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# Divine Names and Bilingualism in Rome: Religious Dynamics in Multilingual Spaces

**Abstract:** Ancient inscriptions commemorate and perpetuate ritual interaction by fixing different forms of communication between divine recipients and human agents using specific names appropriate to the occasion and intentions. The testimonies of bilingual divine names in Rome bear witness to social strategies for invoking and representing single gods or divine configurations. As a multilingual space, Rome offers a wide range of instances where uses or needs model the divine naming process. Bilingual scenarios constitute challenging cases because the context urges human agents to elaborate valid onomastic alternatives according to their cultural understanding and repertoire. In cultic communication, divine onomastic sequences articulate various facets of a given *puissance* that is ritually activated. Accordingly, the use of Greek and/or Latin constitutes a pragmatic resource and stimulates divine conceptualisation in both multicultural and “multicultural” settings.

Ancient inscriptions commemorate and perpetuate the interaction initiated within the ritual – vow, dedication, consecration or other forms of communication between divine addressees and human agents.<sup>1</sup> During such a process of fixation, gods were granted specific names appropriate for the occasion and intentions in accordance with the context. It is well-known that names played a crucial role in the definition and representation of the gods, which characterised them either individually or in relation to other divinities.<sup>2</sup> Recently, Rüpke advocated that gods do not possess inherent names but depend on the onomastics given by the addresser during the religious communication, based on the invocation and verbalisation of specific *puissance divines*.<sup>3</sup> This statement is shared by the ERC “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms” programme (2017–2023), which applies it to the Greek and Semitic evidence. Whether there was some sort of “permanent nucleus” for each deity or his/her very existence

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<sup>1</sup> This publication has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No 741182, Project “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms”). The research has also been carried within the programme Juan de la Cierva Formación 2019, FJC2019-039450-I, and the project “Religión: el Individuo y la Communitas (RICO)”, PID2020-117176GB-I00, funded by the Ministerio de Ciencia e Innovación de España.

<sup>2</sup> This topic has been long studied since Usener 1896. See, more recently, from Brulé 1998 or Belayche/Brulé 2010 to Parker 2017 and Lebreton/Bonnet 2019. Such a trend encourages the rise of projects and databases on divine onomastics: Brulé/Lebreton 2007, the BDEG (<https://epiclesesgrecques.univ-rennes1.fr/>), the EPIDI project (Alvar 2019) and the MAP project (<https://base-map-polytheisms.huma-num.fr/>).

<sup>3</sup> Rüpke 2015 and later Rüpke 2021, 66–83. On the concept of “*puissance divine*” coined by Vernant 1965, 79, see Bonnet *et al.* 2017.

was negotiated in each context according to the agent's knowledge and intentions is beyond the scope of this contribution; our aim is limited to analysing the bilingual, specifically Latin and Greek, inscriptions from Rome containing divine names as the result of specific social strategies.

We will not address and categorise the causes of religious translation of foreign names, as Ando, Marco Simón or Parker, among others, have already done so in relation to the so-called *interpretatio*, but rather we will concentrate on attestations of bilingual divine names as a hint to divine representation and conceptualisation.<sup>4</sup> In fact, bilingual scenarios constitute challenging cases in which the social context incites human agents to reflect on valid alternatives for naming the divine in accordance to their understanding and cultural repertoire.<sup>5</sup> Rome, where multilingual locations are numerous, offers a wide range of multilingual environments, in which different uses or needs shape the naming processes.

## 1 What is a Bilingual Text?

In religious communication, inscriptions can be found on many different supports (stone, metal, ceramic, others), in various ritual contexts (commemoration, *votum*, curses, etc.) and cultural backgrounds. In spaces of cross-cultural contacts, the ritual vocabulary of one language is connected to another cultural repertoire. Multilingualism is thus a common phenomenon that affects religious texts to different degrees, from monolingual inscriptions framed within a multicultural background to bilingual texts, with a whole set of nuances.

The study of such phenomena began in the second half of the twentieth century due to the advances in linguistics and sociological studies. The most influential work on cross-linguistic influence and bilingualism was Weinreich's in 1953: he studied bilingual interferences among different linguistic communities.<sup>6</sup> As Rochette's recent historiographical review observed, such an approach developed into a sociolinguistic perspective and was applied, on the one hand, to the Classical world by Kaimio, who collected multiple sources to establish a contextual qualitative analysis of Roman knowledge of the Greek language, and, on the other hand, to a broader framework by Ferguson and Fishman, who clarified the differences between bilingualism and *diglossia*.<sup>7</sup> After Weinreich, several studies on the symbiosis of Greek and Latin addressed

4 Ando 2005; Marco Simón 2013; Parker 2017, 46–52; Colin/Huck/Vanséveren 2015.

5 As already highlighted by Bonnet and Bianco in the case of Greek and Phoenician dedications: Bonnet/Bianco 2018.

6 Weinreich 1953.

7 Rochette 2011; Kaimio 1979; Ferguson 1959, who brought the term *diglossia* from Arab philologists; Fishman 1972 and Fishman 1975, who expanded the term *diglossia* to unrelated languages that were put in contact.

the phenomenon of bilingualism in a multicultural world, while other works, such as Boyancé and Marrou, delved into the teaching and diffusion of Greek among Romans trying to evaluate the impact of such cultural ascendancy.<sup>8</sup>

The following decades saw the emergence of new sociolinguistic studies which focused on multiculturalism and trans-coding phenomena. They explored the process of code-switching and the reasons behind linguistic choices made by speakers in multilingual environments.<sup>9</sup> At the turn of the millennium, scholars such as Biville introduced these concepts into the field of classical studies and provided new insights into language interactions, which turned out to be especially useful in the analysis of inscriptions.<sup>10</sup> Such studies and others, including those of Dikey and Rochette,<sup>11</sup> resulted in a paradigm shift, with a direct impact on the epigraphic field: Wenskus' works and, above all, Adams' publications introduced the code-switching approach and identified different types of bilingual inscriptions.<sup>12</sup>

Adams spread the general idea that bilingualism cannot be reduced to the influence or imposition of one language on another. In the epigraphic evidence, two main practices surfaced: 1. a translation between two texts, *i.e.* bilingual inscriptions; 2. the introduction of foreign linguistic elements into a monolingual text, *i.e.* code-switching, due to various factors ranging from linguistic interferences to specific ritual constraints or objectives. Adams defines the code-switching as “the practice of switching between two languages in the course of a single utterance”, while admitting that “code-switching has emerged in recent years as the most problematic feature of bilinguals' performance”.<sup>13</sup> This issue encouraged attempts to categorise the practice theoretically and sparked the epigraphic debate with contributions such as that of Mullen and James on multilingualism and the sub-categories of bilingual inscriptions. In fact, they distinguish “bi-version bilingual texts” – that is, inscriptions with two texts in separate languages – versus “texts displaying bilingual phenomena” that is, inscriptions which constitute a single text that shows code-switching, interference or borrowing between two languages”.<sup>14</sup> They established a basic terminological consensus that Mullen could apply to specific studies such as the coexistence of Greek, Latin and Celtic in southern Gaul.<sup>15</sup>

Turning to Adams, he detects three main types of bilingual manifestations:<sup>16</sup> code-switching, linguistic borrowing and interference. The former, adapted from

<sup>8</sup> Boyancé 1956; Marrou 1965, 374–388, whose original edition is from 1950.

<sup>9</sup> Jacobson 1990; Myers-Scotton 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Biville 2001–2003, who later emphasises the epigraphical sources in Biville 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Rochette 1997; Dickey 2003, who delved into the question of linguistic competence and the socio-linguistic level in order to explain the phenomenon of bilingualism.

<sup>12</sup> Wenskus 1993; Adams 2003, although some of his ideas were already present in Adams/Janse/Swain 2002, 298–331.

<sup>13</sup> Adams 2003, xx.

<sup>14</sup> Mullen/James 2012, 83.

<sup>15</sup> Mullen 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Adams 2003, 21–25.

sociolinguistic studies, is technically divided into tag-switching, inter-sentential switching and intra-sentential-switching to capture a range of possibilities from the introduction of single items (tag) to the introduction of whole lines (inter-sentential) into the primary language. However, Mullen emphasises the lack of clear boundaries between these technical concepts as they respond to a fluid continuum already observed by linguistic studies. Given the absence of alternative approaches, these terms are still used today, despite the fact, as Giulia Tozzi rightly pinpointed, that bilingualism “comprende pertanto ogni tipo di situazione che registri la compresenza di diversi codici linguistici o l’interazione tra due varietà linguistiche funzionalmente differenziate”.<sup>17</sup> Her work includes a reflection on the social milieu and the limitations of a hyper-specialised terminology. She proposes to use a less rigid methodological grid and identifies four different instances in the case of Rome: bilingual inscriptions *in senso stretto* that present an identical translation or minor variations; inscriptions with different texts juxtaposed; Latin or Greek texts that include words or expressions from the other language; and Latin texts that are entirely written in the Greek alphabet (as well as some opposite cases). Tozzi’s classification, which departs from the previous terminology, also stresses the need to consider the cultural framework, which should be a central aspect of the categorisation of bilingual inscriptions.

Modern linguistic studies<sup>18</sup> have in fact pointed out that there are many facets of language contact and bilingualism. Migration is a different context from the influence of a *lingua franca*, for example, and may result in bilingual expressions of very different forms – whether written or oral. More recently, Cacoullos and Travis have drawn attention to the socio-linguistic scope of bilingualism (and multilingualism). Their study on the adoption of a *lingua franca* and languages of prestige both by individuals and groups (monolingual or living in a context of *diglossia*) shed significant light on bilingual realities. For instance, they explored the impact of language contact on the production of internal linguistic variations.<sup>19</sup>

Such an approach leaves behind the focus on formal categorisation of bilingual inscriptions and invites us to study bilingualism as a social phenomenon in the context of multiple scenarios. Understood in terms of social rather than morphological dynamics, these situations produce bilingual expressions of many different kinds, from translation to tag-switching, from morphological interferences to different degrees of linguistic imbrication, which Tozzi recently considered,<sup>20</sup> and can generate anomalous forms within the same language. The recognition of multiple levels of linguistic contact and interference, as well as the attempt to address bilingualism more thoroughly in the ancient world, has led to some difficulties in categorising these

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<sup>17</sup> Tozzi 2019, 412.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Raymond 2010.

<sup>19</sup> Cacoullos/Travis 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Tozzi 2019, 412.

processes. The complex explanation of code-switching as a distinct phenomenon,<sup>21</sup> or the attempt to delimit *diglossia* in Antiquity in a theoretical way, reflect this uncomfortable theoretical framework. In this respect, studies on divine names may be useful because they are underexploited in that perspective and can complement investigations of bilingual phenomena by studying divine onomastic elements as potential multicultural operators.<sup>22</sup>

This article will therefore study the linguistic and religious imbrication in the city of Rome and explore bilingual phenomena as manifestations of social contacts in a multicultural environment. We will focus on inscriptions dealing with religious communication and ritual functions. How do bilingual compositions of religious texts work? How do they cope with bilingual divine names which play a crucial role in the interaction? Multiple strategies will be examined: minor changes or equivalences, absence in one of the two languages, complementary expressions with a divine denomination divided between two languages, creation of abbreviations that work as technical tags, etc. These different types of bilingual interaction, as classified by Adams and Mullen, will allow us to scrutinise the representation and conceptualisation of the divine in the “lived religion” of the global Roman society.

## 2 A Panorama of Bilingual Religious Attestations in Rome

Rome is a city where it is easy to find people, languages and cultures in contact. Latin is the principal language and, secondarily, Greek, which was used by numerous communities in and from the Eastern Mediterranean and had notable cultural prestige. In addition, other languages were mobilised by migrant groups who settled in the capital and often developed diasporic cults,<sup>23</sup> such as the Jewish community or the Palmyrene one in Trastevere, which dedicated various inscriptions in Greek and Palmyrene.<sup>24</sup>

Bilingual inscriptions from Rome, with a combination of Latin and a different language, appear in various contexts of interaction with the gods. Excluding the cases where only the writing system changes or isolated Latin borrowings are introduced into the Greek, which are impossible to quantify,<sup>25</sup> Rome offers around 100 cases of bilingual inscriptions with religious content. Translations and equivalences are more or less accurate due to a combination of three factors: technical limitations, respect

<sup>21</sup> Adams 2003; Mullen 2012, 18–21 and, earlier and in different words, Langslow 2002, 42.

<sup>22</sup> Bonnet/Bianco 2018, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Woolf 2017.

<sup>24</sup> On Jewish communities, Rochette 2008. On Palmyrene, Fowlkes-Childs 2016; Bonnet 2018.

<sup>25</sup> Adams 2003, 493 points to this phenomenon with several examples, including Christian and non-religious inscriptions.

for the habits of each language (e.g. the dating system) or an attempt to adapt some proper elements from the original linguistic and religious sphere to a new cultural framework. An excellent example is the dedication of the Roman citizen Tiberius Claudius Felix, native of Palmyra, to *Soli Sanctissimo* in Latin, and to “Malakbel and the gods of Tadmor [= Palmyra]”, in Palmyrene (*lml[k]bl wl'lyh tdmr*).<sup>26</sup> The difference between the two languages is accentuated by the fact that the dedicant appears in Latin as part of a familiar group together with his wife Claudia Helpis and his son Tiberius Claudius Alypus, while the Semitic version runs: *t̄brys qlwdys plqsy wtdmry*, that is, “Tiberius Claudius Felix and the Tadmoreans [= Palmyrenians]”.<sup>27</sup> The difference in the divine names may be due to the lack of an appropriate Latin correspondent for Malakbel, but it also reformulates the semantic scope of the gods invoked (*Sol*, a universal god, *versus* the local gods of Palmyra). Thus, the two different onomastic sequences render the deity from diverse angles. In another case, Hercules Defensor corresponds to Herakles Alexikakos,<sup>28</sup> with a subtle variation since both sequences convey the same basic meaning but with some nuances that facilitate the identification of the specific divine interlocutor that the *cultores* were trying to activate.

Bilingual inscriptions with complementary content may show traits of technification, by resorting to code-switching, by minimising the contribution of a language to a technical formulation or even by performing a lexical borrowing, which could take the form (strictly speaking) of tag-switching according to Adam's classification. Lexical borrowings from the agents' local idioms are quite frequent in the religious horizon of the Roman Empire, although resorting to etymological studies as a means of understanding ancient theonyms and epithets is not without risks.<sup>29</sup> There are also more developed texts where the semantic scope of the indigenous divine denomination remains somewhat unaltered. Such is the case with the Lusitanian religious inscriptions from the Western Iberian Peninsula, where the naming of the gods resorts to Lusitanian lexemes and inflection, while the remaining text is in Latin.<sup>30</sup> This type of bilingualism fulfils a complementary function, either because of the proximity of the dedicants to both languages and cultures (as in the case of funerary inscriptions or dedications of late Roman senators) or, more notably, because of the convenience of invoking the god in a language that is supposed to be familiar to the divinity.<sup>31</sup> In some Roman cases, such as the *ex oraculo* set of inscriptions from the Roman Forum in the 2nd century CE, this explanation needs be taken into account. Code-switching may perform a ritual function in naming the gods with a precise and efficient form.

<sup>26</sup> *CIL* VI, 710 (= *CIL* VI, 30817; *ILS*, 4337; *DB MAP* S#13867); Houston 1990; Bonnet 2018, 237.

<sup>27</sup> *DB MAP* T#17364.

<sup>28</sup> *IGR* I, 82 (= *CIL* 06, 309; *IG* XIV, 1000 I; *MAP DB* S#13867).

<sup>29</sup> See Vallejo 2021 for the case of Hispania.

<sup>30</sup> Estarán Tolosa 2016, 36, 75, 89, 269.

<sup>31</sup> García/Del Prete 2019, and more specifically, Estarán Tolosa 2019.

The technical value of code-switching can go so far that the original structure of the language is lost; the divine name becomes a tag or an abbreviation within the main language. Such a “technical formulation” appears in a funerary inscription, where Marcus Ulpius Alexander commissions a Greek text, but expresses the measurements of the tomb in Latin.<sup>32</sup> This technicality derived from a *diglossia* which may also affect the system of divine naming. For instance, there are numerous cases where “DM”, for *D(iis) M(anibus)*, heads bilingual Greek inscriptions in a way that differs little from the measures of the grave expressed by Marcus Ulpius Alexander. This feature is clearly due to the dominance of the Latin domain in the Roman funerary world.

### 3 Funerary Dedications to the Underworld Gods

The high number of funerary inscriptions, within the total amount of bilingual texts, can help us to explore the mechanisms of religious adaptation in a multicultural context. In a similar way to “DM” for *Dis Manibus* in a Greek text, a funerary religious *diglossia* is manifested by the abundant dedications to the θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, which not only appear in nine bilingual cases<sup>33</sup> but can also be extended to more than three hundred instances in monolingual inscriptions from the city of Rome. Such Greek naming of the infernal gods, which in bilingual inscriptions seems identified with the Manes, comes as a surprise because it constitutes a much bigger percentage than similar cases from other parts of the Roman Empire where Greek was the dominant tongue.<sup>34</sup>

The epigraphic typology that offers the most examples for the analysis of religious inscriptions in two languages is in fact funerary inscriptions containing references to the *Manes* gods/θεοῖς καταχθονίοις or sets of similar divinities. This group, which usually conveys a more familiar or intimate character, presents 75 cases for the city of Rome, and 23 additional funerary inscriptions that should be discarded for various reasons, namely due to the alternation of the script without changing the language, such as mentions to the *Manes* gods in Latin inscriptions written with Greek letters,<sup>35</sup> or due to the numerous examples of reused slabs – usually opisthograph – which bear unrelated texts in Greek and Latin, thus creating a false appearance of a bilingual dedication.<sup>36</sup> The bilingual inscriptions addressed to the Manes gods show Roman citizens, individuals

<sup>32</sup> *CIL* VI, 29134 (= *IGUR* II, 856).

<sup>33</sup> The cases are: *CIL* VI, 07705, 10939, 10971, 19954, 27878; *IG* XIV, 1989; *ICUR* X, 27048; and *IGUR* III, 1238. In addition, it is possible to add to this set *CIL* VI, 10868, which we will analyse below.

<sup>34</sup> The influence of Latin funerary practice on Greek inscriptions in the city of Rome was already suggested by Tzentikopoulos 2007, 16, 203–204. Later, Mullen 2011, 532, 538 included a similar suggestion as part of the cases in which Latin epigraphy influenced Greek inscriptions together with Roman laws.

<sup>35</sup> *CIL* VI, 35454 (= *IGUR* II, 980) and *CIL* VI, 20294 (= *IG* XIV, 1692; *IGUR* II, 616).

<sup>36</sup> Examples are *CIL* VI, 3144 (= *IGUR* II, 559) or *CIL* VI, 6167 (= *IG* XIV, 2071; *IGUR* II, 1011).

with Greek onomastics as well as freedmen or slaves in a multilingual reality where prestige and communication with Greek speakers seem to justify the selection of languages. There are however intermediate cases that can illustrate the difficulty in establishing a clear boundary: the opisthograph tabula *CIL* VI, 10868, which we have not included in the record of bilingual funerary inscriptions.<sup>37</sup> On the obverse, Aelius Byrrus honours his deceased wife Aelia Crispina and invokes the *Manes* gods, while the reverse includes a Greek dedication to the sophist (σοφιστῆι) Ailios Severos and the Theoi Katachthonioi [Θ(εοῖς) Κ(αταχθονίοις)], “the underworld gods”. All three characters present a similar *nomen* and could be relatives, although *IGUR* II records a long series of dedications to the Ailii/Aelii (278 to 309), who also lack the *tria nomina*, so their citizenship status remains unclear. However, it is striking how the inscription for the spouse recurses to Latin language whereas the epitaph of the sophist is in Greek, possibly because of his activity and the intellectual prestige of Greek in philosophy. The same is true for the funerary monument of Quintus Sulpicius Maximus, a boy who died at the age of eleven, found in via Salaria. The monument shows, in a central niche enclosing a statue, the deceased Maximus with a Latin text mentioning the dead, the *Manes* gods and three versified Greek texts, namely two elegiac epigrams and a poem with which the young man competed in the time of Domitian and where Helios is invoked as Ἡμετέρου κόσμοι | ο φαεσφόρον ἄρμε | λατήρα, “the Light-bearing charioteer of our world”.<sup>38</sup> The recourse to Greek for personal reasons appears in another funerary inscription, although it does not refer to the *Manes* gods: Aelia Ehortē’s salutation to Kyris (Κύρι) resorts to tag-switching since she greets the deceased in Greek with the usual formula χαῖρε, while the inscription continues in Latin with a dedication to an amiable/lovely god (*deo Amabili*), which could be an euphemism for Hades.<sup>39</sup> Such a use of Greek, reduced to isolated names or funerary formulae, is a common feature in some contextual code-switching where Latin imperial inscriptions include Greek *epigrammata* to honour the deceased, especially if they come from the Greek-speaking area.<sup>40</sup>

The case of the epigrams shows the flexibility of effective bilingualism, but the properly “bilingual” inscriptions, with a translation of content, account for only 7 of the 75 cases we have recorded. At the same time, 72 cases<sup>41</sup> present code-switching features which can be classified into three categories: religious, formulistic or other. The latter case includes alterations due to direct communication with the deceased, such as Kyris’ epitaph mentioned above. Formulistic alterations correspond to the

<sup>37</sup> Also, *IGUR* II, 296.

<sup>38</sup> *CIL* VI, 33976 (= *IG* XIV, 2012; *IGUR* III, 1336). For Helios and other gods invoked in the poetic texts, see *DB MAP* T#17374–17379.

<sup>39</sup> *CIL* VI, 112 (= *IGUR* I, 140; *IG* XIV, 959; *DB MAP* T#17826).

<sup>40</sup> E.g., *CIL* VI, 9533 (= *IG* XIV, 1497; *IGUR* III, 1174). This phenomenon was highlighted by Tozzi 2019, 412 as the clearest example of complementary texts.

<sup>41</sup> The two numbers add up to more than seventy-five instances because there are some inscriptions that include both phenomena, as in *CIL* VI, 10971 (= *IGUR* III, 1147).



introduction of some typical epigraphic votive formulas from one language in different forms which span from the inclusion of closing Greek funerary formulas in Latin<sup>42</sup> to striking cases such as *CIL* VI, 35434,<sup>43</sup> where the inscription reads: Ἡρακλέων Ἡλι| οδώρω ἀδελφ|ῶ φηκίτ βενεμερε|τι [hedera] Δεῖς Μανιβους, “Herakleion for Helidoros (his) brother did it with good will, to the Manes gods”. The dedication includes the Latin form *fecit* and *benemerenti* in a grammatical arrangement, which, together with the divine dedication to the *Manes*, also in an unusual position, distorts the basic language of the text, *i.e.* Greek, to such an extent that the dedication sounds more Latin than Greek. In addition, the Latin formula Δεῖς Μανιβους, which retains its Latin inflection in Greek but appears in the position of a final salutation, corresponds to the first of the three instances, the religious code-switching. Other epigrams appear in funerary dedications that do not mention the Manes gods or similar divinities but use the code-switching as a personal tribute to the deceased, as in the Latin dedication of two freedmen, Atimetus and Anterotianus, to Claudia Homonoëa, the deceased wife of the former and friend of the latter, who is said to be “more golden than Kyprios herself” in a Greek epigram.<sup>44</sup>

The vast majority of the 75 funerary inscriptions collected in this research present an alternation of code by including divine onomastic formulae in Greek and Latin, which constitute a potentially bidirectional phenomenon. Concretely however, the cases show an absolute predominance of the introduction of the Latin *Dis Manibus* in the Greek epigraphy since the reverse situation is so far unattested except for one instance.<sup>45</sup> The peculiar configuration of funerary inscriptions is probably due to their location in Rome and the existence of a strong funerary tradition in the Latin world.

The bilingual inscriptions which translate religious textual content into a second language show three types of adaptation for the funerary gods: 1) the *Manes* gods retain their Latin form when they change language; 2) they are translated as Theoi Katakthonioi (or Katakthonioi Theoi and other variants) or 3) they are omitted in the Greek text because the reference to the funerary gods is present in the heading as a sort of common label.<sup>46</sup> DM, ΔM or ΘK are abbreviations related to a process of technification of religious formulae, which also affected dedications to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, extensively addressed under the formula IOM.<sup>47</sup> The DM formula constitutes the clearest case of tag-switching or technic switching in divine formulae:

42 Such is the case of *CIL* VI, 10889 (= *IGUR* II, 308).

43 Also, in *IGUR* II, 570.

44 *IGUR* III, 1250 (= *CIL* VI, 12652; *DB MAP* T#18144): αὐτῆς χρυσοτέρη Κύπριδος.

45 Parker 2017, 39 noticed that it is the usual tendency in dedications from bilingual environments, as we shall see later in other types of religious inscriptions. The only exception for funerary cases is *CIL* VI, 28862, a Latin inscription addressed to Θεοῖς Χ(θονίους).

46 *IGUR* II, 902, or even outside Rome, as in *AE* 1947, 84.

47 Raepsaet-Charlier 2001, 143–144 described the phenomenon for Germania Superior.

whereas part of the linguistic information does not appear explicitly, DM manages to convey the semantic message in an abbreviated form into a multilingual space. In a few cases, such as the Herakleon dedication mentioned above, the divine onomastic sequence remains complete (Δεις Μανιβους) but is adapted to the Greek spelling, although it more commonly appears under the abbreviated form, ΔΜ, according to the Latin manner, as in the case of Polykleitos.<sup>48</sup>

The number of attested dedications *D(is) M(anibus)* in Greek texts, but also Latin texts with some Greek elements, by both Roman citizens<sup>49</sup> and non-citizens<sup>50</sup> constitute the clearest example of a Latin divine concept transported into Greek inscriptions.<sup>51</sup> In some instances, the onomastic sequence is not translated into the secondary text, a peculiarity which may indicate that *Dis Manibus* became a common reference that crossed the linguistic barrier. In other words, these invocations<sup>52</sup> evidence the value conveyed by divine names as a potentially language-independent conceptual construct.

To conclude on that point, the different ways of addressing the underworld gods in Rome makes it possible to track social parameters and cultural understanding in the emic representations of the divine. We observe a hyper-abundance of non-bilingual Greek dedications to the *Theois Katachthoniois*, but also 22 cases of alternative formulae for the rendering of the *Manes* gods, such as the dedications to Somnus Aeternalis<sup>53</sup> or to Θεοῖς Δαίμοσιν, often abbreviated ΘΔ (e.g. *IGUR* II, 316)<sup>54</sup> according to the model DM.<sup>55</sup> These designations are present in the whole Empire<sup>56</sup> as well as the Theoi Katachthonioi, although Rome houses inscriptions with suggestive variations from Θ(εοῖς) Χ(θονίους) (*CIL* VI, 28862) to Δ(αίμοσι) Κ(αταχθονίους) (*IGUR* III, 1347), or Θεοῖς καὶ Δαί|

<sup>48</sup> *AE* 2008, 235: Δ(ις) Μ(ανιβους) | Πολύκλει|τος τῆ γλυ|κυτάτη | θυγατρὶ | Θαΐδι εἰς μ|νήμην ἐ|[ποίησεν], trans. “To the Manes gods, Polykleitos did it of his own free will to his sweet daughter Thais”. Other similar instances are *IG* XIV, 1413; *IG* XIV, 1433 or *IGUR* II, 890.

<sup>49</sup> *CIL* VI, 18175 (= *IGUR* III, 1210).

<sup>50</sup> *IG* XIV, 1812 (= *IGUR* II, 751).

<sup>51</sup> Already noticed by Tozzi 2019, 419–420. Other inscriptions can be included in this set – Latin texts with Greek spelling and calling to the Manes gods – such as *IG* XIV, 1492, 2096a; *CIL* VI, 20294, 24475, 27515, 35454.

<sup>52</sup> The same logic appears on second-century CE altars with short bilingual inscriptions found in the Roman forum: *CIL* VI, 106 (= *IGUR* I, 95); *CIL* VI, 105 (= *IGUR* I, 94); *CIL* VI, 427 (= *IGUR* I, 96), and *CIL* VI, 106 (= *IGUR* I, 97). See the section below.

<sup>53</sup> *IGUR* II, 310 = *CIL* VI, 11082.

<sup>54</sup> *IGUR* II, 544, 700 or 991; *IG* XIV, 938.

<sup>55</sup> *IGUR* II, in cases 291, 297, 316 (Θε Δ), 345, 550, 568, 554, 594, 600, 727, 876 (Θε Δ), 997; *IGUR* III, 1240.

<sup>56</sup> It is a Greek-adapted formula typical of the Latin sphere as seen in *IG* Spain Portugal Appendix II, 5, in Carmona; *SEG* 48, 1283, in Ravenna; *CIL* XII, 3672 (= *IG* XIV, 2506) in Nîmes; *IG* XIV, 941 in Portus (Θεοῖς καὶ Δαί|μοσιν) as well as *IG Porto* 37. In the Greek world, we find some similar cases at Arsinoe in a clearly bilingual setting (*AE* 1899, 173; *CIL* III, 14179; *CIL* III, 14180). Other cases are also attested during the Roman Empire, as in Moesia Superior (*JMS* II, 311 and 312) or Macedonia (*CIL* III, 7318), whose choice of divine name is close to the funerary formulation of Δαίμοσιν ἀγαθοῖς from Cyprus (*SEG* 25, 1088).

μοσι (SEG 41, 867), which attempt to express the Roman conception of the Manes gods in Greek: chthonic *divine powers* related to the underworld and dead people.<sup>57</sup> Such examples bear witness to how Greek divine names were conveying a specific categorisation of infernal divinities and how the Roman funerary divine conceptualisation remained predominant since approximately two thirds of the relevant cases are attested in Italy. The various naming strategies for funerary gods are basically rooted in the long-standing contact between Latin and Greek languages and cultures.

## 4 Religious Inscriptions With Institutional Background

In this section we will deal with three groups of inscriptions that fit into a relevant institutional framework. The most notorious set corresponds to four altars found in or near the Roman forum with bilingual inscriptions containing the name of the divine addressee in Greek and the Latin formula *ex oraculo*.<sup>58</sup>

- IGUR I, 95: Ἀθήναι | ἀποτροπαίαι.<sup>59</sup>
- IGUR I, 94: ἀπωσικάκοις | θεοῖς.<sup>60</sup>
- IGUR I, 96: Διὶ πατρίῳι (today lost).<sup>61</sup>
- IGUR I, 95: Διὶ ὑπάτῳι (broken).<sup>62</sup>

Moretti linked the first two cases, found next to the Phokas column, to the last two altars, whose association is less clear. The dedication to Zeus Patrios, the “Ancestral Zeus”, which was found in S. Valentino dei Mercanti, near the Forum, is now lost. The altar of Zeus Hypatos, “Zeus the Supreme”, which was found between the Curia and the Basilica Aemilia, is broken and does not contain the Latin formula.<sup>63</sup> In the first two cases, the altars have similar carvings and the same calligraphy, and they present a parallel text from the second half of the second century, which, as Moretti, Aronen and later Kajava pointed out, was probably associated with the Antonine plague that came after the Parthian wars (166 CE). This event resonates with the protective function of Athena, who is called ἀποτροπαίαι, “to Athena Averter of evil”, and with the Ἀπωσικά-

57 In the same way, we find the formula Δ(αίμοσι) Χ(θονίσις) in Segesta, Sicily, probably in Roman times (IG XIV, 294), as well as Θ(εοῖς) Δ(αίμοσιν) in Messina (*I.Messina*, 4), and Θ(εοῖς) Κ(αταχθονίσις) Δ(αίμοσιν) in Drepanum (SEG 52, 903, 905).

58 This group was already pointed out by Moretti in IGUR I and later revised by Aronen 1983.

59 CIL VI, 106 (= DB MAP S#13839).

60 CIL VI, 105 (=DB MAP S#13844).

61 CIL VI, 427 (=DB MAP S#13842).

62 IG XIV, 994 (=DB MAP S#13842).

63 Aronen 1983, 5–6; Kajava 2007.

κοις θεοῖς, “to the gods who repel evil”, that Aroren hypothetically associates with the Dioscuri.<sup>64</sup> These inscriptions are so brief that it is difficult to say whether their primary language was Greek or Latin. Aroren’s hypothesis that the Latin inscription *CIL* VI 29850 (from the Basilica Giulia) was part of this group of altars, which would have been commissioned by the Roman Senate, implies that Latin would have been the primary language.<sup>65</sup> Latin is clearly used in the technical expression (*ex oraculo*) indicating the oracular authority from which the invocation comes, whereas the name of the gods is systematically written in Greek. Did the Greek names derive from a precise ritual context, which Kajava indicates as the famous oracle of Klaros in Asia Minor?<sup>66</sup> In any case, a public institution appears to call upon different gods with similar functionality, that is the protection from an evil, to which is added a supreme Zeus who, from the Roman institutional point of view, may be an equivalent of Juppiter Capitolinus.

A further, more heterogeneous group is that of public treaties and inscriptions dedicated by foreign institutions during the second and first centuries BCE. This group consists of two inscriptions commemorating a diplomatic treaty and an additional one issued by a member of the Cappadocian royal family. In the first case, Mellor argues that the dedication comes from the Lycian cities,<sup>67</sup> which were in a precarious position due to the Ptolemaic expansion and the clashes with Rhodes in the Aegean. The inscription commemorates a Roman intervention between 168 and 151 BCE with a dedication to *Iovei Capitolino* in its archaic form and the Roman people (*populo romano*). The Latin formulation is translated into Greek as a dedication to Zeus Kapetolios and the Demos of the Romans (Διὶ Καπετωλίωι καὶ τῶι δήμωι τῶ[ι] | ‘Ρωμαίων).<sup>68</sup> The Greek epithet Καπετωλίωι integrates the Roman cultural framework into a Greek logic, which is more clearly seen in the transposition of the Latin accusative *Roma(m)* into δημ[ο] | κρατίαν τὴν ‘Ρώμην to denote the State authority. The Jupiterian designation, which is appropriate to the official frame of the treaty, is repeated in the second and fragmentary inscription of this group dedicated to Rome and Jupiter Capitolinus.<sup>69</sup> This plaque from the first half of the first century BCE, which was found in vicolo Orbitelli in the *Campus Martius*, bears the dedication of an allied *demos* (Δήμος συμμαχός) that honours Jupiter Capitolinus and Roma ([*Iovi Capit*]olino et *Ro[mae]*). The Greek counterpart of the

<sup>64</sup> Aronen 1983.

<sup>65</sup> Also in *AE* 2007, 196: *Senatus populusqu[e Romanus, ex] | oraculo*.

<sup>66</sup> Kajava 2007, 128.

<sup>67</sup> Mellor 1978, 321.

<sup>68</sup> *CIL* VI 372 (= *CIL* VI, 30920; *IG* XIV 986; *IGUR* I, 5, *DB MAP* #13710): “[*Ab co*]muni restitutei in maiorum leibert[atem] | [*Lucei*] *Roma(m)* *Iovei Capitolino et populo Romano v[irtutis]* | *benivolentiae beneficue causa erga Lucios ab comun[i]*. | Λυκίων τὸ κοινὸν κοιμισάμενον τὴν πάτριον δημ[ο] | κρατίαν τὴν ‘Ρώμην Διὶ Καπετωλίωι καὶ τῶι δήμωι τῶ[ι] | ‘Ρωμαίων ἀρετῆς ἔνεκεν καὶ εὐνοίας καὶ εὐεργεσίας | τῆς εἰς τὸ κοινὸν τὸ Λυκίων”.

<sup>69</sup> Reconstructed from the fragments of *CIL* VI, 30921 30923, 30928a-b, it is assembled in *CIL* I<sup>2</sup> 732 (= *DB MAP* S#13708).

divine names can be reconstructed by the few letters preserved and the parallelism with the previous inscription: Διὶ Καπετωλίῳ καὶ Ῥώμῃ.<sup>70</sup> These bilingual inscriptions show precise translations of the initial content and a slight adaptation to the cultural framework of the secondary language.

The Late Republican dedication from Arizobanes, probably a member of the Capadocian royal family, can be read in a similar manner. It was addressed to Juppiter Optumus Maxumus, with his full onomastic sequence, in a text that has been reconstructed from two fragments where the Greek part is barely preserved in some letters from line 6.<sup>71</sup> Although the specific nature of this inscription is unclear, the piece seems to have been written for its public exhibition and was found in the *area sacra di S. Omobono*, between the Forum Romanum and the Janus temple under the Capitoline Hill, a location which points to an institutional dimension.

At the interface between the institutional and the private dimension, we find the third set of inscriptions: two altars dedicated by the *Papiria gens* at some point of the second century CE and found on the Esquiline, probably in the Orti Santarelli in 1663:

1. Silvano | custodi | Papiriū // Σιλβανῶνι | φύλακι | Παπείριοι.<sup>72</sup>

*To Silvanus Guard, the Papirii (dedicated) // To Silvanos Guard, the Papeiroi (dedicated).*

2. Herculi | defensori | Papirii // Ἡρακλεῖ | ἀλεξι | κάκῳ | Παπείρι | οἱ.<sup>73</sup>

*To Hercules Protector, the Papirii (dedicated) // To Herakles Averter of evil, the Papeiroi (dedicated).*

As Wojciechowski pointed out,<sup>74</sup> the *Papiria gens* was a family of senatorial rank that dedicated those altars in a domestic context. Just like the *ex oraculo* altars, this group shares the same support (stone, carving, shape) and calligraphy since, in both cases, the Latin dedication is engraved on the front face and the Greek one on the rear face. The onomastic sequence of the gods is similar: the Roman name together with an epithet first, followed by a Greek “translation” of both elements. In the case of Silvanus, the two onomastic attributes (*custos* and *phulax*) express the idea of protection given to a place or a person, presumably the *domus Papirii* and the family, where the altar was placed. As far as Hercules is concerned, the Latin epithet (*defensor*) refers to a defensive-protective scope similar to Silvanus’ one, whereas the Greek *alexikakos* claims for a specific protection against evil. The four texts share an obvious common goal: the protection of the place, the family and the whole household. Did they resort to Greek because of the prestige of the Hellenic culture and the status of the senatorial class? In the

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *DB MAP* T#17053.

<sup>71</sup> Lintott 1978, 139; Del Monaco 2013, 587–589 (= *CIL* VI, 30924; *SEG* 15, 612).

<sup>72</sup> *IGR* I, 82 (= *CIL* VI, 310; *IGUR* I, 171; *DB MAP* S#13713).

<sup>73</sup> *CIL* VI, 309 (= *IGUR*, I, 195; *DB MAP* S#13732).

<sup>74</sup> Wojciechowski 2013.

direct environment of the texts, there is no hint to a real confluence of speakers of Latin and Greek. Nonetheless, the gods were approached in a bilingual manner.

## 5 Cultural Prestige or Religious Specialisation? Other Uses of Bilingual Inscriptions

The picture of religious inscriptions must be completed by some examples belonging to less institutional spheres, where the agent's social context and private uses acquire a greater significance. In this perspective, we can detect more clearly a double rationale for bilingualism, namely the need to achieve a more specialised or technical meaning, and the ability to express religious communication in a more prestigious way.

An obvious field for specialisation can be found in the *defixiones* of Rome, which provide examples of code-switching fully integrated into the religious message, such as in the curse from the second century against Praeseticus, a miller/baker, son of Arsella, where the *voces magicae*, written in Greek, and the term Εὐλάμων, are followed by the imperative κάτεχε, “hold fast”. The curse is then completed by a Latin text invoking Pluto as ruler of the dead (*Plutoni praeposito mortuorum*).<sup>75</sup> The introduction of a term that functions as a technical “tag” is even more evident in the *defixio* AE 2008, 225 from Anna Perenna's fountain, where the divine appellation reads as follows: *Sete | Mnu | S(H) | Θ*. Here, the agent employed a double invocation to Seth and Mnevis, with a second mention of Seth in Greek with the Latin S at the beginning.<sup>76</sup> The Greek spelling of the name was probably considered to be more efficient in the ritual performance. In other occasions, bilingual expressions provide a correspondence for Latin official titles, for calendar references and others. As we shall see in the following cases which do not contain a translation, Greek seems sometimes to be more adapted for personal messages or religious addresses. Along with the need for religious precision and cultural prestige, these parameters create, in theory, infinite combinations within a vast spectrum of human-divine interactions.

On the other hand, bilingualism can be restricted to a formula that is added to a text without affecting the religious message. Such is the case in Rome for the Latin dedication [*Imp(eratoris)? C]aesa[ris M(arci)] A[nt]onii Gordiani Aug(usti) | Furiae Sabinae Tranquillinae Aug(ustae)* followed by a Greek dedication to Zeus Bronton (Δι Βροντῶντι) made by Aurelius Lampo and his mother, who dedicated a bust/mask of the invincible Neotera (τὴν προτομὴν τῆς ἀνεκίτου Νεωτέρας) in 241–244 CE.<sup>77</sup> More than a century later, Sabine, who commemorates the *taurobolium* and erection of an

75 *CIL* VI, 33899. Cf. Kropp 2008, nr. 1.4.4/5. Mastrocinque 2005 interprets the term Εὐλάμων as a borrowing from the Aramaic or Hebrew *ʾlm*, “eternity”.

76 Blänsdorf 2009, 218; *DB MAP* T#17022.

77 *IGUR* I, 138 (= *AE* 1935, 128; *DB MAP* T#13848).

altar to Attis and Rhea in Greek, memorialises the institution of rites to Demeter and fearful Hecate (Δηούς και φοβεράς Ἑκάτης) in a mystical context, with a closing consular year (377 CE) expressed in Latin.<sup>78</sup> In the late fourth century it was fashionable for the senatorial elite to promote pagan rituals in a conservative form, hence the address to Attis and Rhea in Greek rather than in Latin.<sup>79</sup>

During the same period, the bilingual dedication of Petronius Apollodorus, who is holder of several priesthoods such as *Pater* of *Deus Invictus Mithras*, and his wife Rufia Volusiana, praises Magna Mater in Greek, through the celebration of the mysteries of Rhea, identified as mother of all (Μητέρι τῆ πάντων Ῥεῖη), and Attis, the “highest god and who encompasses everything, who makes germinate at every season all the more holy things” (Ἄττει θ’ ὑψίστω καὶ συνέχοντι τὸ πᾶν | τῷ πᾶσιν καιροῖς θεμε [ρῶτε]ρα πάντα φύοντι).<sup>80</sup> The altar of Petronius and Rufina, contrary to the previous case, introduces a code-switching in Greek only for the onomastic sequences of the gods and the cultic commemoration, whereas the rest of the information remains in Latin (dedicants, motif, dating and closure in lines 7–14). The altar, now lost, dates from 270 CE and represented Cybele-Mater Magna on the left side, holding a tympanum and driving a biga drawn by lions together with a pine tree in the upper register. In the lower register of the relief, the bull of the taurobolium was depicted while, on the right side, Attis stood, holding a syrinx, a pair of cymbals and a *pedum* by a ram and a pine tree. The iconography matches the divine naming and the ritual context of the epigraphic commemoration, while the text informs on late connections between Cybele, Mater Magna and Rhea. The Greek is thus mobilised to account for a specific field of expertise.

Moreover, prestige and technicality are sometimes intertwined, as in the poetic code-switching that we have seen in Greek funerary epigrams. The invocation to Hermes by a person called Attis on a Herma in the second century CE constitutes another good example.<sup>81</sup> The text presents a bilingual polymetric text inscribed on two sides: on the frontal face, a bilingual text in iambic (two Latin verses) and dactylic verses (Greek), on the right side, a bilingual text consisting of two hexameters and three Latin phalaecian hendecasyllables. In the verses, Attis invokes the protection of Hermes, for himself, his friends and family. Hermes, who is invoked in Greek, also receives a poetic Latin denomination in relation with his origin and mythology as *Lucri repertor atque sermonis dator* | *infa(n)s . . . Cyllenius*, “inventor of profit, giver of language, the child . . . of Cyllene”. The text continues with the Greek petition and ends with the Latin poetic description of the god as *Interpres divum, caeli terrae(ue)* | *mea-*

78 *CIL* VI, 30966 (= *IG* XIV, 1019; *IGUR* I, 128; *DB MAP* S#13675).

79 Such phenomena have been studied mainly through the figure of Vettius Agorius Praetextatus, see Kahlos 1995, Marco Simón 2016. On the self-representation of pagan elites and their traditionalist environment, see Buchheim 2019, 141–143.

80 *CIL* VI, 509 (= *IG* XIV, 1018; *IGUR* I, 129; *DB MAP* S#13713).

81 *CIL* VI, 520 (= *IGUR* I, 161; *IG* XIV, 978; *DB MAP* S#13861).

tor | (. . .) [*Caelorum incola toti]usque terrae | sermonis dator atq(ue) somniorum | Iovis nuntius et precum minister*, “Mediator of the gods, traveller of the sky and the earth, (. . .) inhabitant of the heavens and of the earth, of the whole, allocator of language and of dreams, messenger of Jupiter, and bearer of prayers”. The complex bilingual construction of the god makes the two languages inseparable as they complement each other in an artistic way and express the polysemic profile of Hermes.

However, a linguistic complement is not always poetic and can respond to practical reasons. For instance, Hermes, an imperial freedman and *vilicus*, commemorated the consecration of an altar and a crater to Nemesis in the second century CE.<sup>82</sup> His inscription combines Greek and Latin to correctly address the goddess Nemesis according to the dedicant’s dream. It opens with a Greek laudatory addressing, Μεγάλη Νέμεσις | ἡ βασιλεύουσα τοῦ κόσμου, “Great Nemesis who rules the Universe”, and continues with the Latin description of the goddess according to the vision, *Magna Ultrix Regina Urbis*, “Great Avenger, queen of the City” that the formula *ex visu* emphasises. Like the altars dedicated by the *Papiria gens*, the double text is intratextually complete and the use of a second language results in an amplification of the divine power; the Greek probably serves to express a more universal aspect of Nemesis than the more local Latin context, related with Rome.

The use of code-switching as an instrument to supplement or emphasise the praise can be observed not only in relation with the gods but also with the dead (in the epigrams) or the emperors. In 186 CE, Marcus Antonius Gaionas, a *cistiber*, consecrated a column to Juppiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus in honour of the emperor Commodus, who is first praised in Greek and then addressed in Latin according to his official titles.<sup>83</sup> As Dészpa states, the Greek “displays a very particular attachment and closeness” to the emperor.<sup>84</sup> There is no bilingual divine name here because the cult of Jupiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitanus was common among the Latin-speaking soldiers, which shows that the resource to two languages can be motivated by different reasons: social and cultural prestige, practical requirements, political background and ritual strategies. A funerary bilingual inscription for a priestess from Alexandria constitutes another case where the cultural and technical parameters are intermingled.<sup>85</sup> Dated to approximately 100–300 CE, it describes the deceased as a “famous priestess of Bacchus Ogygius and bearer of the Goddess of the Nile” in Latin (*[Ogygii Bacc]hi dei nota | [sacerd]os | [pastophorus]quae deae Nilo | [tidis] . . .*) with a Greek adaptation: πρόπο | λος Διονύσου, | [π]α[σ]τοφόρος τε θεᾶς Νειλώτιδος | Εἰσιδος ἀγνῆς, “Servant of Dionysus, bearer of the Goddess of the Nile, Isis, the Pure”. Ogygius for Bacchus has disappeared, while the name of Isis pops up. The text opens with a funerary formula in Latin which

<sup>82</sup> *CIL* VI, 532 (= *IG* XIV, 1012; *IGUR* I, 182; *DB MAP* S#13838).

<sup>83</sup> *CIL* VI, 420 (= *IG* XIV, 985; *IGUR* I, 166; *DB MAP* S#13727).

<sup>84</sup> Dészpa 2017, 116.

<sup>85</sup> *CIL* VI, 32458 (= *IGUR* III, 1150; *SIRIS* 433; *DB MAP* S#13871). The date corresponds to the catalogue of Bricault/Dionysopoulou 2016, 6.



is not translated in Greek and then drops certain information in each language. The description of Dionysus and Isis is deployed to its full extent only in the Greek, a language that was maybe perceived as closer to the original cult from a Roman point of view.

The cultic perspective can therefore be decisive for the absence, adaptation, modification or precise translation of divine onomastic elements or ritual formulations. The language is used as a tool that helps to achieve the agents' aim by targeting specific divine addressees. In the only inscription written in Latin and Palmyrene, *CIL VI, 710*, that we examined above, relevant changes are visible in the transition from one language to the other. The message is adapted to the respective cultural *milieux*: the dedicant's family is absent from the Palmyrene version where Malakbel, a local god from Palmyra, is associated with other gods. In the Latin counterpart, Sol Sanctissimus appears alone and the whole family is mentioned.<sup>86</sup> The iconography emphasises the solar identification, since the altar presents a bust of a radiate Helios-Sol behind an eagle with outstretched wings, and on the sides, a charioteer with a rampant quadriga (Helios or Phosporos?) and a man bearded and veiled (Saturn?). The inscriptions, dating to the second half of the first century CE, reflect subtle strategies to express Tiberius Claudius Felix' double identity, as a Roman citizen from Palmyra trying to integrate his Syrian gods into the Roman frame to which he now belongs.<sup>87</sup>

A final example of the linguistic potential for defining and designing the gods in specific ways can be seen in the bilingual inscription issued by the imperial freedman Titus Flavius Hyginus during the Flavian or early Antonine period.<sup>88</sup> He dedicates an altar to *Soli Invicto Mithrae* with a divine onomastic sequence that makes it impossible to discern whether there is one god, Sol Invictus Mithras, or two, Sol and Invictus Mithras. The *Pater* Lollius Rufus is nonetheless mentioned only in Greek (διὰ Λολλίου Ρούφου πατρός ιδίου) and, in the Greek part of the text, the god is called Ἡλίωι Μίθραι, Helios Mithras, without the "Invincible" qualification, so typical in the Roman dedications to Mithras. The Greek onomastic sequence is engraved on one line, a material feature which reinforces a reading of the formula referring to one god, Mithras, addressed as a solar divine power.

## 6 Conclusion

The bilingual religious inscriptions from Rome, with the exception of the treaties from the Republican period, span mainly from the end of the first century CE to late antiquity. Greek was at that time undoubtedly a language of prestige in Rome, and the numerous

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Houston 1990; Bonnet 2018.

<sup>87</sup> In the Syrian sanctuary near Porta Portese, several bilingual inscriptions, Greek-Palmyrene, and some Latin inscriptions were found. This a specific case study that deserves an *ad hoc* analysis.

<sup>88</sup> *CIL VI, 732* (= *IG XIV; IGUR I, 179; CIMRM, 362; DB MAP S#13854*).

uses within the funerary and dedicatory inscriptions, from different social backgrounds, prove its ascendancy as a complementary *lingua franca*<sup>89</sup> and a means of cultural distinction. However, its use in the inscriptions is not limited to social exhibition or accessibility to technical contents. These two reasons may be combined with the need to define more adequately, even precisely, the names and attributes of the gods. The inscriptions involving the Manes gods introduced into Greek texts indicate that the dominion of a language is not absolute but rather responds to specialised fields. The code-switching for consular or other typically Latin formulae goes in the same direction. Different parameters may impact the translation/adaptation of divine names, with a whole range of strategies. In some cases, the bilingual option provides complementary messages and/or reflects an attempt to better construct and verbalise a *puissance divine* from two different angles, with two languages. It also happens that the name of the god is not transposed into a second language because the use of one single language allows for a better definition of the cultic background and/or the divine denomination (as in the cases of Mater Magna or instances of Manes). In some other cases, the god's definition is intratextually complete either by a complementary use of Greek and Latin (*i.e.* the dedication to Hermes) or because the repetition of the divine name did not appear to be useful. All in all, the cases collected here show the lack of a systematic translation and the use of fluid options over four centuries. This fact corresponds to a whole set of political and cultural needs, and to a wide range of personal situations on the part of the agents.

In the worshippers' communication with the divine, divine onomastic sequences are pivotal and articulate in different ways the various facets of a *puissance*, which is activated whenever necessary. In Greek and Latin, names delineate and express, with a mixture of precision and nuances, the specificity of the targeted deities; names also help to connect different gods who share similar functions and attributes (for instance a "solar" one). The use of Greek *and/or* Latin constitutes a pragmatic resource in specific contexts, where they work together or separately.<sup>90</sup> The recourse to different languages also shows an effort to conceptualise the divine and share cultic habits, to a certain extent. Within the ongoing multicultural normalisation, which characterises the Imperial city of Rome, the gods are not attached to a single name or a single conception, but welcome variations, appropriations and reformulation. Our focus on bilingual religious communication shows, in fact, an accurate consciousness and knowledge regarding the complex, multifarious identity of the gods, activated by means of changing onomastic formulas. Through the divine names, the agents were able to act with the volition of specifying a generic *puissance divine* (in the case of IOM specified through the adjective Heliopolitanus), with a certain degree of appropriateness to the context and moment

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<sup>89</sup> A fact more visible through the bilingual inscriptions in Greek and a Semitic language in Rome, such is the case for the majority of Palmyrene dedications. Cf. Bonnet 2018.

<sup>90</sup> The social value of a given language in its cultural milieu during the ancient world was already revised by Adams 2003b regarding the *romanitas* and Latin language.

(in the case of the twin altars of the *Papirii*) or by making an effort to describe and conceptualise a god (in the case of the dedication to Malakbel).

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