

A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names

On 11 January 2001, a reception was held at the Academy to celebrate the publication the previous month of both the latest volume of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* and the proceedings of an Academy conference on ‘Greek Personal Names: Their Value as Evidence’. **Elaine Matthews**, joint editor of both volumes, describes here the scope of the project, and the significance of names in the various fields of classical scholarship.

LGPN was established as an Academy Research Project in 1972. It is edited by P.M. Fraser FBA and E. Matthews, and is published in regional volumes by Oxford University Press. Regions covered so far are the Aegean Islands, Cyprus, and Cyrenaica (LGPN I, 1987); Attica, edited by M.J. Osborne and S.G. Byrne (II, 1994); The Peloponnese, Western Greece, Sicily and Magna Graecia (IIIA, 1997); Central Greece (IIIB, 2000). The remaining volumes will cover Northern Greece, the Black Sea and Balkan regions, and Asia Minor.

Unavoidable as the repetition of errors is, we may express the pious hope that some organization (for it is beyond the scope of a single scholar) will in due course undertake the production of a new Dictionary of Greek Proper Names’. So wrote the Cambridge scholar John Chadwick, in his 1959 review of a recently published reverse index of ancient Greek names. The ‘repetition of errors’ was a reference to the status of the onomastic dictionary on which the reverse index had been based: the *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen* of W. Pape, first published in 1842, revised by him in 1850, and further revised and augmented by G.E. Benseler and son between 1862 and 1870.

That there should already have existed a specialised name collection in 1842 is a measure of the early appreciation, within the scientific classical community, of the importance of personal names, both in themselves as an integral part of language (but with their own rules and patterns of evolution), and as a key to Greek religious, political and individual values, and a measure of demographic, religious and other movements. In the same period began the systematic publication of collections of inscriptions, on a regional basis, containing documents of all kinds, not only the records of cities but also individual dedications, wills, tombstones. A dual development thus occurred: the discovery of new epigraphical texts greatly widened the social and geographical range of Greek names, and the interpretation of individual documents became focused in a new and important way.

The failings of ‘Pape–Benseler’, then, were not those of scholarship but of the information available, for they caught only the first waves of the publication of documents (though it is an indication of the rapid growth of documentary evidence that by 1870 Pape’s original work of 424 pages had grown to 1710). But although the discovery and publication of documents went on apace, and the study of personal names, from both

the philological and the historical perspective, expanded and deepened, no replacement appeared for Pape–Benseler, which remained in use, *faute de mieux*, for over a century, with increasingly misleading results, for its evidence was not simply out of date but lacking in whole dimensions.

It was the British Academy which, in 1972, took up the challenge, responding to a proposal from Peter Fraser, a Fellow of the Academy and of All Souls College, Oxford, to support the compilation of a new comprehensive personal name dictionary: *A Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*. Peter Fraser undertook the Editorship and the Chairmanship of the Steering Committee, and set out the founding principles. In the broadest terms, the aim of the new Lexicon was to document all personal names

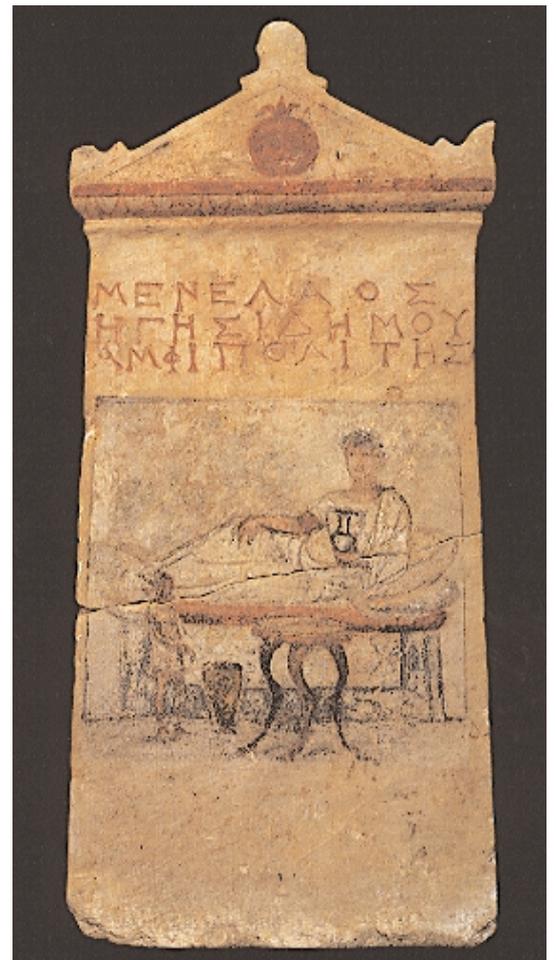


Figure 1. Tombstone of Menelaos son of Hegesilaos, of Amphipolis. From ancient Demetrias in Thessaly, third century BC, now in Volos Museum. © Archaeological Receipts Fund, Athens

Σωτίων

- ΒΟΙΩΤΙΑ: (1) i BC *SEG* XXVIII 456 ([Σ]ωτίων: s. Διοκλ—)
 —ANTHEDON: (2) c. 170-220 AD *ib.* XXVII 52 A, 37
 —KORONEIA? (AG. DEMETRIOS (MOD.)): (3) *hell. ib.* XLI 462
 —OROPOS: (4) iii-ii BC *IG* II² 10521 (*FRA* 7353) (s. Δημήτριος)
 —THEBES: (5) i BC/i AD *IG* VII 2441 I, 3 (s. Ἀθανίας)
 —THESPIAI: (6) iii BC *SEG* XXII 377, 4
 —THISBE: (7) *imp. IG* VII 2297
 DORIS:
 —KYTENION: (8) 206 BC *SEG* XXXVIII 1476, 92 (Rousset 173) (f. Φηγεύς)
 LOKRIS (OPUNTIAN):
 —HALAI: (9) ii AD *SEG* III 421, II (s. Εὔτυχος); (10) ~ *ib.* I. 13 (f. Θεοκλής)
 LOKRIS (WESTERN):
 —AMPHISSA: (11) 194 BC *SGDI* 2082, 2, 5
 —NAUPAKTOS: (12) m. ii BC *IG* IX (1)² (3) 624 c, 12 (Σωτίων); (13) a. 141 BC *ib.* 624 d, 2 (f. Δελφίων)
 PHOKIS:
 —DAULIS: (14) 193 BC *SGDI* 1969, 4, 9, 10, 12, 15 (s. Σίμακος)
 —DELPHI: (15) c. 247-213 BC *Daux* K 23 + *BCH* 64-5 (1940-1) pp. 82-3; pp. 109 f.; *Lefèvre* 65? ?= (16); (16) 225-214 BC *FD* III (2) 76, 7 ?= (17) (15); (17) 214 BC *Brooklyn Mus. Ann.* 10 (1968-9) p. 138 no. 30 (Nachttergaele, *Les Galates* 28, 1) (s. Κλέων) ?= (16); (18) ?162 BC *SGDI* 1824, 7; (19) 93-81 BC *FD* III (3) 352, 3 (f. Σώσιον)

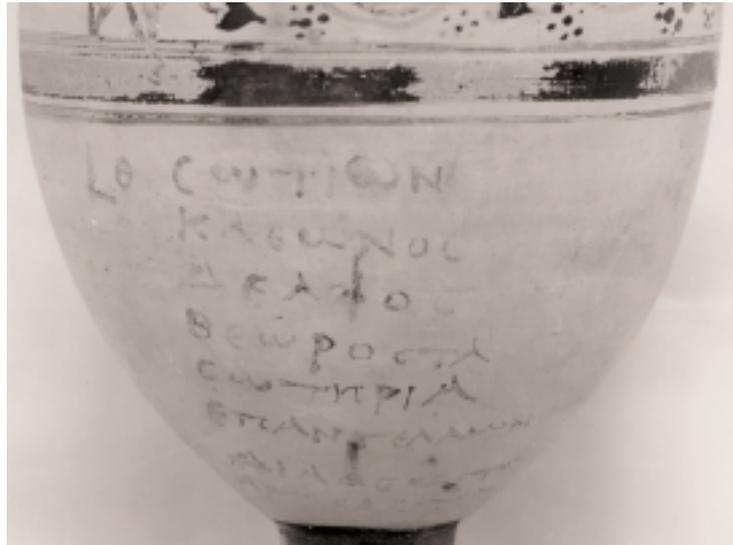


Figure 2. Funerary urn of Sotion son of Kleon of Delphi, who died in Alexandria in 212 BC, after travelling there as an official to announce the religious festival of the Soteria at Delphi. He is number (17) on the excerpt taken from *LGN III B*, Central Greece, illustrated left; possibly identical with a Delphian office holder of the same name ((15) and (16)). New York, Metropolitan Museum. Photo. © Museum

occurring in Greek literature, inscriptions, papyri, on coins, vases and other objects.

With this enormous task in prospect, pragmatic decisions were taken to exclude geographical, mythological and heroic names (all included in Pape-Benseler), and Mycenaean names. The terminal date of, broadly speaking, the reign of Heraclius was intended to draw the line short of truly Byzantine nomenclature. The geographical range was, simply, wherever there was a Greek presence in the ancient world, from Asia Minor to Western Europe, from the Black Sea to North Africa. Despite some early modifications, such as the abandonment of summaries of the more common names in favour of comprehensive listing of all the evidence, the original plan has been essentially sustained.

The ambitious research programme was set in train with a small research staff working in Oxford, whose efforts were supplemented and complemented by a large number of volunteer scholars enlisted by Peter Fraser to contribute from within their specialist fields. In this sense the project has been truly international from the start. Sources

were collated afresh to extract the basic information of name, location, date, reference, and supplementary details appropriate to an onomasticon, most notably familial relationships and social status. The result was an archive of fiches, stored in shoe boxes which still line the walls of the Lexicon offices and, despite computerisation, are occasionally consulted. The research programme was succeeded and amplified in due course by one of editorial work, to forge an onomasticon from this mass of material. The editorial staff have always worked in Oxford, though the complexity of the material has ensured that specialist collaboration continues to be sought, at home and abroad. The project is now at approximately the halfway stage of its publication programme, having produced four regional volumes covering the Aegean Islands, Cyprus and Cyrenaica, the Greek mainland up to Thessaly and Southern Illyria, Sicily and Magna Graecia. Or, to quantify it another way, 215,000 records have been published of the 450,000 or so compiled; they share more than 28,000 different names.

Work continues on Northern Greece, the Black Sea and Balkan regions, and Asia Minor, and throws up, not for the first time but perhaps more radically than before, material which challenges the methodological framework of the work as a whole. The city of Byzantium, for example, was dedicated as the new Christian city of Constantinople in 330 AD, more than a thousand years after its foundation as a colony from mainland Greece, but nearly 300 years before the proposed terminal date of the Lexicon. There is a very strong case that the Lexicon should in this case stop short and not attempt to accommodate

In July 1998, an international colloquium was held at the British Academy on the theme of the value of Greek personal names. The papers were published in December 2000, as *Greek Personal Names: Their Value as Evidence*, edited by S. Hornblower and E. Matthews (OUP/British Academy)

what was in effect a new epoch in onomastic terms as in so many other ways, and one which has its own specialists. Similarly, the Macedonian and Thracian diaspora at all levels, dynasties, settlers and soldiers alike, challenges established definitions of nationality. While it is important to be responsive to varieties in the material, a publication which will distil 450,000 records into six printed volumes of condensed dictionary format must also maintain uniform presentation and scholarly coherence, enabling the work, whether in book or electronic form, to be treated as one whole.

With more than a century's understanding of the value of names preceding its inception, the impact of the Lexicon is to some degree along predicted lines. At a basic level, quite simply more is now known, and since Greek is a very rich language, and names a very inventive part of it, with verbs, nouns, and adjectives combined and recombined to create new forms, the result is that we have not only more examples of known names, but many more name forms. Commentators on literary texts can no longer dismiss as 'not very convincing' an unusual looking name, without first checking to find, as often happens, that it has several historical attestations. On the other hand, a surprising number of names are attested only once, a phenomenon too widespread to be accounted for solely by the vagaries of the survival of the evidence. The increase in evidence has emphasised, rather than undermined, the localisation of names: against the backdrop of mounting totals of pan-hellenic names (Dionysios 2413 times, Demetrios 1681), some names remain attested in one place only. The large and important category of theophoric names, those formed from the names

Figure 3. Simon Hornblower, Elaine Matthews, Peter Fraser and Peter Brown (Secretary of the Academy) at the launch of the 'Greek Personal Names' volume



and titles of gods, grows, and awaits deeper analysis.

But as the amount of published material becomes a critical mass, there are signs of movement on the offensive, as it were, to ask new questions armed with the evidence, both positive and negative, of names. This can be seen most notably in the papers from the international conference held at the Academy in 1998, as an 80th birthday tribute to Peter Fraser, in which leading scholars explored the value of names in various fields of classical scholarship. Since the Lexicon began, Mycenaean studies have advanced, and we now know that many of the features of Greek nomenclature were already established in Mycenaean names; tracing the continuities, and discontinuities, may reveal interesting variations in the way different societies responded to linguistic and cultural changes. Again, names may offer an independent test of the authenticity of ancient historians. The statement of the historian Diodorus, for example, that Macedonian annexation of the city of Amphipolis in 357 BC left the resident population largely intact is confirmed by contemporary documents revealing bearers of Ionian names on terms of equality in political and economic transactions with Macedonian newcomers. Again, the accuracy of the historian Thucydides is vindicated when examination of the Thessalian section of his narrative reveals names not only distinctly Thessalian, but even unique to the city to which individuals are assigned.

The link between names and documents has already been stressed. Since the 1994 publication of the second volume in the series (the work of M.J. Osborne and S. Byrne) dedicated to Athens, a city uniquely well documented and studied, an international team of epigraphers has begun work on a new edition of its decrees. With greater awareness of the names, on a basis which distinguishes their distribution within demes and by chronology, newly refined approaches are being developed to use names to interpret and date inscriptions, what one of the researchers has called 'epigraphical onomastics'. One result is new readings of texts long ago regarded as fixed; this in turn creates corrigenda, to appear alongside the addenda which are emerging from the excavations in the city as it prepares for the 2004 Olympics. Questions arise of updating and a new edition of the Lexicon.

At the midway stage, then, the Lexicon project is privileged to see some of the effects of its work, and to be able to play its part in further



Figure 4. Tombstone of a military man, showing distinctively Boeotian helmet, shield and griffin decoration. His name, Eubolos, Boeotian dialect for Euboulos, is inscribed in very fine relief lettering in a sunken field, a style characteristic of the region. Tanagra, Boeotia, third century BC. Photo. P.M. Fraser

developments arising from them. Fundamental to the ability to respond to new enquiries and proposals are the electronic resources. The project began using computers in 1975, a primitive period of card punching and improvised ways of coping with the absence not only of Greek fonts but even of lower-case letters. Fortunately, in 1984, we paused to take stock and, drawing the benefit of the ten years' research already accomplished, reconsidered the research values and inter-relations of the various components of the data we had collected. The resulting database schema has stood us in good stead, accommodating the academic demands of very varied material and migrating successfully through two database and typesetting systems, and now supporting the delivery of data online.

The published books are generated directly from the database, the order and format determined by a program, with embedded typesetting commands, and automatic pagination and hyphenation.

Reverse indexes, an extremely valuable working tool, are now routinely produced in each volume, and an integrated index of all published names is available for analysis online. The crucial and overriding task of making the rest of the regional volumes available to the scholarly community is accompanied by an ability to respond to enquiries from researchers, and to new ideas in the world of electronic scholarship.

The project has been supported by the British Academy, as an Academy Research Project, since its inception. Since 1999, it has received funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Board. The project is pleased to acknowledge lasting support from the Archaeological Society at Athens, and more recently from the J.F. Kostopoulos Foundation.

The web site for the Lexicon of Greek Personal Names can be found at www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk