

MANUMISSION INSCRIPTIONS AS A SOURCE: THE CASE OF LEMNOS



The archaeological context

The Lemnian manumission inscriptions come all from the Kabirion, which is on the northern coast of the island, on the Eastern side of the Bay of Pournia. The Italian Archaeological School at Athens (SAIA) has been excavating this archeological area since 1937. The surveys have showed a complex that consists of two *telesteria*, placed on two different terraces. The archeological area was already populated in the eighth century BC, as the pottery proves, but it is only a century later that the first structures were built on the southern platform, which attest a continuity of presence and rituals until the sixth century BC. The sanctuary was in use throughout the classical age, which is well documented by the pottery and the inscriptions. On the northern terrace in the late Hellenistic period a large *telesterion* (never completed) was built. The imposing late Hellenistic shrine remained in use until 200 AD, when was destroyed by a fire, probably in connection with an earthquake. The *telesterion* on the southern terrace, which imitates the plan of the Hellenistic one, was built only in the late Roman era (III century AD), with an extensive reuse of the materials taken from the old building, that was partially dismantled.

The Inscriptions

The four manumission inscriptions were found in connection with the third century *telesterion*: they were probably moved there to be saved from the fire that destroyed the Hellenistic building. The first one (Accame 1941/43 n° 14, 94-95 = MMyrina X18; fig. 2) still preserves the right and left borders, but is damaged on the top and on the bottom. In May 2009 E. Culasso recognized a second fragment that can belong to this inscription; this fragment is still unpublished, but the edition is forthcoming. The stele is completely covered with inscriptions on four sides, for a total of five texts, engraved by five different hands. The second document (Accame 1941/43 n° 15, 95-96 = MMyrina X19; fig. 4) is kept in the storerooms of the Museum and consists, at present, of two gray marble fragments, which match but are not rejoined. They keep two different manumission texts, engraved by two different letter cutters. The third inscription was also published by Accame (Accame 1941/43 n° 16, 96-99 = MMyrina X20; fig. 3); it still preserves the triangular pediment, some traces of the *acroteria* and is now on display at the Museum. On its surface there is only one text, a decree, which was meant to publicize the manumission deeds, engraved below. The last document is a stone of great size, published by Luigi Beschi (Beschi 1996/7 n° 25, 46-66 = MMyrina 2202, fig. 5); it presents many difficulties, for both the autopsy and the interpretation. There are thirty inscriptions which completely cover every inch of the stone. As we have already said, the archeological data can't help us with the chronology, since the documents' findspot was not the original one. Thus, we were compelled to use other indications, such as the phonological habits, the change of the paleographic characters and the prosopography. Paleography, in this kind of text is not so trustworthy; however, it can be noted *alpha* with the crossbar sharply broken and the lunate *epsilon*, *sigma*, *omega*. Some linguistic features can be more useful. In particular, the confusion between the dental *delta* and the aspirate *theta* (*methen* for *meden*), the use of *-ei* for *-ηι* in the dative singular of *η*-stems, or the permanence of the acrophonic numerals suggest the late Hellenistic period. The second half of the I century BC and the beginning of the first century AD are, instead, evoked by the lack of distinction of the short vowel *epsilon* and the long one, *eta*, or by the use of the spelling *eatos* for the reflexive pronoun *eautos*. Trying to put together all these data, it is possible to date our documents in the first century BC, with some later exceptions: Accame 1941/3, n° 14, text II b-side, which seems rather to belong to the I / II century AD, and the second text on the same side of the stone, which could be attributed to the early first century AD.



Fig. 1. The Kabirion of Lemnos, North terrace. Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 2. MMyrina X18 (=Accame 1948, n° 14). Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 3. MMyrina X20 (=Accame 1948, n° 16). Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 4. MMyrina X19 (=Accame 1948, n° 15). Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 5. Myrina 2202 (=Beschi 2000, n° 25). Picture taken by the author.

The historical context: manumittors

Prosopography can help us to lead a specific study on the historical context of the island in the late Hellenistic period. In details, two individuals, Αρχικλῆς Αρχικλέους Λακιάδης and Θεόδωρος Θεοδώρου Αιθαλίδης, belong to families that, after 167/6 BC, i.e. after the defeat of Perseus at Pydna, seem to provide cleruchs to Lemnos and Delos, given back to Athens by the Roman Senate. Another manumittor, Ιεροκλῆς Λασιμάχου Εύωνυμεύς, could belong to the same family of an homonym who appears in a list of cleruchs that were sent to Hephaistia in the first half of the fourth century BC. A funerary stele from Hephaistia, edited by Susini in 1952/54, may support my hypothesis. The holder of the deposition is called Archias, son of Androkleides, of Phegaia. A homonym, without patronymic, but with the same demotic, is attested as the father of Leothemis (MMyrina 2202, text n° 10), a woman who freed her slave. I believe that the chronology of the funerary inscription can be established in the I BC, as the paleographic characters reveal. If I am correct, the hypothesis of a family membership, if not of an identification of the two individuals, will be strongly supported. A second inscription can confirm what we have said. It preserves the memory of two persons, both represented in a scene of *dexiosis*: the man, Dies, recorded without patronymic and demotic, can be compared with another Dies, attested in MMyrina 2202, as a manumitted slave. Again, the paleographic characters suggest that both the inscription may well be set in the first century BC. Therefore, all the individuals mentioned above seem to recommend a connection with a group of people living on the island and, as we have seen, even buried there.



Fig. 6. Head of Serapis. Museum of Myrina, 2128. Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 7. Head of god, probably Serapis. Museum of Myrina, X126. Picture taken by the author.
Fig. 8. Graphic representing the manumittors' origin.

The formulas of the Inscriptions

The manumissions are an homogeneous *corpus* with a very repetitive form. The texts all follow a fixed scheme: at the beginning we usually find the archon's name, which unfortunately is preserved in just one Lemnian stele, MMyrina X20. The archon, Pheidantides, was not Athenian, but Lemnian. Regrettably, we do not have the list of the archons for the island and, therefore, the name can't help us with the chronology. After the magistrate we can read the name of the manumittors, that are generally Athenian citizens, as the graphic shows (fig. 8). The verb of manumission is always *aphiemi*, followed by the adjective *eleutheros*, which characterizes the gift of freedom. More than the half of the inscriptions then have the *paramone* clause, which is the obligation imposed to the slaves to remain with their ancient patrons for a precise lapse of time after the manumission. Usually the freedman were forced to work and serve the manumittor throughout his life. Finally the inscriptions from Lemnos bears three different formulas that were to guarantee protection to the freedman. The first one is *μηδενί μηδέν προσήκων*, which means "n'appartenat à personne en rien" (Darmezin 1999). The second one is *απτίεναι οὐ ἄν βούληται*: the manumitted slave could go wherever he wanted, without restrictions. Finally, the manumitted slaves could be rewarded with a special status, since he was entitled *xenos*.

En to hiero tou Sarapidos...

Six of the thirty inscriptions engraved on the huge stele published by Luigi Beschi (fig. 5) have a peculiar formula. The texts say that the obligation called *paramone* needs to be in compliance with the *homologia* kept *en to hiero tou Sarapidos*. The main problem is that we don't know whether this sanctuary is the Athenian one, seen by Pausanias (I, 18, 4) in the area now called Plaka, or an hypothetical (still unknown) Lemnian shrine. Even if it's been said that on the island there are no data concerning Serapis, some elements may be in connection with a local cult of Serapis and so deserve to be better considered. I think it may be interesting a little marble head, that had been considered lost for years, but that now is on display in the Museum of Myrina. The little piece of sculpture is a sure representation of the god of Alexandria (Fig. 6), since the *modius* proves this identification. Moreover, this head may be not the only one: another head, found in the Kabirion and already published by Beschi in 1998 could be associated with the Egyptian god. The divinity represented was first associated with the iconography of Hades, leaving aside a possible connection with Serapis because of the lack of the *modius* (Fig. 7). But this is not a crucial proof, since there are many sculptures of Serapis that represent the god without any head -covering (*modius vel kalathos*) or primary attribute, like a statue found in the Serapeum C in Delos (LIMC VII, 2, n° 7). Moreover, the presence of a local form of worship for the god Serapis could find confirmation also in some evidences relating to the goddess Isis, which is traditionally associated with the god of Alexandria. On the bottom of a cup of fine clay found in the Kabirion and now lost, it's possible to read the word *Ισις*, confirming the presence of the cult on the island: this is not surprising and fits well the framework of the North Aegean, where there are other islands that attest the same worship. The most important comparison is the 'twin' cleruchy of Imbros. Here a stele (IG XII 8,81+ IG XII Suppl. 81), dated to the imperial era, and found near the chapel of Hagios Dimitrios, near the village of Glyki, bears a votive inscription for Isis, and, perhaps, for Serapis (the name of the god is fully restored). This offer, in my opinion, suggests a local celebration of the worship; therefore, I would imagine a very similar situation for the two islands, which probably had their own sanctuary and cult of Serapis.

