

Citizens in the Graeco-Roman World

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Citizens in the Graeco-Roman World

Aspects of Citizenship from the Archaic Period to AD 212

Edited by

Lucia Cecchet
Anna Busetto



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Preface

This book takes its inspiration from an international conference held in Urbino in 2014 on the topic “Citizens, Ancient and Modern. Questions and Debate on Citizenship in the ancient world and today”, organized by the editors of this book and generously funded by the University of Urbino in cooperation with the cultural association *Rodopis—Experience Ancient History*.

The original idea of a conference on ancient citizenship was suggested to us by the many questions raised by the peculiar historical period in which we live. As we all agree, Europe is today witnessing an extraordinary and, hitherto unknown, phenomenon of immigration of people especially from the Near-Eastern and African countries. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 59.5 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced in 2014.¹ The Agency reports that “the 28 Member States of the European Union registered 570,800 asylum claims in 2014, a 44 per cent increase compared to 2013.”²

The massive movement of people towards Europe is currently fuelling a lively political debate on the integration of immigrants into European societies. In a short-time perspective, the question is how to welcome and integrate these people into our communities, and how to face the political, economic, social and religious challenges that mass migration brings with it. In the longer term, one wonders how this phenomenon will eventually affect both the EU as a communitarian institution and our understanding of European citizenship.

Despite significant differences within the contemporary world, migration-phenomena were indeed already known in antiquity. The set of questions prompted by intensive immigration in contemporary Europe can, *mutatis mutandis*, be applied to the ancient world. How did ancient cities respond to the need of integrating foreigners? What did citizen rights entail and how did the practice of granting citizenship change from the world of the classical and Hellenistic *poleis* to the more integrated system of the Roman Empire? How did ancient political thinkers regard citizens and citizen rights in a world that was becoming more and more cosmopolitan?

These are some of the central questions on which the Urbino conference focused. This book contains an assortment of papers on these topics: based on

¹ Global trends 2014: <http://www.unhcr.de/service/zahlen-und-statistiken.html>.

² Asylum trends 2014: <http://www.unhcr.de/service/zahlen-und-statistiken.html>. Roughly 300,000 asylum seekers arrived in EU-members states in the first quarter of 2016, among which the first three nationalities were Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans, according to Eurostat data: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_quarterly_report.

the study of mainly literary and epigraphic evidence, it explores the processes of formation and re-formation of citizen bodies, the integration of foreigners into ancient cities, the question of multiple citizenship-holders and the political and philosophical thought as regards citizenship. One *caveat*: the present book is not a companion to ancient citizenship and it does not aim at covering the full range of questions concerning this topic in the ancient world. Instead, it discusses some key-aspects of citizenship from its first emergence in the Greek communities of the archaic period until the decades preceding the Antonine Constitution of AD 212, the formal act with which citizenship was extended to (almost) all the free inhabitants of the Empire. The papers are grouped into three sections which will, hopefully, guide the reader in identifying the three central subjects, i.e. “Defining the citizen body in the Greek *poleis*”, “Citizens and non-citizens in the Roman world”, and “Ancient citizenship in the philosophical and political reflection: Ancient and Modern”.

In overseeing this volume, it became increasingly clear to us that the questions dealt with are all very relevant to the world in which we live, which is becoming, at least as far as Europe is concerned, more and more cosmopolitan, closer and closer to facing the question of integration, naturalization and relations between citizens and non-citizens. We sincerely hope that these papers will stimulate further discussion on these topics both in the ancient world and in contemporary societies.

Lucia Cecchet and Anna Busetto