



TITE! A PECULIAR USE OF THE PRAENOMEN

Abstract:

As we see from Ennius, the *praenomen* alone can be used by a Greek addressing a Roman; as we see from Lucilius, it can be also employed by a Roman greeting a philhellene in jest. At the beginning of *Cato Maior*, Cicero quotes the passage of Ennius, but those words when addressed by him to Atticus acquire a similar function as those mentioned by Lucilius.

Keywords:

Praenomen, Quintus Ennius, Gaius Lucilius, Marcus Tullius Cicero, Titus Pomponius Atticus.

Various uses of the *praenomen* without a *nomen gentilicium* or *cognomen* are discussed in an article by Ugo E. Paoli.¹ He observes, for instance, that, in the period of the Roman republic, *praenomina* without any addition were used in familiar allocution, though greater familiarity was expressed by *cognomina*; and that, judging from the preserved fragments of *fabula togata*, its personages used to call each other and speak of each other using first names, since they probably lacked a third one.

It must be stressed that a Roman *praenomen* meant something else to the Greeks. They were tempted to treat it as equivalent to their own names: just like them, it was not inherited, but given by one's parents. Therefore, they do not hesitate to use it in official situations, where a Roman would use the *praenomen* combined with the *nomen gentilicium*. Thus, there is no undue familiarity when in Ennius' *Annales* a Greek, *vir haud magna cum re*, addresses Flamininus (as one should imagine, in Greek):

¹ Paoli 1925. Paoli's point of departure are remarks of Schulze 1933: 487 with notes 5–7. Cf. Adams 1978: 161–162, and Dickey 2002: 63–67. I am grateful to Agnieszka Lew and Stephen Farrand for their kind help.

*O Tite, si quid ego adiuro curamve levasso
quae nunc te coquit et versat in pectore fixa,
ecquid erit praemi?*

adding that he knows:

*sollicitari te, Tite, sic noctesque diesque.*²

Greeks referred to Flamininus by his *praenomen* even in a much more solemn context. Plutarch writes that during his lifetime the inhabitants of Chalcis still sang a pean celebrating their alliance with Rome. It ended with the words:

μέλπετε, κοῦραι,
Ζῆνα μέγαν Ῥώμαν τε Τίτον θ' ἄμα Ῥωμαίων τε Πίστιν.
ἰήε Παιάν,
ὦ Τίτε σῶτερ.³

One can suppose that Ennius' contemporary readers did not see anything amusing in the scene in which the famous general was addressed by his *praenomen*. A different reaction is expected by Lucilius when in one of his *Satires*, Scaevola the Augur relates his encounter in 121 BC with the philhellene Titus Albucius who later would prosecute him *de repetundis*:

*Graecum te, Albuci, quam Romanum atque Sabinum (...)
maluisti dici. Graece ergo praetor Athenis,
id quod maluisti, te, cum ad me accedi', saluto:
'chaere – inquam – Tite!'. lictores, turma omni' chorusque:
'chaere, Tite!'. hinc hostis mi Albucius, hinc inimicus.*⁴

Evidently the pretor and his retinue regard addressing Albucius in Greek with his first name as a capital joke, mocking his fascination with Greek culture. Albucius is not amused: he would prefer to be treated with more esteem by a magistrate. In my opinion there is no need here to look for sexual undertones as do some scholars pointing out that *titus* could mean 'penis'⁵ and *τίτις* 'vulva'.⁶

Both fragments – that of Ennius and that of Lucilius – have been preserved thanks to Cicero.⁷ In the introduction to *Cato Maior*, the words directed to Flamininus are redirected to Atticus, to whom the dialogue is dedicated; this play is based on the identity of Atticus' *praenomen* with that of the general. Relishing this joke, Cicero in his letters to Atticus refers to *Cato Maior* as *O Tite, si quid*, or just *O Tite*.⁸

² Enn. *Ann.* 10.335–339 (Skutsch).

³ *Collectanea Alexandrina* 173.3–6 ap. Plut. *T. Flamin.* 16.7. Plutarch's biography is entitled *Τίτος* and he very often refers to Flamininus by his first name.

⁴ Lucil. 2.88–94 Marx.

⁵ Jones 1989.

⁶ O'Sullivan 2012.

⁷ Cic. *Cato* 1 and *Fin.* 1.9.

⁸ Cic. *Att.* 16.3.1 and 16.11.3.

What is so amusing in applying this quotation to Atticus? When Cicero says to him: *O Tite*, he does it for a different reason than the man addressing Flamininus. He is not a Greek speaking to a Roman, but a Roman speaking to a quasi-Greek, like Scaevola to Titus Albucius. Atticus spent much of his life in Athens and was fluent in Greek, in which he wrote a book on Cicero's consulate.⁹

Though Cicero addresses Atticus as Titus some other times,¹⁰ here this seems to allude to his status as an honorary Greek. This can be supported by six-year-old Cicero Junior's postscript in one of his father's letters: Κικέρων ὁ μικρὸς ἀσπάζεται Τίτον τὸν Ἀθηναῖον.¹¹ Contrary to what it may seem, ὁ Ἀθηναῖος is not meant here to render *Atticus*. A name with this adjective designated a Greek from Athens from the point of view of the inhabitants of other Greek cities (a fellow Athenian would use the name of the deme).

It seems a paradox that out of Atticus' *tria nomina* it was not the *cognomen*, taken from the Greek, but the purely Roman (or rather Sabine) *praenomen* that served to emphasize his philhellenism.

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⁹ Cic. *Att.* 2.1.1, cf. 2.12.4.

¹⁰ In his correspondence Cicero addresses his friend 22 times *Attice* (usually *mi Attice*) and only two times *Tite*. A different proportion – 9 times *Attice* (including one such address by Quintus Cicero) and 8 times *Tite* – in *De Legibus* can be ascribed to the writer's desire for *varietas*.

¹¹ Cic. *Att.* 2.9.4.