

Linguistic observations of the phonetic changes in Latin names and epithets of gods

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Received: January 20, 2025 • Revised manuscript received: July 16, 2025 • Accepted: October 8, 2025

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ABSTRACT

The linguistic study of the divine names in votive inscriptions has recently attracted increasing interest. In this paper, the author discusses phonetic changes in Latin names and epithets of gods using data from the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age. The vowel and consonant changes in votive inscriptions across the Roman Empire are in the focus and certain Vulgar Latin features and cultural influences can be identified from the corpus. The study focuses on common phonetic phenomena, such as vowel and consonant changes, monophthongization, gemination, etc. The epigraphic corpus shows various Vulgar Latin features in theonyms and epithets, which are considered linguistic, regional, and cultural factors that influenced these changes, including Celtic, Greek, and Brittonic influences. The research concludes that the observed phonetic variations reflect the dynamics of the development of Latin as well as language contact phenomena affecting it.

KEYWORDS

Vulgar Latin, Latin linguistics, phonetic changes, dialectology, Roman deities

1. INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the votive inscriptions reveals religious practices and the gods worshipped, but also the language used by the dedicators and the linguistic changes of the time.¹ Adams believes²

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¹This paper employs the coding system of the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age (cf. <http://lldb.elte.hu/>, hereafter referred to as LLDB) to categorize spelling variations in the inscriptions. For resolving abbreviations of inscriptional corpora used in this survey see: http://lldb.elte.hu/admin/abbrev_bibl.php.

²Adams (2003, 291).

that the religious language of the provincial population exhibited the greatest conservatism. Religious inscriptions are indeed a highly conservative and formulaic category within Roman epigraphy. The performance of religious acts was governed by numerous regulations, and success depended significantly on precise wording and, even more critically, on the correct execution of the ritual.³

Previous research has addressed broader questions concerning divine names, declension and case confusions in these names, and Pannonian inscriptions within the context of territorial phenomena.⁴ The phonetic analysis of the names of the gods was already suggested by P. de Bernardo Stempel,⁵ especially in connection with the etymology of theonyms. In some inscriptions, there are vowel mistakes in the first part of the names, mostly in the case of deity names which had non-Roman origin.⁶ The phonetic variations in the inscriptions may reflect contamination between the different formulas and the scribes' poor knowledge of Latin, particularly in the foreign names of the gods.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study analyzes common phonetic phenomena in Latin theonyms and epithets, utilizing data from the Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age (LLDB).⁷ The corpus of divine names and epithets in which a change of phoneme is observed consists of 1212 items in 919 votive inscriptions (*tituli sacri*) all over the Roman Empire. In the analysis, I included the entire so-called Latin part of the Roman Empire. The corpus includes diverse votive monuments, primarily altars, construction inscriptions, reliefs, *tabulae*, statue bases, *instrumenta domestica*, and bronze triangular votive tablets.

However, given the nature of the available data, any conclusions regarding the linguistic aspects of divine names should be regarded with appropriate caution. The analysis of theonyms and epithets was limited in several aspects in a previous study:⁸ in time (from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD), the LLDB Database examines linguistic changes starting from the period of Augustus. The number of votive inscriptions decreases at the end of the 3rd century AD due to the change in inscription habits. Secondly, from a geographical point of view, when local deities were adapted to the new Latin speaking milieu, their cults were limited to only one

³Wissowa (1902, 380–382).

⁴Vágási (2022, 2023, 2025).

⁵De Bernardo Stempel (2010, 23): “a good etymology should, accordingly, not only account (1) for the phonetic aspect of a given theonymic element, but also (2) for its morphology as well as (3) for its word formation together with (4) its order of constituents. It should moreover (5) fit into the lexicon of the involved Indo-European branch and (6) be semantically appropriate for a divine name, while obviously agreeing with what might be known of the iconography and cult of the involved deity”.

⁶Vágási (2022).

⁷This investigation considers data pertaining to divine names and epithets, identified by phonetic main codes in the LLDB (from the ‘Vocalismus’ list), and occasionally by nominal or syntactic alternative codes (from the ‘Nominalia’ or ‘Syntactica et lexica’ lists). Alternative interpretations are not excluded for god names and epithets, especially given the foreign linguistic influences from which the cults originated.

⁸Vágási (2023, 612–613).

province or even smaller areas. For instance, the worship of Vidasus and Thana was confined to the southern Pannonian region of Ad Fines, while the mother goddesses, known by various epithets, were primarily worshipped in Germania, in the area around present-day Bonn. The number of inscriptions dedicated to different deities varies – some are known from a single inscription, while others have hundreds of inscriptions across the Roman Empire – thus a spatial comparison of language data would result in a distortion of proportions. The analysis of the names of the gods had to take into account that the names of individual local gods appear in multiple variants in the inscriptions and such inscriptions must be read with attention.⁹ In the absence of literary sources, however, it is uncertain which of the different variants is normative, and only those god names and epithets that are either known from literary sources or whose normative form can be clearly established from hundreds of inscriptions have been included in the corpus.¹⁰ Thirdly, there are linguistic limitations: Latin divine names generally belong to the first three declensions, as they are proper nouns,¹¹ while epithets, typically adjectives, follow the same declensions. In inscriptions, the formulae containing theonyms are usually in the dative case.

3. VOWEL CHANGES

Monophthongization (ae > E in 341 items) and the fusion of interconsonantal -ii- (*contractio ii* in 53 items) constitute the largest proportion of vowel changes (852 items). However, the latter are treated separately as they are considered purely orthographic errors and epigraphic conventions.¹² Figure 1 illustrates that, except for those errors, the most frequent vowel changes in the theonyms and epithets of gods are the change of /i/~/e/ and syncope.

3.1. Diphthongs

The most frequent phenomenon affecting diphthongs is monophthongization, where they merge into a single vowel in specific phonological contexts or periods of Latin language history. This tendency was already present in Latin in the republican period, and became very common and widespread in the imperial period.¹³ The ae > E change is the most common diphthong shift

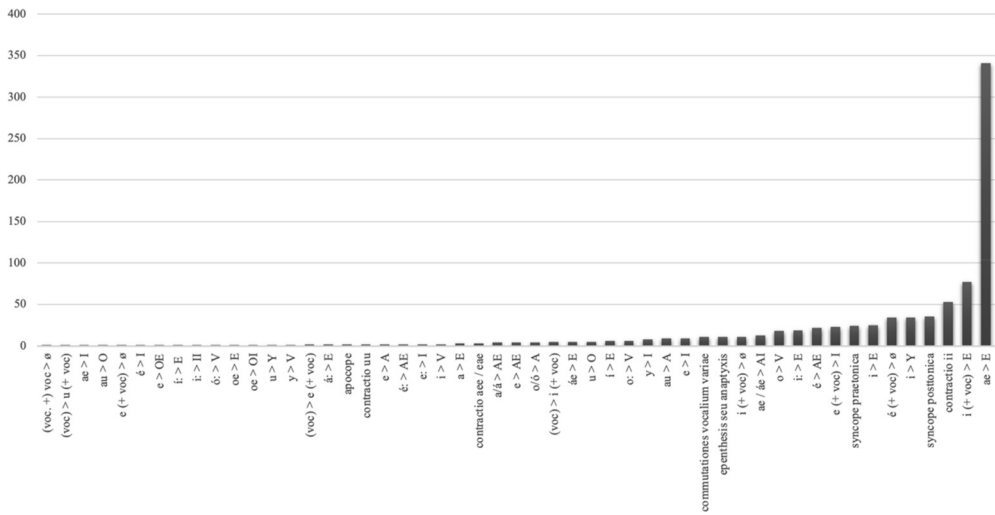
⁹Mars Marmogius was venerated in the region between Noricans and Tauriscans (southwestern Pannonia), near Poetovio. Inscriptions reveal various linguistic variants of the deity's name: Harmogius, Marmogius, Armogius, Marimogius and Maromogius.

¹⁰Hispanic votive inscriptions featuring Rev(v)e, Rebe, Reove, or Reo dedications were excluded, as the name (Reus) of the Lusitanian deity is attested in parallel forms such as Revinos, see de Bernardo Stempel (2013, 89).

¹¹Peels-Matthey (2021, 36).

¹²The linguistic changes underlying these misspellings were likely complete by the beginning of the Imperial period, cf. Väänänen (1963, 44–45).

¹³Väänänen (1963, 59§), Herman (2003, 23) dates to the first century AD.



is the easiest to misspell.¹⁸ There is a single example of the *au* > *O* change and *oe* > *Y*¹⁹ with one type: the first is known from Aquileia: *Fonib(us)* instead of *Faunis* (LLDB-11248 – CIL V, 8250), the second occurs in a single name, the epithet Poeninus spelled *Pynino* (LLDB-25437 – AE 1904, 170, Alpes Poeninae, Summus Poeninus).²⁰

Hypercorrection related to monophthongization is evident where /a/ or /e/ are written as diphthongs (*e* > AE,²¹ *é* > AE,²² *é:* > AE,²³ as well as *a/á* > AE²⁴ and *e* > OE).²⁵ All three instances of hypercorrect spellings of /e/ are found from Pannonia.²⁶ The cult of Deus Sol Elagabalus is primarily documented in Pannonian inscriptions, which also exhibit variations in the spelling of the name. In two inscriptions from Intercisa, he appears as *Aelagabalo* (LLDB-72920 – RIU-5, 1106; LLDB-516 – AE 1910, 141). Uncertainty in the spelling of the god's name is evident in its appearance at Brigetio as *Alagabalo* (LLDB-6883 – CIL III, 4300). The other type of hypercorrect diphthong (*a/á* > AE) is attested in the form *Vag[daevercus]ti* instead of *Vagdavercusti* (LLDB-143622 – AE 1935, 163), as recorded in an inscription from Vetus Salina (Pannonia Inferior).²⁷

The archaic *ai* spelling of the /ae/ diphthong can be found in divine names, exclusively in the -ae dative ending,²⁸ and once in a word-initial position.²⁹ A similar spelling of the /oe/ diphthong is recorded from the Alps (*Poinino* for *Poenino*: LLDB-25434 – AlpPoeninae 25).

¹⁸Fehér (2007, 367).

¹⁹Väänänen (1963, 59§).

²⁰Beside the monophthongization process in Latin, i.e. the monophthongization of /oe/ resulted in a closed /e/, which due to the /e/~i/ fusion can also be confused with /i/, and could easily be written <y>, because it is pronounced /i/. The spelling is also presumably the result of Greek influence, where the /oi/ diphthong was changed to /o/, and therefore was written as <y> in the Latin transcription. The archaic form of the name originated from Gk. *πουνη*, de Bernardo Stempel (2013, 85).

²¹*Aelagabalo* for *Elagabalo*: LLDB-72920 – RIU-5, 1106; LLDB-516 – AE 1910, 141; *Panthaeo* for *Pantheo*: LLDB-10000 – CIL III, 10394.

²²*Aecate* for *Hecatae*: LLDB-37054 – CIL VI, 1675; LLDB-36984 – CIL VI, 733; LLDB-7543 – AE 1913, 51; *Aep[onae]* for *Eponae*: LLDB-9720 – ILD-1, 779; *Aeso* for *Eso*: LLDB-105614 – AE 1997, 1210; *Caeleaes(tis)* for *Caelestis*: LLDB-122497 – AE 2017, 836; *Caereri* for *Cereri*: LLDB-115190 – CIL VIII, 1398, LLDB-103398 – CIL III, 6660; *Daeae* for *Deae*: LLDB-112027 – ILAfr 354, LLDB-122556 – AE 1983, 559, LLDB-25198 – CILCaceres-2, 19, LLDB-121587 – AE 2011, 1116; *Daao* for *Deo*: LLDB-26383 – CIL IX, 1023, LLDB-2615 – CIL XIII, 41, LLDB-17698 – CIL XIII, 5047, LLDB-73776 – AE 1902, 89; *Haecatae* for *Hecatae*: LLDB-65673 – AE 1971, 35; LLDB-37058 – AE 1953, 238; *Haercu[li]* for *Herculis*: LLDB-71491 – IAlG-2-3, 7664.

²³*Ae[li]opol[ita]no* for *Heliopolitano*: LLDB-26236 – Wagner-2, 69; *Aevento* for *Evento*: LLDB-70890 – AE 1946, 228.

²⁴*Sae[lncto]* for *Sancto*: LLDB-122092 – CIL II, 2412; *Vag[daevercus]ti* for *Vagdavercusti*: LLDB-143622 – AE 1935, 163.

²⁵*Hoerculi* for *Herculi*: LLDB-92906 – CIL VI, 30897.

²⁶*Ae[l]a[gabalo]* for *Elagabalo*: LLDB-72920 – RIU-5, 1106 (Intercisa); *Aelagabalo* for *Elagabalo*: LLDB-516 – AE 1910, 141 (Intercisa); *Panthaeo* for *Pantheo*: LLDB-10000 – CIL III, 10394 (Aquincum).

²⁷Vágási (2022, 450).

²⁸They may also reflect a Greek inscriptional habit. *Concordiai* for *Concordiae*: LLDB-110299 – CIL VI, 29324; *Dianai* for *Dianae*: LLDB-76980 – CIL III, 499; *Laphriai* for *Laphriae*: LLDB-76981 – CIL III, 499; *Liberai* for *Liberiae*: LLDB-28878 – AE 1934, 200; *Minervai* for *Minervae*: LLDB-140143 – AE 1935, 44, LLDB-974 – CIL XII, 1088, LLDB-25581 – AE 1922, 115, LLDB-24218 – AE 1926, 20; *Mitrai* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-37051 – CIL VI, 1675; *Victorai* for *Victoriae*: LLDB-76618 – Corinth-8-2, 11, LLDB-126459 – AE 2018, 703, LLDB-59184 – InscrIt-9-1, 59.

²⁹*Aisculap[io]* for *Aesculapio*: LLDB-143284 – CIL VI, 30684.

3.2. The /e/~/i/ sounds

The most frequent vowel variations involve /e/ and /i/ (155 items), in both stressed and unstressed syllables, with 30 instances of e > I³⁰ and 125 of i > E.³¹

The short, unstressed i > E vowel change before a vowel occurs most frequently in the name of Diana (74 items), written *Deanae*, with three other inscriptions *Esculapeo* for *Aesculapio*, *Mercur|eo* for *Mercurio* and *Veatori* for *Viatori*.³² However, it is also interesting to note that the change from *di-* to *de-* in Diana's name may have been a palatalization, with /i/ becoming a semi-vowel or consonant.³³

Most examples of i: > E changes (18 items) appear in the dative ending of the third declension.³⁴ The possibility that the *-e* endings were derived as a process of merging dative and ablative cannot be excluded for these data (dat. *-ī* > E, alternative code i: > E).³⁵

The short, unstressed i > E change is found in the spellings of the names *Envicto* for *Invicto*,³⁶ *Larebus* for *Laribus*³⁷ and *Menervae* for *Minervae*.³⁸ The *Larebus* dedications all come from Hispania citerior and Lusitania, where Lar or Lares existed with an indigenous ethnic identity, representing Latinized indigenous titular deities of social groups. The stressed í > E is primarily observed in the name of Mithras³⁹ in correlation with epenthesis in the form *Meterae* (LLDB-221 – AE 1906, 184). The name Sirona in the form *Seranae* is a special case (LLDB-10102 – AE 1982, 806). The goddess's name derives from the reconstructed Indo-European root **h₂stēr-*; in

³⁰In the LLDB database coding scheme, é: > I is represented by 1 item, é > I is also represented by 1 item; e: > I, and e > I has 9 items, finally e (+ voc) > I has 18 items recorded in the Database.

³¹The i: > E (1 item), í > E (6 items), i: > E (19 items), i > E (22 items) and i (+voc) > E (77 items) were recorded.

³²*Deanae* for *Diana*: LLDB-14010 – CIL III, 14086; LLDB-45433 – AE 1966, 295; *Escula|peo* for *Aesculapio*: LLDB-5605 – CIL III, 12558; *Mercur|eo* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-9523 – AE 2003, 1485; *Veatori* for *Viatori*: LLDB-1009 – CIL XII, 1084.

³³Fehér (2007, 344). The change from *Diana* to *Deanae* is classified as a vowel change with reservations, as it is mostly a case of /i/ becoming a semi-vowel. The D- could be palatalized from the following /i/, i.e. the change from i > E before the vowel [i (+ voc)] > E, as well as e (+ voc.) > I], basically reflects the j-shift of the i/e vowel involved.

³⁴*Iove Iutori* for *Iovi Iutori*: LLDB-45307 – CIL IX, 5531; *Hercule* for *Herculi*: LLDB-122478 – AE 1983, 587, LLDB-143742 – CIL VI, 30732, LLDB-19458 – CIL III, 7438; *Caute* for *Cauti*: LLDB-112916 – CIL II, 464, LLDB-1533 – CIL XII, 1811; *Heroi A|ulo|nite* for *Heroi Auloniti*: LLDB-154297 – Philippi 629a; *Vitire* for *Viteri*: LLDB-17032 – CIL VII, 958; *Matre Magne* for *Matri Magnae*: LLDB-6858 – AE 1947, 33; *Iunone* for *Iunoni*: LLDB-33656 – CIL VI, 15471, LLDB-3509 – CIL III, 7533; *Hirone* for *Heroni*: LLDB-19707 – CIL III, 14424; LLDB-14193 – AE 1935, 171; *Fonte Dei* for *Fonti dei*: LLDB-147326 – CIMRM-2, 2277; *Deo Nudente* for *deo Nudenti*: LLDB-10464 – CIL VII, 139. Cf. Vágási, 2023, 624).

³⁵The LLDB database has a nominal or verbal morphosyntactic alternative code for these data, as these could be the result of morphosyntactic changes rather than just phonological variations.

³⁶LLDB-37106, LLDB-37108 – AE 1935, 131.

³⁷LLDB-14117 – IRLungo 65; LLDB-30964 – CILCaceres-1, 3; LLDB-15352 – AE 1967, 203; LLDB-122393 – AE 1973, 311; LLDB-14115 – IRLungo 64.

³⁸LLDB-5752 – CIL III, 1073; LLDB-15135 – CIL VII, 313; LLDB-154129 – CIL II, 1950.

³⁹*Meter[ae]* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-28122 – CIL III, 14617; *Meterae* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-221 – AE 1906, 184; *Methrae* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-37068 – CIL VI, 511; *Metras* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-28063 – CIL III, 4804, see Vágási (2020, 191).

Latin inscriptions, the adapted name was Sirona, although the form *Seranae* reflects both accentual stages simultaneously.⁴⁰

The change *e* (+ *voc*) > *i* occur in dative of *deus* or *dea*.⁴¹ These cases may not only have phonological explanations, but the plural forms (*deis*, *diis*, *dis*) could also have influenced the singular form. Several instances of the short, unstressed *e* > *i* change in divine names can be found,⁴² with two examples being the spelling of *Mircurio* for *Mercurio*⁴³ and the *Ericurae* spelling of *Erecura*.⁴⁴ However, the spelling of *Mercurius*' name may come from the archaic form,⁴⁵ whereas the theonym of (H)*erectura* is attested in many variants in Latin inscriptions.⁴⁶

3.3. Changes affecting the /e/ sound

Thirty-five records are found for changes affecting /e/, among them a relatively large number of records exist for the loss of the pre-vowel /e/, all within the *Deo* / *Deae* spelling (the /e/ was not pronounced).⁴⁷ Seven /e/~/a/ changes are available in our corpus, two of which are for *a* > *E*,

⁴⁰De Bernardo Stempel (2013, 80) and Vágási (2022, 449).

⁴¹*Diae* for *Deae*: LLDB-49727 – CIL XIII, 10024,26; LLDB-5105 – CIL XIII, 2864; LLDB-19738 – AE 1957, 301; LLDB-19379, LLDB-19380 – CIL III, 10393; LLDB-30935 – AE 1985, 695; LLDB-67282 – CIL X, 1549; LLDB-144133 – CIL VI, 30854; LLDB-30700 – CIL IX, 7668; LLDB-16534 – RIB-1, 1543; LLDB-16621 – CIL VII, 1348; LLDB-16506 – RIB-1, 1525; LLDB-19726 – CIL XIII, 6553; LLDB-28045 – CIL XIII, 6363; LLDB-31525 – CIL XI, 4635; *Dio* for *Deo*: LLDB-16771 – RIB-1, 2190; *Fidio* for *Fidei*: LLDB-149330 – CIL VI, 30995 and *Ociano* for *Oceano*: LLDB-17050 – AE 1904, 2.

⁴²[*N*]emisi for *Nemesi*: LLDB-9328 – AE 1934, 283; *Libire* for *Liberæ*: LLDB-4856 – AE 1910, 172; *Lilhunno* for *Lelhunno*: LLDB-151847 – CIL XIII, 422; *Nemedus* (whose name contains the root word “nemed / nemet” meaning “sacred place”) once in form *Nimmedo*: LLDB-153731 – AE 1935, 11 and *Siqu[a]nn(ae)* for *Sequanae*: LLDB-5107 – CIL XIII, 2864. *Sequana* was the Celtic goddess worshipped in Gaul of the river Seine. The inscription contains spelling error that may give a clue to the pronunciation of *Sequana* in Gaulish.

⁴³A bilingual (Latin and Greek) inscription with the same text from Dalmatia (LLDB-135595 – CIL III, 3076) from the Republican period show this form and another inscription from Dacia from the second century AD (LLDB-94631 – CIL XIII, 4680).

⁴⁴LLDB-28047 – CIL XIII, 6363; LLDB-150300 – CIL XIII, 6322.

⁴⁵AE 1910, 10: ...*magistreis Mirquri Apollini(s) / Neptuni*... (113 BC); CIL III, 14203,4: ...*magis[t]reis Mircurio et Maiae*... (125 BC).

⁴⁶Many different Latinized forms exist of the Celtic or Germanic theonym: *Eracura*, *Erecura*, *Ercura*, *Aeraecura*, *Aer-ecura*, *Aericura*, *Heracura*, *Herecura*, *Herecura*. The etymology of the name has been connected to different roots, to *aes* ‘copper, bronze, money, wealth’, to *era* ‘mistress’ and to the name of the Greek goddess *Hera*. Delamarre thinks she is Celtic and proposes to break it down as **Ēri-cūrā*, ‘Wind of the West’. These variations may be explained by different interpretations of the first syllable of the name. Therefore, in the present corpus, I have excluded inscriptions with variants in the first syllable of the name. To the origin of the cult and to the etymology see Jufer & Luginbühl (2001, 136), Delamarre (2007, 13–14, 221) and de Bernardo Stempel (2013, 80–81).

⁴⁷*Do* for *Deo*: LLDB-153082 – CAG-31-2, p 467; LLDB-16601 – CIL VII, 746; LLDB-16598 – CIL VII, 751; LLDB-16593 – CIL VII, 745; LLDB-15173 – CIL VII, 500; LLDB-15082 – RIB-1, 987; LLDB-18672 – CIL VII, 181; LLDB-145518 – CIL VI, 31000; LLDB-18672 – CIL VII, 181; *Dae* for *Deae*: LLDB-24377 – AE 1978, 537; LLDB-69274 – ILAlg-1, 3000; LLDB-20142 – AE 1989, 550; LLDB-20140 – CIL XIII, 3665; LLDB-20139 – CIL XIII, 3664; LLDB-20137 – CIL XIII, 3662; LLDB-16624 – CIL VII, 828; LLDB-16531 – RIB-1, 1537; LLDB-16511 – RIB-1, 1528; LLDB-16478 – RIB-1, 1449; LLDB-15005 – CIL VII, 273; LLDB-10680 – CIL VII, 234; LLDB-2261 – AE 2001, 1339; LLDB-21431 – CIL XIII, 7679; LLDB-20135 – CIL XIII, 4194; LLDB-19710 – CIL XIII, 6486; LLDB-15750 – CIL XIII, 6733; LLDB-104610 – CIL XIII, 8546; LLDB-5115 – CIL XIII, 2859; LLDB-5103 – CIL XIII, 2862; LLDB-103098 – AE 1980, 643; LLDB-145682 – CIL VI, 31178; LLDB-93944 – AE 2012, 573; LLDB-93943 – AE 2012, 572; LLDB-125495 – AE 2012, 562; LLDB-125494 – AE 2012, 562.

two for *e* > *A* and three for the accented *a*: > *E*. Fehér and Gonda attributed the merging of the short /*e/~/a/* sounds to the influence of the Celtic substrate in Celtic or Germanic origin names, distinguishing it from the *e* > *A* phenomenon observed in other parts of the empire.⁴⁸ There are three instances of the spelling change occurring in place of the accented long /*a:/*, two of them being *Priepo* instead of *Priapo* (LLDB-117178 – AE 1991, 1319 and LLDB-5941 – CIL III, 1139), although probably as a result of Greek influence.⁴⁹ The form *Asculepio* in an inscription from Aquincum (LLDB-9999 – AE 1937, 182) might display a phonetic change, as well as the result of the ambiguity between the Greek and Latin spellings of the god's name. The choice between the Greek (*Asclepius*) and Latin (*Aesculapius*) spelling of the god's name was an individual decision made by the dedicator, influenced by factors such as linguistic background, tradition, or pre-vailing 'fashion'. Both variants are known from Aquincum, but Latin was mainly used.⁵⁰ Two records of a *e* > *A* variation are attested, of which the spelling of Sabazios' name as *Sebesio* (LLDB-37011 – CIL VI, 719) is somewhat uncertain,⁵¹ and the spelling of Vagdavercustis' name as *Vagevercu(sti)* indicates this type of sound change (LLDB-104604 – CIL XIII, 8662). One isolated case of *e* > *A* is also uncertain, since *Elagabalo*'s spelling as *Alagabal(o)* (LLDB-6883 – CIL III, 4300) is interpreted as a substrate/adstrate effect. On the other hand, the name of Belenos appears as *Belano* in an inscription in northern Italy (LLDB-154149 – AlpCott *1).⁵² The change of /*e/* to /*a/* observed in the suffix *-eno-*, is attested by other divine names of Celtic origin.⁵³

3.4. Changes affecting the /*i/* sound

In total, we have 69 items on changes in the /*i/* sound, including 5 items on the appearance of the vowel before /*i/* [(*voc*) > *i* (+ *voc*)],⁵⁴ 11 items on the loss before a vowel (*i* (+ *voc*) > *ø*),⁵⁵ 1 item

⁴⁸Gonda (2015, 322). Gonda (2015, 322–324) has proved that this is a peculiarity of Latin inscriptions in and around Pannonia in the 1st–3rd centuries AD, which he attributed to Celtic influence. This type of /*a/~/e/* fluctuation occurs frequently in local, especially Celtic, tribal, and personal names.

⁴⁹LLDB-117178 – AE 1991, 1319 and LLDB-5941 – CIL III, 1139.

⁵⁰See Kádár (1999). *Aesculapius*: CIL III, 3412, 3414; AE 1937, 180–182; AE 1972, 363; AE 1982, 805; *TitAq*-1, 36; AE 2009, 1106; *Asklepius*: AE 1990, 816.

⁵¹The name of the deity is spelled in several ways in votive inscriptions: *Sabazius*, *Sabadius*, Σεβάκιος, Σαβάκιος, Σαβάσειος, see Tacheva (1983, 183–184) and for the interpretation of the inscription, Georgiev (2021, 14).

⁵²The name of the god is best known from this area of northern Italy, where it also occurs on its own, but is also known as *Apollo Belenos* in many inscriptions, see Jufer & Luginbühl (2001, 28–29).

⁵³see the note 72 concerning the *-ona* suffix.

⁵⁴*Deaniae* for *Dianae*: LLDB-120642 – AE 1915, 42; *Epionae* for *Eponae*: LLDB-9497 – AE 1998, 1101; *Minerviae* for *Minervae*: LLDB-122112 – AE 1982, 619, LLDB-73519 – AE 1924, 50; *Neptunio* for *Neptuno*: LLDB-37456 – CIL VI, 16814.

⁵⁵*Geno* for *Genio*: LLDB-36481 – IRG-4, 145, LLDB-9002 – AE 1971, 399; *Mercuro* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-2243 – AE 1993, 1122, LLDB-5252 – AE 1997, 1181; *Aesulapo* for *Aesculapio*: LLDB-121476 – AE 1998, 1134, LLDB-5270 – CIL III, 951, LLDB-22951 – *TitAq*-1, 36; *Ciclanos* for *Ciconio*: LLDB-86824 – CIL VI, 2797; *Mesa* for *Mysia*: LLDB-105137 – CIL IX, 6514; *Victorae* for *Victoriae*: LLDB-13536 – CIL III, 10333; and the Celtic theonym of Albiorix (from **albios* "world") in *Albofrigi* form: LLDB-154150 – AlpCott-G, 32.

on the initial position i: > II,⁵⁶ and 53 items on the shortening of the plural dative *-iis* (*contractio ii*) ending.⁵⁷ These shortenings occur exclusively in the names of the goddesses Biviae, Triviae and Quadriviae / Quadruviae, deities of crossroads and forks of the road, although the contraction of the *-ii-* sounds is a common phenomenon at the imperial level.⁵⁸ There are eleven instances of /i/ vowel loss before the following vowel.⁵⁹ The absence of /i/ vowels is generally considered a spelling issue rather than a phonetic phenomenon. In some cases, omission may be attributed to engraver carelessness or a poorly executed ligature.⁶⁰

The epenthetic /i/, which includes the appearance of /i/ before the vowel [(voc) > i (+ voc)],⁶¹ does not reflect a phonological change, i.e. a change in the opposite direction of the weakening of /i/, but instead a simple error or hypercorrection. The two inscriptions using *Minerviae* instead of *Minervae*⁶² may reflect influence from the adjective *minervius*, as 'belonging to Minerva'. Legio I Minervia also bears this adjective, and soldiers serving in the legion used the genitive form in their inscriptions to indicate their affiliation, possibly influencing the dative form *Minerviae*.⁶³

3.5. The /o/~/u/ sounds

The changes between /o/ and /u/ are relatively rare in the corpus of divine names, with five items for u > O and twenty-five items for o > V,⁶⁴ which can be explained in various ways. The short, unstressed u > O change is recorded in the names of Aesculapius and Hercules, with *Aesculapio*⁶⁵ and *Hercoli*⁶⁶ respectively being an alternative interpretation of the archaic form.⁶⁷

The short, unstressed o > V is found in the name of Jupiter Dolichenus in 17 instances, and once in the spelling *Nudente* for *Nodenti* (LLDB-148403 – CIL VII, 139). The deity of Celtic origin, Nodens or Nodons, whose name can be reconstructed from the dative *Nodenti* or

⁵⁶*Isidi* for *Isidi*: LLDB-73454 – CIL IX, 4772.

⁵⁷for example, *Bivis* for *Biviis* – 8 items, *Qadruvis* for *Quadruviis* – 34 items, *Trivis* for *Triviis* – 12 items.

⁵⁸Euskirchen (2024) and Adamik (2009, 215).

⁵⁹see note 55.

⁶⁰*Victorae* for *Victoriae*: LLDB-13536 – CIL III, 10333; *Ascielpo* for *Asclepio*: LLDB-22951 – TitAq-1, 36.

⁶¹*Deaniae* for *Dianae*: LLDB-120642 – AE 1915, 42; *Epionae* for *Eponae*: LLDB-9497 – AE 1998, 1101; *Minerviae* for *Minervae*: LLDB-122112 – AE 1982, 619, LLDB-73519 – AE 1924, 50; *Neptunio* for *Neptuno*: LLDB-37456 – CIL VI, 16814.

⁶²LLDB-122112 – AE 1982, 619; LLDB-73519 – AE 1924, 50.

⁶³For example, CIL XIII, 3605: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Iunoni Minervae / Dianae Nymphis / pro salute Commodi / Antonini Pii Felicis / Aug(usti) / T(itus) Fl(avius) Hospitalis [(centurio) leg(ionis) I M(inerviae) Fusciano II et Silano [II] / [co(n)s(ulibus)]*

⁶⁴o: > V – 6 items, o > V – 18 items, ó: > V – 1 item (*Victu(riae)* for *Victoriae*; LLDB-4547 – AE 1980, 732).

⁶⁵LLDB-141675 – AE 1915, 30; LLDB-87860 – CIL VIII, 18018; LLDB-75838 – CIL XII, 3042.

⁶⁶LLDB-126250 – CIL IX, 7877; LLDB-51842 – CIL XI, 5954.

⁶⁷see CIL VI 30845: *Aesculapio / donom dat* – 230-171 BC; CIL VI 30844: *Aesculapio / dono dedit / meritod* – 230-171 BC; CIL I, 1428: *Hercoli ea dat* – 130-71 BC; CIL VI, 304: *Hercoli Celeri dat* – 100-51 BC.

Nodonti, is known from the Romano-Celtic temple of Lydney Park, Britannia. The change in the first syllable from $-\bar{o}-$ to $-\bar{u}-$ in Brittonic languages dates to the end of the 3rd century AD,⁶⁸ and this could be interpreted in relation to the Latin name variants. However, the Nudenti form may also have a long $o > V$ change, which is more likely, as the late 3rd century dating of the Celtic change would correspond closely with the 4th century dating of the Nudenti inscription. Concerning Jupiter Dolichenus, the most common spellings of the name are *Dulceno* or *Dulcheno*,⁶⁹ which reflect the current pronunciation. The $o > V$ change occurs exclusively in the singular dative ending, reflecting the merging of the boundaries between the second and fourth declensions in nouns. However, since divine names are limited to the first and second declensions, a morphological explanation is untenable, leaving only a phonological interpretation.⁷⁰

3.6. The /a/~/o/ sounds

The suffix *-ona* is attested in the form *-ana* in the names of two goddesses of Celtic origin. In the name of Sirona, the *-ona* suffix is replaced by *-ana*⁷¹ in an inscription from Aquincum, creating the form *Seranae* (LLDB-10103 – AE 1982, 806). Another inscription from Hispania uses the spelling *Epa|ne* instead of *Eponae* (LLDB-87375 – AE 1965, 62). The adaptation of the Celtic vowel $\bar{a}$ into Latin occasionally resulted in the change of unstressed vowels to /a/, which is characteristic in divine names in the *-ena/-ona* suffix.⁷² Beside the change in suffix ending, the change between /a/ and /o/ is attested in an inscription from Rome: *Cic|anos* for *Ciconio* (LLDB-81213 – CIL VI, 2797).

3.7. The /i/~/u/, /i/~/y/, and /u/~/y/ sounds

There is almost no evidence for variations in the /u/ sound⁷³ that are unrelated to the spelling of /y/ or the alternation between /i/ and /u/.

⁶⁸Carey (1984, 2–3).

⁶⁹The name of the town Doliche appears in various forms, alongside the epithet Dolichenus: *Dulca* (LLDB-7090, 7091 – AE 1911, 222) and *Dolicu* (LLDB-7084, 7085 – RIU-2, 523) from Brigetio (Pannonia sup.), and *Dolica* in an inscription from Aquincum (Pannonia inf.; LLDB-143632, 143633 – CIL III, 3490), which shows the starting point of the uncertainty (i.e. why the toponym formed from the city name appears in different spellings).

⁷⁰*Silvanu* for *Silvano*: LLDB-25904 – AE 1925, 33 and LLDB-19768 – AE 1939, 242; *Augustu* for *Augusto*: LLDB-103078 – AE 2000, 1846; *Coban|nu* for *Cobanno*: LLDB-103080 – AE 2000, 1846; *Sal|turnu* for *Saturno*: LLDB-129757 – CIL VIII, 19983 and an altar at the present-day village of Előszállás, near Intercisa (Pannonia inf.), is dedicated to *Elagabalu* instead of *Elagabalo* (LLDB-151645 – RHP 326).

⁷¹Delamarre (2003, 163–164).

⁷²De Bernardo Stempel (2013, 89).

⁷³ $\text{voc} > \text{u}$ (+ voc): *Puoenin|o* for *Poenino* (LLDB-25359 – CIL V, 6871) and contractio uu : *Austo* for *Augusto* (with the intervocalic $\text{voc.}-\text{g.}-(\text{voc.}) > \emptyset$; LLDB-16261, LLDB-16259 – CIL II, 2705).

The vowel /y/⁷⁴ occurs in words and names borrowed from Greek, alternating between /u/ and /i/. The confusion between /i/, /y/, and /u/ dates back to early Latin,⁷⁵ and mistakes between them in the divine names occur vice versa. The u > Y change is found in a Neapolitan inscription as *Laribys* (LLDB-74980 – ILGR-1, 159). There is also only one example of a reverse change (y > V): an inscription from Palantia (Hispania citerior) bears *Numphis* instead of *Nymphis* (LLDB-87376 – CIL II, 5760). The alternation between /i/~/y/ is the most common, with seven records of y > I change,⁷⁶ and thirty-four of i > Y changes.⁷⁷ The pronunciation is elucidated by the use of <i> instead of /y/, as exemplified by *Igia* in the name of Hygia. A relatively large variety of changes in the first syllable of the god's name is documented.⁷⁸ The most common form is where <y> is written instead of the original /i/, as we can see in *Mythrae*.⁷⁹

The i > V change type is attested solely in the name *Quadriviae*, with variations like *Quadriviae*, *Quadribiae* and *Quadrubiae* reflecting both consonantal and vocalic changes.⁸⁰ These divinities, protectors of the crossroads, are attested throughout the empire, from the Gallic regions to Pannonia.⁸¹ The theonym of these goddesses derives from the Latin *quadrivium*, meaning a place where four roads meet.⁸²

3.8. Syncope and epenthesis

Syncopation, the omission of a short vowel before or after the stressed syllable, is a common phenomenon in the corpus of divine names.⁸³ Fehér identifies syncope as typical in only two phonological contexts: *-c-V-l-* in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, and *-m-V-n-* in the 3rd century AD.⁸⁴ In our corpus, syncope also occurs in this phonological context: in the names of *Dominus*

⁷⁴Tantimonaco (2022).

⁷⁵The inscriptions show that in the 1-2nd centuries AD the /y/ was still predominantly pronounced /u/, but from the middle of the 3rd century onwards it was predominantly pronounced /i/. This process is also evident from the chronological distribution of /y/~/u/ and /i/~/y/ in the names of the gods. See Gonda (2016, 331).

⁷⁶*Nymphis* for *Nymphis*: LLDB-14949 – CIL II, 887, LLDB-14948 – CIL II, 888, LLDB-140596 – IRAlmeria 49; *Cibele* for *Cybele*: LLDB-11530 – CIL V, 1330, LLDB-37063 – CIL VI, 511; *[H]iegie* for *Hygiae*: LLDB-87859 – CIL VIII, 8782, LLDB-10098 – TitAq-1, 36.

⁷⁷31 times in the name of *Mithras*, 2 times in the name of *Dolichenus* (LLDB-11117 – CIL III, 14445; LLDB-15092 – CIL VII, 422), and 1 item in the name of *Py[n]ino* for *Poenino*: LLDB-89731 – AE 1904, 170.

⁷⁸Mostly following the loss of initial /h/: *[H]iegie* for *Hygiae*: LLDB-87859 – CIL VIII, 8782; *Igia* for *Hygiae*: LLDB-10098 – TitAq-1, 36.

⁷⁹For the other examples, see Vágási (2022, 452).

⁸⁰*Qadribis* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-110341, LLDB-110342 – CIL III, 4441; *Quadrivis* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-19862 – Hild 66 and LLDB-47822 – CIL III, 13497; *Qua[dr]ivis* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-44760 – Hild 381; *[Qva]drubs* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-117644, LLDB-117645 – AE 2008, 1104; *Quadrib(iis)* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-47820 – CIL III, 13464; *Quadrubis* for *Quadriviiis*: LLDB-47821 – CIL III, 13497.

⁸¹From Pannonia sup., Carnuntum: CIL III, 4441, CIL III, 13463-7, CIL III, 13475, CIL III, 14089, Hild 66, AE 2008, 1104, AE 1992, 1425; Savaria: Hild 381 and Vindobona: CIL III, 13497.

⁸²Heichelheim RE XXIV, col. 714–720 and Ferlut (2022).

⁸³Adamik (2016).

⁸⁴Fehér (2007, 373).

and Domina, and of Hercules⁸⁵ it appears in post-tonic, while in the names of Jupiter Dolichenus and Aesculapius in pre-tonic, position.⁸⁶

Epenthesis, the opposite of syncope, is less frequent and typical of the *-lv-* and *-ns-* consonant groups, resolving the consonant cluster by inserting a vowel.⁸⁷ The corpus documents three instances of epenthesis of the vowels /a/ and /o/ are attested: *Silavano* instead of *Silvano* (LLDB-117326 – AE 2012, 1156) and *Tranosito* instead of *Transitu* (LLDB-28103 – CIL III, 4444), both from Carnuntum, and *Valgada ver|gustae* instead of *Vagdavercusti* (LLDB-124650 – AE 1952, 138). The epenthesis of vowels /e/, /i/ or /u/ is characteristic of other consonantal clusters within the names of gods and epithets.⁸⁸

3.9. Commutationes vocalium variae

The most notable instance among divine names is *Doloceno* instead of *Dolicheno*,⁸⁹ exhibiting acoustic assimilation (*commutationes vocalium variae*). However, given that only isolated examples have been documented, it is challenging to draw firm conclusions. It is possible, though, that this assimilation represents not a linguistic phenomenon but rather an orthographical error.

⁸⁵*Domno* for *Domino*: LLDB-5273 – AE 1913, 173; LLDB-5276 – ILJug-3, 1827; LLDB-91412 – AE 2010, 1383; LLDB-74863 – CIL XII, 1001; LLDB-117874 – CIL III, 3236; LLDB-122084 – CIL II-13, 940; LLDB-115276 – CIL VIII, 15147; LLDB-115270 – CIL VIII, 15132; LLDB-133390 – CIL VIII, 24280; LLDB-139255 – AE 2003, 1923; LLDB-4715 – CIL III, 8244; LLDB-86031 – CIL VIII, 9329; LLDB-69272 – CIL VIII, 1838; LLDB-9083 – CIL III, 1289; *Domnae* for *Dominae* LLDB-4716 – CIL III, 8244; LLDB-11235 – CIL III, 12476; LLDB-102908 – AE 1946, 154; LLDB-5282 – ILJug-3, 1827; LLDB-5281 – ILJug-3, 1827; LLDB-91413 – AE 2010, 1383; LLDB-9084 – CIL III, 1289; LLDB-91055 – CIL III, 7671; LLDB-117387 – AE 2002, 1132; LLDB-14077 – AE 1974, 494; *Libro* for *Libero*: LLDB-5034 – AE 1973, 456; *Vetri* for *Veteri* /*Vitiri*: LLDB-15180 – CIL VII, 511; *Hercli* for *Herculi*: LLDB-16600 – CIL VII, 751; LLDB-16770 – CIL VII, 1114; LLDB-32434 – CIL III, 3075; LLDB-55 – CIL XII, 5733; LLDB-93692 – CIL XIII, 7705; LLDB-60011 – CIL V, 5498; LLDB-23363 – CIL V, 4213; *Isdi* for *Isidi*: LLDB-90490 – CIL XIV, 20; *Saltecapu|teno* for *Saltecaputeno*: LLDB-148402 – AE 1939, 242.

⁸⁶*Dolc(heno)* for *Dolicheno*: LLDB-13552 – CIL III, 3343; LLDB-59681 – AE 1939, 272; *Dolchen(o)* for *Dolicheno*: LLDB-11225 – CIL III, 7520; LLDB-78679 – AE 1999, 1374; *Dulceno* for *Dolicheno*: LLDB-6623 – AE 1902, 20; LLDB-59709 – CCID 316; LLDB-59786 – CCID 423; LLDB-59678 – CCID 300; LLDB-14819 – TitAq-1, 164; LLDB-32066 – CIL III, 2758; LLDB-5980 – RIU-3, 762; LLDB-59647 – CCID 138; *Dulcheno* for *Dolicheno*: LLDB-59657 – CCID 201; LLDB-59697 – CCID 312; LLDB-9079 – IDR-3-3, 296; *Aesclapio* for *Aesculapio*: LLDB-11240 – CIL V, 727; LLDB-11241 – CIL V, 728; LLDB-11239 – InscrAqu-1, 86; LLDB-119573 – AE 1933, 264; LLDB-29266 – CIL III, 1766; LLDB-29267 – CIL III, 1767; LLDB-121477 – AE 1998, 1134; *Herclinti* for *Herculi*: LLDB-74791 – CIL XIII, 8188; LLDB-13268 – AE 1976, 626.

⁸⁷Fehér (2007, 374), Gonda (2016, 104), Gaeng (1968, 2–27).

⁸⁸*Meterae* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-223 – AE 1906, 184; LLDB-28128 – CIL III, 14617; *Mythirae* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-5902 – CIL III, 1112; *Invicite* for *Invictae*: LLDB-37079 – CIL VI, 80; *In|ivicto* for *Invicto*: LLDB-27156 – CIL XIII, 4735; *Cmbriano* for *Cimbriano*: LLDB-20173 – CIL XIII, 6742; *Matri Magenae* for *Matri Magnae*: LLDB-67325 – CIL X, 1587.

⁸⁹Vágási (2019, 543), LLDB-8503 – CIL III, 3999; LLDB-122659 – AE 2010, 790; LLDB-15137 – CIL VII, 991; LLDB-63375 – AE 1998, 1144; LLDB-58458 – CIL III, 11926; LLDB-59712 – CCID 356.

4. CONSONANT CHANGES

The most common consonant-related phonological issues (360 items, [Figure 2](#)) involve the letter H (144 items), though these are generally interpreted as indicators of literacy levels, as the /h/ phoneme had already disappeared from Latin by the end of the Republican era. After excluding these mistakes, i.e. errors concerning the use of H incorrectly, 216 items remain that exhibit some form of consonant-related issue. The most common of these are /b/~v/ confusion (43 items), *degeminatio* (36 items) and *geminatio* (20 items).

4.1. Geminatio, degeminatio

The shortening of geminates (*degeminatio*) in unstressed syllables is one of the most common consonant changes among the divine names and epithets, characteristic of the consonants /l/ and /n/. The presence of shortened geminates may be explained as space-saving measures,⁹⁰ but the presence of hypercorrected spellings suggests that the double consonants were shortened intentionally. In the corpus of the names and epithets of gods, the shortening of double /l/ is by

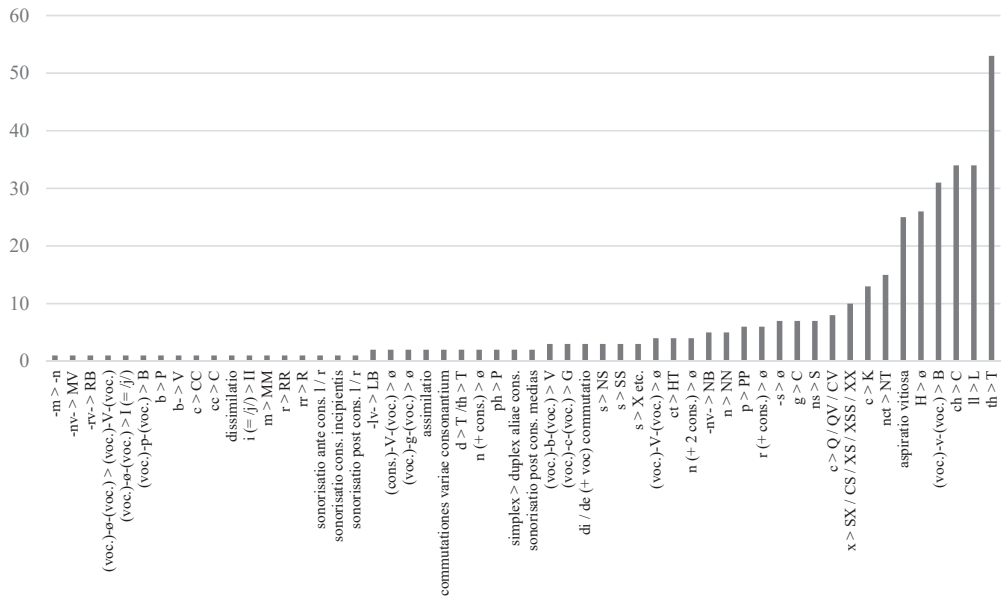


Figure 2. The relative frequencies of consonant changes in divine names and epithets. (360 items)

⁹⁰Gonda (2016, 104).

far the most frequent type of degemination (32 out of 34 cases), occurring in the names of Apollo and Bellona.⁹¹ There is also a single instance of the shortening of double /r/ and /c/.⁹²

The *geminatio*, in which the standard single consonant is doubled, is relatively less frequent in the names of gods and epithets.⁹³ The most common is the doubling of /p/ and /n/.⁹⁴

4.2. Nasals and ns > S

Among the consonant groups, changes involving nasal sounds account for 2% (18 items). The weakening or loss of the consonant in word-internal position (most often before /v/, /t/ or /ct/ consonants) is rare among the divine epithets – *invictus* and *sanctus, sancta*.⁹⁵ The ns > S change within the case of omission before a consonant constitutes a separate group. This is better understood as a measure of literacy, as the /n/ in the *-ns-* consonant cluster was not pronounced.⁹⁶ The opposite process, i.e. the hypercorrect spelling of *-ns-* in place of *-s-* between vowels also occurs in the name of Isis. The form *Insidi* is attested in three cases, from Gallia narbonensis, Germania superior and Hispania citerior.⁹⁷

⁹¹*Apolini* for *Apollini*: LLDB-2690 – CIL XIII, 433; LLDB-937 – CIL XIII, 1460; LLDB-29146 – AE 1987, 809; LLDB-27957 – AE 1987, 815; LLDB-17250 – CIL XII, 2792; LLDB-74860 – CIL XII, 991; LLDB-50037 – CIL XIII, 7785; LLDB-19750 – CIL XIII, 6663; LLDB-60900 – AE 1921, 13; LLDB-103101 – AE 1980, 644; LLDB-103100 – AE 1980, 644; LLDB-38958 – HEp 2000, 722; LLDB-15561 – AE 1968, 211; LLDB-4818 – IMS-4, 106; LLDB-126198 – CIL IX, 8111; LLDB-125330 – AE 2008, 559; LLDB-125329 – AE 2008, 556; LLDB-125328 – AE 2002, 545; LLDB-151841 – CAG-27, p 142; *Belonae* for *Bellonae*: LLDB-44511 – AE 1968, 212; LLDB-44492 – CILCaceres-2, 518; LLDB-44491 – CILCaceres-2, 517; LLDB-44464 – CILCaceres-1, 324; LLDB-43998 – CILCaceres-2, 638; LLDB-25196 – AE 1993, 987; LLDB-15553 – CIL 2, 5277; LLDB-50935 – CIL VIII, 7111; *Poluci* for *Polluci*: LLDB-28738 – AE 1998, 1024; *Adsa|lute* for *Adsallutae*: LLDB-49891 – CIL III, 11685; *Cicolui* for *Cucollui*: LLDB-154112 – CIL XIII, 5597. However, the Gaulish theonym *Cicollu(i)s*, the epithet of Mars has different variations: *Cicollus*, *Cicolus*, *Cicollui*, and *Cichol*.

⁹²*Tere M|atri* for *Terrae Matri*: LLDB-13524 – CIL III, 10274; *Baco* for *Baccho*: LLDB-80191 – HEp 2000, 181.

⁹³*Cassibus* for *Casibus*: LLDB-24138 – AE 1928, 188; *Sabazzi* for *Sabazi*: LLDB-145455 – CIL VI, 30950; *Maiia* for *Maias*: LLDB-5249 – AE 1997, 1180; *Hercull(i)* for *Herculi*: LLDB-122610 – AE 2001, 1297; *Nimmado* for *Nemado*: LLDB-153732 – AE 1935, 11; *Berro* for *Bero*: LLDB-153150 – AE 1971, 192; *Ccastori* for *Castori*: LLDB-153730 – CIL II, 6070; *Anccieti* for *Aniceto*: LLDB-156271 – CIL VI, 32567; *Tutellae* for *Tutelae*: LLDB-80450 – AE 1981, 537; LLDB-153722 – HEp 2011, 421. Examples occur in end-of-line position, which may also involve duplication due to the carelessness of the engraver. *Cos|serva(tori)* for *Conservatori*: LLDB-30944 – AE 1996, 1157; *Augus|ste* for *Augustae*: LLDB-36631 – CIL 2-14, 849; *Silv|van|(o)* for *Silvano*: LLDB-9147 – CIL III, 12564.

⁹⁴*Appolini* for *Apollini*: LLDB-121755 – AE 2017, 1028; LLDB-127146 – AE 1999, 631; LLDB-15743 – CIL XIII, 6661; LLDB-36082 – CIL XIII, 11239; LLDB-20793 – CIL V, 6603; LLDB-151840 – CAG-27, p 142; *MINNERVAE* for *Minervae*: LLDB-112028 – ILAfr 354; LLDB-24431 – AE 1978, 581; *Silvanno* for *Silvano*: LLDB-9617 – AE 1912, 72; *Siqu[a]|nn(ae)* for *Sequanae*: LLDB-5108 – CIL XIII, 2864; *Dolchenno* for *Dolicheno*: LLDB-59669 – AE 1972, 445.

⁹⁵*Ivcto* for *Invicto*: LLDB-28077 – CIL III, 15184,10a; *Sacto* for *Sancto*: LLDB-16710 – RIB-1, 2044, LLDB-15061 – RIB-1, 924; LLDB-92754 – AE 2012, 1105; *Sacte* for *Sanctae*: LLDB-19645 – CIL XIII, 6384 and the goddess from Britannia: *Covel|tina* for *Conventinae*: LLDB-18588 – RIB-1, 1531.

⁹⁶Väänänen (1981, 121§); *Trasitu* for *Transitui*: LLDB-13534 – RIU-6, 1488; *Trasito* for *Transitui*: LLDB-51829 – CIL III, 10963; *Ver[g]ulesi* for *Bergulensi*: LLDB-81219 – CIL VI, 2798; *Castresi* for *Castrensi*: LLDB-144134 – CIL VI, 30854; *Camcesi* for *Campensi*: LLDB-143717 – CIL VI, 185; *Laquiniesi* for *Laquiniensi*: LLDB-153148 – CIL II, 2405; *Cos|serva(tori)* for *Conservatori*: LLDB-30943 – AE 1996, 1157.

⁹⁷LLDB-21714 – CIL XII, 1532; LLDB-140159 – AE 2004, 1017; LLDB-90711 – AE 1951, 277, see Sisani & Gasparini (2009, 393).

There are some data on the alternation of the letters /m/ and /n/, both in word-final (-m > -N) and inter-vocalic positions (voc-n-voc), as well as before another consonant (-nv- > MV), however, all of these can be interpreted as simple misspellings.⁹⁸

4.3. Labial sounds

Intervocalic merger of /w/ and /b/ attested in B/V confusion [(voc.)-v-(voc.) > B] occurred in the name of Jupiter,⁹⁹ and the merger is most common in the variants of Quadriviae, Triviae and Biviae as *Quadribiis*, *Quadrubiis*, *Tribiis* and *Bibiis*;¹⁰⁰ moreover, the intervocalic change [(voc.)-b-(voc.) > V] is also recorded in the corpus, although much less frequently.¹⁰¹ Only one example of b- > V confusion is represented in our corpus in word-initial position: *Apollini | Ver[g]ulesi* stands for *Apollini Bergulensi* (LLDB-81217 – HEP 1989, 159). Alternatively, the change may be explained as (voc.)-v-(voc.) > b, following external sandhi rules. Post-consonantal mergers of /w/ and /b/ are also evident, including the change from /v/ after /n/ (-nv- > NB), to /v/ after /l/ (-lv- > LB) and /v/ after /r/ (-rv- > RB).¹⁰²

The post-consonantal loss of /v/ is evidenced in a single inscription from Aquincum, where the name of Silvanus was carved in the form *Silan|o* (LLDB-19315 – CIL III, 10453). However, *Silano* can be explained by a simple misspelling, the latter being much more likely, given that the whole inscription is poorly written.¹⁰³

4.4. Loss of word-final consonants

One of the most common changes affecting the consonant system is the loss of word-final consonants. Explaining the absence of a final consonant requires considering several factors. All instances of the omission of -s were examined in their phonetic contexts, i.e. in relation to the

⁹⁸*Cybeben* for *Cybelem*: LLDB-72158 – CIL VI, 513; *Mvicto* for *Invicto*: LLDB-28145 – CIL III, 7475 and *Menitrae* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-28111 – CIL III, 3474; to the interpretation of *Menitrae* cf. Vágási (2020, 90–91).

⁹⁹*Iobi* for *Iovi*: LLDB-6621 – AE 1902, 20; LLDB-27240 – CIL IX, 2124; LLDB-26802 – CIL IX, 1498; LLDB-40027 – CIL III, 6228; LLDB-143738 – CIL VI, 30730.

¹⁰⁰*Bibis* for *Biviis*: LLDB-16483 – AE 1998, 984; LLDB-19751 – CIL XIII, 6667; *Qaudrubis* for *Quadriviis*: LLDB-19628 – CIL XIII, 6343; LLDB-19597 – CIL XIII, 6315; LLDB-24221 – AE 1922, 61; LLDB-7631 – CIL III, 1440; LLDB-47820 – CIL III, 13464; LLDB-110341 – CIL III, 4441; LLDB-93824 – CIL XIII, 11708d; LLDB-16489 – AE 1998, 984; LLDB-21437 – CIL XIII, 7928; LLDB-76163 – CIL XIII, 8242; LLDB-76160 – CIL XIII, 8241; LLDB-76157 – CIL XIII, 8240; LLDB-16444 – AE 1991, 1267; LLDB-16223 – CIL XIII, 11823; LLDB-28038 – CIL XIII, 7398; LLDB-18680 – CIL XIII, 5070; LLDB-93480 – CIL XIII, 11647; LLDB-47821 – CIL III, 13497; LLDB-117644 – AE 2008, 1104; *Tribis* for *Triviis*: LLDB-19656 – CIL XIII, 6426; LLDB-16486 – AE 1998, 984; LLDB-19753 – CIL XIII, 6667; LLDB-18677 – CIL XIII, 5070.

¹⁰¹*Live[ro]* for *Libero*: LLDB-117526 – FE 763; *Naviae* for *Nabiae*: LLDB-153152 – CIL II, 2602; LLDB-153734 – CIL VI, 2798.

¹⁰²*Silbano* for *Silvano*: LLDB-92964 – CIL XI, 3732; LLDB-1176 – ILBulg 199; *Miner[bae]* for *Minervae*: LLDB-110925 – CIL VI, 29844,2; *Inbicto* for *Invicto*: LLDB-26997 – CIL XI, 3865; LLDB-37090 – CIL VI, 746; LLDB-36997 – AE 1948, 100; LLDB-73774 – CIL IX, 7622.

¹⁰³Fehér (2015, 27).

subsequent words. The fact that the omission occurred at the end of a line, as well as the possibility of VS ligature, were also considered.¹⁰⁴ The loss of the word-final *-m* has already been discussed in the context of case confusion – as an alternative explanation of the same form.¹⁰⁵

In the corpus of divine names and epithets, data are available only on the loss of the plural dative ending *-is* (7 items). In the inscription from Tabernae (Germania sup.), the goddesses of the crossroads, the Biviae, the Triviae and the Quadriviae are named (AE 1998, 984). However, the goddesses' names appear as *Bibie*, *Tribie* and *Quadrubie*, where both phonological (i > E with drop of *-s*) and morphological errors explain why these forms were created, i.e. these forms can be plural nominatives (also with ae > E change).¹⁰⁶ The omission of the word-final *-s* after *-u-* is also recorded from Vindolanda (Britannia): *Ma|tribu* instead of *Matribus* (LLDB-122655 – AE 1998, 837a) and from Lusitaniae and Turgalium (Lusitania), where *Larebu* was engraved instead of *Laribus* (LLDB-30965 – CILCaceres-1, 3, LLDB-15353 – AE 1967, 203).

4.5. Consonant voicing and devoicing

Overall, there are 20 items for the voicing (sonorization) of consonants: some instances of the sonorant consonants in the word-initial position (*sonorisatio cons. incipientis* – *Zabazi* for *Sabazi*: LLDB-135432 – AE 1961, 81), sonorization after the voiced consonant (*sonorisatio post cons. medias* – *Sangto* for *Sancto*: LLDB-15181 – CIL VII, 511; LLDB-16679 – CIL VII, 884), sonorization before a consonant (*sonorisatio ante cons. l / r* – *Midre* for *Mithrae*: LLDB-24191 – Finke 163), and the appearance of the post-consonantal sonority (*sonorisatio post cons. l / r* – *Mergurio* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-19599 – CIL XIII, 6316).

Intervocalic voicing and devoicing include (voc.)-c-(voc.) > G (3 items)¹⁰⁷ and the /b/ (b > P – *Laripus* for *Laribus*: LLDB-36493 – CIL II, 2471) and of /g/ also in the position between the vowels (g > C – 6 items).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴The role of the line end, and the resulting lack of space, in the omission of a final consonant cannot be confirmed as a linguistic phenomenon.

¹⁰⁵In general, see Adamik (2019); Herman (2003, 38–39) and in divine names and epithets see Vágási (2023, 625).

¹⁰⁶LLDB-16488, LLDB-16485 and LLDB-16491.

¹⁰⁷[Red]jugenti for Reduci: LLDB-121765 – CIL XIII, 5941; Dulgeno for Dolicheno: LLDB-59695 – AE 1982, 734; Gp for Cautopati: LLDB-37123 – CIL VI, 3730.

¹⁰⁸Adamik (2009, 150–153). However, the change g > C can also be an archaic spelling. Auc(ust-) for Augusto/Augustae/Augustis: LLDB-45933 – AE 1938, 73; LLDB-32955 – CIL III, 8405; LLDB-3562 – CIL III, 5036; LLDB-117823 – AE 2006, 1041; Hyciae for Hygiae: LLDB-33655 – CIL VI, 15471; LLDB-121478 – AE 1998, 1134.

4.6. Errors regarding *-qu-* and the consonant *c*

In thirteen cases, the spelling <k> instead of *c* (*c* > *K*) appears in the inscriptions, most often in the spelling *Volkano* instead of *Vulcano*.¹⁰⁹ There are also some examples of hypercorrect spellings of the consonant *c* and the group *cv* (*c* > *Q* / *QV* / *CV*).¹¹⁰ A single instance illustrates the reverse change (*qu* > *CV*): an altar dedicated to *Secuan(ae)* instead of *Sequanae* (LLDB-5113 – CIL XIII, 2863). This variant of the name of the goddesses may give a clue to the pronunciation of *Sequana* in Celtic.¹¹¹ In addition, fifteen instances show *-nt-* spelling for the consonant group *-nct-*, all in the epithet *sanctus/sancta* or *sanctissimus/sanctissima*,¹¹² along with some data for the change *ct* > *TT* / *T*, found only in the epithet *invictus*.¹¹³

4.7. Other consonant changes

Palatalization before a vowel occurs four times, all four inversely in the name of Sabazius as *Sabadio*.¹¹⁴ Although the original name is supposed to have been *Savadios*, the *z*-form being explained by the assumption of a Thracio-Frigian assimilation of the *-di-* group.¹¹⁵ However, the form *Sabadius* is not found in Thracian inscriptions before the Roman era. The epigraphic attestations are from the Roman provinces of Upper and Lower Moesia from a small geographical area, around Novae and Nicopolis ad Istrum and one inscription from Rome.¹¹⁶ The adoption of Σαβάζιος used in Greek inscriptions appears as *Sabadius*, which shows that the pronunciation of *-di-* was already palatalized, i.e. *-zi-* pronounced, thus *Sabadius* is hypercorrect, or inversely confirms the palatalized *-z-* pronunciation of *-di-* (i.e. *-dj-*).¹¹⁷ Examples of

¹⁰⁹*Volkano* for *Vulcano*: LLDB-15046 – CIL VII, 346; LLDB-9654 – ILD 533; LLDB-34729 – CIL XIII, 2940; LLDB-1139 – CIL III, 13718; LLDB-23375 – CIL V, 4295; LLDB-19684 – CIL XIII, 6454; LLDB-35135 – CIL XIII, 3164; LLDB-23374 – CIL V, 4294; LLDB-25932 – AE 1903, 27; LLDB-4439 – CIL XIII, 3593; LLDB-35056 – CIL XIII, 3106; LLDB-1453 – AE 1957, 7, and *Merkurio* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-94373 – CIL XIII, 3533; the data for *Volkano* are labelled *fortasse recte* in the LLDB database, because the use of *K* before */a/* was considered correct by some grammarians not only at the of the spelling of *-ka-*, but also in word initial position.

¹¹⁰*Viqtoriae* for *Victoriae*: LLDB-38953 – AE 1896, 1; *Herquli* for *Herculi*: LLDB-60070 – CIL V, 5510; LLDB-59686 – AE 1953, 123; LLDB-91059 – CIL III, 7681; *Merqurio* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-18891 – CIL VII, 1337,61; LLDB-4914 – CIL XIII, 5480; LLDB-2346 – CIL XII, 2440; LLDB-2240 – AE 1993, 1113.

¹¹¹*sēcū-’atnā*, see Jung (1969, 1973).

¹¹²LLDB-91962 – AE 2013, 1412; LLDB-96696 – CIL VI, 9019; LLDB-31529 – CIL XI, 4643; LLDB-96693 – CIL VIII, 9017; LLDB-19490 – CIL III, 14424; LLDB-121316 – AE 1935, 66; LLDB-1194 – AE 1976, 611; LLDB-1182 – AE 2004, 1197; LLDB-1175 – ILBulg 199; LLDB-105759 – AE 1975, 670; LLDB-58150 – CIL VIII, 18897; LLDB-98777 – CIL VI, 32593; LLDB-121520 – AE 2008, 1186.

¹¹³LLDB-19546 – ILBulg 30; LLDB-90291 – LIKelsey 395.

¹¹⁴*Sabadio* for *Sabazio*: LLDB-19813 – AE 1908, 141; LLDB-19704 – CIL III, 12429; LLDB-147327 – AE 1998, 1137; LLDB-177139 – CIL VI, 31164.

¹¹⁵Hálmagi (2014, 97).

¹¹⁶The dedicators of the inscription are equites originating from Moesia inferior: ...*ex ala prima Darda(norum) pro- v(inciae) Moesiae inferioris*...

¹¹⁷Hálmagi (2014, 100).

assimilation, where a consonant influences a neighboring consonant to become similar,¹¹⁸ and dissimilation, the opposite process, are also present.¹¹⁹

There are six examples of the loss of /r/ before a consonant (r (+ cons.) > ø),¹²⁰ which is not explained only by a change of consonant and could possibly be a simple misspelling.

Among god names and epithets, there is also an example of the omission of the intervocalic /g/ [(voc.)-g-(voc.) > ø] in the name of *Augusto* as *Austo* (LLDB-16260, LLDB-16258 – CIL II, 2705). To the insertion of /j/ [(voc.)-ø-(voc.) > I (= /j/)] *Deiae* for *Deae* (LLDB-25556 – AE 1965, 73a) on a Lusitanian altar is worth to mention.

4.8. A separate case of /h/

The most prevalent issues pertain to /h/, with 144 records among the god names. While these instances may reflect completed linguistic changes, they are better regarded as indicators of literacy and should be treated as spelling errors. The disappearance of /h/ (26 items) by the 3rd century AD was widespread in the Danubian provinces, where half of these items originate.¹²¹ The phenomenon occurs in all divine names and epithets beginning with /h/, especially in *Hygiae*, in the form *Igiae*, and also in the names of Hecate and Hercules.¹²²

The most widespread th > T change is found in fifty-three items in the divine names, all involving the name *Mithras* in the form *Mitrae*.¹²³ There are also examples of the hypercorrect insertion of /h/, or aspiration, in the divine names,¹²⁴ where, once again, the most common is the aspiration of Mithras' name, appearing in the form *Mithrae*.¹²⁵ However, these examples could be interpreted as misspellings of the name of Mithras.

¹¹⁸*Depussori* for *Depulsori*: LLDB-356 – CIL XII, 315; *Sebesio* for *Sabazio*: LLDB-37012 – CIL VI, 36819.

¹¹⁹*Ninphis* for *Nymphis*: LLDB-39809 – CIL II, 887.

¹²⁰*Heculi* for *Herculi*: LLDB-6553 – CIL III, 8095; LLDB-2794 – CIL III, 15150; *Mecurio* for *Mercurio*: LLDB-5252 – AE 1997, 1181; LLDB-5251 – AE 1997, 1181; LLDB-2956 – CIL XIII, 1125; LLDB-5756 – AE 1930, 9.

¹²¹Fehér's suggestion of a "renaissance of h" during this period may indicate that its pronunciation was partially restored. These might have been reintroduced from the east by settlers returning after the Marcomanni War, or possibly by Semitic speakers who brought them back to the Danube provinces, especially in Pannonia. Gonda (2016, 105).

¹²²*Ygiae* for *Hygiae*: LLDB-10099 – TitAq-1, 36; LLDB-5606 – CIL III, 12558; LLDB-9501 – AE 1992, 1480; LLDB-11112 – AE 1980, 828; LLDB-49822 – CIL XIII, 10024,479; LLDB-3472 – ILJug-3, 1522; LLDB-85804 – CIL VIII, 8985; LLDB-59843 – CIL VIII, 2624; LLDB-31667 – CIL XI, 5025; *Ecate* for *Hecatae*: LLDB-37052 – CIL VI, 1675; LLDB-36983 – CIL VI, 733; LLDB-60873 – CIL XI, 671; LLDB-94594 – CIL XIII, 4550; *Erculi* for *Herculi*: LLDB-60069 – CIL V, 5510; LLDB-5275 – AE 1991, 1356; LLDB-16599 – CIL VII, 751; LLDB-49886 – CIL XIII, 3594; LLDB-86903 – CIL VIII, 2295; LLDB-143743 – CIL VI, 30732; LLDB-2114 – AIJ 30; LLDB-71 – CIL III, 11743; LLDB-31527 – CIL XI, 4638; LLDB-5658 – AE 1991, 1342; *Aellipolitan* for *Heliopolitano*: LLDB-26235 – Wagner-2, 69; *Ar[p]o[c]atri* for *Harpocrati*: LLDB-90386 – SIRIS 99; *Eroni* for *Heroni*: LLDB-19847 – ILBulg 414.

¹²³A few examples: LLDB-16553 – CIL VII, 646 or LLDB-1833 – AE 1976, 533.

¹²⁴*Hisidi* for *Isidi*: LLDB-75843 – CIL XII, 3061; *Ephonae* for *Eponae*: LLDB-145606 – CIL VI, 31146; *Dehe* for *Deae*: LLDB-98761 – CIL VI, 32583; *Phoen(ino)* for *Poenino*: LLDB-25431 – CIL V, 6879.

¹²⁵LLDB-8820 – CIL III, 3910; LLDB-8821 – CIL III, 14354,20; LLDB-645 – CIL III, 10309; LLDB-19272 – AE 1990, 818; LLDB-117221 – AE 2016, 1278 and LLDB-117222 – AE 2016, 1279.

The second most common is the proportion of *ch*~*h* alternation (34 items), which indicates that *ch* was not palatalized.¹²⁶ The change is represented by the spelling of the name Jupiter Dolichenus,¹²⁷ and with one example of Bacchus.¹²⁸ Only two items for the spelling *ph* > *P* are known in the corpus, – showing the predominance of /*f*/ instead of /*p*/: we have *Nympis* instead of *Nymphis* (LLDB-14947 – CIL II, 888; LLDB-153733 – HEP 2013, 100).

Changes in the dentals are rare, with only two inscriptions from Aquincum showing /*d*/ becoming <*t*>, as in *teo* instead of *deo* (LLDB-23036 – AE 2009, 1129; LLDB-23025 – AE 1969/70, 475). This could be interpreted as *th* > *T* if it originated from the corresponding Greek word *θεός*.¹²⁹

There are four other records of the change from *ct* > *HT*, all in the form *Invihto* in place of *invicto*,¹³⁰ all from the same Mithras shrine in Gimmeldingen (Germania sup.), which is a local phenomenon and each of the altars here can be assumed to be the work of a single craftsman.

5. CONCLUSION

The phonetic variations in divine names and epithets reveal complex linguistic phenomena reflecting the dynamics of Latin's development, regional variations, cultural influences, and language contact, including Celtic and Greek influences. Spelling variations often result from linguistic interactions and regional differences, illustrating variations among Latin dialects. A general overview of the religious inscriptions and a comparison with the other type of inscriptions from the Roman Empire is required.

Preliminary analysis indicates that divine names and epithets in votive inscriptions exhibit similar vowel changes to those found in typical epigraphic material. In Latin god names, there are numerous phonetic variations, spelling mistakes, and hypercorrect spellings among vowels and consonants. The vowel changes in the names of gods and epithets cannot be distinguished linguistically from other phrases of the votive inscriptions, but the trends that appear throughout the empire can be seen in the corpus under study, with the phonetic changes towards the Romance languages dominating. In the case of vowels, the monophthongization of diphthongs and the loss of vowels before other vowels are significant. Consonant changes in divine names align with general trends observed in other word types within the provinces; however, consonant changes are slightly less frequent than vowel changes.

¹²⁶Gonda (2016, 105).

¹²⁷LLDB-13552 – CIL III, 3343; LLDB-14819 – CIL III, 3462; LLDB-59654 – AE 1973, 444; LLDB-16580 – AE 1898, 25; LLDB-18911 – RIB-2-8, 2503,122; LLDB-9731 – AE 1905, 16; LLDB-8801 – CCID 161; LLDB-59651 – CIL III, 7660; LLDB-59649 – CIL III, 7630; LLDB-59648 – CIL III, 7625; LLDB-32067 – CIL III, 2758; LLDB-35076 – CIL XIII, 6334; LLDB-15731 – CIL XIII, 11812; LLDB-59828 – CIL XIII, 7343; LLDB-59830 – CIL XIII, 7566a; LLDB-40833 – CIL III, 6290; LLDB-6624 – CIL III, 14503,1; LLDB-59707 – AE 1982, 740; LLDB-59706 – AE 1939, 275; LLDB-59704 – AE 1982, 735; LLDB-59699 – AE 1982, 739; LLDB-59694 – AE 1982, 734; LLDB-59690 – AE 1982, 732; LLDB-59685 – AE 1939, 276; LLDB-59683 – AE 1982, 737; LLDB-59679 – AE 1939, 271; LLDB-116645 – CIL VIII, 18217.

¹²⁸BACCO for *Baccho*: LLDB-25078 – CIL XI, 127; LLDB-80192 – HEP 2000, 181.

¹²⁹In the case of *teo* instead of *deo*, the form may reflect dedicator or engraver uncertainty rather than a phonetic change, leading to confusion between the Greek *theos* and the Latin *deus*, which share the same meaning.

¹³⁰see Barchi (2020–2021, 286); LLDB-24200 – Finke 166; LLDB-24197 – Finke 165; LLDB-24194, LLDB-24190 – Finke 163.

Variations between phonemes in the divine names and epithets corpus can reveal patterns that are significant linguistically, historically, and culturally. The interaction with Celtic, Gaulish, Greek and even Brittonic languages and culture, local dialects and traditions have influenced the development of the divine names and epithets, producing a diversity of linguistic variations. Although some cults of the pre-Roman religious world can be found in the Roman Empire, – surviving with at least some aspects of their origins preserved – such as those of Celtic, Greek or Gaulish origin, they often adapted their names or translated them into Latin. The linguistic interpretation of these theonyms may sometimes be difficult where the sound changes from the original language and the possibility of different variants have to be considered.

Most phonetic confusions occur in the names of Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus, which contained aspirated consonants do not present in Latin. Both cults emerged and spread rapidly within the Roman Empire around the 1st century AD. They spread along different paths, but in both cases, the cult was imperial (from Britain to the Eastern provinces), which makes the linguistic study of these cults even more interesting.¹³¹

However, the inscriptions only provide a direct insight into the life of the upper provincial leadership, the army, and the urban elite, who were almost exclusively able to erect altars.¹³² The inscriptions, therefore, reflect the language use of the narrower population and the changes in the Latin language. It may also be a further symptom of deviation from classical norms and rigorous regulations – to find such great variation from the classical idiom and the use of everyday language in the names of the gods and their epithets.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The present paper was prepared within the framework of the HORIZON-ERC-2022-ADG project no. 101098102 entitled Digital Latin Dialectology (DiLaDi): Tracing Linguistic Variation in the Light of Ancient and Early Medieval Sources and the NKFIH (National Research, Development and Innovation Office, Hungary) project no. K 135359 entitled Computerized Historical Linguistic Database of Latin Inscriptions of the Imperial Age (see: <http://lldb.elte.hu/>).

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Council Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

¹³¹Vágási (2019, 2020).

¹³²Financially, since the cost of an altar or statue base was enormous, and also the right to perform the dedication ceremony was restricted to certain persons, see Szabó (2020, 198).

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