

## Language and Identity in Antiquity

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### Abstract

‘Different identities did not necessarily exclude each other, but could be displayed in a complementary manner side by side’ (Kantola and Nuorluoto 2022:161) I will consider such overlapping identities through onomastics and morphology in women’s names in Latin epigraphy, specifically within Greek-influenced paradigms. I will focus on the genitive endings *-es* and *-aes* to determine what the use of these endings can tell us about the identity of the women named.

We have studied plenty of names recorded in epigraphy. This has led to ‘almost a factoid in modern scholarship that there was social stigma attached to Greek cognomina, because such cognomina were overwhelmingly born by slaves and freedmen’ (Bruun 2013:34-35). It is estimated that 60% of cognomina in Rome are Greek (Solin 1971:112). One in ten children born to parents with Latin names was given a Greek name (Thylander 1952) and we know that the presence of a Greek cognomen does not prove that a person spoke Greek (Bruun 2013:22). Therefore, name choice alone does not predict personal identity well and I suggest we may gain better insights through focusing on morphology.

I have collected over 1000 examples of genitive *-es* and over 700 of genitive *-aes* with no chronological or geographical limitations beyond that the form appeared in a Latin inscription. Adams argues that genitive *-aes* was used by lower-class Greeks who had acquired or were acquiring Latin as a second language. He suggests genitive *-aes* was used as a Latinisation of genitive *-es* on Latin gentilicia when combined with Greek cognomina, probably among slaves with Greek names who had been freed and gained Latin gentilicia (Adams 2003:473-483). Using these datasets, I considered the role of the women named in the inscriptions and separated two categories for further analysis. The woman can be deceased with the genitive is used in a funerary formula. The deceased could have been a slave, freedwoman or free-born, although this information is not always provided. The genitive can also be used with *servus/a* or *libertus/a* to denote a woman who owned or had previously owned a slave. The woman named may herself be a free born or freed person, although again this is not always clear.

By analysing the distribution of *-es* and *-aes* on these two categories of women, I will show that an *-aes* ending is significantly more likely to be found on the name of a slave-owning woman than *-es* and significantly less likely to be found on the name of a deceased woman to whom the inscription was dedicated. I will also discuss inscriptions which include gentilicium-cognomen formula formed with *-es* and *-aes*. I will show that gentilicium *-aes* cognomen *-es* is actually no more common than gentilicium *-es* cognomen *-es* and is 63% less common than gentilicium *-aes* cognomen *-aes*. Within these two analyses, I will break down the distribution of Greek and Latin name forms, in order to reveal how morphological choices show the personal identity of women in the Greek-Latin milieu of the Roman world.

### Bibliography

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