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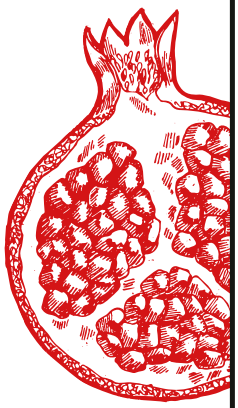

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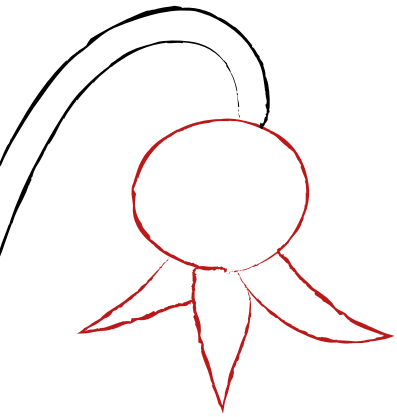
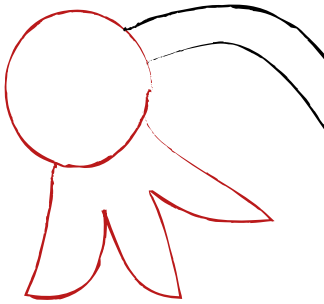


Thematic Issue: Global and Local Cultures in the Roman East



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CITIZENSHIP AND ETHNICITY IN CASSIUS DIO'S *ROMAN HISTORY*

Jussi Rantala

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Abstract

In 212 CE, Emperor Caracalla gave a famous edict, the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, granting citizenship to almost all free denizens of the Roman Empire. Although the document itself is preserved in a fragmentary papyrus, we know surprisingly little about it, as written sources are mostly silent about the edict. The only description of some length is provided by Cassius Dio, a Roman historian, a senator, and a contemporary of Caracalla. Cassius Dio's critical attitude toward the edict is well-known (and a much-researched topic); according to him, Caracalla's motive for the declaration was to increase the number of taxpayers in the Empire. In this article, I concentrate on the idea of citizenship in Dio's history: How does he see its role during the hundreds of years of Roman history he describes? What is the relationship between citizenship and Roman identity for Cassius Dio in the Roman past? I evaluate Dio's attitudes in the political context of his own time and consider them as a statement from a Roman senator taking part in a contemporary discussion on Roman identity. Moreover, as Caracalla's edict had a particularly strong impact the eastern part of the Empire, I will pay special attention to Dio's attitudes toward eastern peoples–"new Romans" in the contemporary context of Dio and Caracalla.

En 212 de notre ère, l'empereur Caracalla promulgue un édit célèbre, la *constitutio antoniniana*, qui accordait la citoyenneté à la quasi-totalité de la population libre de l'Empire romain. Bien que le document lui-même soit conservée dans un papyrus fragmentaire, nous savons étonnamment peu de choses sur le sujet, puisque les sources écrites ne disent pour la plupart rien sur l'édit. La seule description un peu fournie vient de la main de Dion Cassius, historien romain, sénateur et écrivain contemporain de Caracalla.

L'attitude critique de Dion Cassius à l'égard de l'édit est bien connue (et a fait l'objet de nombreuses recherches) ; selon lui, le but de la déclaration de Caracalla était d'augmenter le nombre des contribuables dans l'empire. Je me concentre sur l'idée de la citoyenneté en général dans l'histoire de Dion : comment perçoit-il le rôle de cette dernière dans les centaines d'années d'histoire romaine qu'il décrit ? Dans le passé romain, quelle est la relation entre la citoyenneté et l'identité romaine pour Cassius Dion ? J'examine les attitudes de Dion dans le contexte politique de son époque et analysées comme les déclarations d'un sénateur romain qui participe au débat contemporain sur l'identité romaine. En outre, comme l'édit de Caracalla a eu un impact surtout dans la partie orientale de l'empire, je m'intéresse particulièrement aux attitudes de Dion à l'égard des peuples orientaux–des « nouveaux Romains » dans le contexte contemporain de Dion et de Caracalla.

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Jussi Rantala

Introduction

The period from the late second to the early third century was one of great change for the Roman Empire. A civil war, the first in over a hundred years, took place in 190 CE. As a result, Septimius Severus, a usurper from North Africa, rose to power and established a new dynasty. This meant many changes for Roman political life, including the development of more explicitly autocratic policies compared to those of perhaps a more conciliatory nature practiced by most of the Antonine rulers earlier in the second century.[1] One of the major events of the period was the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, an edict promulgated by Emperor Caracalla, the successor and son of Severus. The edict, which took effect in 212 CE, gave citizen rights to practically all free men in

[1] For the birth of the Severan dynasty and the political ideas pursued by Septimius Severus, see Rantala 2017.

the Empire.[2] The edict and its significance is a much-debated issue and provides many problems for analysis—not least because of a lack of sources.[3] In fact, only one author in Roman literature provides even a few lines on the subject—Cassius Dio (c. 155–235 CE). He was a historian and Roman senator who, as a contemporary writer, personally witnessed the reign of Caracalla and his imperial edict.[4]

In this article, I take a closer look at Dio's view toward the concept of citizenship.[5] However, instead of concentrating solely on Dio's passage on the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, my aim is to evaluate the role of Roman citizenship as a part of Dio's history as a whole. How does Dio value citizenship in his history throughout the centuries? Does he see it as a purely legal concept, or does he have other interpretations? How does Dio see and link the role and development of citizenship through his history as a part of his political aims? Moreover, dealing with concepts such as citizenship and the ideal government also leads us to the question of identity. While the notion of Romanness, or *Romanitas*, ideologically consisted of common values, morals, customs, and so on, the latter were, in practice, actualized in a political community (Woolf 2000, 120); for centuries, the most obvious mark of one's membership in a political community was Roman citizenship.

Indeed, Dio's writings were deeply connected to his own political community. While sometimes considered a "second-class" historian without any particular political motivation (Millar 1964) and seen simply as a good resource to check various, isolated facts without a need to care too much about his work's entirety, recent years have witnessed

[2] The papyrus containing the edict can be found in *P.Giss*. 40. Considering free women, they were to be given the same rights as Roman women.

[3] Most recent studies include Corbo 2013; de Blois 2014; Ando 2016.

[4] Dio's massive *Roman History* (*Historia Romana*) consisted of 80 books (most of which are lost) and covered about 1,400 years from the arrival of Aeneas in Italy to the reign of Emperor Alexander Severus in 229 CE; apparently, it was composed between 220 and 231 CE, the process beginning a couple of years after Caracalla's death (Rantala 2017, 9).

[5] Apart from the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, not many studies concerning Dio's relationship with Roman citizenship exist; see the studies mentioned in subsequent sections of this article.

a change in attitude toward Dio. An increasing number of scholars nowadays highlight the historiographical setting of his work and the links between various parts of his history, and acknowledge that Dio did indeed have a political agenda—that is, to present his version of an ideal government, a Roman monarchy, as established by Augustus.[6] My starting point takes its cue from this newly found interest in and view of Dio and his work. While the historian admittedly had his shortcomings, he was nevertheless presented a valuable and unique perspective on the contemporary politics of the early third century CE. He was an intellectual as well as a politician at a time when Rome was at its zenith, writing a politically motivated history as an important member of his own political community during a period of great change. As the *Constitutio Antoniniana* appeared to be one of the most remarkable products of these changing times, Dio's general view on citizenship can be seen as an interesting part of his political views.

While citizenship, as a concept itself, has traditionally had close ties with *Romanitas*, we should also acknowledge the significant role played by ethnicity in the Greco-Roman context that Dio represents, and how it is tied in with the issue of identity. While Romans were perhaps more inclusive with regard to the subject, traditional Greek views on identity were more strictly based on language and inherited ethnicity (Woolf 2000, 120). Cassius Dio himself had his origins in Greece as he was a native of Nicaea, in the province of Bithynia. Thus, he was not just a proud Roman senator and citizen (Madsen 2009, 124–26), but also a Greek who clearly valued his cultural origins.[7] Inasmuch as defining one's identity on ethnic grounds was commonplace in ancient Greek thought, I seek in this article possible traces of the relationship

[6] Lange and Madsen 2016, 1–3. This recent research includes, e.g., Fromentin et al. 2016; Lange and Madsen 2016; Burden-Strevens and Lindholmer 2019; Osgood and Baron 2019. For a new general introduction to Dio himself, see Madsen 2019.

[7] Cassius Dio underlines in his history that Bithynia, his home province, was indeed part of the Greek world (Sørensen 2016, 90). For Dio's Greek intellectual heritage, see Rantala 2016, 174–75.

between citizenship and ethnic identity in the work of Dio.[8] The identification and analysis of such traces, I believe, would help us to widen our scope toward the question of identity in an era when the *Constitutio Antoniniana* affected not only the people actually becoming citizens but also contemporary intellectuals of that time, such as Dio, that took part in discussions on the nature of the Roman Empire and Roman identity.

Citizenship in Dio's Pre-imperial History

Dio's coverage of Roman regal and republican history before the civil wars of the first century BCE is a somewhat forgotten subject, much overlooked by scholars,[9] and this is even more the case considering the role of citizenship in that period. On the other hand, this oversight is somewhat understandable. The appearance of citizens in Dio's early history is, while present, quite uneventful and politically insignificant, even if the idea of an "active citizen" does appear a few times in his early narrative.[10] For example, we can read how the kings of Rome had to take into consideration the view of citizens when forming the Roman city-state; even the "bad king" Tarquinius Superbus could not take his power for granted, because his soldiers, "in their capacity as citizens,"

[8] Benjamin Isaac (2004, 35) defines an ethnic group as a group that has a long-shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing itself from other groups, as well as the memory of which it keeps alive. Moreover, the group should have a cultural tradition involving certain family and social customs, and often religious customs as well. In addition to these two "essential" characteristics, other relevant aspects often are, for example, a common geographical origin, a common language, a common literature, and a common religion. In this article, I consider Dio's definitions such as "Syrian," "Egyptian," and so on as ethnic definitions; I understand that from his point of view those names refer precisely to groups with a shared origin, language, history, etc.

[9] However, an excellent recent volume, edited by Christopher Burden-Strevens and Mads Lindholmer (2019), fills the gap. See also, e.g., Simons 2009.

[10] In Dio's political vocabulary, the basic word for citizen is *πολίτης*, following earlier Greek historiographical tradition (see, e.g., Hdt. *Hist*., 9.34; Thuc. *Hist*, 6.104). Dio's use of the term is discussed in Freyburger-Galland 1997, 43–52.

might revolt (*Hist. Rom.* 2.10; 2.10.2 [Zonaras]). Dio also records the traditional Struggle of the Orders between patricians and plebeians in books 4–8, describing how activities of the lower classes eventually led to the fairer treatment of all citizens.[11]

However, Dio's narrative from the very beginning is centered on the actions of great men, and his attitude toward the deeds of ordinary citizens and their struggle for power seems to be either uninterested or cautious compared to other historians, such as Livy or Dionysius of Halicarnassus, who also described the events.[12] While Dio recognizes that the unwillingness of the rich to compromise with poor citizens was often a reason for troubles in early Rome (*Hist. Rom.* 4.14.6), his attitude toward citizen activity as such is not too enthusiastic. For example, he highlights how unjust and even tyrannical the tribunes acted after the office was established because of the demands of the people (*Hist. Rom.* 4.15.1). As mentioned by Mads Lindholmer, political competition in general was seen as a destructive process by Dio, and events such as the Struggle of the Orders had their logical continuation during the late Republic, when they were replaced by struggles between great men (2019, 211). Similarly, I believe Dio's cautious attitude toward citizen activity is part of this general approach. Accordingly, Dio's view on citizenship seems to be most positive when it has purely symbolic, not political, value. Such is the case when Dio mentions that, if somebody rescued a citizen from peril during battle in the days of the Republic, the rescuer had "the greatest praise and would receive a crown fashioned of oak, which was esteemed as far more honourable than all the other crowns, whether of silver or of gold" (*Hist. Rom.* 6.12.1 [Zonaras]).[13] Thus, he reminds his readers about the symbolic value of citizenship for society.[14]

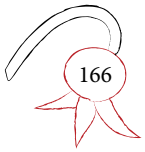
[11] *Hist. Rom.* 5.18.1 records the story of Romans sending men to Greece to "observe the laws and the customs of the people there."

[12] For example, Liv. *Ab urbe cond.* 2.32.4; Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 6.47.2. See Lindholmer 2019 for discussion.

[13] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

[14] Citizens as "worthy" people are also mentioned in *Hist. Rom.* 13.55.1. Other examples of at least some "citizen activity" are presented, for example, in 4.14.6; 7.29.5; 9.40.7.

Eventually, records of citizens as at least somewhat active participants in society cease completely in Dio's history with the arrival of powerful figures in the late Republic, such as Julius Caesar, Pompey the Great, Marc Anthony, and Octavian. However, we do find a few other passages regarding the actual process of granting citizenship in the pre-imperial era. The first case takes place early in the republican period, when the Romans were waging a war against the Etruscans. According to the story, as the Etruscans did not offer resistance but instead continued their everyday business and welcomed Romans in a friendly manner, the Romans, likewise, "far from doing them harm, enrolled them subsequently among the citizens" (*Hist. Rom.* 7.28.1). Moreover, soon after that we encounter a case of the granting of citizenship to the Latins:



> The Romans, by way of bringing the Latins in turn to a condition of friendliness, granted them citizenship, so that they secured equal privileges with themselves. Those rights which they would not share with that nation when it threatened war and for which they underwent so many dangers they voluntarily voted to it now that it had been conquered. Thus, they rewarded some for their alliance and others because they had made no move to rebel. (*Hist. Rom.* 7.29.10)[15]

When mentioning these cases of citizenship expansion, Dio seems to deal with the issue without much problematization. What the republican passages do show, however, is that citizenship was something granted by Romans by their own free will, in practice, as a mark of their domination. In Dio's narrative, it was an impossible idea that somebody could force the Romans to do so. This attitude can be traced to the description of the conduct of the Samnites, another Italian people, who ravaged Campania during the Social War of the first century BCE, and, as a condition to cease their attacks, demanded Roman citizenship. This was, according to Dio, too much of a request for the Roman senators and they refused (*Hist. Rom.* 31.102.7). While the Samnites were, in Roman historical thought, a kind of archenemy during the early republican period and a people Dio described as untrustworthy liars and cheats (Jones 2019, 287–88), the real problem regarding citizenship

[15] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

was probably their challenge to Roman rule; their citizenship would be a result of their demands instead of a goodwill gesture from Rome. Indeed, while traditionally described as bitter foes of Rome, the relationship of these two peoples was more complicated than simply one of good vs. evil. As Brandon Jones notices, while the Samnites were treacherous, Romans of the day also had a vice of their own—excessive pride often led them to trouble (Jones 2019, 287–88). Moreover, the fragmentary eighth book of Dio, covering the Samnite wars of the past, does not paint a particularly negative picture of the Samnites, even if they were a stubborn enemy of Rome. This is in line with the earlier historical tradition. Livy, for example, while describing the wars against the Samnites as particularly bitter and cruel, nevertheless writes several admirable passages about them. For Livy, they were a people, which, even when all hope was lost, still fought on. He writes: "So far were they from tiring of freedom even though they had not succeeded in defending it, preferring to be defeated rather than not to try for victory" (*Ab urbe cond.* 10.30.9). Thus, it is unlikely that the Samnites were more "unworthy," ethnically or culturally speaking, for citizenship than were other Italian peoples; it was simply their challenge to Roman superiority, another central theme of Roman identity, which was the problem.

We can trace a slight change of attitude in Dio's writings when he describes the last decades of the Republic. This was a period when Italy not only was unified under Roman rule, more or less, but also a time when Roman political and military influence expanded beyond Italy. Thus, Dio describes how there was a dispute about the people living north of Italy, beyond the river Po; some Romans were willing to grant a citizenship to them, some were not. Dio describes:

> All those who were resident aliens in Rome, except inhabitants of what is now Italy, were banished on the motion of one Gaius Papius, a tribune, because they were coming to be too numerous and were not thought fit persons to dwell with the citizens. (*Hist. Rom.* 37.8.3)[16]

What we can trace here is that, first of all, citizenship still was an important sign of identity, as giving rights of citizenship even to people living

[16] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

right next to Italy appears to be a tense subject. On the other hand, Italian inhabitants, in general, were held to a different, higher category of citizenship than the aliens by Dio. Italians were "fit" to dwell with Roman city folk, and foreigners were not. This seems to point to the significance of Italy compared to other lands occupied by the Roman Republic.[17] Indeed, while the actual discussion about Italy during the late republican / early imperial era does not need to detain us much here, we should recognize that Dio himself lived and wrote in a political and cultural context wherein Italy had long been an essential part of traditional Roman self-understanding. It was a *topos* among intellectual life as well as an important aspect of imperial politics and propaganda.[18] This does not necessarily mean as such that the Greek historian Dio, on a personal level, was particularly attached to Italy. However, as Italy had become one of the central symbols of the Roman Empire and Roman identity, we can assume that his relationship with Italy was, at minimum, something akin to his relationship with the city of Rome. While Dio apparently did not care about the city itself too much, he nevertheless was proud of his personal senatorial status and in this way was attached to what Rome represented—power and authority.[19] As Italy had also become a symbol of this political entity, Dio seems to follow these ideas in his reports of the granting of citizenship outside Italy.

The question of granting civil rights outside Italy is also dealt with by Dio when he mentions how Julius Caesar gave citizenship to the people of Gades (*Hist. Rom.* 41.24.1) and also to the Gauls living south of the Alps, beyond the Po, because he had once governed them (*Hist. Rom.* 41.36.3). While these acts may sound insignificant, there still seems to be a hint of reluctance on the part of Dio. While he admits that the

[17] The contemporary discussion during the late Republic on the role of Italy is dealt with, for example, by Filippo Carlá-Uhink (2017), who shows that for Cicero the Italian Peninsula and its elites were the very root of his political ideal, which was later continued by the Augustan policy of *tota Italia*.

[18] The development is discussed in Dench 2004, 153–221. The strong role of Italy during early imperial era can be traced in the literature (e.g., Plin. *HN* 3.5.39; Plin. *Ep.* 6.19; SHA *Hadr.* 6.5) as well as in imperial coinage—particularly in the Antonine coins (see Dench 2004, 487).

[19] For Dio on the city of Rome, see Gowing 2016, 135.

Roman people confirmed Caesar's act toward the people of Gades, he does lead the reader to understand that these were tactical choices of Caesar by pointing out that the latter had a good experience with them, particularly because of his governorship. Similarly, Dio's attitude toward Caesar and his policy of granting citizenship is also evident later in his history when he reports how Caesar was quite liberal when rewarding those who had supported him in his political and military affairs. As Dio mentions, Caesar granted citizenship status to some and colonist status to others, but he also mentions that he "did not give these favors for nothing" (*Hist. Rom.* 43.39.5). These passages may indeed be read in accordance with the general tone Cassius Dio took with Julius Caesar as a person and a ruler. As Adam Kemezis has pointed out, while modern scholars have painted a picture of Caesar as a "reforming autocrat," Dio's account gives a less impressive picture of him. While Dio sees Caesar as a "master manipulator" in obtaining power, he also portrays him as quite ineffective when in power. For example, Dio's books dealing with Caesar's years as the sole ruler are more dedicated to describing Caesar's various ways to celebrate his victories and position than to describing his actual domestic initiatives, highlighting a certain lack of effectiveness. While Dio seems to admit that Caesar had good intentions as such, he did not have the ability to create a concrete system that guaranteed peace and stability; it was his successor, Octavian/Augustus, who would complete the task (Kemezis 2014, 118–20). Accordingly, I would suggest that Caesar's policy of granting citizenship more or less liberally to his supporters outside Italy was part of the picture of the man himself created by Dio; Caesar was cunning and, as such, impressive in the politics of "manipulation" while on his way to the throne. However, regarding acts concerning Rome and its identity, those decisions were not very remarkable or positive as such; their value was positive mainly to Caesar in his quest for power.

Early Empire: From Ideal to Decline?

An interesting passage can be found a bit later in Dio's history, where he provides an account of the death of Augustus. According to Dio,

Augustus had left detailed instructions for how his followers should act after his death. These instructions contained four books; the first dealt with his funeral, and the second with various acts that he had performed and that he ordered to be inscribed upon bronze columns placed around his shrine. The third contained issues regarding military affairs, revenues, public expenditures, money in the treasuries, and other issues significant for the administration of the Empire. Lastly, the fourth had instructions for Tiberius and for the public (*Hist. Rom.* 56.33.1).

While Dio does not describe any of these books in detail, he does single out one particular instruction of Augustus from the fourth book:

> The fourth [book] had instructions and commands for Tiberius and for the public. Among these injunctions was one to the effect that they should not free many slaves, lest they should fill the city with a promiscuous rabble; also, that they should not enrol large numbers as citizens, in order that there should be a marked difference between themselves and the subject nations. (*Hist. Rom.* 56.33.3)[20]

Here, we find a certain demand for consideration or prudence when granting new citizen rights, and now can also trace an ethnic, or at least cultural, aspect to citizenship. There was a divide between Romans, which mainly meant Italians in terms of citizenship, and "subject nations."[21] Remarkably, this is the only detail included in Augustus's instructions that Dio singles out. Thus, it possibly appeared for Dio as a piece of advice particularly worth reminding his readers of. At least it is more or less in line with the attitude he shows in his few other passages about granting citizenship.

After the Augustan period, Dio also recorded, from the reign of Claudius (41–54 CE), an occasion where the emperor asked a question to a member of a Lycian envoy, to a man who was Lycian by birth but who had been made a Roman citizen. As the man could not understand Claudius's question, the emperor took away his citizenship, saying that

[20] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

[21] See, e.g., Cooley 2016 for the significance of Italy for Augustan policy and propaganda.

it was not proper for a man to be a Roman who had no knowledge of the "language of the Romans" (*Hist. Rom.* 60.17.4). Thus, Dio points out here that Claudius, at least in principle, tried to show some strictness considering the citizen rights of non-Italian peoples, or at least toward those who were not acquainted well enough with Roman culture, with language being the decisive ethnic definer.[22] Interestingly, Claudius's famous proposal to the Senate to allow monied, landed citizens from further Gaul to enter the senatorial class, and thus the Senate itself, is not dealt with by Cassius Dio at all, although Tacitus records it at some length (*Ann.* 11.23–25).[23] Apparently, the question of recruiting new senators from the provinces was not a major concern for Dio, being a provincial senator himself, particularly as they already had obtained Roman citizenship by his time.

However, even though Dio acknowledged the occasional strictness in Claudius's policy on citizenship, he nevertheless describes that this policy was not to last. Eventually, citizenship became a trading item during the reign of Claudius. Dio writes:

> For inasmuch as Romans had the advantage over foreigners in practically all respects, many sought the franchise by personal application to the emperor, and many bought it from Messalina and the imperial freedmen. For this reason, though the privilege was at first sold only for large sums, it later became so cheapened by the facility with which it could be obtained that it came to be a common saying, that a man could become a citizen by giving the right person some bits of broken glass. (*Hist. Rom.* 60.17.5–6)[24]

Overall, the passages about granting citizenship in the Julio-Claudian era are admittedly few, and we should perhaps be careful before making too bold of an interpretation. However, what we have seen seems to

[22] Suetonius gives a similar account on ethnical/cultural demands related to Roman citizenship in Claudius's policy; see Suet. *Claud.* 16.2; 25.3. A similar attitude considering language as a mark of Romanness can also be related to the policy of Claudius's predecessor, Tiberius (*Hist. Rom.* 57.17.1).

[23] Claudius's speech is also preserved as an inscription in the so-called "Lyon Tablet" (*CIL* XIII, 1668).

[24] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

indicate that for Dio granting citizenship in the past required deliberation and some kind of cultural, ethnic, or political qualification. This is observed in particular with Augustus, the emperor who created the new monarchical system that Dio in his writings supports and considers as an ideal form of government.[25] However, we may also read that already during the reign of Claudius citizenship for Dio started to lose its prestige as it was sold cheaply and without much consideration.

Indeed, while Dio is never enthusiastic about citizens taking an active part in politics, he nevertheless values citizenship as a symbol of Roman identity from republican times all the way to the early Empire, where the ideal ruler, Augustus, tried to preserve its limited nature. But this eventually changed during Claudius's reign. That said, for Dio Claudius himself was initially not responsible for this, as we have noticed about his politics. However, his weakness when it came to Empress Messalina and his freedmen soon became evident.[26] As a result, the granting of citizenship became somewhat irregular business, despite his good intentions. According to Dio, a "great many other persons unworthy of citizenship were also deprived of it, whereas he granted citizenship to others quite indiscriminately, sometimes to individuals and sometimes to whole groups" (*Hist. Rom.* 60.17.5).

Dio and the *Constitutio Antoniniana*

Dio's narrative dealing with the post-Julio-Claudian imperial era does not deal much with citizenship. He briefly mentions how Otho (in 69 CE) tried to gain popularity among the people by putting on theatrical shows and by granting citizenship to foreigners, albeit without much success (*Hist. Rom.* 63.8.22). He also records how Marcus Aurelius (r. 161–180 CE) "gave audience to those whom came as envoys from outside nations, but did not receive them all on the same footing; for this varied

[25] Dio's pro-monarchical and pro-Augustan attitude is widely accepted by modern scholars; see, e.g., Gowing 1992, 26; Hose 1994, 394; Kemezis 2007, 270; Rees 2012, 151–53; Kemezis 2014, 120–26.

[26] As also expressed in *Hist. Rom.* 60.28.2.

according as the several states were worthy to receive citizenship" (*Hist. Rom.* 72[71].19).[27] Dio does not mention what the qualifications were to be "worthy" of citizenship, and does not, in fact, directly mention either if the envoys were eventually granted civil rights at all. Roman citizenship was, however, spread beyond the borders of Italy already in the republican and early imperial period by, for example, military veterans and Italian settlers who moved to various, foreign-populated, provinces. It was spread as well by the granting of citizenship to local provincial elites serving Rome. Thus, it is estimated that, by the death of Augustus in 14 CE, perhaps 4–7 percent of the free provincial population had Roman citizenship (Lavan 2016, 4). While the spread of citizenship continued to grow during the first two centuries CE, the volume of this growth is extremely hard to estimate because of our lack of sources (this question will be addressed shortly). However, what we do know is that the process experienced somewhat of a conclusion in 212 with the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of Caracalla, an edict providing citizen rights to (almost) the entire free population of the Empire. The edict is, as mentioned in the introduction, partly preserved on a fragmentary papyrus:

> Imperator Caesar Marcus Aurelius Augustus Antoninus Pius says: […] rather […] the causes and considerations […] that I give thanks to the immortal gods, because [when that conspiracy occurred] they preserved me, thus I think that I should be able [magnificently and piously] to make suitable response to their majesty, [if] I were able to lead [all who are presently my people] and others who should join my people [to the sanctuaries] of the gods. I give to all of those [who are under my rule throughout] the whole world, Roman citizenship, [(with the provision that) the just claims of communities] should remain, with the exception of the [ded]iticii. The [whole population] ought […] already to have been included in the victory. […] my edict will expand the majesty of the Roman [people]. (*P. Giss.* 40, col. 1.1–12)[28]

As dramatic as Caracalla's edict sounds, we have a very limited number of other sources mentioning the act. Besides the papyrus, we have a

[27] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

[28] Adapted from Potter 2004, 138–39.

short sentence in the *Digesta*, where Ulpian, a jurist from the Severan period, states how "all persons throughout the Roman world were made Roman citizens by an edict of the Emperor Caracas" (*Dig.* 1.5.17).[29] There is also a passage from Cassius Dio:

> Now this great admirer of Alexander, Antoninus [Caracalla], was fond of spending money upon the soldiers, great numbers of whom he kept in attendance upon him, alleging one excuse after another and one war after another; but he made it his business to strip, despoil, and grind down all the rest of mankind, and the senators by no means least. In the first place, there were the gold crowns that he was repeatedly demanding, on the constant pretext that he had conquered some enemy or other; and I am not referring, either, to the actual manufacture of the crowns—for what does that amount to?—but to the vast amount of money constantly being given under that name by the cities for the customary "crowning," as it is called, of the emperors. Then there were the provisions that we were required to furnish in great quantities on all occasions, and this without receiving any remuneration and sometimes actually at additional cost to ourselves all of which supplies he either bestowed upon the soldiers or else peddled out; and there were the gifts which he demanded from the wealthy citizens and from the various communities; and the taxes, but the new ones which he promulgated and the ten per cent tax that he instituted in place of the five per cent tax applying to the emancipation of slaves, to bequests, and to all legacies; for he abolished the right of succession and exemption from taxes which had been granted in such cases to those who were closely related to the deceased. This was the reason why he made all the people in his empire Roman citizens; nominally he was honouring them, but his real purpose was to increase his revenues by this means, inasmuch as aliens did not have to pay most of these taxes. (*Hist. Rom.* 78[77].9)[30]

Besides the paucity of sources, there are also other aspects that have led scholars to somewhat belittle the significance of the edict. It has been claimed, for example, that the edict was basically meaningless, as imperial rule had abolished the privileges traditionally connected with

[29] "Caracas" obviously refers here to Caracalla. Some additional, small pieces of evidence can be found from various later texts; see Marotta 2009, 101–3.

[30] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

Roman citizenship (Ando 2011, 16). It has also been seen as a "natural" conclusion to a long process that was, as such, an act with very little meaning (Sherwin-White 1973, 251–63), and so on.[31] However, there is a number of recent studies questioning this approach, highlighting instead the impact of the edict for Roman society. As pointed out by Arnaud Besson (2017, 215–16), during the period just prior to the edict, citizenship was still an enviable status expressing a privileged relationship with Rome; it was a status reserved for certain, limited groups in the provinces and mainly those in the service of the Empire. Similarly, Myles Lavan (2016, 33–34) has pointed out that the spread of Roman citizenship, while steady, was very limited during the first two centuries CE, and that perhaps 67–85 percent of the free population of the provinces still did not have citizenship when Caracalla promulgated his edict.

Thus, we may suggest that Cassius Dio, as a Roman senator, witnessed in the *Constitutio Antoniniana* a major political and cultural change, or at least a phenomenon of a larger political change, to which he also responded in his writings. Regarding the act itself, it appears that Dio's view was that Caracalla's motive was economic—namely, to increase the number of people available to be taxed. How "right" Dio was in his claims is a debated issue and does not need to concern us too much here, although David Potter's observation is worth mentioning. As he points out, one of the aims of Caracalla could also have been to promote a sense of Roman identity to the diverse population of the Empire, as Caracalla appears to be interested in linking the fortunes of the Empire's population to his own, as expressed in the edict (2004, 139).[32] In any case, Dio's tone is cynical; his hostility toward Caracalla

[31] For the studies arguing for the minimal significance of the act, see Besson 2017, 200.

[32] Potter does not claim that Dio was wrong in his economic claims as such, but that "there was more to the story that he chose to tell." As Potter continues, the edict also meant that a vast number of new citizens took Caracalla's name, as it was the custom among new citizens to take the name of a person sponsoring their entry into the community of citizens. This was a good way for Caracalla to encourage a huge amount of people to symbolically join him. Besides, it should also be noticed that the number of wealthy people receiving citizenship by

is well attested (Jones 2016, 306), and it seems he did not want to give the emperor any credit either. Moreover, when mentioning the act, he obviously mentions a thing very familiar to his audience—his fellow senators.[33] Thus, he simply does not need to explain the edict itself or its consequences. His main motive seems simply to remind his readers of the typical nature of Caracalla; his creed, and his desire to get more money. This is very much in accordance with other criticisms Dio has toward Caracalla in his writings. He records quite bitterly, on many occasions throughout his history, how the emperor, for example, wished to live in luxury and splendor, and that his greed had no limits. Caracalla was not only an evil emperor but also an overall economic burden to Dio and his fellow senators (*Hist. Rom.* 78[77].10.4; 12.6; 18.3–4; 20.1).

The "New Romans" in Dio's History

Whatever the imperial motives were, the edict probably affected the life of many people in the Empire. Rome had reached its largest expanse under Emperor Trajan (r. 98–117 CE); during that period, the Empire stretched from northern England to the Euphrates in Syria, and from the Rhine and Danube to the plains of the North African coast and the Nile Valley in Egypt (Le Glay et al. 1996, 270–77). While his successors, starting from Hadrian (r. 117–138 CE) adopted a policy of maintaining rather than expanding the Empire (Southern 2001, 14–16), Rome was still a vast entity in Dio's time, almost as large as it was back in the days of Trajan.

While the *Constitutio Antoniniana* probably had an impact in the western part of the Empire as well, it probably affected the East more, where citizenship had not spread as much as it had in the West by the

Caracalla's edict apparently was quite small. Thus, it is unlikely that the edict had a significant economic effect.

[33] As suggested by Alan Gowing (1992, 190), Dio's primary audience was his fellow senators, particularly those coming from the Eastern part of the Empire.

early third century CE.[34] Thus, it would be beneficial to shortly evaluate Dio's attitude toward those who were most affected by Caracalla's edict—the eastern populations who were now "new Romans" in terms of citizenship. Indeed, Dio was generally not too concerned about western peoples living inside the Roman Empire, such as Gauls, or those living outside it, such as Germans. While he once makes a comment about Gallic inconstancy, cowardice, and impetuosity (*Hist. Rom.* 78[77] 6.1a.), his main interest are peoples living in the East. This might reflect the general, particularly economic, importance of the eastern part of the Empire that had already begun in the second century and continued in Dio's lifetime as well (Le Glay et al. 1996, 297–310); as a senator, Dio was probably aware of the serious political, social, and economic issues facing the Empire.

Speaking of the East, the connection between citizenship and ethnicity in Dio's writings also arises in his descriptions of warfare in the East—even if he is usually not too direct or explicit about it. Dio's account of the Battle of Pharsalus, for example, which involved many non-citizen Easterners, a defining battle of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey in 48 BCE, is particularly interesting in this regard. For Dio, the battle itself was epic, even "apocalyptic" by its very nature.[35] These were indeed the "end of times" for Dio, as he considered the soon-to-be following Augustan reign a new, ideal Roman Empire. Quite early in his record of the battle, Dio separates the citizens from the "foreigners" in both armies by reporting that both Caesar and Pompey tried to inspire the men in their legions to fight, and, in doing so, used a similar kind of language. He writes: "As they both came from the same state and were talking about the same matters and called each other tyrants and themselves liberators from tyranny of the men they addressed, they had nothing different to say on either side" (*Hist. Rom.* 41.57.1–2).[36]

[34] I thus follow here the "conventional" view (as expressed by Lavan 2016, 34), even if admittedly there were many regional differences and the citizens were probably a minority compared to non-citizens also in the West during the early third century CE.

[35] The battle is described in *Hist. Rom.* 41.55–62.

[36] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

Thus, their legions were addressed, in Dio's account, with the rather traditional language of Roman political life. How well this would have inspired ordinary soldiers in the actual battle is another issue, but it is nevertheless noteworthy that Dio expresses this kind of language in his work. On the other hand, the allies and subject nations are simply inspired by "hopes of a better lot and fears of a worse one" (*Hist. Rom.* 41.57.3).

For Dio, the attempts at motivating citizens were not too successful on either side. His description of the actual beginning of the battle is particularly noteworthy:

> Such was the struggle in which they joined; yet they did not immediately come to close quarters. Sprung from the same country and from the same hearth, with almost identical weapons and similar formation, each side shrank from beginning the battle, and shrank from slaying anyone. So, there was great silence and dejection on both sides; no one went forward or moved at all, but with heads bowed they stood motionless, as if devoid of life. Caesar and Pompey, therefore, fearing that if they remained quiet any longer their animosity might become lessened or they might even become reconciled, hurriedly commanded the trumpeters to give the signal and the men to raise the war cry in unison. Both orders were obeyed, but the combatants were so far from being imbued with courage, that at the sound of the trumpeters' call, uttering the same notes, and at their own shout, raised in the same language, they showed their sense of relationship and betrayed their kinship more than ever, and so fell to weeping and lamenting. But after a long time, when the allied troops began the battle, the rest also joined in fairly beside themselves at what they were doing. (*Hist. Rom.* 41.58.1–3)[37]

The reluctance of a Roman soldier to fight is indeed an "apocalyptic" sign. Everywhere in the historiography and other literature—including Dio—we see the *topos* of brave Romans who are characterized by their excellent combat ability, quality in hand-to-hand fighting, manly courage, and personal bravery. Indeed, among the aforementioned features of *Romanitas*, courage in battle and militarism were a crucial part of

[37] Trans. Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

Roman self-understanding as well.[38] Thus, when Dio describes the unwillingness or Romans to fight in a defining moment that would affect the fate of both the city of Rome and its empire (*Hist. Rom.* 41.56.1), the Romans are acting against their very nature. Indeed, when they heard "the same notes" from trumpets and shouts "raised in the same language" they "fell to weeping and lamenting." Eventually, the citizens did their duties and began to fight, but only after their allies had started it. In practice, Dio seems to refer to only those who did not share language or customs as able to do so, and not those who "sprung from the same country and from the same hearth."

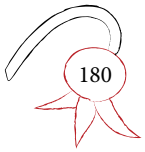
Eventually, the "apocalyptic" nature of the battle becomes even clearer when Dio describes various incredible, or even miraculous, proceedings taking place during the struggle. There is confusion because of the multiple languages shouted in during the heat of the combat, as well as the "confusion of nations" fighting against each other (*Hist. Rom.* 41.60). Thus, even if there were citizens on both sides who were reluctant to start the battle because of their mutual kinship, Dio makes it clear that the armies were not composed solely of Romans who had a common language, common customs, and common values, but of forces that were multilingual and multicultural. And while citizens on both sides were not eager to fight each other, they were still the best soldiers overall. The ultimate reason why Pompey lost the war was because Caesar had more Romans in his ranks, while Pompey's forces were, according to Dio, more "Asian." He writes:

> Caesar had the largest and the most genuinely Roman portion of the state legions and the most warlike men from the rest of Italy, from Spain, and the whole of Gaul and the islands that he had conquered; Pompey had brought along many from the senatorial and the equestrian order and from the regularly enrolled troops, and had gathered vast numbers from the subject and allied peoples and kings. (*Hist. Rom.* 51.55.2)

[38] For the immense value for military virtues for Roman identity and self-understanding, see, e.g., Roth 2009, 1; Zimmermann 2009, 10–16; Hahn 2017, 36–37.

> At last, after they had carried on an evenly-balanced struggle for a very long time and many on both sides alike had fallen or been wounded, Pompey, since the larger part of his army was Asiatic and untrained, was defeated, even as had been made clear to him before the action. (*Hist. Rom.* 51.61)[39]

While Dio is not explicit, it can be read that the more "genuinely Roman" army is the one which consists of more Roman citizens. Within the period in which Dio writes, this means mostly Italians. Hence, Italy is therefore more powerful and virtuous in military affairs. Indeed, Caesar's army as an "army of citizens" is highlighted by Dio in another earlier story, where Caesar warns some of his mutinying troops that they, while armed, were no better than the citizens back home and had no superiority over them in birth, education, training, or customs, and that the citizens were also Romans who could be soldiers as well (*Hist. Rom.* 51.31.1–2). Thus, for Dio, Caesar's legions shared the origin, social customs, and other important traits with citizens residing in Rome, and were more "genuinely" Roman than Pompey's troops.



The lack of Roman virtues among Eastern peoples is also a recurring theme in Dio's history, as he quite closely follows the old stereotypes of Easterners presented by many Roman and Greek writers who came before him. Of course, Dio is not an Italian himself but a Greek. However, in his history, he also clearly separates both Greeks and Romans from "barbarians" (*Hist. Rom.* 37.18.1; 52.10.2).[40] These barbarian peoples receive a harsh treatment by Dio; Egyptians are cowardly and fickle worshippers of cattle (*Hist. Rom.* 51.16.6), Arabians treacherous (51.7.1–2), Syrians crafty and brash (78[77].10.2; 79.39), and so on. Even when reporting the events of his own lifetime, Dio mentions the revolts in Syria (in 175 CE) and writes about how Marcus Aurelius declared Cilicians, Syrians, Jews, and Egyptians as peoples who have never been proven as superior to Romans and never will. Thus, a clear border is drawn between Romans and Eastern people already under Roman rule (*Hist. Rom.* 72[71].25). Later, Dio describes the siege of Hatra in 198 CE by Septimius Severus, writing how Europeans were

[39] Trans Cary and Foster 1914–1927.

[40] For the classification of different types of foreigners in Dio, see Sørensen 2016.

the only part of Severus's army with the ability to do anything, while his Syrian soldiers were completely useless (76[75].11.3–4). Dio's contempt toward Easterners becomes particularly clear when he recounts the deeds of Elagabalus, a Roman emperor with a Syrian background who ruled during Dio's own lifetime. For Dio, the young ruler was a "Sardanapalus"[41] who represented the luxury, degeneration, and unmanly habits of the East (Rantala 2020, 125–26).

Interestingly, while Dio's attitude is quite unfriendly toward those who had, during his own lifetime, become Roman citizens, he appears less hostile toward Parthians, the "archenemy" of Rome. While Dio stresses that the Parthians are still an inferior people compared to the Romans, he seems to consider them as the most admirable group existing in the East.[42] Apparently, this attitude derives from the military achievements of Parthia in their numerous wars against Rome, which also took place during Dio's own lifetime.[43] As Parthians were formidable soldiers, they in fact represent Roman ideals and qualities attached to the Roman identity better than other, weaker Eastern peoples, such as those who had just become Roman citizens en masse by the edict of Caracalla.

Conclusion

From the purely "legal" point of view, citizenship has a very limited value in Dio's history, as demonstrated by his mostly uninterested attitude toward "active citizens" during the days of the early and mid-Republic. From very early on, the roles of citizens are mostly subordinate to the acts of great men, and even when citizens do make a rare appearance as

[41] For example, *Hist. Rom.* 80[79].1.1; 2.4; 10.2; 11.1; and so on (cf. SHA *Heliogab.* 17.4). Sardanapalus was an Assyrian king who, in Roman literature, represented a stereotype of a weak and feminine Easterner, summarized in Diod. Sic. *Bib. Hist.* 2.23.

[42] For example, *Hist. Rom.* 37.7.2; 40.14.4.

[43] For a more detailed study on Dio's views on Parthians, see Peltonen and Rantala 2022.

active actors in Roman political life, Dio does not regard these occasions very highly. For him, the political activity of citizens in pre-imperial Rome mostly highlights the unstable nature of the republican system itself. Thus, it serves in its own way Dio's political mission; while the problems of pre-Augustan Rome were primarily caused by competition between strong individuals, the role of ordinary citizens did not make things any better.

However, the idea of citizenship is not superfluous to Dio On the contrary, it seems to have value as a symbolic mark of membership within the Roman community during the first centuries of its history. As such, it also had a clear ethnic dimension, which is shown in Dio's work by the role of Italians as "natural" members of the citizen-community. This dimension can be traced both from his descriptions of the "normal" process of granting citizenship inside Italy, as well as his more cautious attitude when describing the granting of citizen rights outside Italy, seeing the process as part of a political game during the shaky period of the late Republic. As Dio was not an Italian by birth, his seemingly cautious attitude might seem odd. After all, he himself was not only a Roman citizen but also a senator, and extremely proud of his status (Rantala 2016, 175). However, when reading Dio, we can see that, while he does not appear enthusiastic about citizenship begin given outside of Italy, his lack of enthusiasm applies to proceedings wherein citizen rights are granted en masse to "peoples," not individuals. Thus, Dio does not directly criticize the Roman traditional policy of granting citizenship to local elites in the provinces who took care of much of the local government for Rome and sometimes became Roman senators as well.[44] What he apparently wished for was simple moderation.

A similar attitude can be traced to when he described the actions of Claudius, who initially had good intentions. We can trace occasional prudence and, again, an ethnic dimension in Dio's account. However, the moderation was lost with the actions of Empress Messalina and imperial freedmen and the selling of citizenship out of greed without any

[44] While the role of these local elites was crucial for Rome from a governing perspective, it should also be noticed that the number of provincial citizens in total was much bigger than simply that of the elites (Lavan 2016, 33).

control. Claudius, with all his good intentions, could not resist such greed. This was a dangerous precedent, and the first step away from Augustus' precious advice had been taken. Later, similar action was taken by Caracalla, again motivated by money; first he bankrupted the senatorial class, and then gave citizenship to all, without any consideration to whom he was giving it, out of greed. In other words, both Claudius (or Messalina) and Caracalla broke away from the policies of an ideal monarch, although Caracalla's decision had much more radical consequences. Despite the actions of Messalina and Claudius, citizenship had probably not spread very widely by 212 CE; after the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, the situation was very different. A vast number of new citizens now emerged in the Empire, and yet the majority of them did not impress Dio. His attitude toward Easterners is extremely hostile, and, as we have seen, he makes a clear separation between Italian "citizens" and Eastern "Asians"—particularly with regard to their combat abilities—an important marker of Roman identity in Roman historical thought throughout the centuries. Caracalla's policy was, thus, an explicit step away from Augustan ideals and further proof that he was inadequate as a ruler.

Hence, while citizenship itself is not an idea to which Dio gives very much attention to in his history, we can still recognize that it occasionally appears as part of his "mission." Thus, for Dio the *Constitutio Antoniniana* expressed the abandonment of the ideal monarchical system of Augustus, in which citizenship should be controlled and only very carefully expanded. The changing status of citizenship from the Augustan era to Caracalla went hand in hand with the changing nature of the Roman Empire itself—a direction that a Roman senator such as Cassius Dio found unacceptable.

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