

Metics in Athens

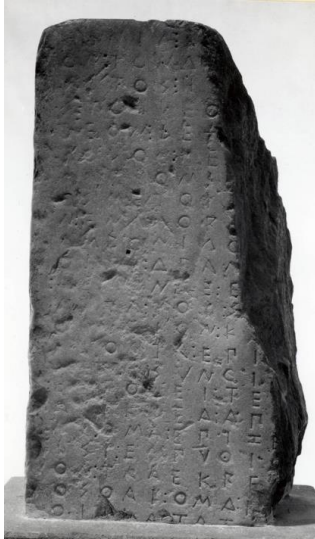
Background:

- Metics—Ancient Greek: *μέτοικοι* / *metoikoi* refers to a resident foreigner who lived in a polis but was not a citizen and had few political rights
 - o This definition comes from lexicographical and literary sources preserved in later commentaries and lexica (scholia), which distinguish metics from other categories of resident people. These ancient definitions survive in collections and fragments
- They were usually foreigners who settled in Athens and sometimes included freed enslaved peoples (who were also legally defined as metics)
- Metics could live indefinitely in Athens, engage in economic activity, and participate in courts with an Athenian sponsor (*prostates*), but they could not vote or own land and were subject to special tax obligations (*metoikion*)
 - o This was a residence tax paid by metics with lexicographical sources citing poll tax's amounted to around 12 drachmas a year for men and six drachmas for women
 - o This act of regular and direct taxation was a strong statement of the secondary status metics had in Athens
- Metic status becomes historically visible through legal texts, inscriptions, and later commentary, but how and when the status of metics evolved is continually debated among scholars
- The term likely developed either right before or alongside Pericles' citizenship law of 451 BCE
 - The earliest epigraphic evidence for legal status also roughly dates to mid-5th century BCE specifically IG 13 244 in relation to ritual laws in the Scambonidae deme
 - This deme is mentioned in various inscriptions regarding financial and civic matters

Primary Evidence: How We Reconstruct Their Status

Official civic inscriptions

- In Athens, metics were identified in official documents by name followed by their deme of residence and a phrase indicating foreign status (e.g., – *οἰκῶν ἐν*) which distinguishes them from citizens (who are identified by deme alone).
- These surviving inscriptions along with legal documents particularly court cases and lawsuits highlight that metics were not slaves but also not citizens who possessed limited rights and no political participation



Face C IG 13 244

- **Translation:** Ordinances of Skambonidai.^[1]The demarch and the sacred officials shall [sacrifice]⁵ a full-grown victim to Leos,^[2] allocation (?) of [the?]spits^[3] **to each of the Skambonidai, and the metics**^[4] shall have a share, in the agora of 10 Skambonidai; to (deities) or at (festival) they shall sacrifice [a full-grown victim?] and distribute 15 ; at the Synoikia on the Acropolis^[5] a full-grown victim and sell the meat raw; at the Epizephyria^[6] 20 in the Python a [full-grown victim?] and sell the meat raw; at the - (?) in the same way (?)

Tax and legal inscriptions

- Other epigraphic evidence includes tax lists and decrees awarding privileges or records of property dispositions involving metics (e.g., property confiscated from condemned individuals that belonged to a metic)

Literary and Legal Sources—how Metics Appear in Ancient Literature

Oratory and Legal speeches

- Attic orators such as Lysias and Demosthenes mention metics in legal contexts (e.i., obligations, tax, liturgies) or as parties in litigation. These speeches are primary evidence showing how Athenians argued about and used metic status in real civic disputes
- It's through these legal speeches that the “othering”, structural inequities, and social hierarchies are highlighted and show how separate metics were from political power.
 - o Demosthenes (384-322 BCE) was a Greek statesman and Orator in ancient Athens. He made his living as a professional speech writer (logographer) and lawyer writing speeches for private legal suits.
 - o Lysias (458-380 BCE) was a prominent Athenian logographer and was a wealthy metic. He was able to inherit and own property from his father Cephalus which

classified him and his brother as isoteleis (ἰσοτελεῖς), metics who paid only the same tax as citizens. This excluded him from the special *metoikion* tax on metics

AGAINST EUBULIDES

So, then, although he continued throughout all the past to act as a member of
the deme and to draw lots for offices together with me without seeing any of
these objections, yet, when the whole city was roused to sharp indignation
against those who had recklessly forced their way into the demes, then, and
not till then, he laid his plots. The earlier time would have suited one who
was convinced of the truth of his charges; but the present suits an enemy and
one who will stoop to malicious pettifoggery. For my own part, men of the
jury (and I beg you by Zeus and the gods, let no one make an outcry or be
vexed at what I am going to say), I hold myself to be an Athenian on the same
grounds on which each one of you holds himself to be one, having from the
first regarded as my mother her whom I represent as such to you, and not
pretending to be hers while really belonging to another; and in regard to my
father the case is the same. Yet, if in the case of those who are proved to have
hidden their real parentage and laid claim to a false one, you rightly hold this
to be a proof that they are aliens, surely in my case the opposite should prove
that I am a citizen. For in claiming the rights of citizenship I should never
have inscribed myself as the son of parents who were both foreigners, but, if I
had known any such thing, I should have sought out persons to claim as my
parents. But I knew nothing of the sort, and so, holding fast to those who are
my real parents, I claim Athenian citizenship.

Again, I was left an orphan; and yet they say that I am rich and that some
of the witnesses testify that they are my relatives because they receive help
from me. They taunt me with my poverty and make

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AGAINST EUBULIDES

my birth a reproach, but at the same time they assert that I am rich enough to
buy anything. In which statement, then, is one to believe them? It surely
would have been their right, if I had been illegitimate or an alien, to inherit
all my property; Do they prefer, then, to take a little and jeopardize
themselves by giving false testimony and to commit perjury, rather than to
take everything, and that with safety, without having invoked a curse upon
their own heads? This is not the case. No; in my opinion, seeing that they are
my relatives, they are but doing what is right in aiding one of themselves. And
they are not doing this at this time because I have induced them to do so; on
the contrary, when I was a child they at once took me to the clansmen, they
took me to the temple of Apollo our ancestral god, and to the other sacred
places. And yet I presume that as a child I did not induce these men to do
this by giving them money. No; my father himself, while he still lived, swore
the customary oath and introduced me to the clansmen, knowing that I was
an Athenian, born of an Athenian mother, lawfully betrothed to himself; and
these facts have been established by testimony.

Am I, then, an alien? Where have I paid the resident alien's tax?^a Or what
member of my family has ever paid it? Have I ever gone to the members of
another deme and, because I could not induce them to accept me, got myself
registered in this one? Have I done any of the things which all those who are
not genuine citizens are proved to have done? Certainly not. No; in a word I
manifestly have lived as a member of the deme among the same people
among whom my father's grandfather, my

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- (Demosth. 57.48)
 - o This is an oratorical speech written by Demosthenes delivered around 345 BCE by a citizen names Euxitheus defending his citizenship against Eubulides who

was the leader of the Halimus deme. Euxitheus is accused of not being of proper Athenian descent and faces enslavement if the appeal fails.

Philosophical and Political texts

- Aristotle in the Politics, contrast metics with citizens and notes their exclusion from courts and offices. This is a later source but helps interpret classical practices
- In this section of Politics, he tries to define what a citizen is and is not

POLITICS, III. I.

BOOK III

¹ I. For the student of government, and of the nature and characteristics of the various forms of constitution, almost the first question to consider is in regard to the state: what exactly is the essential nature of a state? As it is, this is a matter of dispute: a public act is spoken of by some people as the action of the state, others speak of it as the action not of the state but of the oligarchy or the tyrant in power²; and we see that the activity of the statesman and lawgiver is entirely concerned with a state as its object, and a constitution is a form of organization of the inhabitants of a state. But a state is a composite thing, in the same sense as any other of the things that are wholes but consist of many parts; it is therefore clear that we must first inquire into the nature of a citizen; for a state is a collection of citizens, so that we have to consider who is entitled to the name of citizen, and what the essential nature of a citizen is. For there is often a difference of opinion as to this: people do not all agree that the same person is a citizen; often somebody who would be ³ a citizen in a democracy is not a citizen under an oligarchy. We need not here consider those who acquire the title of citizen in some exceptional manner, for example those who are citizens by adoption; and citizenship is not constituted by domicile in a

Book III. THE
NATURE OF THE
STATE.

The elements of the
States are citizens.

Citizenship consists in
membership of the
deliberative and judicial
bodies.

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POLITICS, III. I.

certain place (for resident aliens and slaves share the domicile of citizens), nor are those citizens who participate in a common system of justice, conferring the right to defend an action and to bring one in the law-courts (for this right belongs also to the parties under a commercial treaty, as they too can sue and be sued at law,—or rather, in many places even the right of legal action is not shared completely by resident aliens, but they are obliged ⁴ to produce a patron, so that they only share in a common legal procedure to an incomplete degree), but these are only citizens in the manner in which children who are as yet too young to have been enrolled in the list and old men who have been discharged⁵ must be pronounced to be citizens in a sense, yet not quite absolutely, but with the added qualification of 'under age' in the case of the former and 'superannuated' or some other similar term (it makes no difference, the meaning being clear) in that of the latter. For we seek to define a citizen in the absolute sense, and one possessing no disqualification of this nature that requires a correcting term, since similar difficulties may also be raised, and solved, about citizens who have been disfranchised or exiled. A citizen pure and simple is defined by nothing else so much as by the right to participate in judicial functions and in office. But some offices of government are definitely limited in regard to time, so that some of them are not allowed to be held twice by the same person at ⁵ or only after certain fixed intervals of time; other officials are without limit of tenure, for example the jurymen and the member of the assembly. It might perhaps be said that such persons are not officials at all, and that the exercise

- (Arst. Pol. 1275a 5-23)

χώρα, πέφυκε μὲν γὰρ λίθος ἐν αὐτῇ ἀφθονος, ἐξ
 οὗ κάλλιστα μὲν ναοὶ, κάλλιστα δὲ βωμοὶ
 γίνονται, ἐσπερότατα δὲ θεῶν ἀγάλματα·
 5 πολλοὶ δ' αὐτοῖ καὶ Ἑλλήνες καὶ βάρβαροι
 προσδέονται, ἔστι δὲ καὶ γῆ ἢ σπειρομένη μὲν οὐ
 φέρει καρπὸν, ἰστρομένη δὲ πολλαπλασίονα
 τρέφει ἢ εἰ σῆτον ἔφερε, καὶ μὴν ὑπὲρ γῆρος ἔστι
 σαφῶς θεῶν μοίρα· πολλὰν γὰρ πόλεον
 παροικούντων καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλατταν εἰς
 οὐδεμίαν τούτων οὐδέ μικρὰ φέβῃ ἀργυρίτιδος
 διῆκει.
 6 Οὐκ ἂν ἀλόγως δέ τις αἰρηθῆναι τῆς Ἑλλάδος καὶ
 πάσης δὲ τῆς οἰκουμένης ἀμφὶ τὰ μέσα οἰκίσθαι¹
 τὴν πόλιν, ὅση γὰρ ἂν τις ἐπὶ πλείονα ἀπέχουσα
 αὐτῆς, τοσοῦτον χαλεπωτέρας ἢ ψύχειον ἢ
 θάλασσαν ἐντηρχάουσαν· ὅπως τ' ἂν αὐτὴ
 βουληθῆσαν ἀπ' ἐσχάτων τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπ'
 ἔσχατα ἀφικέσθαι, πάσης οὖτοι ὥσπερ κύκλου
 τόρον τὰς Ἀθήνας ἢ παραπλεύουσα ἢ
 7 παρερχομένη, καὶ μὴν οὐ περιμνησῆναι γε οὐδα
 ὅμως ὥσπερ τῆς πᾶσης ἀνεμῶν προσάγειται τε
 ἂν δεῖται καὶ ἀποσπένεται ἂ βούλεται·
 8 ἀμφὸ θάλαττος γὰρ ἔστι, καὶ κατὰ γῆν δὲ πολλὰ
 δεχεται ἐμπορίας² ἤπερος γὰρ ἔστιν, ἐπὶ δὲ ταῖς
 μὲν πλείονα πόλεις βάρβαροι προσηκουόντες
 πρῆγματα παρεχόμενοι Ἀθηναίους δὲ
 γετοικούντων αἱ καὶ αὐτὰ πλείονα ἀπέχονται τῶν
 βαρβάρων.
 9 Ταῦτων μὲν οὖν ἀπάντων, ὥσπερ εἶπον,
 νομίζω αὐτῆν τὴν χώραν αἰτεῖν εἶναι, εἰ δὲ πρὸς
 τοῖς αὐτοφύκτον ἀγαθοῖς πρώτον μὲν τῶν
 μετοίκων ἐπιμέλεια γένοιτο· αὐτῆ γὰρ ἡ πρόσδοδος

XENOPHON

τῶν καλλίστων ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ εἶναι, ἐπεὶ αὐτοὺς
 τρέφοντες καὶ πολλὰ ὠφελοῦντες τὰς πόλεις οὐ
 2 λαμβάνονται μισθόν, ἀλλὰ μετοίκων
 προσφέρουσι· ἐπιμελεῖα γὰρ μὴν ἴδ' ἂν ἀρκέει μοι
 δοκεῖ, εἰ ἀφέλομεν μὲν ὅσα μὴδὲν ὠφελοῦντα τὴν
 πόλιν ἀτιμίας τι³ δοκεῖ τοῖς μετοίκων παρέχειν,
 ἀφέλομεν δὲ καὶ τὸ σπουδαιότερον ὀπίσθας
 μετοίκων τοῖς ἀσπασί, μέγας μὲν γὰρ ὁ κίνδυνος
 3 αὐτῶν, μέγα δὲ καὶ τὸ ἀπὸ τῶν τεχνῶν καὶ τῶν
 οἰκείων⁴ ἀπέειναι, ἀλλὰ μὴν καὶ ἡ πόλις γ' ἂν
 ὠφελῆθῃ, εἰ οἱ πολῖται μετ' ἀλλήλων
 στρατεύουσι μᾶλλον ἢ εἰ συντάττοντο αὐτοῖς,
 ὥσπερ νῦν, Λυδοὶ καὶ Φρυγίαι καὶ Σύριοι καὶ ἄλλοι
 4 παυτοδαποὶ βάρβαροι· πολλοὶ γὰρ τοιοῦτοι τῶν
 μετοίκων, πρὸς δὲ τῷ ἀγαθῷ τῷ τούτους τοῦ⁵
 συντάττεσθαι ἀφελθῆναι καὶ κόσμον ἂν τῇ πόλει
 εἴη, εἰ δοκοῖεν Ἀθηναῖοι εἰς τὰς μάχας αὐτοῖς
 μᾶλλον πιστεύειν ἢ ἀλλοδαποῖς.
 5 Καὶ μεταδιδόντες δ' ἂν μοι δοκοῦμεν τοῖς
 μετοίκων τῶν τ' ἄλλων ὧν καλὸν μεταδιδόναι καὶ
 τοῦ ἵππικοῦ εἰνονοτέρον ἂν ποιέσθαι καὶ ἅμα
 ἰσχυροτέραν ἂν καὶ μείζονα τὴν πόλιν ἀποδεικνύειναι.
 6 Ἔστω ἐπεὶ δὴ καὶ πολλὰ οἰκίαν ἐρημὰ ἔστιν
 ἐντὸς τῶν τεχνῶν,⁶ καὶ οἰκόπεδα εἰ ἡ πόλις διδοίη
 οἰκοδομησάμενοις ἐγκεκῆσθαι οἱ ἂν αἰτούμενοι

that last for ever. Nature has put in her abundance of
 stone, from which are fashioned lovely temples and
 lovely altars, and godly statues for the gods. Many
 Greeks and barbarians alike have need of it. Again,
 there is land that yields no fruit if sown, and yet, 5
 when quarried, feeds many times the number it
 could support if it grew corn. And recollect, there is
 silver in the soil, the gift, beyond doubt, of divine
 providence: at any rate, many are the states near
 to her by land and sea, into none of them does even
 a thin vein of silver ore extend.
 One might reasonably suppose that the city lies 6
 at the centre of Greece, nay of the whole inhabited
 world. For the further we go from her, the more
 intense is the heat or cold we meet with; and every
 traveller who would cross from one to the other end
 of Greece passes Athens as the centre of a circle,
 whether he goes by water or by road. Then too, 7
 though she is not wholly sea-girt, all the winds of
 heaven bring to her the goods she needs and bear
 away her exports, as if she were an island; for she lies
 between two seas: and she has a vast land trade as
 well; for she is of the mainland. Further, on the 8
 borders of most states dwell barbarians who trouble
 them: but the neighbouring states of Athens are
 themselves remote from the barbarians.
 II. All these advantages, as I have said, are, I
 believe, due to the country itself. But instead of
 limiting ourselves to the blessings that may be called
 indigenous, suppose that, in the first place, we
 studied the interests of the resident aliens. For in
 them we

WAYS AND MEANS, II.

have one of the very best sources of revenue, in my
 opinion, inasmuch as they are self-supporting and, so
 far from receiving payment for the many services
 they render to states, they contribute by paying a
 special tax. I think that we should study their 2
 interests sufficiently, if we relieved them of the
 duties that seem to impose a certain measure of
 disability on the resident alien without conferring
 any benefit on the state, and also of the obligation to
 serve in the infantry along with the citizens. Apart
 from the personal risk, it is no small tiling to leave
 their trades¹ and their private affairs.² The state
 itself too would gain if the citizens served in the 3
 ranks together, and no longer found themselves in
 the same company with Lydians, Phrygians, Syrians,
 and barbarians of all sorts, of whom a large part of
 our alien population consists. In addition to the
 advantage of dispensing with the services of these
 men, it would be an ornament to the state that the
 Athenians should be thought to rely on themselves
 rather than on the help of foreigners in fighting their
 battles.
 If, moreover, we granted the resident aliens the 5
 right to serve in the cavalry and various other
 privileges which it is proper to grant them, I think
 that we should find their loyalty increase and at the
 same time should add to the strength and greatness
 of the state.
 Then again, since there are many vacant sites for 6
 houses within the walls, if the state allowed
 approved applicants to erect houses on these and

- (Xenoph. Vect. 2.6)
 - o Ways and Means believed to be Xenophon’s last written work, he responds to political statements that expressed Athen’s unfair behavior against other cities was due to poverty. In this section he talks about the lives of metics and how they can be beneficial to the state if their lived experiences are recognized.

Tragedy and Drama as Indirect Evidence

- In some cases, classical literature alludes to metics in dramatic representations.
Euripides' Suppliants may allude to metic status and its social perception in the late 5th century BCE
 - o These allusions don't define legal status but show how the concept resonated in cultural imagination