

**THE ORIGINS OF CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL CONCEPTS OF  
CITIZENSHIP: CITIZENSHIP IN ANCIENT ATHENS.**

The essence of Ancient Greek concept of citizenship and a brief overview of the history of its development in ancient Athens are presented. The reforms of Solon, Cleisthenes, and Pericles are highlighted as such that destroyed primordial loyalties on the basis of bloodlines and created a new form of belonging – to a territorial political entity, the city-state. Citizenship in a Greek polis became the prerequisite for individual liberty, yet for a rather limited group, excluding women, children, slaves, and metics. It is emphasized that the citizenship for Ancient Athenians directly concerned the idea of duties as opposed to citizenship as a right or a privilege. Peculiarities of Greek conception of correlation of private and public life are discussed. Particular duties of Athenian citizens – domestic, political, judicial, financial, providing grain for the city, not leaving the city in a time of crisis, and religious – are described in details. Domestic duties included respecting elders, taking good care of own family, and having legitimate children, eligible for becoming citizens in the future. Key duty in the sphere of politics was to take active part in democratic institutions of Ancient Athens. It involved both attendance of public assemblies and holding political office. Judicial duties were inseparable from political, and Athenian citizens were obliged to serve as jurors, prosecutors, or defense attorneys.

Since in Ancient Athens direct taxation was considered incompatible with the idea of civic liberty, Athenians instead bore certain financial duties. Some taxes, for instance, the import levy, were still paid but they were less significant than liturgies – special contributions from the wealthy citizens for concrete public causes. Liturgies were used for various festivals, sport events, public feasts etc. Military liturgy, called trierarchy, was used to maintain Athenian fleet – rich Athenians were expected to

equip ships and finance their upkeep for a certain period of time. Religious duties included having *hiera patria* – tombs of the family – and preserving them in proper conditions.

Finally, wealthy Athenians had to feed the city when needed and all citizens were expected to remain in the polis in case of crisis. Greek concept of citizenship is often criticized for being exclusive and focused on duties as opposed to rights. Yet, the Greeks were the first to introduce the idea of belonging to a territorial unit versus blood and kinship identity. Therefore Ancient Athenian citizenship can be considered a first major step forward towards citizenship as we know it today.

Keywords: citizenship, polis, Ancient Athens, duty.