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Politeia as Citizenship in Aristotle John J. Mulhern, University of Pennsylvania Presented to the meeting of SAGP with the American Philological Association, Jan. 7, 2012

Recent studies of the citizen and citizenship in Aristotle, such as those of Hansen,¹ Morrison,² and Collins,³ have focused attention on a somewhat neglected topic in Aristotle's work. While a definitive treatment of this topic awaits a comprehensive catalogue of the uses of *politeia* in the *Politica* and the *Ath*. at least, with over 500 occurrences in the *Politica* alone, in this paper I contribute to the catalogue project by considering some examples of Aristotle's use of *politeia* in idioms from earlier Greek literature which express participation in citizenship, giving a share in citizenship, and so on. I consider also Aristotle's apparent awareness of inscriptions recording grants of citizenship. Understanding *politeia* as citizenship appears to provide attractive alternative interpretations for some otherwise challenging passages.

Politeia in Literature

Politeia, as the abstract noun cognate with the concrete nouns *politēs* ('citizen') and *politis* ('citizeness'), should denote, in the usage of grammarians, a condition or a quality.⁴ It is a newer word than *politēs*, which may be found as far back as the *Iliad* in the appropriate sense.⁵ Conditions are different from the better known qualities. They are not simple as qualities are, and they are enjoyed rather than being possessed. Citizens are expected to possess the quality *andreia*, for example; but some citizens may possess *andreia* and others lack it while they both still enjoy the condition of citizenship, since they still are citizens. And some noncitizens might possess *andreia* even though they do not enjoy citizenship. *Politeia* denotes a condition that citizens enjoy but others do not, whatever qualities they possess or lack.

While *politeia* is an abstract noun, the abstract can be used for the concrete in Greek as in English. As Denniston points out, this is a "common Greek idiom."⁶ Accordingly, one should expect *politeia* in Aristotle and others sometimes to be used for the citizens, just as, in Thucydides II.8.1, *neotēs*, or youth, is used for the young men, just as in English. The use of an abstract noun for the concrete as a matter of prose style, however, does not make it any the less an abstract noun. Thus *politeia* should not be understood as denoting a citizenry, or body of citizens, but as denoting the condition of

¹M.H. Hansen, "*Polis, Politeuma*, and *Politeia*: A Note on Arist. *Pol.* 1278b6-14," in D. Whitehead (ed.), *From Political Architecture to Stephanus Byzantius: Sources for the Ancient Greek Polis* (Stuttgart, 1994), pp. 91-98.

²D. Morrison, "Aristotle's Definition of Citizenship: A Problem and Some Solutions," *History of Philosophy Quarterly* 16 (1999), pp. 143-165.

³S.D. Collins, Aristotle and the Rediscovery of Citizenship (Cambridge, 2006).

⁴⁴ H.W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar*, rev. G.M. Messing (Cambridge, 1984), p. 46, 199.c. ⁵(B.806, O.558, Ξ.429)

⁶J.D. Denniston, Greek Prose Style (Oxford, 1960), p. 38.

the citizens, even though it may be used for the body of citizens.⁷ Aristotle does come close to 'body of citizens' with *plēthos tōn politōn*, but he uses this of the *polis* rather than of the *politeia* (1274b41).

The occurrences of *politeia* from the beginning in extant Greek literature up to but not including Aristotle were traced in a 1982 monograph by Bordes, who catalogued the idioms in which this expression occurred.⁸ Bordes' catalogue showed that the idioms revealed both continuity and innovation. From author to author and even in the same author, the idioms would be modified so that the verb remained the same even as its grammatical objects varied. So, for example, since the Greeks viewed the *politeia* as embodied most clearly in the *archai*, they sometimes might speak of granting the citizenship as granting the *archai*. Bordes viewed these instances as examples of substitutes—substitute idioms because they had substitute objects—that offered different ways of indicating the *politeia*.

While Bordes considered about 40 idioms, in the present paper I consider mainly the idiom *metadidonai tēs politeias* and its substitutes. This idiom is especially informative because it is used repeatedly by Aristotle and because it leaves comparatively little room for misunderstanding. One can't give a share in the constitution to an individual or to a group, especially if one doesn't have an object to give, such as a copy of a written constitution. But one certainly can give a share in the condition of citizenship to an individual or to a group, as the Greeks did.⁹

Politeia makes its debut in Herodotus 9.33-34, in its Ionic form, where Tisamenus insists that the Spartans make him a citizen, giving him a share of all the things connected with being a citizen (33.18-19)¹⁰ and where *tōn pantōn metadidontes* is balanced by *politēiēn aiteomenous* (demanding citizenship, 34.3).¹¹ This occurrence of *tōn pantōn* is a good example of a substitute recognized by Bordes, and it suggests that the condition of citizenship includes many components. *Politeia* is absent from the conference of the assassins in 3.80-84, which suggests that Herodotus did not associate the *politeia* with the

⁷ Quality is familiar to students of Aristotle, since it is included in the categories. Condition is not included in the categories. Perhaps one can get some sense of condition in Aristotle by considering *katastasis* and its cognates, which are used by him when he considers setting up the *politeia*.

⁸ J. Bordes, *Politeia dans la pensée grecque jusqu'à Aristote* (Paris, 1982). I am indebted to the late Professor M. Ostwald for having referred me to Bordes.

⁹ It has been suggested to me that Diogenes Laertius provides an example in Greek of being able to give a share of things that aren't objects at 1.24, where he uses *metadidonai* in giving a report from Aristotle and Hippias about Thales's having attributed (given a share of) soul to the unsouled, using as a sign the magnet and amber. Aristotle notes this peculiar antiquity about Thales at *De Anima* 405a19, where he suggests that Thales seems, based on the reports, to take it that the soul is some sort of mover, since he said that the magnet has soul because it moves iron. Ross refers to 411a8, where Aristotle observes that some say that it [soul] is mixed in the whole, whence perhaps Thales also thought that all things were full of gods. Of course DL does not offer a parallel case to giving a share in the *politeia*, since Thales's giving is only a theoretical giving—what a theorist would do; Thales did not have an inventory of soul to distribute, though the Greek cities did have citizenship to distribute. Aristotle, *De Anima*, edited, with introduction and commentary, by Sir David Ross (Oxford, 1961). But again: The citizenship is a condition in which some can be allowed to share, while the soul is not a condition but rather something that might be in a certain condition.

¹⁰ min poliētēn spheteron poiēsōntai tōn pantōn metadidontes.

¹¹ Bordes, *Politeia*, p. 39 *et passim*. Bordes includes *tōn pantōn* in her list of "principales formules comportant *politeia* ou une substitute de *politeia*," p. 491. For the text see Ph.-E. Legrand, *Hérodote*. *Histoires*, vol. IX (Paris, 1954; repr. 1968). Retrieved from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

rule of the multitude or with the oligarchy or with the monarchy. The idiom with *metadidonai* reappears in Thucydides, Isocrates, Lysias, Xenophon, the Pseudo-Xenophon, and Plato.

In *Republic* VIII, for example, Socrates uses this idiom in his discussion of the origin of the democracy. He is describing the behavior of the poor when they come to power.¹² Here the idiom and its substitute are clear, since the one verb *metadosi* has both *politeias* and *archon* as objects. This passage illustrates the association of the citizenship with the *archai* in Greek authors before Aristotle; shares in both are given at once.

In *Laws* IV, the Athenian Stranger picks up the theme of *stasis*.¹³ Here the substitute idiom is *archēs metadidonai*; that the Stranger is talking about the *politeia* in using this substitute is made clear in the lines that follow. Since, for him, citizenship involves sharing in the *archai*, the Stranger holds out for the view that, where legitimate claimants are excluded completely from sharing in the *archai*, they do not enjoy the *politeia* or citizenship. As the language had developed to this point, while the understanding of *politeia* as citizenship had not been lost, it was being encroached upon by the understanding of *politeia* as merely *taxis* and especially the *taxis* of the *archai*.

The Stranger reinforces his point in *Laws* VIII. 832B10-C3, where he is explaining the causes of inadequate military exercises as the non-citizenships (*tas ou politeias*).¹⁴ While this passage does not include the idiom, it does point to the situation in which the understanding of *politeia* as citizenship is abridged in favor of the understanding of *politeia* as merely *taxis* and in which the *taxis* may not have for its purpose the interest of the whole city.¹⁵ The contrast is drawn clearly by the phrases *politeia men oudemia, stasiōteiai de* with their particles—not a citizenship, but partisanships.¹⁶

Aristotle uses the exact idiom *metadidonai tēs politeias* in Book II of the *Politica* in his discussion of the Spartan situation, where he says that, under the former kings, the Spartans conferred the citizenship¹⁷ and thus avoided a shortage of men. In Book III, in

^{12.4} they kill some of the others [the well to do], expel others, and give a share in the citizenship and the leading positions (*metadosi politeias te kai archon*) equally to those who are left, and for the most part these positions in it [the citizenship] come out of the lots (557A3-5)."

¹³He says, as Bury rendered 715A8-B4: "Where offices of rule are open to contest, the victors in the contest monopolise power in the State so completely that they offer not the smallest share in office to the vanquished party or their descendants [*hōste archēs mēd' hotioun metadidonai tois ēttētheisin, mēte autois mēte ekgonois*]; and each party keeps a watchful eye on the other, lest anyone should come into office and, in revenge for the former troubles, cause a rising against them. Such polities we, of course, deny to be polities, just as we deny that laws are true laws unless they are enacted in the interest of the common weal of the whole state." R.G. Bury, ed., Plato: *Laws* (Cambridge, 1926; repr. 1952).

¹⁴ "I say that the causes are the non-citizenships (*tas ou politeias*) that I have mentioned often in the previous discourses—democracy and oligarchy and tyranny. For of these none is a citizenship, but all of them would be called partisanships most correctly."

¹⁵ Two other Platonic passages that might be added to Bordes' catalogue are *Republic* 503D9 (*metadidonai mēte timēs mēte archēs*, to give a share of neither honor nor office) and *Laws* 768A1 (*tōi plēthei metadidonai tēs kriseōs*, to give a share in judging to the multitude).

¹⁶ 'Non-citizenship' is an unusual expression but surely not much more incomprehensible on reflection than other abstract nouns with 'non-' in English, such as 'nonpartisanship', which seem to give English speakers no difficulty. In any case, the Athenian makes it more comprehensible immediately by the mentioning of 'partisanship', for which the Greek apparently is a coinage of Plato's, since the only other occurrence (at least as given in *LSJ*) is in the late antique and spurious oration *In Alcibiadem* attributed to Andocides.

¹⁷ metedidosan tēs politeias, 1270a35.

considering the free poor, he observes that while they cannot be given a share in the greatest positions, not to give them a share [in the *archai* or the *politeia*] and for them not to have a share would be fearful,¹⁸ since then the city will be full of enemies.¹⁹ Here Aristotle uses the idiom with *metadidonai* together with the usual Greek idiom for being a citizen—to share in the citizenship. Elsewhere also in the *Politica*, Aristotle uses substitutes for *tēs politeias*,²⁰ such as *tēs archēs* and *tōn archōn*, with *metadidonai*. In Book IV, for example, in discussing the different *politeiai*, Aristotle speaks of the situation that would obtain if, in a city of 1,300 citizens, the wealthy 1,000 did not give a share in the *archē* to the 300 free poor who were like them in other ways (1290a35-36).²¹ Again, in Book V, in the course of discussing causes of revolution in oligarchies, Aristotle mentions the case in which the oligarchs gave a share in citizenship to the multitude (1306a25-26).²²

The Aristotelian *Politeia of the Athenians* represents the usage of the Lyceum when Aristotle was engaged in writing the *Politica*, and so its witness should not be overlooked. It uses the cognate *apodidonai* in reporting that citizenship had been given or given back to those furnishing their own weapons (4.2).²³ See also 1274a16 (*apodidonai* . . . *dunamin*).²⁴ It uses *metadidonai* in describing how Solon gave the least productive census group access only to the assembly and the jury courts $(7.4)^{25}$ —the minimal citizenship. And it uses *metadidonai* in the story of Theramenes when it describes how he urged the Thirty to give a share in the public business (*tōn pragmatōn*) to the best men (36.1).²⁶ Bordes includes *tōn pragmatōn* as a substitute with sharing (*metechein*) in the citizenship.²⁷ As the story goes on, the oligarchs responded by enrolling 3,000 citizens as giving them a share in the citizenship to the respectable people, the oligarchs gave it to the 3,000 only (36.2).²⁹ And again, it uses this idiom in describing the condemnation of a psephism proposed by Thrasybulus which gave a share in the

 $^{^{18}}$ to de mē metadidonai mēde metechein phoberon, 1281b28-29.

¹⁹ I follow Robinson's lead here in taking *metechein* in the genitive as the object of *metadidonai*, even though Aristotle omits the article here where he might have used *tou metechein*. See Aristotle, *Politics: Books III and IV*. Translated with Introduction and Comments by Richard Robinson (Oxford, 1962), p. 37. Examples of Aristotle's use of the article with μετΥξειν are found at 1275a23, 1292a1, and 1308b38.

²⁰ Bordes, *Politeia*, p. 491.

²¹ And later on in this book, he suggests that one way to deal with a similar issue is to give a share of advising to everyone while only the rulers deliberate (1298b33-34).

²² Not, I think, "hand over a share of the regime to the multitude," as it is rendered in P.L.P. Simpson, *The Politics of Aristotle* (Chapel Hill, 1997), p. 221; nor, as his *Commentary* explains it, or perhaps compresses it with adjacent phrases, "enlist the support of the populace." See P.L.P. Simpson, *A Philosophical Commentary on the Politics of Aristotle* (Chapel Hill, 1998), p. 384.

²³ apodedoto men hē politeia tois hopla parechomenois, a passage which can be added to those cited by Bordes. H. Oppermann, *Aristotelis Athēnaiōn Politeia* (Leipzig, 1928; repr. Stuttgart, 1968). Retrieved from the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*.

²⁴ On this idiom see Bordes, *Politeia*, pp. 81-82.

²⁵ tois de to thētikon telousin ekklēsias kai dikastēriōn metedoke monon.

²⁶ metadounai de tōn pragmatōn tois beltistois.

²⁷ Bordes, *Politeia*, p. 492.

²⁸ hos metadosontes tes politeias.

²⁹ boulomenoi metadounai tois epieikesi trischiliois monois metadidoasi.

citizenship to all those who had returned from the Peiraeus (40.2).³⁰ See also the *Politeia of the Athenians* (7.2).³¹

Politeia in the sense of 'citizenship', then, along with its substitutes, definitely was used by Aristotle and his school in these idioms and to some extent elsewhere. This use of *politeia* in the sense of 'citizenship' apparently did not disappear from Greek literature, since it is found, for example, as late as Diodorus Siculus in the age of Augustus. In his account of the foundation of Thurii, Diodorus notes, using the traditional idiom, that the inhabitants of Sybaris gave a share in the citizenship to many (*pollois de metadidontes tēs politeias*, 12.9.2).³²

While the literary sources for the use of *politeia* in the sense of 'citizenship' are unmistakable, inscriptions having to do with citizenship help to fill out the picture. Aristotle appears to have been aware of some of these inscriptions. Indeed, it would have been hard for him to miss them.

Politeia in Inscriptions

The author of the *Politeia of the Athenians* alerts us to the epigraphical evidence in 54.3, where he observes that the prytany secretary was named on the stone *stēlai* or slabs on which were recorded alliances, grants of proxenies, and [grants of] citizenship.³³

Wycherley cites grants of citizenship,³⁴ and illustrative examples of grants of citizenship can be found in the *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. One of these inscriptions, which is identified as a citizenship decree from Athens of the year 303/2 B.C.—a generation after Aristotle's death, includes the words "they gave valid citizenship to him and to his descendants according to the decree of the demos of the Athenians."³⁵ 'To him and to his descendants' (*autōi kai [ekgo]nois*) is the formula seen above in *Laws* 715A10-11. Another inscription, which is identified as a citizenship decree from Athens circa 215-210 B.C., indicates that someone "should be given the *politeia* and that he should be enrolled in the tribe and the deme and the phratry which he wished."³⁶ There are others as well.³⁷

³⁰ en hōi metedidou tēs politeias pasi tois ek Peiraieōs sugkatelthousi.

³¹ Here the author says that Solon "locked up the laws for a hundred years and arranged the *politeia* this way." This way is Solon's partition of the citizens into four groups according to the output of their households. Those whose households are most productive are given the big *archai*. Rhodes suggests "organized the constitution" for *dietaxe tēn politeian*, but the author clearly has in mind the condition of the citizens, whom he goes on to mention, not just the *archai*, and so the citizenship. 'Constitution' is unnecessary here. Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*. Translated with Introduction and Notes by P.J. Rhodes (London, 1984), p. 48.

³² *Diodori bibliotheca historica*, vol. II, ed. F. Vogel, 3rd edn. (Stuttgart, 1890; repr. 1985), 12.9.2, p. 364.

³³ kai gar en tais stēlais pros tais summachiais kai proxeniais kai politeiais houtos anagraphetai.

³⁴ R.E. Wycherley, ed., *The Athenian Agora*, vol. III: *Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia* (Princeton, 1957), p. 81, 221; p. 142, 456; and p. 135, 419=IG, II², 1055, II. 24-26.

³⁵ kurian tēn poli]te[ian] autōi kai [ekgo]nois, tēn dotheisan kata to psēph]is[ma tou] dēmou t[ou Ath]ēnaiōn. Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum XXVI, 90.

³⁶ dedosthai de autōi kai] politeian kai g[ra][psasthai phulēs kai dēmou kai phratria]s hēs an thelei. SEG XXVI, 97. Professor J. McInerney, Department of Classical Studies and Ancient History, University of Pennsylvania, has advised me on the translation of this inscription.

³⁷ Other examples can be found in *SEG* XXVI 83 and 96; XXIX 94 and 121; and XXXVII 90.

In 1893, Sandys issued a text with apparatus and notes, and this text saw a second edition in 1912. In his notes, Sandys identified an inscription which he considered the oldest corresponding to Aristotle's witness in 54.3.³⁸ It indicated that the adopted citizen was enrolled in the tribe and the deme and the phratry as entered by the secretary on the stone *stēlē*. The inscription had been reconstructed and published in 1883 and now is included in *Inscriptiones Graecae* with a date of 387/6, or shortly before Aristotle was born.³⁹ It clearly represents a grant of citizenship, even though it does not have an occurrence of *politeia*. Instead of mentioning the *politeia*, it says that the initiate was enrolled into the Athenians. If Aristotle had this inscription and others like it in mind, why is *politeia* not used here?

The answer may be that, as Osborne has suggested, there are three formulae for decrees that grant the citizenship—the ethnic, which uses the name of the people of which the new citizen will become one; the generic, which uses *politeia*; and the intermediate, which states that someone is to be a *politēs*.⁴⁰ All three of these formulae happily are reflected in Book IX of Herodotus. Both the intermediate and the generic occur in 9.33.18-19, though the generic there uses a substitute idiom. And Herodotus uses the ethnic where he reports the claim of Tisamenus that his brother also must be made a Spartiate (9.33.25). Thus it would not be inappropriate for the author to describe an inscription as granting the citizenship if it used the ethnic formula rather than the generic formula.⁴¹

That *politeia* was used regularly for citizenship in inscriptions has not penetrated studies of Aristotle very far in the century since Sandys. The occurrence of *politeia* to mark grants of citizenship on the official stone slabs designed for public consumption, however, suggests a well-established and noncontroversial convention for this use. And so it suggests that most literate Greeks, as well as those who could not read but who might have had the inscriptions read to them, would have understood *politeia* here as citizenship. Thus both literary evidence and epigraphical evidence suggest that *politeia* would have made many Greeks think first of citizenship. It is not surprising, then, that Aristotle sometimes used *politeia* in the sense of 'citizenship', as many of his hearers and readers would have expected him to. Sometimes, yes. But when and where? That remains to be worked out by weighing the interpretation of passage after passage.

Alternative Interpretations

³⁸ J.E. Sandys, *Aristotle's Constitution of Athens*, second edition, revised and enlarged (London, 1912), p. 210.

 $^{^{39}}Eph\bar{e}meris archaiologik\bar{e}$ 1883, pp. 37-38. I wish to thank Professor D.G. Romano of the University of Pennsylvania's Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (Mediterranean Section) and Department of Classical Studies for identifying this inscription as *IG* II² 25 and for providing other assistance with the epigraphical materials.

⁴⁶ M.J. Osborne, Naturalization in Athens, III-IV, Verhandelingen van de Koninklijke Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten van België, Klasse der Letteren 109 (Brussels, 1983), p. 155.

⁴¹ Rhodes and P. Gauthier also have studied these grants of citizenship in the inscriptions. P.J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford, 1981), pp. 602-603; P. Gauthier, *Les cités grecques et leurs bienfaiteurs, Bulletin de correspondence Hellénique*, Supplément XII (Athènes, 1985), pp. 149-154 *et passim*.

Since Aristotle was accustomed to using *politeia* in the traditional idioms and to seeing it used to denote the condition of a citizen, or citizenship, in inscriptions, the challenge is to determine how he was using it outside the traditional idioms. Hansen offers ten non-idiomatic passages in which *politeia* does not appear to have the sense of 'constitution' or, if it does, not exclusively that. ⁴² These examples deserve close scrutiny. I shall consider one of Hansen's and one other.

In 1297b1-3, where Hansen gives "constitution" intending "body of citizens' as a connotation," Sinclair-Saunders in the first instance gives "Citizenship ought to be reserved for those who carry arms," though this translation is qualified in a note, which retranslates "the *politeia*, constitution, should be made up exclusively of those who carry arms," and where a second qualification is added to the effect that "Aristotle may however mean polity."⁴³ More literally still, one might offer 'the citizenship must be of (or for) those who possess arms only'. At the very least, this text indicates the uncertainty of scholars over the traditional 'constitution' approach. Aristotle's point here is to justify a property assessment in connection with citizenship, even though the amount of the assessment cannot be set once and for all.

Aside from Hansen's examples, in 1284b17-19, Aristotle says: "It is better for the lawmaker in the beginning so to bring together the *politeia* that it will not need such a course of treatment [as ostracism]." It would make little sense to say that the *politeia* will need a course of treatment if it is interpreted as the constitution or arrangement of offices. How would one treat an arrangement of offices by ostracism? The point of ostracism was to remove individuals from the condition of citizenship rather than to eliminate offices; the name of an office was not written on a shard. So here translation by 'citizenship' instead of 'constitution' leads to a plausible alternative interpretation of an otherwise opaque text.

Conclusion

I conclude that Aristotle sometimes used *politeia* to denote citizenship not only in the traditional idioms but elsewhere as well. It may be, as Hansen says, that constitution in the sense of an arrangement of offices is the most common use and that the idiomatic concrete use is the next most important. Hansen's view will be confirmed or disconfirmed when the catalogue is completed. But whatever the catalogue shows, it will remain that Aristotle does use *politeia* to denote citizenship, and recognizing that he does opens the possibility of reinterpretation of some otherwise puzzling passages.

⁴²Hansen, pp. 95-96: "In Aristotle's *Politics* much the most common meaning of *politeia* is "constitution" in the sense of the structure of the city's political institutions, its *archai* in the broad sense of the term, but in quite a few passages *politeia* has "citizen structure" or in a concrete sense "the body of citizens" [citizenry] as its principal meaning or at least as a connotation." The condition that the citizens share seems to have fallen out of the discussion here, unless "citizen structure" is supposed to supply it; but the condition denoted by *politeia* is not simply structural.

⁴³Aristotle, *The Politics*. Translated by T.A. Sinclair, revised and re-presented by Trevor J. Saunders (London, 1992), p. 274.

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