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THE USE OF PRAENOMINA IN CICERO'S LETTERS

It is on only comparatively rare occasions that Cicero refers to, or addresses, a fellow-Roman by his praenomen alone, without appending either his nomen or his cognomen. Apart from Atticus and members of Cicero's own family, there are only seventeen persons who are mentioned in Cicero's correspondence by their praenomina alone. These are Pompey(1), his sons Gnaeus (2) and Sextus (3), Publius Clodius (4), Appius Claudius (5), Decimus Brutus (6), Servius Sulpicius Rufus (7), Servius Sulpicius Galba (8), Sextus Peducaeus (9), Servius Pola (10), Marcus and Publius Crassus (11), Publius Sittius the younger(12), Tiberius, the father-in-law of Q. Volusius (13), Servius Claudius (14), Quintus Cornificius (15), and a certain Publius, possibly Dolabella (16).

(1) Att. 2,12,2; 2,16,2; 6,1,3; 7,1,4; 7,10,1; 8,3,7; 8,9,3; 8,11,2; 8,13,1; 8,16,2; 9,1,1 & 2; 9,2,1; 9,3,1 & 2; 9,10,4 & 6; 9,11,4; 9,18,1.

(2) Fam. 15,19,4.

(3) Att. 14,1,2; 14,8,2; 14,13,2; 15,21,2; 15,22,1; 15,19,1; 16,1,4; 16,4,1.

(4) Att. 2,7,2; 2,12,1; 2,15,2; 2,19,4; 2,22,4; 4,3,4; Fam. 1,9,19.

(5) Appius Claudius is almost always referred to solely as 'Appius', not only by Cicero but also by Caelius and Vatinius.

(6) Att. 15,10,1; 15,11,2; 15,29,1.

(7) Cicero refers to Sulpicius Rufus as 'Servius' very frequently, not only in letters to Atticus but also in those to other correspondents, e.g. Brut. 1,15,7; Fam. 6,4,5; 7,21,1; 10,28,3. Caelius also refers to him as 'Servius' in Fam. 8,12,3. See also Tacitus Hist. II, 48.

(8) Fam. 11,7,1; 11,24,2.

(9) Att. 7,14,3; 7,17,1; 9,7,2; 9,13,6; 10,1,1; 12,50,1; 15,7,1; 16,3,6; 16,11,1; 16,14,4; 16,15,4.

(10) Q. 2,4,6. Fam. 8,4,2. The reading in both passages is uncertain.

(11) Fam. 5,8,4.

(12) Fam. 5,17,2.

(13) Att. 5,21,6.

(14) Fam. 9,16,4.

(15) Fam. 12,25,5.

(16) Fam. 16,22,1. But the true reading may be 'Publius',

These examples seem to fall into three main categories, the first of which comprises prominent political personages who were addressed or referred to by first names as an indication of familiarity. Such familiarity was often affectionate, but it may also have denoted a certain degree of contempt. In this category should be placed Cicero's use of 'Publius' and 'Gnaeus' to refer to Clodius and Pompey respectively, and it is significant that these are the two people whom he most frequently refers to by nicknames. He calls Clodius 'Pulchellus' on several occasions (1), while he frequently calls Pompey 'Sampsiceramus', and once 'Epicrates' and 'Arabarches' (2). It seems then, that, when speaking of Clodius and Pompey, Cicero often uses their praenomina as equivalent to a derogatory nickname, and the passages where this use occurs are generally those where he is adopting a somewhat contemptuous tone.

Apart from Cicero's use of the praenomen in this contemptuous sense, it seems that the practice of calling Pompey 'Gnaeus' was a fairly general one. There is an example in letters of Atticus quoted by Cicero (3), while Cicero himself talks about 'Gnaeus' in a conversation with Caesar (4). If in fact it was an established custom at Rome to refer to Pompey in this informal and familiar fashion (a fate that often befalls a man who is continually in the public eye), it would not* have been tllifficult for this usage to have been extended to his sons as well. The use of Clodius's praenomen, too, must have been general, or, Cicero's joke in the letter to Lentulus would lose much of its point.

It is interesting to note that neither Caesar nor Crassus are called by their praenomina alone. In the case of Pompey, this usage may have been a natural reaction among his contemporaries to his excessive concern for his own personal dignity.

The fact that Appius Claudius was almost invariably denoted by his praenomen not only by Cicero, of whose real feelings towards him there can be no doubt, but also by other personal enemies such as Caelius and Vatinius, would at first sight seem to indicate that this, too, is an example of the use of the praenomen as a contemptuous

(1) Att. 2,1,4; 2,18,3;2,22,1.

(2) Att. 2,14,1; 2,16,2; 2,17,1 & 2; 2,23,2 & 3; Att. 2,3,1; 2,17,3.

(3) Att. 9,10.

(4) Att. 9,18,1.

nickname. This, however, is conclusively disproved by the fact that Appius Claudius refers to himself as 'Appius', bracketing the name with the cognomen 'Lentulus' and the gentile name 'Ampius' (1), while Cicero in writing to him uses the term 'Appietas' in a complimentary sense. It seems, therefore, that the praenomen 'Appius' was commonly used with the force of a cognomen to indicate an eldest son in that branch of the gens Claudia. It was also used in this way to denote the son of C. Claudius Pulcher (2).

The use of 'Servius' to denote Sulpicius Rufus also comes into this second category of praenomina used with the force of cognomina. Cicero uses it not only in the intimate letters to Atticus, the jocular note to Trebatius, and the comparatively informal letter to Trebonius, but also in the more formal address of consolation to Torquatus and the rather laboured piece of self-justification addressed to Brutus. Sulpicius himself generally uses the form 'Servius Ciceroni' in the superscription of his letters, while in one letter (3) he refers to himself as 'Servius'. Finally, in a forensic speech, Cicero speaks of him by his praenomen alone (4).

The third category consists of all those examples where there exists some close relationship, of friendship or blood, between the person named and either Cicero himself, as in the case of Cornificius and Dolabella, or his correspondent, as in the case of Sittius and the Crassi, Galba, Claudius and Atticus's friend Tiberius, or both, as in the case of Peducaeus, who was an intimate friend of both Atticus and Cicero. This usage is only found in correspondence of an informal nature. For example, when writing to Crassus and Sittius, he calls their sons by their praenomina, while in the letters to Decimus Brutus and Papirius Paetus he refers to their cousins, Galba and Claudius respectively, as 'Servius'. But in formal correspondence it is different. In writing to Metellus Celer to answer his angry rebuke Cicero refers to Celer's brother by his cognomen 'Metellus' (5), and, in the formal

(1) Fam. 3,7,5. 'Quidni? Appius Lentulo, Lentulus Ampio processit obviam, Cicero Appio noluit?'...ullam Appietatem aut Lentulitatem valere apud me plus quam ornamenta virtutis existimas?

(2) Fam. 8,8,1 & 2.

(3) Fam. 4,5,4.

(4) Pro Murena 21,43.

(5) Fam. 5,1,1; 5,2,6.

letter of congratulation to C. Marcellus he refers to his son as 'Marcellus' (1).

In this connection it is interesting to note Cicero's practice when referring to members of his own family circle. He always refers to his son as 'Cicero', never as 'Marcus', even when writing to Terentia (2); yet he almost always refers to his nephew as 'Quintus', and always calls his brother by his praenomen even in the formal letters to Cato (3) and the consul Metellus Nepos (4). In the letters to Tiro he always refers to himself as 'Tullius' or 'Cicero', but refers to his brother as 'Quintus', though in a letter from Quintus to Tiro, the orator is referred to as 'Marcus' (5). Finally, in spite of the great intimacy between them, there are only two occasions in the letters on which Cicero addresses Atticus by his praenomen (6), though in the *De Legibus* the praenomina of the three protagonists are used, while Teucris, the shadowy agent of C. Antonius, speaks of Atticus as 'Titus' (7), which indicates that he was at times referred to by his praenomen.

There are two examples that cannot be placed with certainty in any one of the above categories. The use of 'Servius' for Servius Pola may be equivalent to a cognomen, but it more probably represents a contemptuous nickname. The praenomen 'Decimus' is probably used as an easy way of distinguishing between Decimus and Marcus Brutus. It only occurs in the letters to Atticus, in all cases after Marcus Brutus has already been mentioned. It is not found in the letters to Marcus Brutus.

From this evidence two further conclusions can be drawn. First, the use of the praenomen alone was generally, though not exclusively, confined to letters written in an informal tone. Secondly, it seems that, even between intimates, this form of address was employed less frequently in letter-writing than in ordinary conversation.

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- (1) Fam. 15,8,1.
- (2) Fam. 14,1,1; 14,4,3; 14,5,1. And also in the *Partitiones Oratoriae*,
- (3) Fam. 15,4,8.
- (4) Fam. 5,4,1.
- (5) Fam. 16,26,1.
- (6) Att. 2,16,3; 9,6,5,
- (7) Att. 1,12,1.