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Ancient Greek Personal Names. Part I: Theory

The aim of the article is to provide a perspective on onomastic (i.e. name-giving) practices of the Classical period of ancient Greece (roughly, the 5th and the first half of the 4th century BCE) and present the most important aspects of ancient Greek personal name typology, exemplified with real-life names.¹ The first part of the text will discuss a social aspect of ancient Greek name-giving (and name-bearing), the number of names a Greek would have and their general nature. Then a number of anthroponym typologies will be proposed, based on the following notions: male / female, theophoric / non-theophoric, simple / compound, derivative / non-derivative, derivative / compound, semantically easily interpretable / semantically harder to interpret. Finally, an observation on ancient Greek anthroponymic diminutives / hypocoristics will be presented. The above, additionally, is meant to serve as a form of introduction to a ‘case study’ of Aristophanic anthroponymy which will be presented in one of the author’s subsequent articles.

A single individual name of an ancient Greek was, in a sense, an equivalent of the modern last name (surname), rather than first name, with one important exception: it was not officially inherited. Since there were no formal lists of anthroponyms from which a parent would select a name for their offspring, he/she came close to being virtually unlimited in their choice of a name, which obviously does not mean that they would

¹The text is based on (a section of) the author’s doctoral dissertation titled *Semantyczno-derywacyjna analiza antroponimów w komedii Arystofanesa pt. Acharnejczycy i ich przekładów na język angielski i polski* (*A semantic-derivational analysis of the anthroponyms in the comedy Acharnians by Aristophanes and their translations into English and Polish*). The primary reference sources for the text are Jurewicz, Winniczuk 1973; Winniczuk 1983; McLean 2002; Tribulato 2015; *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* (henceforth LGPN).

light-heartedly neglect the customary onomastic practices of their society. Undoubtedly, the local customs were of primary importance here, so Greek proper names, unlike those given in some modern societies, would usually follow an established tradition and stay within its boundaries.² The most common practice seems to have been naming children after particular family members from the previous generation(s). A first-born son would usually be given the name of his father's father, a second-born would be named after his maternal grandfather. Other family members also served as a name pool for children, especially fathers and uncles. Baby-girls would usually be named after their grandmothers (paternal and/or maternal), mothers and more distant family members, the matter of primogeniture however, and if it mattered at all, is not obvious to us in this case. Sometimes a child received a name which, rather than copy a name of a given family member, would contain a particular lexical element traditionally appearing in this family's anthroponyms, thus resembling the other members' names. For example, one Ἀριστοφάνης (*Aristophánēs*, not the Old Attic Comedy poet of the same name) of Azenia (Attica, 5th century BCE) had sons named Ἀριστοφῶν and Ἀριστομήδης (*Aristophōn*, *Aristomédes*, *LGPN*; ἄριστος '([adj] best, noblest'). Obviously, parents also created new names which, depending on the circumstances, would describe a wished-for trait/feature of the baby and be auspicious in general. A (comically ironic) example of the process of choosing a name for a newborn child appears in the play *Clouds* by Aristophanes (v. 60-67) where we can see the parents' argument during which a few names are proposed: Goldtrot, Hackjoy, Beautybronc (the mother's choices) and Meanypop (the father's idea). The haggles outcome is the name Shyhorse.³

² An example of an apparently uncurbed Western World name-giving practice is the one to be observed in the United States. For the most part, an American parent, when choosing a name for their child, is solely limited by their imagination. Thus, we can meet people with somewhat unusual names (which are not substantially at odds with ancient Greek onomastics, however) such as *Cookie*, *Coyote*, *Legend*, *Peaches*, *Sugar* (*Babycenter*), individuals with names even rarer, e.g. *Moon*, *Diva Muffin* (the musician Frank Zappa's children's names (*Wikipedia*)) or children called in a most unusual way, e.g. *XÆ A-12* (the South African entrepreneur Elon Musk's youngest son's first name (Rogan 2020)).

³ The English translation of the Greek names, respectively, Ξάνθιππος (*Ksánthippos*), Χαίριππος (*Khairippos*), Καλλιπιδίης (*Kallippidēs*), Φειδωνίδης (*Pheidōnidēs*), Φειδιπιδίης (*Pheidippidēs*), by Roche (2005: 136). In the comedy fragment, the mother's idea was for the name to have (a form of) the word ἵππος ('horse, mare') in it, which, generally, was associated with an aristocratic background of the bearer. The father, on the other hand, seems to have been driven by the notion of thrift as a key element of his son's name. A Polish translation which ingenuously expresses the Greek anthroponyms reads, respectively, Koniocwał, Rumakosław, Włodzirimak, Szczędzigrosz, Szczędzirimak (Srebrny 1962: 218). (All the *lexical* (i.e. of individual words) Greek-English translations given in this article, if not indicated otherwise, are taken from the *Online Liddell-Scott-Jones Greek-English Lexicon*.)

Interestingly, a newborn would usually stay ‘nameless’ for the first few days of their life. The name may have been chosen earlier, but an official name-giving ceremony was held up to ten days after the birth (δεκάτη ἡμέρα), a celebratory family gathering during which the father would name the child, thus legalizing their status as his offspring.

Customarily, Greeks of the Classical period would have one name, but on occasion (in official contexts or ones where precise identification of the individual in question was especially important) a patronymic (or, rarer, metronymic⁴) was used together with the name of the *deme* the person came from (in the case of Athenians and citizens of certain other *poleis* which had a similar administrative system). In some parts of Greece, the additional (middle) name, rather than being a patronymic (expressed as the father’s name in the genitive case), would consist of an adjectival form of the father’s name, e.g. Ἀλέξανδρος Φιλίππειος (*Aléksandros Philíppēios*) instead of Ἀλέξανδρος Φιλίππου (*Aléksandros Philíppu*), i.e. Alexander ‘Philip-like’ (or ‘Filipiak’, in Polish) instead of Alexander Philip’s (son).⁵ A name could also be accompanied with an adjective denoting the bearer’s place of origin, especially if he was travelling outside of his *polis*, e.g. Κρητικός (*Krētikós*, Cretan, i.e. from Crete). The Athenian politician Alcibiades would then officially be called Ἀλκιβιάδης Κλεινίου Σκαμβωνίδης (*Alkibiádēs Kleiniú Skambōnídēs*, Alcibiades Kleinias’ (son), from the *deme* of Skambōnídai) when in Athens, but Ἀλκιβιάδης Κλεινίου Ἀθηναῖος (*Alkibiádēs Kleiniú Athēnaïos*, Alcibiades Kleinias’ (son), Athenian) while overseas (*LPGN*).

Regarding (semantic and structural) division of ancient Greek proper names, there is no one clear-cut typology. What I present below is a general view, presumably sufficient for my purposes.⁶ A traditional onomastic approach, following Aristotle’s disciple, Clearchus of Soli (4th-3rd century

⁴ Metronymics were infrequent in ancient Greece. Women tended to be marginalized and isolated in most *poleis* and often did not have the status of full citizens (e.g. in Athens). Therefore, identification of a citizen by his mother’s name would not be a standard procedure, used exceptionally, perhaps in the case of non-citizen fathers’ children. Olson (2004: 233) suggests we could even interpret a metronymic as implied invective directed against the person so named in certain cases.

⁵ Obviously, Alexander the Great was born in the late-Classical period and away from the mainstream of Greek culture. In theory, however, there could have lived an Alexander, son of Philip, in Macedonia even in the 5th century BCE: *LPGN* notes the Macedonian name Ἀλέξανδρος from around that period a few times, e.g. (*floruit*) c. years 525-452 or, another, c. year 413.

⁶ Some typologies proposed in the literature (e.g. McLean 2002: 76-87) contain numerous, long, intricately detailed subcategories. For the clarity of the current discussion, I focus on generalities rather than excessive detail.

BCE), will divide personal names into theophoric, θεοφόρα ὀνόματα,⁷ i.e. derived from gods' names (or other names, usually toponyms, associated with particular deities) and non-theophoric, ὀνόματα ἄθεα.⁸ The former category comprises so-called simple names and compounds (which constitute a subcategory of nominal compounding, a very productive word formation process in Ancient Greek). Simple names are either derivatives which change the form of the god's name (e.g. Ἀπολλώνιος, *Apollōnios*) or forms which are considered to be of non-derivational character (e.g. Ἀπόλλων, *Apóllōn*), i.e. names in which the form of a person's name is identical with the form of the god's name, so the latter has not been altered in the word formation process nor has the word category been changed, *ergo* no derivation has been involved.⁹ Compounds, on the other hand, can comprise a name of one deity, e.g. Ἡρόδοτος (*Hēródotos*, Hera [here with a form of the verb διδωμι 'give, offer']) or two, e.g. Ἑρμαφρόδιτος (*Hermaphróditos*, Hermes and Aphrodite). Certainly, the Olympians were a major onomastic inspiration for mortals, but the names of lesser deities also served as name-giving material. Interestingly, the god Ares rarely appears in the attested Greek personal names (eight times in *LGPN*, the earliest from the 2nd-1st century BCE¹⁰) and, what is perhaps easier to explain, there are no attestations of the names of the gods of the underworld, Hermes and Persephone, as given to children in their unchanged form.

Non-theophoric names could be analyzed along similar lines (i.e. simple and compound). This vast category offers multifarious types of lexical material to be found in personal names belonging to it. For example, among non-theophoric names we find those which relate to honorific titles (e.g. Βασιλεὺς, *Basileús*), physical characteristics (e.g. Κρατῖνος, *Kratīnos*), psychological traits (e.g. Σόφον, *Sóphon*), moral rules (e.g. Φιλοτίμη, *Philotímē*), professions (e.g. Μάντις, *Mántis*), religious and political functions/positions (e.g. Ἱερεὺς, *Hiereús*; Ἄρχων, *Árkhōn*), omens (e.g. Κληδόνιος, *Klēdónios*), toponyms (e.g. Ὀρέστης, *Oréstēs*), hydronyms (e.g. Στρυμόδωρος, *Strymódōros*), geological formations (e.g. Πετραῖος, *Petraios*), plants (e.g. Ἄμπελις, *Ampelís*), animals

⁷ Θεός 'god, the deity', φορός 'bringing on one's way, forwarding' (φέρω 'bear, carry, convey'), ὄνομα 'name'.

⁸ Clearchus, frag. 86, at Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 10.448e (Athenaeus: *Athenaei Naucraticae deipnosophistarum libri xv*).

⁹ It should be noted that the name Ἀπόλλων as a personal name for a human is most likely a post-Classical phenomenon. The earliest *LGPN* attestation is dated at the 1st century CE. In general, it seems that in the Classical period names of gods in their unchanged form were rarely given to children.

¹⁰ Derivatives of the god's name are attested earlier, however, e.g. Ἄρητος (*Árētos*): the 5th and 4th centuries BCE.

(e.g. Λεονίδας, *Leonídas*), fantastic creatures (e.g. Δράκων, *Drákōn*), body parts (e.g. Κέφαλος, *Képhalos*),¹¹ various objects, e.g. furniture items (Κλίνικος, *Klínikos*), armor (Θωρακίδης, *Thōrakídēs*) etc.¹² In one word, the category was onomastically extremely productive. Understandably, the vast majority of names were, as it seems, based on words with positive or neutral associations, but there are also to be found such that connote unfavorable or outright negative ideas, e.g. Αἰσχρός (*Aĩskhros*, αἰσχρός ‘causing shame, dishonoring, reproachful; ugly, ill-favored; shameful, base; ill-suited’) or Κόπρις (*Kópris*, κόπρος ‘excrement, ordure, dung, manure; dunghill, byre’). Finally, among odd-sounding personal names (to our ears, that is) there are compounds where the combination of the constituents seems somewhat logically confounding, e.g. Ἀνδριπίδης (*Andrippídēs*, ‘son of man-horse’).¹³

Simple non-theophoric names branch into derivatives (e.g. Δρακόντιος, *Drakóntios*)¹⁴ and those where the derivational process is seemingly lacking

¹¹ A very interesting name (attested in Athens, 3rd century BCE) is Κλειτόριον (*Kleitóron*). Perhaps the most prominent semantic association would be one with κλειτός ‘renowned, famous, splendid, excellent’, related to the verb κλέω ‘tell of, make famous, celebrate’. However, it does not seem improbable, I believe, to perceive the name as being related to the noun κλειτορίς ‘clitoris’ (if such a form was indeed in use in Classical Greece), which would render the name as ‘small clitoris’. The other attested meaning of the word κλειτορίς is ‘a gem’, but one has to admit that the body part sense would not perhaps have been overlooked by the hearer.

¹² The meaning of the appellatives semantically related to the names in the current list is as follows: βασιλεύς ‘king, chief; prince’, κράτος ‘strength, might; power, authority’, σοφός ‘clever, wise, prudent, learned’, φίλος ‘beloved, dear, friend’, τιμή ‘worship, esteem, honor, dignity’, μάντις ‘diviner, seer, prophet’ (divination in ancient Greece was a kind of profession, not necessarily formally connected with the religion of a particular *polis*), ἱερεύς ‘priest, sacrificer’, ἄρχων ‘chief magistrate, governor’, κληδών ‘omen, presage contained in a chance utterance’, ὄρος ‘mountain, hill’, Στρυμών ‘a river of Thrace’, πέτρα ‘rock; freq. of cliffs, ledges, etc. by the sea’ (proverbially used as a symbol of firmness), ἀμπελίς ‘young vine, vine plant’, λέων ‘lion’, δράκων ‘dragon, serpent’, κεφαλή ‘head’, κλίνη ‘that on which one lies, couch’, θώραξ ‘corslet; coat of mail, scale armor’.

¹³ ἄνηρ (gen. ἀνδρός) ‘man; husband’; ἵππος ‘horse’; -ιδης, a patronymic suffix. *LGPN-Ling*, an *LGPN* offshoot, observes that some seemingly semantically incompatible name roots or bases may occasionally yield a meaningful interpretation. For example, the name Λυσαινέτη (*Lysainētē*), seen as containing the verb part λυσ(ι)- ‘unlash, liberate’ and the verbal adjective -αινετη ‘about whom is talked, praiseworthy’ (translation by *LGPN-Ling*) is a compound whose constituents seem incompatible unless we pose that the name was interpreted as ‘the liberation about which it is spoken, that has had so much impact’, where the first element is the noun λύσις ‘loosing, releasing, ransoming’ and the whole name is ‘a feminine derivative of the father’s nickname or of an ancestor who “liberated” the city.’

¹⁴ δράκων ‘dragon, serpent’.

(e.g. Ἄγγελος, *Ángelos*¹⁵). Of course the division is far from being clear-cut and may pose a problem. McLean (2002: 83) mentions, for example, the names Ἴσχυς (*Ískhys*) and Ἡδύς (*Hēdys*) as having been formed from the appellatives ἰσχύς ‘strength; might, power’ and ἡδύς ‘pleasant; welcome’ without any modification. Disregarding the fact that the word category changes in the word formation process, i.e. an appellative becomes a proper name, which entails derivation, one has to observe the word stress shift that occurs in both pairs of words, which can be seen as prosodic derivation. Non-theophoric compounds appear in a number of structural combinations, e.g. Ἀγάθανδρος (*Agáthandros*, adjective with noun), Ἀνδράγαθος (*Andrágathos*, noun with adjective), Δεξιόχος (*Deksiókhos*, noun with verb (ἔχω (with apophony in derivation))), Εὐαθλος (*Eúathlos*, particle/adverb with noun) etc.¹⁶ and, depending on the analytical methodology used, may be interpreted as derivation-free compounds or compounds where derivation is to be observed, i.e. derivational compounds. For example, the name Λυσίστρατος (*Lysístratos*) may be viewed as a derivation-free compound λυσι- + στρατός (stem + word; the first constituent of compounds with the verb λύω being λυσι- and λυε- (Tribulato 2015: 396)) or, as I am inclined to see it, as a derivational compound λυσ-ι-στρατ-ο-ς (stem + interfix + root + derivational affix + inflectional affix).¹⁷

Most of the above-mentioned names are male, but there is also ample attestation of ancient Greek female names. Women seem to have been given

¹⁵ ἄγγελος ‘messenger, envoy’. I offer the current Latin spelling, i.e. *Ángelos*, rather than *Ággelos*, due to the assumed pronunciation of the word in Attic Greek. The system of Latin representation of Greek spelling used in this article is, what has perhaps been observed already, a cross between transcription and transliteration. I explain the methodology in my doctoral dissertation; this article is far too short to be burdened with lengthy theoretical considerations of the kind discussed there. For the Classical Athens Greek pronunciation see Allen 1987.

¹⁶ The potential motivating words for the current compound anthroponyms are as follows: ἀγαθός ‘well-born, gentle; brave, valiant; good, capable’, ἀνὴρ ‘man; husband’, δεξιά ‘right hand, the right; a sign of assurance, pledge, treaty’ (the sense of δεξιά appears in many positively charged words, e.g. δεξιός ‘dexterous, ready, skillful, clever’, δεξιότης ‘dexterity, esp. of mind, sharpness, cleverness’ etc.), ἔχω ‘possess, keep, inhabit’, εὖ ‘well, thoroughly, competently; morally well, kindly’, ἄθλος ‘contest (for a prize), conflict, struggle’. It should be noted that there is a Greek compound εὐαθλος ‘successful in contests; happily won’, so the name Εὐαθλος may be said to be a syntactic derivation (an appellative becomes a proper noun) rather than a compound, depending on the methodology used.

¹⁷ The justification of the morphological interpretation of the second constituent in the current example may come from the feminine version of the name, Λυσιστράτη (*Lysistrátē*), where the addition of a suffix (-ῆ) in the word formation process that yielded the name is unquestionable (*στρατή, with στρατός-like semantics, does not seem to have existed in the ancient Greek lexicon).

names similar to men, with a feminine termination, obviously. Examples of simple non-theophoric female names are forms such as Ἀγάθη (*Agáthē*), Δόξα (*Dóksa*), or Πραξῶ (*Praksῶ*).¹⁸ Female compounds were also numerous, e.g. Δεξιππη (*Deksíppē*), Ἐπιφίλη (*Epiphílē*), Φαιναρέτη (*Phainarétē*).¹⁹ Interestingly, even ‘masculine’ objects and ideas found their way into women’s anthroponyms (simple or compound). Thus we can find in the ancient Greek onomastic corpus forms such as Ἀρχεστράτη (*Arkhestrátē*, στρατός ‘army; band or body of men’), Νικομάχη (*Nikomákhē*, μάχη ‘battle, combat’), or Τιμάνδρα (*Timándra*, ἀνὴρ ‘man, husband’).²⁰ And conversely, some ‘feminine-sounding’ notions such as ‘sweetness’ or ‘rose’ are to be noted in male names too, e.g. Γλύκων (*Glykōn*, γλυκύς ‘sweet to the taste or smell’) or Ῥοδάς (*Rhodās*, ῥοδῆ ‘rose-bush’).

The above-mentioned aspect of feminine (and masculine) anthroponymic terminations requires a short comment, since the matter of ancient Greek name endings is not strictly bipolar, i.e. masculine vs. feminine. A typical Greek male anthroponym termination is -ος, -ης, -ας, -ιος, -ιας, or -ων (a participle ending), e.g. Μόσχος (*Móskhos*), Εὐθυμένης (*Euthyménēs*), Κλέας (*Kléas*), Σιβύρτιος (*Sibýrtios*), Νικίας (*Nikías*), Κλέων (*Kléōn*). Some names also end in -ις, for instance Θεόγνις (*Théognis*), which termination is perhaps more characteristic of feminine gender in the third declension of Greek appellative nouns. Women’s names most often end in -η, -α, -ια, -ω, for instance Συνέτη (*Synétē*), Καλλινίκα (*Kalliníka*), Ἀσπασία (*Aspasía*), Κλεώ (*Kleῶ*). It is worth mentioning however that the grammatical gender of certain ancient Greek names does not correspond to the biological sex of the bearer. Names formed with the suffix -ιον (-ιδιον), e.g. Μείδιον (*Meídion*) or Παρθένιον (*Parthénion*), are neuter (and female, in this case). The suffix was used to form diminutives/hypocoristics, both appellative (παιδίον, ‘little/young (dear) child’) and onymic (Εὐριπίδιον (*Euripídion*), ‘little (dear) Euripides’), but it could have lost its diminutive sense in some (most?) names in the Classical period.²¹

¹⁸ ἀγαθός ‘well-born, gentle; brave, valiant; good, capable’, δόξα ‘expectation; notion, opinion, judgment’, πρᾶττω ‘achieve, effect, accomplish’.

¹⁹ δεξιός ‘dexterous, ready, skillful, clever’, ἵππος ‘horse, mare’, ἐπί ‘upon, in, near; before, in presence of, according to’, φίλος ‘friend, dear one; pleasant; loving, friendly’, φαίνω ‘bring to light, cause to appear; make known, reveal, disclose’, ἀρετή ‘goodness, excellence; active merit’.

²⁰ As the initial component of the three compounds there are forms semantically relating to, respectively, ἀρχή ‘beginning, origin; first place, power, sovereignty’, νίκη ‘victory’, τιμὴ ‘worship, esteem, honor; worth, value, price’.

²¹ In passing, the aforementioned comedy by Aristophanes, *Clouds*, contains a jocular fragment relating to the current issue (v. 681-691) in which Socrates discusses certain

It is important to bear in mind that, when analyzing the semantics (i.e. the ‘meaning’, as understood from the analysis of the name’s morphology) of a given name, we may at points find ourselves at a loss. What I mean is not the abovementioned name Ἀνδριπίδης with its challenging combination of constituents, but a slightly more subtle phenomenon found in ancient Greek names. The problem lies in the interpretation of the sequence of the parts of the name in certain anthroponyms and their grammatical function. The reading of the semantics of such names may not be linear, as we might expect. As *LGPN* explains (under *Greek names*), names could usually combine their parts in either order, e.g. Ἀριστόνικος (*Aristónikos*), Νικάριστος (*Nikáristos*),²² to give a particular (singular or multiple) semantic interpretation of the anthroponym. What’s more, the position of particular elements in a compound may or may not imply a given grammatical correlation between them. The following quote aptly illuminates the phenomenon:

The Greeks did not think of any actual case relations as existing in these compounds, and the case relation that exists is purely logical. The same form may be analysed in different ways, as φιλόανθρωπος²³ = φιλῶν ἀνθρώπους [i.e. he who loves people] or = φίλος ἀνθρώπων [i.e. he who is loved by people].

(Smyth 1920: 253)

Certainly, the abovementioned interpretational difficulties may as well be negligible in most contexts. It would not be unreasonable to suppose that the semantics of anthroponyms heard on an everyday basis, even if undoubtedly not difficult for the speakers to decipher, would not have constituted the first plane of communication in most conversations in ancient Greece, as it would not for us. On the other hand, however, this does not mean, one would think, that the sheer conspicuousness of the meaning of the Greek names could not have been easily utilized, provided the hearer wanted to draw his/her attention to it. If we deal with literary sources of ancient Greek onomastics, for example comedy, the meaning of names to be found there may have been of utmost importance, at least in certain cases. Precisely this context is meant to be the topic of the follow-up article I mention earlier.

Generally, ancient Greek anthroponyms, as mentioned above, are divided into derivatives and compounds (which can be derivatives in their own right). Greek compounds, both proprial and appellative, consist, for the most part, of roots or stems, but not whole words (cf. Tribulato

declination aspects of a number of male names, pointing out to the fact that they have feminine terminations (in the vocative).

²² ἄριστος ‘best, noblest’, νίκη ‘victory’.

²³ φιλέω ‘love, regard with affection; treat affectionately or kindly, esp. welcome, entertain a guest’, ἄνθρωπος ‘man; mankind’.

2015: 18, 20). An example of a compound with a stem (and a word) in it is *κουροτρόφος* ‘rearing children’ (stem: *κουρο-*), and a compound containing a root is *βουπλήξ* ‘ox-goat’ (root: *πληγ-*; *ibid.*).²⁴ Nouns and verbs which are part of a compound are usually in the form of a root or stem, adverbs and prepositions appear in their word form (Tribulato 2015: 20).

As a final thought pertaining to Classical Greece onomastics one should mention one more category of personal names to be found in certain typologies, i.e. diminutives/hypocoristics, exemplified with, as *LGPN* wants it, *Κλεόμμας* (*Kleómmas*, from *Κλεομένης* [*Kleoméñēs*]).²⁵ Pigeonholing a particular anthroponym as such a formation, we should be cautious, however, since it may be somewhat problematic. First, it is not always obvious whether a particular name is a diminutive/hypocoristic and not a full form. Greek diminutive/hypocoristic word formation rules may have been quite unpredictable and hard to pinpoint for us, being more of unfettered poetic license than clear-cut rule. It is not inconceivable to imagine there having existed ancient Greek anthroponymic forms which we would not be able to recognize as diminutives/hypocoristics of a particular given name²⁶ or as diminutives/hypocoristics in general, or, worse still, which we would wrongly classify as such forms of another name. Secondly, a particular given name could have had a number of ‘terms of endearment’ as we can see in a great many modern English and Polish names.²⁷ It seems impractical to suppose that ancient Greeks had a lesser onomastic imagination than we do today, thus it is far from obvious how we could attempt to comprehensively describe ancient Greek diminutive/hypocoristic word formation processes and work out typologies. Finally, a given form of the anthroponym could have functioned as a diminutive/hypocoristic of more than one name. An example of it is the anthroponym *Κρατύλος* (*Kratýlos*) which, apparently,

²⁴ Of course, any stem contains a root; the difference between *κουρο-* and *πληγ-* in the current example is that *κουρο-* is a root (*κορ-*, *κουρ-* being an epic Ionic variant, cf. Beekes 2010, s.v. *κόρη*) affixed with a derivational suffix (*-ο-*), whereas *πληγ-* is a pure root (to which, subsequently, the inflectional affix *-ς* is added).

²⁵ Diminutives and hypocoristics are similar but not identical lexical phenomena, yet they will often have one word-form, e.g. *doggie* can be both, depending on context, i.e. it can mean ‘small dog’ or ‘lovely (small) dog’. In the current passage I discuss them jointly. It also seems worth mentioning that I have not come across any formal Greek name typology which would list augmentatives.

²⁶ In the current paragraph, the notion of *given name* should be understood as the *name given at birth, in its full form*.

²⁷ One such example would be the following anthroponyms: Elisabeth: Bess, Bessie, Beth, Betsy, Bette, Bettie, Betty, Buffy, Elisa (plus over twenty more in *Behind the Name*, s.v. Elisabeth) and Elżbieta: Ela, Elaczek, Elalunia, Elaszek, Elcia, Elciak, Elciak, Elcik, Elda (plus a few dozen more in *Imiona*, s.v. Elżbieta).

was a hypocoristic form of the names Κρατίνοϛ (*Kratīnos*) and Κράτιοϛ (*Krātios*), where Κρατίνοϛ, in turn, is thought to have been a hypocoristic of the name Ἐπικράτης (*Epikrātēs*, Bechtel 1917: 260). Since data collections such as *LGPN* gather all types of names found in various sources, some of the forms attested there may have been diminutives/hypocoristics or even nicknames rather than given names and, bearing in mind the scarcity of ancient Greek data we have at our disposal and its fragmentary nature, it might be extremely hard in certain cases to unequivocally ascertain the status of a particular anthroponym.

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Ancient Greek Personal Names. Part I: Theory

Abstract

The article discusses ancient Greek anthroponyms of the Classical period from a social and typological perspective. The former touches upon ancient Greek name-giving practices, the number of names a Greek would bear and their general type. The latter focuses on a number of name characteristics such as male / female, theophoric / non-theophoric, simple / compound, derivative / non-derivative, derivative / compound, semantically easily interpretable / semantically harder to interpret, given name / diminutive (hypocoristic). The text is meant as a form of introduction to a 'case study' of Aristophanic anthroponymy to be presented in one of the author's subsequent articles.

Keywords: onomastics, anthroponym, name, ancient, Greece.