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Biographical note: Benjamin Gray is lecturer in Ancient History at Birkbeck College, University of London. He specialises in the connections between political thought and practice in the ancient Greek world, with a focus on the Hellenistic period. He is the author of *Stasis and Stability: Exile, the Polis, and Political Thought, c. 404–146 BC* (Oxford 2015) and co-editor of *The Hellenistic Reception of Classical Athenian Democracy and Political Thought* (Oxford 2018, with M. Canevaro) and *Ancient Greek History and Contemporary Social Science* (Edinburgh 2018, with M. Canevaro, A. Erskine and J. Ober).

Chapter 10

Expanding the Polis

Benjamin Gray

1. Introduction

Ancient democracy raises an acute challenge for modern liberal democrats, committed to both moral universalism and equal participatory democracy: the most famous case, Classical Athens, supposedly a congenial ancestor of modern democracies, is widely known to have tended to exclude all those outside an elite of male home citizens, denying full civic participation to women, foreigners and slaves. The problem is deeper than the mere coexistence of democracy and exclusivity. As also noted in Chapter 6 and elsewhere in this volume, the suspicion is ever present that Classical Athens' undoubted success in achieving political equality and participation among male citizens was itself dependent on, indeed built on, a system of exclusion of all outside that enfranchised group. Ancient democracy thus throws into relief the challenges confronted by modern political theorists who analyse, and seek to resolve, the tensions between moral universalism and 'bounded' democracy (e.g Benhabib 2006).

This chapter investigates this problematic relationship between democracy and exclusivity in different ancient democratic communities, including Athens (studied together with republican Rome in section 2), but also many others. On the one hand,

close study of the ancient evidence amply confirms that exclusivity, combined with the demonisation of those outside the in-group, was often an effective short-cut to the levels of internal solidarity and trust necessary to sustain a demanding democratic system.

On the other hand, the ancient world also offers wide-ranging evidence for experiments in ‘expanding the polis’, often combined with attempts to preserve the institutions and ethos of democracy. This was not merely a question of philosophers imagining a cosmopolitan utopia. It was also a matter of practical experiments in widening access to citizenship or in binding together disparate individuals and groups, of different origins, in shared political institutions, often covering a wide geographical area.

Many such experiments were undertaken by the city-states of the Hellenistic era (c. 323–31 BC), which are the focus of section 3. These were the city-states which existed within and between the vast monarchies of the complex, multicultural world created by Alexander the Great’s conquest of the Near and Middle East, which brought Greek political and cultural models into constant interaction with those of many other civilisations (see Thonemann 2016 for a recent overview). Against this background, many city-states doubled down on exclusivity, fending off newcomers, especially those of alien cultural background. Simultaneously, however, many other city-states, or groups of city-states, launched complex experiments in loosening or broadening citizenship, sometimes by inventing new unions of two or more city-states, macrocosms of a single polis, with their own adapted institutions, often democratic ones. Section 3 assesses the complex relationship between ‘expansion of the polis’ and democracy in these Hellenistic cases, linking them to broader debates about the opportunities and pitfalls of open, heterogeneous democracy.

2. Exclusivity with democracy at Athens, inclusivity with oligarchy at Rome?

It would be easy to overestimate the exclusivity of the Classical Athenian democracy: even if formal political participation in the assembly and other civic institutions was

restricted to adult male citizens, there were many opportunities for outsiders to participate in civic life, often in more informal ways. As Chapters 5 and 6 show, women could play a prominent role on the alternative civic stage of religion (compare especially Blok 2017). Moreover, women and those who had not been born Athenian could participate in varied ways in the thriving world of Athenian social, economic and cultural life, including voluntary associations. Indeed, one tendency in recent scholarship has been to deny that formal legal status divisions, especially the citizen/outsider boundary, ever really frustrated meaningful socio-economic interaction, even collaboration, across them. According to this approach, Athenian society meaningfully resembled a modern melting-pot 'nation' (Cohen 2000); it had many 'free spaces', such as the port spaces of the Piraeus or even the civic agora itself, in which citizens and outsiders could interact largely unencumbered by formal status categories (Vlassopoulos 2007b, compare 2007a).

[Figure 10.1 – votive plaque for Thracian goddess Bendis, Piraeus]

This recent scholarly tendency is a useful corrective to fixation on the exclusivity of Athenian democratic civic life. Nevertheless, emphasis on the ingenuity with which some residents of Classical Athens circumvented the prevailing legal-political framework has to be combined with acknowledgement of the tenacity of that framework itself, both as institutionalised reality and as internalised ideology (compare Whitehead 1977).

It was probably quite often possible for individuals to slip through the cracks in the framework. For example, the otherwise unknown Pancleon, the defendant in the case of Lysias *Oration* 23 (c. 400 BC), had apparently been successful in living in Athenian society for some time with an ambiguous status (Lysias' prosecuting client alleged that he was of slave status), with the aid of a claim to be a 'Plataean', one of the refugees from the city of Plataea exceptionally granted Athenian citizenship during the Peloponnesian War.

However, the system eventually caught up with Pancleon. This was partly the result of legal structures: when he became embroiled in a legal dispute, his personal status ended up the subject of the legal proceedings attested in Lysias' speech. This was the result of his objecting to being treated by his opponent as a non-citizen (see Wolpert and Kapparis 2011: 59-61 for a summary of the legal details), but that objection set in train the tendency of the Athenian legal system to encourage and facilitate policing of status divisions. In general, Athenian law offered varied avenues for denunciation of those who trespassed across status divisions, including runaway slaves and foreigners who falsely claimed Athenian citizenship, or who did not observe the rigorous rules governing the status of metic (or 'resident alien'; compare Meyer 2010; Kamen 2013, chs. 4-5; and again Whitehead 1977).

In Pancleon's case, his downfall was the result, not only of legal formalities, but also of the force of exclusive civic ideology, and its persistence even among liminal groups: according to Lysias (23.6), the (recognised) Plataean community at Athens disowned Pancleon at their monthly meeting in the cheese-market. These Plataeans had themselves benefited from an unusual bending of Athenian civic exclusivity, but were not on this occasion prepared to show similar flexibility to Pancleon. Other expatriate groups also clung to, perhaps sometimes emphasised, their original ethnic identity. This was true even of those living in the multicultural Piraeus: consider the Thracian emigrants said to have held a procession to their ancestral goddess Bendis at the start of Plato's *Republic* (327a), even if they did inspire an imitation procession among other (non-Thracian) residents. In a similar case involving more disparate individuals, expatriates from the city of Byzantium on the Bosphorus come together for business purposes in the Piraeus in Demosthenes *Oration* 33.

It was apparently only exceptional migrant outsiders who took the bold step of questioning civic exclusivity altogether. It was migrants and exiles in Classical Athens who developed the early forms of Greek philosophical cosmopolitanism: the theory that the truly wise and virtuous person is at home by nature in the whole cosmos, with no

special link other than chance to the city of birth. Fifth-century migrant Sophists were probably already developing ideas along these lines (see the ideas about unifying laws of nature and human kinship attributed to the Sophist Hippias of Elis at Plato *Protagoras* 337c). These ideas were given a coherent form, very influential for later centuries, by philosophical exiles living in fourth-century BC Athens, especially the early Cynics, probably joined by their pupil, the founder of the Stoic school, Zeno of Kition (see Richter 2011: chs. 1–2 on this early history; and Schofield 1999: chs. 1–2 and Vogt 2008: chs. 1–2, for contrasting interpretations of Zeno’s approach).

This early cosmopolitanism was primarily an oppositional movement, designed to expose the contradictions of the established polis system: poleis claimed to promote moral values, but were in fact obsessed with upholding the contingent privileges of those who happened to be born in a certain place to certain parents. Anyone truly interested in virtue would recognise as fellow-citizens all others of a similar disposition, not only those in the purely contingent community of birth (for the Stoic Zeno’s reported view that only other virtuous people are ‘fellow citizens and kin’ of the virtuous, see Diogenes Laertius 7.33; among the Cynics, Crates of Thebes reportedly declared himself a ‘fellow-citizen’ of another displaced philosopher, Diogenes of Sinope, 6.93). Asked about his origins, Diogenes of Sinope supposedly explicitly claimed to be a ‘citizen of the world’ (Diogenes Laertius 6.63). To Cynic eyes, poleis could not even guarantee their own citizens a secure livelihood and secure dignity: the ascetic, marginal Cynic was far better protected against twists of fate than a conventional polis citizen (see again Diogenes Laertius 6.93). It seems that, for these early exponents, ‘cosmopolitanism’ was intended to be as much a contradiction-in-terms as a positive proposal: there could be no truly universal, inclusive polis, since abolishing exclusivity would transform the polis model out of recognition.

[Figure 10.2 Ricci, Diogenes and Alexander]

These dissident intellectuals were taking aim at the way in which ethnic exclusivity underpinned the civic life of their host polis, Athens, perhaps even more than that of

other city-states, where there were not such strong imperatives to limit access to local economic benefits such as the proceeds of the lucrative silver mines and of the Athenian empire. Despite the caveats mentioned above, strong ethnic exclusivity undoubtedly played a crucial role in sustaining Athenian civic identity and the internal solidarity and like-mindedness which sustained the Athenian democratic system (see especially Loraux 2006; compare Kasimis 2018). S. Lape (2010) has even recently suggested that Athenian civic ideology can be meaningfully compared with modern racist political ideologies. Even if the lack of discrimination based on skin colour at Athens weakens this analogy, Lape brings into relief the gulf between Athenian civic exclusivity and modern liberal normative expectations of democratic regimes. This exclusivity left its mark even on cosmopolitan theorists: the Cynics certainly did not want to admit all comers to their cosmopolis, only those who satisfied demanding Cynic standards of ascetic virtue.

If Athens can be said to bear out a significant connection between democracy and exclusivity, despite all the caveats and complications sketched here, the Roman Republic can be used to illustrate – again with important qualifications – the converse: the frequent entanglement of inclusivity towards foreign-born outsiders with oligarchy. Inclusivity was a foundational principle of Roman citizenship: Rome’s founder, Romulus, was said to have drawn the city’s original inhabitants from outcasts wandering Italy. This myth of Rome as an open and diverse citizen-body was central to Roman self-understanding throughout the Republican period (c. 500–30 BC) and into the Principate (Dench 2005). This very diversity was held to be at the root of the Romans’ famous political and legal institutions, and punctilious respect for them: the first-century BC historian Livy pointed out that only through law could Romulus have forged this heterogeneous community into a united citizen-body (Livy 1.8). This central myth helped to make the Romans much more amenable than the Classical Athenians to granting citizenship to outsiders on a systematic basis (Purcell 1990), whether to manumitted slaves or (especially from the first century BC onwards) to whole communities or favoured individuals who showed loyalty to Rome’s expanding empire, in Italy and then further afield. The result was a genuinely ‘expanded’ polis (or rather *res publica*), with a wide and expanding geographical reach as well as a very large number of citizens.

The Roman willingness to integrate outsiders was also a consequence of the political character of Roman citizenship, which it itself reinforced. In a famous article, Philippe Gauthier (1981) contrasted a Greek model of citizenship whose central focus was participation in shared political institutions with a Roman model which instead prioritised integration. According to this interpretation, gaining Roman citizenship was as much about being accepted into Roman social, economic and cultural life as about obtaining a vote in the Roman civic assemblies, though the latter was undeniably often also important.

This argument introduces a very tight link between inclusivity towards foreign-born outsiders and the absence of full democracy: it was precisely because the average citizen wielded less political power than in Athens that the Romans were quicker to distribute citizenship to newcomers and allies. An important caveat here is that, as also discussed in others chapters here, the Roman system did have important democratic elements, as Greek historian Polybius recognised in his analysis of the Roman system notionally in 216 BC as a ‘mixed constitution’ containing monarchical, aristocratic and democratic elements (Polybius *Histories* Book VI, esp. 6.11–18; compare the modern debate between Millar 1998 and Hölkeskamp 2010). The inclusivity of the Roman system towards outsiders may itself, however, have posed problems for the vitality of the democratic forces in the constitution. The Roman assemblies already enjoyed much less formal political power than the Athenian assembly, and their large (and increasing) scale and heterogeneity probably also made it more difficult for them to emulate the formidable collective bargaining-power of the cohesive Athenian *demos* vis-à-vis its elites. By the time of the Principate, far-flung Roman citizens living in different provinces might never even visit Rome (Eberle 2017), let alone forge a common political programme with fellow citizens.

Another reason for associating Roman inclusivity with hierarchical power is that it also served as an instrument of imperialism, helping to entrench Roman power in different regions (Ando 2016a; compare Chakrabarty *et al.* 2000b and Douzinas 2007 for parallel arguments about modern forms of universalism). Selectivity in grants of citizenship

(perhaps still relatively restricted in spread around the empire before AD 212: Lavan 2019) and manipulation of subtle gradations in privilege for different groups and individuals (Padilla Peralta 2019: section 2) were useful tools of control. This link between open citizenship and imperialism puts in a different light perhaps the most famous example of ‘expanding the polis’ from the ancient Mediterranean: the edict of Emperor Caracalla of AD 212 (the *Constitutio Antoniniana*) which granted Roman citizenship to all freeborn inhabitants of the empire, subject to certain minor restrictions (see Lavan 2019b; also the collected essays in Ando 2016b). This was undoubtedly a transformative moment of ‘expansion’ of the republican model of citizenship, which gave new legal rights (and obligations) to a wide swathe of the population of the Mediterranean lands, but it was also inextricably bound up with the operations of a hierarchical, extractive empire.

When considered alongside the Classical Athenian case, the Roman evidence makes it hard to deny that the demands of including outsiders and sustaining vibrant participatory democracy do not always pull in the same direction. Indeed, in the more democratic of the two cases, Classical Athens, the *demos* regularly used its vote to support the exclusivity of Athenian citizenship, preventing the dilution of its privileges through generosity to outsiders (compare again Benhabib 2006 for modern parallels).

3. The Hellenistic period as alternative case-study

Against the Classical Athenian and Roman background discussed in the previous section, the Hellenistic civic world – usually far less prominent in synoptic volumes such as this one – emerges as an intriguing intermediate case. As suggested in my introduction, the Hellenistic period was one of rich experimentation with traditional civic and democratic forms, including efforts to adapt them to a more fluid and multicultural world. This makes Hellenistic thought and Hellenistic cities a valuable laboratory for studying the complex relationship between inclusivity towards outsiders and participatory democracy, including the results of trying to yoke them together, despite the potential tensions between them. This section aims, not to hold up Hellenistic political thought and Hellenistic cities as a normative paradigm to supplant Classical Athens and Rome, but to

bring into focus their neglected potential as empirical test-cases for historians and political theorists interested in practical varieties of open or cosmopolitan democracy, and their problems (compare Alston 2011; Gray 2018a).

3.1. Hellenistic developments in cosmopolitan theory

Especially in a ‘cultural’ history of democracy such as this, a central concern must be the complex evolution of cosmopolitan theory among philosophers and literary authors in the Hellenistic period. Hellenistic philosophers and historians endowed the basic cosmopolitan ideas which emerged in fourth-century Athens with much richer content. It was probably the third-century BC Hellenistic Stoic Chrysippus, for example, who developed a complex theory of the ‘natural law’ which governs the whole cosmos and underpins any legitimate positive law in particular places (Schofield 1999: chs. 3–4).

Like the Cynic cosmopolis discussed earlier, the Stoic cosmopolis was an imaginary community of dispersed but allied souls: a community which did not have to be created through political reform, because it already existed in virtual form. It is nevertheless clear that Hellenistic Stoics did, in principle, value civic equality among the far-flung members of this imaginary cosmopolis: each was a ‘citizen’, equal before the unchanging natural law, the same for all. It is more difficult to tell whether Stoics envisaged this cosmopolis as ‘democratic’ in any more substantial sense. Full membership of the Stoic cosmopolis, as true ‘world citizens’, probably remained restricted in most iterations to the elite of the virtuous (or even of perfect ‘sages’); it was their extreme moral purity and resulting automatic co-operation which made political and legal institutions superfluous (see again Diogenes Laertius 7.33–4 on Zeno of Kition). However, the Stoics do seem to have regarded virtue as accessible, at least in principle, more or less to all humans (Stephens 2018: 82 calls this conception ‘powerfully democratic’). Even those who were ‘progressing’ towards virtue may well have been recognised at least as partial members of the cosmopolis by many Stoic thinkers, from Zeno onwards (for discussion of this issue, see Vogt 2008: esp. ch. 2).

Other Hellenistic thinkers could certainly imagine an inclusive cosmopolis of ‘all humans’, even one functioning something like a democratic polis. In the preface to his monumental first-century BC history of the world, Diodorus of Sicily advocated that ‘all humans’ should honour universal historians, such as himself, using (and urging them to use) language and formulae which recall the ways in which Hellenistic civic assemblies of real-life citizens passed (by vote or acclamation) honorific decrees for their benefactors (see Diodorus of Sicily 1.1–2). Perhaps most suggestively, when early Christians absorbed Hellenistic civic and cosmopolitan language and thought, they came to describe their supposedly universal church as an *ekklesia*, on the model of the real-life civic ‘assembly’ in a democratic city-state: it was certainly possible to imagine a world cosmopolis structured on the model of a Greek democracy, with participatory institutions and strict qualifications for membership (in this case Christian faith) which all could, in principle, meet.

In themselves these abstract forms of cosmopolitanism did not automatically stimulate inclusivity in practical politics. Indeed, their very abstraction could easily militate in the opposite direction. The Stoic insistence that all truly virtuous people are automatically free citizens of the cosmopolis could easily belittle the practical difficulties of the marginalised. The implication was, for example, that those suffering exile from their home city were not suffering genuine hardship; if committed to virtue, they remained ‘citizens’ of their ‘homeland’ in the truly important sense (compare first-century AD Roman Musonius Rufus *That Exile is Not an Evil* 9.2–3, discussed in Stephens 2018: esp. 84–5). Even the enslaved were not truly disenfranchised, since they too could be full citizens of the cosmopolis if they perfected their virtue. The Stoics regarded moral slavery (or ‘slavery of the soul’) as a far graver threat to freedom than legal slavery (or ‘slavery of the body’): for them, the truly unfree were those who were ‘enslaved’ in their souls to their unruly passions (consider the report of this aspect of Hellenistic Stoic doctrine in Cicero’s *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5 and its adoption by the first-century AD Alexandrian Jewish philosopher Philo in *Every Good Man is Free* 17–19, discussed in Garnsey 1997). The important consequence was, as Garnsey (1997: 159) summarises it, that ‘by comparison with the slavery that was a condition of the soul, legal slavery was of marginal importance’.

This tendency in Stoicism probably to some degree hindered the development of practical calls from intellectuals for emancipation or other legal changes in the status of the disadvantaged. However, even within Stoicism, it did not preclude, for example, advocacy of hands-on assistance to refugees, as Stephens has argued: the virtuous have to take positive steps to make their home also the home of refugees arriving in need (Stephens 2018: 84–9). To an even greater extent, as I will now argue, many citizens in the Hellenistic cities strove to translate into political reality on the ground the abstract ethics and culture of cosmopolitanism, fusing them with the democratic traditions of the cities themselves.

3.2. Cosmopolitan democracy on the ground in the Hellenistic world?

The idea that the Hellenistic poleis are an interesting case-study of experiments in combining democracy with cosmopolitan inclusivity must face two immediate objections: that the Hellenistic cities were neither democratic nor inclusive. The first objection, that there was little true democracy among the Hellenistic cities, harks back to an old-fashioned view that true participatory self-government did not survive the conquests of Alexander the Great, after which successor kings dominated subordinate city-states, also dominated from within by increasingly powerful civic elites (compare Veyne 1976).

Painstaking research in the Hellenistic evidence, especially inscriptions, has exposed the limitations in this traditional picture: democratic institutions in fact remained vibrant in many cities, with a powerful participatory assembly exerting significant authority, alongside democratic courts and other sophisticated democracy machinery (see especially Grieb 2008; Hamon 2009). This was partly a matter of the endurance of older democratic traditions which already existed outside Athens, but also of the spread of Athenian-style democratic institutions and ideology, which became an almost universal political *koine*, to match the *koine* form of the Greek language which bound together the Hellenistic world (Ma 2018). This is not to say that democratic institutions of the Classical era persisted without adaptation: for example, democratic magistrates seem to

have been increasingly selected by election rather than the lot. Nonetheless, other strongly democratic practices – such as pay for attendance at the assembly to encourage the poorest to take part – are still attested (*I.Iasos* 20). There were significant shifts in some cases towards elite power and away from democratic scrutiny in the later Hellenistic period (after c. 150 BC), as a result partly of Roman intervention and partly of internal evolution in Greek civic life (see again Grieb 2008, building on the insights of Gauthier 1985; see further 3.4 below). Even then, however, democratic institutions and ideology remained potent alongside their rivals (note Cicero’s unease at the power of civic assemblies and assembly rhetoric in first-century BC Asia Minor, *Pro Flacco* 57; more generally, Gray 2018b, citing earlier bibliography).

The second objection has recently been expressed in particularly potent form, bolstered with democratic and post-colonial theory, in Ando 2018: the Hellenistic poleis can be presented as a colonial enterprise, through which privileged citizen-bodies (made up of Greeks and Macedonians) dominated non-citizen populations, especially in Anatolia and other areas conquered by Alexander the Great. On this interpretation, Hellenistic cities’ claims to ‘democracy’ were the hollow rhetoric of an exploitative elite.

There is undoubtedly considerable truth in this model. Many Hellenistic cities established in multicultural areas did remain exclusive and monocultural: for example, the Hellenistic polis at Babylon, the ancient Mesopotamian city incorporated into the new Seleucid empire, existed in parallel with the older Babylonian settlement, without much apparent integration between the older and newer populations (see Mairs 2016: 180). In an area which had for much longer seen Greek-speakers and Greek institutions interacting with native ones, the city of Phaselis on the south coast of Anatolia apparently resisted hybridity and fusion until the first century BC, when its involvement in the ‘pirate wars’ against Rome undermined its prosperity. Before then, the attested names of citizens are overwhelmingly Greek (rather than Anatolian) in origin (Adak 2013). Exclusivity and chauvinism were not, however, the only pattern in the Hellenistic poleis; it is also possible to identify a range of other tendencies, which I will now survey.

3.3 New poleis and networks

New city foundations across the Hellenistic world could give those without long Greek ancestry and cultural ties the opportunity to participate as citizens in polis life, and thus join the world *oikoumene* of those committed to a Greek-style civic (even democratic?) lifestyle (compare Ma 2003 on Hellenistic ‘peer-polity interaction’). Mairs presents a convincing portrait of the new city of Ai Khanoum in Bactria (in modern Afghanistan) as a city distinguished by cultural ‘hybridity’, even if that term needs to be used with caution (Mairs 2016: 185). The architecture of the city takes the form of a ‘Greco-Bactrian *koine*’ of mixed forms (Mairs 2016: 98). Citizens of this and other Greco-Bactrian cities without obviously Greek origins could experiment with Greek cultural forms, giving them a distinctive new flavour (e.g. Mairs 2016: 144 on the complex inscribed epitaph of a certain Sophytos from Alexandria-in-Arachosia, modern Kandahar, *SEG* 54.1568).

[Figure 10.3 – coin from Ai Khanoum]

Even if it is hard to tell whether hybridity went beyond forms of cultural co-option of or by the local elite, the evidence suggests even more complex and reciprocal dynamics of cultural interaction than those revealed in the earlier classic study of Greek civic culture in Bactria (Robert 1968), where the surprising discovery of a set of Delphic moral maxims inscribed at Ai Khanoum is explained mainly in terms of export and defence of Greek culture (cf. Mairs 2016: 73–4). The civic ideal itself need no longer be seen purely as a Greek import: across the Hellenistic East as a whole, new Hellenistic poleis could tap into the long pre-Greek traditions in different regions of both civic government and civic interaction with imperial monarchy (see Vlassopoulos 2007: ch. 4 on Mesopotamia; also the introduction to this volume on Indian traditions of citizenship).

Hellenistic kings also organised or assisted the foundation of new cities closer to the older heartlands of Greek civic politics, in the Aegean world and Anatolia. These were usually substantial urban settlements, much larger than the average traditional polis. The

settlers were not generally drawn from traditional elites: the majority consisted of mercenaries from royal armies, many of whom would never have experienced the polis lifestyle before. As a result, each foundation merged together within one citizen-body a heterogeneous group, including both incoming mercenaries (mainly Macedonians and other Greeks) and members of the existing local population.

Boehm (2018: 198–9, 203) discusses the phenomenon of major new city-foundations which cut across ethnic divisions: Demetrias, Thessalonike and Cassandrea in northern Greece; and Antigoneia Troas and Stratonikeia in Asia Minor, the latter incorporating ‘old Karian villages’ as well as Greco-Macedonian immigrants. Alexandria in Egypt could be added to the list. It is, admittedly, difficult to determine to what extent those who were neither Greek nor Macedonian by origin could achieve status and recognition in these new cosmopolitan mega-cities, rather than serving the citizen-body as slaves or other dependent labourers (cf. Boehm 2018: 24–5). In Asia Minor, citizens with non-Greek names are certainly attested in such places, even if always in a small minority, though there were also other indigenous citizens who concealed their origin by adopting Greek names (see e.g. Balzat *et al.* 2013, xxxi–xxxii, on Carian names at Stratonikeia and elsewhere in Hellenistic Caria).

Even if these new cities possessed democratic institutions on the traditional model, including an assembly through which the heterogeneous *demos* could find its voice, preserved in inscriptions, it might be objected that these settlements in fact illustrate again how ethnic diversity often goes together with political hierarchy: these were cities founded on the initiative of kings. Their very existence partly served the interest of royal bureaucracies in the dilution of old ethnic loyalties and simplification of patterns of local settlement for purposes of taxation and control. Nonetheless, as Boehm (2018) shows, the establishment and flourishing of new cities also depended on local political initiative from below, interacting in complex ways with royal authority.

Indeed, it was sometimes precisely a vacuum in centralised, unquestioned royal control which enabled the establishment of complex new poleis in the Hellenistic world,

including some whose citizens – or a substantial proportion of them – came from outside the Greco-Macedonian population. The turbulent politics of later fourth- and third-century BC Asia Minor gave many existing Anatolian villages and larger settlements the opportunity to adopt the forms and institutions of a democratic polis, not least as a way to assert their own political identity and independence (Mitchell 2017: esp. 26–8; cf. Schuler 2010: 408, see also section 3.5 below on Latmos and Pidasia in Caria and Timioussa and Tyberissos in Lycia).

These local Anatolian communities could put their own local stamp on democratic procedures and standards of legitimacy. In the old Carian centre of Mylasa, for example, it seems that fourth-century decrees of the assembly had to be ratified by all three of the old Carian ‘tribes’ of the community, in a departure from standard Greek democratic practice (see e.g. *I.Mylasa* 1, ll. 2–4, with Mitchell 2017: 27). In the early Hellenistic period, the Sagalassians of Pisidia, all of their representatives bearing non-Greek, Pisidian names, made regulations in Greek to protect their civic life against the seizure of their acropolis by an aspiring tyrant or narrow faction, blending classic Greek civic language and rules with more unfamiliar religious regulations and formulae (*SEG* 59.1409 + 50.1304).

Another monarchical vacuum in the early second century BC, after the overthrow of the Seleucid empire by the Romans, also precipitated a new raft of Anatolian city-foundations which merged Greek and Anatolian people and traditions. For example, it was probably in this context that the traditional Carian settlement and/or religious sanctuary of Nineuda (?) started developing into Aphrodisias, which was to be one of the most celebrated cities of Roman Asia Minor (Chaniotis 2010: 461).

Many new foundations at this point were, admittedly, encouraged by the favour towards new city foundations of the Attalid monarchy, the Pergamon-based successor to the Seleucids as the hegemonic power in the region. Nonetheless, there is good evidence for the democratic drive with which a local community could demand recognition as a polis. One such community was Toriaion in Phrygia, which must have originated as a

settlement of mercenaries, including predominantly Greco-Macedonians but also at least one Gallic member and perhaps others. These incomers had adopted the name of the local Phrygian settlement of Toriaion, and perhaps even merged to some extent with the local population. On gaining polis status, they inscribed in celebration the series of letters from the Attalid king Eumenes II which had led to their elevation. Eumenes had addressed them in the first letter as ‘the inhabitants’, before approving their petition from below to be granted their own constitution (*politeia*), laws and civic gymnasium; in subsequent letters he wrote to their ‘council (*boule*) and people (*demos*)’, acknowledging the signature institutions of a democratic polis (*SEG* 47.1745, with commentary).

The wealth of inscriptions preserved from Anatolia makes it the region most suited for studying the complex mingling of populations in new poleis and networks of poleis. These complex hybrid democracies were partly picking up older traditions in Anatolia (see e.g. Mac Sweeney 2013 on the fluidity of early ‘Ionian’ communities). More isolated survivals document similar processes in other regions rich in poleis, such as Sicily, another place where, as in Anatolia, polis communities had long been unusually open to outsiders.

For instance, the discovery of the ‘Entella tablets’ on bronze reveals the success of Italian (Campanian) immigrants to Sicily, mainly mercenaries, in adopting and adapting the forms of a democratic polis in their Hellenistic communities at Entella and Nakone (see Ampolo 2001). In an early Hellenistic decree re-establishing concord after civil strife, the Nakonian democratic ‘assembly (*halia*) and council’ endorsed the suggestion of envoys from the older polis of Segesta to reconcile the factions through a ritual of ‘brother-making’: the leading factionaries would each be paired up with one of their opponents, together with three neutral ‘brothers’ (*SEG* 30.1119). This ritual appears idiosyncratic by the standards of the older Greek world, but it also crystallises one of the central aspirations of all Greek democracies: to unite citizens in the same degree of solidarity and intimacy as would be expected within a single family (cf. Loraux 2001: 222–7; consider also the widespread Greek institution of the ‘phratry’, a fictional brotherhood). ‘Expanding the polis’ could thus give newcomers the opportunity to

innovate, at the same time as bringing to the surface central commitments of Greek democratic culture.

[Figure 10.4: the text of the reconciliation from Sicilian Nakone]

3.4 Opening citizenship to outsiders in established poleis

Long-established cities also engaged in ‘expanding the polis’ in the Hellenistic period. They did so partly through an openness to granting citizenship to outsiders which would have been questionable in Classical Athens. This tendency was perhaps most pronounced in cities located in multicultural regions on the edges of the old Greek world. Around 300 BC, the city of Aspendos, located in the traditionally multi-ethnic region of Pamphylia (‘Land-of-All-Tribes’) on the south coast of Anatolia, passed a democratic decree (‘in sovereign assembly’) granting citizenship to disparate mercenaries – they name Pamphylians, Lycians, Cretans, Greeks and Pisidians – in recognition of their bravery in fighting for the city and King Ptolemy (*SEG* 17.639). This is a striking example of explicit embrace of ethnic mixing of citizens on the part of a democratic civic assembly, itself probably already very mixed in composition. At the same time, the contrast with the civic exclusivity of the Aspendians’ near neighbour Phaselis (see 3.2 above) reveals the variety of possible approaches (Adak 2013).

[Figure 10.5 – Aspendos, wealthy Hellenistic and Roman city in Pamphylia, Asia Minor]

There is nothing quite so emphatic as the Aspendian case from the older Greek cities. Already in the third century BC, however, there are signs of a willingness to naturalise new citizens which perhaps went beyond earlier custom. The most striking example is the old Ionian polis of Miletus, which had a complex democratic constitution in the Hellenistic period (Grieb 2008: ch. 3). The Milesians at one point naturalised around 1000 Cretan mercenaries, together with their families, whom they settled at nearby Myous (*Milet* I 3 33–38; Carless Unwin 2017: 134–6, citing parallels from the contemporary Peloponnese and Thessaly). This might be thought no more generous than

the Classical Athenians' *ad hoc* grants of citizenship to some groups with whom they had a special cultural and military connection, such as the Plataeans (see section 2 above). However, there are also some signs that the Milesians came in the course of the Hellenistic period to show in general a greater willingness to enable the foreign-born and 'bastards' (those not born to two legitimate citizen parents) to progress into full citizenship (see the many apparently routine citizenship grants in *Milet I* 3 39–93; Ogden 1996: 304–307; Günther 2014).

It was in the later Hellenistic period, after c. 150 BC, that older Greek cities seem systematically to have widened access to their citizenship (see, for example, Oliver 2007 on Athens and Kah 2012: esp. 60–2 on Priene). They even increasingly tolerated dual or multiple citizenships, with individuals now sometimes even attributed more than one home city in inscriptions (see Heller and Pont 2012).

[Figure 10.6 Bouleuterion or council chamber, Priene]

One such individual was A. Aemilius Zosimos, whom the Prienians honoured in the first century BC, noting both his Roman citizenship and the fact that he had been naturalised as a citizen of Priene (*I.Priene*² 68–70, new edition of *I.Priene* 112–114). His background is obscure, but it seems likely that he came from outside the Greek and Roman elites: he was perhaps a Greek-speaking Italian who had gained Roman citizenship after the Social War, or even a manumitted slave of a Roman citizen (Kah 2012: 62–3, 68). In any case, he took steps to include outsiders in the civic life of the polis in which he had now become a magistrate: on his first day as *stephanephoros*, the chief Prienian magistrate, he invited all to a celebration at his house, and was said thereby to have disregarded the chance fate (*tyche*) of slaves and the bureaucratic status of foreigner (*xenos*) (*I.Priene*² 69, ll. 53–6). This temporary (one-day) suspension of status categories may have only reinforced their bite in normal life, though this period did see a flowering of voluntary associations in the Greek cities which cut across traditional boundaries of gender and ethnicity, including eventually the formation of

socially and ethnically diverse local Christian communities (see Kloppenborg and Ascough 2011; Harland 2014; also Atack's chapter here for similar phenomena earlier).

It is perhaps troubling – and in keeping with the patterns observed in the opening parts of this chapter – that this late Hellenistic loosening of the boundaries of citizenship and civic life does seem to have gone hand in hand with the partial erosion of traditional democracy in the Greek cities. The Prienian decrees for Zosimos themselves testify to this, showing that Zosimos had come to dominate Prienian civic life through his extreme wealth at a time of public poverty. Perhaps, in general, multiple citizenships were a form of class solidarity across the elites of different cities; mobility of person and property could have helped elite figures to evade or minimise civic scrutiny and taxation demands. This particular part of the Hellenistic material perhaps reinforces the link between inclusive citizenship and oligarchy, though much of the Hellenistic evidence also points in the opposite direction, as the next section will confirm.

3.5 Experiments in building enlarged democratic communities

The most systematic way in which an existing polis could expand itself in the Hellenistic world was through a formal merger with one or more other poleis, creating a mega-polis with a single citizenship. This was a stock feature of the Hellenistic political landscape. Hellenistic kings often encouraged or even supervised such unions, which doubtless sometimes suited their interest in administrative simplicity (compare 3.3 above). Nonetheless, royal will seems usually to have coalesced with local initiative in a complex power dynamic (LaBuff 2015: 8–12, 54; Boehm 2018: 209). Another potential reason for suspecting that such unions were a backdoor to hierarchical control might be that they often involved the effective absorption of a smaller polis by a larger one. Nonetheless, even in such cases a complex negotiation of power seems often to have taken place (Mack 2014). Reger even argues that such unions could increase the political agency of citizens of the smaller polis: they could assert themselves politically within the new integrated citizen-body, benefitting from their status as enfranchised citizens rather than mere dependents of the larger city (compare Ma 2018: 280–1), at the same time as

preserving local culture, religion and institutions (Reger (2010: 54 on the integration of Olymos and Hydai into Mylasa in Caria; compare Balzat *et al.* 2013: xxii–xxv).

Indeed, a degree of equality and shared participation was implied in the most common word used to describe such unions, *sympoliteia* (literally ‘sharing of a political system’ or ‘common citizenship’). In some cases we can even observe the efforts taken by the parties to a union to construct the resulting mixed polis as very much a shared democracy. When the ‘residents’ of Magnesia-by-Sipylos were integrated into the larger polis of Smyrna on the western coast of Asia Minor in c. 245 BC, the inscribed regulations for the union emphasised that the Magnesians would be citizens on equal terms with existing Smyrnaeans (ἐφ’ ἴσηι καὶ ὁμοίαι τοῖς ἄλλοις πολίταις, *I.Smyrna* 573, l. 44). These new citizens also had to swear an oath that they would denounce any attempt to overthrow ‘democracy’ or ‘equality before the law’ (*isonomia*) in Smyrna, ‘struggling with all love of honour’ (ἀγωνιζ[όμ]ενος μετὰ πάσης φιλοτιμίας) (ll. 67–8).

The slightly later union (*homopoliteia*) of the large Aegean island polis of Cos with its smaller neighbour Calymna (late third century BC) contains an oath to be sworn by all citizens of the new unified polis, which spells out the shared duties of all democratic citizens, regardless of which of the two poleis they came from. They all had to promise (among other things) not to establish any oligarchy or tyranny, or any other constitution but democracy, and to be a ‘just judge and equal citizen, voting by hand and stone without favour in accordance with whatever seems to me best for the people’ (δικαστὰς δίκαιος καὶ πολίτας ἴσος χειροτονῶν καὶ ψαφίζόμενος ἄνευ χάριτος ὃ κά μοι δοκῆι συμφέρον ἦμεν τῷ δάμωι) (*IG XII 4 1 152*, ll. 21–9).

It would be nice to know more about the long-term fortunes of these ambitious experiments in expanded, hybrid democracy. Their very formation does in itself suggest that at least some Hellenistic Greeks had no difficulty in imagining robust democratic institutions in which citizens of formerly separate communities actively participated on equal terms.

[Figure 10.7: the *homopoliteia* inscription from Cos]

Sympoliteia was also one of the important mechanisms by which non-Greek communities were integrated into the community of poleis (the subject of 3.3 above). For example, a religious dedication to the emperor Augustus (*SEG* 57.1665) reveals these complex dynamics at work in Lycia in south-western Asia Minor: the dedication was made by the *demos* of both Tyberissos and Timioussa (two originally Lycian settlements), which was ‘conducting politics together with’ (σὺμ[πολ]ιτεύόμενος) the large polis of Myra. Not only had these two small communities at some point bound themselves together, but they had also gained recognition and access to political institutions by a further *sympoliteia* with a more established polis. Here the overseeing great power was not a king but the powerful island democracy of Rhodes, probably itself transferring to Lycia its own internal model of binding separate communities into a single mega-polis (Schuler 2010: esp. 405–408), but the inscriptions also suggest a high degree of local agency.

A better attested example of two indigenous Anatolian communities assuming polis identity by means of *sympoliteia* comes in an interesting inscription from later fourth century BC Caria. In this case a local governor, Asander, superintended the union of the Carian communities of Latmos and Pidasa into a single polis. The settlement made use of an unusual device for constructing a unified *demos*: for six years, Latmians could marry only Pidaseans, and *vice versa* (*SEG* 47.1563, ll. 21–5; compare van Bremen 2003). In this case we do know that the union did not enjoy success in the very long term, despite (or partly because?) of this ambitious attempt at social engineering: Pidasa was in the second century integrated into Miletus (*Milet* I 3 149), with (Herakleia-under-)Latmos continuing its own independent history.

Perhaps even more ambitious than these unions of two or three poleis were full-scale experiments in building large-scale federations of many poleis on a democratic model.

Early attempts to build self-consciously democratic federations of many poleis, with their own complex democratic structures, were the Boeotian and then Arcadian Leagues of the fourth century BC, in Central Greece and the Peloponnese respectively. This federal model was further developed in the Hellenistic period, especially by the famous Aetolian and Achaian Leagues, but also (for example) by the Lycian League, which brought together the heterogeneous poleis of Lycia (see above) from the second century BC onwards.

Greek federalism has been a growing subject of research interest in recent years (e.g. Mackil 2013; Beck and Funke 2015). It remains an open question to what extent the different Leagues ensured equal access to political power across socio-economic groups. Even in the case of the Hellenistic Achaian League, one of the best attested of these federal systems, the nature of political participation is far from clear. We are not certain, for example, who participated in the regular decision-making assemblies (or *synodoi*). The less frequent assemblies called *synkletoi*, which decided on questions of peace and war, appear to have been open to all citizen across different member poleis, but it is not clear if the *synodoi* were similarly open to all or rather (more probably) composed of representatives from the different member poleis, selected by some special process (Rizakis 2015: 124–5).

It is more straightforward to demonstrate that these federal systems did succeed in achieving ‘democratic’ equality in a different sense: equal, or at least proportionate, entitlements to political participation and rule among member poleis both large and small. This seems to have been achieved even in traditionally war-torn regions dominated by a single major player, like the Peloponnese, whose smaller poleis had long been under the shadow of Sparta. The second-century BC Hellenistic historian Polybius, a native of the Achaian League, celebrates how that federation had succeeded in gaining the voluntary loyalty of almost all the poleis of the Peloponnese, to which it offered not only security but also ‘equality’ and ‘freedom’ (or ‘frankness’) of speech (*isegoria*, *parrhesia*). He even claims that there could be no purer or truer form of ‘democracy’ than this expanded, multicultural one (2.38), an ambitious and surely conscious challenge

to the primacy of the exclusive Athenian model. What (if anything) had to be sacrificed in democratic participation and solidarity in order to achieve this border-crossing form of democracy, spanning a wide territory, is a central question for future research.

4. Conclusion

The ancient world offers a rich seam of evidence for understanding the challenges and opportunities involved in ‘expanding the polis’ – and especially in ‘expanding the democratic polis’. While Classical Athens prioritised strong democratic engagement over inclusivity towards outsiders, and republican Rome took the opposite course, experiments in harmonising the two values are attested in the evidence for civic life and theory across the multi-faceted Hellenistic world.

Hellenistic experiments in hybrid, open democracy may have in some cases assisted the imposition of hierarchical control, beneath a democratic façade. As noted in 3.4 above, loosening of citizen exclusivity interacted in complex ways with the increasing power of civic elites in the later Hellenistic world: elites themselves could benefit from special civic honours in multiple cities, while the diminished power and prestige associated with simple assembly attendance made ordinary citizenship a less costly commodity to share more widely. Moreover, Hellenistic kings were always keen to support foundations and mergers of poleis and grants of citizenship to outsiders. Thonemann even suggests that some local communities might have deliberately resisted urbanisation and the trappings of polis life, in order to evade royal control and taxation (Thonemann 2013b, on Phrygia in Asia Minor).

It is also true that the multicultural Hellenistic polis world continued to rely for its economic prosperity on slaves (cf. Ando 2018). The Attalid pretender and opponent of Rome of the 130s BC, Aristonikos, rallied a dissident army of those discontented with Roman power, supposedly including both the rural poor and slaves (Strabo 14.1.38). This would suggest intense exploitation of the disadvantaged. It is possible that the charge that Aristonikos recruited slaves was a polemical invention of his opponents, but that too

would confirm that attempts at ‘expanding the polis’ did not erode contempt for the unfree.

On the other side of the equation, Aristonikos supposedly called his rebel community the ‘Heliopolitai’ (not ‘citizens of the cosmos’ but ‘citizens of the sun’ or ‘citizens under the Sun’): the polis was a potent political ideal even (especially?) for those who continued to be excluded from it. It is also true that the Hellenistic Greeks adopted as fellow citizens or recognised as citizens of new poleis (see 3.3–4–2 above) members of groups (such as indigenous Anatolians) whom the Classical Athenians would more readily have treated as slaves or, at best, as barbarian tributary subjects of their empire.

Particularly in the third and earlier second centuries BC, many Greek citizens and thinkers do seem to have been committed to building enlarged but nonetheless meaningful democracies, in single poleis, two-polis *sympoliteiai* or whole federations. These experimental projects met with mixed fortunes: note the apparent failure of the ambitious promotion of mixed marriage at Latmos-Pidasa (3.5), or the long-term Hellenistic trend away from strong democratic equality as civic fluidity increased. Nonetheless, the failures as well as the successes of Hellenistic attempts at *sympoliteia* (‘doing politics together’ in all senses) have much to offer to debates about the difficulties and prospects of open, cosmopolitan democracy.

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Figure 10.4: the bronze tablet containing the regulations for reconciliation in the small Sicilian democratic polis of Nakone (early Hellenistic period). Credit: Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford University.



Figure 10.7: the union (*homopoliteia*) of Cos and Calymna, later third century BC. Credit: Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents, Oxford University.

