

CHAPTER SIX

MANUMISSION, SOCIAL REBIRTH, AND HEALING GODS IN ANCIENT GREECE

DEBORAH KAMEN

Slavery in ancient Greece, as in all slave societies, involved the stripping away of individuals' personal and social identities.¹ First, through the process of enslavement, individuals were cut off from their homelands and families. Most slaves in Greece were of foreign (i.e. non-Greek) origin, arriving primarily via Mediterranean trading networks.² In addition to this regular supply of slaves, particularly from Scythia and Asia Minor,³ there were also sporadic injections into the slave market of those captured in war or (less frequently) by pirates.⁴ Then, once these slaves arrived in their new homes in Greece, they were deprived of their former names and

¹ Throughout, "slavery" refers to "chattel slavery." For an introduction to chattel slavery in ancient Greece, see, e.g., Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, 24-84; Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece*. I rely here on Orlando Patterson's definition of slavery: "Slavery is the permanent, violent domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons" (Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 13).

² On the slave trade, see, e.g., Finley, "The Slave Trade in Antiquity"; Garlan, "War, Piracy and Slavery."

³ In the archaic period, slaves came to Greece primarily from Scythia, a loosely defined area to the north and east of Greece, especially Thrace; in the classical period, slaves came increasingly from Asia Minor; and in the Hellenistic period, slaves were primarily acquired from Asia Minor, with the number of slaves from Africa also increasing. See Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, 46-7.

⁴ On the acquisition of slaves in warfare, see Ducrey, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre*, 74-92, 131-40; Garlan, "War, Piracy and Slavery in the Greek World"; Pritchett, *The Greek State at War*, 223-45; Klees, *Sklavenleben im Klassischen Griechenland*, 20-50. For the relationship between piracy/banditry and slavery, see Ducrey, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre*, 171-93; Garlan, "War, Piracy and Slavery"; de Souza, *Piracy in the Graeco-Roman World*, 60-5.

renamed by their new masters.⁵ Unlike freeborn Greeks, who generally had three names (a proper name; a father's name, "son of X"; and a name that indicated their place of residence), slaves were given only one name. Usually this new name had some significance, referring either to their native land ("Thracian"), or to some physical attribute ("Red-haired"), or to some abstract virtue ("Loyal"), etc. As such, the slave's very name reflected his lack of ancestors and his lack of a real social identity.

Moreover, the slave was constantly dominated through violence. Some slave labor was extremely taxing, not to mention dangerous, like working in the mines;⁶ other work was less dangerous but still entailed bodily subservience, like agricultural work, cooking, cleaning, waiting on the master or mistress of the house, and serving as wet-nurse to the master's children. Regardless of the nature of their work, slaves' labor was always, by definition, forced, and their body was completely at the master's service. Indeed, masters could treat their own slaves, for the most part, however they wished. We find numerous references in Greek literature to slaves whose bodies carry the indelible marks of their master's violence: these included scars (from beatings, whippings, fetters), but also tattoos and brands (used both as punishment and as a way of marking property). In this way, the master's violent domination was often literally written on the slave's body.⁷

Finally, slaves in Greece were almost entirely stripped of honor,⁸ as can be seen even in the terms used to refer to them.⁹ The most common word for slave, *doulos*, is not particularly degrading in and of itself, though its etymology is uncertain. Other common terms, however, are quite derogatory, including *andrapodon*, literally "man-footed creature" (coined on analogy with *tetrapodon*, "four-footed creature," or cattle); *sôma*, literally "body"; and *pais*, literally "child" (cf. "boy" in the American South). Slaves' lack of honor is also apparent in their lack of legal capacity:¹⁰ they had no claims to property, and with a few exceptions, they had no independent procedural capacity; at least in classical Athens,

⁵ On slave names, see Lambertz, *Die griechischen Sklavennamen*; Fragiadakis, *Die attischen Sklavennamen*.

⁶ On slave work in the mines, see Lauffer, *Die Bergwerkssklaven von Laureion*.

⁷ On the punishment of slaves, see Klees, *Sklavenleben im Klassischen Griechenland*, 176-217; on "slave marks," see Kamen, "A Corpus of Inscriptions."

⁸ On the question of slaves' honor, see Fisher, "Hybris, Status and Slavery."

⁹ On Greek slave terminology, see Gschnitzer, *Studien zur griechischen Terminologie der Sklaverei* vols. 1 and 2.

¹⁰ Most of what we know about slaves' legal capacity comes from classical Athens, on which see Todd, *The Shape of Athenian Law*, 184-94.

they could not (in general) be a plaintiff or defendant, and could not be a witness except under torture. Moreover, they had no legally recognized family relationships: in addition to being stripped of their ancestors, slaves were deprived of the right to marry either another slave or a free person (though they were occasionally allowed to cohabit with a fellow-slave lover). If a slave woman bore children, either to her master or to another slave, she had no legal claim on her descendants; she had to hand over any children she bore to her master, who could keep them as slaves or sell them on the market.¹¹

For most slaves in Greece, slavery was a permanent, life-long condition. However, although manumission was never as frequent in Greece as it was in Rome,¹² slaves began to be freed in increasing numbers starting in the fourth century BCE.¹³ In the rest of this chapter, I outline first the various ways (both “secular” and “sacral”) in which slaves in Greece could be freed,¹⁴ and then turn to an examination of the particular gods most commonly involved in sacral manumission. Ultimately, I present a new explanation not only for the significance of these gods but also for the ways in which the Greeks conceptualized both slavery and manumission.

Scholars conventionally identify two main modes of Greek manumission.¹⁵ First, slaves could be freed in a “secular” way, that is, without the involvement of the gods.¹⁶ One way to categorize these procedures is to distinguish those conducted by private individuals—what

¹¹ On master-slave sexual relations, see Klees, *Sklavenleben im klassischen Griechenland*, 155-75.

¹² But see, for cautions about over-estimating the frequency of manumission in Rome, Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 115-32; Wiedemann, “The Regularity of Manumission at Rome.”

¹³ On this increase, see, e.g., Ciccotti, *Le déclin de l’esclavage antique*, 166-7; Westermann, *The Slave Systems of Greek and Roman Antiquity*, 25 (see also Westermann, “Slavery and the Elements of Freedom” on the ease of manumission in the classical period); Bourriot, “L’evolution de l’esclave”; Garland, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, 74; Patterson, *Freedom*, 134; Fisher, *Slavery in Classical Greece*, 70.

¹⁴ On manumission practices in ancient Greece, see Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen* and most recently Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*.

¹⁵ These two modes, “secular” and “sacred,” are never entirely distinct from one another. On the lack of “radical separation of sacred and secular” in ancient Greece, see, e.g., Connor, “‘Sacred’ and ‘Secular’.”

¹⁶ On “secular” manumission, see most recently Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 70-86. The vast majority of our evidence for this mode of manumission comes from classical Athens.

Aristide Calderini, author of the earliest handbook on Greek manumission in 1908,¹⁷ calls “ordinary”—and those conducted by the state (“extraordinary”). In the former case, what I call “private manumission,” an individual master could, for altruistic or purely mercenary reasons, decide to set free his slaves. Private manumission might be as simple as a verbal declaration uttered by a master (“You’re free!”). Alternatively, manumission might be conducted through a will (posthumously); through the fictive “sale” of a slave to a third party, with the understanding that the third party would then free the slave; or through proclamation by a herald, apparently a performative utterance delivering the slave into freedom.¹⁸ In what I call “public manumission,” on the other hand, it was the polis, rather than individual masters, that freed slaves. This institution seems to have been particularly common as an incentive or reward for military service or for offering up information in lawsuits of particular significance to the city.¹⁹

The second, more common mode of manumission is conventionally termed “sacral”; that is, it involves the gods in some way or another.²⁰ The evidence for this type of manumission comes in the form of stone-cut inscriptions found all over the Greek world, documenting the freeing of individual slaves. These inscriptions date from the archaic period to the Roman era, with the bulk from the Hellenistic period. The three main categories of sacral manumission have conventionally been defined as fictive consecration to a god, fictive sale to a god, and general protection by a god, to be described in more depth below.²¹ Of these forms, manumission through fictive consecration is generally deemed the oldest.²²

¹⁷ Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*.

¹⁸ On private manumission, see Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 74 (verbal declaration), 74-5 (testamentary manumission), 81-2 (“sale” to third party), 71-2 (proclamation by herald; on which see also Rädle, “Freilassung von Sklaven im Theater” and Mactoux, “Regards sur la proclamation de l’affranchissement”).

¹⁹ On public manumission, see Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 70-1. On slaves’ involvement in the military (including their manumission), see further Hunt, *Slaves, Warfare and Ideology*; on manumission for informing, see Osborne, “Religion, Imperial Politics.”

²⁰ On “sacral” manumission, see most recently Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, 86-99.

²¹ For the earliest categorization of sacral manumission in these terms, see Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*, 94-5.

²² For a collection of fictive-consecration inscriptions, with analysis, see Darmezín, *Les affranchissements par consecration*.

In fictive consecration, a slave was nominally consecrated, or dedicated, to a god, but the consecration was in a sense a fiction. That is, the slave, instead of truly entering into the god's possession, was actually set free. It might be instructive to look at an example from Chaironea in Boiotia, a polis that has yielded an enormous number of fictive-consecration inscriptions. These records involve slaves being “consecrated” to a god, most commonly Sarapis or Asklepios.²³ A fairly typical inscription from the middle or end of the second century BCE reads:

Ἄρχοντος Δεξίππου, μηνὸς Θυῖου πεν|τεκαίδεκάτη, Σάμιχος
 Ἴππομένους ἀνατίθη|σι τὸν ἴδιον δοῦλον Σωσίβιον ἱερόν τῷ
 Σερά[πι], | μὴ προσήκοντα μηθενὶ μηθὲν ἀπὸ τῆσ|δε τῆς ἡμέρας
 τὴν ἀνάθεσιν ποιούμενος | διὰ τοῦ συνεδρίου κατὰ τὸν νόμον. (IG
 VII 3362)

With Dexippos as archon, on the 15th of the month of Thyios, Samichos, son of Hippomenes, consecrates (*anatithêsi*) his slave, Sosibios, as “sacred” (*hieros*) to Sarapis, not belonging (*prosêkonta*) in any way to anyone from this day on; conducting the consecration through the council in accordance with the law.

We should notice, first of all, that this act of manumission is not purely sacral, since civic involvement is implied through the presence of the council. As for the sacral component, we have the verb “consecrate” (*anatithêsi*), the adjective “sacred” (*hieros*), and of course the Egyptian god Sarapis. We know that the consecration is *fictive* because Sosibios is said not to “belong” (*prosêkonta*) in any way to anyone anymore. That is, he is free.

Consecration did not start out as a mode of manumission; it was originally a way of providing sanctuaries with a slave workforce.²⁴ That is to say, slaves were *truly* consecrated—or sometimes sold—to the gods, whom they served as temple-slaves (*hierodouloi*). Some scholars have proposed that fictive consecration, as a mode of manumission, arose from such true consecrations of *hierodouloi*: that originally, consecrated slaves were considered the real property of the god, but in time consecration

²³ Fictive-consecration inscriptions from Chaironea: see Darmezin, *Les affranchissements par consecration*, #16-108. Those involving Sarapis: #16-87; Asklepios: #103-108.

²⁴ Sokolowski, “The Real Meaning of Sacral Manumission,” 173.

came to be a way of manumitting slaves.²⁵ But if this was the case, we must explain how, and why, this kind of development—from real to fictive consecration—occurred, especially since no traces of such a transition exist.²⁶ As it stands, no scholar has provided a particularly satisfying account of this evolution.

A more recent theory holds that fictive consecration, rather than developing out of true consecration, represents instead the application of the *form* “consecration” onto a previously secular mode of manumission, as a means of guaranteeing divine protection for the freed slave.²⁷ If we are to accept this theory (a more plausible one, in my view), we are nonetheless left with a number of difficult questions: What does it mean that slaves manumitted through fictive consecration were designated as sacred (*hieroi*) to a god? Were they conceived of as the sacral *property*—fictive or otherwise—of the god?²⁸ Was it that these freed slaves, like other sacred things (*hiera*), were considered “untouchable” by men?²⁹ Or does the term *hieros* simply indicate some sort of ill-defined connection with “the divine”?³⁰ Finally, we might also ask how the god’s role was conceptualized in this procedure: Was he thought of as providing protection, if not actively then by means of his authority?³¹ Given that the manumitted slave faced very real threats to his newfound freedom,³²

²⁵ See Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*, 96; Bloch, *Die Freilassungsbedingungen*, 6; *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, s.v. “Freigelassene,” 97-8; Klaffenbach, *Griechische Epigraphik*, 86-7. Cf. Sokolowski, “The Real Meaning of Sacral Manumission.”

²⁶ On this point, see Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 15-16.

²⁷ See Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen*, 42 and passim; and Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 10-11.

²⁸ On freedman as sacral property, see Koschaker, *Über einige griechische Rechtsurkunden*, 46; Sokolowski, “The Real Meaning of Sacral Manumission,” 175; Klaffenbach, *Griechische Epigraphik*, 86; Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 123. Cf. Burkert, *Greek Religion*, 269, who defines *hieros* as “that which belongs to a god or a sanctuary in an irrevocable way.”

²⁹ On *hieros* = *anephapτος* (untouchable), see Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 123; Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen*, 41.

³⁰ See, e.g., Benveniste, *Indo-European Language and Society*, 456-61.

³¹ For the god as protector, see *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, s.v. “Freigelassene,” 97-8; Sokolowski, “The Real Meaning of Sacral Manumission,” 175; Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen*, 58-9; cf. Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 16n.2.

³² On the precariousness of the freedman’s freedom, see Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, ch. 6 and passim.

having the god's protection (however that was conceptualized) would definitely have been a boon.

We might ask some of these same questions about fictive *sale*, the second type of sacral manumission. Fictive sale, as the name implies, entailed the pretense of a master selling his slave to a god, usually Apollo, for a certain (variable) price. However, it was not actually Apollo but the *slave* who paid, under the guise of "entrusting the sale" to the god. By this fiction, slaves, who notionally could not earn money, were allowed to pay for their manumission via a third party, Apollo. At the same time—as in fictive consecration—the slave presumably received additional security for his newfound status, thanks to the god's involvement.

So, just as with a slave "consecrated" to a god, we might ask whether the slave "sold" to the god was thought to *belong* to the god. It seems, rather, that the slave, like any bought and sold commodity, was thought to pass into the possession of the buyer, namely the god, but with the understanding that the god would make no use of his right of ownership. As a result, this right of ownership was transferred, by default, to the slave himself; the slave was then in possession of himself, or "free."³³ Scholars disagree as to whether the slave was then thought of as the "real" or "fictive" property of the god, but regardless of their interpretation, the outcome, like that of fictive consecration, was the same: the slave became free. We know this because the slave is frequently designated in the inscriptions as "unseizable"—*anephaptos* or similar periphrastic expressions—and sometimes he is described explicitly as free (*eleutheros*). The "sold" slave was therefore just like the "consecrated" slave, in that he was attached, in some ill-defined sense, to the god in question.

Manumission through fictive sale is found predominantly in central Greece, particularly in Delphi.³⁴ In fact, we have over a thousand recorded acts of manumission from Delphi, which involve the freeing of over 1350 slaves. The bulk of these inscriptions are carved on the polygonal blocks making up the terrace wall of the temple of Apollo, but others are scattered throughout the site: e.g. in the theatre, on the temple itself, and on various monuments. These inscriptions are dated between 201 BCE and c. 100 CE.

³³ See, e.g., Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 32.

³⁴ For an overview of Delphic manumission practice, see, e.g., Bloch, *Die Freilassungsbedingungen*; Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, ch. 3; Kränzlein, "Bemerkungen zu Form der delphischen Freilassungen"; Mulliez, "Les actes d'affranchissement delphiques." Delphic manumission inscriptions are collected in *GDI* 1684-2342, *FD* vol. 3, and now in Mulliez's forthcoming corpus of Delphic *affranchissements*.

The first part of a fairly characteristic Delphic inscription, dated to the middle of the second century BCE, reads:

Ἀρχοντος Ἀνδρονίκου τοῦ Φρικίδα μηνὸς Ἰλαίου, ἐπὶ τοῖσδε ἀπέδοτο
 Εὐκράτης Ἐπικράτης, συνευδοκέοντος καὶ τοῦ | οὐὸ Κλέωνος, τῶι
 Ἀπόλλωνι τῶι Πυθίωι σῶμα γυναικεῖον ἃ ὄνομα Εὐφροσύνα τὸ
 γένος Θραῖσαν, τιμᾶς ἀργυρίου μνᾶν | τριῶν, καὶ τὰν τιμὰν ἔχει
 πᾶσαν, καθὼς ἐπίστευσε Εὐφροσύνα τῶι θεῶι τὰν ὠνάν, ἐφ' ὧτε
 ἐλευθέρᾳ εἶμεν καὶ ἀνέφαπτος | ἀπὸ πάντων τὸν πάντα βίον.
 βεβαιωτῆρ κατὰ τὸν νόμον τᾶς πόλιος· Πασίων Κλέωνος.
 παραμεινάτω δὲ Εὐφροσύνα παρὰ || Εὐκρά[τ]η ἄχρι οὗ κα ζῶη
 Εὐκράτης ποιέουσα τὸ ποτιτασσόμενον πᾶν τὸ δυνατόν
 ἀνεγκλήτως. εἰ δὲ τί κα πάθη Εὐκράτης, | ἐλευθέρᾳ ἔστω
 Εὐφροσύνα κυριεύουσα αὐτοσαυτᾶς καὶ ἀποτρέχουσα οἷς κα θέλη,
 καθὼς ἐπίστευσε τῶι [θ]εῶι τὰν | ὠνάν. εἰ δὲ τίς κα ἄπτηται ἐπὶ
 καταδουλισμῶι Εὐφροσύνας τελευτάσαντος Εὐκράτους, βέβαιον
 παρεχέτω | ὁ βεβαιωτῆρ τῶι θεῶι τὰν ὠνάν κατὰ τὸν νόμον. ὁμοίως
 δὲ καὶ οἱ παρατυγχάνον[τ]ες κύριοι ἐόντων πύλας δίκας καὶ
 ζαμίας, μάρτυροι τοὶ ἱερεῖς τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος || τοῦ Πυθίου Ἀμύντας,
 Ταραντίνος καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες Νικόμαχος, Ἄρχων καὶ ἰδιῶται
 Ἀνδρόνικος Φρικίδα, Μένης, Τιμόκριτος. (GDI 1826)

With Andronikos son of Phrikis as archon, in the month of Ilios, Eukrates son of Epikrates, with his son Kleon also consenting, sold to Pythian Apollo a female slave (*sōma*, lit. body) named Euphrosuna, a Thracian by race, on these terms, at a price of three mnas of silver, and [Eukrates] holds the whole payment, since Euphrosuna entrusted the sale to the god, on the condition that she be free (*eleuthera*) and unseizable (*anephaptos*) by everyone for all her life. Guarantor in accordance with the law of the city: Pasion son of Kleon. And may Euphrosuna remain by (*parameinatō*) Eukrates as long as Eukrates lives, doing everything ordered as blamelessly as possible. And if Eukrates suffers anything (i.e. dies), let Euphrosuna be free, master of herself, and going wherever she wants, since she entrusted the payment to the god. And if anyone seizes Euphrosuna for re-enslavement after Eukrates has died, let the guarantor provide the guaranteed payment to the god in accordance with the law. Likewise also let passers-by be responsible for taking her back, on the ground that she is free, being neither punished nor liable to any judgment or penalty. Witnesses: the priests of Pythian Apollo, Amyntas and Tarantinos; and the magistrates Nikomachos and Archon; and the private citizens Andronikos son of Phrikis, Menes, Timokritos.

This inscription—like others of its type—can be divided into a number of well-defined units. The record begins with a dating formula (the chief magistrate’s name and month), followed by a statement of sale (or rather fictive sale) to the god, generally including the following information: 1) the buyer, Apollo; 2) the price of freedom;³⁵ 3) whether the master received payment in full;³⁶ 4) the aim: to be free (etc.); and 5) the name of the guarantor(s) of the “sale.” There then follows an optional *paramonê*—literally “remaining-by”—clause, mandating that the freedman remain (*paramenein*) and serve his former master.³⁷ After this *paramonê* clause, then, a release clause often follows—although not in our inscription—offering the freedman the opportunity to pay extra money in exchange for early release (*apolusis*) from *paramonê*. After this is a clause providing the freedman with “security of status”: here are listed potential threats to the freedman’s status or person, the names of his legally bound defenders, and the penalties to be paid by offenders against the freedman. The inscription always ends with a list of witnesses: in our inscription, the list is long and wide-ranging, encompassing sacral and secular (public) officials, as well as private Delphic citizens.

In this mode of manumission, then, the slave (here Euphrosuna) is “sold” to the god Apollo, but the reality is that she has been manumitted: she is now “free” (*eleuthera*) and “unseizable” (*anephaptos*). Apollo, like Sarapis in our last example, is only nominally the slave’s new owner; his role seems to be to protect Euphrosuna *as if* she were his possession.³⁸

Finally, let us turn to the third major type of sacral manumission, general protection by a god. Inscriptions that fall into this somewhat motley category are characterized by the involvement of gods, without there being a fictive consecration or sale. For example, a second-century BCE inscription from the polis Thespiiai in Boiotia records a manumission that took place in the presence of the gods Asklepios and Apollo:

[E]ϋρουμείλω ἄρχον|τος, ἀφίειτι Σά|ων Ἀτ[έ]αν ἐλεύ|θερον ἐναντία
| τῷ Ἀσκληπιῶ | κῆ τῷ Ἀπόλλων|ος· ρίστορες Ἀν|τι[μέ]νων, Ἄσιος,
| Ἀθανόδωρος, | Εϋφραστος. (IG VII 1779)

³⁵ On variation in prices, see Hopkins, *Conquerors and Slaves*, 158-63.

³⁶ For more on the receipt of money in fictive sale, see Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen*, 81-2.

³⁷ On *paramonê*, see Samuel, “The Role of Paramone Clauses in Ancient Documents.”

³⁸ Other, “secular” protection was offered by the human guarantor and witnesses, not to mention passers-by.

With Eurymeilos as archon, Saon sets free (*aphieiti... eleutheron*) Ateas opposite (*enantia*) Asklepios and Apollo. Witnesses: Antimenon, Asios, Athanodoros, Euphrastos.

We find here a “secular” manumission formula (*aphieiti... eleutheron*) paired with a sacral element: namely, the fact that the slaves are being freed opposite (*enantia*) Asklepios and Apollo. Although there are also human witnesses present, these gods might be thought of as offering a “sacral bonus,” an additional form of protection, and one more authoritative, than that provided by the human witnesses who are named. Moreover, like these witnesses, we can imagine that the gods served to guarantee the slave’s transition into freedom.

These, then, are the main types of sacral manumission: fictive consecration, fictive sale, and manumission with general divine protection. Although I have presented only a few representative examples here, a complete survey of the manumission inscriptions demonstrates that the three most common gods, by far, are Apollo, Asklepios, and Sarapis (the ones seen in the aforementioned examples). Of these gods, Apollo presided over more manumissions than any other—although admittedly, most of these manumissions come from Delphi. Outside of Delphi, Sarapis and Asklepios appear much more frequently in manumissions than Apollo does, especially in fictive consecrations: Sarapis, either alone or associated with Isis, appears in four different *poleis* and in 77 of the remaining 205 records of fictive consecration, Asklepios in six *poleis*, with 52 acts.³⁹

Why these gods? I should reiterate that Apollo, Asklepios, and Sarapis are not the *only* gods who appear in manumission inscriptions, simply the most common ones. Calderini categorized into three groups all of the gods who appear: 1) local gods (e.g. Zeus Naios in Dodona, Apollo in Delphi, Zeus in Olympia, and Poseidon in Tainaron); 2) helper gods (e.g. Sarapis, Asklepios, and Apollo); and 3) foreign gods (e.g. Artemis Gazoria, Ma, and Dea Syria).⁴⁰ In order to determine what motivates the disproportionate involvement of Apollo, Asklepios, and Sarapis in manumissions, I would like to start by interrogating each of Calderini’s categories in turn. We might start with Calderini’s first category, “local gods.” I have no doubt that a number of our inscriptions represent individuals selecting a *local* god—i.e. one with the most prominent and accessible temple—as the god to involve in a manumission. This makes good, practical sense. But not all of the gods in Calderini’s first category are best described as “local gods.” Take Apollo in Delphi, for instance. Given that people came to Delphi

³⁹ For these figures, see Darmezin, *Les affranchissements par consecration*, 184.

⁴⁰ Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*, 113.

from all over Central Greece, not to mention the entire Mediterranean, Delphic Apollo clearly had more than merely local appeal. I would assert, then, that Apollo's popularity in manumissions is better explained by the Panhellenic pull of Delphi,⁴¹ as well by as Apollo's role as one of the "helper gods" (Calderini's second category).

Setting aside these "helper gods" for a moment, I want to address briefly Calderini's third category, that of "foreign gods." It is true that these deities do show up in inscriptions, especially in Asia Minor, but it is important to note that they appear in records we should be wary of categorizing as manumissions. Indeed, it is hard to tell with these inscriptions whether we are looking at *true* consecrations of slaves (rather than manumissions), or some combination of Asiatic slave-consecration and Greek manumission practice.⁴² For that reason, I advocate caution in making any arguments to explain the role of "foreign gods" in Greek manumission.

Calderini's second category, what he calls "helper gods," is the most useful for us, especially since it includes the three gods who appear most frequently. As mentioned above, Apollo is by far the most common god in our inscriptions, and Asklepios and Sarapis, also frequently invoked, are called upon even in cities where some other deity is clearly the more prominent local god, demonstrating that their appeal went beyond a matter of convenience.⁴³ Calderini asserts that the impetus for the involvement of such "helper gods" came from Sarapis himself—or more precisely, from a third-century BCE religious movement spreading the Alexandrian triad of Isis, Osiris, and Sarapis. Calderini's implication, therefore, is that Sarapis became involved in manumissions first, followed by Asklepios and Apollo.⁴⁴ Franz Bömer, author of a multi-volume work on the religion of

⁴¹ This explanation likely holds also for the popularity of Zeus in Dodona (a major oracle) and in Olympia (a site for Panhellenic games, among other things). The inscriptions involving Poseidon in Tainaron are thought by some not to represent manumissions but genuine consecrations: see, e.g. Rädle, *Untersuchungen zum griechischen Freilassungswesen*, 26-34.

⁴² For some examples, and a discussion thereof (classifying them as sacral manumissions), see Cameron, "ΘΡΕΠΙΤΟΣ and Related Terms." For an argument against their status as manumission inscriptions, see Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 132.

⁴³ So, e.g., Asklepios and Sarapis are invoked even in Orchomenos, where the Charites were the head gods; in Hyampolis, "trumping" Artemis and Apollo; in Stiris, where Demeter and Athena were prominent; and in Koronea, where various other gods are known as local deities. See Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 113.

⁴⁴ Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*, 120.

slaves in Greece and Rome, correctly takes issue with this interpretation: Not only is it unlikely, he says, that Asklepios and Apollo were drawn into the arena of Greek manumission only after, and *through*, the Egyptian god Sarapis; but, in addition, the inscriptional evidence suggests that Asklepios initially “trumped” Sarapis as manumission-god in *poleis* where the two gods co-existed, with this hierarchy experiencing a complete reversal centuries later.⁴⁵ Similarly, I would argue, we cannot—and should not—explain Apollo’s prominence in Delphic manumissions as an outgrowth of the popularity of Sarapis cult.

So, the question remains: what accounts for these “helper gods” in manumission? The conventional explanation is that it was their particular character as assistants of those under duress—whether slave or free—that led these gods to be involved in manumission, a procedure involving a difficult transformation of status.⁴⁶ I do not disagree with this explanation, but I would like to argue that there is something more to these three gods. Beyond being mere helpers, generically defined, they are also conceptualized (by both the Greeks and the Romans) first and foremost as healers, perhaps even as *the* healers.⁴⁷ Indeed, when in 213 CE the Roman emperor Alexander Severus fell ill, he is said to have turned to the gods for assistance. However, none of these gods gave any response, even though Severus “served all the most prominent ones.... He received no help from Apollo Grannos, nor yet from Asklepios or Sarapis, in spite of his many supplications and his unwearying persistence” (πάντας τοὺς ἐπιφανεστάτους θεραπεύσαντι.... οὔτε γὰρ ὁ Ἀπόλλων ὁ Γράννος οὔθ’ ὁ Ἀσκληπιὸς οὔθ’ ὁ Σάραπις καίπερ πολλὰ ἰκετεύσαντι αὐτῶ πολλὰ δὲ καὶ προσκατερήσαντι ὠφέλησεν: Cassius Dio, *Roman History* 78 (77).15.5-6). In what follows, I do not mean to suggest that it was *only* as healers that these gods were invoked in manumissions. Rather, I would argue that their capacity for healing was an attribute that made them particularly fit for involvement in manumissions.

The evidence for the role of these gods as healers is abundant. Let us begin by looking at Apollo the healer, that is, Apollo Paian. Apollo and

⁴⁵ Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 113.

⁴⁶ Thus Calderini, *La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti*, 199 categorizes Sarapis and Asklepios as “slave gods,” but cf. Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion*, 132; Darmezis *Les affranchissements par consecration*, 184; and others, who argue that Sarapis and Asklepios should be viewed rather as generic “helper gods.”

⁴⁷ Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece*, 75 perhaps hints at this when he says that a slave might be consecrated “to one of the healer gods around whom cults sprang up during the Hellenistic period,” but he does not explain why.

the healing god Paian were originally separate gods, but in time a syncretism of the two occurred. We see this syncretism both in the use of “paian” (healer) as an epithet and a role for Apollo, and in the use of the paian-song addressed to Apollo. Thus in the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo*, the god is invoked as “Healer” in the first-ever paian (516-9). In the *Iliad*, the Greeks sing a paian to Apollo to ward off plague (1.472-4). And in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the herald says, “Now be our preserver and healer, lord Apollo” (νῦν δ’ αὖτε σωτήρ ἴσθι καὶ παιώνος, | ἀναξ Ἀπολλων... ; 512-3). Despite the fact that the epithet Paian could be applied to other healing gods (including Asklepios), and that paian-songs could be addressed to other gods, the paian was primarily associated with Apollo.⁴⁸

Asklepios, the other major paianic god,⁴⁹ in addition to being the son of Apollo, is perhaps the most famous of the healing gods.⁵⁰ Greeks from all over made pilgrimages to healing sanctuaries called Asklepeia, most famously those at Athens and at Epidauros, in order to be healed from everything from aches and pains to life-threatening illnesses. Inscriptions and votive offerings attest to the cures Asklepios was thought to provide.⁵¹ Moreover, as the founder of medicine, Asklepios is frequently referred to as a “savior.” The Roman author Aelian, for example, says that “not only did [Apollo] know himself how to save, but he was also the father of Asklepios, the savior and the adversary of diseases” (καὶ αὐτὸν σώζειν εἰδότα καὶ μέντοι καὶ τὸν σωτήρα καὶ νόσων ἀντίπαλον Ἀσκληπιὸν φύσαντα; *On the Nature of Animals* 10.49). Most remarkable are the testimonials to Asklepios’ power to bring dead men back to life. Pindar writes that “gold appearing in his hands with its lordly wage prompted even [Asklepios] to bring back from death a man already carried off” (ἔτραπεν καὶ κείνον ἀγάνορι μισθῶ | χρυσὸς ἐν χερσὶν φανείς | ἄνδρ’ ἐκ θανάτου κομίσαι | ἤδη ἀλωκότα; *Pythian* 3.55-7). In Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon*, the chorus refers to Asklepios as he “who possessed the skill to raise men from the dead” (τὸν ὀρθοδαῆ | τῶν φθιμένων ἀνάγειν; 1022-3). Finally, Euripides’ *Alkestis* provides yet another example, when

⁴⁸ On the Apolline paian, see Rutherford, *Pindar’s Paeans*, 23-6.

⁴⁹ On the paian’s role in the cult of Asklepios, see Rutherford, *Pindar’s Paeans*, 38-42.

⁵⁰ For a compendium of evidence attesting to Asklepios as healer, see Edelstein and Edelstein, *Asclepius*.

⁵¹ For testimonia from the Athenian Asklepeion, see Aleshire, *The Athenian Asklepieion and Asklepios at Athens*; from the Epidauran Asklepeion, LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*.

the chorus says that Asklepios “raised up the dead” (δμαθέντας...άνίστη; 127-9).

Calderini’s third “helper god,” Sarapis, can also be categorized as a god of healing. Sarapis (often conflated with Osiris⁵²) is a paianic god as well, albeit a less prominent one than Apollo and Asklepios. Diogenes Laertius tells us that Demetrios of Phaleron, after losing his sight in Alexandria, recovered it with the help of Sarapis, whereupon “he composed the paianes which are sung to this day” (ὄθεν καὶ τοὺς παιᾶνας ποιῆσαι τοὺς μέχρι νῦν ἄδομένους; *Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, 5.76). Sarapis’ connections with healing become even clearer when he is looked at together with his sister and consort Isis, who is better attested as a healing god. The most relevant part of Sarapis/Osiris’ life story, detailed in Plutarch’s *On Isis and Osiris*, runs thus: Osiris’ brother Typhon tears Osiris’ body into fourteen parts and scatters them all around. Isis searches for the remains, finding all but Osiris’ penis, and reassembles his body, thereby ensuring his revivification and rebirth (ταῖς ἀναβώσσει καὶ παλιγγενεσίαις; *Moralia* 364F).⁵³ Plutarch’s account is complemented by the *Songs of Isis and Nephthys*, a set of hymns preserved in the fourth-century BCE Bremner-Rhind papyrus.⁵⁴ In these hymns, two priestesses sing of Isis and her sister Nephthys, mourning for Osiris and summoning him back to life. Addressing Osiris, one priestess sings, “[Isis] dispels the evil which appertains to thy flesh, / And the stroke as though it had never been: / Thou placest life before <thy> wife” (*Songs of Isis and Nephthys* 14.25-7).

Similar to her ability to raise the dead is Isis’ reputation for making (or trying to make) mortals immortal. In an episode reminiscent of the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*,⁵⁵ Isis tries to immortalize the queen’s baby in her charge by burning the mortal parts of his body, but the queen intercedes, depriving the child of immortality (Plutarch, *Moralia* 357C). In another account, we learn that Isis “discovered the drug which gives immortality,” by which she raised her son Horus from the dead and also

⁵² According to Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus, Sarapis and Osiris are essentially interchangeable in the Greeks’ minds: see Plutarch, *Moralia* 362B, 376A; Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 1.25.2. Moreover, Osiris was also aligned with Apollo (Diodorus Siculus 1.18.4).

⁵³ For the account of Osiris’ death and reconstitution, see Plutarch, *Moralia* 358A-B.

⁵⁴ For text and commentary, see Faulkner, “The Bremner-Rhind Papyrus.” For a recent re-edition of demotic hymns to Isis, see Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess*.

⁵⁵ For the association of Isis with Demeter, see Herodotus, *Histories* 2.59 and Diodorus Siculus 1.25.1.

made him immortal (Diodorus Siculus, *Historical Library* 1.25.6). Isis was also seen as a healer of more quotidian ills: According to Diodorus, “the Egyptians say she was the discoverer of many health-giving drugs and was greatly versed in the science of healing” (1.25.2). Like Asklepios, she healed patients undergoing incubation (i.e. spending the night in her temple for treatment), making herself manifest before them and providing cures (1.25.5). Finally, both Sarapis and Isis were invoked in moments of distress by those hoping to obtain some sort of “salvation” from them. In his *Dream Analysis*, Artemidoros says:

Σάραπις καὶ Ἴσις καὶ Ἄνουβις καὶ Ἄρποκράτης αὐτοὶ τε καὶ τὰ ἀγάλματα αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ μυστήρια καὶ πᾶς ὁ περὶ αὐτῶν λόγος καὶ τῶν τούτοις συννάων τε καὶ συμβάμων θεῶν ταραχὰς καὶ κινδύνους καὶ ἀπειλὰς καὶ περιστάσεις σημαίνουσιν, ἐξ ὧν καὶ παρὰ προσδοκίαν καὶ παρὰ τὰς ἐλπίδας σώζουσιν· αἰεὶ γὰρ σωτήρες εἶναι νενομισμένοι εἰσὶν οἱ θεοὶ τῶν εἰς πάντα ἀφιγμένων καὶ εἰς ἔσχατον ἐλθόντων κίνδυνον, τοὺς δὲ ἤδη ἐν τοῖς τοιοῦτοις ὄντας αὐτίκα μάλᾳ σώζουσιν. (2.39)

Sarapis and Isis and Anubis and Harpokrates—these gods and their statues and their mysteries and all their story, as well as the gods associated with them in temples and altars—signify disturbances and dangers and threats and crises from which they save (*sōzousin*) people contrary to every expectation and hope. For these gods are universally considered to be the saviors (*sôtêres*) of those who have gone through everything and reached the ultimate danger; and they save (*sōzousin*) at once people who are already in such a fix.

Thus, Isis and Sarapis, like Apollo and Asklepios, were thought of as saviors of those on the brink of death—or even already dead!⁵⁶

Clearly, then, Apollo, Asklepios, and Sarapis (along with Isis) are not merely “helper gods”: they are defined significantly by their ability both to heal and to bring men back from the dead. I would argue, then, that the frequent selection of these gods in sacral manumission implies that *healing* gods were thought particularly appropriate for effecting the slave’s transition to freedom. And if this is the case, we can posit that slavery itself was conceptualized as a sort of sickness, or even death, from which the slave had to be “healed” or “saved.” Such a notion should not necessarily surprise us: a conception of slavery as (social) death is found in

⁵⁶ For Isis as a savior goddess and divine healer, see also Kockelmann, *Praising the Goddess*, 63-6.

almost all slave-holding societies, as we learn from cross-cultural sociological work on the subject.

Thus, in his book *Slavery and Social Death*, Orlando Patterson argues that enslavement, slavery, and manumission represent three phases of an extended rite of passage.⁵⁷ According to this model—which, he says, can apply to nearly every slave society from Greece and Rome to the modern day—enslavement is conceptualized as a symbolic execution, slavery a liminal state of social death, and manumission a symbolic rebirth. By “social death,” a term he adopts from Michel Izard and Claude Meillassoux,⁵⁸ Patterson refers to the complete desocialization and depersonalization to which the slave is subject. There is no question that chattel slaves in ancient Greece were desocialized: as described above, individuals were torn from their natal communities and were deprived of all family and community ties. Slaves in Greece were also depersonalized, in a process Igor Kopytoff describes as “commoditization”: an enslaved individual “becomes a non-person, indeed an object and an actual or potential commodity.”⁵⁹

Once the socially dead slave was freed, however, he regained his personhood; he was no longer a mere commodity. Moreover, he could now regain family and community ties, either by returning to his homeland or by forging social connections in Greece.⁶⁰ Manumission, then, was a process of both re-personalization and re-socialization. Indeed, as Patterson writes,

Since the slave is natally alienated and culturally dead, the release from slavery has certain implications in terms of symbolic logic. As enslavement is life-taking, it follows logically and symbolically that the release from slavery is life-giving and life-creating.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*. A number of classicists have found the work of Orlando Patterson useful: for a recent example, see Zelnick-Abramovitz *Not Wholly Free*, 9, 25-6.

⁵⁸ See Meillassoux, “Introduction,” 21-2 and *Anthropologie de l’esclavage*, 106. By adopting this theory of slavery as “social death,” I do not mean to imply that slaves in Greece had no independent identity or agency. On the agency of “powerless” groups, see, e.g. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

⁵⁹ Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things,” 65.

⁶⁰ To ritual “healing” as a means of (re)incorporating individuals into a society, we might compare the function of African “cults of affliction” (see, e.g. Turner, *Schism and Continuity*, ch. 10). I thank Joe Miller for this comparison.

⁶¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 211.

That is to say, manumission was conceptualized as a rebirth. In Greece, however, even when the slave invoked the healing gods in his manumission, he was never *completely* “healed” or “reborn.” Unlike in Rome, the freed slave in Greece did not become a citizen. Instead, he occupied an intermediate status somewhere between slave and citizen: free, but lacking many important rights and privileges.⁶² Nonetheless, it is important to note that once the slave was freed, his status *did* change, legally as well as conceptually. He was no longer a piece of property, no longer dishonored (or at least not nearly to the same extent), and no longer lacking the potential to become part of a community.⁶³

⁶² On the status of the freedman in Greece, see Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*, esp. ch. 6.

⁶³ I thank Steve Hodkinson, Dick Geary, and the other participants at the ISOS “Slaves, Cults and Religions” conference; Leslie Kurke, for reading an earlier incarnation of this project; and Sarah Levin-Richardson, for offering helpful feedback. All errors are, of course, my own.

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