The following notes on various Ancient Greek words with initial ὀ-, as discussed in Frisk 1963 (henceforth, GEW), clarify aspects of the development of this vowel in Greek.

GEW 352-3, s.v. ὀδών (Ion.) ‘tooth’ has a fine account of the Greek as far as it went at the time of publication of his work (1963). Beyond the Greek, as it turns out (especially for the Armenian, Latin, and ultimately Lithuanian), the total Indo-European history is far simpler, richer, and more instructive than it seemed then. At that time, only separate details were noted in isolation, e.g. “ablaut” without motivation. Thus Armenian atamn, an ancient participle, did not show secondary vocalization in the initial vowel, but together with Greek ὀδοντ- (see Hamp 1978) rather simply regular vocalization of initial pre-consonantal Schwundstufe *ʔ-, hence *ʔd-. This laryngeal (*ʔ) disappeared regularly in Indic, Lithuanian, German: *ʔdónt-, and Indic, Latin, Old Irish, English: *ʔdnt-. Greek νοθός ‘toothless’ (GEW, p. 330) must be formed somewhat later, when *ve- would merge with od- < *odo- < *ʔdónt-, because νοθός means ‘zahn-los’ and not ‘ess-los’ or ‘aß-los’.

ὀνόμα ‘name’ as a headword is justified by its presence but GEW should note that it is restored from derivatives. That is shown by the by-form ἐνυμα, which has the regular o > u between nasal and labial and thus no *ʔ- > o- assimilated to -o- in a following syllable. ὀνόμα as discussed in GEW 396-7 is excellent except for two points. The Latin form (nōmen) does not equate to Indic nāma in length; rather, Indic must be explained by Brugmann’s Law (*o > ā /R_CV) and Latin must, by Warren Cowgill’s genius, by a cross with *gnōmen. Greek νόμυμος ‘nameless’ can be later, with –ω- from ε-ο- after

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colouring of *ʔ, which is assured by Old Prussian *emmens ‘name’;¹  Tosk Albanian *emër ‘name’ must show e- via umlaut from *a < syllabic *η.

These are different from όντιῶδος ‘reproach’ (GEW 394), Armenian *anici, apparently with *ιυ- and όνωφ ‘dream’ and Armenian *anurj, Geg Albanian *âdërre, apparently from *ιυɾɨɾ(nə)-² and Armenian **xɨɾnɾ-jo, or better the latter from earlier *ιɨɾnɾ+-jo-, or more exactly *xɨɾnɾH+. The last fits with what I have proposed for Helleno-Armenian as seen in Greek όδωρ ‘water’ (see Hamp 1983-84, 1990).

Finally, regarding όβολο- ~ όδελο- ‘spit’, GEW (s.v.) has βελ- but ό- “unerklärt”. I compare Albanian hell ‘spit’ < *h₄ogʷe/lolo- (> hagʷe-i/a/α > hâk- (cf. gen ‘dog’ < kann- and gelq ‘glass’ < calice-, both borrowed from Latin)), as well as halë ‘fishbone’ < *h₄ogʷe/o-l-n(o)-ā (where –ā is the collective suffix).³

References


¹ Cf. Hamp 2008, on Gaulish anman ‘name’.
² Giving *án(ə)rrnā > *ândrnā > *âd(ə)rrā, with North European *o > *a.
³ On *h₄o-, cf. ὀλισθάνω ‘slide’.