# Compounded loanwords between historical morphophonology and semantics: the ancient Greek (and Latin) names of Candragupta Maurya

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**Abstract**

Among Classical sources (Phylarcus, Strabo, Arrian, Plutarch, Justin, and Orosius), there seems to be no common spelling of Candragupta's name. The spelling Σανδρόκοττος (*i.e*., the canonical one) is used by Phylarchus (*FGrHist* 81 F 35b), Strabo (II.1.9; XV.1.53; XV.1.57), and Justin (*Epit*. XV.4.13). Later on, the spelling Σανδράκοττος is adopted by Arrian (*Anab.* V.6.2; *Ind*. 5.3; 9.9), whereas Ἀνδρόκοττος is adopted by Mnaseas (fr. 14 *FHG*), Plutarch (*Alex*. 62.4; *Mor*. 542d), Appian (*Syr*. 55.282), and Orosius (III.23). This article aims at investigating the reasons behind these different spellings in the light of a wider dynamic involving morphophonological and semantic processes towards compounded loanwords in ancient Greek (and Latin). We shall carry out an in-depth analysis of the different spellings of Candragupta's name in Classical sources within the Contact Linguistics Framework. After focusing on the socio-historical context underlying the language-contact dynamic, we will take into account several elements that may justify the lack of uniformity (e.g., the compounded nature of the name, the constituents' semantics, and the accent pattern). Finally, we conclude that the spellings of the Classical sources depend on ancient Greek morphophonological processes involving (compounded) loanwords, that result in a process of folk etymology, thanks to which Candragupta's name is definitely integrated into the ancient Greek compound system.

**Key Words** – Indo-Greek contact; Candragupta Maurya; hybrid compounds; loanwords; historical linguistics

## 1. The state of the art

Candragupta's name is attested only in ancient Greek and Latin literary sources. However, neither epigraphical nor numismatic attestations are available[1] to the extent that there is no common spelling of Candragupta's name[2].

To begin with, the three ancient Greek versions are listed below:

a) The spelling Σανδρόκοττος, used by Phylarchus (*FGrHist* 81 F 35b)[3] and Strabo (II.1.9; XV.1.53; XV.1.57)[4];
b) The spelling Σανδράκοττος, adopted by Arrian (*Anab.* V.6.2; *Ind.* 5.3; 9.9)[5];
c) The spelling Ἀνδρόκοττος, adopted by Mnaseas (fr. 14 *FHG*)[6], Plutarch (*Alex.* 62.4; *Mor.* 542d)[7], and Appian (*Syr.* 55.282)[8].

In Latin, only two versions are attested:

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[1] My sincere thanks go to Luca Alfieri, Roberta Melazzo, and Domenica Romagno for their suggestions and corrections regarding this research and for reading a provisional draft of the present paper. Additionally, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of the paper for enriching the argument with their advice. In the end, I remark that any error is my responsibility.

[2] An updated collection of both Classical and Indological scholarly studies on Candragupta Maurya is found in Kosmin (2014: 369-405); more specifically, for the Graeco-Roman scholarship, see, e.g., Musti (1989), and, for the Indological scholarship, see, e.g., Thapar (1961); as a marginal note, we remark that limited corpus research with TLG (= *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*) of the Greek various spellings of Candragupta's name gave no results.

[3] *FGrHist* 81 F 35b: «Φύλαρχος δὲ **Σανδρόκοττόν** φησι τῶν Ἰνδῶν βασιλέα Σελεύκῳ μεθ᾽ ὧν ἔπεμψε δώρων ἀποστελεῖν τινας δυνάμεις στυτικὰς τοιαύτας, ὡς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας τιθεμένας τῶν συνουσιαζόντων οἷς μὲν ὁρμὰς ἐμποιεῖν ὀρνίθων δίκην, οὓς δὲ καταπαύειν» ('Phylarchus says that Sandrocottus [*scil.* Candragupta], king of the Indians, dispatched, together with the gifts he sent to Seleucus, such aphrodisiacs that, when put under the feet of men having sexual intercourse, made some of them aroused like birds while causing the loss of their erection to others').

[4] Strabo 2.1.9: «[…] ἐπέμφθησαν μὲν γὰρ εἰς τὰ Παλίμβοθρα, ὁ μὲν Μεγασθένης πρὸς **Σανδρόκοττον** ὁ δὲ Δήμαχος πρὸς Ἀλλιτροχάδην τὸν ἐκείνου υἱὸν κατὰ πρεσβείαν» ('[both of these men] were sent to an embassy to Palimbothra, Megasthenes to Sandrocottus, Deimachus to Allitrochades his son'); 15.1.53: «[…] γενόμενος γοῦν ἐν τῷ **Σανδροκόττου** στρατοπέδῳ […] ὁ Μεγασθένης» ('Megasthenes, who was in the camp of Sandrocottus'); 15.1.57: «τοὺς μὲν οὖν ἀγρίους μὴ κομισθῆναι παρὰ **Σανδρόκοττον** […]» ('The wild men could not be brought to Sandrocottus […]').

[5] Arrian *Anab.* 5.6.2: «[…] πολλάκις δὲ λέγει ἀφικέσθαι παρὰ **Σανδράκοττον** τὸν Ἰνδῶν βασιλέα ('[…] they say that he often came to Sandracottus, king of the Indians'; *Ind.* 5.3: «[…] συγγενέσθαι γὰρ **Σανδρακόττῳ** λέγει, τῷ μεγίστῳ βασιλεῖ τῶν Ἰνδῶν […]» ('[…] they say that he [*scil.* Megasthenes] was born with Sandracottus, the greatest king of the Indians […]'); *Ind.* 9.9: «[…] ἀπὸ μὲν δὴ Διονύσου βασιλέας ἠρίθμεον Ἰνδοὶ ἐς **Σανδράκοττον** τρεῖς καὶ πεντήκοντα καὶ ἑκατόν […]» ('[…] the Indians counted one hundred and fifty-three kings starting from Dionysus to Sandracottos […]').

[6] Fr. 14 *FHG*: «Οὐ μόνος δὲ ὁ Σαρδανάπαλλος διετέθρυπτο, ἀλλὰ καὶ **Ἀνδρόκοττος** ὁ Φρύξ» ('Not only Sardanapallus, but also the Phrygian Androcottus had been enervated.').

[7] Plutarch *Alex.* 62.4: «**Ἀνδρόκοττος** δὲ μειράκιον ὢν αὐτὸν Ἀλέξανδρον εἶδε, καὶ λέγεται πολλάκις εἰπεῖν ὕστερον ὡς παρ᾽ οὐδὲν ἦλθε τὰ πράγματα λαβεῖν Ἀλέξανδρος, μισουμένου τε καὶ καταφρονουμένου τοῦ βασιλέως διὰ μοχθηρίαν καὶ δυσγένειαν» ('Androcottus, when he was a stripling, saw Alexander himself, and we are told that he often said in later times that Alexander narrowly missed making himself master of the country, since its king was hated and despised on account of his baseness and low birth.'); *Mor.* 542d: «Ἀλέξανδρος μὲν οὖν Ἡρακλέα τιμῶν καὶ πάλιν Ἀλέξανδρον **Ἀνδρόκοττος** ἑαυτοὺς εἰς τὸ τιμᾶσθαι προσῆγον ἀπὸ τῶν ὁμοίων […]» ('Both Alexander, by honoring Heracles, and Androcottus, by honoring Alexander, obtained to be honored themselves thanks to the similar credits (that they shared) […]').

[8] Appian *Syr.* 55.282: «καὶ τὸν Ἰνδὸν περάσας ἐπολέμησεν **Ἀνδροκόττῳ**, βασιλεῖ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν Ἰνδῶν […]» ('And, after passing right across the Indus, he fought against Androcottus, the king of the Indians settled around there […]').

a) The spelling *Sandrocottus*, used by Justin (*Epit*. XV.4.13)[9];
b) The spelling *Androcottus*, adopted by Orosius (III.23)[10].

The dates of the works all fall between the third century BCE and the fifth century CE, with a higher concentration between the first century BCE and the second century CE. Moreover, the Latin versions of Candragupta's name clearly depend on ancient Greek models.

Considering this scenario, previous studies (Mookerji 1928; Piano 1968; Kosmin 2014) have mainly focused on the differences displayed by the ancient Greek spellings of Candragupta's name. For example, as pointed out by Piano (1968: 26-7), the variety of ancient Greek transcriptions of Candragupta's name is linked to the absence of the Sanskrit voiceless palato-alveolar affricate /t͡ʃ/ (*i.e.*, <c>) in the ancient Greek phonological inventory[11]: thus, the initial voiceless alveolar fricative /s/ (*i.e.*, <σ>) would have been used instead of the Sanskrit voiceless palato-alveolar affricate /t͡ʃ/ (e.g., <c>)[12].

On the other hand, according to Ziegler (1935: 838), whose suggestion can be enhanced by some statements of Benveniste (1958: 37) on ancient Greek adaptations of Prakrit loans, the variants without the initial /s-/ might have arisen due to an analogy to the ancient Greek *Andro-* compounds.

Instead, according to others (Kosmin 2014: 276), the spelling without the initial voiceless alveolar fricative, both in the Greek and Latin versions, is considered to be due to an error in haplography: in other words, the error might have arisen from passages such as [X]-ς Σανδρό/άκοττος > Ἀνδρόκοττος.

However, even though the above-mentioned philological proposals look reasonable, and in some cases even promising, they either are not fully developed, or they do not take into account a series of features that can benefit from further study, such as the vowels, the accent, and the compounded nature of this proper name from a linguistic point of view.

## 2. The historical-sociolinguistic perspective

As far as this investigation is concerned, three preliminary points must be clarified: the historical context (and, more specifically, when it was possible to hypothesise that the loan happened); the nature of the name that the Greeks came into contact with; and the kind of route that this name followed in order to be incorporated into the ancient Greek language (namely, either orally or by a written *medium*).

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[9] Justin *Epit*. 15.4.13: «*Auctor libertatis **Sandrocottus** fuerat, sed titulum libertatis post uictoriam in seruitutem uerterat*» ('The instigator of that freedom had been Sandrocottus, but, after he won, he had changed that freedom into slavery').

[10] Orosius 3.23: «*Cum hoc ergo **Androcotto** Seleucus quamuis multa et grauia bella gessisset* […]» ('Even though Seleucus had fought many tough battles against this Androcottus […]').

[11] For a discussion on the phonetics of Skt. <c> see Allen (1953: 4, 20, 52) with bibliography; as far as the phonetic inventories of ancient Greek and Sanskrit are concerned, see, for the former, Vendryès (1945); Rix (1992); Probert (2006); see, for the latter, Wackernagel (1896); Kobayashi (2017).

[12] Since voiceless palato-alveolar affricates are formed by an occlusive setting and a fricative solution, their common rendering in languages whose phonological systems do not have palate-alveolar affricate is /s/: see Ciancaglini (2008: 82); Basharin (2024: 31-47); moreover, as far as the rendering of Old and Middle-Iranian loanwords in ancient Greek are concerned, especially for the treatment Old and Middle-Iranian <č>, see Brust (2005). Nevertheless, a Prakrit weakening of the original affricate cannot be excluded *a priori*.

To begin with, Candragupta's name is linked to two events of ancient Greek history: firstly, Alexander the Great's Indian campaign (327-325 BCE); secondly, the peace pact between Candragupta Maurya and Seleucus I Nicator (305-303 BCE)[13].

With Alexander the Great's Indian campaign, the ancient Greeks entered into the so-called Greater Gandhāra zone (326-325 BCE), and, more specifically, the territories of Gandhāra, the Indus Valley and Punjab. In this area, indeed, the Greeks reached the Hydaspes and the Iphasis river around 326 BCE before heading back West. At that time (*i.e.*, the last quarter of the 4th century BCE), Candragupta was still a general of Mahāpadmā Nanda, the ruler of Magadha. Nevertheless, after Alexander's death (323 BCE), Candragupta acceded to the throne of the kingdom of Magadha (323-320 BCE), pushing the Macedonian troops away from Punjab and overthrowing Mahāpadmā Nanda. From this moment on, Candragupta Maurya started his own campaign of conquest in the West, thus slowly creating a pan-Indian empire (see Piano 1968; Kosmin 2014).

At the time of the Diadochi, the expansion of Candragupta's empire threateningly collided with the construction of the eastern border of the Seleucid kingdom: Seleucus, indeed, had started his eastern campaign (308-307 BCE) to subdue the independent Asian satraps. Despite the challenges involved, it is widely accepted that Seleucus and Candragupta encountered a battle near the Indus River, from which a subsequent peace was achieved (also known as the «Treaty of the Indus») between 305-303 BCE (Kosmin 2014: 32; Giudice 2023). From these two significant events on, the name of Candragupta begins to appear in ancient Greek (and Latin) sources, thus making it plausible that the loan happened either between 326-323 BCE when Alexander began to gravitate around the Greater Gandhāra territory, or between 305-303 BCE, with the alliance between Seleucus and Candragupta.

Secondly, with respect to the kind of name that the Greeks came into contact with, our analysis remains highly hypothetical due to the sources that we possess. In particular, the most authoritative one seems to be Strabo, who relies on a source of paramount importance, lost to us, that is, Megasthenes[14], presumed to be the first one to record – by a written *medium* – Candragupta's name. In this way, from a historical-sociolinguistic point of view, the territory where such a contact seems to have happened – at least with Megasthenes – was a nest of various languages that, unfortunately, we cannot further describe since empiric evidence is often lacking[15]. Moreover, our reconstruction is based uniquely on the forms that we currently possess, among which none comes from the Indo-Aryan branch of the time. Nevertheless, in order to hypothesise what sort of name the Greeks came into contact with, we might imagine (at least) three scenarios:

a. it is possible that the ancient Greeks (*scil.* Megasthenes) came into contact with a Prakrit name (*\*Candagutta*): thus, the name was recorded for the first time by an ancient Greek speaker; this can be inferred due to special phonetic traits that cannot be attributed to the Prakrit that Candragupta and his people probably spoke at the times, such as /-dr-/ (Karttunen 1997: 34, 260). Inasmuch, a form of this kind only later became widespread in the West with an already Greek (phonetic) fashion;

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[13] For further information about the date problems of both these events, see Mookerji (1943: 36); Thapar (1961: 176); Schwarz (1972: 91); Bernard (1985: 85); Heckel (2009: 47-50).

[14] See Bernard (1985: 92-93); Coloru (2009: 142-43); Giudice (2023: 9).

[15] As far as Indian sources are concerned, we do not possess any witness sources dating back to this period.

b. it is also possible that the ancient Greeks came into contact with a Gāndhārī form (*Candragutta*) due to special phonetic traits typical of such a Prakrit, like the regular preservation of post-consonantal /-r-/ (Baums 2009: 103);

c. one can also imagine, thanks to a later Indian source included in the Purāṇic tradition (*BhPu* III.1.6.43), that the name recorded by the Greeks is somehow a quasi-literary form (*Candragutta*): the Indian source, indeed, records *Candagutta* with total assimilation of both the /-dr-/ and /-pt-/ consonantal clusters, allowing us to presume that the name may have been modelled in a Sanskrit fashion already by the Prakrit speakers (see Turner 1962-1966: 225).

Unfortunately, at the present stage of knowledge, it is highly difficult to achieve further progress and as a result the investigation has to remain, inevitably, still open.

Finally, if a loan's route has to be reconstructed, even if we do not possess much information about this period[16], it seems reasonable that the name of Candragupta was first recorded by Megasthenes' *Indiká* (in four books), which, although lost, boasted a strong ethnic-historiographic content[17]: from his report on, all historians of Alexander the Great might have relied on Megasthenes' witness account.

## 3. Towards a data reassessment

In this section, we take into account a series of aspects that previous studies do not consider, in order to understand the lack of uniformity of the spellings of Candragupta's name.

At the present state of affairs, just the initial voiceless palato-alveolar affricate has received the attention of scholars. Thus, before going further, we present a preliminary analysis of the main similarities and the relevant differences among the ancient Greek names of Candragupta with respect to the original (reconstructed) Prakrit form (see Tab. 1).

| | *Candragupta* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | <c> : /t͡ʃ/ | /a/ | /-g-/ | /-pt-/ |
| Σανδρόκοττος | /s/ | /-o-/ | /-k-/ | /-tt-/ |
| Σανδράκοττος | /s/ | /-a-/ | /-k-/ | /-tt-/ |
| Ἀνδρόκοττος | /∅/ | /-o-/ | /-k-/ | /-tt-/ |

Table 1. *Similarities and differences displayed by the attested names.*

From a phonetic point of view, all the traits point towards a simple adaptation of a loanword in terms of phonetic preferences of the language adopter[18]. Nevertheless, it is necessary to look at the differences displayed by the ancient Greek forms in order to understand whether other factors may be involved in this language-contact dynamic.

It should be noted that the three ancient Greek spellings differ in two fundamental traits that have not received the appropriate attention by previous studies: the stressed

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[16] This deals with the main problem of the so-called "invisible time" in historical-sociolinguistic inquiries (see Mancini 2009, 2012: 240-1).
[17] Tarn (1940); Primo (2009); Giudice (2023).
[18] Regarding the preferences of the so-called language adopter in a language-contact situation see, for a general view, Gusmani (1987), and for more specific problems and dynamics, Weinreich (1953: 14-29); McMahon (1994: 200-224); Matras (2007); Matras and Sakel (2007).

vowels /o/ (back vowel) vs. /a/ (central vowel)[19], and the initial voiceless fricative /s/ vs. a zero phoneme /∅/.

With respect to the first feature, we might be facing a phenomenon of adaptation: so that the original /a/ was rendered as an /o/ thanks to analogy to the Gk. -o- compounds (see Benveniste 1958: 37), since usually Pkt. <ā> phonetically corresponds to [ɒ] and Pkt. <a> to a mid-vowel, often rendered with Gk. <ε> (e.g., Skt. *pippalī* > Gk. πίπερι 'pepper')[20].

Nevertheless, in our opinion, two features represent the epiphenomena of a wider process involving the ancient Greek adaptations of Candragupta's name: namely, the opposition /g/ vs. /k/ displayed coherently by the ancient Greek data and the opposition /s/ vs. /∅/ within the ancient Greek forms.


## 4. The loanword's path

In order to understand the lack of uniformity of the ancient Greek forms, it is necessary to investigate what kinds of processes a compounded loanword may have faced once adopted in the ancient Greek language system. Indeed, the compounded nature of the word itself – or, to be more cautious, the two-membered structure of the loan (McMahon 1994: 220-24) – is fundamental for understanding the reasons for the lack of uniformity of the spellings of Candragupta's name in ancient Greek.

As pointed out by Weinreich (1953: 49-53), when compounded words are involved in a language-contact situation, three scenarios can be displayed:

a. firstly, all the compound's elements can be analysed and, as such, transferred (e.g., Florida Sp. *objectores concientes* after Eng. *conscientious objectors*)[21];
b. secondly, all the compound's elements can be reproduced by semantic extensions (e.g., Eng. *skyscraper*, which yields Fr. *gratte-ciel*, Sp. *rascacielos*, It. *grattacielo* etc.);
c. thirdly, some of the compound's elements can be transferred, while others can only be reproduced; in this case, these words are called *hybrid compounds*.

With respect to hybrid compounds, a factor of paramount importance is homophony (Weinreich 1953: 49): for example, in the Wisconsin Germ. hybrid compound *Grund-floor* 'ground floor', the second element is transferred, while the first (*scil.* Eng. *ground-*) is reproduced by a homophonous indigenous sign whose semanteme is perhaps slightly extended (*scil.* Germ. *Grund-*).

Significantly, after discussing all these contact scenarios, Weinreich (1953: 52)[22] remarks that «all that has been said about forms of lexical interference applies not only to common words but to *proper names* (emphasis mine) as well […]; that the same place or person should be called by unrelated names in a language-contact situation is in fact the rarer case». Indeed, with respect to proper names, the hybrid type seems to be quite

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[19] As far as phonetic is concerned, it is problematic to define more precisely these sounds: in order to have a bigger picture of these difficulties, both in ancient Greek and in Prakrit languages, see Vendryès (1945); Kobayashi (2017); Bubeník (2017); Cardona (2017).

[20] See, for instance, Mansion (1931); Allen (1953); Pischel (1981); Witzel (1989); Benedetti (2014: 59-62); Kobayashi (2017); for further examples of OInd. <c> rendered as Gk. <σ> see Brust (2005).

[21] Needless to say, this example points to a broader definition of nominal compounds, which still does not invalidate both the analysis and the data presented; the interested reader will find further information in Weinreich (1953: 50-51).

[22] See also the statements made in Dressler (2005: 32) and, more profusely, in Ciancaglini (2008, 2010).

frequent: e.g., Yid. *Finkl-štejn* > Eng. *Finke*(?)-*stone* (with a deeper compound structure like: Yid. [[N]ₙ[N]ₙ]ₙ > Eng. [[X]ₓ[N]ₙ]ₙ).

Considering a similar theoretical framework, with respect to the structure of Candragupta's name, meaning 'protected (Skt. *gupta*-) by the moon (Skt. *candra*-)', it is possible to argue:

a. first of all, that the proper name Candragupta – already at the stage Σανδρό/άκοττος – can be considered to be a hybrid compounded word, whose second element (*scil.* Gk. -κοττος), coherently from a phonetic and semantic point of view with the ancient Greek compound system (typically, right-oriented: see Tribulato 2015: 60 ss.; as for the semantics, see §4.1), is transferred (*scil.* Pkt. /g/ yields Gk. /k/), and the first one (*scil.* Gk. Σανδρό/ά-) is simply reproduced;
b. centuries on, it is probable that the first element (*scil.* Gk. Σανδρό/ά-), obscure from a semantic point of view, might have been reproduced by (almost) homophonous indigenous words, whose semanteme is perhaps slightly extended (*scil.* Gk. Ἀνδρό/ά-)[23].

## 4.1. The -κοττος issue

As we have seen, as far as -κοττος is concerned, the devoicing phenomenon (Pkt. /g/ > Gk. /k/) seems phonetically problematic. It is well known, indeed, that Prakrit languages do not tend to devoice voiced sounds, especially if in an intervocalic environment (*scil.* VCV). Rather, these languages often display voicing phenomena towards voiceless sounds, as well as assimilation processes[24]. Thus, the phonetic hint (*scil.* /k/) that we do perceive in Candragupta's name seems to suggest an ancient Greek treatment. As such, the fact that we do have -κοττος instead of the expected Gk. *-γουπτο(ς) may also highlight a clear manipulation of the Prakrit compound's second constituent. In this way, the hybrid compounded nature of this loanword seems even clearer.

Nevertheless, having established that the ancient authors perceived the two-membered nature of Candragupta's name, we now have to explain this second member (-κοττος). In this case, the constituents' semantics, whose role is of paramount importance when compounds are concerned[25], interfaces with morphophonology.

What seems plausible to have happened is that the term κόττος might have been associated with the radical κοττ- (~ κοττίς)[26], which seems well established not only in ancient Greek onomastics but also as a second member of compounds with the unclear meaning of 'big head, cock-headed, fish-headed' (Chantraine 1968-1980, 2: 572; Beekes 2009: 762). Moreover, the antiquity of the masculine autonomous proper name Κόττος

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[23] Weinreich (1953: 49-52); in order to understand more deeply this phenomenon in ancient languages, where this issue is not particularly investigated, see Alfieri and Ciancaglini (2014: 119-121); this idea was also suggested by Ziegler (1935: 383): «Die Schreibung ohne anlautendes *Σ*, zu der die Analogie so vieler mit Andro- beginnender griechischer Namen verführte […]»; nevertheless, this scholar did not develop his observation any further (see Section 1).

[24] Mansion (1931), Turner (1962-1966), and Kobayashi (2017).

[25] For a wider overview of the importance held by the semantics when analysing compounds, see Lieber (2009) with bibliography.

[26] Beekes (2009: 762) reports that the radical κοττ- is related to κοττίς, -ίδος (f.) 'hairdress with long hair on the forehead'; then, -κοττος as second member of compounds is related to κόττος (/ κοττός), with the meaning of 'bird, cock'; see, also, a glossa reported by Beekes (2009: 762): «ὄρνις. καὶ οἱ ἀλεκτρυόνες κοττοὶ διὰ τὸν ἐπὶ τῇ κεφαλῇ λόφον 'bird; cocks, because of the crests or tufts on their heads'; see also modern Greek κόττα 'chicken'» and modern Gk. κοτόπουλος 'id.', which points to the same etymology.

in ancient Greek onomastics is beyond doubt since it is attested from Hesiod on[27]. In this way, the second member of the compounded loanword might have been cleared, from a semantic point of view, thanks to a partial process of folk etymology.

In other words, we propose that the folk-etymology process is responsible for the phonetic adaptation of the compound's second member (namely, /g/ > /k/), through a process that we may define as "calquization of a loan" (see Gusmani 1987: 106-107)[28]. As such, it seems reasonable to argue for a diachronic path like the one that follows:

1. Candragupta, perceived as a two-membered word maybe already influenced by phonetic traits typically Prakrit (e.g., /pt/ > /tt/; and maybe Gāndhārī?), is adapted in Σανδράκοττος (*i.e.*, the most resemblant phonetic spelling);
2. The new word Σανδράκοττος, perceived still as a loan[29], coherently with ancient Greek compounds' preferences, alternates with its variant Σανδρόκοττος;
3. Significantly, the loanword Σανδρόκοττος is morphologically interpreted with respect to the ancient Greek morpho-phonology (e.g., an /o/ stem, see also Benveniste 1958: 37);
4. The Σανδρόκοττος compound, maybe as much as its variant Σανδράκοττος, at this point, might have been re-interpreted through a process of partial folk etymology from a semantic point of view; thus, we propose a preliminary interpretation of such a compound, yet to be discussed, following the meaning that -κοττος bears in ancient Greek onomastics and composition (see Chantraine 1968: 572; Beekes 2009: 762):

$$[[\Sigma\alpha\nu\delta\rho\acute{o}]_X[\textbf{κοττος}]_N]_N \text{ 'a big/cock/fish headed(-X)', on the model of}$$
$$[[\grave{\alpha}\nu\delta\rho\acute{o}]_N[\textbf{γυνος}]_N]_N \text{ 'a man-woman'.}$$

### 4.1.1. *Foreign names and morphophonology: the /s-/ problem*

As far as the Plutarch's witness account is concerned[30], on the basis of what we have sketched above, it seems reasonable to present a situation like the one that follows. Indeed, Plutarch perceives the word as a compound, whose onomastic nature is enhanced by the Greek accent pattern (which is typical of the often improperly so-called *bahuvrīhi* type), is reinterpreted by a complete folk-etymology process that proceeds in the following way:

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[27] See Hes. *Th*. 149, 618, 654, 714, 734, 817.

[28] See also Fauconnier (2015: 121, especially footnotes 4 and 5) for further bibliography concerning the philological aspects of Candragupta's name throughout the diachrony of its variants.

[29] In Guilbert's (1975) terms about the adoption's phases: a) loans are '*xénismes*' (*i.e.*, foreign words normally enclosed in a quotes in a text); b) virtually, these loans might become '*pérégrinisme*' (*i.e.*, they become more widely used); c) subsequently, some proto-loans will be rejected, due to phonological or orthographical reasons (e.g., *ordinateur* vs. *computer*), whereas others will be accepted and integrated morphosyntactically and *semantically* [emphasis mine] into the recipient language; see also Gusmani (1987); McMahon (1994: 200-224).

[30] We take into account Plutarch's witness account as representative of the other authors, due to philological and chronological reasons.

a. the initial sibilant is consciously removed by Plutarch (e.g., <Σ>, /s/ > <∅>, /∅/)[31], thus yielding an undeniable resemblance to the onomastic compounds in Ἀνδρο-[32];

b. as a result, the second constituent of the compound, already (more or less) associated with the radical κοττ- (~ κοττίς), can now determine (variously, see below) its finally semantically clear first constituent[33].

Proof of this picture can be found both from an internal and external perspective on this source.

From an internal point of view, it is plausible to sustain a semantic operation behind the compound's constituents. Indeed, as pointed out by Robert (1963: 283), the radical κοττ- is frequently found as an ancient Greek adaptation for exotic Lydian and Asian [Robert's terminology][34] (proper) names.

Nevertheless, when κοττ- reproduces foreign names, its morphological endings are of various natures, depending on the foreign names' forms, without further interpretations (e.g., Κοττ-ᾶς, Κοττ-ίς, Κόττ-αλος, -άλη, Κόττ-αρος, Κόττ-ος, Κοττ-ώ)[35]. As a result, it is plausible to suppose that Plutarch brings to an end the process of folk etymology: the second constituent, either meaningful or meaningless before Plutarch, is now linked to the radical κοττ- (~ κοττίς), thanks to the finally clear first constituent (levelled to the ancient Greek compounds in Ἀνδρο-).

On the other hand, further external elements support our view when Plutarch's work is taken into account. As a matter of fact, both *Vitae parallelae* and *Moralia* highlight a literary intention of the author to write a typology of work that deals with significant details, such as proper names. What seems to happen here is a tendency displayed by the author to give meaning to a foreign name, thus creating a *nomen parlante*. This operation is coherent not only with the nature of Plutarch's works but also with a whole rhetoric and literary tradition typical of Roman-period Greece[36].

In this way, it is possible that the compound, from Plutarch on, unlike before, might have been perceived in at least three ways, considering the ancient Greek compound system:

a. as a left-oriented coordinated attributive endocentric compound, by interpreting the meaning of -κοττος as 'big headed'[37]:

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[31] Or, at least, from a lost source that Plutarch refers to; for the intentionality of the process of /s-/ deletion, see the statements on the next page and the observation of Plutarch's literary work from a stylistic and linguistic point of view made in Ziegler (1935); Porciani (2001); Soverini (2001); Casanova (2005) with bibliography.

[32] For an exhaustive collection of onomastic ancient Greek compounds in Ἀνδρο- over the centuries see, e.g., Tribulato (2015); for modern Greek, see Ralli (2013).

[33] In order to have a more specific idea about the criteria adopted for a possible classification of compounds in ancient Greek, see Tribulato (2015: 49-61), where compounds are divided according to a) the constituent's relationship (*i.e.*, subordinated vs. coordinated compounds); b) the morphological analysis of the constituents (*i.e.*, N, A, Adv etc.); c) the presence or the absence of the morpho-semantic head (*i.e.*, endocentric vs. exocentric compounds, that can be either right- or left-oriented).

[34] More specifically, it is stated in Robert (1963: 283, with bibliography) that the personal name Κόττος looks like a nickname for Κοττᾶς, attested for a man of Magnesia ad Sipylum.

[35] Chantraine (1968-1980, 1: 572).

[36] The same can be accounted for Mnaseas' work (II century BCE), whose fragmentary nature does not invalidate the clear ethnographic and literary interest of the author, typical of the late Hellenistic (and Roman) period; see, among many others, Porciani (2001); Soverini (2001).

[37] For further interests about terminology, see Bisetto and Scalise (2005); Tribulato (2015); Montesi (2023).

[[Ἀνδρ]ɴ[**ό**]ʟᴠ[κοττος]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'a man big-/cock-/fish-headed', whose mechanical combination of the two name components might be resemblant of [ἀνδρ]ɴ[**ό**]ʟᴠ[γυνος]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'a man-woman'[38];

b. as a right-oriented coordinated attributive endocentric compound, according to the other possible meanings of -κοττος 'chicken, fish' (from κόττος/κοττός, see Beekes 2009: 762):

[[Ἀνδρ]ɴ[**ό**]ʟᴠ[κοττος]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'a chicken/fish (which is a) man, male-chicken/fish', on the model of [[ἰατρ]ɴ[**ό**]ʟᴠ[μαντις]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'a diviner (who is a) doctor, a doctor-diviner' (with the same formal structure of both the first constituents, which is a genitive form of ἀνήρ 'man', for the former, and of ἰατήρ 'healer', for the latter);

c. as right-oriented *bahuvrīhi* compound (*scil.* a determinative exocentric compound as named by Indian grammarians, following A 2.2.23-24), typical of the onomastics:

[[Ἀνδρ]ɴ[**ό**]ʟᴠ[κοττος]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'whose head [is] of a man, man-headed', on the model of [[Πατρ]ɴ[o]ʟᴠ[κλῆς]ɴ]ɴ/ᴀ 'whose fame [is] of the father, father-famed' (as noted above, with the genitive forms of both the compounds' first members, *scil.* ἀνδρός from ἀνήρ 'man' and πατρός from πατήρ 'father');

Even though none of the three mentioned possibilities can be excluded with certainty, the most plausible one seems to be the last one. Indeed, the *bahuvrīhi* interpretation has two advantages: firstly, from a functional point of view, it is the most frequent, common, and well-attested compound typology involved in proper names since the Mycenaean Greek (see, for instance, Meissner and Tribulato 2002); secondly, from a formal point of view (considering the accent pattern and the constituents' structure), there are a lot of parallels to such a compound throughout the whole of ancient Greek literature (for an overview, see Tribulato 2015: 77-85).

## 5. From morphophonology to folk etymology

At this point, from a diachronic perspective and with respect to what has been highlighted by our investigation so far, we can draw from a similar situation:

| Variants | Morphophonology | Semantics |
|---|---|---|
| Σανδράκοττος | -ος<br>Linking (and stressed) vowel /-a-/ | [Σανδρά]ₓ ~ [X]ₓ<br>[κοττος]ɴ ~ [κοττίς]ɴ |
| Σανδρόκοττος | -ος<br>Linking (and stressed) vowel /-o-/ | [Σανδρό]ₓ ~ [X]ₓ<br>[κοττος]ɴ ~ [κοττίς]ɴ |
| Ἀνδρόκοττος | -ος<br>Linking (and stressed) vowel /-o-/ | [Ἀνδρό-]ɴ ~ ἀνήρ<br>[κοττος]ɴ ~ [κοττίς]ɴ |

Table 2. *Morphophonological and semantic levels of the Ancient Greek forms.*

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[38] From a typological perspective, this possibility seems even stronger: see the Italian last names *Mala-testa* (lit. 'bad-head'), *Capo-tosto* (lit. 'strong-head') etc. (see De Felice 1987: 158-65).

Now, we would like to focus on a final feature that not only enhances the perception of the loanword as a compound, but also clarifies the folk-etymology process displayed by Plutarch: the accent pattern.

In ancient Greek, even though incoherence is more frequent than regularity (see Vendryès 1945: 188), several phenomena seem to be typical of some compounds. More specifically, as pointed out by many scholars[39], there is one tendency, particularly relevant for our case, in the accent of ancient Greek compounds: if the second constituent corresponds to an autonomous word, the accent of the whole compound will (often) be different from that of the autonomous word. In other words, the compound behaves as a new lexical unit, facing the general Greek accentuation rules (e.g., ἀκρόπολις 'high city' vs. πόλις 'city').

As a result, if the accent is also taken into account, two conclusions can be drawn:

a. We have further elements to think that Candragupta's name is progressively perceived as a compound, that is a new lexical unit, whose second constituent represents the possible autonomous word *κοττος (~ κοττίς), attested as an autonomous masculine proper name from Hesiod on (see Section 4.1);

b. The accent pattern of the compound itself (*scil.* the stressed antepenultimate) now meaningful thanks to the folk-etymology process is the one typical of the *bahuvrīhi* type[40], category in which proper names abound (see Tribulato 2015: 77-85, 122-25); thus, even though recessive accentuation is the default pattern in ancient Greek (see Probert 2006: 131-136), the outlined structure of the compound (see Section 4.1.1) points to an accent position coherent with the compound typology envisaged (see Lazzeroni 1995; Melazzo 2010; Melazzo and Melazzo 2010).

In this way, a new diachrony for Candragupta's names within the ancient Greek (compound) system can be outlined as follows:

| Diachrony of the Ancient Greek and Latin sources witnessing Candragupta's name(s) | | |
|---|---|---|
| Original Prakrit form | *Candagutta* / *Candragutta* (?) | |
| DIACHRONY | Ancient Greek sources | Latin sources |
| Arrian | Σανδράκοττος | / |
| Phylarcus, Strabo (Justin) | Σανδρόκοττος | *Sandrocottus* |
| Mnaseas, Plutarch, Appian (Orosius) | Ἀνδρόκοττος | *Androcottus* |

Table 3. *Diachrony of the Ancient Greek names of Candragupta.*

1. Candragupta, perceived as a two-membered word maybe already influenced by Prakrit nuances (/pt/ > /tt/), is adapted in Σανδράκοττος (*i.e.*, the most resemblant from a phonetic point of view);

2. The new word Σανδράκοττος, coherently perceived still as a loanword[41], alternates with its variant Σανδρόκοττος;

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[39] Among many others, see Debrunner (1917); Vendryès (1945: 188-189); Rix (1992); Lazzeroni (1995); Pontani (2008); Melazzo and Melazzo (2010); Ralli (2013); Tribulato (2015).

[40] Besides its onomastic nature, this specific compound cannot be considered a prototypical *bahuvrīhi* compound, see Lazzeroni (1995); Melazzo (2010).

[41] For the reasons behind this statement, see the already mentioned Guilbert (1975).

3. The Σανδρόκοττος compound, maybe as much as its variant Σανδράκοττος, might have been interpreted in two ways, one meaningless and one partially meaningful:

    a. [[Σανδρό]x[κοττος]ɴ]ɴ a proper foreign name, regularly adapted to the ancient Greek phonetics (see Robert 1963: 283);
    b. [[Σανδρό]x[**κοττος**]ɴ]ɴ '**a big headed**-X', '**a chicken/fish**-X', or '**whose head is**-X' (see Section 4.1.1);

4. Mnaseas, Plutarch and Appian, in whose texts the spelling of Candragupta's name significantly misses the starting voiceless sibilant /s/, may have linked the new compound to other compounded proper names, such as the ones in Ἀνδρο-[42], allowing us to assume that there might have been the perception of:

    a. a relation to the radical κοττ-;
    b. a process of folk etymology, that is a mainly semantic reinterpretation of something that is obscure and apparently meaningless[43];
    c. the will to create a new transparent compound which might have sounded like a *bahuvrīhi* one with the meaning of 'whose head is of a man, man-headed'.

## 6. Conclusions

Finally, the analysis of the ancient Greek names of Candragupta Maurya has led us to some conclusions. Indeed, the reasons behind the different spellings of Candragupta's name in ancient Greek depend on:

    a. morphophonological rules typical of the ancient Greek language: after an initial adaptation, indeed, the two-membered loan, progressively perceived as a compound, faces the sort of the majority of compounds throughout the diachrony of ancient Greek; the ancient authors, thus, register forms that are more or less conservative with respect to the original one;
    b. semantic reasons: it seems plausible that a conscious literary manipulation of the compound existed in order to create a *nomen parlante* (*i.e.*, an endocentric left-oriented coordinated onomastic compound) through a process of folk-etymology; in this way, again, behind the different names attested by the ancient authors there seems to be a more or less conscious attempt to literarily modify Candragupta's name.

This research underlines the importance of analysing old problems from new perspectives. Unlike previous studies, indeed, we have tried to solve an old philological problem, not only from a new linguistic point of view, but also in order to integrate this framework with further information from different fields of study (literature, historiography, etc.).

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[42] See, also, Risch (1974), Ralli (2013), and Tribulato (2015).

[43] As far as works on folk etymology are concerned, see Ullmann (1951, 1962) and, for a wider perspective, McMahon (1994: 174-190) and its bibliography; it must be reminded, though, that a folk etymology might have been possible even if the word had not been perceived as a compound.

Thanks to the above, we have been able to make a step further with respect to the current state of the art research, by focusing on features that had not been sufficiently considered before. In order to do so, the methods of both historical linguistics (in terms of phonetic and semantic change), together with areal linguistics, have been excellent tools for our purpose.

While we fully understand that further research is necessary, in this text, we hope to have helped clarify a scenario that had previously seemed ambiguous and problematic from a solely philological point of view.

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