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HOW TO NAME A TRIREME

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The names of Athenian warships are a valuable source for cultural history, but scholars have long laboured without a sense of how these names were chosen. In a recent article, the present author has suggested that naval architects (master craftsmen elected by the Athenian Assembly) were responsible for naming each vessel they built. This explanation applies to the great majority of Athenian warship names known to us, but exceptions to the rule remain. Naval architects cannot have named vessels they did not build, and we know of several foreign-built ships (e.g., captured or donated ships) in the Athenian fleet. Vessels with the special status of 'sacred triremes' must also have followed their own unique naming procedure. Such exceptional cases are the subject of this paper.

INTRODUCTION

In the third century BC, Hiero II, tyrant of Syracuse, commissioned the construction of a massive grain transport ship (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 5.206d–209e; see also Casson 1995b, 185–6; Turfa and Steinmayer 1999). The finished vessel was a wonder to behold. Quite apart from its impressive storage capacity, the ship was adorned with luxuries belying its primary function of cargo transport: mosaic floors in the captain's quarters, onboard gardens and irrigation pipes, a library, a fish tank, a gymnasium, and many other refinements. The famed Archimedes served as a kind of technical adviser during its construction, an ancient writer named Moschion authored a treatise about the vessel, and the poet Archimelus penned 18 lines of verse praising the ship. This feat of Hellenistic 'gigantism' (Green 1990, 774 n. 22) bore the name *Syracusia*, a reference to its place of origin, to the state which brought this technological marvel into existence. But the behemoth proved less than practical: so large, in fact, that a number of Mediterranean harbours could not accommodate it. Seizing the opportunity for a diplomatic gesture, Hiero resolved to part ways with the *Syracusia*, donating it to the current Ptolemaic king in Egypt (either Ptolemy II or Ptolemy III).[1] Before doing so, however, Hiero renamed the ship: in advance of its trip to the port of Alexandria, the *Syracusia* became the *Alexandris*.

More than a century before Hiero's donation, another Syracusan tyrant had donated a ship to a foreign power. On this occasion the ship in question was no transport vessel but rather a warship, a gift of Dionysius I to the Athenian state. The ship is identified in Athenian naval inventory inscriptions – an important body of evidence in the pages that follow – as the *Eleusis* (*IG* II^2 1618, lines 92–3). It is worth pondering how the *Eleusis* received its distinctive name. Did Dionysius choose the name, just as Hiero had christened his grain transport the *Alexandris* before sending it off to Egypt?

In a recent article, I have attempted to shed light on the naming practices of the Athenian navy (McArthur 2021, 505–7). We are fortunate enough to know the names of dozens of Athenian warships thanks to a group of inscriptions known as the naval inventories (designated in epigraphic corpora as the *tabulae curatorum navalium*). Dating for the most part from *c.* 379/8 to 323/2 BC (plus a few small fragments from the fifth century), the naval inventories identify

[1] 'The Ptolemy involved is more likely Euergetes (246–221 BC) than Philadelphus (283–246)' (Casson 1995b, 185 n. 6).

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ships by name and, often, by the name of the ship's naval architect.[2] (To illustrate the standard format in these inscriptions, the entry Αἰαντεία, Παμφίλου ἔργον informs us that the warship *Aianteia* is the work of the naval architect Pamphilus [*IG* II² 1630, lines 8–9].) It was these architects, I contend, who named most Athenian warships, choosing a name for each vessel they built. This can be inferred from signs of wordplay among the names of ships built by a given architect. For instance, among the ships constructed by the naval architect Archeneus, we find the *Charis* and *Eucharis*; among the ships of Hierocles, we find not only the *Phēmē* but also the *Euphēmia*; an architect named Lysicrates built the *Hēgemonē* and the *Hēgemonia*; to Lysistratus' credit is the *Kallenikē*, *Axionikē* and *Aristonikē*; and so on. Moreover, the oeuvre of a given architect sometimes includes thematic similarities among ship names. For example, the *Bacchē* and *Tragōidia* of Hierophon may signal a special interest in the Attic stage, while several ships built by Lysistratus have horse- or cavalry-related names.[3] Finally, we occasionally find similar ship names among what may be families of shipbuilders. On onomastic grounds, Alison Burford has suggested that Athenian naval architects like Archeneus, Archeneides and Archenicus (all sharing the *Arche-* name element) were related to each other, and several other potential family relations may be detected among the architects (Burford 1972, 87; see also McArthur 2021, 507). With this in mind, it is noteworthy that both Lysicleides and Lysicrates built a *Petomenē*, that Lysicleides and Lysicles both built an *Aktis*, and that the family of architects whose names begin in *Lysi-* (if indeed they constitute a family) appears especially fond of wordplay in their ship names. Such naming patterns, I submit, make a good deal of sense if the naval architects did in fact choose these names, and little sense otherwise. One might entertain the possibility that ship names were chosen not by naval architects, but rather by a civic body such as the Assembly or Council. Yet this view struggles to explain why we find two ships with the same name (*Euetēria*) seemingly built in the same year.[4] Though homonymous ships were common enough in the Athenian fleet, it would be surprising if the city was so uncreative as to choose a duplicate name in the same year – and not at all surprising for naval architects working independently of each other to choose duplicate names. Having said all of this, we should not exclude the possibility that the architects' chosen names required the Assembly's approval; in Athens, naval architects were democratically elected and even delivered speeches before the Assembly (McArthur 2021, 502–5). Perhaps the election process served to confirm ship names proposed by the candidates. Nonetheless, whether or not this is true, it would remain fair to conclude that the ship names *originated* with the naval architects.

But the hypothesis that architects named their ships provides only a general rule; it cannot account for the names of every ship in the fleet, since some vessels – among them the *Eleusis* from Dionysius – originated outside Athens and its usual shipbuilding procedures. Naturally, Athenian naval architects did not name ships they did not build, and there were always several such vessels in the Athenian fleet. This paper examines precisely such special cases: vessels which were donated by foreign states, captured from hostile powers then enlisted into the navy, or otherwise named or renamed under exceptional circumstances. I will argue that Athens dealt with these cases on an ad hoc basis, renaming some of the foreign-built ships which entered its service (especially those which were seized from the enemy), while retaining the original names of others.

[2] *IG* I³ 498–500; *IG* II² 1604–32. I tentatively follow Clark (1990; 1995) in placing the earliest fourth-century record (*IG* II² 1604) in 379/8 BC, but Gabrielsen's (1992, 73–4) argument for 378/7 in light of the career of Antimachus of Chios merits serious consideration.

[3] All ships and architects mentioned in this paragraph may be found in McArthur 2021, 517–28. On Lysistratus see McArthur 2021, 506.

[4] *IG* II² 1614, lines 3, 27. At most, the ships could have been built a year apart if an archon heading has been lost in the lacuna after line 24, but that is unlikely given the typical length of entries in this inscription; cf. lines 38–47.

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DONATED SHIPS

Let us return, then, to the *Eleusis*, which appears for the first and only time in an Athenian naval inventory dating to the early 350s, perhaps to 358/7 BC.[5]

> Ἐλευσίς, ἐπισκε(υῆς) δεο(μένη), ἡ παρὰ Διονυσίο
> The *Eleusis*, in need of repair; this ship came from Dionysius.

It was August Böckh who, in 1840, first identified the *Eleusis* as a gift from Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse from 405 BC until his death in 367. Böckh (1840, 27–9) rightly observed that a formulation like παρὰ Διονυσίο does not conform to the inventories' conventions for recording captured ships nor Athenian-built vessels, leaving one to conclude that the *Eleusis* was a foreign-built warship which Athens received peaceably from Dionysius – just as, we may note in passing, fourth-century inscriptions speak of Athens receiving diplomats παρὰ Διονυσίο (in reference to Dionysius I) (*IG* II² 103 [= Osborne - Rhodes, *GHI* 33], lines 6–7; 105 [= Osborne - Rhodes, *GHI* 34], line 32). Though Dionysius died roughly a decade before the *Eleusis* appears in the naval inventories, the vessel's apparent poor condition by the early 350s is consistent with a ship already several years old (other vessels described as 'needing repair' in this period date back as far as the 370s).[6] Moreover – and this helps tip the scales against the chronologically feasible alternative of Dionysius II, who took up rule of Syracuse upon his father's death – we will see that history furnishes a clear diplomatic context for the gift of a warship to Athens late in the rule of Dionysius I. With a high degree of confidence, we can set the date the *Eleusis* entered the Athenian fleet to the period 369–367 BC.

After decades at loggerheads with the Athenians, toward the end of his life Dionysius finally came to the negotiating table. Though the tyrant was a longstanding backer of the Spartans, the Athenian–Spartan friendship that obtained after the battle of Leuctra (culminating in an alliance between Athens and Sparta in 369 BC) paved the way for Syracuse to normalise relations with Athens. It is in 369 that we hear, for the first time, of Dionysius' men fighting side-by-side with the Athenians and other allies (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.1.20–2). By the latter half of the archon year 369/8, Syracusan envoys were present in the city of Athens, evidently seeking admission into the Second Athenian League, as well as relating the tyrant's musings on the King's Peace and the effort to rebuild the temple of Apollo at Delphi (destroyed in 373/2). As an outcome of these negotiations, the Athenian state voted an honorary decree for Dionysius that same year, going so far as to grant him Athenian citizenship (Osborne - Rhodes, *GHI* 33 [= *IG* II² 103]). The following year Dionysius concluded an alliance, not with the League but with Athens alone (Osborne - Rhodes, *GHI* 35 [= *IG* II² 105 + 523]). During the allied campaigns against Thebes in 368, Dionysius again dispatched a force to join the allies (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 7.1.28). The tyrant fancied himself a playwright – the Athenian comedian Eubulus wrote an entire play mocking his literary efforts – but now Dionysius finally won recognition for his dramaturgy. At the Lenaean festival in the winter of 367, his *Ransom of Hector* took home first prize. 'Anything less', remarks Caven (1990, 209), 'would have been tantamount to a calculated insult offered to a potentate with whom it was now Athens' policy to establish the friendliest possible relations'.

Against the backdrop of this rapprochement came diplomatic gestures of a more subtle nature. There is an Athenian trireme from around this time called the *Enna* (the name of a town in Sicily), perhaps an Athenian naval architect's personal homage to the recent thaw in relations or the tyrant's victory at Lenaea.[7] Dionysius, for his part, seems to have given several catapult bolts to the Athenian

[5] *IG* II² 1618, lines 92–3. On this proposed date see McArthur 2021, 516. Laing (1968, 254 n. 22) judged the inscription to be 'very close in date' to 357/6 BC. The corpus date in *IG* II² is 'post 358/7'.

[6] E.g., the Εὐρώπη (captured by Chabrias at *IG* II² 1607, lines 125–6; 'needing repair' at *IG* II² 1615, line 88; repaired at *IG* II² 1612, line 195).

[7] The *Enna* undergoes repair operations around the same date that the *Eleusis* is said to 'need repair', suggesting the two ships may be roughly the same age (*IG* II² 1612, lines 175–7). In the late fifth century Dionysius set up, then

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state, still in storage on the Athenian Acropolis as of 363/2 (Cole 1981). Doubtless this gift, and the gift of the *Eleusis*, came in the context of the diplomatic overtures of 369–367, which in turn reveals something of the thinking behind these donations. Dionysius had pioneered the use of catapults early in the fourth century (Diodorus Siculus 14.42.1, 14.50.4). The battles he waged alongside the allies in the early 360s may well mark the introduction of the catapult to mainland Greece (Plutarch, *Moralia* 219a [*Sayings of Spartans*, Archidamus 8]; Caven 1990, 205). Dionysius had also commissioned a major shipbuilding programme in the early fourth century, seemingly achieving significant advances in naval technology.[8] By giving catapult bolts and a warship to the Athenians, Dionysius was showing off his two great feats of technical innovation – and reminding Athens of the military prowess he could offer as an ally.

All of this has taken us some distance from our original question: who named the *Eleusis*? Dionysius, or some Athenian civic authority? Certainty is impossible, but on the analogy to Hiero's *Syracusia* (renamed the *Alexandris* prior to being donated to the Ptolemaic kingdom), I incline toward the former alternative. If the good manners of diplomacy led Hiero to choose a name pleasing to the Ptolemies, the same conventions very well could have prompted Dionysius to choose a name suitable to the Athenians. One might even entertain the possibility that Hiero was following a precedent set by Dionysius. Lending some credence to this view is the fact that, just like the *Alexandris*, the *Eleusis* bears a geographical name; both ships are named after a famous locale in the land to which they were given.[9] Doubtless the celebrated rites at Eleusis would have been familiar to a connoisseur of Greek high culture such as Dionysius, and within a decade of the tyrant's death Dion, the exiled adviser to Dionysius I and II, sought initiation into the Eleusinian mysteries during his stay at Athens (Plato, Letter 7.333e; Plutarch, *Dion* 56.3–4). If Dionysius did in fact choose the name *Eleusis*, he did so for calculated diplomatic effect, and the Athenian authorities would have no reason to diminish the gesture by renaming the ship.

UNNAMED SHIPS

Whatever one makes of the *Eleusis*, it is certain that, on some occasions, the city enlisted foreign-built warships into its navy without giving them new names. This is clear enough from the small number of unnamed ships appearing in the naval inventory inscriptions. In an inventory dating to 357/6 BC, we find a list of eight ships in Zea harbour designated as third-class vessels – a hull's worst possible rating in the Athenian fleet.[10] The first six vessels are identified, as usual, by name. Then comes the following entry: 'Two other ships, which do not have names' (ἕτεραι δύο ὅ[ν]ο[μα οὐκ] ἔχ[ο]υ[σ]αι [*IG* II² 1611, lines 102–3]). As it happens, an earlier inventory inscription, dating to *c.* 374/3 BC, preserves references to precisely two unnamed ships, both of which Athens has

promptly deposed, Aeimnestus as tyrant of Enna (Diodorus Siculus 14.14.6–8). There was also an Athenian trireme called the '*Simaitha*, named after a stream just north of Syracuse' (Casson 1995b, 353–4). But the *Simaitha* predates Athens' rapprochement with Dionysius – it is already 'old' in the 370s (*IG* II² 1604, line 77; 1607, lines 14–15).

[8] Diodorus Siculus 14.41–3, with Dionysius building quadriremes and quinqueremes decades before the states of mainland Greece began constructing such vessels. According to Diodorus, the quinquereme was of Syracusan invention, but cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 7.208. The naval inventories give no indication that the *Eleusis* was anything but a regular trireme, but as a diplomatic gesture a trireme may have sufficed to show off Sicilian craftsmanship without giving away top-of-the-line maritime technology.

[9] Shear (1995, 186–8) goes much too far in asserting that Athenian triremes were 'not named for known toponyms', taking *Eleusis* to strictly mean 'arrival' with no reference whatsoever to the Attic deme. Geographical ship names are well attested, both in Athens (Shear herself acknowledges exceptions to her rule) and elsewhere (e.g., the *Syracusia*). Schmidt (1931, 82–7) takes the following Athenian ship names as geographical: *Aithiopia*, *Aithiopis*, *Amprakiōtis*, *Amphipolis*, *Dēlias*, *Dēlos*, *Delphinia*, *Delphis*, *Eleusis*, *Enna*, *Erytheia*, *Eurōpē*, *Hellas*, *Iōnikē*, *Kōlias*, *Krētē*, *Naukratis*, *Ortygia*, *Pallēnis*, *Persis*, *Salaminia*, *Simaitha*, *Sounias*. He considers *Idaia*, *Kythēria*, *Ortheia* and *Paralia* as dubious or ambiguous cases.

[10] *IG* II² 1611, lines 97–105. For a list organised by harbour of Athenian warships in the 350s BC, see Clark 1993, 389–91. On hull ratings, see Gabrielsen 1994, 129–31.

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captured from the enemy during campaigns of the Athenian general Timotheus.[11] Given the rarity of unnamed ships in the Athenian fleet, I rather suspect – though again certainty is impossible – that the unnamed third-class ships from 357/6 BC are identical to the unnamed captured ships of the 370s. Their third-class status would be consistent with old, decrepit vessels captured years earlier, perhaps already a few years old at the time of their capture. But even if one rejects such an identification, this much is clear: at least two ships captured by Timotheus in the 370s went unnamed upon entering Athenian service. Why?

Perhaps their original operators had never given them names, or perhaps the original names were unsuitable to Athenian tastes and thus removed, but that does not explain why no new name was chosen. I would hazard a guess that these ships were already of rather dubious condition when captured, so that it was unclear if they would ever be fit for active service.[12] Thus, the Athenian authorities did not immediately go to the trouble of naming the two ships, and as time wore on the combination of bureaucratic inertia and continued decline in the ships' condition ensured that the task of naming the ships never became a priority.

CAPTURED SHIPS

Despite the occasional references to unnamed ships, most captured vessels enlisted into Athenian service did have names, as the naval inventories demonstrate (see Table 1). In at least some cases, the Athenians chose new names for their captured ships rather than retaining their original names or leaving them unnamed.

Among the nine surviving names of captured ships, three may be said to possess a distinctively Attic character. The *Oreithyia* (assuming the restoration [Ὠρ]είθυα is correct) recalls the mythical daughter of Erechtheus, remembered in Athenian tradition (along with her husband Boreas) for sending a storm which destroyed hundreds of Persian ships before the battle of Artemisium.[13] The *Silver* (Ἀργυρᾶ) brings to mind the famed ore deposits so profitable to the Athenian people (and essential to the Themistoclean shipbuilding efforts early in the fifth century). Even more revealing is the *Peace* (Εἰρήνη), whose name quite plainly alludes to contemporary events in Athens. In 375/4 BC, the Athenian general Timotheus – a prolific captor of enemy ships in this period – prevailed against Sparta in a naval battle off Alyzia (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 5.4.65). Shortly afterwards, through the mediation of the Persian king, Athens and Sparta agreed to a common peace (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 6.2.1; Isocrates 15.109–10; Diodorus Siculus 15.38; Cornelius Nepos, *Timotheus* 2; Didymus, *On Demosthenes* col. 7, lines 62–71). Although hostilities would soon resume (ultimately resolving in the peace of 371), the peace of 375/4 was seen as a major coup at the time, an event that restored to Athens its coveted reputation as the foremost naval power in the Greek world (Cornelius Nepos, *Timotheus* 2.2–3). Commemorating the occasion, the Athenians founded a cult of personified Peace, complete with an altar and annual feast, and honoured Timotheus with a statue in the agora.[14] It is no coincidence, I think, that a captured trireme named *Peace* turns up in Athenian naval records around this same time. Appearing in the naval inventory of 373/2 BC, the ship was probably captured by Timotheus in his campaign of 375/4. The city promptly christened the vessel with a new name – *Peace* – in

[11] *IG* II² 1606, lines 11–13, 29–32 (on the date of this inscription, see below, n. 15). Another possible reference to an unnamed captured ship comes at *IG* II² 1607, line 44, but this may be one of the unnamed ships from *IG* II² 1606, or even a piece of captured equipment rather than a ship; cf. *IG* II² 1606, line 17 (πηδάλια αἰχμάλωτα).

[12] Supporting this view is the fact that these ships had declined to third-class status by the 350s BC. Some Athenian-built vessels which were already 'old' in the 370s were still rated as highly as second class in 357/6 BC (Gabrielsen 1994, 129).

[13] Herodotus 7.189. Though Oreithyia appears as a Nereid in Homer (*Iliad* 18.48), she is far more widely known (both in Athens and in non-Athenian sources) as the daughter of Erechtheus (Finkelberg 2014).

[14] Isocrates 15.110; Cornelius Nepos, *Timotheus* 2.2–3; Didymus, *On Demosthenes* col. 7, lines 65–71. It may have been at this same time – in any case, no later than 360/59 BC – that the sculptor Cephisodotus set up a statue of Peace, holding in her hand the child Wealth (Harding 2006, 184; Smith 2011, 110–12).

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Table 1. Captured ships in the naval inventory inscriptions.

Name	Captured by	Date of inscription[15]	Reference
Unnamed	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 11–13
Name lost	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 24–8
Unnamed	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 29–32
Γένεσις	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 69–73; *IG* II² 1607, lines 152–5
Name lost	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 74–7
-ος	Chabrias	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 78–81
Νεμεάς	Chabrias	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 82–5
Εὔπολοια	Timotheus	374/3 BC	*IG* II² 1606, lines 86–90
Εἰρήνη	Unknown	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, line 4
Name lost	Timotheus	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, line 20
Προθυμία	Chabrias	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 20–1
Unnamed?[16]	Unknown	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, line 44
Ἀρετή	Chabrias	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 114–16
Εὐρώπη	Chabrias	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 125–7
Ὠρείθυα[17]	Timotheus	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 138–41
Ἀργυρᾶ	Timotheus	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 142–4
-α	Chabrias	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 144–7
Ὀλε-	Unstated	373/2 BC	*IG* II² 1607, lines 147–9
Name lost	Unstated	325/4 BC	*IG* II² 1629, lines 145–64

order to commemorate the recent peace treaty, the new cult of Eirene, the accomplishments of Timotheus, or all of the above.

There is a final, still more definitive example of Athens renaming a captured ship. In the naval inventory of *c.* 374/3 BC, we find one of the ships captured by Timotheus identified as the *Genesis* (*IG* II² 1606, lines 69–73). The inventory goes on to tell us that a different name (Πλη[...]) is inscribed (ἐπιγέγραπται) upon the ship.[18] It seems fair to conclude that this ship is in the process of being renamed: a new name (*Genesis*) has been chosen for the captured vessel, but the original name (*Plē-*) has not yet been removed from the hull. When this vessel next appears in the inventories, it is recorded solely as the 'captured *Genesis*' with no further mention of its former name (*IG* II² 1607, lines 152–5).

AN AMBIGUOUS CASE

In the same inventory as the *Genesis*, we hear of another ship displaying a name which did not match its recorded name (*IG* II² 1606, lines 58–60). On the hull appeared the name *Democracy* (ἐπιγέγραπται Δημοκρατία), while the official name of the ship, though it does not survive in the inventory, was only three letters long. Unlike the *Genesis*, in this instance there is no indication that the vessel had been captured. The question then becomes, what other circumstances, apart from the capture and subsequent renaming of a ship, could lead to such a discrepancy in names?

[15] I follow here the corpus date of *IG* II² 1606 (374/3 BC), although a date of 375/4 or even 376/5 may be possible (Clark 1993, 27–9).

[16] αἰχμάλω[τ]ο[.] here possibly denotes captured equipment rather than a ship; cf. *IG* II² 1606, line 17 (πηδάλια αἰχμάλωτα).

[17] The name is printed as [Εἰλ?]είθυα in *IG* II². For the restoration [Ὡρ]είθυα see Clark 1993, 33.

[18] For other examples of ἐπιγράφειν/ἐπιγραφή in a context of ship names, see *ID* 1855–1857 (e.g. ἐν νηῒ δικρότωι ἧι ἐπιγραφὴ Ἀθηνᾶ ['on the *dikrotos* ship named *Athena*']), dated to *c.* 69 BC; Pollux 1.86, remarking that ships' names were written beside their eyes (καὶ ὀφθαλμός, ἐφ' οὗ καὶ τοὔνομα τῆς νεὼς ἐπιγράφουσι).

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One possibility can be dismissed as quickly as we entertain it: this vessel was almost certainly not renamed in an effort to avoid confusion with other ships named *Democracy*. Athenian authorities had little to no interest in avoiding duplicate names; Gabrielsen (1994, 135) remarks upon 'the simultaneous existence of homonyms, even of the same rating and harbor'. Beyond this negative response, one can offer little more than speculation. It may be that *Democracy* was a kind of nickname, though nicknames are vanishingly rare in Athenian maritime history, and one would expect the hull to display a vessel's official name.[19] Or perhaps this ship was in the process of being renamed – as was the *Genesis* at the same time – though the reason to rename a non-captured ship eludes us.

THE SHIPS OF HARPALUS

Around the beginning of July in 324 BC, a defector from the army of Alexander the Great appeared off the coast of Attica. His name was Harpalus, holder of an honorary grant of Athenian citizenship, who until recently had served as Alexander's royal treasurer. He arrived at Athens leading an imposing force: 6000 mercenaries in 30 ships, laden with treasures plundered from the Macedonian ruler. One imagines that it came as a surprise to Harpalus when the Athenians turned him away, but this was the only rational course of action. Athens could not yet risk open defiance of Alexander, and besides, admitting a private army with unknown intentions was a dangerous proposition. Rebuffed, Harpalus led his fleet to Taenarum, a mercenary colony on a peninsula in the Peloponnese. Here he left most of his men, along with a considerable part of the treasure, and promptly returned to Athens, no longer in the guise of a daring rebel, but rather as a suppliant. Harpalus still had 700 talents of silver in his possession and – most important for our purposes – at least three ships. This time Athens admitted Harpalus to the city, but public opinion was rife with ambivalence: what should be done with the defector and his wealth? In accordance with a decree of Demosthenes, the authorities incarcerated Harpalus on the Acropolis, where they also stashed his treasure. The defector soon escaped his confinement and fled Attica, but the controversy dragged on. When counted, the treasure of Harpalus added up not to the alleged 700 talents but to only 350 talents. Suspicions of bribery were rampant. After a lengthy six-month investigation by the Areopagus, 10 prominent Athenian politicians (Demosthenes among them) found themselves indicted on charges of accepting bribes from Harpalus.[20]

At an unknown point during this affair, Athens assumed control of the ships in which Harpalus had arrived as suppliant. The naval inventory of 323/2 (inscribed over a year after the Harpalus affair) records three 'Harpalic ships' (αἱ Ἁρπαλεῖοι) in the Athenian fleet: two triremes and one quadrireme.[21] It is unclear whether we should classify this as a donation or a confiscation of the vessels. In all probability Harpalus would have liked to give the ships away in order to ingratiate himself to the Athenians, just as he was willing to part ways with the entirety of his treasure.[22] But Athens was in no position to receive such a donation and risk the ire of Alexander that would surely follow. It may be that the naval *epimelētai* took possession of the warships

[19] Pliny (*Natural History* 35.101) says the *Ammonias* was also called the *Nausicaa*; cf. Bubelis 2010, 400–1 n. 67. On ships' nicknames in later history, see Kennedy 1974, 98–100.

[20] For the narrative of the Harpalus affair, see Badian 1961; Blackwell 1999. Harpalus may have arrived in Athens with four vessels rather than three, if we assume he later escaped in one of his own ships (Ashton 1983, 57 n. 46; Worthington 1986, 223 n. 5). However, this assumption has no evidentiary support, and it seems to me no more probable than the alternative. On the treasures of Harpalus, see Blackwell 1999, 13–14 n. 13.

[21] *IG* II² 1631, lines 167–74; see also *IG* II² 1632, lines 122–30. Worthington (1986) is wrong to argue that the single Harpalic ship from *IG* II² 1632 may be in addition to the three from *IG* II² 1631, lines 167–74. The latter passage is plainly recording *all* Harpalic vessels in Athenian hands; indeed, this passage comes in the context of recording sum totals of all vessels in the fleet, τῶν ἐν νεωρίοις καὶ τῶν ἐμ πλῶι (lines 166–7).

[22] Harpalus offers all 700 talents to Phocion (Plutarch, *Phocion* 21.2). One imagines he would have made the same gift to the Athenian state, had the state been willing to receive it.

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immediately upon the arrival of Harpalus as suppliant, but did not formally enlist these vessels into the fleet until the death of Alexander. Notably, the Harpalic ships are absent from the naval inventory of 325/4, published around the time Athens admitted Harpalus into the city.[23] No record survives from 324/3. By 323/2, the inventories treat the Harpalic ships as fully fledged members of the navy, and at least one is assigned syntrierarchs during the Lamian War (*IG* II² 1631, lines 167–74; 1632, lines 122–30).

As it happens, the aforementioned vessel is the only one of the three Harpalic ships whose name we know. It is a trireme called the Βοήθεια, which could be rendered in English as *Aid*, *Help*, or even *Reinforcements*. Such a provocative name seems out of step with Athens' circumspect response to the Harpalus affair, when the city made every effort to avoid the appearance of accepting military aid from the defector. I thus see three main possibilities for how the Βοήθεια received its name. One is that Athens waited until after the death of Alexander to rename the ship. Another is that this vessel had always been called Βοήθεια; Athens simply continued to use its original name, which is, after all, a rather common one.[24] The third is that Harpalus chose the name prior to reaching Athens, just as, I suspect, Dionysius named the *Eleusis* in a fashion to maximise the effect of his diplomatic gesture. A name like Βοήθεια would send the Athenians precisely the message Harpalus intended: that he was there to help. It is difficult to adjudicate between these three possibilities, but in any event the name was apt; the Βοήθεια would soon serve quite literally to reinforce the Athenian fleet in its doomed effort in the Lamian War.

CONFISCATED SHIPS

Over the course of the fifth century, Athens confiscated many ships from its Delian League allies (Blackman 1969, 199–202). Unfortunately, we know nothing of the names of these ships, let alone if they were ever renamed. But there is a fourth-century example, very close in date to the Harpalus affair, of Athens confiscating and renaming a ship, albeit under circumstances very different from the intrigues of the Delian League a century earlier. Naval inventories from the late 320s tell us of a trireme entangled in a legal dispute:

> τριήρης Ἀριστο<ν>ίκη, ἣν ἔφη[ν]εν Ἀριστόνικος Μαραθ(ώνιος)
> The trireme *Aristonikē*, which Aristonicus of Marathon denounced.[25]

The coincidence of names is remarkable: *Aristonikē* and Aristonicus. It is a safe bet, as Schmidt recognised, that the *Aristonikē* was named in honour of Aristonicus.[26] Doubtless this honorific act came as a result of the lawsuit which he initiated: Aristonicus 'denounced' the ship in the sense of bringing a *phasis* prosecution against it (as the verb ἔφηνεν signifies). A brief survey of the evidence for *phasis* suits in general, followed by details about the life of Aristonicus, will bring this case into clearer focus.

The *phasis* remains somewhat poorly understood in modern scholarship, but a few salient details are reasonably clear (Harrison 1968, 115–17; 1971, 218–21; MacDowell 1991; Hansen 1991; Wallace 2003). In general, *phasis* suits involved denouncing an item of property used to commit a crime, as opposed to directly targeting the wrongdoer. Charges could be brought by *ho boulomenos*. The surviving evidence reveals *phasis* prosecutions to be applicable in a wide variety of circumstances: illegal possession of public property; a guardian's mismanagement of an orphan's estate;

[23] 'It is clear (and nowadays fairly generally agreed) that [Harpalus] must have been admitted into Athens before the end of the archon-year 325/324' (Badian 1961, 42).

[24] For Athenian-built ships called Βοήθεια, see *IG* II² 1611, lines 127–9 (built by Archeneides); *IG* II² 1615, lines 67–8 (built by Epicharides); *IG* II² 1631, lines 445–6 (built by Smicrion).

[25] *IG* II² 1632, lines 189–90. The *Aristonikē* also appears at *IG* II² 1631, line 169.

[26] Schmidt (1931, 5, 92), viewing the *Aristonikē* as a forerunner to the Hellenistic vessels *Antigonis*, *Demetrias*, and *Ptolemais*, which were named after historical individuals. See also Casson 1995b, 354.

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excavation under a mine, plot of land, or structure; and so on (Harpocration s.v. φάσις; Suda φ 125, 126). We even have examples of *phaseis* brought against ships. In one case the vessel in question seems to have illegally transported grain to a destination outside Athens (Demosthenes 58.5–12; cf. Demosthenes 34.37, 35.50–1; Lycurgus, *Against Leocrates* 27). In another instance, a merchant ship (ὁλκάς) fell prey to a *phasis* because its owner was from Delos. As Isocrates (17.42) relates, 'someone denounced it on the grounds that it belonged to a Delian man' (ἔφηνέ τις ὡς οὖσαν ἀνδρὸς Δηλίου). MacDowell explains why Delian ownership ran afoul of the law: 'The accusation was that the ship belonged to the enemy, because at this period (the 390s) Delos was under Spartan control' (MacDowell 1991, 192). This is reminiscent of allusions to the *phasis* in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (819–20, 912), which speaks of objects being denounced as enemy property, effectively contraband: φανῶ ταδὶ πολέμια in one passage, φαίνω πολέμια ταῦτα in another.

None of this offers an exact parallel to a *phasis* suit against a warship, but does provide a basis for educated guesswork. Scholars have proposed two hypotheses to explain the *phasis* against the soon-to-be-renamed *Aristonikē*.[27] One possibility is that the vessel was an Athenian warship illegally held in private hands – perhaps a rogue trierarch scenario – thus falling under the rubric of *phasis* prosecutions for illegal possession of public property. On this view, the prosecution by Aristonicus effectively brought this trireme back into the fold, restoring it to the control of the Athenian navy. The second possibility is that the ship was of foreign origin, and had been used to commit some illegal act in Athenian waters: piracy, espionage, transporting contraband goods, or the like. Through his *phasis*, Aristonicus alerted the authorities to this illegal activity, leading to the vessel's confiscation and incorporation into the Athenian fleet. I incline strongly toward this latter view for three reasons. First, the naval inventories do not attribute the *Aristonikē* to a naval architect, which is often a hint as to a ship's foreign origins (apart from certain sections of the inventories which *never* list the naval architect).[28] Indeed, the relative clause ἣν ἔφηνεν Ἀριστόνικος Μαραθ(ώνιος) effectively replaces the standard shipbuilder attribution, suggesting that this ship entered the navy in the first place thanks to the efforts of Aristonicus (*IG* II² 1632, lines 189–90). Second, the *Aristonikē* is singled out for special mention in the '*arithmos* formula' of 323/2, as are the three ships taken from Harpalus, which were of course foreign-built.[29] Thus, while appearance in the *arithmos* formula is not a surefire indication of foreign origins,[30] it is certainly consistent with foreign origins. Third, if the ship were originally Athenian, it would already have a suitably Athenian name and would not need to be renamed.[31] But if, as I suspect, the vessel was foreign-built, renaming it would be a matter of course.

That Aristonicus of Marathon should be the prosecutor in this case fits well with what we know of the man. Aristonicus was a wealthy, prominent politician of the Lycurgan era, particularly notable for his attention to the maritime sector.[32] In 335/4 he joined Lycurgus in proposing a

[27] Böckh 1840, 230 ('es kann also angenommen werden, es sei von diesem Schiffe aus Schleichhandel getrieben worden; doch konnte es auch wegen Kaperei oder Seeraub aufgebracht worden sein'); Schmidt 1931, 5, 51 n. 77 (following Böckh's interpretation); MacDowell 1991, 196 ('perhaps Aristonikos alleged that this trireme had in fact been used for illegal trade of some sort'); Gabrielsen 1994, 100 ('plausibly because [the *Aristonikē*] had been unlawfully used for private purposes').

[28] Böckh (1840, 230) takes the absence of the architect attribution as indicating the *Aristonikē*'s foreign origin ('Die Triere, von welcher wir sprechen, ist unstreitig eine ursprünglich fremde, womit übereinstimmt, dass ihr Baumeister nicht angegeben ist'). For this practice of 'builder omission' throughout the naval inventories more generally, see McArthur 2021, 511–13. It is not until the 350s BC that the naval inventories show an effort to systematically record each ship's naval architect, and even then certain types of entries omit the architect attribution regardless of the ship's place of origin (e.g., *IG* II² 1611, lines 142–72).

[29] On the term '*arithmos* formula', see Ashton 1977, 2–4.

[30] The *arithmos* formula of 325/4 makes special mention of three Athenian-built horse transports which were no longer fit for service (*IG* II² 1629, lines 804–7; cf. lines 722–45).

[31] Even if the name had somehow been effaced during the vessel's period outside state control, the naval *epimelētai* could presumably identify it with ease, just as they could keep track of ships like the *Genesis* and *Democracy* when they displayed the wrong name on their hulls.

[32] Traill, *PAA* 174070; cf. Traill, *PAA* 173950. He also proposed a decree in the late 330s about the funding of the Lesser Panathenaia festival (*IG* II³ 1 447).

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decree regarding defence against piracy (*IG* II² 1623, lines 276–85). Another regulation to his name, mocked in two separate passages of Alexis' *Cauldron*, governed the sale of fish (Ath. *Deipn.* 6.226a–c). 'After Solon', the comedian states wryly, 'there's never been a better lawmaker than Aristonicus.' Doubtless Aristonicus attracted his share of political enemies, and when the Harpalus affair occurred, he was among those accused of accepting bribes (Dion. Hal. *Dinarchus* 10). Unlike Demosthenes, Aristonicus seems to have been acquitted,[33] but his days among the vanguard of democratic politics were drawing to a close. The death of Alexander the Great in 323 led swiftly to the Lamian War. After Athens' defeat at the battle of Crannon, Antipater demanded the surrender of a number of leading Athenian politicians. Aristonicus, it seems, was among them. He fled the city, taking refuge in the sanctuary of Aeacus on Aegina, along with two other notables: the famed orator Hyperides and Himeraeus, brother of Demetrius of Phalerum. On Aegina, Aristonicus was soon apprehended by Archias of Thurii. He was sent to Antipater, and finally put to death.[34]

The *Aristonikē* incident can be situated with some precision within the biography of Aristonicus. Athens must have confiscated the *Aristonikē* in 324/3 or 323/2 BC, after the Harpalus affair but before Aristonicus went into exile.[35] The history of this period offers a few possibilities for what may have precipitated his *phasis*. This was a time when disaffected mercenaries from Asia Minor were pouring into mainland Greece, a voyage they made by sea.[36] Could it be that one of these ships ventured into Athenian waters, committed some infraction, and subsequently fell prey to the prosecution of Aristonicus? This explanation looks rather less likely when we note that the Athenian general Leosthenes aided many, if not most, of the mercenaries in their voyage from the East, sending them to Taenarum on the Peloponnese, where Leosthenes would soon recruit them for service in the Lamian War (Diodorus Siculus 17.111.3, 18.9.1–2; Pausanias 1.25.5, 8.52.5). A prosecution of these mercenaries would not have served Athenian interests. A more probable explanation for the *phasis* of Aristonicus may be found in Alexander's Exiles Decree, promulgated in the summer of 324, guaranteeing to exiles across the Greek world the right to return to their home cities. Athens was resolute in its opposition to the decree, and the controversy spilled over into Athenian law-courts. A certain Callimedon was brought up on charges of conspiring with the exiles at Megara to overthrow Athenian democracy (Din. 1.94). Around the same time, Polyeuctus of Cydantidae was investigated by the Areopagus for allegedly leading exiles to Megara (Dinarchus 1.58–9). Although Polyeuctus was acquitted in the ensuing prosecution (on the grounds that he was only visiting his mother's husband in Megara, a man whose exiled status was irrelevant to Polyeuctus' visit), the incident underscores Athens' heightened alert to any possible risk the exiles posed. It is not hard to imagine that, if a trireme in Athenian waters was found to have given the slightest aid to the exiles, it could have fallen prey to a *phasis*.

Of course, it is entirely possible that the *phasis* of Aristonicus is unrelated to any event in the historical record. A passing reference to an alleged plot against the dockyards during this period hints at the multiplicity of events which lie outside our knowledge.[37] And we know that private individuals possessed triremes on occasion, creating the potential for trouble.[38] Any infraction by such an actor in Athenian waters could hypothetically expose a privately owned trireme to prosecution and confiscation via *phasis*.

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[33] On convictions resulting from the Harpalus affair, Badian (1961, 35) notes, 'we cannot even be certain that anyone apart from Demosthenes and Demades was in fact condemned, at least to a serious penalty'.

[34] Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 28.2–4; [Plutarch], *Lives of the Ten Orators* 849b–c. The latter source mentions Hyperides fleeing to Aegina ἅμα τοῖς κατεψηφισμένοις.

[35] The *Aristonikē* first appears in our sources in 323/2 (*IG* II² 1631, lines 167–74). It has not yet entered the navy at the end of 325/4 (*IG* II² 1629, lines 783–812).

[36] Curtius Rufus 9.7.1–11; Diodorus Siculus 17.99.5–6, 17.111.2–3, 18.9.1–2; Pausanias 1.25.5, 8.52.5.

[37] Not long after the Exiles Decree, Demosthenes brought a 'false informer' (ψευδὴς μηνυτής) into the Assembly to allege a plot against the dockyards (Dinarchus 1.95).

[38] In the early fourth century, Demaenetus hijacked a trireme and joined the fleet of Conon (*Hellenica Oxyrhynchia* 6.1–3; Simonsen 2009). In the mid-fourth century, a private citizen purchased a trireme and sailed to Crete (Isaeus 11.48; Casson 1995a).

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Whatever the circumstances of the prosecution, Aristonicus prevailed, and he did so despite the apparent cloud of suspicion hanging over his head after the Harpalus affair. For this fleeting moment, Aristonicus enjoyed great civic distinction in a form unprecedented in our sources: a trireme named in his honour. Yet his demise would swiftly follow. The next time Athens conferred similar honours, it would name warships not after its leading orators, but after Hellenistic monarchs: Antigonus Monophthalmus, Demetrius Poliorcetes, and (several decades later) Ptolemy III Euergetes.

SACRED SHIPS

The Hellenistic warships to which I have just alluded bring us to our final topic. Until now, we have focused largely on ships of foreign construction which found their way into the Athenian fleet. But there is a class of Athenian-built vessel whose naming conventions deserve consideration: the so-called sacred ships, which the city tasked with a variety of ceremonial and diplomatic functions. For much of the fifth and fourth centuries BC, Athens maintained two sacred triremes – the *Paralos* and the *Salaminia* – as well as at least one sacred triaconter, the supposed 'ship of Theseus', which may have been named the *Delias*.[39] Prior to the composition of Aristotle's *Athenian Constitution* (61.7), the city replaced the *Salaminia* with a new vessel, the *Ammonias*. The Hellenistic period brought further changes still, with the aforementioned *Antigonis*, *Demetrias*, and *Ptolemais* all serving as sacred ships (Bubelis 2010, 398).

It is safe to assume that sacred ships, unlike generic Athenian-built vessels, cannot have been named by their naval architects. Certainly, names like *Antigonis*, *Demetrias*, and *Ptolemais* evoke decision-making at the level of the state rather than the personal whims of naval architects; these new ships were only one part of a broader set of honorific measures, which also included founding new tribes called Antigonis, Demetrias, and Ptolemais. Similarly, when the *Ammonias* replaced the *Salaminia* (seemingly in the mid-fourth century BC),[40] it did so against the backdrop of broader movements afoot in the *polis* – in this case, cultic activity. By the 370s BC a *phialē* of the Egyptian god Ammon was stored on the Acropolis (Bubelis 2010, 402 n. 70), and the deity's prominence in Athenian religion only increased in the years ahead. In 363/2, the treasurers of Athena seem to have transferred the *phialē* to a newly founded shrine of Ammon in the Piraeus; it was in this same year, Bubelis argues, that the city retired the *Salaminia* in favour of the *Ammonias* (Garland 2001, 134; Bubelis 2010, 389–90, 401–3; Lambert 2010, 163–4; Parker 2010, 199 n. 24). Though it is unclear if the *Salaminia* had a similar cultic dimension (and any possible connection to the *genos* of Salaminioi, though an appealing hypothesis, remains tentative – Jordan 1975, 167–72; Lambert 1997, 102–3; Bubelis 2010, 407–8), there is no such ambiguity in the case of the *Paralos*. Crewing the vessel was an elite cohort dubbed the Paraloi, who remained on the state payroll year-round, attended to diplomatic responsibilities, and upheld religious obligations in devotion to their eponymous nautical hero, Paralos – who, like Ammon, was seemingly worshipped at a shrine in the Piraeus (Jordan 1975, 172–6; Garland 2001, 131–2; Bubelis 2010, 392–401; Parker 2010, 199–200). The vessel's name was thus a matter of cult observance and custom, persisting even across multiple generations of the 'same' ship. 'Because there had long been a sacred trireme named Paralos', observes William Bubelis (2010, 404), 'but no physical vessel could have survived so long, it stands to reason that the Athenians regularly decommissioned hulls that had outlived the appropriate level of fitness for

[39] Rhodes 1993, 687–8; Bubelis 2010. For the ship of Theseus see Plato, *Phaedo* 58a–c; [Aristotle], *Athenian Constitution* 56.3; Plutarch, *Theseus* 23.1. On the name *Delias* see Jordan (1975), 160–1; Suda δ 406; scholia to Demosthenes 21.171, giving *Delia* as an alternate name of the *Salaminia* (but perhaps conflating what were actually separate vessels). If the triaconter was indeed called the *Delias*, this would reflect its function conveying *theoriai* to Delos and/or the myth of Theseus sailing to Delos (Plutarch, *Theseus* 21).

[40] Though earlier scholarship preferred a date in the 330s or 320s, Rhodes (1993, 687–8) proposes the late 350s, while Bubelis (2010, 389–90) suggests 363/2.

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an elite vessel and constructed their replacements so that Athens was never for long without its Paralos.' All told, it seems clear that separate sets of rules governed the naming of sacred ships, on the one hand, and standard Athenian-built warships on the other.

Sacred ships have one further implication for the naming of Athenian warships. In general, Athens allowed duplicate ship names in its navy, but the *Paralos* was evidently an exception to the rule: while a name like *Paralia* was perfectly acceptable for regular warships, we never hear of another *Paralos*.[41] It is unclear if this avoidance of homonymy applied to the other sacred ships in Athenian service. We know of at least one *Delias* besides the sacred triaconter, and in the early 350s multiple ships called *Salaminia* begin to appear in the naval inventories (*IG* II² 1611, lines 95, 164; 1632, lines 103–4). Bubelis (2010, 404–5 n. 84) maintains that the name *Salaminia* was restricted to the sacred trireme until 363/2 BC, at which point, he argues, Athens retired the *Salaminia* in favour of the *Ammonias*, leaving 'the name Salaminia … once again available for any manner of vessel'. This is an appealing suggestion, though the date Athens retired the *Salaminia* remains somewhat tentative. Moreover, a ship's first appearance in the fragmentary naval inventories need not imply that it is brand new. One *Salaminia* which is first attested in 357/6 BC had already declined to 'second class' condition by that date; it may well have been built before 363/2.[42] As for the *Ammonias*, this name is otherwise unattested in the Athenian fleet, but Ammon's unconventional place in Greek religion could have rendered it an unlikely candidate for duplication in the first place. All uncertainty aside, the case of the *Paralos* is enough to suggest a restriction upon the naming of regular Athenian warships. While the naval architects seem to have enjoyed considerable autonomy in naming their creations, they were not free to choose a name already claimed by that most eminent of sacred triremes, the *Paralos*. Whether this restriction was encoded in law or was purely a matter of custom is unclear.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that naval architects named most vessels in the Athenian fleet, though there were exceptions to the rule. When foreign-built ships entered Athenian service via capture or confiscation, the city often renamed them, bringing their names into line with Athenian preferences. Such vessels did not always receive a new name, however, for we know of at least two ships which remained nameless after their capture. In addition, Athens may have retained the names of craft offered to the city for diplomatic purposes. I suspect this is true of the *Eleusis* which Dionysius I granted to Athens, and it may well be true of the Βοήθεια of Harpalus. Apart from vessels of foreign origin, still other ship names fell outside the purview of the naval architects. Sacred ships cannot have been named by naval architects, and we know of one ambiguous case in which the city may have renamed a standard Athenian-built ship (*IG* II² 1606, lines 58–60).

All of this raises the question: who was responsible for naming Athenian warships in these special circumstances? Possibilities include the Assembly, which elected naval architects and set annual shipbuilding policy; the Council, which was heavily involved in naval affairs; the *triēropoioi*, a subcommittee of the Council tasked with shipbuilding finance; the *epimelētai tōn neōriōn*, who oversaw the dockyards and published the naval inventory inscriptions; and perhaps even the *stratēgoi* (one thinks of the vessels captured by Timotheus and Chabrias in the 370s).[43] Unfortunately, the evidence is insufficient to provide an answer, but if there is any truth to the idea of the Assembly confirming ship names chosen by naval architects, then that same body was probably responsible for the ships names given under special circumstances.

[41] For ships called *Paralia*, see, e.g., *IG* II² 1623, lines 319–20; 1632, lines 25–6.

[42] *IG* II² 1611, line 95. However, we might entertain the possibility that this *Salaminia* is the old sacred ship, retired from its ceremonial role and now in regular service.

[43] On the involvement of the Assembly, Council and *triēropoioi* in management of the navy, see [Aristotle], *Athenian Constitution* 46. On the *epimelētai* see Gabrielsen 1994, 14–15.

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In closing, it is worth pondering what the corpus of Athenian ship names can offer as historical evidence – evidence for the history of not only the navy, but also Attic society and culture. The small body of scholarship on ancient ship names places a great deal of emphasis on categorisation, sorting attested names into a handful of onomastic categories: religious names, animal names, names based on abstract concepts, and so on.[44] The analysis rarely goes much deeper than that; lack of evidence for *how* ship names were selected typically brings the conversation to an abrupt halt. But these onomastic categories can prove illuminating nonetheless. At the root of many historical ship names (ancient or otherwise), argues Malcolm Jones, is an 'optative' quality seeking to wish into existence some desirable characteristic of a given ship.[45] On this view, ship names of a religious nature may be seen as an appeal to divine protection; a ship named after an animal aspires to the creature's desirable qualities, such as the speed of a gazelle; a name like *Bonaventure* is a straightforward invocation of good luck. Such explanations apply well to the Athenian case, although, as we will see, they tell only part of the story.

At first glance, it seems easy enough to classify Athenian warship names using a handful of familiar categories.[46] Many of the names are religious or mythical in character, notably including figures with a connection to Attic cult or with special nautical significance (e.g. the sea goddess *Amphitrite*). Other names describe a physical characteristic of the ship itself (*Swift*), allude to martial qualities or victory (e.g. *Nike*), or pertain to some other aspect of ancient warfare (e.g. *Ephebe* or *Panoply*). Several Athenian warships bear geographical names referring to locations in Attica and elsewhere (e.g., the *Eleusis* and the *Enna*, discussed above). Still other names express political ideals such as *Freedom* (Ἐλευθερία), *Democracy* (Δημοκρατία), and *Free Speech* (Παρρησία). This all makes for a revealing collection of civic, religious and cultural values of the Athenian state. But I would urge that these names achieve even greater historical importance if we accept the hypothesis that naval architects chose the names. Seen in this light, names celebrating qualities of a given ship are perhaps not only 'optative' statements, but also boasts about the architects' own skill. Since naval architects were democratically elected to their position, their choice of names would reflect a fascinating blend of personal preference and calculated efforts to retain the favour of the *dēmos*. Far from an impersonal list of categories devoid of context, the ship names provide us something remarkable indeed: a glimpse of the Athenian experience through the eyes of master craftsmen.

Likewise, the ship names we have especially considered in this paper – those which were named or renamed not by architects, but by the state – tell us something about Athenian culture. Among these state-named ships, we find an interest in the natural resources of Attica (the *Silver*), in Attica's mythical figures (the *Oreithyia*), and in contemporary cultic activity (the *Ammonias*, the *Peace*). Most pronounced is the effort to honour specific contemporary individuals – a trend which intensified over time. Such honours come somewhat obliquely in the case of the *Peace* (alluding to the achievements of Timotheus), explicitly in the case of the *Aristonikē* (honouring the politician Aristonicus), and quite blatantly when we reach the Hellenistic sacred ships. It should not escape us that this entire category of ship name (i.e., ships named after a historical person) remains unattested among vessels named by naval architects.

At the same time, we should be wary of forcing every ship into a single onomastic category. The *Peace* serves well to illustrate the potential for ambiguity: whatever original meaning the name-givers had in mind, to contemporaries its name could have equally evoked the recently signed peace treaty, the personified goddess Eirene, or simply peace in the abstract (and as time wore on, the original context of the peace of Timotheus may have faded from memory, imparting the name with an increasingly abstract meaning). The situation is comparable for many other Athenian ship names; *Democracy*, for instance, could elicit thoughts of not only the Athenian political system but also the goddess Demokratia, a subject of cult worship in Attica. *Areia* suggests warlike

[44] On Athenian warship names, see Schmidt 1931; Shear 1995, 186–8. Casson (1995b, 350–4) discusses ancient ship names more generally. Jones (2000) explores ship names in late medieval England. Kennedy (1974) and Jones (2016) survey ship names throughout history.

[45] Jones 2016, 656–8. Cf. Kennedy 1974, 11–13 on what constitutes a 'good name' for a ship.

[46] For a complete list of Athenian warship names (including those mentioned in this paragraph) see Schmidt 1931.

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qualities in the abstract, but also devotion to the god Ares. Even a name as seemingly straightforward as *Aristonikē* plays on multiple meanings; while plainly honouring Aristonicus, in literal terms it signals the concept of 'best victory'. Such *-nikē* compounds were highly popular among Athenian warship names, and to anyone unaware that the *Aristonikē* was (as the naval inventories state) a τριήρης ἣν ἔφηνεν Ἀριστόνικος, the name would have been understood literally.

But such ambiguity should not imply that warship names were something trivial to the Athenians. On the contrary, modern comparative evidence illustrates just how contested naval onomastics may become. The urge to rename a captured ship, to bring its name in line with the preferences of its new owners, recurs through much of history. Thus we find, for instance, the Royal Navy renaming Napoleonic vessels captured in the battle of the Nile, or the Confederacy in the American Civil War, when building its famous ironclad atop the salvaged hull of the *USS Merrimack*, renaming its creation the *CSS Virginia*, discarding the name of a New England river in favour of that of a southern state.[47] Still more recent history has seen naval onomastics explode into areas of intense public discussion. In 2012, the United States Navy's decision to name a ship the *USS Gabrielle Giffords* sparked debate over both gun control legislation and ship naming traditions, prompting a special report to Congress on the matter.[48] In 2023, ship names again made headlines when the United States Navy rechristened the *USS Chancellorsville* the *USS Robert Smalls*, commemorating an escapee from slavery instead of a Confederate victory.[49]

Of course, all of this takes us far afield from Classical Athens, but such examples illustrate the potential for ship names to generate widespread interest and even debate among the general public. This would have been all the more so, I imagine, in such a nautically inclined state as Athens. It would have been no small thing for the Athenians to receive an *Eleusis* from a tyrant courting their favour, or to mark the occasion of a major peace treaty with a seafaring *Peace*, or to christen an *Aristonikē* in honour of a living politician. The fact that many Athenians from all walks of life served in the navy would have only enhanced their interest in such things. There can be no doubt that ship names (like names in general) perform a pragmatic function, aiding in identification, record-keeping, and ease of recall. But names can also attain an emotional content, serving as focal points for the connections one forms with a person or place or object, or channeling feelings about broader issues a particular name calls to mind.[50] To those who fought aboard the Athenian trireme, to the citizens who took an interest in naval affairs, to those who named the ships in the first place, such emotional connections would have run deep; in their minds, the names of Athenian warships must have been laden with meaning. We cannot fully grasp such meaning without some understanding of who bestowed these names. But the evidence is strong enough, I maintain, to provide a good working hypothesis: while many warship names originated in the minds of master craftsmen, others find their origin in the institutions of the state.

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[47] E.g., *Le Franklin* renamed *Canopus* once in British hands (Jane 1912, 108–9), and the *Aquilon* renamed *Aboukir* (Mason 1908, 3). On the *Merrimack*/*Virginia*, see Silverstone 1989, 202.

[48] *New York Times*, 5 June 2017, page A13, 'Ship named for Giffords is almost ready for sea'; *Stars and Stripes*, 19 June 2015, 'From Hope to Giffords: the Navy's long history of unconventional ship names'; Department of the Navy, 'A report on policies and practices of the US Navy for naming the vessels of the Navy', n.d.

[49] *New York Times*, 13 March 2023, page A14, '2 Navy ships will receive new names'.

[50] See Nyström 2016 (on names in general) and Kennedy 1974, 3–4 (on ship names in particular).

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Πως να ονομάσεις μια τριήρη

Τα ονόματα των αθηναϊκών πολεμικών πλοίων είναι μια πολύτιμη πηγή για την πολιτισμική ιστορία, αλλά οι ερευνητές έχουν κοπιάσει εδώ και πολύ καιρό χωρίς καμία αίσθηση του πως επιλέγονταν αυτά τα ονόματα. Σε ένα πρόσφατο άρθρο του, ο συγγραφέας του παρόντος έχει προτείνει ότι οι ναυπηγοί (αρχιτεχνίτες που εκλέγονταν από την αθηναϊκή συνέλευση) ήταν υπεύθυνοι για την

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ονοματοδοσία κάθε πλοίου που κατασκεύαζαν. Αυτή η εξήγηση ισχύει για τη μεγαλύτερη πλειονότητα των ονομάτων των αθηναϊκών πολεμικών πλοίων που μας είναι γνωστά, αλλά παραμένουν ορισμένες εξαιρέσεις στον κανόνα. Οι ναυπηγοί δεν θα μπορούσαν να ονοματοδοτούν τα πλοία που δεν είχαν κατασκευάσει, και γνωρίζουμε για αρκετά πλοία ξένης κατασκευής (πχ. αιχμαλωτισθέντα ή δωρηθέντα πλοία) στον αθηναϊκό στόλο. Σκάφη με το ειδικό καθεστώς της «ιεράς τριήρους» πρέπει να ακολουθούσαν τη δική τους μοναδική διαδικασία ονοματοδοσίας. Τέτοιες ειδικές περιπτώσεις είναι το θέμα αυτού του άρθρου.

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