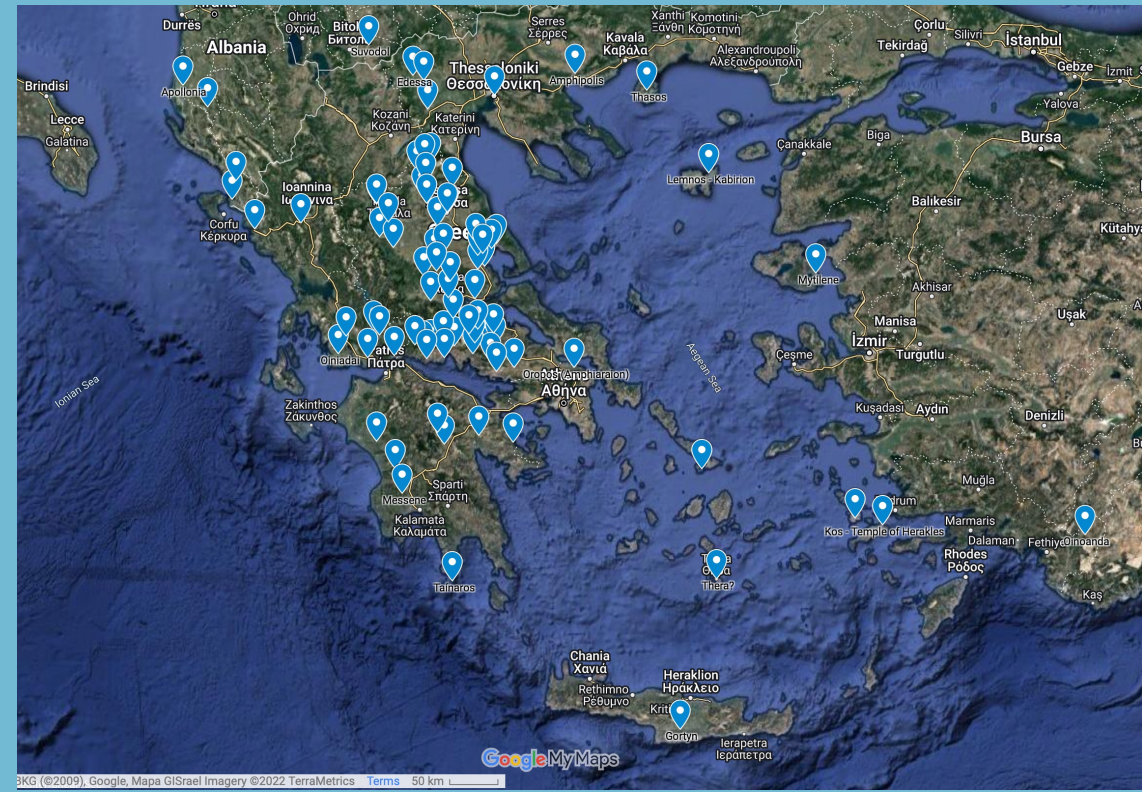


The Inscribed Manumission Lists of Epirote Bouthrotos: Ideology and Function

Greek manumission inscriptions

- Inscriptions pertaining to manumission (the release of an enslaved person) have been found at c. 100 Greek sites.
- The great majority of these date from the Hellenistic period (3rd – 1st cent. BCE), and belong to states from the central and northern Greek mainland.
- Within the broad category of ‘manumission inscriptions’, there is great formal variety, and many categorical distinctions can be drawn (e.g. ‘sacral’ vs ‘secular’; ‘public’ vs ‘private’).
- Among these is the distinction between individual inscribed ‘acts’ of manumission, and lists.

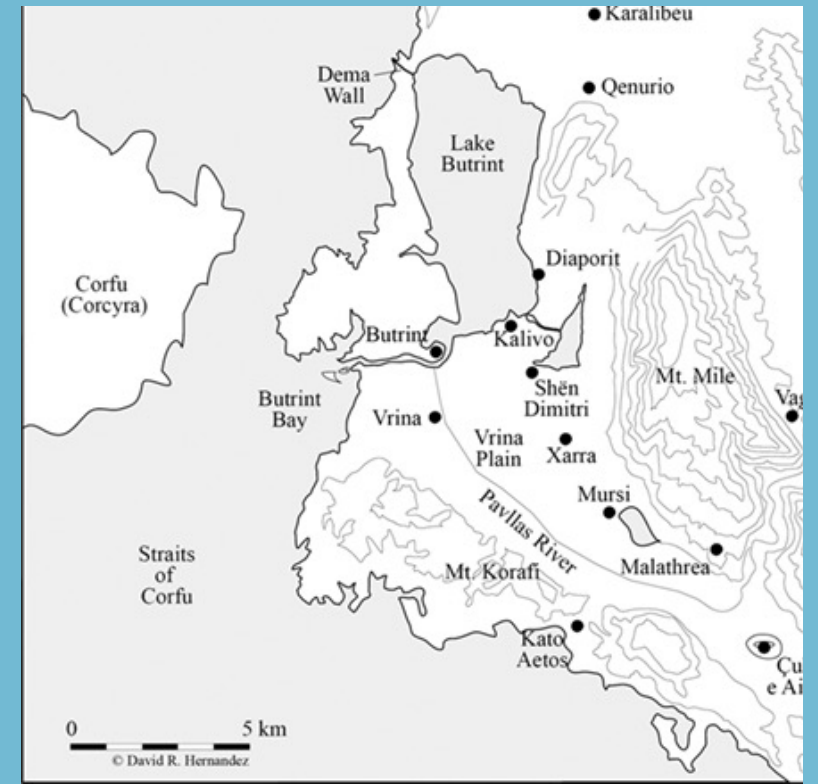


Bouthrotos

- A relatively small settlement, located on the west coast of Epirus, opposite Corcyra (Corfu). Modern Butrint, Southern Albania.
- Part of a region dominated by *ethne* and *koina* (federal leagues). Bouthrotos became the political centre of the *koinon* of the Prasaiboi in the mid-2nd cent. BCE.
- 156 extant inscriptions recording the release of nearly 600 slaves, dating from 2nd-1st cent. BCE; published by Cabanes and Drini (2007) *CIGIME 2. Inscriptions de Bouthrôtos*.
- These inscriptions are located on the *diazoma* and *parodos* walls of the Hellenistic theatre, and reused in a Roman tower.
- Combination of 'sacral' and 'secular' formulae: usually dedicated to Asklepios or Zeus Soter ('the saviour').
- 2 kinds of inscription: individual detailed acts of manumission, and concise lists of those freed during the term of a single priest.



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E.g. *I.Bouthrotos* 115

ACTS

Ἀγαθαί τύχαι. στραταγοῦντος Πρασαι-
 βῶν Νικάνδρου Ὀπορρωνίου, προσ-
 τατοῦντος δὲ Ἀδμάτου Λυκτεννοῦ,
 ἱερεύοντος δὲ τῷ Σωτῆρι Μυρτίλου Ἄνεμω-
 τίου, ἀφίητι Γέλων ὁ Φιλίππου καὶ ἀνατιθη-
 τι ἱερὸν τῷ Διὶ τῷ Σωτῆρι Ἑρακλείδαν. παραμε-
 νέτω δὲ Ἑρακλείδας παρὰ Γέλωνα ἄς κα-
 ζοῖ Γέλων, ἐπεὶ δε κα τελευταῖοι Γέλων ἴ-
 μεν Ἑρακλείδαν ὅπαι κα θέλη. μάρτυρες ὃ
 [τε] προστάτας Ἄδματος Νικαίου Λυκτεννός
 καὶ τῶν συναρχόντων Ἀλέξανδρος Ἄνε-
 ροῖτα Πυλλίεο[ς] καὶ τῶν ἄλλων πολιτῶν
 Μυρτίλος Σαῶτα Ἄνεμώτιος, Λυκίσκος
 Λύκου *vacat* Ὀφύλλιος, Ἀντιφῶν Βοῖσκου
vacat Βουθρώτιος.

Good Fortune. When Nikandros Oporronios served as strategos of the Prasaiboi, Admetos Lyktennos served as prostates, and Myrtilos son of Anemontios served as priest of Zeus: Gelon son of Philippos released Herakleidas, and dedicated him as sacred to Zeus Soter. Let Herakleidas remain with Gelon for as long as Gelon lives, then, when Gelon has died, let Herakleidas go wherever he should please. Serving as witnesses were: the prostates, Admetos son of Nikaios Lyktennos, and, from among the synarchontai, Alexandros son of Aneroitas Pullieos, and, from among the other citizens, Myrtilos son of Saotas Anemotios, Lykiskos son of Lykos Ophyllios, and Antiphon son of Boiskos Bouthrotios.



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LISTS

I. Bouthrotos 14

Ἐπὶ προστάτα Κλέα Δρυμίου,
 ἱεριτεύοντος δὲ τῷ Ἄσκλη-
 πιῷ Νικάνωρος τοῦ Λυκίσκου,
**οἱ ἀφρωθεντες ἐλεύθεροι
 καὶ ἀνατεθέντες ἱεροὶ τῷ
 Ἄσκληπιῷ***:

Νικάνωρ Λυκίσκου, Λυκίσκος, Πρω-
 τόμαχος, Ἄττεα Φιλίστιον, Λαμίαν;
 Μενοίτας Βοῖσκου, Βοῖσκος, Δεινο-
 μάχα, Θερσῶ Ἀρσινόαν;...

*When Kleas Drymios served as prostates, and Nikanor son of Lykiskos served as the priest of Asklepios, **those released as free and dedicated as sacred to Asklepios:***

*Nikanor son of Lykiskos, Lykiskos, Protomachos and Attea
 (released and dedicated) Philistion and Lamia.
 Menoitas son of Boiskos, Boiskos, Deinomacha and Therso
 (released and dedication) Arsinoa...*

* Note the variant active formulae in *I.Bouthrotos* 15; 26; 46

Possible Functions

- For the freed:
 - Publicity: the precarious status of the newly-freed is better protected with wider recognition from the local community.
 - Invocation of a divine witness.
 - An expression of integration into free society?
- For slaveowners:
 - Avoidance of future inheritance disputes.
 - A display of wealth or generosity, through the alienation of a valuable article or property?
 - Conspicuous participation in local community?
- For the sanctuary and state:
 - A source of income, through registration and publication fees.
 - A method of monitoring changes to the free population?
 - Ensured patronage of the sanctuary by those tied to it through dedication?

Problems

- How consultable were these texts as documents?
 - Static stone inscriptions cannot be produced on the spot as proof of freed status.
 - Lack of named witnesses reduces potential for verification.
 - Legibility of the inscriptions and literacy of the local community crucial factors.
- Why choose to have manumission inscribed in list form rather than as a single act?
 - A cheaper option?
 - Registration rather than performance of the act?
- These inscriptions are demonstrably uncomprehensive, and irregularly produced.

Conclusion

- ❖ The inscribed lists of those manumitted at Bouthrotos were of limited use as practical documents, from the point of view both of the freed and of the city. By virtue of their physical form, as well as their lack of detail, they offer little in the way of protection to those whose names are recorded. They also do not represent an exhaustive record of the slaves freed in a given period, and so can not offer the city a useful account of their freed population.
- ❖ We must therefore justify their existence in the realm of the symbolic. Any protection they provided was by invoking a deity as witness, as well as an abstract notion of the community. They also served as a visible monument, in the civic and religious centre of that community, of the integration of the manumitted into the free society of Bouthrotos and of the Prasaiboi, an integration sanctioned by state and sanctuary officials.

Other Greek manumission Lists:

- Thessaly: records of fees paid to the *polis* in relation to manumission (see Zelnick-Abramovitz (2013))
- Athens: The “Phialai” inscriptions record the dedications of silver bowls, possibly by those manumitted by means of fictitious trial (see Meyer (2010))
- Thera: *IG XII 3, 336-7; 1302*: lists of those freed at the Karneia festival
- Argive Heraion: *IG IV 528; 529; 530; O. Walter (1911) 143-150; SEG 53-292*: lists of the freed
- Concise records, consisting only of names, at the theatres of Oiniadai (*IG IX,1² 2:419*) and Epidauros (*IG IV², 1 353-73*).