

ATHENS AND ROME: LIFE AND CULTURE IN CLASSICAL ANTIQUITY

The City of Athens and Rome
Lecture 4 – Slaves and Freedmen

CLCS4007
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Slaves (Athens)

- ▣ Natively alienated (alienable = transferable)
 - Natal alienation = no recognised family
 - ▣ Slaves may have relationships, but they are not recognised in law or respected; children may be sold out of the household, couples divided, partners used sexually by others.
- ▣ Slavery originates as commutation of a death sentence; slave owes life to master.
- ▣ As part of a household they were the responsibility of the *kyrios* (master).
- ▣ Generally dishonoured
 - accorded no respect by society
 - ▣ Slaves have no honour or shame; they are likened to 'two-footed stock', animated tools

Legal Status

- ▣ Murder of another's slave treated as destruction of property.
- ▣ Killing one's slave not subject to penalty (though may bring religious pollution).
- ▣ No right to bring a court case.
- ▣ Testimony only admissible if subject to torture.
- ▣ Protected by certain *graphe* (public) laws, e.g. Hubris law.
- ▣ Can seek sanctuary from bad master:
 - Run to shrine of Theseus.
 - Demand sale to someone else.
 - Depends on being able to persuade someone to buy you from your bad master.

Torture and Abuse

“After I had departed for Aenus and the boat on which Herodes and I had been drinking had reached Mytilene, the prosecution first of all went on board and conducted a search. On finding the bloodstains, they claimed that this was where Herodes had met his end. But the suggestion proved an unfortunate one, as the blood turned out to be that of the animals sacrificed. So they abandoned that line, and instead **seized the two men and examined them under torture**. The first, who was tortured there and then, said nothing to damage me. The second was tortured several days later, after being in the prosecution's company throughout the interval. It was he who was induced by them to incriminate me falsely. I will produce witnesses to confirm these facts. - **Antiphon 5.29-30.**

Lysias *On the Murder of Eratosthnes*

“So I ordered my wife go and give the child her breast, to stop its howling. At first she refused, as though delighted to see me home again after so long; but when I began to be angry and commander she go, she said — **“Yes, so that you may have a try here at the little maid.** Once before, too, when you were drunk, you pulled her about [i.e. forced himself upon her].” (1.12).

“[approached by an old woman] Euphiletus, do not think it is from any meddlesomeness that I have approached you; for the man who is working both your and your wife's dishonour happens to be our enemy. If, therefore, you take the servant-girl who goes to market and waits on you, and **torture her**, you will learn all.” (1.16).

““So it is open to you,” I said, “to choose as you please between two things, — **either to be whipped and thrown into a mill**, and to be irrevocably immersed in that sort of misery, or else to speak out the whole truth ...” (1.18)

Origin, Identity and Identification

- Athenians could not be made slaves (except in very extreme circumstances)
 - abolition of debt-slavery by Solon.
- Few house-born (3/45 in Hermocopidai sales).
- Predominately purchased in market.
- Mostly from Black Sea and Asia Minor (modern Turkey).
- Slaves often given names vaguely denoting their (assumed) origin or characteristics – e.g. Manes (Anatolian) and Xanthias (blond).

“Now among the slaves and metics at Athens there is the greatest uncontrolled wantonness; you can't hit them there, and a slave will not stand aside for you. I shall point out why this is their native practice: if it were customary for a slave (or metic or freedman) to be struck by one who is free, you would often hit an Athenian citizen by mistake on the assumption that he was a slave. **For the people there are no better dressed than the slaves and metics, nor are they any more handsome.** If anyone is also startled by the fact that they let the slaves live luxuriously there and some of them sumptuously, it would be clear that even this they do for a reason. For where there is a naval power, it is necessary from financial considerations to be slaves to the slaves in order to take a portion of their earnings, and it is then necessary to let them go free. And where there are rich slaves, it is no longer profitable in such a place for my slave to fear you. In Sparta my slave would fear you; but if your slave fears me, there will be the chance that he will give over his money so as not to have to worry anymore. For this reason we have set up equality between slaves and free men, and between metics and citizens. The city needs metics in view of the many different trades and the fleet. Accordingly, then, we have reasonably set up a similar equality also for the metics.” - Old Oligarch 1.10-12.

Types of Occupations

- ▣ Domestic servants – (wet)nurses, tutors etc.
- ▣ Agricultural work – sometimes specialised like viticultural work.
- ▣ Artisanal activities, e.g. ceramics, sculpting, weapons manufacturing etc.
- ▣ Managers, agents, bankers (specialised tasks).
- ▣ Working in mines and quarries.

1) "...if there is no business to do in town, my serving-boy leads my horse to the farm... when I have reached the farm, where it may be that some of my men are planting trees, or breaking fallow, sowing or getting in the crops, I inspect their various labours with an eye to every detail..." – **Xenophon *Oeconomicus* 11.16-17.**

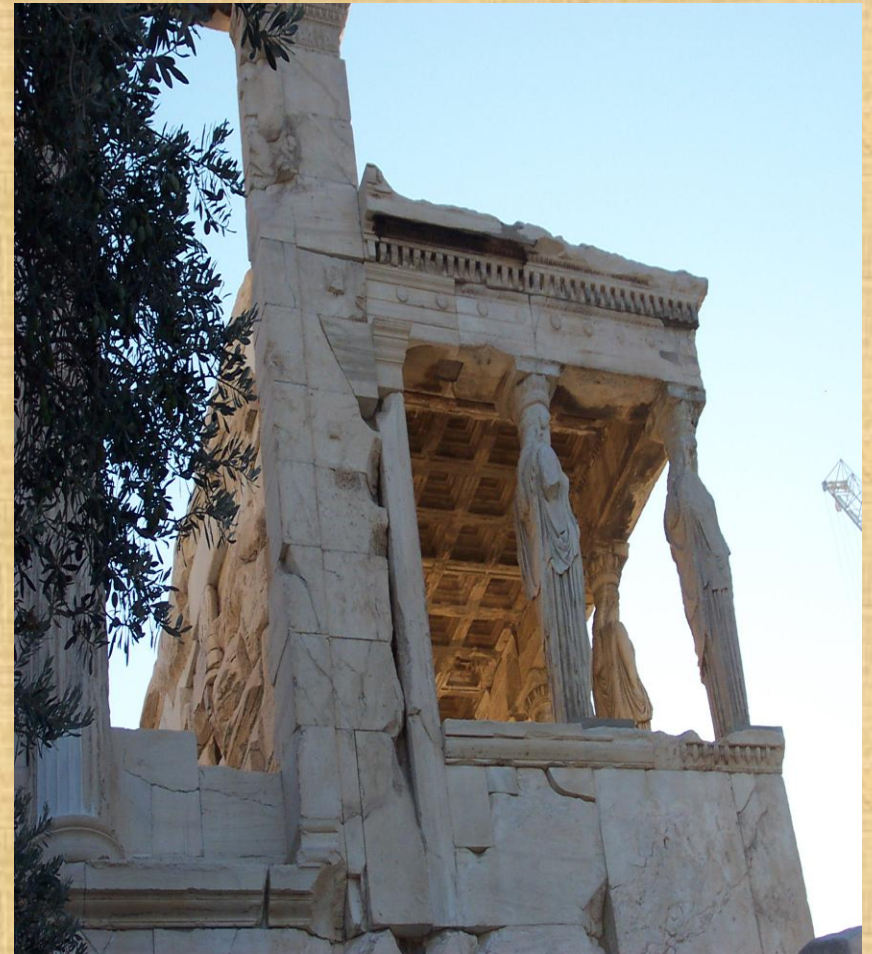
2) [purported remark of Pericles upon seeing a slave break his leg] "There's a new paedagogos" - - **Hieronimus of Rhodes in Stobaeus *Flor.* 31.121.**

Working for Masters

- ▣ Slaves may live independently of their master, in rented accommodation.
- ▣ Paid a daily body-rent to the master
 - 1 or 2 obols per day fairly typical
 - Slave kept rest of earnings
 - ▣ some went on necessary expenditure (food, lodgings and taxes).
 - ▣ remainder went on living better or saving to buy freedom.
- ▣ Extreme cases involve single slave agents travelling abroad, handling large sums of money, buying and selling property, even fighting lawsuits via legally competent proxies (see e.g. **Demosthenes 34**).

Work at the Erechtheion

- ▣ 9 citizen, 12 metic and 16 slave stonemasons worked side-by-side on the Erechtheion 408-7 BC.
- ▣ 5 citizen, 7 metic and 4 slave carpenters.
- ▣ 1 citizen and 5 metic labourers.
- ▣ No difference in payment is made between citizens, metics and slaves, or between masters and slaves: same job, same pay.



Public Slaves

- ▣ The polis owned some slaves
 - Scythian archers
 - ▣ Provided muscle to magistrates
 - More like bouncers than police; they did not investigate crime, just manhandled people
 - Various administrative roles needing unbiased and incorruptible staff
 - ▣ State record-keepers (esp. financial)
 - ▣ Silver assayers
 - ▣ Grain dole dispensers
 - ▣ Prison guards and executioner
 - Assorted little-known other jobs
 - ▣ Sewage collectors
 - ▣ Manager of state-owned gambling den?

Number of Slaves in Athens

- ▣ Highly disputable – little reliable statistical evidence.
- ▣ Minimum c. 11,000 working in the Laurium, mining and processing ores and earths (esp. silver and lead, but also copper and ochre among others).
- ▣ If we assume average of 1 slave per free *oikos*, = another 40,000
 - ▣ c. 30,000 (citizen) + c. 10,000 (metic).
- ▣ Lit. sources say ‘more than 150,000’ in 338 BC (Hyperides) and ‘400,000’ in 317 BC (Ctesicles quoted by Athenaeus); variation suggests guesses.

- ▣ Defence speech written for Callias who has been denounced as a temple robber by his own slave.

“The trial, in my opinion, ought to be regarded, not as the personal affair of the accused, but as the common concern of everybody in the city; for these¹ are not the only people who own slaves; **they are owned by everyone else**, and looking at the fate of the accused will no longer ask themselves by what great service to their masters they might gain their freedom, but instead what lying account to make” – **Lysias**
For Callias 5.5.

Manumission

- ▣ Manumission = ‘sent from the hand’
 - *Dike apostasiou* ‘standing apart’ is the relevant legal case in Athens.
- ▣ Not always complete freedom - master must become the *prostates* (patron) – become metics if they stay in Athens.
- ▣ Manumission fairly frequent
 - Best means in which to motivate slaves performing jobs of high skill or care, e.g. child-minders may be liberated on the marriage of the child, artisans when they have earned enough to buy a replacement.

“...my wife happened to be lunching with the children in the courtyard and **with her was an elderly woman who had been my nurse, a devoted soul and a faithful, who had been set free by my father.**” -
Demosthenes 47.55.



Stelae – *IG* 2² 1554, 1556, 1557, 1558, 1559

- ▣ Inscription from Athens dating around 430-20 BC.
- ▣ Refer to names of manumitted slaves, their former master, and their occupations.
 - majority on the lists are craft-slaves.
 - 11 out of 85 referred to as *georgoi* (farmers).
 - 2 are recorded as being vine-dressers.

Pasion – Slave made Citizen

“For the real property of Pasion was about twenty talents, but in addition to this he had more than fifty talents in money of his own lent² out at interest. Among these were eleven talents of the bank's deposits, profitably invested. ” - **Demosthenes 36.5.**

“...is no secret to him or to many of you that Socrates [not the philosopher], the well-known banker, having been set free by his masters just as the plaintiff's father had been, gave his wife in marriage to Satyrus who had been his slave...” (36.28).

“Another, Socles, who had been in the banking business, gave his wife in marriage to Timodemus, who is still in being and alive, who had been his slave. And it is not here only, men of Athens, that those engaged in this line of business so act; but in Aegina Strymodorus gave his wife in marriage to Hermaeus, his own slave, and again, after her death, gave him his own daughter...” (36.29).

Slavery in the Roman Culture

- ▣ An Empire wide phenomenon.
- ▣ Lacking a racial component
 - “You do Germans, and Parthians [Iraq + Iran], and Dacians [Balkans], Caelia, you don’t scorn Cappadocian or Cilician beds [regions in Turkey]; and fuckers from Memphis, that Pharian city [Egypt], and Red Sea’s black Indians sail towards you. You’d not flee the thighs of a circumcised Jew, not an Alan goes by, with Sarmatian horse too [north of Black Sea]. What’s the reason, then, since you are a Roman, not one Roman cock pleases you, woman?” – **Martial *Epigrams* 7.30.**

Brutality and Abuse (1)

- ▣ Mine slaves

- “The men engaged in these mining operations produce unbelievably large revenues for their masters, but as a result of their underground excavations day and night they become physical wrecks, and because of their extremely bad conditions, their mortality rate is high; they are not allowed to give up working or have a rest, but are forced by the beatings of their supervisors to stay at their places and throw away their wretched lives as a result of these horrible hardships.” - **Diodorus Siculus 5.38.1**

Brutality and Abuse (2)

- ▣ Domestic slaves – can be subject to casual ill-treatment and sexual abuse.

“Quirinalis does not think he should take a wife, meanwhile he wishes to have sons and he has discovered how to secure that aim: he has relations with maid servants, and fills his town-house and his country-place with home-born slave knights. A genuine *paterfamilias* is Quirinalis.” – **Martial *Epigrams* 1.84.**

Brutality and Abuse (3)

“Soon afterwards one of his own slaves murdered the city-prefect, Pedanius Secundus, either because he had been refused his freedom, for which he had made a bargain, or in the jealousy of a love in which he could not brook his master's rivalry. Ancient custom required that the whole slave-establishment which had dwelt under the same roof should be dragged to execution, when a sudden gathering of the populace, which was for saving so many innocent lives, brought matters to actual insurrection... Still, the party which voted for their execution prevailed.” – **Tacitus *Annals* 14.42.**

- ▣ **Resulted in the execution of 400 slaves (AD 61).**

Brutality and Abuse (4)

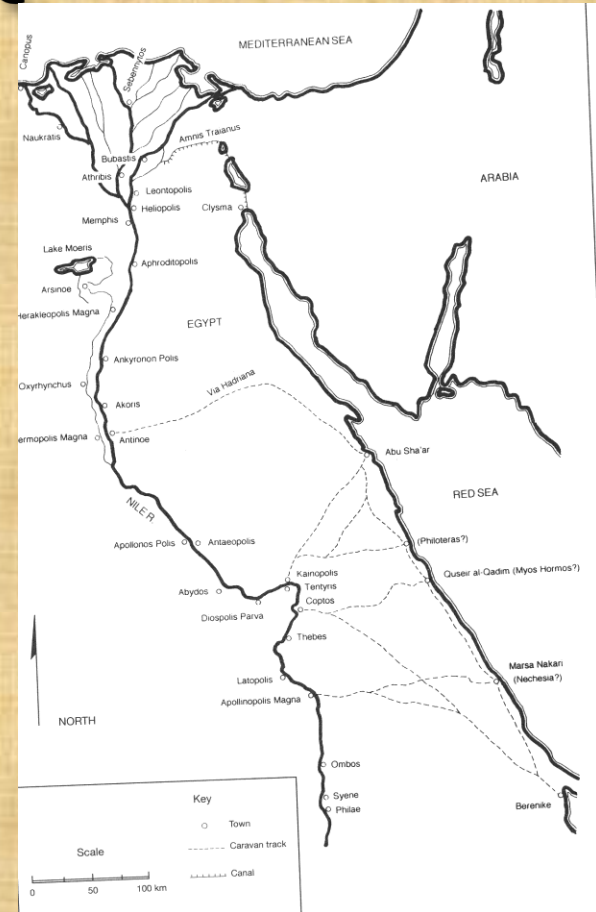
“This same year [15 BC] Vedio Pollio died, a man who in general had done nothing deserving of remembrance, as he was the child of a freedmen, but of the equestrian order, and had performed no brilliant deeds; but he had become very famous for his wealth and for his cruelty... **he kept in reservoirs huge lampreys that had been trained to eat men, and he was accustomed to throw to them such of his slaves as he desired to put to death.** Once, when he was entertaining Augustus, his cup-bearer broke a crystal goblet, and without regard for his guest, Pollio ordered the fellow to be thrown to the lampreys. Hereupon the slave fell on his knees before Augustus and supplicated him, and Augustus at first tried to persuade Pollio not to commit so monstrous a deed. Then, when Pollio paid no heed to him, the emperor said, ‘Bring all the rest of the drinking vessels which are of like sort or any others of value that you possess, in order that I may use them,’ and when they were brought, he ordered them to be broken. When Pollio saw this, he was vexed, of course; but since he was no longer angry over the one goblet, considering the great number of the others that were ruined, and, on the other hand, could not punish his servant for what Augustus also had done, he held his peace, though much against his will...” **Cassius Dio 54.23.**

Skilled Slaves and Freedmen

- ▣ **Craftsmen and farm managers:**
 - *peculium* (grant of master's money or resources).
 - *CIL VI 9,222* (found in Rome) - freedman Marcus Canuleius Zosimus, a silversmith.
- ▣ **Bankers, merchants and agents**
 - Murecine archive (or archive of the Sulpicii) found at Pompeii – commercial documents.
 - slaves (including imperial slaves) borrowing money and engaging in commercial activity.

Imperial Slaves and Freedmen in the Eastern Desert of Egypt

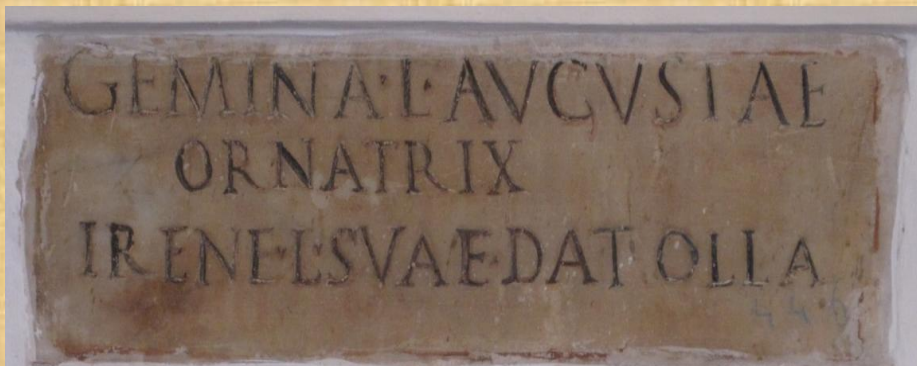
- Aniketos Kommonos slave or freedman of the emperor Tiberius, operating in the Kotpos-Red Sea region around AD 33-34).
- Zethos, slave of Tratos slave of Caesar (slave of a slave of Claudius or Nero?).



Freedmen/women of the household of Livia



Zeuxis, freedman of Livia,
aurifex (goldsmith)



Gemina, freedwoman of
Augusta [Livia], *ornatrix* (hair dresser)



Columbarium – place for
storage of funerary urns

Latifundia

- ▣ Latifundia = “Spacious estates” – large conglomerations of land.
- ▣ Increasing warfare from takes away many small-holding farmers from their land for lengthy periods - campaigns also lead to influx of slaves.
- ▣ Many farm fall into disrepair and debt – purchased or appropriated by many elites.
- ▣ Wealthy landowners frequently use slave labour (though not exclusively).

Slave Rebellions

- ▣ First Servile War – 135-32 BC (in Sicily).
- ▣ Second Servile War – 104-100 BC (also in Sicily).
- ▣ Third Servile War – 73-71 BC (in Italy – led, among others, by Spartacus).



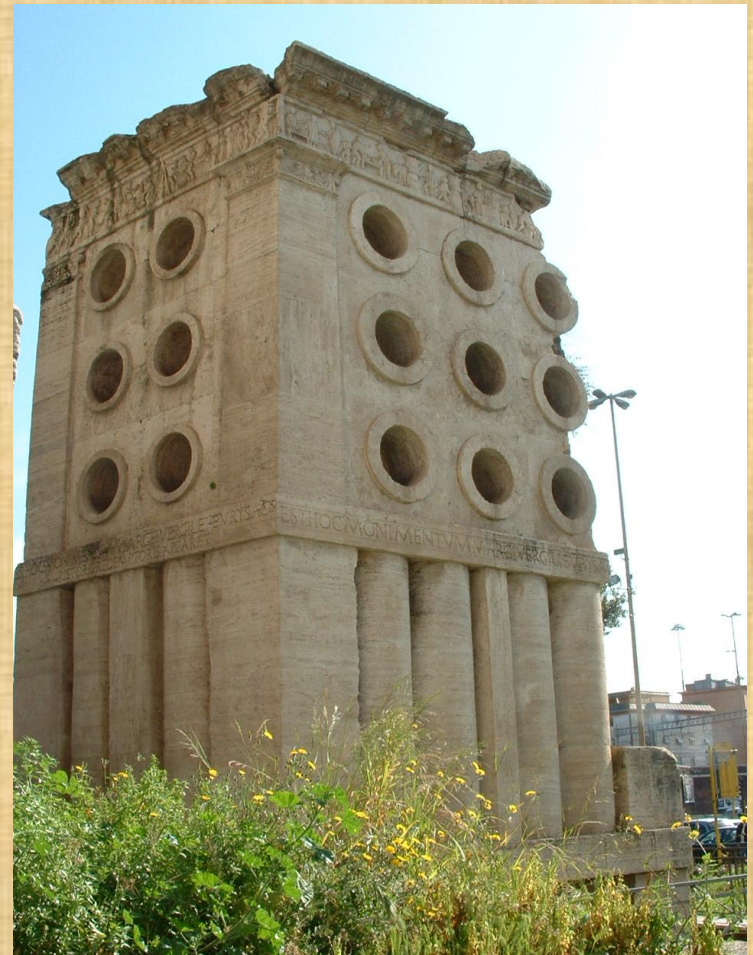
Manumission

- ▣ Freeing of slaves, by purchase, by formal or informal ceremony, by will.
- ▣ **FIRA III no.II**- Hermopolis Magna (Egypt) Helene freed in front of master's friends for 2000 drachmas given to her by Aurelius Ales (AD 221).
- ▣ Tomb of the Haterii, Rome – slaves freed by will mourn mistress.



Rich Freedmen

- ❑ The tomb of Marcus Vergilius Eurysaces in Rome a baker and contractor of freedman origin -wealthy but low social status
- ❑ Trimalchio, a fictional freedman (**Petronius' *Satyricon***).
- ❑ Tiberius Claudius Narcissus, freedman of the emperor Claudius.



Wealth does not equal status!

“Rufus, you see that person lounging in the front rows [seats reserved for senators], whose hand with its sardonyx [a precious gem] gleams even from here, and his cloak has so often drunk up Tyre [reference to purple dye] ...whose starred brow is plastered by many a patch [he is try to cover up the brand that marked out his former servile status]...” – **Martial *Epigrams* 2.29.**