

Summary

BEYOND TEXTUAL VARIABILITY: ORTHOGRAPHIC STANDARDIZATION AS A HERMENEUTICAL STRATEGY IN THE THIRD REDACTION OF THE OLD CZECH BIBLE

This study examines orthographic practices in Old Czech biblical manuscripts traditionally assigned to the third redaction (early 15th century). It argues that systematic diacritical spelling functioned as a hermeneutical strategy for establishing textual authority. By means of statistical analysis of vowel quantity marking in the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles across 23 manuscripts, the investigation reveals a hierarchical distribution where only 8.7% of manuscripts achieve systematic practice (>60% marking), while 47.8% manifest minimal engagement (<10% marking). The manuscripts consistently privilege marking of long yat (*ie*), mentioned in the theoretical afterword supposedly written by the third-redaction translator, over other vowels, demonstrating circulation of orthographic theory across medieval scribal communities. Complete Bibles demonstrate higher orthographic sophistication than stand-alone New Testament copies, suggesting investment in graphic precision as a marker of scriptural authority. These findings complement traditional redactional analysis by revealing orthographic systematicity as a parallel dimension of manuscript sophistication, demonstrating how medieval scribes employed graphic standardization to minimize interpretive ambiguity in vernacular biblical texts.

Keywords: Old Czech Bible, medieval orthography, diacritical spelling, biblical manuscripts

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