham* 947 (S 528), *Mersetham* 1042–66 (S 1047), *Merstan* 1086, *Mersteham* 12th; Schram 1928–29, 203) is more likely to be ‘settlement by the horse-enclosure’ than a *sætan* name (PNSr 300–301).³⁴

³² CDEPN 236 allows a shortened place-name Fornham with *sætan*, thus ‘dwellers from Fornham (Suffolk)’. This would be an unusual use of *sætan*—in all clear examples, it refers to the dwellers in or near a place, not from a place; Fornham is probably too far away from Forncett for it to mean ‘Fornham dwellers’.

³³ For Tarsset, see Mawer 1920, 193 and DEPN 399, 412. For the other examples in this paragraph, see the relevant entries in DEPN, Mills 2003 and CDEPN, and see also PN ERY 21, 77.

³⁴ EPNE 2 94 suggests OE *sæt* ‘lurking place, lair, trap’, based on the earliest form.

PN Hrt (56–7) suggests that Leasybridge or Leasey Bridge in Wheathampstead (Hertfordshire) goes back to an original *Hlypsātenabrycg* ‘bridge of the slope dwellers’, observing that the bridge is at the foot of a fairly steep slope. The wider topography, however, is that of a river valley, through which flows the Lea, and it seems unlikely that the slope in question could have given rise to the name of a large community, unless the referent was much larger—if, for example, **Hlyp* was used as a hill-name. On the other hand, *hlyp* could have formed the specific in a compound such as **Hlypset* ‘slope-fold’. Moreover, the forms, as PN Hrt notes, are late and difficult (*Lupsed brugge* 1306, *Lefsetebregge* 1340, *Lessomille* 1341, *Leshomelle* 1343, *Lessetebregge* 1349, *Lessebruggemelle* 1385). Again, this cannot be included in the present survey. Nor can Holset in Devon (*Holset(e)* 1330, 1333), which is in a small hollow and probably has *sāete* or (*ge*)*set* as its generic (PN D 329).

Four more suggested instances of *sāetan* are worth considering in more detail, but may not all be relevant here. Hethersett in Norfolk is taken by Mills (2003, 240) and Watts (CDEPN 300) to be **hāddre-sāetan* ‘heather dwellers’. If *hāddre* is taken to be a district-name, then it might be analogous with **Scrobb*, the first element of Shrewsbury and of **Scrobsāetan*, a community named in the *Chronicle*. However, the name of the **Scrobsāetan*, discussed above, is more feasibly derived from that of Shrewsbury rather than a recurrence of the specific of the latter name, and this weakens the parallel with Hethersett. The latter could simply be a (*ge*)*set* name, since ‘heather fold’ or, as Ekwall (DEPN 237) suggested, *hēah-dēor-set* ‘stag fold’ would be entirely acceptable, perhaps even preferable, interpretations semantically.

More promising is the name Exceat in Sussex, taken by Schram (1928–9, 203–4) to be of the type ‘river-name + *sāetan*’. His argument, followed by later commentators, is that the River Cuckmere was formerly known as **Exe* (a river-name evidenced elsewhere but not otherwise linked with the Cuckmere), and that this forms the basis of a *sāetan* name (Schram 1928–9, 203–4; PN Sx 419–20). Ekwall (DEPN 171) suggests OE *āc-scēat* ‘oak grove’ as an alternative, but the phonology indicated by the run of forms is not especially in favour of such an interpretation (cf. PN Sx xxvii–xxix). For Guist in Norfolk, Schram (1928–9, 205) suggested an elliptical *sāetan* formation based on the place-names Gaywood and Gayton, some 30km to the west. This seems unlikely unless one of those settlements was formerly an important central place. Watts (CDEPN 265), on the other hand, proposes a *sāetan* name based on a lost river-name **Gāge* ‘the turning or wandering one’, an element that

also underlies the name Ginge Brook in Berkshire (PN Brk 10). This would be a nickname for the River Wensum, which, as Watts points out, makes a big turn at this point. Alternatively, Guist could contain (*ge*)*set* or *sāete*² with an unrecorded personal name **Gāga* or **Gāgi* (DEPN xiii, 399, 412; Mills 2003, 218). Both explanations have their drawbacks. Semantically, both *sāetan* etymologies would be comparable with the **Grantasāetan* of Grantchester, but the explanations both require special pleading—namely the postulation of unattested river-names. It is difficult to include Exceat and Guist with any great confidence, but they might be considered possible instances of *sāetan*.

Finally, Burstwick in East Yorkshire (*Brocstewic*, *Brostewic* 1086, *Brustwic* 1170–75, *Brustewic* 1203–21) might contain **Brōcsāete* ‘brook dwellers’, with OE *wīc* ‘dependent settlement’ as the generic. This sounds unpromising—an unspecified ‘brook’ seems unlikely to serve as an adequately distinctive qualifier for a group name—and this would differ from the other *sāetan* discussed already, since it would be based on a topographical element rather than a river-name. Udolph (2012, 40), however, notes exact continental parallels for **Brōcsāetan*, where the cognate of OE *brōc* has the meaning ‘marsh’ rather than stream, and there is evidence that the Old English element could also mean ‘marsh’ (VEPN 2 36). In that case, **Brōcsāetan* might mean ‘marsh dwellers’, perhaps with reference to the terrain of the Holderness peninsula. Alternatively, the first element might be OE *burhsāeta* ‘citizen, town-dweller’, and Burstwick would then be ‘the dependent settlement’ named in reference to the inhabitants of a nearby town. It would be paralleled by Burmarsh in Kent, which is ‘the marsh of the *burhware* (or inhabitants of Canterbury)’ (VEPN 2 89). Nevertheless, the early spellings are equivocal and an entirely different etymology—taking the first element to be a personal name of Old Norse origin—may be preferable (PN ERY 33; Mills 2003, 88).³⁵

Two points are clear from the analysis in this section: first, that there are many settlement-names that contain elements formally identical with *sāeta* and, second, that almost all of them have qualifiers that rule out *sāeta* on the criteria set out in §3.2. The range of compounds in which they occur differs very clearly from those of the established *sāetan* names of §3.1, and they cannot be references to large communities occupying substantial districts, given the purely local relevance of their first

³⁵ Udolph (2012, 42) also notes a Burstwick, apparently in Staffordshire, for which he tentatively suggests **Burgsāetan*. I have not found any record of this and take it to be a mistake for the East Yorkshire example discussed here.

elements. If any of the others do contain OE *sāeta*, then they must also represent a different application of that term as a name-forming element, one that perhaps finds parallel (though not necessarily) in Bilston, Phepson and Poston, for which the early spellings certainly make *sāeta* the most likely interpretation. It is not inconceivable that such a usage was early and general, perhaps even a West Germanic inheritance; the possible identification of continental parallels to **Brōcsāetan* should be kept in mind (Udolph 2012, 40). It is more likely, however, that the place-names discussed in this section contain *sāete* or (*ge*)*set*. Either way, they cannot be included in the present corpus.

Table 4: securely identified *sāetan* names: place- and district-names

<i>sāetan</i> name	Co.	Early forms	Sources	References	Feature
<i>*Bilsāetan</i> [Bilston]	St	<i>on Bilsatena gemæro</i> <i>Bilsetnatun</i>	985 (12) S 860 996 for 994 (17) S 1380	DEPN 43; Mills 2003, 57; Horovitz 2005, <i>s.n.</i>	HN <i>bill</i> 'sword' (as topog term)
<i>*Fepsāetan</i> [Phepson]	Wo	<i>to fepsetnatune</i> <i>Fepsetenatun</i>	S 633 1086	PN Wo137– 8; Gelling 1982, 69–71	?
<i>*Granta- sāetan</i> [Grant- chester]	Ca	<i>Grantaseta, Grantasete,</i> <i>Grentaseta</i> <i>Gransete</i> <i>Granteset(e)</i>	DB 1199 1203–8	PN Ca 75	RN Granta/ PN Cam- bridge
<i>*Halhsāetan</i> [Halceter]	Mo /Sa	<i>Halchseten</i> <i>Halsetene</i> <i>Halsetone</i>	1249 InqMisc 1318 Cl 1318 InqMisc		LF <i>halh</i>
<i>*Mere- sāetan</i> [lost]	Sa	<i>Merset(e) hd'</i>	DB	Anderson 1934, 155	DN <i>*Mere/</i> PN Maes- bury
<i>*Putsāetan</i> [Poston]	He	<i>Poston</i> <i>Poscetenetune</i>	 DB	DEPN 372; Freeman 1986, 72	?ellip- tical HN
<i>*Rhiw- sāetan</i> [lost]	Sa	<i>Rvesset, Reweset hund'</i>	DB	Anderson 1934, 155–6	HN <i>*Rhiw</i> (Britt.)
<i>*Stepel- sāetan</i> [lost]	He	<i>Stepleset, Stæpleset,</i> <i>Stapel hd'</i>	DB	Anderson 1934, 165	HN <i>*Stēpel</i>

* <i>Stursætan</i> [lost]	Ke	<i>Estursete hvnd'</i> <i>hd of Stursaete</i>	DB DM	Anderson 1939, 148	RN Stour
* <i>Teme- sætan</i> [Tempsiter]	Sa	PN Tempseter <i>Themecestre</i> <i>Teneset, Tenseten,</i> <i>Temesete</i> <i>Temesete</i>	1284 Cl 1291–92 Ass 1305 Pat	Morgan 2008, 73	RN Teme

Table 5: possible additions to the corpus

<i>sætan</i> name	Co.	Early forms	Sources	References	Feature
* <i>Bærnet- sætan</i> [Bassetlaw Hundred]	Nt	<i>Bernedeselawe,</i> <i>Bernedelawe,</i> <i>Bernesedelawe</i> <i>Dersetelawahdr'</i> <i>Bersetelawa</i>	DB 1157 P 1166 P	Anderson 1934, 39; PN Nt 23	DN <i>Bærnet</i>
* <i>Crægsætan</i>	Ke	<i>Cregsetna haga</i> <i>Cræg sætena haga</i>	862 (1.9) S 331 987 (1.10) S 864	KPN 83, 208 n2	RN Cray or PN Crayford
* <i>Exesætan</i> [PN Exceat]	Sx	<i>Essete, Esseta</i> <i>Exeta, Exete</i>	DB, 1135–54 1135–54	Schram 1927–8, 203–4; PN Sx 419–20; DEPN 171	?RN
* <i>Frome- sætan</i>	So	<i>thanen on</i> <i>fromesetinga hagen</i>	964 (14) S 727		RN/PN Frome
* <i>Gægsætan</i> [PN Guist]	Nf	(<i>et</i>) <i>Gæssæte</i> <i>Gegeseta</i>	1023–38 (e.11) S 1489 DB	Schram 1927–8, 205; DEPN xiii, 399, 412 Mills 2003: 218 CDEPN 265	?RN
* <i>Suluc-sætan</i>	He	<i>Sulcet</i>	DB	Anderson 1934, 161 n1, 163 n1; Thorn and Thorn 1983 §29.10 n; Freeman 1986, 62–3	PN Sellack

4. The distribution and chronology of *sæta*

This assessment leaves us with a corpus of 26 probable *sætan* names, 16 from documentary sources (Table 3), 10 from place- and district-names

(Table 4).³⁶ A further six may be considered possible instances (Table 5), but they are problematic in various ways and will not be considered in the following discussion. Together with Table 1, which lists *sāetan* in noun phrases, this provides a considerable body of material upon which to base an analysis of *sāeta* as a lexical item and as a name-forming element. The earliest charter bounds in which the term is used lexically purport to date from the ninth century, but only the Bromley charters of 862 (l.9; S 331) and 987 (l.10; S 864) survive in pre-eleventh-century manuscripts. This is important, given the potential for the orthography of boundary points to be updated by later scribes. Nevertheless, *sāetan* was certainly used onomastically at an earlier date, and this is unlikely to have occurred if *sāeta* were not also a normal lexical item. There is in fact good reason for assuming that *sāeta* was in widespread use before the ninth century. Cognates of *sāeta* are found in other Germanic languages (Seebold 1999, 705 *sub Saß*; de Vries 1977, 471, *sub seti*), and form part of the continental Germanic onomastic tradition (Jellinghaus 1898, 314; Förstemann 1913–16, vol. 2, 689; Udolph 2012, 40–41).³⁷ OE *sāeta* must therefore have been available as a lexical item to the very earliest Old English speakers and presumably in all dialects.

It is important to note that the corpus gathered together here is limited by the accident of survival, and certainly does not represent a complete record of *sāeta* either as a lexical or as an onomastic item. Evidence for the lexical use of *sāeta* is so dependent on its appearance in charter boundaries that the uneven survival of the latter across England must be borne in mind (Hill 1981, 24 Fig. 35). The first of the two Bromley charters is important, therefore, in demonstrating that *sāeta* was certainly in use in western Kent in the ninth century. Nevertheless, by the time sources become relatively abundant, a clear bias towards the west midlands and the south-west can be discerned. Noun phrases with *sāeta* occur in the bounds of twelve charters held in the archives of Worcester and Evesham, and dealing with estates in Worcestershire and Warwickshire. OEBede probably also originated in the west midlands towards the end of the ninth century (Whitelock 1962, 77–8). A charter from the Old Minster, Winchester, uses such a construct in reference to Lilleshall, Shropshire, and a charter from Crediton via Exeter describes

³⁶ It is possible that other *sāetan* names will be identified, but they should only be accepted as such if they meet firm criteria for inclusion, as set out here.

³⁷ Although note that not all of the examples set out by these scholars necessarily derive from the precise cognates of OE *sāeta*.

the inhabitants of Buckland in Devon as **Bōcsāetan*. Lexical use of the term is nevertheless more widespread, with occurrences in archives and concerning estates in Hampshire (Winchester Old Minster/*Igtun*) and Wiltshire (Malmesbury/Crudwell), the south midlands (Eynsham in Oxfordshire/Chipping Camden in Gloucestershire), and Kent (Rochester/Bromley). The western distribution of the material is not exclusive, but is marked.

Given that charter survival is better in those parts of the country than, say, in East Anglia and north of the Humber, the distribution cannot be taken at face value—the term was clearly available in other dialects of southern England and was probably more current than the surviving evidence reveals.³⁸ Nevertheless, the concentration in the west midlands cannot be ignored and almost certainly reflects a dialectal reality. By the time records are plentiful, *sāeta* may well have been falling out of use in parts of the country, but was still very productive in the west.

There is certainly evidence that lexical use of *sāeta* survived longest in the western dialects of Old and Middle English. In addition to the plethora of late tenth-century occurrences in Worcester and Evesham charters, and the eleventh-century instances in charters concerning estates in Gloucestershire and Devon, it is worth noting that the compound **hundred-sāeta* seems only to be attested twice, once in a probably forged charter surviving in a twelfth-century manuscript, from the Glastonbury archive in Somerset (*hundredesetena ađas*; 971 (12) S 783), and again in the post-Conquest legal compilation known as *Instituta Cnuti aliorumque regum Anglorum*, probably compiled at Worcester (*hundrædsētene*; Liebermann 1903, 615; O'Brien 2003). Presumably the compound was current in the language of the forger, at some time between the late tenth century and the twelfth. MED only notes one attestation of *sēten* (the ME reflex of *sāetan*), which is *hu Dorchestre-seten hine gunnen greten* (Lazamon's *Brut* 14780). Here the reference is specifically to the inhabitants of Dorchester rather than the people of Dorset and it is notable that the form of the compound is out of step with earlier usage, with no reduction of the place-name Dorchester. Two things are worth noting: that Lazamon was a priest in Areley, Worcestershire (Allen 1993, xviii–xix), and that his writing, which dates to sometime towards the end of the twelfth century or in the first half of the thirteenth, is characterised by a certain amount of archaism (Allen 1993, xvi–xviii, xxi). Given the late persistence of the term in the west midlands, and especially in charters

³⁸ The wide distribution of *sāeta* might be compared with features of what Kitson (1995) describes as the old south-eastern dialect.

held in the Worcester archive, it may still have been current at the time he was writing; or he may have been using *sāetan* learnedly.³⁹

What is especially striking is that it was in the west that *sāeta* seems to have survived longest as an active part of English vocabulary, and the onomastic evidence seems to fit well with this interpretation. As a name-forming element, *sāetan* may similarly go back to the earliest times of English speech, since it was also used onomastically in other Germanic languages.⁴⁰ Alternatively, the onomastic use could have developed in another region and spread across other Germanic dialects that retained *sāeta* as an active part of the lexicon, including Old English. Once again, the surviving material is distributed across southern England with the exception of East Anglia, but is more common in the west, mirroring the suggested dialectal survival of *sāeta*.⁴¹ It is not inconceivable that the **Halhsāetan* and **Temesāetan* on the Welsh border, the last to be attested, are of very late coinage.⁴²

5. Conclusions

Several important points emerge from this discussion of OE *sāeta*. The first is the importance of setting any discussion of *sāetan* names against

³⁹ In that case, it is interesting that he does not seem to have got his archaic construction quite right—perhaps, had he done so, his audience would not have understood it.

⁴⁰ The *pago* called *Firihsazi* is mentioned in the *Royal Frankish Annals s.a.* 823 (Scholz 1970, 114). The district-name Alsace seems at the very least to have been reinterpreted as a *-saß* name by speakers of a West Germanic dialect, and this in turn may have influenced the modern French form (Vincent 1937, 38 §96; Nègre 1991–98, 23 §1016, 423 §6305, 1744 §31122). Other possible examples are listed by Jellinghaus 1898, 314; Förstemann 1913–16, vol. 2, 689; Udolph 2012, 40–41.

⁴¹ It is worth stating that in community-names, in England and on the continent, *sāetan* and its cognates seems to refer to the inhabitants of a substantial district, a sense that is not too far removed from the use of *sāeta* in the compound **hundredsāeta*, which, as noted above, is recorded in a twelfth-century forgery of a charter from the south-west. If any of the East Anglian place-names discussed in §3.2.2 are *sāetan* names, then they seem to refer to communities who occupied much smaller areas. So the dialectal evolution may have involved a semantic divergence, as well as later survival in the west.

⁴² Further analysis of the distribution of the names is complicated by the question of location—whether the names that survive in pre-Conquest sources are a reflection of naming-practice in the scriptorium or on the ground. With the benefit of a complete corpus, such an analysis would be of value, but is beyond the scope of the present paper.

the wider lexical use of the element *sæta*. The difference between the two contexts in which *sæta* was used has not always been emphasised in the literature,⁴³ but has been crucial to the establishment of a corpus of *sætan* names; by implication, this cautionary point is relevant to any study of community-names in Anglo-Saxon England. There is little evidence for *sæta* as a lexical term north of the Humber or in East Anglia. While this may be explained in part by the relative lack of early documentary material from those areas, especially charter bounds, it is also possible that its use was never extensive in those regions and died out very early. With the exception of East Anglia, the term was certainly used across southern England, and such currency is to be expected of a word common to other West Germanic, as well as North Germanic languages. What is clear and of considerable importance, however, is that *sæta* survived longest in the Old English dialects of the southwest and, especially, the west midlands, where use of the term seems even to have continued into Middle English. Further understanding of this dialectal evolution can perhaps be gained by consideration of semantically equivalent terms, especially *ware*, *-ingas*, and *hæme* (see Wheeler 1916; Gelling 1982, 69; Yorke 1999, 28). This too is beyond the limits of the present paper, but is an important area for future research.

The second important point is that *sætan* names are far more numerous than is sometimes supposed. In this survey, which sets out, for the first time, a reliable corpus of *sætan* names, twenty-six have been identified with some certainty, and another six with varying degrees of probability. The establishment of a corpus is crucial to our understanding of *sætan* names, and no previous assessment of them has been based on such rigorous criteria for inclusion. The danger of drawing conclusions about the significance of *sætan* names based on only a handful of relevant instances is clear—interpretations of this kind are likely to lack sophistication, since they ignore much of the evidence; at worst, they may be entirely misleading. The general focus on the west midland bias of the distribution of *sætan* names, which characterises several earlier discussions of the name-type, ignores their occurrence in other parts of the country, which is probably a more significant phenomenon than usually assumed. It also sometimes overlooks dialectal explanations for

⁴³ Certainly Wheeler (1916) and Udolph (2012) are more concerned with historical linguistic considerations and Wheeler focuses on charter bounds, although at least one of his examples is also a place-name, Bilston. Schram (1927–8, 201–4) attempts to set out a typology of *sætan* names, but includes both onomastic and lexical instances under the same headings. EPNE 2 94 is careful to separate lexical occurrences from onomastic ones, but is not explicit in doing so.

this distribution in favour of socio-political ones. The historical context and significance of *sāetan* names are of utmost importance for our understanding of early territorial and administrative organisation, but interpretation cannot advance securely without a solid foundation of the kind set out here.

There is a great deal more that could be said about *sāetan* names. Now that a corpus has been established, questions of socio-political background, administrative status, and the chronology of the phenomenon of *sāetan* names can be addressed effectively. These are questions that require detailed analysis. Such an approach, though beyond the limits of this article, might contribute significantly to our understanding of the political geography of Anglo-Saxon England.⁴⁴ It should be clear from this discussion that there is also much more to be learnt about Anglo-Saxon community-names of other types. For a class of name that is so often invoked in historical discourse, it has been relatively neglected in terms of onomastic analysis. In order to gain insights from this material, it must be approached in a detailed and systematic manner.

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Acknowledgements

This paper arises in part from The Place-Names of Shropshire project, generously funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AH/K000233/1). For discussion and feedback, I am grateful to colleagues at the SNSBI spring conferences of 2013 (Glasgow) and 2014 (Gregynog), and at ICOS 2014 (Glasgow), where parts of this paper were presented. In particular I should also like to thank Steven Bassett, Jayne Carroll, Paul Cavill, David Parsons, Barbara Yorke and an anonymous reviewer, for detailed and helpful comments on earlier drafts.

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⁴⁴ See Baker forthcoming.

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