

THE WORLD OF THE WESTERN GREEKS

Edited by Kathryn Lomas

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RULING THE CITY

Civic constitutions, law codes and their development

Loredana Cappelletti

General considerations

The literary tradition on the history and politics of the Greek and Hellenised centres of southern Italy in the period of independence from Rome – from the first Greek colonial foundations (eighth century BC) to the Roman assimilation following the Social War (91–88 BC) – reveals a picture of a collection of small city-states which were jealous of their autonomy, lacked feelings of mutual solidarity and were especially well organised from an institutional point of view. Each Italiote centre had its own armies and commanders, its own laws and law-givers and various government bodies, usually collegiate in structure, which exercised their respective functions (deliberative, consultative, executive, judicial, etc.) in both internal affairs and international relations (e.g. Dunbabin 1948; Sartori 1953, 1997; Ampolo 1987; Ghinatti 1996; Lomas 2000; Fischer Hansen et al. 2004b). The *foedera* negotiated by Rome between itself and individual Italiote colonies from the late fourth century BC were advantageous for the Italiotes and did not change this situation: the internal autonomy of the poleis and the variety of local governments – together with Greek language, traditions, religion – survived until the Social War and even beyond, as shown by the emblematic cases of Naples and Reggio in the imperial age (Costabile 1984, 1994; Lombardo 1987; Lomas 1993: 134–60, 1995, 2015, 2016a, 2016b; Lazzarini 2004; Cappelletti 2009, 2011a: 115–22).

The literary sources present a similar picture for the Greek and Hellenised centres of Sicily, depicting autonomous communities, often rivals of each other, each with specific systems and principles of government. This is true especially for communities of Greek origin which, from their date of foundation, exercised a dominant institutional and cultural influence on the other ethnic groups present on the island – Siculi, Sicani, Elymians, Phoenicians-Punics, and later Italians and Romans (e.g. Bondi 1990–91; Tagliamonte 1994; Albanese Procelli 2003; Fischer Hansen et al. 2004a; Amadasi Guzzo 2006; Ampolo 2012a; Cordano 2012a; De Vincenzo 2013; De Angelis 2016; Jonasch 2020). The variety of institutional arrangements in the different Siceliote and Italiote communities has long been recognised by scholars and it was a legacy of the political individualism typical of the founding cities of the Greek motherland, which was passed on to the western colonies. But what was transmitted to the colonies of Sicily and Magna Graecia, and accepted by them, is only a behavioural model and not a constitutional model; in most cases, in