AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

# Did address influence whether gods answered prayers? Preliminary overview of Vulgar Latin names of deities in the Roman Empire

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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper offers a preliminary linguistic analysis of votive texts with particular reference to their use of and variation in Latin. The aim of the linguistic analysis is to identify variation in the context of votive texts. In those votive inscriptions which contained a request, precise wording was considered crucial for the request to reach the gods. Therefore, schematic, formulaic wording is common. The epigraphic corpus under study shows various Vulgar Latin traits. The incorporation of 'non-Roman' or pre-Roman cults into Latin caused the greatest problems, with most variations occurring in the names of such gods. Since the names of these gods are not included in literary sources, our primary sources for these cults are inscriptions and they show characteristics of Vulgar Latin.

On votive inscriptions that contained requests, precise wording was considered crucial for the request to reach the gods. Therefore, schematic, formulaic wording is widespread. The dedications are usually simple and sparse in information, and divine names are normally made up of just one or two segments, so it is not always possible to identify the proper name or the divine epithet with which the divinity is invoked. There are also some spatial differences in the spelling

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of the names of the gods worshipped in the Roman Empire, and how they show peculiarities of Vulgar Latin.

Romans attached great importance to communication with the gods through rites.[1] Since the exact performance of the prescribed forms and ritual acts (*caeremonia*) was paramount in a sacred area,[2] making mistakes in either the texts or ritual actions invalidated the transaction, so perfect implementation was crucial. Altars were also an indispensable part of the worship of the gods in Roman era: it seemed impossible to conceive of the worship of the gods without altars. On altars, sacrifices (food offerings, burnt offerings, etc.) were offered to the divinity to whom they were dedicated and individual religious choice had a very strong social or political message for the 'readers' of the altars in public spaces. The inscriptions on altars normally specify both the gods or goddesses to whom the altar is dedicated, and the person or persons who raised it. The exact wording of these two elements was essential for the dialogue between god and man to be maintained, which raises the question how linguistic change affects the productivity of this dialogue.

Divine names and epithets are strictly cultic and usually very conservative. There is nothing special about the names of the classic deities, but sometimes the names of even these gods are written in a vulgar form. We can regularly expect unique features (e.g. non-Latin suffixes or stems) in theonyms. Latinized deity names may come from cults, which spread by provincial believers from provinces to all the Roman empire, or these deities may have been local to the given province.[3] The local population of provinces became 'Roman' while also wishing to preserve their local identity through several local and specific, occasional or regional epithets. The orthography of these names is somewhat uncertain for Latin speakers, either because the names themselves are foreign to the language, or because the speakers are not native speakers of Latin, and deciding how to include the name of the god in the Latin text would require a linguistic intuition they lack.[4] Language assimilation varies from province to province and depends on several factors, such as the length of Roman rule. A sociolinguistic investigation is made difficult by how little we know about the history and teachings of the small religious groups who worshipped deities with Eastern connections (either in divine name or in figurative representation) prevalent all over the Empire; only archaeological findings and cult inscriptions can provide clues to the social and linguistic background of the believers.

In any case, the relationship between man and god still seems to be regulated by the classic *do ut des* formula of Roman religion. The most striking example of this is the promise made to the gods, the fulfilment of which (for example, the construction of a temple or a sanctuary, or the organization of games) was mandatory only if the request was granted by the gods; which could be indicated on the original inscription later.

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[1] KÖVES-ZULAUF, TH.: *Bevezetés a római vallás és monda történetébe* [Introduction to the history of Roman religion and folklore]. Budapest 1995, 65–87.

[2] Liv. 1. 32, 3. 55, 4. 17, 6. 41, 9. 5, 9. 11, 10. 8, Gell. 10. 15. 1. Regulations to the sacred area: *CIL* IX 3513; *CIL* XII 4333; *CIL* III 1933; *CIL* VIII 26416.

[3] LINDSAY, M. W.: Festus: *De Verborum Significatione quae Supersunt cum Pauli Epitome.* Leipzig 1913, 268: *Peregrina sacra appellantur, quae aut evocatis dis in oppugnandis urbibus Romam sunt coacta aut quae ob quasdam religiones per pacem sunt petita, ut ex Phrygia Matris Magnae, ex Graecia Cereris, Epidauro Aesculapi, quae coluntur eorum more, a quibus sunt accepta.*

[4] FEHÉR, B.: *Pannonia latin nyelvtörténete* [The history of the Latin language of Pannonia]. Budapest 2007, 444.

In line with the above, the main topic of the present paper is the rules applying to divine names in inscriptions, or rather, the irregularities discovered as typical to the material. Regarding variations of divine names on altars, two main categories can be distinguished. First, those where the first part or the stem of the name has a mistake related to the sound system. Second, those where suffixation is affected, especially with female and male deities with identical names where the -ābus suffix is used to identify the female deities and/or to show the desire of the believers to emphasize their Latinity and urbanity through archaization. The main question is what developed these variants? Was the wording influenced by the fact that the worshipper addressed a pre-Roman divinity or other influences caused these variants, e.g. archaism or religious conservatism?

## LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS AND THE SOUND SYSTEM[5]

### Celtic deities

A relatively large number of deities with continuous use of the Celtic theonyms are known which in terms of their declension fit perfectly into the Latin language. They are well-known and respected deities, such as the Gallo-Roman *Epona*. Other deities have several name variants, such as *Sirona/Serana/Ðirona/Thirona*,[6] who was mostly worshipped in the Celtic part of the Roman Empire. Considering both epigraphic evidence and representations, the cult of *Sirona* is primarily concentrated in Germania, East-Central Gaul, and along the Danube. The initial sound of her name indicates some difficulty,[7] which is also reflected in the various Latin transcriptions: *Si-, Ði-, Thi-*; in Gaulish, it is written with a Ð, called 'tau Gallicum'. TH and Ð account for the sounds *ts, ds* or *st* in the Celtic language.[8] The original *\*Tsīrona 'stellar'* or '*astral*' was derived from the root *\*ster-*, with the addition of a *-ona* suffix,[9] and written with letters of the Latin alphabet it should have been *Sirona*, as analogy of the handling of Greek *zeta* in Vulgar Latin text. Accordingly, the *Sirona* name is the Latinised form of the theonym, while other variants must have emerged because the sound expressed by Ð was unknown to Latin

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[5]The substandard word forms referred to in this study can be found in the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age (see: http://lldb.elte.hu/).

[6]*Thiron(a)* – *AE* 1994, 1227 (Belgica, Mediolanum); *Dironae* – *AE* 1994, 1256, 1257 (Belgica, Treveri); *CIL* XIII 4498 – LLDB-94579 (Belgica, Mediomatrici); *CIL* XIII 3143 – LLDB-71916 (Lugudunensis, Fanum Martis); *CIL* XIII 3662 – LLDB-20138 (Belgica, Augusta Treverorum); *Seronae* – *AE* 1984, 642 – LLDB-103208 (Lugudunensis, Suindunum), FÉRET, G. – SYLVESTRE, R.: Les graffiti sur céramique d'Augusta Raurica, Augst 2008, Nr. 8277 (Germania Sup., Augusta Raurica); The variant *Serona* is to preserve the archaic form *ðer-, Seranae* – *AE* 1982, 806 (Pannonia Inf., Aquincum).

[7]ESKA, J. F.: Tau Gallicum. *Studia Celtica* 32 (1998) 115–127. Some Latin inscriptions from Belgica do actually use this letter: *AE* 1994, 1256, 1257 (Belgica, Treveri); *CIL* XIII 4498 (Belgica, Mediomatrici); *CIL* XIII 3143 (Lugudunensis, Fanum Martis); *CIL* XIII 3662 (Belgica, Augusta Treverorum).

[8]COLEMAN, M.: Gaulish multilingualism? Writing, receipts, and colonial entanglement. *Critical Multilingualism Studies* 3. 1 (2015) 26–45, here 34–36.

[9]For *\*ster-*, see DELAMARRE, X.: *Dictionnaire de la langue gauloise. Une approche linguistique du vieux-celtique continental.* Paris 2003, 281, s.v. *stir-, sir-, dir-.* For *-ona*, as in so many other theonyms: *Epona, Matrona, Ritona, Maponos*, or with similar Italic suffix *-unus/-una* as in *Neptunus, Portunus, Fortuna*, etc. See Hamp, E. P.: Incidence of Gaulish divine names in *-on-. Studia Celtica Japonica* NS 4 (1994) 71–72.

speakers. In an inscription from Aquincum, the /o/ in the *-ona* suffix is substituted by an /a/, creating the form *Serana* (*AE* 1982, 806 – LLDB-10102, 10103).

The cult of *Vagdavercustis* is known primarily from the area of Germania Inferior, including Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium.[10] The cult was widespread in the territory of the *Batavi* tribe, so it can be associated with them. Inscriptions show that she was mainly venerated by soldiers.[11] The element *-vercustis* can be interpreted as the root *wer-* ('man') attached to the verbal noun *kusti-* ('choice')[12] The meaning of the prefix *Vagda-* is uncertain, but it can be traced back to the meaning of 'honoured'.[13] Based on this, the name *Vagdavercustis* can be interpreted as 'honored virtus'. The goddess has an inscription from Brixia where the name appears in the form *Vagada vergustae* (*AE* 1952, 138 – LLDB-124650-52),[14] indicating that her name was very problematic for some Latin speakers. Another variation of her name is *Vagdae-vercusti* (*AE* 1935, 163 – LLDB-143622) from Vetus Salina (Pannonia Inferior), where the dedicator, Marcus Simplicius Quietus, was tribune of *cohors III Batavorum*. We know of a person with the same *gentilicum*, Simplicius Super, who was a *decurio* from Germania Inferior (*CIL* XIII 8805), and the two might be identical. The *cohors* came from Germania Inferior, and the goddess was its *dea patria*. A third version of the name of the goddess is from Burginatium (Germania Inferior), in the form *Vagevercusti* (*CIL* XIII 8662 – LLDB-104603-04), where the omission of *d* might have been caused by a damage to the inscription.

*Sedatus* has autochthonous origins, and connected with the Celtic tribes *Breuci* and *Latobici* in Southern Pannonia and Noricum, worshipped mostly between the 1st and the 3rd century AD. Based on the etymology of the name *Sedatus* and its presence in the personal onomastics of the area, Šašel-Kos[15] considered it a pre-Celtic deity from this area. The exact circumstances of the inscriptions relating to his cult are unknown, but a connection to mining[16] can be ruled out in favour of a military and/or civil context. In one single instance of the many, his name appears in the fourth declension: *Sedatui,* although the context is somewhat problematic.[17] This altar

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[10]*CIL* XIII 8805 (Germania Inf., Hemmen); *AE* 2003, 1227; *AE* 2012, 978; *CIL* XIII 8662 (Germania Inf., Burginatium); *CIL* XIII 12057 (Germania Inf., Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium); *CIL* XIII 8702, 8703 (Germania Inf., Harenatium); *AE* 1935, 163 (Pannonia Inf., Vetus Salina); *AE* 1952, 138 (Venetia et Histria, Brixia).

[11]*CIL* XIII 8805 – *decurio alae Vocontior(um); AE* 2012, 978 – *[…] leg(ionis) XXX Ulp(iae) V[ic(tricis)]; AE* 1935, 163 – *trib(unus) coh(ortis) III / Bat(avorum).*

[12]NEUMANN, G.: Germani cisrhenani — die Aussage der Namen. In BECK, H. – GEUENICH, D. – STEUER, H. (eds): Germanenprobleme in heutiger Sicht. Berlin – New York 1999, 126.

[13]MUCH, R.: "Vagdavercustis". *Zeitschrift für Deutsches Altertum und Deutsche Literatur* 55, no. 2/3 (1914) 285–287.

[14]This inscription is the only one where there is an interpunction in the name.

[15]ŠAŠEL KOS, M.: Svet bogov vzhodnih Alp in Jadrana v stiku z rimsko civilizacijo III, Svet lokalnih božanstev iz Celeje in mestne okolice [The World of the Gods of the Eastern Alps and the Adriatic in Contact with Roman Civilization III, The World of Local Deities from Celeia and the City Surroundings]. *Keria: Studia Latina et Graeca* 4.2 (2002) 41–57, here 42–43.

[16]DUŠANIĆ, S.: The miners' cults in Illyricum. *Pallas* No. 50, Mélanges C. Domergue 2 (1999) 129–139.

[17]Supplementing the previous reading (*RIU* 429), I suggest the reading as follow: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Silvan(o) / pro sal(ute) / et in(columitate) Au(gusti) / deum / Sedatui.* In the third line can be added to *et incolumitate* after *pro salute,* which is a common connection in epigraphic corpus (for example in Pannonia Inf.: *CIL* III 3469; *AE* 1990, 805; *AE* 1953, 14 and *RIU* 864). The *deum* in the fourth line can be understood instead of *deorum* 'among the gods' – analogies: *ILAM* 158: *Matrib]us Vedia[ntiabus] / [Numinib(usque)] deorum; AE* 1984, 739: *Numini Saturno / Reg(i) Patri deo/rum / et Latonae* – and thus the last two lines suggested reading is 'to Sedatus among the gods'.

dedicated to Jupiter, Silvanus and *Sedatus* was found in Brigetio (*RIU* 429 – LLDB-143623), dating from the second half of the 2nd to the end of the 3rd century AD. This *Sedatui* dative form may have been influenced by the abstract concept of *sedatus, -us,* meaning *'state of peace'.* However, the analogies clearly show the *Sedato* form was the classical one.[18]

***Mithras.*** A study of the epigraphic evidence of Mithraic communities may be suitable for our investigation, since worshippers in the Roman Empire of *Mithras* were mostly Latin speakers. The Latin name *Mithras* may have originated from Avestan *miθra-* or from Indo-Iranian *miθrəm* meaning 'contract', or *mitras* 'contractual partner, friend',[19] and been taken over from Greek where it was written as *Μίθρας*.[20] His name does not appear uniformly in the inscriptions. Currently, more than 520 inscriptions dedicated to the invincible *Mithras* are known from the Roman Empire from the 1st through the 4th century AD. However, most votive inscriptions contain the common abbreviation: *D(eo) S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae).*

There is a unique altar from Aquincum (Pannonia Inferior) that might be relevant for our investigation of *Mithras*' name (*CIL* III 3474).[21] The most striking is the beginning of the text: the name of the deity invoked is already controversial, since the altar seems to be dedicated *Minitrae,* or, according to a new interpretation, *Menitrae.*[22] In either case, the deity in question was considered to be a pre-Roman deity to Pannonia, known only from this one single inscription.[23] The altar was erected by a veteran, Aurelius Florianus, who served in an unnamed military unit as *beneficiarius consularis.* The name of the deity contains various anomalies: beside the /e/–/i/ change, which follows the imperial patterns, the M is also reduplicated with an N. The duplication of the first syllable is the engraver's attempt to correct it, he wrote the first syllable as *Me-*, then to correct it, he started again in the incorrect *ni-* form. However, the deity indicated on the altar might be identified as *Mithras* if we consider changes to his name that are common in other dedications. The change of the short /i/ of the stem into an (at the time, similar-sounding) long /e/ appears on other Mithraic inscriptions, for example in a cult relief from Dalmatia, in the form of *Mete[rae]* (*CIMRM* 1892);[24] or in another inscription from the same place incorrectly written as *Metri* (*CIMRM* 1896);[25] or in a lost inscription from Rome in the form of *Methrae* (*CIL* VI 511).[26] A relatively large variety of mistakes are attested in the first

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[18]On the etymology of *Sedatus* as a proper and theophoric name (*cognomen*) see: Alföldy, G.: *Die Personennamen in der römischen Provinz Dalmatia.* Heidelberg 1969, 292; de Bernardo Stempel, P.: *Celtic and Other Indigenous Divine Names Found in the Italian Peninsula.* In Hofeneder, A. – de Bernardo Stempel, P. (eds): *Théonymie celtique, cultes,* interpretatio / *Keltische Theonymie, Kulte,* interpretatio. X. *Workshop F.E.R.C.A.N., Paris, 24.-26. Mai 2010.* Wien 2013, 73–96. 84, nn. 104–105; *PWRE* IIA [Keune, L.: *Sedatus*] 1010–1012.

[19]Kellens, J.: Les bras de Miθra. In Bianchi, U. (ed.): *Misteria Mithrae.* Leiden, 1979, 703–716.

[20]θεῷ Μίθρᾳ – *IGBulg* V 5229 (Nicopolis ad Istrum); Ἡλίου Μίθρᾳ – *IGBulg* IV 2068 (Pautalia), etc.

[21]LLDB-28110-11, 140916.

[22]Vágási, T.: *Minitrae et numini eius.* A Celtic deity and the Vulgar Latin in Aquincum. *Acta Classica Univ. Debr.* 56 (2020) 179–193.

[23]Alföldy, G.: *Aquincum vallási életének története* [A history of the religious life of Aquincum]. *BudRég* 20 (1963) 47–69, here 51.

[24]LLDB-221-23.

[25]LLDB-28122-23, 28128.

[26]LLDB-143625.

syllable; we can even find hypercorrect forms where Y is written for the original /i/, in the form *Mythrae*.[27] The forms *Mythrae* and *Mythirae* are both common in Dacia, especially in inscriptions from Apulum.[28] Epenthesis, in our case, /e/ or /i/ appeared only in a handful of cases in *Mythirae* from Apulum, Dacia (*CIL* III 1112),[29] and in the form *Mete[rae]* in an inscription from modern Konjic, Dalmatia (*CIL* III 14617),[30] between the TH and the R. These inscriptions related mostly to the Danubian area.

**Jupiter Dolichenus.** The name *Jupiter* with the epithet *Dolichenus* – from the toponym Doliche (modern Dülük) – appears in various form in inscriptions.[31] Linguistic variations identified with the *Dolichenus* epithet are found all over the Empire, and it is unlikely that so many variations were brought from Syria, especially since only a few of the claimants appear to be of Eastern origin. The name of the god is most often abbreviated in the following form: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno)*. The variations appear in Latin-language inscriptions with different frequencies.[32] In addition, there are some Greek inscriptions as well from the Eastern part of the Empire that include the form *Δολιχηνῷ*.[33] In addition to the epithet *Dolichenus*, the name of the town[34] Doliche appears in various forms: *Dulca* (*AE* 1911, 222 – LLDB-7090, 7091) and *Dolicu* (*RIU* 523 – LLDB-7084, 7085) from Brigetio (Pannonia inferior), and *Dolica* in an inscription from Aquincum (*CIL* III 3490 – LLDB-143632, 143633) all of them from Pannonia.

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[27]*AE* 1998, 869 – LLDB-65593 (Alpes Poeninae, Octodurus); *CIL* VII 645 – LLDB-16552 (Britannia, Vercovicium); *CIL* VII 541 – LLDB-15185 (Britannia, Vindobala); *CIL* X 204 – LLDB-26996 (Bruttium et Lucania, Grumentum); *CIL* III 6772 – LLDB-103478 (Cappadocia, Caesarea); *CIL* III 1112 – LLDB-28139, 1113 – LLDB-28138, 7777 – LLDB-5923, *AE* 1934, 116 – LLDB-5922, *AE* 2016, 1335 – LLDB-143629 (Dacia, Apulum); *CIL* III 14466 – LLDB-28131 (Dacia, Napoca); *AE* 1960, 376 – LLDB-5921 (Dacia, modern Oarda); *AE* 1988, 963 – LLDB-9160 (Dacia, modern Sacadate); *AE* 1923, 34 – LLDB-15510 (Germania Sup., Bingium); *CIL* XIII 7416 – LLDB-143630 (Germania Sup., modern Grosskrotzenburg); *CIL* XIII 6086 – LLDB-19514 (Germania Sup., Tabernae); *CIL* XIII 6362 – LLDB-19641 (Germania Sup., Sumelocenna); *AE* 1990, 756 – LLDB-65675 (Germania Sup., Noviomagus Nemetum); *AE* 2013, 1074 – LLDB-70112 (Lugudunensis, Iuliomagus); *AE* 1951, 115 – LLDB-27154, *CIL* XIII 2906 – LLDB-27155 (Lugudunensis, Haedui); *CIL* VIII 8440 – LLDB-36811 (Mauretania Caes., Sitifis); *CIL* III 4800 – LLDB-28060 (Noricum, Virunum); *CIL* III 3481 – LLDB-28112 (Pannonia Inf., Aquincum); *CIL* III 10309 – LLDB-538 (Pannonia Inf., Intercisa); *CIL* III 3260 – LLDB-28118 (Pannonia Inf., Cusum); *CIL* VI 730 – LLDB-37088 (Rome).

[28]*Mythrae* – *CIL* III 1113, 7777, *AE* 1934, 116, *AE* 2016, 1335; *Myth{i}r|ae* – *CIL* III 1112 (Apulum); *CIL* III 14466 (Napoca); *AE* 1960, 376 (modern Oarda); *AE* 1988, 963 (modern Sacadate).

[29]LLDB-5918, LLDB-5902.

[30]LLDB-28122-23, 28128.

[31]VÁGÁSI, T.: The sociolinguistic research of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus. *Acta Ant. Hung.* 59 (2019) 537–546; *Dolichenius, Dolychenus, Dolochenus, Dolicenus, Dolcenus, Dulcenus, Dolucens*, etc.

[32]VÁGÁSI (n. 31) 544.

[33]From Syria in the vicinity of Doliche: *CCID* 2–15, 30, 33, 34 and from Thracia *CCID* 50–52.

[34]The original cult centre was on a hilltop close to the small town of Doliche.

The most common forms, *Dulceno* or *Dulcheno* have dozens of examples from various sites within the Empire.[35] All these inscriptions – apart from the Misenum fleet's inscription, which is from Portus (*CCID* 440) – come from provinces along the Danube, since most of the cultic monuments of the god come from the area of *limes*, where most of the worshippers were soldiers and Eastern merchants. The most instances for the *Dulceno* form were found on the silver plates belonging to the sanctuary of *Jupiter Dolichenus* in Locus Felicis (Mauer an der Url), where the dedicators were indigenous people, mostly women.[36] The name occurs in a single instance in the form of *Duli(cheno)* on an inscription from Portus (*CIL* XIV 110 – LLDB-59806). The fact that all these instances reflect linguistic changes is proved by the fact that the inscriptions of the *Dolichenus* priests working in this era – the main propagators of the cult, who came from the immediate vicinity of the cult centre in the province of Syria – do not show any linguistic vulgarism, especially not in the name of the god, which is written correctly in Greek-speaking areas too.

In the second syllable, the hypercorrect forms *Dolycheno* or in the third syllable *Dolicino*[37] occur just a couple of times in the Empire.[38] The inscription from Pannonia Inf., modern Sárpentele (*CIL* III 3343 – LLDB-13552-53), erected by all the priests of the province of Pannonia, was dedicated to *Dolc(heno)*. The most interesting form is *Doloc(h)eno* (for *Doli-*), where an acoustic assimilation can be observed; however, the number of these examples is limited,[39] making it difficult to draw firm conclusions and also could be non-linguistic phenomenon.

All these different forms do not belong to separate lexemes. They manifest the same epithet in a way in which the engravers used their own spellings, reflecting the current pronunciation – and revealing linguistic, i.e. the most common /o/–/u/ change.

***Dibus et deas.*** The second large group to be dealt with are female deity names ending in *-ābus*. The first declension *-ābus* suffix is an archaic form inherited from classical language use, the special function of which is to distinguish masculine 2nd declension from feminine 1st declension nouns in dative and ablative plurals.[40] The occurrences of the dative-ablative plural *-ābus*

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[35]*CCID* 300 – LLDB-59677, *CCID* 304 – LLDB-59682, *CCID* 305 – LLDB-59684, *CCID* 310 – LLDB-59692, *CCID* 312 – LLDB-59696, *CCID* 313 – LLDB-59698, *CCID* 314 – LLDB-59703, *CCID* 316 – LLDB-59708 (Noricum, modern Mauer an der Url); *CCID* 86 – LLDB-6622 (Moesia Sup., Pincum); *CCID* 122 – LLDB-32065 (Dalmatia, Salona); *CCID* 146 – LLDB-9078 (Dacia, Ampelum); *CCID* 138 – LLDB-59646 (Dacia, modern Domnesti) and *CIL* III 7625 – LLDB-59646 (Dacia, modern Bistritz); *CCID* 182 – LLDB-5978 (Pannonia Inf., modern Tokod); *CIL* III 3316 – LLDB-59656 (Pannonia Inf., Lussonium); *CIL* III 3462 – LLDB-14818 (Pannonia Inf., Aquincum); *CCID* 440 – LLDB-59806 (Ostia); *CCID* 481 – LLDB-58463 (Raetia, Statio Vetonianis (modern Pfünz).

[36]Vágási (n. 31) 545–546.

[37]Gavrilović Vitas, N.: *Ex Asia et Syria. Oriental Religions in the Roman Central Balkans.* Oxford 2021, 234 (Moesia Inf., Novae).

[38]*CIL* III 14445 – LLDB-11117 (Moesia Inf., Troesmis); *CIL* VII 422 – LLDB-15092 (Britannia, Bremesio).

[39]*CIL* III 11926 – LLDB-58458 (Raetia, Vetoniana); *CIL* III 3999 – LLDB-8503 (Pannonia Sup., Aquae Balissae); *AE* 2010, 790 – LLDB-122659 (Britannia, Vindolanda); *CIL* VII 991 – LLDB-15137 (Britannia, Habitancum); *AE* 1998, 1144 – LLDB-63375 (Moesia Inf., Sacidava); *CIL* VI 411 – LLDB-59719 (Rome).

[40]Diom. Gram. 1. 304; Char. gramm. 1. 129.

suffix of feminine nouns are systematically examined in this paper, both in literary texts and on inscriptions.[41] The mix-up of male and female suffixes occurs even in the names of gods and goddesses, e.g. *dibus, deas*[42] or *dabus.*[43] The *dibus,*[44] *filibus, amicibus,*[45] forms were created on the model of the analogous female *filiabus*[46] and *deabus.* These forms have an interesting relationship between vulgarism and archaism, due to liturgical and technical contexts where archaisms are often used for stylistic reasons.[47]

Using -*īs* and -*ābus* to distinguish grammatical gender also became important for some deities, e.g. *Silvanus* and *Silvanae,*[48] as well as for *Dominus-Dominae,*[49] *Glanus-Glanae*[50] where the male part of the group has three female counterparts or just one like *Belisamarus-Belisama.*[51]

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[41]Luján, R. E.: La desinencia latina de dativo-ablativo femenino -ĀBVS. In. Fernández, A. H. – Villaro, B. O. – López, H. V. – Salamanca, H. Z. (eds): *Ágalma. Ofrenda desde la Filología Clásica a Manuel García Teijeiro.* Valladolid 2014, 399–407, here 401–402.

[42]*dis deasque* – *AE* 1994, 1446 – LLDB-143634 (Pannonia Inf., Sirmium); *AE* 1992, 1203 – LLDB-102960 (Gallia Narb., Vasio).

[43]*CIL* III 10264 – LLDB-47585 (Pannonia Inf., Mursa); *CIL* II 2457b – LLDB-122597 (Hispania Cit., modern Caldelas); *CIL* III 11107 – LLDB-8605 (Panonia Sup., Carnuntum); *CIL* III 12539 – LLDB-90873 (Dacia, modern Gherla). Fehér (n. 4) 196.

[44]*dibus deabusque: CIL* VI 224 – LLDB-143635 (Rome); *AE* 1992, 1203 – LLDB-102959 (Gallia Narb., modern Vaison-la-Romaine); *AE* 1995, 629 – LLDB-143636 (Transpadana, modern Sirtori); *CIL* III 3221 – LLDB-143637 (Pannonia Inf., modern Donji Petrovci), *CIL* V 5669 – LLDB-60140 (Transpadana, Galliano), etc.; *dibus et diabus: AE* 2008, 1103 – LLDB-117655, 117656 (Pannonia Sup., Carnuntum); *CIL* XIII 3638 – LLDB-20143 (Belgica, Augusta Treverorum); *dibus deabus: CIL* XI 3333 – LLDB-92818 (Etrurira, Blera); *CIL* II 4496 – LLDB-122068-122075 (Hispania Cit., Barcino); *CPILCaceres* 382 – LLDB-15471 (Lusitania, modern Plasencia); *ILD* 584 – LLDB-9672 (Dacia, modern Ciumafaia).

[45]*filibus* – *AE* 1983, 85 – LLDB-143638, *ICUR* 3, 9045 – LLDB-143643 (Rome); *CIL* III 7535 – LLDB-3868 (Moesia Inf., Tomi); *duobus filibus*: *AE* 1991, 197 – LLDB-143645 or *filibus duobus* – *ICUR* 1, 3699 – LLDB-129364 (Rome), etc; *amicibus*: *CIL* VI 15267 – LLDB-33336 (Rome); *CIL* III 12953 – LLDB-34251 (Dalmatia, Salona).

[46]In epigraphy to refer to several women of the same *gens*: Luján (n. 41) 402.

[47]Tantimonaco, S.: The role of archaism in the Latin inscriptions of the Roman Empire: Some new considerations in light of computerized dialectology. *Acta Classica Univ. Debr.* 55 (2019) 147–169, here 153.

[48]In the territory of Pannonia, especially in Carnuntum and its vicinity: *CIL* III 4441; *AE* 2005, 1232; Vorbeck, E.: *Zivilinschriften aus Carnuntum.* Wien 1980, Nr. 204 (Carnuntum); *CIL* III 10394; *AE* 1965, 124; *AE* 1992, 1461 (Aquincum); *CIL* III 14355 (Sopron).

[49]*Domnabus Iunonibus* – *AE* 1946, 134 (Venetia et Histria, Verona); *AE* 1888, 114 (Alpes Poen., Summus Poeninus); *AE* 1913, 153; *ILAfr* 312 (Africa Proc., modern Pupput); *AE* 1992, 709; *AE* 1972, 193; *CIL* V 8246; *InscrAqu* 3491 (Venetia et Histria, Aquileia).

[50]*Glani et Glanicabus et Fortunae Reduci* – *AE* 1954, 103; *Matrebo Glanikabo* – *RIG* G-64 and *CAG* 13, 2, 100 Gallo-Greek inscriptions (Gallia Narb., Glanum). In addition to singular male gods, plural mother goddesses are common in Gallia Narbonensis, see Häussler, R.: The importance of location: Religious inscriptions from archeological contexts. In Häussler, R. – King, A. (eds): *Celtic religions in the Roman period. Personal, local and global* [Celtic Studies Publications XX]. Aberystwyth 2017, 339–363, here 344.

[51]*CIL* XIII 11224 (Lugudunensis, Haedui); *CIL* XIII 8 (Aquitania, Consoranni); *AE* 2013, 1121 (Belgica, Geminiacum); *BHAH/CAMI* – *RIG* G-172 (Gallia Narb., Vasio). The etymology of *Belisamarus* is *beli-samo-māros*, meaning 'the very very powerful, the very great'. The goddess has Celtic superlative suffix, cf. Segisama, Uxama.

In addition to the traditional forms *deabus, filiabus, libertabus*,[52] the divine name *Silvanabus*,[53] which serves to distinguish the female deities from the masculine *Silvani*, is obviously justifiable. Nevertheless, the forms of male plural deities *Silvani*[54] and singular female goddess *Silvana*[55] are also known from inscriptions. Moreover, the form *Silvanis* is sometimes used to refer to female deities,[56] especially in some Pannonian inscriptions. On an altar from Aquincum – dedicated *Silvano et Silvanis* – above the *tabula ansata,* four mythical figures are depicted: *Silvanus* and three *Silvanae. Silvanus* is in a short, belted tunic and cloak, holding a tree branch in his left arm and a winemaker's knife in his right. To the right are three *Silvanae* in long, belted chitons, each with a tree branch in her left arm and a basket in her lowered right hand (*CIL* III 10460). Another dedication to *Silvanis Silvestribus* from Carnuntum has the same image.[57] Without an image to go with the inscription, it is usually impossible to decide whether the *Silvanis* form refers to male or female deities. There is also a dedication containing *Silvanabes* (*TitAq* 344 – LLDB-22963) from Aquincum,[58] although the interpretation of that inscription is problematic. In line with the above, a dedication to the plural *Silvanae* may legitimately be either *Silvanabus* or *Silvanis*.

***Matronabus et Matrabus.*** The suffixation of the names of mother goddesses also shows uncertainties, where *Matres* and *Matronae* produce the forms *Matrabus*[59] and *Matronabus* instead of *Matribus* and *Matronis*.[60] The words *Matronae* and *Matres* in fact encompass a wide range of

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[52] Serv. Gramm. 4. 434.

[53] *CIL* III 10077 (Dalmatia, Alvona); *CIL* V 3303 (Venetia et Histria, Verona); *CIL* III 10394, *AE* 1965, 124, *AE* 1992, 1461 (Pannonia Inf., Aquincum); *AE* 2005, 1232, *AEA* 2013/14, 51, 52, *CIL* III 4441, *Hild* 70, *AEA* 1993/98, 263 (Pannonia Sup., Carnuntum); *CIL* III 14355,11 (Pannonia Sup., Scarbantia). Girardi, Ch.: *La divinita plurali nell'Occidente romano. Analisi delle fonti epigrafiche epicoria e latine, archeologiche, iconografiche e letterarie* [Tesis de la Universidad de Zaragoza 143]. Zaragoza 2021, 164–175.

[54] For the male *Silvani*, see Plin. *Epist.* XII 2. 1.

[55] *Silva/no e[t] Silva/n(a)e* – *CIL* XII 1103 (Gallia Narb., Apta); *Silvano D(o)me(stico) / et Silvanae* – *AE* 1978, 657 (Pannonia Sup., Aquae Balissae); *Silvanae* – *RIU* 776 (Pannonia Sup., Solva); *D[is(?)] / Sil[vano et] / Sil[vanae]* – *IBR* 274 (Raetia, Vetoniana); *Silv]ano et Silv[anae* – *CIL* VI 31001 (Rome). For *Silvana*, see Keune, J. B.: *Statistik der Verbreitung des Sirona-Kultes.* RE IIIA (1927) 354–360. col. 117, *s.v. Silvana* and Dorcey, F. P.: *The Cult of Silvanus: A Study in Roman Folk Religion* [Columbia Studies in the Classical Tradition 20]. Leiden – New York – Köln 1992, 45.

[56] *Silvanis [et] / Quadr(i)vi(i)s Ca[e]/lestib(us)* – *AE* 1964, 175 (Britannia, modern Westerwood); *Silvanis et / Silvano Cam/pest(ribus)* – *AE* 1967, 405 (Dacia, Germisara); *Sil(vano) et Silva/nis* – *CIL* III 10460 (Pannonia Inf., Aquincum); *[Qua] dr'iv'(ii)s / et / Silvani[s]* – *AE* 2008, 1104 (Pannonia Sup., Carnuntum); *Silvanis / et Quadr'iv'i(i)s* – *CIL* III 13475 (Pannonia Sup., Carnuntum); *Silvanis et / Quadr'iv'i[is]* – *CIL* III 14089 (Pannonia Sup., Carnuntum); *Silvano / et Silvanis / et Quadr'iv'i(i)s* – *CIL* III 13497 (Pannonia Sup., Vindobona); see Dorcey (n. 55) 46.

[57] For a different interpretation see Vorbeck (n. 48) 31.

[58] Fehér, B.: *Aquincum instrumentum domesticum-feliratai* [Instrumentum domesticum inscriptions from Aquincum]. DSc thesis. Budapest 2011, 257.

[59] Blasco raised the hypothetical form *Matrae as a Celtic linguistic variant, which is recorded epigraphically in two particular dative suffixes, *Matrabus* and *Matris* (Blasco, A. A.: *Matres y divinidades afines de carácter plural en la Hispania Antigua.* Doctoral thesis, Universidad de Valencia 2016 [https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/50059], 101), suggesting that *matra was the original Celtic word. ACS II (1904) col. 463, s. v. *mātrā, mātēr*; Heichelheim in RE XIV.2 (1930) col. 2243, s. v. *Matres.*

[60] Luján (n. 41) 405–406.

pre-Roman Germanic and Gallic deities, worshipped by Roman and indigenous people in the Roman Empire in accordance with Roman religious structures, rituals and concepts. Their rituals, their representations[61] and the worshippers in the provinces were Roman. In Germania Superior and Gallia Narbonensis, the *Matronae* and *Matres* were worshipped in the Roman style, with hundreds of votive inscriptions bearing local epithets some of them preserved in Latinised form. Currently, we know of approximately 1,100 altars and hundreds depictions of these goddesses from this area.[62] The territorial distribution of inscriptions and cultic objects (statues, reliefs, sanctuaries) is different: the *Matres* goddesses are primarily known from Gaul,[63] but also from Britannia,[64] Germania, Northern Spain[65] and Rome. Inscriptions of the *Matronae* goddesses are mostly limited to Germania Inferior, where their cult was very popular, especially in the area of present-day Bonn and Cologne, the territory of the Germanic tribe *Ubii*.[66] Eight of their sanctuaries have been excavated in this area and more than 500 monuments with inscriptions survive. The *Matronabus* form occurs without any epithets on inscriptions in the areas around Verona in Venetia et Histria,[67] while *Matrabus* is prevalent in the region of Vasio/ Gallia Narbonensis.[68]

The name of the goddesses could have originated from Celtic, as the Celtic suffix *-onus/-ona*; Gallo-Roman or Roman words, or all of these origins together. *Matrona* can be translated as 'matron, woman of status' and can be derived from Latin or Gallo/Celtic *mātro-, mātra-*, in both cases from the Indo-European *\*māter-* 'mother', while Matres can be translated as 'mothers'.

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[61]Simek, R.: *Dictionary of Northern Mythology*. Woodbridge 1996, 204–205. The most common image of these statues and altars is a depiction of three women, two of whom are hooded and one has uncovered hair (although this is more common among carvings of *Matronae*; carvings of *Matres* sometimes have all the women with uncovered hair, depending on the region where the artefact was found). These three figures are generally depicted wearing linen dresses with short cloaks held together by a fibula, and they often wear necklaces with half or crescent moon shaped pendants. Two of the three woman wear very large linen bonnets. The clothing style is of traditional Ubian fashion, even if the statues are in non-Ubian regions. Some images of *Matres* also show the women breastfeeding children, or have one or both of their breasts uncovered, see Beck, P. N.: *Goddesses in Celtic Religion. Cult and Mythology: A Comparative Study of Ancient Ireland, Britain and Gaul*. Doctoral Thesis, University College of Dublin, 2009.

[62]In the territory of Germania Inferior, some of the dedicators bear indigenous, Germanic names: Chamarus, Allo (*AE* 1981, 679), see Weisberger, J. L.: *Die Namen der Ubier* [Wiss. Abh. d. Arbeitsgem. f. Forschg. des Landes Nordrhein-Westf. 34]. Köln 1968, 146, 241.

[63]37 inscriptions from Gallia Narbonensis, 10 of them from the territory of the *Allobroges*, 10 from the territory of the *Vocontii* tribe.

[64]Primarily from the Antoninus and Hadrian's walls, Barnard, S.: The Matres of Roman Britain. *Archaeological Journal* 142 (1985) 237–245; Birley, E.: The Deities of Roman Britain. *ANRW* II 18.1 (1986) 3–112, here 49–51.

[65]In the vicinity of Clunia: *AE* 2002, 766; *CIL* II 2764, 2766, 63381; *AE* 1914, 24, *AE* 1988, 768, 769; *Meseta* 170, 179.

[66]Eck, W.: *Köln in römischer Zeit. Geschichte einer Stadt im Rahmen des Imperium Romanum*. Köln 2004, 497–510.

[67]*CIL* V 4137 – LLDB-23761 (Venetia et Histria, Brixia); *AE* 1993, 779 – LLDB-97669 (Venetia et Histria, Caprino Veronese); *CIL* V 4159 – LLDB-23779 (Venetia et Histria, Minervium); *CIL* V 3264 – LLDB-97670 (Venetia et Histria, Verona).

[68]*CIL* XII 1302 – LLDB-74934, 1306 – LLDB-74935, 1309 – LLDB-74937; *CIL* XIII 5671 – LLDB-97662, 97663 are from Andematunum /Belgica; *CIL* XIII 5369-5371 – LLDB-97665-97667 from Vesontio /Germania Superior; *CIL* XIII 5959 – LLDB-97668 from Ellelum /Germania Superior and *CIL* XIII 2498 – LLDB-22133 from Bellicum / Lugudunensis.

The Gaulish-speaking communities used several scripts for their own language in Gaul, mainly Latin and Greek. The dative plural form *matrebo*,[69] 'to the mothers', is known from two Gallo-Greek[70] inscriptions from Nîmes (Gard) and Saint-Rémy-de-Provence (Glanum, modern Bouches-du-Rhône). These two inscriptions are of great interest because they honour the divine mothers of the respective cities.[71] The suffix *-obo* or *-abo* is reconstructed as dative plural ending in the ā-stem declension of Gaulish nouns.[72] The first inscription from Nîmes is engraved on a pedestal, and the dedicator bears a Celtic name: *Illianus*. It was found in 1740 on the site of the temple dedicated to the god Nemausus. The other altar was found at Glanum,[73] a pre-Roman sanctuary settlement near the spring, in an alcove with fragments of female statues and near to the Latin inscription to the *Glanicabus*.[74] Another dedication to the *Rokloisiabo*, 'to the far-hearing goddesses', is known from the vicinity of Glanum.[75] All the inscriptions are written in Greek script, but are distinctively Gaulish in their language: note the dative plural in *-bo-,* where Latin would have *-bus*. This correspondence is supported by a Gallo-Latin inscription from Plumergat (Morbihan), with a dedication to *atrebo*, meaning 'to the Fathers',[76] which is the dative plural for the Gaulish word *atir*. In these Gallic inscriptions we have a dedicator paying homage to divine mothers in the Gaulish language in a Gaulish-speaking community, which could be proof that the proliferation of *-ābus* endings in Latin inscriptions could have been caused by Gaulish influence and not archaism in religious context.

[69] We know of the plur. dat. suffix *-bo* from Celtiberia which, just like Latin *-bos > -bus*, comes from Indo-European *\*-bhos*, and which displays the same *o > u* change: *Matrubos – CIL* II 2848 – LLDB-16422, 15783 (Hispania Cit., Augustobriga); *Lugubus Arovieis – AE* 2007, 782 (Hispania cit., Lucus Augusti); *deis Queunu(bo) – AE* 2012, 770 (Hispania Cit., modern La Vid); *Lugubo Arquienob(o) – IRLugo* 67 (Hispania Cit., San Martin de Linaran); *[Lucou]bu Arquienis – BRAH-*1971-185 (Hispania Cit., modern Panton); *Lucobu[s] Arquieni[s] – IRLugo* 68 (Hispania Cit., Sinoga), etc., see Blasco (n. 59) 102–104.

[70] The term used for Gaulish inscriptions of southern and central-eastern Gaul which are recorded in Greek script. The vast majority of the Gallo-Greek material contains only personal names.

[71] *[-]αρταρ[ος ι]λλανουιακος δεδε / ματρεβο ναμαυσικαβο βρατουδε[…]* "artaros son of Illianus offered (this) to the Mothers of Nîmes, in gratitude (?), on accomplishment of a vow".

[72] Mullen, A. – Darasse, C. R.: *Gaulish. language, writing, epigraphy.* Zaragoza 2018, 9–10, Table 4.

[73] *ΜΑΤΡΕ|ΒΟ ΓΛΑ|ΝΕΙΚΑΒΟ ΒΡΑ|ΤΟΥ ΔΕ|ΚΑΝΤΕΝ – RIG* G-64 'To the mother-goddesses of Glanum, [X gave] a tithe in gratitude'. Szemerényi, O.: A Gaulish dedicatory formula. *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung* 88.2 (1974) 246–286; Gateau, F. – Gazenbeek, M. (eds): *Carte archéologique de la Gaule: Les Alpilles et La Montagnette 13/*2. Paris 1999; Lejeune, M.: Quel celtique dans ΔΕΔΕΒΡΑΤΟΥΔΕΚΑΝΤΕΜ. In Morpurgo Davies, A. – Meid, W. (eds): *Studies in Greek, Italic, and Indo-European linguistics.* Innsbruck 1976, 135–151; Mullen, A.: *Southern Gaul and the Mediterranean: multilingualism and multiple identities in the Iron Age and Roman periods.* Cambridge 2013, 189–219; Rolland, H.: Deux nouvelles inscriptions celtiques. *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres.* Paris 1955, 91–99; Rolland, H.: *Glanum: Saint- Rémy-de-Provence.* Paris 1960; Roth-Congès, A.: *Glanum: de l'oppidum salyen à la cité latine.* Paris 2000.

[74] Salviat, F.: *Glanum, St.-Rémy-de-Provence.* Paris 1980, 36.

[75] *RIG* G-65: *ΚΟΡΝΗΛΙΑ ΡΟ|ΚΛΟΙΣΙΑΒΟ ΒΡΑΤΟΥΔΕΚΑΝΤ[* The inscription, offered by a peregrine woman, bears a Latin name and *Rocloisiabo* with a plural dative *-bo* to the 'The Great Listeners'.

[76] *vrabos iiioovt atrebo aganntobo durneogiapo – RIG* II-1, 15 the exact meaning of this short inscription is unclear. Lambert (Lambert, P.: *La langue gauloise: description grammaticale, commentaire d'inscriptions choisies.* Paris 1994, 62, 107) translates 'Vrabos (offered?) to the Fathers who mark the boundary of (?)…', while Gildas Bernier (Bernier, G.: La stèle épigraphe de Plumergat.

*Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 77.4 (1970) 655–667) cites 'Vrabos erected (this) to the Fathers of the Boundary (or Country) for Giapos, son of Durnos'.

These goddesses have hundreds of epithets which are very diverse, many of them extremely localised, sometimes occurring in just one shrine,[77] while other adjectives are more widespread, and some are Celtic, some are Germanic. In the territory of Northern Gallia and Germania was very heterogenous in language and multicultural. The area was inhabited by dozens of tribes, and the tribes had their own deities with different names. Non-Latin speakers of Celtic or Gaulish languages might have understood one another, since Gaulish belongs to the Celtic group of the Indo-European family tree. The goddesses have many mixed epithets, most of which have Celtic roots and a Germanic adjectival suffix *(-henae)*.[78] However, there are also words that exist in both Celtic and Germanic languages and can be traced back to the same root.[79]

There are usually three of the goddesses, but they are always indicated as *Matres* and/or *Matronae*, never by any specific or distinct names of their own. Sometimes the same adjective is associated with both *Matres* and *Matronae*,[80] suggesting that the two groups of goddesses were compatible and that their names were interchangeable.[81] From the approx. 100 Germanic and Gallic epithets,[82] of confusion or equivalent usage of -*īs* and -*ābus* occurs in 35. On some inscriptions, the same group of goddesses has several epithets, of which one has the -*ābus* and another the -*īs* suffix. Altars with such different epithets and suffixes have been found in the area of these cults in Rheinland, with two centres: Bonna and Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium. The examined inscriptions often contain the suffixes -*ābus* and -*īs* as part of two separate epithets of the same goddesses: *Matribus Veianiabus Ibanduiocolis* (*AE* 1973, 316 – LLDB-101407),

[77]*Matronae Vacallinehae* is known only from the sanctuary in Pesch, Lehner, H.: Der Tempelbezirk der Matronae Vacallinehae bei Pesch. Bonn 1919; the *Matronae Austriahenae* from Morken, see Weisgerber, L.: Der Dedikantenkreis der Matronae Austriahenae. *Bonner Jahrbücher*162 (1962) 107–138.

[78]E. g. *Matronae Bergniahenae,* which consists of the Celtic *bergo-* ('*mountain*') and the Germanic suffix -*iahenae*, as well as the *Matronae Albiahenae*, which was formed from the combination of the Celtic *alb-, albio-* ('white') and the Germanic suffix -*henae*, see de Bernardo Stempel, P.: Muttergöttinnen und ihre Votivformulare. Eine sprachhistorische Studie. Heidelberg 2021, 109.

[79]Such as the *Matronae Gesahenae* – according to Neumann (Neumann, G.: Die germanischen Matronen-Beinamen. In *Matronen und verwandte Gottheiten* [Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher 44]. Köln–Bonn 1987, 101–132), from Germanic *geisa* 'rolling into anger', and at the same time, as *Matronae Gesationum*, which could have been named after the Gallic Gesati tribe cf. de Bernardo Stempel Muttergöttinnen (n. 78). Divine names starting with *Gab-* are problematic, such as *Gabiae, Gabinae, Alagabiae, Ollogabiae*, etc., since the root *gab-* is found in both Celtic and Germanic languages, meaning either 'hold' or 'give', respectively. The root *ollo-/ala-* could also have originated from the Celtic *ollo-* 'all' (*Matres Ollototae*) or from the Germanic equivalent, which was *ala-* 'all', (*Alatervae*). In the case of *Matres Mopates* (*CIL* XIII 8725), the origin is not clear either, as the word can be derived from the Celtic *map-at-eis* as well as from the Gallic word *mapat-* 'child', see de de Bernardo Stempel Muttergöttinnen (n. 78) 72, 75.

[80]Derks, T.: Gods, temples, and ritual practices. The transformation of religious ideas and values in Roman Gaul [Amsterdam Archaeological Studies 2]. Amsterdam 1998, 120; *Matres Senone* – CIL XIII 6475 (Germania Sup., modern Bockingen); *Matronae Senone* – CIL XIII 4304 (Belgica, Divodorum); *Matres Octocannae* – AE 1981, 686 (Germania Inf., Gelduba); *Matronae Octocannae* – CIL XIII 8571, 8572 (Germania Inf., Gelduba); *Matres et Matronae Andrustehiae* – CIL XIII 8212 (Germania Inf., Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensis); *Matres Aumenahenae* – CIL XIII 12054 (Germania Inf., Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensis); *Matronae Aumenahenae* – CIL XIII 8215 (Germania Inf., Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensis); *Matres Vacallinehae* – CIL XIII 8003a (Germania Inf., Bonna); *Matronae Vacallinehae* – CIL XIII 7951 (Germania Inf., modern Antweiler); *Matres Aufaniae* – CIL XIII 5413 (Germania Sup., Epamanduodurum); *Matronae Aufaniae* – CIL XIII 8021 (Germania Inf., Bonna).

[81]*Matribus sive / Matronis Auf/aniabus Dom/esticis* – CIL XIII 8021 (Germania Inf., Bonna).

[82]de Bernardo Stempel Muttergöttinnen (n. 78) 46–92.

*Vatviabus Berhliahenis* (*Ness–Lieb* 236 – LLDB-101399), *Matribus Suebis Hieuthungabus* (*CIL* XIII 8225 – LLDB-101384); *Matronis Alaferhuiabus Amfratninehis* (*AE* 1984, 691 – LLDB-95609). This specifically proves that there was an uncertainty regarding the grammatical form.

The two Gallo-Greek inscriptions also indicate the possibility for the ending *-ābus* to have been used for mother goddesses under Gaulish influence, and that the two groups, the Gaulish and the Germanic goddesses, arrived at the same Latin form by three separate routes borrowing suffixes from Germanic, Celtic, or Gaulish language. Some of the epithets have a Germanic dative plural suffix*-ims*,[83] which is a small group of matron epithets (*Matronis Aflims, Gabims, Saitchamims* and *Vatvims*) from the narrower area of Cologne–Wesseling–Jülich.[84] It should be emphasised that these inscriptions in a Latin context show the survival of the local language, and, along that logic, the *-ābus* suffix is probably also, at least in part, a Latinised version of a Celtic formula.

The dative plural *-ābus* is found with names of groups of goddesses who bear Latin or Greek names, although in some cases they cover pre-Roman divinities from different regions of the empire: *Eponabus*,[85] *Fortunabus*,[86] *Parcabus*,[87] *Nymphabus*,[88] etc.,[89] which suggests an insecurity with Latin suffixation or the desire that people wanted to sound more archaic before their gods all over the empire. Using the *-ābus* suffix is not necessary for these goddesses, since there would have been no ambiguity regarding their gender even if the *-īs* suffix had been used, since it could only be feminine.

## CONCLUSION

The dedicators (Roman citizens or *peregrini*), who used Latin as their mother tongue, addressed their gods according to Roman rites, e.g. by offering them votive inscriptions. Indigenous people could very rarely be identified in Roman context, since they have Roman names and Roman deities. Unlike official cults, the small religious group cults that appeared around the 2nd and 3rd centuries often show vulgarisms in the dedications that reflect the spoken language.

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[83] DE BERNARDO STEMPEL Muttergöttinnen (n. 78) 46.

[84] *Matronis Vatvims* – *CIL* XIII 7892 – LLDB-101406 (Germania inf., Iuliacum) *CIL* XIII 8510 – LLDB-101402 (Germania Inf., modern Lipp); *Ness-Lieb* 232 – LLDB-101403, *Ness-Lieb* 233 – LLDB-101404, *Ness-Lieb* 234 (Germania Inf., modern Morken); *Matronis Saitchamims* – *CIL* XIII 7916 – LLDB-104325 (Germania Inf., Tolbiacum*); CIL* XIII 8157 – LLDB-95553 (Germania Inf., modern Wesseling).

[85] *CIL* III 7904 – LLDB-7534 (Dacia, Sarmizegetusa).

[86] *CIL* V 8929 – LLDB-97642 (Transpadana, Novaria); *CIL* VI 182 – LLDB-97641 (Rome); *EE*-8-1, 647 – LLDB-97640 (Latium et Campania, Antium).

[87] *AE* 2009, 911 – LLDB-101373 (Belgica, modern Gourzon); *CIL* XII 5890 – LLDB-79446 (Gallia Narb., Nemausus); *ILGN* 83 – LLDB-101374 (Gallia Narb., modern Rognac); *AE* 1969/70, 339 – LLDB-101375 (Gallia Narb., Calcaria Solarium); *CIL* V 8242 – LLDB-12858 (Venetia et Histria, Aquileia); *AE* 1993, 780 – LLDB-101380 (Venetia et Histria, modern Bardolino).

[88] *CIL* II 1164 – LLDB-97672 (Belgica, Hispalis); *RIB* 3489 – LLDB-97673 (Britannia, Habitancum); *CIL* XI 3290 – LLDB-92648 (Etruria, Sutrium); *CIL* X 6799 – LLDB-97675 (Latium et Campania, Aenaria); *CIL* XIV 4321 – LLDB-97676 (Latium et Campania, Ostia); *AE* 2001, 226 – LLDB-97679; *AE* 1990, 55 – LLDB-97682; *CIL* VI 549, *CIL* VI 553 – LLDB-97685, *CIL* VI 554 – LLDB-97686, *CIL* VI 36818 – LLDB-97688 (Rome); *Nymphabus Nitrodibus* – *AE* 2001, 554 – LLDB-143693 (Rome).

[89] LUJÁN (n. 41) 403.

Roman inscriptions of a religious nature are mostly short, and have similar structures and formulas. Dedications began with the names of the deities in the dative, and the names of the gods on the votive inscriptions containing requests often reflect Vulgar Latin. These divinities were worshipped conforming to Roman traditions: by erecting altars to them and using the Latin language. The followers of the different cults do not typically refer to these figures by their pre-Roman names but often by the names of the Roman gods with which they equated them. Some names are complemented with Celtic theonyms and epithets, although unsyncretised theonyms are also widespread. All in all, there are several hundred names containing Celtic, Germanic or pre- and non-Celtic Gaulish elements. The multiplicity of deity names may be attributed to tribal or local characteristics, while some adjectives may simply be epithets applied to major deities with widespread cults.

In view, above all, of the epigraphic examples, it must be clarified that *Matronabus, Nymphabus* or *Fortunabus* could only be feminine, but the ending still could be used when speakers wanted to make it very clear or want to sound festive or religious that the designated referent was feminine, as happens in the case of names of divinities or epithets. That female deities appear with the *-ābus* suffix is a complex religious phenomenon that apparently has a linguistic and ethnic background, which can be glimpsed at when looking at the epigraphic material from the territory of Gallia and Germania.

The theonyms and the visual and physical (statues, frescoes, etc.) representations of the divinities have been translated into the Roman cultural language. The local particularities of Roman religion in the province manifest itself through these peculiarities of theonyms. Living and local language often depend on the demographic reality of believers. The relationship of the local and global religious communication in the context of religious studies is complex, and depends on the role of the human factor. The group of worshippers in the first two centuries adopt new linguistic strategies and change their vocabulary in local contexts, influenced by global factors. Pre-Roman religious communication is difficult to demonstrate in a Roman environment, but these variations of theonyms shows some of them. If the addressee actively helped in a matter, the vow (the *votum*) was fulfilled, and the inscription was marked with the formula *votum solvit libens merito*. Religious individualisation was very flexible and produced numerous forms, when the vow to the deity was fulfilled only after the request had been granted (e.g. after the soldier returned from the war in good fortune), according to the inscriptions, the gods became more permissive to their worshippers, even if their names were written and spoken in a vulgar form, when the vow was made.

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