

Teiresias Journal Online 1.2 (2022)

Section 2 Work in Progress

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Anchoring Roman rule: Rome-oriented festivals in the Greek world (supervisors Prof. Dr. Onno van Nijf and Dr. Christina Williamson). Date range: April 2019 – March 2024.

This research is financed by Anchoring Innovation, the Gravitation Grant research agenda of the Dutch National Research School in Classical Studies, OIKOS.

When Rome became the dominant hegemony in the Eastern Mediterranean, a complex and continuous process of cultural communication and status negotiation between the Greek communities and this new hegemonic power came about, as both parties had to adapt themselves to the novel and evolving situation of Roman rule.¹ Festival economy – in its broader cultural and ritual setting – played an important role in this process of connectivity: from the moment Rome set foot on Greek soil until well into the Imperial era, festivals were (re)dedicated to Rome or the Roman emperors, and events celebrating Rome were being added to their programs that now attracted participants from all over the Greek world.²

‘Anchoring innovation’ – a new tool for thinking

This doctoral thesis sets out to examine the dynamic role of festival culture in shaping the relationships between Greece and Rome and argues that this process may be considered from the perspective of ‘Anchoring Innovation’, a new analytical concept for investigating the ways by which new situations (‘innovations’) are connected (‘anchored’) to what people already

¹ On this wider trend see primarily Gruen 1984 and Ando 2001.

² Price 1984; Kantiréa 2007; Camia 2011.

expect and understand (the ‘anchors’).³ The aim is to explore how such Rome-oriented festivals may be seen as an anchoring place for the negotiation, expression and dissemination of relationships between Greek communities and Rome. What specific cultural anchors did traditional festival culture provide to shape and maintain relations between Greece and Rome? The underlying hypothesis is that such anchoring processes were not only crucial for the legitimacy of Roman rule, but were likewise important for the Greek communities to understand and define their own position, and to adapt to the rise of Roman hegemony. It is expected that the perspective of anchoring helps not only to focus on the outcome of this process (i.e. the successful integration of the Greek world into the Roman empire), but especially on the building blocks (the anchors) that enabled this. Finally, this project also aims to contribute to a better understanding of how anchoring processes work, as well as a stronger concept of ‘Anchoring Innovation’ in itself.

Festival culture and Boiotia

In order to investigate the role of festival culture in the integration of Greek communities into the Roman empire, as well as the many layers from which these processes could come to exist, this thesis focuses on the region of Boiotia. Boiotia provides a rich research area for this type of study as first of all it is well-known that the cities and sanctuaries in this region had a strong festival tradition, going back to at least the Classical period and sometimes even earlier.⁴ This makes it possible to trace the historical meaning and significance of the anchors that helped shape the relationship between Greek communities and Rome. Moreover, it has been established that the coming of Rome had a major impact on the way the festivals in this area developed and interacted with each other: as time progressed the region’s dense festival calendar started to include more and more events in honour of Rome.⁵ This gradual increase in Rome-oriented festivals allows me to illustrate and investigate processes of anchoring and change from different angles: not just synchronically (across different cultural and socio-political domains), but also

³ The analytical concept of ‘Anchoring Innovation’ is currently being developed by OIKOS (the National Research School in Classical Studies in the Netherlands): <https://anchoringinnovation.nl/>. On this research agenda see: Sluiter 2017 and the developing bibliography via its own open access book series with Brill, *Euhormos*: <https://anchoringinnovation.nl/book-series>. In the last decades more research has focused on the complexity of festival culture, see e.g. van Nijf and Williamson 2016; van Nijf and van Dijk 2020; and the Connecting the Greeks project in Groningen: <https://connectingthegreeks.com/>.

⁴ A complete chronological record of the evidence for Boiotian festivals from the seventh century BCE through to the end of the third century CE, as well as their role in the creation, development, and promotion of a unified Boiotian identity may now be found in Grigsby 2017. Also Schachter 1981-1994 and 2016; Manieri 2009 and many separate articles.

⁵ Fossey 2014; van Nijf and Williamson 2016; Papazarkadas 2019; van Nijf and van Dijk 2020.

diachronically (over time). Moreover, the region of Boiotia has featured – and still features – prominently in research. This means that the information required to conduct this study is often relatively easy accessible and available. Finally, this thesis also hopes to contribute to the continuing research bibliography on this region, by adding to our understanding of the importance and function of festival culture within this region and between this region and Rome.

Thesis outline

The first chapter of this thesis contains an introduction to the topic and highlights the historical importance of festival culture in the relations between Greece and Rome (e.g. starting with Titus Flamininus who famously used the Isthmian games to declare Greek ‘freedom’ in 196 BCE). Chapter 2 is primarily theoretical in nature and will explain the concept of ‘anchoring innovation’ in more detail. Although this thesis pays attention to the wider development of Rome-oriented festivals throughout Boiotia, three case-studies have been selected from which to start more in-depth inquiries from the perspective of ‘anchoring’. Each of the case-studies investigates at least three intertwined strands: 1) the festival institutions – in their wider cultural and ritual setting, 2) their (performative) space and material dimensions, and 3) the issue of agency. Chapter 3 focuses on the sanctuary of Amphiaraos near Oropos, where the role of festival culture as well as its material dimensions in the formation of relations with Rome can be traced from a relatively early period onwards. Chapter 4 is concerned with the festivals celebrated in connection to the Valley of the Muses and the city of Thespiiai and, among other things, will pay attention to the role of material culture (like theatres and statues, in particular the statue of Eros) in processes of anchoring and change, as well as to the many layers of meaning festivals and their related spaces could acquire as time progressed. Chapter 5 focuses on anchoring processes in the early imperial period by investigating the role of festival culture in the city of Akraiphia and the nearby sanctuary of Apollo Ptoios. This chapter centres around a close-reading of the well-known inscriptions IG VII 2711, 2712 and 2713 and aims to come to a better understanding of the ways in which festival culture functioned as an anchor in the intercultural communication between the city of Akraiphia and imperial Rome.

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Working title: The Epigraphic Culture of Manumission in the Greek World

Aims of the Project

My DPhil project offers a reappraisal of the epigraphic habits underlying the inscription of acts of manumission in the Greek world, focusing in particular on the central and northern Greek mainland from the middle-late Hellenistic period. From the late third century BCE, we observe the emergence, in various shapes, of inscriptions recording the release of enslaved persons in regions such as West Lokris, Aitolia, Phokis, Doris, Boiotia, Thessaly and Epirus, with some examples deriving from as far afield as Seleukid Iran. A great deal of attention has been paid to the legal content of such inscriptions, and in particular the various forms, sacral and secular, in which they appear. The precise conceptual and procedural connotations of manumission by sale to a deity (as exhibited at Delphi and its environs), or by consecration (the favoured Boiotian form), remain compelling issues in modern scholarship. Furthermore, manumission inscriptions provide precious evidence for various aspects of slavery and slaveholding in this period, facilitating tentative reconstructions of the demographics of the enslaved population (through gender ratios, ethnicities), the economics of slavery (prices, manumission rates), and aspects of master-slave relationships (affective ties, obligations, punishments). A relatively uninterrogated question, however, is why the inscription of a manumission act on stone became an appropriate (and desirable) object at certain times and in certain places.

Whether the category ‘manumission inscriptions’ denotes a single phenomenon or serves as an umbrella term for a multitude of epichoric practices, their appearance is far from ubiquitous. They are manifestly not reflective of the distribution of the practice of manumission itself, which undoubtedly occurred throughout Greek antiquity, and wherever slavery existed. Furthermore, Greek communities were selective about the documents they recorded on stone, and there was nothing inevitable about the development of an epigraphic habit. Where a culture of inscribing acts of manumission developed, therefore, the conditions which encouraged this must be critically examined.

The function of a manumission inscription is often assumed to be the display (and thereby protection) of the new status of the freed. From a purely practical point of view, this warrants scepticism: at Delphi, for example, where over 1,300 inscriptions documenting manumission were dispersed across the architecture of the sanctuary (primarily the wall of the Apolline

temple), many of which were performed by manumitters from outside of Delphi, it is hard to imagine how an inscription could be usefully consulted in the scenario of a status-dispute. Documents on more easily accessible, portable (and perishable) materials unquestionably will have served this function better. Of course, to read any inscription purely as a document for consultation largely misconstrues the value of this medium, and a more abstract notion of protection through publicity might be appealed to.

More importantly, however, the publication of these texts was not at the discretion of the manumitted, and the development of this epigraphic habit was contingent on the assent of several other parties, for whom the value of publicity is less obvious: the manumitters, the sanctuary and civic authorities who ratified and/or published these acts, as well as the community as a whole. The question of why these parties had an interest in publishing acts of manumission is open, and likely varied across the Greek world. Financial motivations, an interest in supervising population changes, as well as in publicising residual obligations, have all been advanced as factors motivating the production of these documents. But other more symbolic, performative functions, such as are often ascribed to other types of inscriptions, should not be discounted. At both a general and a local level, it is these functions that my project seeks to identify and explore.

In order to analyse a phenomenon, it must first be defined, and its boundaries delimited. My thesis must therefore inevitably engage in the fundamental issue of categorisation. Most studies of the topic operate according to a schema for categorising manumissions by type, along the major lines of public vs private and secular vs sacral, with a number of sub-divisions. That said, few scholars have failed to highlight the difficulties involved in distinguishing between these types. In terms of form and content, manumission inscriptions vary so widely between, and sometimes within communities, that these distinctions often break down on examination. However, atomised studies of individual regions, or specific corpora, have done much to advance our understanding of local procedures.

Boiotia, and specifically the large corpus of inscriptions from Chaironeia, recording the dedication of enslaved individuals as *hieroi* to a handful of gods (chiefly Serapis), provides a particularly interesting test case for the question of the nature of local manumission procedures. Indeed, the very categorisation of the Chaironeian texts as manumissions has recently been called into doubt, on the grounds that they are, formally and legally, real dedications, and do not represent a fictitious mode of release from enslavement. I argue that the terminological inconsistencies encountered in these inscriptions, as well as those at other sites such as Epirote Bouthrotos, do in fact betray a conceptual conflation of manumission with human dedication, and that we are therefore justified in categorising them as manumissions.

My thesis then turns to examining the relationship between the performance of manumission and its record; that is, the act and the fact. In many instances, it seems all that was required for the release of a slave in the Greek world was a slaveowner's word. Yet it is also clear that manumission procedures were often far more elaborate. While the extant inscriptions are low on

detail when it comes to the performance of the act of manumission, we should not underestimate the significance of this element to their legality, as well as their impact on individual and collective psychologies. This chapter will look at the evidence, some direct, some circumstantial, for the performance of manumission, considering physical location, participants, and those elements pointing towards a social and religious ritual.

It is generally assumed that inscriptions are abridged copies of ‘original’ or ‘archival’ documents, and this is also true of manumissions. It is therefore important to consider the relative status of an archival document and its corresponding inscription, and the extent to which each was deemed valid and authoritative and, crucially, consultable. The answers to these questions are significant for our understanding of the functioning and purpose of the inscriptions. The clearest, and hence the most intensively studied, evidence on this issue comes from Delphi, and those other communities in which manumission by sale to a deity was practiced: here, we encounter clauses which dictate (though often in rather oblique terms) the procedure for recording and storing copies of a manumission document. The inscriptions from Boiotia generally lack this kind of procedural detail, though we have some interesting self-referential texts, in which the authority of the *stèle* is explicitly affirmed. These provide valuable insight into the function of these objects as conceived by the communities which produced them.

Finally, my thesis will explore two further aspects of manumission inscriptions: their physicality, and their relationship to other types of inscriptions. In large part, manumissions are found in religious contexts, inscribed into walls, altars, or theatres at local and regional sanctuaries. This is a significant fact in itself, though it is worth emphasising these sites often also served as the political heart of their communities. In order to assess their value, practical and symbolic, we must ask how far they were accessible, legible documents (notably, this varies across sites), and how much effort was expended on their aesthetic qualities. Closely interrelated to this aspect is the question of how far this genre of text resembles, either formally or physically, other epigraphic genres. At Delphi, for example, it seems that manumissions coexisted, in terms of the space in which they are displayed and their aesthetic appearance, with honorific decrees. At other sites, by contrast, they represent almost the entirety of the local epigraphic output. I argue that the roles played by manumission inscriptions, whether as legal documents, commemorative markers of status, or of some other values (perhaps those of the manumitters), can be better discerned by analogy with the other objects displayed around them.

By taking into consideration the nature of the acts recorded by these inscriptions; the legal, religious, and administrative procedures underlying them; their functionality as documents; their physicality; and their place in a broader epigraphic culture, I hope to bring this puzzling body of evidence into clearer focus.