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THE POPULATION OF THE PIRAEUS IN THE ROMAN PERIOD: A RE-ASSESSMENT OF THE EVIDENCE OF FUNERARY INSCRIPTIONS*

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Introduction

In 87–86 BCE, the Roman army under L. Cornelius Sulla invaded Attica and, after a long siege, sacked Athens and the Piraeus.[1] In both ancient and modern eyes, Sulla's sack has been seen as a key event, which marked not only the end of Athenian independence but also the beginning of an irreversible decline for its port, the Piraeus, in antiquity.[2] Ancient literary testimonies in the decades following the Sullan sack portray the Piraeus as an urban wasteland, crammed with ruins but devoid of life.[3] Strabo, writing in the Augustan age, notes that the town of his time endured, but had shrunk between the two harbours (the Kantharos and Zea);[4] Pausanias,[5] writing later in the second century CE, mentions a number of monuments but pays more attention to the old, 'Classical', town than to the contemporary 'Roman' Piraeus. Rescue excavations in the last few decades have provided corroboration for Strabo's remark. Building remains dating

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[1] For ancient testimonies and a thorough account of the historical developments leading up to the events of 87–86 BCE, see C. Habicht, *Die Geschichte Athens in hellenistischer Zeit* (Munich, 1995), 297–303; for the sack of Athens, see ibid., 303–13, and M. C. Hoff, 'Laceratae Athenae: Sulla's siege of Athens in 87/6 BC and its aftermath', in M. C. Hoff and S. I. Rotroff (eds.), *The Romanization of Athens. Proceedings of an International Conference held at Lincoln, Nebraska, April 1996* (Oxford 1997), 33–51.

[2] For example, R. Garland, *The Piraeus. From the Fifth to the First Century BC*, second edition (London, 2001), 66; C. Panagos, *Le Pirée. Étude économique et historique depuis les temps anciens jusqu'à la fin de l'empire romain* (Athens, 1995), 183–4. For a more positive assessment of the post-Sullan and Roman Piraeus, see J. Day, *An Economic History of Athens under Roman Domination* (New York, 1942), 142 ff.

[3] Cicero, *To His Friends*, 4.5.4.

[4] Strabo, *Geography*, 9.395–6, 14.654.

[5] Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 1.1.2–4.

to the Classical period (mainly the fourth century BCE) extend over a larger area than those of Roman date, which tend to concentrate on the isthmus between the Kantharos and Zea harbours.[6] Nevertheless, more recent finds and a reconsideration of the available archaeological evidence has shown that settlement clustering around the main harbour did not result from the destruction of the port by Sulla but had started in Hellenistic times and was intensified in the Roman period.[7]

One of the main implications of this evidence lies in its significance for changes in the demography of the Piraeus in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The extent to which the size of the settled (or even built) area of a city can function as a proxy for calculating urban population numbers at any particular time is a vexed issue, and generally this correlation cannot be supported on archaeological grounds alone.[8] In other areas of Roman Greece, such as Boeotia, where archaeological surveys have documented such a shrinkage in the size of urban settlements, it has been argued on both archaeological and textual grounds that a demographic collapse did indeed take place.[9] To what extent does this also hold for the Piraeus in the Roman period? Although the available literary sources do not explicitly mention any grave population decline, the description of the Roman Piraeus as a shrunken town begs the question.

Arguably, the question can be explored to a limited extent using literary texts or archaeological data alone,[10] but funerary inscriptions – so long as their limitations are recognized and borne in mind – provide a remarkably rich record, which can be brought to shed relevant light. The purpose of this paper is to examine the Roman-period epitaphs and to compare this evidence with that of previous periods in order to draw some meaningful conclusions about the intensity of demographic change after the Sullan sack. Surviving epitaphs from the Piraeus have recurring features and, when studied in quantity, allow us to re-assess some specific aspects of the demography of the Roman Piraeus (for example, citizen mobility, choice of residence,

[6] See K.-V. von Eickstedt, *Beiträge zur Topographie des antiken Piräus* (Athens, 1991).

[7] Discussed in D. Grigoropoulos, 'After Sulla: A Study in the Settlement and Material Culture of the Piraeus Peninsula in the Roman Imperial and Late Roman Periods', unpublished PhD thesis, University of Durham, 2005.

[8] See J. Lloyd, 'Some Aspects of Urban Development at Euesperides/Berenice', in G. Barker, J. Lloyd, and J. Reynolds (eds.), *Cyrenaica in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1985), 55.

[9] See particularly S.E. Alcock, *Graecia Capta. The Landscapes of Roman Greece* (Cambridge, 1993), 96 ff.

[10] On the constraints of archaeological evidence from the town, see Grigoropoulos (n. 7).

ethnic composition of local population, etc.) that are pertinent to the issue outlined above.

This reassessment is intended to demonstrate three things: first, during the Roman period, the population of Athenian citizens registered in the deme of the Piraeus (henceforth, 'Peiraieis') is likely to have increased; secondly, migration of Peiraieis to Athens was not affected significantly by the sack of the port by Sulla; and thirdly, the resident population of the Piraeus during the Roman period as in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, consisted mainly of people from other Athenian demes and foreigners. Before dealing with these issues, it is important to introduce the available evidence that forms the basis of inferences about the variation in population size through time and to discuss some of its strengths and limitations.

Funerary inscriptions and the population of Roman Piraeus

For Attica, the existence of a large number of tombstones recording various population groups has attracted particular attention as a means of studying the demography of the region since the time of Arnold Gomme's work on the population of Classical Athens.[11] Tombstones of Athenian citizens and foreigners in which the inscribed names of the deceased are accompanied by the person's demotic or, in the latter case, ethnic origin offer an invaluable tool for tracing patterns of the demographic development of these population groups through time.[12] In addition, funerary inscriptions, with known contexts of discovery, that commemorate Athenian citizens can sometimes – and with caution – be used to help trace the spatial mobility and fluctuations in the size of this group on a diachronic basis.[13]

The following discussion focuses on two elements in the epigraphic evidence. First, it draws upon tombstones found in the Piraeus since the nineteenth century and listed in the specialist literature, mainly in the standard collections of Greek inscriptions *IG* II^2, *IG* III *editio*

[11] A.W. Gomme, *The Population of Athens in the Fifth and Fourth Centuries* BC (Oxford, 1933).

[12] See in particular M. H. Hansen, L. Bjertrup, T. H. Nielsen, L. Rubinstein, and T. Vestergaard, 'The Demography of the Athenian Demes: The Evidence of the Sepulchral Inscriptions', *Analecta Romana Instituti Danici* 19 (1990), n. 43.

[13] On spatial mobility in Classical Athens, see R. Osborne, 'The Potential Mobility of Human Populations', *OJA* 10, 2 (1991), 231–52, and A. Damsgaard-Madsen, 'Attic Funerary Inscriptions: Their Use as Historical Sources and Some Preliminary Remarks', in E. Christiansen, A. Damsgaard-Madsen, and E. Hallager (eds.), *Studies in Ancient History and Numismatics presented to Rudi Thomsen* (Aarhus, 1988), 55–68.

minor, and *SEG*. Latin tombstones from the Piraeus are rare (see below, p. 178 with n. 45). A survey of these works has yielded 132 inscriptions dating to the Roman imperial period and indexed as found in or near to the Piraeus.[14] The tombstones record 137 names in all and have a number of recurring features, with most carrying the personal and paternal name of the individual and his/her demotic or ethnic group. Figure 1 shows quantitative data about the sex and origins of the commemorated. The tombstones are variously and not always accurately dated, even within a century, and I have generally kept the dating given by the collections. Figure 2 shows the chronological placement of this material.

A second element is provided by the occurrence of tombstones recording one specific group, namely men and women registered in

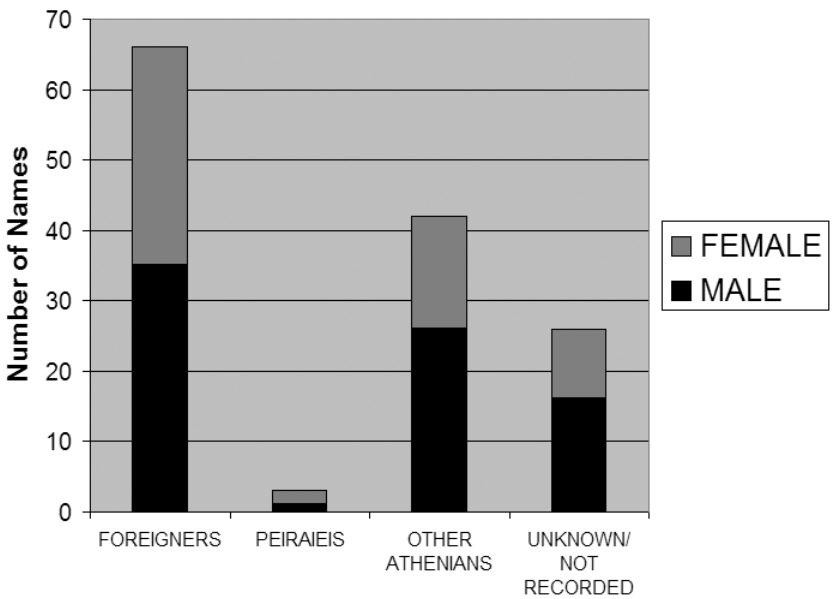

Figure 1. Groups commemorated on Roman tombstones discovered in the Piraeus (total of 137 names).

[14] This includes eight examples that, at the time these works were compiled, were in the collection of the Piraeus Museum. It cannot be ascertained that these were also discovered in the Piraeus but it should be borne in mind that the Piraeus Museum did not start to accumulate large amounts of archaeological material from outside the Piraeus until after its rebuilding in 1966, a significant time after the epigraphic *corpora* mentioned above were compiled. See G. Steinhauer, *Ta mnimeia kai to arhaiologiko mouseio Peiraios* (Athens, 1997), 27; Damsgaard-Madsen (n. 13), 61.

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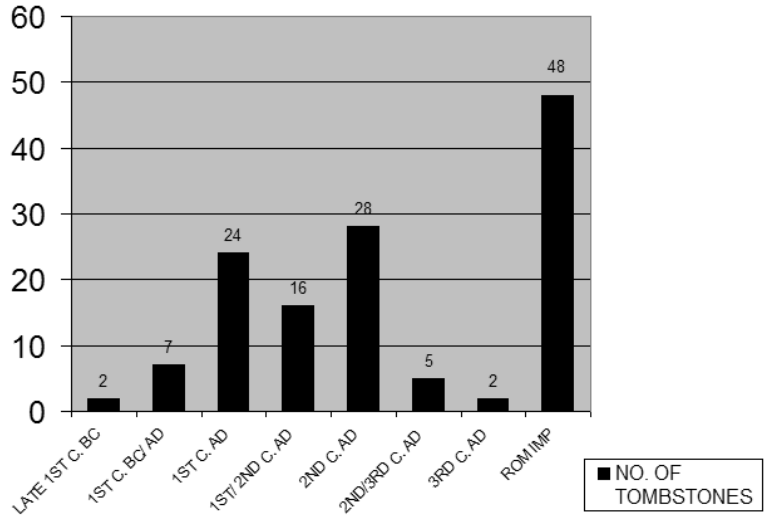

Figure 2. Inscribed tombstones of Roman imperial date from the Piraeus: chronological distribution (total: 132, based on *IG* II² and *IG* III ed. minor).

the deme (parish) of the Piraeus and found in different locations in Attica, mainly Athens. The structure of the epigraphic commemoration of these individuals is the same as that for tombstones recording other Athenian citizens,[15] with the exception that the demotic following the name and patronymic is invariably 'Peiraieus'. For the Roman imperial period, based mainly on the information of the works quoted above, there are thirty-three such inscriptions, mostly commemorations for one individual.

It should be noted here that not all urban residents necessarily had their personal details carved on tombstones upon death, for cultural, economic, or even circumstantial reasons.[16] For Attica, it has been argued that funerary monuments could be relatively low cost, and the long tradition of epigraphic commemoration in the region may suggest that a large part of the population did, or at least could, afford them.[17] On the other hand, a number of studies have emphasized the need to allow for the fluctuating levels in the epigraphic habit over

[15] For the epigraphic formula on Attic tombstones of the Roman period, see B. H. McLean, *An Introduction to Greek Epigraphy of the Hellenistic and Roman Periods from Alexander the Great down to the Reign of Constantine (323 B.C.–A.D. 337)* (Ann Arbor, MI, 2002), 97.

[16] G. J. Oliver, 'An Introduction to the Epigraphy of Death', in G. J. Oliver (ed.), *The Epigraphy of Death. Studies in the History and Society of Greece and Rome* (Liverpool, 2000), 11.

[17] See, extensively, T. H. Nielsen, L. Bjertrup, M. H. Hansen, L. Rubenstein, and T. Vestergaard, 'Athenian Grave Monuments and Social Class', *GRBS* 30 (1989), 411–20.

time and the possibility that certain inscribed groups are under- or overrepresented.[18] As we shall see below,[19] these remarks are particularly pertinent when tackling problems such as ancient demography, as in the case of the Piraeus in the Roman period, where inscriptions have been used in the past without taking the epigraphic habit seriously into consideration. This does not call into question the use of funerary inscriptions for the study of ancient demography, but underlines the need to establish control groups, using other epigraphic sources, in order to minimize the impact of such bias in epigraphic commemoration.

For those epitaphs found in the Piraeus, recurring features such the ones mentioned previously allow us to study some compositional aspects of the population of the port and their general development through time: To what extent was the Piraeus populated by foreigners and locals? And to what extent did Athenians migrate from other areas to the Piraeus? Funerary inscriptions recording Peiraieis can in turn provide some complementary information about the spatial mobility of this group. For example, to what extent did Peiraieis take residence in their home deme or chose to live in other locations/demes? Such questions are not new, but the existence of new data on certain aspects of the epigraphic record allows us to approach these issues on a diachronic basis and review the results of previous research in a new light.

Population decline after the Sullan sack?

The notion that, in the period following the destruction of the town by the Romans in 86 BCE, the population of the Athenian port declined in a dramatic fashion has been a common theme throughout nineteenth- and twentieth-century historiography on ancient Greece,[20] but in recent times the thesis was developed systematically on the basis of funerary inscriptions, first by Ulrich Kahrstedt and anew by Robert Garland. Kahrstedt, using all the epitaphs of all periods and discussing their occurrence in space and time for the

[18] See, for instance, R. McMullen, 'The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire', *American Journal of Philology* 103 (1982), 239; H. W. Pleket, 'Greek Inscriptions in the Roman Empire: Their Strength, Deficiencies and (In)Accessibility', in *XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina, Roma, 18–24 settembre 1997* (Roma, 1999), 83.

[19] Pp. 170–2.

[20] See for example, G.F. Hertzberg, *Die Geschichte Griechenlands unter der Herrschaft der Römer* (Halle, 1866–75), 386, 487.

whole of Attica, claimed that the Piraeus experienced a significant shrinkage of its population in imperial times, while at the same time contributing to the demographic expansion of Athens.[21] In his study on the Piraeus, Garland raised two similar points in relation to the demography of the port in the Roman period: first, decline in overall population numbers and, second, migration.

Both issues, namely decline and migration, are to some extent interconnected, but for the purpose of clarity it is necessary to deal with them separately and then explore the extent of their link in more detail. Garland drew upon the funerary inscriptions from the fourth century BCE to the third century CE that recorded foreigners and Athenian citizens (registered both at the Piraeus and other demes) who 'domiciled' in the Piraeus in order to examine demographic changes in the composition of the population of the town. Although providing detailed lists of the evidence for foreigners only (a total of 182 inscriptions), his discussion also mentions 240 inscriptions that commemorated Athenian citizens buried in the port town.[22] Based on the decline of the absolute number of inscriptions commemorating Peiraieis, other Athenians, and foreigners in the port, he argued that the port's population experienced various waves of decline from the fourth century BCE onwards, culminating in a sharp drop as a result of the Sullan sack in 86 BCE. He complemented this assertion by noting that the Sullan sack resulted in a general slaughter of the population and led most of the survivors to migrate to Athens.

Although the historical context for a population decline after the Sullan sack would appear to work well with the patterns demonstrated by the epigraphic record, excessive reliance on the funerary record alone is likely to create a bias in favour of periods that are better represented than others, as well as creating misconceptions about the size of population. As John Bodel has noted,[23] the richness and abundance of such evidence is likely to create the illusion that epitaphs can reveal demographic realities rather than commemorative practices. To what extent can the fact that 110 tombstones commemorating foreigners buried at the Piraeus date from the 4th century BCE as opposed to only 39 dating to the Roman imperial period be regarded as a reliable indicator of population decline? Or, for that matter, why

[21] Garland (n. 2); U. Kahrstedt, *Das wirtschaftliche Gesicht Griechenlands in der Kaiserzeit. Kleinstadt, Villa und Domäne* (Bern, 1954), 42 ff., particularly 43–4.

[22] Garland (n. 2), 60. His total of 240 probably includes inscriptions of all periods; however, this is not stated explicitly.

[23] J. Bodel, 'Epigraphy and the Ancient Historian', in J. Bodel (ed.), *Epigraphic Evidence. Ancient History from Inscriptions* (London, 2001), 35.

should a drastic decline be inferred from the fact that only 12% of all individuals commemorated on tombstones discovered at the Piraeus date to the period after Augustus?

Apart from issues that relate to the circumstances of survival, the extensive discussion of the epigraphic habit in the past decades – especially in the context of epigraphically rich regions of the classical world such as Attica, where it has been argued that information about individuals recorded on tombstones decreases through time[24] – invites us to re-think the validity of inferences of diachronic population trends that rest solely on the use of 'coarse' straight counts of funerary inscriptions.[25] In recent years, a more refined methodology has been proposed for examining demographic issues using the epigraphic record of ancient Athens, which is based on the comparison of percentages between funerary, ephebic, and bouleutic inscriptions as internal cross-checks of epigraphic bias.[26] This rests on the premise that the epigraphic habit will fluctuate with respect to not only funerary but also other types of inscriptions that have a bearing upon ancient demographic patterns. The funerary data can be trusted only when percentages of demotics recorded on all types of inscription show only small deviations from each other.

Applying the methodology developed for this purpose to the evidence for the Roman funerary inscriptions (total: 39; 3% of total number of inscriptions) from the Piraeus, shows that the ephebic and bouleutic lists (total: 82 (4%) and 28 (2%) commemorations respectively) of the same period do not reveal any significant deviations in the percentages of recorded Peiraieis as adduced from the funerary inscriptions.[27] This suggests that, although the number of surviving funerary inscriptions from the Piraeus is rather small, these same epigraphic data can be trusted as an indicator of demographic patterns. This refined approach thus reveals a very different picture for the Piraeus in the Roman period from that proposed by Garland. Hansen et al. speculated that only very small demes, with a low number of male lines that could provide new citizens, became extinct or shrank considerably in the 600-year period covered in their

[24] See especially E. A. Meyer, 'Epitaphs and Citizenship in Classical Athens', *JHS* 113 (1993), 99–121, especially figs. 1 and 2; see also the discussion above, pp. 168–9.

[25] Kahrstedt (n. 21), 44, discussed these issues to some extent but this did not apparently deter him from explaining the fluctuation in the number of inscriptions in terms of population rise or decline.

[26] Hansen et al. (n. 12), 27–8.

[27] Percentages are calculated by dividing the number of recorded demotics attested for each epigraphic category by the total number of inscriptions of each category for a specific period, i.e., in this case, Roman. Data according to Hansen et al. (n. 12), 33, table 9.

study.[28] The Piraeus was certainly not one of them. According to the authors' calculations based on inscriptions with recorded demotics, the Piraeus was among the ten largest demes of Attica in the Roman imperial period and eighth in order in relation to the rest of the 139 demes on account of its citizen population.[29]

These observations serve to correct the picture presented by Garland, who implied that the population of the Piraeus in the Roman imperial period suffered a grave loss in relation to previous times. The deme population certainly did not decline in a dramatic fashion; on the contrary, it seems to have flourished in the Roman imperial period for the first time since the fourth century BCE. The low numbers of tombstones of the Roman imperial period commemorating Peiraieis discovered in the Piraeus cannot thus be taken to show 'the virulence of the Sullan destruction'.[30] This is a weak explanation, for two main reasons. First, it does not take account of the fact that tombstones of Roman imperial date from the Piraeus span some 400 years, some dating to long after the Sullan destruction. Secondly, as a comparison with the evidence for previous periods suggests, the population of the Piraeus, even in the Late Classical period (when it is assumed to have been particularly prosperous), included only a small number of persons registered in the local deme. This issue and some of its implications will be considered in more detail in the following parts.

Migration of Peiraieis and the composition of the Athenian population of the Piraeus from the Classical to the Roman period

It appears that, based on the comparison between bouleutic, funerary, and ephebic inscriptions, the deme of the Piraeus grew considerably in the course of the Roman period, the first growth since the 4th century BCE. But where did the majority of the Athenian citizen population registered in the deme of the Piraeus live? Hansen et al. are concerned primarily with broad demographic developments of the demes as clans over time rather than as places of residence. Thus they do not make clear how many of the inscriptions recording Peiraieis that they cite have been found in the Piraeus, Athens, or elsewhere in

[28] Hansen et al. (n. 12), 31–2.
[29] Ibid., 29.
[30] Garland (n. 2), 66.

Attica.[31] In the grouping employed by Hansen et al. the Piraeus is listed with the other 'urban' demes, on account of the fact that the port was fortified and physically connected to the *astu*, although this was the case only for limited and discontinuous periods in the 600 years or so that their evidence covers.[32]

Although it is debatable whether this last criterion matters, what is really important in the context of this study is that grouping the Piraeus with the other urban demes misses the fact that the port was situated at a greater distance from the *asty* than was true for the rest of the so-called 'urban demes'. Thus, in terms of its geographical location in relation to the civic centre, the Piraeus stood midway between the proper urban demes and the more distant 'rural' ones.[33] What effect did this distance have on the composition of its population? This is a very important issue because it not only addresses the fundamental question of the choice of residence but also has implications about the qualitative composition of the population of the Piraeus in the Roman imperial period. It also brings us to the second issue raised by previous research, namely the migration of much of the population of the Piraeus to Athens after the sack of the port by the Romans in 86 BCE.

Migration as an explanation of patterns in the epigraphic record for Roman Piraeus was put forward by Kahrstedt, who noted that only 5% of all post-Augustan epitaphs were found in the Piraeus compared to 15% of all finds dated to the entire preceding era.[34] Garland reached a similar conclusion about migration in the Roman imperial period on observing that 'out of 24 sepulchral inscriptions commemorating Peiraieis which date to the Roman era no fewer than 22 came to light outside the Piraeus itself'.[35] By that, he seems to be implying that there was a drastic drop in the local population resident in the port when compared to the previous periods. The drop, however, reflects rather that people had less information (including details about their deme of origin, age, etc.) inscribed on their tombstones from the Roman imperial period onwards.

[31] On the correlation between the epitaphs from Attica and the place of residence of the persons recorded on them, see the extensive discussion in Damsgaard-Madsen (n. 13).

[32] Cf. Meyer (n. 24), 103.

[33] The topographical identification of individual demes is discussed in J. S. Traill, *The Political Organization of Attica. A Study of the Demes, Trittyes and Phylai and their Representation in the Athenian Council* (Princeton, NJ, 1975).

[34] Kahrstedt (n. 21), 44.

[35] Garland (n. 2), 66.

It is important to dwell on this issue a bit more, as it must be clarified whether the migration put forward by Kahrstedt and especially by Garland with respect to inscribed Peiraieis is a phenomenon related exclusively to the vicissitudes of the later history of the Athenian port, or whether it can be observed for other periods covered by the epigraphic record. In this context, it is worth asking where tombstones of the Classical and Hellenistic periods commemorating Peiraieis have been found. Significantly, relevant data collected by Damsgaard-Madsen suggest that 68% of such inscriptions come from areas outside the Piraeus.[36] In other words, if the correlation between findspot of epitaph and place of residence holds, for inscribed Classical–Early Hellenistic and Roman Peiraieis the tendency was not to reside in the deme in which they were registered but elsewhere, and, as the evidence compiled by Damsgaard-Madsen suggests, mainly in Athens itself.

An important question that Garland's conclusion raises is whether the port, at any period of its history, was populated mainly by persons registered in the local deme. Garland does not offer any such comparative examination but his discussion contains inconsistencies between the information he cites and the conclusion he reaches. For example, it is stated that 'out of 240 inscriptions commemorating [Athenian] citizens who were buried in the Piraeus, a mere eight commemorate Peiraieis'.[37] Assuming that his number of '240' includes inscriptions of all periods – which is most probably the case – and following his reasoning, it would appear to be the case that, throughout the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods, the great majority of Athenian citizens resident in the Piraeus were persons with origins outside the port town itself.

Even judging by the information that Garland himself cites, the Peiraieis as a group defined by its deme affiliation seem to have made up only a small fraction of the citizen population resident in the port, not only in the Roman imperial period but also in previous eras. The data provided by the study of Damsgaard-Madsen on Attic epitaphs of the Classical to Early Hellenistic period may help to put this into a clearer perspective.[38] Damsgaard-Madsen used 736 inscriptions recording male Athenians dating between 400 and 200 BCE and tabulated their findspots against the demotics recorded to assess the patterns of intra-regional migration. The Piraeus was incorporated

[36] Damsgaard-Madsen (n. 13).
[37] Garland (n. 2), 60.
[38] Damsgaard-Madsen (n. 13).

with the adjacent area of Phaleron and inscriptions discovered in these areas are listed as found in his Region Ib. According to his data, the vast majority of tombstones of citizens recovered from the Piraeus and Phaleron do indeed record men who came from other areas of Attica, with only a small percentage attributable to citizens registered at the Piraeus (see figure 3).[39]

The epigraphic evidence for the Roman imperial period is less numerous but nonetheless quite telling. Based on the information recorded mainly in *IG* II^2 and a number of more recent collections,[40] there are forty-two names of Athenians recorded on tombstones found in the Piraeus dating to the Roman imperial period, of which eighteen are women. Even in the Roman imperial period, however, women were not, strictly speaking, considered citizens, and if we exclude this population group to be able to compare like with like, the evidence suggests that, again, it is mainly tombstones of citizens of other demes that are found in the Piraeus (see figure 4). A comparison with the available evidence for the Roman imperial period thus indicates that, while the overall number of inscriptions dropped, the general trend in the pattern of representation of 'locals' versus Athenians of other demes did not change significantly.

It is important to stress in this context that none of the above information can be taken at face value, as direct evidence about the extent

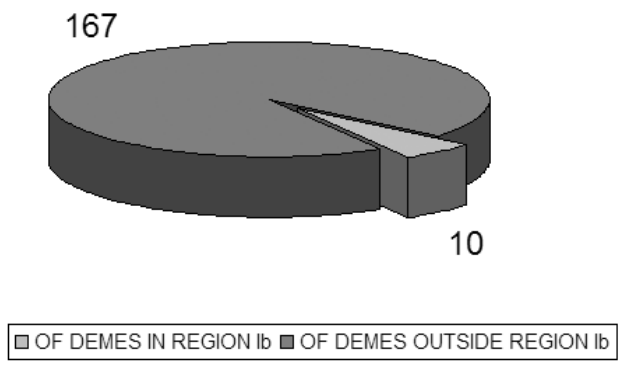

Figure 3. Deme origin of male citizens commemorated on tombstones discovered in region Ib (Piraeus/Phaleron), 400–200 BCE; total of 177 names. Source: Damsgaard-Marsden (n. 2).

[39] Ibid., 65.

[40] I have generally used information collected in the works cited by Hansen et al. (n. 12), 43, n. 7.

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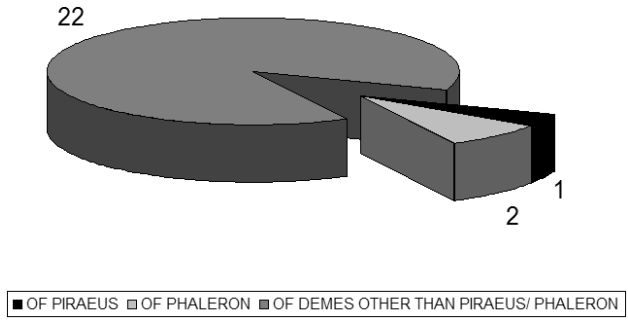

Figure 4. Deme origin of male citizens commemorated on tombstones discovered in or near the Piraeus and Phaleron, first to third centuries CE (total of 25 names).

of migration from the Piraeus to other locations in Attica and Athens or the size of the Athenian citizen population in the Piraeus at any particular period. What it may permit is appreciation of some broad patterns or tendencies of the population dynamics of the Piraeus as a deme/clan and as a deme/location over time. It is thus important to focus on these broad patterns rather than the actual fluctuation in the numbers of tombstones, which is likely to contain biases, both ancient and modern. In this respect, the tombstone evidence from the Piraeus suggests two things: first, that at no time were Peiraieis the dominant group within the territory of their deme of origin. In other words, the port seems to have been populated mainly by other groups, a substantial number of which must have been made up by citizens from other Attic demes. Secondly, the trends reflected in the tombstones suggest that Peiraieis primarily chose to take residence in Athens, not only in the Roman period but also in the previous centuries.

Demographic nucleation and migratory trends in context

The epigraphic evidence does not permit a single and straightforward correlation between the Sullan sack and the migration of Peiraieis. Events or extended periods of instability, warfare, and unrest, such as the Mithridatic or the Roman civil wars are indeed very likely to have fostered these movements. Nevertheless, migration, if securely adduced from the evidence of Attic epitaphs, has a more complex trajectory in the settlement history of Attica. Recent works show that migratory movements from the countryside demes to the *asty* had started to take place as early as the Late Classical

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period and that these intensified in the Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods.[41]

However, we should also consider cultural, social, and economic motivations, which are likely to have had considerable influence upon the choice of place of residence. It has been argued that, in the Roman imperial period, a number of factors made residence in the city more attractive to larger parts of the population, such as better prospects for work, and the provision of public services and facilities through civic munificence.[42] In the case of Roman Athens, for members of the local elite who came from the demes of the periphery, residence in the city also had the additional advantage of enabling people to live closer to the meeting places of the Athenian assembly and city council.[43]

As the evidence considered above suggests, the citizen population registered in the deme of the Piraeus was not exempt from this process of nucleation. However, the port itself provided a developed satellite urban centre next to Athens, in both the Classical–Hellenistic period and the Roman imperial period. This created a substantial, if not always stable, influx of population from the other Attic demes and, as will be shown below, from regions further away. In this context, the fact that the epigraphic evidence from the Piraeus points to the predominance of citizens of other demes should not cause any surprise. This observation applies to both the Classical–Hellenistic period and the Roman imperial period, but for the latter it has a greater historical significance. It serves to demonstrate that demographic losses that the port town may have suffered as a result of warfare and unrest in the course of the first century BCE were compensated on a considerable scale in the course of the later centuries under the empire.

Migration of foreigners to the Piraeus

Apart from the influx of people from the neighbouring or more remote demes in Attica, the permanent population in the port was

[41] For arguments in favour of migratory movements from the countryside to the *asty* in the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods, see Gomme (n. 11) and Damsgaard-Madsen (n. 13), 63 ff.; *contra* R. Osborne, *Demos. The Discovery of Classical Attika* (Cambridge, 1985), 41–2; D. Whitehead, *The Demes of Attica 508/7–ca. 250 BC* (Princeton, NJ, 1986), 352–7.

[42] On nucleation as a process in settlement and demographic patterns in Greece during the early imperial period, see Alcock (n. 9), 113–14.

[43] As argued by Hansen et al. (n. 12), 33.

also boosted by the arrival and settlement of foreigners, arguably attracted by commercial and economic activities at the port. Philostratus, in his biography of Proclus, mentions that this philosopher from Naucratis in Egypt bought a house in the Piraeus and started an import business.[44] The available funerary inscriptions recording foreigners reflects this tendency in a telling manner (Table 1). There are sixty-five tombstones of foreigners dated to the Roman imperial period from the Piraeus, making up 48% of the total available evidence. The actual size of this group in relation to the total population at any time within this large time span is very difficult to estimate. Account should also be taken of the possibility that at least some of the foreigner population included in the epitaphs were short-term visitors (such as sailors and merchants) who died in the port and were buried in local cemeteries.

The latter is most likely to have been the case with two tombstones commemorating members of the crew of the imperial fleet based at Misenum and Ravenna in Italy that came from Bessica in Thrace.[45] These two individuals were probably stationed in the port at the time of Trajan's campaigns in Parthia.[46] Although the demographic impact of such groups is likely to have been low from a long-term perspective, the periodic presence of such visitors, especially during the sailing season, would have added to the overall size of the population in the port and would have been significant in generating economic activities that sustained a major part of the permanently resident population.

Other aspects of this evidence, however, suggest genuine permanent settlement of foreigners during the Roman imperial period. The data, excluding the tombstones of the two crew members of the imperial fleet from Bessica, comprise sixty-three tombstones (see figure 5). As in previous periods, foreigners commemorated in the Piraeus seem to have come mainly from the eastern part of the empire, namely Thrace, Asia Minor, the southern Black Sea littoral, and the eastern Mediterranean, as well as from other cities within the Roman province of Achaea and Macedonia.[47] In most cases, the cities/areas from which these individuals came are represented by two, or at most three, inscriptions, with the exception of the island of Salamis,[48] which is

[44] Philostratus, *Lives of Sophists*, 603.

[45] *CIL*, 557 and 558.

[46] See discussion in J. H. Oliver, 'Excavations in the Athenian Agora: Greek and Latin Inscriptions', *Hesperia* 10 (1941), 237–61.

[47] For foreigners in the Piraeus in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, see Garland (n. 2), 64–6.

Table 1. Ethnic origins of foreigners (non-Athenians) commemorated on tombstones of the Roman imperial period from the Piraeus (listed by region; based on IGII^2)

Regional Grouping	**Ethnic Commemorated**	**Number of Inscriptions**
Greece (incl. Macedonia)	Megara	2
	Pellene	1
	Salamis	10
	Thessalonike	1
Asia Minor	Dardanos	1
	Laodikeia	1
	Miletos	27
	Nikomedeia	1
	Smyrna	1
	Synnada	1
	Tralleis	1
Thrace & the Black Sea	Amastris	1
	Amissos	1
	Armenia	1
	Bessica	2
	Byzantium	1
	Herakleia	3
	Lysimacheia	2
	Sinope	1
Eastern Mediterranean	Antioch	3
	Arados	2
	Berytus	1
Total Number of Inscriptions		65

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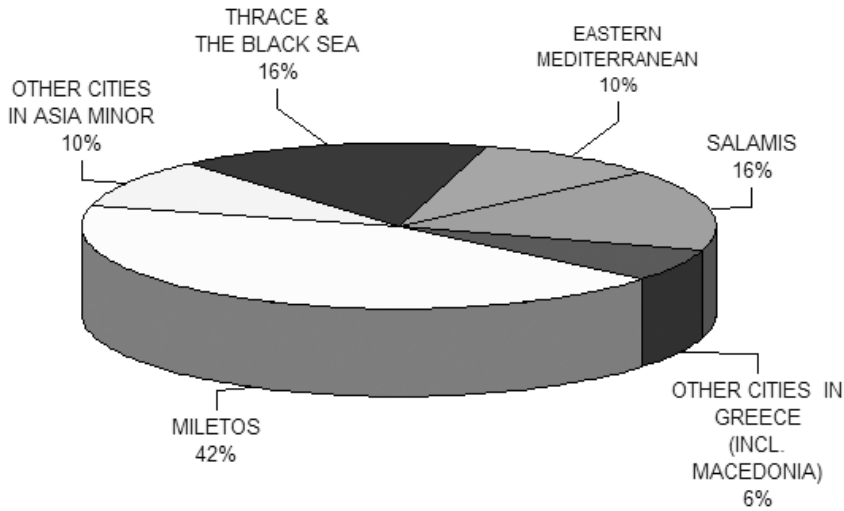

Figure 5. Origins of foreigners (non-Athenians) commemorated on tombstones of Roman imperial date from the Piraeus (excluding CIL 557–8; total of 63 tombstones; for the data, see Table 1).

represented by ten. In striking contrast, there is one large group of funerary inscriptions commemorating persons from the city of Miletos in the Roman province of Asia. These make up no less than 42% of all the Roman tombstones commemorating foreigners with known ethnic groupings discovered in the port.

The high representation of Milesians in the epigraphic record may indicate stronger commemorative habits on the part of this inscribing group. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the ethnic term 'Milesios' (fem. 'Milesia') is very rare among the Roman funerary inscriptions discovered at Miletos itself,[49] suggesting perhaps that Milesians felt a stronger need to advertise their ethnic background away from their home city. While this may be so, Milesians, significantly, also comprise the most common group commemorated on Late Hellenistic and Roman imperial epitaphs found at Athens. According to Torben Vestergaard, who studied this aspect of the evidence, the high

[48] It is not clear whether the island of Salamis was an Athenian possession in the Roman imperial period. Therefore inscriptions recording Salaminians are here included in the 'foreigner' group. The debate is summarized in M. C. Taylor, *Salamis and the Salaminioi. The History of an Unofficial Athenian Demos* (Amsterdam, 1997).

[49] See P. Hermann, *Inschriften von Milet. Teil 2. Inschriften n. 407–1019* (Berlin and New York, 1998), 17–53; P. Hermann, W. Günther, and N. Ehrhardt, *Inschriften von Milet. Teil 3. Inschriften n. 1020–1580* (Berlin and New York, 2006), 247–50 passim.

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epigraphic representation of Milesians at Athens can be charted on an increasing level for a longer period of time, starting from about 100 BCE until 200 CE.[50] This is especially true for evidence from the first and second centuries CE, where Milesians comprise 35.3% and 73.4% respectively of all foreigners with ethnic origins inscribed on tombstones in the city.

It can reasonably be argued that the large numbers, temporal stretch, and strong regional concentration of epitaphs of this group upon Athens and the Piraeus reflect more than just a high degree of epigraphic visibility. They suggest a long-term pattern of migration and permanent residence of considerable numbers of immigrants from Miletos in the Roman imperial period, for which further socio-cultural and historical explanations have been offered.[51] Even if we are not in a position to calculate the percentage of Milesians with respect to the total population, in the light of these arguments and the evidence from the Piraeus it is also reasonable to suggest that this group that looms large in the epigraphic record made up a quantitatively significant group of the population resident in the port during the early Roman imperial period.

Conclusion

To arrive at a more balanced interpretation of the population dynamics of the Piraeus in the Roman period, it is important to dissociate the question from the destruction of the port in 86 BCE and to place the evidence of funerary inscriptions against the background of local demography and regional reconfigurations under the empire. This shows that, generally speaking, the composition and dynamics of the Athenian port's population in the chronological frame considered here was shaped by two major forces: on the one hand, the century-old intra-regional mobility from the countryside to the city encouraged Athenian citizens from peripheral demes to settle at the Piraeus, while at the same time driving registered Peiraieis to seek residence at the Athenian *asty*; on the other hand, migration to the port from overseas, which in previous periods was also an important aspect of local demography, may in the Roman imperial period have

[50] T. Vestergaard, 'Milesian Immigrants in Late Hellenistic and Roman Athens', in Oliver (n. 16), 81–110.
[51] Ibid., 90–1.

been intensified in scale, especially with respect to particular groups, such as the Milesians.

To what extent Roman Piraeus was more or less populated than in the preceding centuries is a complicated matter that cannot be explored on the basis of epitaphs alone; in fact, seasonality, especially for a port like the Piraeus, as Horden and Purcell point out, 'makes [it] theoretically impossible to speak about the population of a city'.[52] At any rate, however, there is sufficient evidence to argue that Roman Piraeus should no longer be considered as a synecdoche of demographic and urban decline, as implied by the rhetoric of ancient literary sources and frequently reiterated by modern historical accounts; rather, it appears to have been a dynamic population hub with a demography that reflected varying degrees of continuity and change and the novel socio-political, cultural, and economic position of Greece and Attica in the Roman empire.

[52] P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea. A Study of Mediterranean History* (Oxford, 2000), 382.