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Hera Eleutheria, the Water of Freedom and the Slaves

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Abstract - In the Greek colony of Kroton the goddess Hera was worshipped with the epithet Eleutheria, which can be translated as “grantor of freedom”. Her cult was in fact possibly connected with the protection and the manumission of slaves, as the epigraphic and archaeological data seem to suggest. Some inscriptions (all considered in the text) that possibly concern the manumission of slaves or their consecration to the goddess were discovered in the renowned temple of Capo Lacinio. This reminds us the role of asylum that the sanctuary used to have. The Heraia of Argos and Samos were also places where the slaves, as suppliants, could seek refuge. Some wrist and foot chains broken with a mallet were found in the smaller temple (Heraion) of Vigna Nuova and these items may refer to some prisoners, who were set free all together. Finally, the adjective eleutherios/eleutheros appears to be strongly related with water and the ritual connected to it (drinking, immerging) to be released from slavery.

Keywords - slavery; manumission inscriptions; ritual of manumission; cult of Hera, sanctuary of Capo Colonna.

The literary and epigraphic sources concerning the manumission of slaves in Greece have been pretty well known since the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the conclusions, suggested by Drachman in his book, De manumissione servorum apud Graecos, quale ex inscriptionibus cognoscimus, are still relevant. Moreover, although in certain respects outdated, the monographic study La manomissione e la condizione dei liberti in Grecia, published by Calderini in 1908, has remained, thus far, one of the best treatments of the topic. It is apparent that the dossier of documents known at the very beginning of the last century has needed an update from time to time, since year after year, in archaeological excavations, hundreds of new inscriptions were - and still are - brought to light1. The number of the stelae has significantly increased and the literary sources

1 The following works may be considered the essential bibliography about Greek manumission: first and foremost Drachmann 1878 and Calderini 1908, which I have already mentioned in the text; Bömer 1960; Rädle 1969; Albrecht 1978; Klee 1998 and Id. 2000; Darmezin 1999; Zelnick-Abramovitz 2005 and now also Ead. 2013, with a special attention to the manumission acts from Thessaly; see also Kamen 2005 (unpublished) and Kamen 2013, 32-42 (chap. 3). See also Kranzlein 1983; Velissaropoulos-Karakostas 2011, 343-452. One might also note an interesting online corpus of manumission inscriptions: www. iath.virginia.edu/meyer. The leader of the project, Elisabeth Meyer, has recently published a book about inscriptions (mainly manumissions) from Dodona (see Meyer 2013).
have been systematically reconsidered by the scholars. Therefore, the book of Zelnick-Abramovitz, Not Wholly Free. The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World, published in 2005, has been essential and well received.

At present, many scholars (epigraphists, historians and jurists) are dealing with the sources concerning manumission and, above all, the freedman's status. The bibliography is growing faster; the congresses about slavery and the ways out of it are increasing in number. But I must say, quite surprisingly, that in the great majority of the essays that I have read and papers heard, the inscriptions and the archaeological data found in the South of Italy - namely in Magna Graecia - are not mentioned\(^2\). And this becomes even stranger if we think that, especially in Sicily and Calabria, we have very early proofs of the existence of freedmen and, as a consequence, of manumission\(^3\). So, in spite of the surprising lack of attention in these sources, I would like to focus on a group of documents, found in a specific sanctuary of the south of Italy, that is to say, the Temple of Hera Lacinia, located at Capo Colonna, near Kroton, to see if they can reveal to us something unique and perhaps thereby improve our knowledge of the topic.

1. The sanctuary of Hera at Capo Colonna

The importance of the archaeological site of Capo Colonna primarily lies in the historical elements linked to the sanctuary, which was dedicated to Hera Lacinia. The sacred area was established near (but not quite so near) the ancient Achaean colony of Kroton\(^4\). This polis was itself founded by the Achaeans, led by the oikist Myskellos of Rhypai, in the last decades of the 8th century, most likely after Sybaris, which was established in 720 BC\(^5\). The

\(^2\) A complete corpus of all the sources related to manumission in the South of Italy is not available, as far as I know. A useful (but now not totally updated) bibliographic review is given by Cordiano 2000: 116.

\(^3\) A very early instance of the word exeleutheros appears on a ceramic fragment which can be dated in the 6th century BC. The fragment was found in Leontini, Sicily, and consists of a dedication made by a manumitted man, namely an exeleutheros (see Manganaro 2004: 55-68 and especially 63). The other early data linked with manumission were found in the sanctuary of Capo Colonna - Kroton - and will be considered in the text.

\(^4\) The collection of essays published by Spadea 2014 is the more recent and exhaustive study on the Achaean polis of Kroton. Nonetheless, it is worth noting the congress that was dedicated to the Greek polis of Kroton in 1983 (Crotone 1983 in bibliography). An update of the findings and studies was undertaken in 1993, when another conference was held at the University of Naples (see Crotone 1993). Another very useful review of the materials was the congress which took place in 2000 at Kroton (see Belli Pasqua - Spadea 2005 in bibliography). On the history of the city, see also Giangiulio 1989.

\(^5\) The date of the foundation of Sybaris is suggested by Ps.-Scymn. 337-360. We have a rich and quite tangled documentation about the foundation of Kroton, which took place after many Delphic oracular responses (Zen. 3. 42 = Hippys, FrGrHist 1; Str. 6. 1. 12 = Antiochus