

distinction between those suitable as workers and those capable of acting as foremen in command over the other slaves. Thus at times he recommends treating them like wild animals, training them with punishments and rewards of extra rations, supported by differentiated clothing and shoes. But at other times he views slaves as human beings, who react like free men and women, recognising that some slaves 'love honour' and 'crave praise', and recommending that they be rewarded accordingly. Finally he claims (with much rhetorical exaggeration) that one may treat especially honest and loyal slaves 'as free men, not only making them rich, but also honouring them as if they were gentlemen' (*Oikonomikos* 13-14; cf. also 9.5 = *GARS* 193, quoted in ch. 4 above, where bearing children is a privilege only allowed to 'good' slaves).

Much the same picture is given by Pseudo-Aristotle, though in a rather more realistic tone. He recommends treating slaves according to their deserts, repressing the potentially disobedient without excessive cruelty, but rewarding good slaves with extra food, with honours, and with a share in the holidays provided by festivals. He adds, what Xenophon surprisingly omits (unless that is what is implied by the phrase quoted just above, which seems unlikely), that the prospect of freedom is a major inducement (cf. also below), and is both 'right and beneficial' (whether he means 'right' for the slaves' interests, or for the institution as a whole is unclear). He also suggests, however, that allowing them to have children is a useful means of retaining obedience, as the children act as 'hostages'. In a rather different way, Plato fears that many Athenians may be over-indulgent with their slaves, and that this allows a dangerous narrowing of the necessary gap in aptitudes and intelligence between slave and free. Yet he also insists that one should give the slaves appropriate honour 'not only for the slaves' sake, but for the good of the masters': masters should not treat slaves with *hybris* or injustice, because it makes the slaves' 'souls' more sullen and rebellious and the souls of the masters more deprived (*Laws* 777b-778a).

These debates can be easily paralleled, in their anxieties and contradictions, with the much fuller evidence of the southern United States. One can see these uncertainties equally in the pamphlets of slaveowners and in the narrative of the intelligent and articulate ex-slave Frederick Douglass. Douglass, for example, gives an account of how when he was treated most savagely he rebelled with violence and ingenuity to recover a sense of his own manhood. But he also asserts that it was on the rare occasions that slaves were treated with kindness and humanity that they conceived the greatest desire to attain full freedom – not just to have a good master, but to have no master.

Freedom for some slaves: manumission

The inducement of freedom was a strong weapon in the slaveowners' armoury. To use it, of course, one had to overlook the fact that to set a slave free as a reward for good behaviour conflicts with the idea that 'barbarians' (or 'blacks' in some other slave-societies) were naturally suited to living as slaves (cf. ch. 6). But it had so many advantages that this ideological problem did not in practice usually worry slaveowners. Such was evidently the case in ancient Greece.

One potential source of large-scale state manumission was as a result of military service, though its use was rare and restricted to the most desperate crises. It is important to emphasise that in the Greek city military service was a prime duty and privilege of the citizen. Metics (like *perioikoi* at Sparta) might be held to have enough of a stake in the community to contribute in calculatedly subordinate roles to the Athenian army and navy. But slaves were not, and as a result were admitted into the army or navy only as a last resort in cases of emergency, and were often offered manumission and in some instances a form of citizenship in advance. This happened at Athens perhaps before Marathon in 490, and certainly in the last few years of the Peloponnesian War (cf. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 33-4, 290-1, 693-4). In other states, freeing of slaves for use in army or navy may perhaps have occurred a little more frequently (and cf. the Spartan use of helots discussed in ch. 3). The desperate needs of a civil war, in particular, might produce such appeals to slaves. This happened in Corcyra in 427 BC, where slaves in the countryside were offered freedom by both sides and the majority of them chose to help the democrats (Thucydides, 3.73).

Other cases of manumission were the gift of individual masters. The attraction of freedom to slaves, under any terms, is all too clear. Life as a slave meant having the consciousness of your inferiority, lack of rights and lack of social identity constantly brought home to you, as you were subject to your masters' commands, and to whatever beatings, sexual exploitations or other deprivations and humiliations might be inflicted or threatened. Hence many slaves, especially those working inside the household, or those working with relative independence, could, it seems, be persuaded fairly readily to work efficiently and loyally over periods of years by the prospect of eventual liberation.

In practice, selective manumission carried a great many advantages for masters. Many slaves would only be set free towards the end of their lives (and most would not in fact live that long) when perhaps

their value as slaves would be declining. Rather than having to continue to feed, out of sentiment, a possibly diminishing and unsaleable asset, selling him or her for whatever one could get, or, finally, simply casting the slave out to beg, or to die, a master could seem generous by disposing of the faithful slave by a formal and legally recognised grant of freedom. Often, too, slaves would be set free towards the end of their master's life, or under the terms of his will. The attraction of such arrangements to owners, and the possible benefits of also manumitting selected younger slaves, become clear when some of the conditions commonly imposed are considered. First, slaves would regularly agree to 'buy' their freedom, using one or both of two mechanisms. They might give their master some of the money they may have been accumulating over the years, that is part of their wages or whatever he had permitted them to keep. Or they might scrape together a collective contribution (*eranos*), that is an interest-free loan from their friends, already freed relations, or lovers (for the case of the celebrated *hetaira*, Neaira, whose lovers contributed to her *eranos* see Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Neaira* 59.29-32). Thus these ex-slaves contributed their savings or their friends' contributions to help their former masters to buy new slaves as their replacements.

Second, manumitted slaves did not become completely free. In the Greek world they did not become citizens, as they did in Roman Italy. In Athens freedmen acquired metic status, and like metics had to register with an Athenian citizen as their patron and legal representative. This would be their former master; in cases where the master was himself a metic, his citizen patron would probably become the freedman's patron as well. As metics, freedmen had to pay the special metic-tax (12 drachmai a year for males, 6 for females); and as ex-slaves they were usually subject to other obligations (though our information for these matters in Athens is extremely sketchy). We hear of the 'laws of freedmen' at Athens, and that freedmen who failed to keep their obligations were liable to a charge of 'desertion' (*dike apostasiou*, cf. *GARS* 27). It is said by our source, the late lexicographer Harpocration, that acquittal on such a charge brought freedom from all remaining obligations for the ex-slave, but conviction brought re-enslavement. By analogy from evidence for other Greek cities, mostly in the Hellenistic period, a master could perhaps have imposed various extra conditions (in addition to the initial payment and his registration as patron), such as the duty to stay with and work part-time for his patron for a period of years, or until death (these are called *paramone*-agreements). The conditions of manumission were, hardly surprisingly, loaded very heavily

in favour of the slaveowners, who exploited to the full the desperate desire of the slaves to be known as free. Furthermore, it is obviously only the slaves 'living apart', the traders, craftsmen and entertainers, who were likely to have been able to 'buy' their freedom while still young enough, and equipped with a skill, to make viable careers for themselves (and, like comparable freedmen in the towns in the slave-states of the USA, become themselves slaveowners).

It is very difficult to say how frequent manumission of slaves was in Athens; as usual there is no worthwhile statistical evidence. Xenophon, who, as we saw, seems not to mention manumission as an incentive, in another pamphlet written in the 350s regretted that there were currently a great many metics who were 'Lydians, Phrygians, Syrians and other barbarians of all types' (*Ways and Means* 2.3). This may reflect a consciousness that the proportion of ex-slaves among the metic population was sizeable, perhaps that it was increasing. Aristotle, as well as Pseudo-Aristotle, strongly recommended manumission as an incentive for all slaves (*Politics* 1330a32-3), but it is not clear whether they were encouraging existing trends or making radical proposals.

Some fragmentary inscriptions (mentioned above p. 43; see *GARS* 27) survive which deal with manumission of slaves in Athens, but they present many problems. A series of inscriptions record the dedications of silver bowls worth 100 drachmai, each dedicated, it seems, as a result of an ex-slave's acquittal in a case of 'desertion'; major issues are uncertain because of gaps at crucial points in these texts. It seems likely, however, that they reflect a special procedure which was only in operation in the 330s and 320s BC. This appears to have established a system of formal registration of manumissions using a process of fictitious legal actions for 'desertion' which the freed slave automatically wins (thereby apparently gaining unconditional freedom); to which was added a requirement that the state should benefit by a registration fee in the form of the dedication of the bowl. What special conditions in Athens produced this procedure is unknown. It was perhaps part of the drive, master-minded by Lycurgos, then the dominant figure in Athens, to reorganise many areas of Athenian life, and to persuade Athenians to contribute financially, as in other ways, to the recovery of Athens after her defeat by Philip at Chaeronea in 338 BC. At about the same time, the practice was stopped whereby owners would gain publicity for their manumissions of their slaves by proclaiming them in the theatre at the festival of Dionysos (Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 3.41, 44).

What proportion of manumissions used this peculiar registration procedure in this period, and what proportion used other methods, is

unclear. But we have something like 300 dedications in this period of perhaps 20 years or less, on incomplete lists; and if this form of manumission was normally unconditional, and was more expensive, it may not in fact have been the most commonly used. The majority of occupations listed of the ex-slaves on these lists come, as would be expected, from those 'living apart'. Other sets of inscriptions from elsewhere in Greece, especially from Delphi in the Hellenistic period, suggest that unconditional manumission became less common than conditional from c. 200 BC onwards. The reasons are not clear, but may be related to a rise in the costs of replacement slaves as the market for imported slaves in Italy reached huge proportions.

In general, it seems to me plausible that the frequency of manumissions increased in Athens in the classical period and was related to the increase in slave involvement in trade and the crafts. In comparison with Rome the rate was certainly low, but it was perhaps considerably higher than in other slave systems, such as the plantation-economies in the USA or the Caribbean (though urban slaves, manumission, and slaveowning black freedmen were not negligible elements in the southern states). There are useful comparative tables and discussions, based, admittedly, on a mixture of good evidence and speculation, in Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* ch. 10. Whatever the reasons for manumitting slaves, it is to be seen as a mechanism which served to strengthen, not to weaken, the institution of slavery as a whole, and was managed in ways which maximised the practical advantages to the slaveowners as well as increasing their reputation for decency and generosity.

Evidence for fear and for friendship

In assessing what our other literary sources can tell us of the treatment of slaves in Athens, two obvious points need stating at the start. The first is that there must have been very considerable variation in the quality, or misery, of the lives of different types of slaves. There can have been little to mitigate the horrors of the brief existence of work, punishments, inadequate rations, and diseases for those working, perhaps in chains, in the mines at Laurion. At the other extreme, the lives of faithful and trusted domestics, or craft workers or traders 'living alone', could include a sense of (partly) belonging to a family, interesting work, some pleasant sharing in festivals and other consolations of religion, and some prospect of eventual freedom. But one must never forget that even the most trusted of slaves, of whatever age, would still regularly be called 'boy' or 'child'. Not even the most privileged slaves were free from the

prospect of physical punishment, or of violent or sexual abuse; none had any rights to their own time, for leisure or even sleep (cf. the telling joke about slaves' snoring in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, quoted below, p. 82). All faced the fear that at any moment, at the whim of the master, their hopes of freedom might be dashed, or a worse form of slavery imposed. This is nicely revealed in a law-court speech, where a husband, recounting how he investigated his wife's alleged adultery before killing the adulterer, tells the jury how he persuaded the slave-girl who went to the market and did other services, and was operating as go-between in the affair, to reveal what she knew:

You can choose one of two courses, either to be whipped and thrown in the mill, and have a life of perpetual misery, or, if you tell me the truth, to get pardon from me for your wrongs, and suffer nothing.

(Lysias, *On the Murder of Eratosthenes* 1.16-19)

The second point is that, once more, virtually all our evidence comes from the slaveowners, not the slaves, and in almost all cases from material publicly presented to a listening or reading audience of other slaveowners. While contrasting pictures or attitudes can be found, a certain amount of systematic idealisation of relations and glossing-over of intimate horrors is only to be expected.

Fairly frank awareness of the basis of the relationship in fear and terror can indeed be found (and ancient slaveowners, unlike those in the southern United States, were not constantly faced with pressure to justify the institution from those urging abolition in the northern states and elsewhere). A law-court speaker, making a point that he had offered his slaves for torture, claims he did so even though slaves might well delight in incriminating their masters 'to whom they are naturally most ill-disposed' (Lysias, *On the Olive Stump* 7.34-5). In a notable passage Plato recognised that slaves inevitably tended to hate their masters, longed for freedom, and would revolt collectively unless masters maintained constant vigilance. As he put it, graphically:

'If one of the gods were to take a man who owned fifty or more slaves and were to transport him and his wife and children to a deserted place, along with the rest of his property and his slaves, where no free man was likely to come to his aid, what and how great would be his fear, do you think, that he, his children and his wife would all be killed by their slaves?'

Won't you let me go now, you worst of beasts,
 don't you remember the time when I found you stealing grapes
 and I tied you up to the olive tree and flayed you well and
 manfully,
 so that every one envied you? But I see you weren't grateful.
 (Aristophanes, *Wasps* 438-51)

On the other hand one development towards the end of Aristophanes' career, which is carried on with great force in the New Comedy, and in its Roman imitations, the plays of Plautus and Terence, raises a different and tricky question: how 'realistic' are the substantial and confident roles that can be given to slaves? Xanthias in the *Frogs* is a bold and cheeky slave, whose confidence contrasts with the weakness of his master Dionysos; Carion, on the other hand, Chremylos' greatly trusted slave in the *Ploutos* (Wealth), shares amicably and fully in his master's adventures, speaks boldly and rudely to his master's friends and wife, and argues vigorously with the wicked crook, the 'Sycophant'. In the New Comedy, among the different types of slaves encountered, the most striking character is the clever slave, who is not only often contrasted with his foolish young master but may also be the chief manipulator and problem-solver in the play, and has a 'love-interest' of his own. This pattern has been imitated and developed in innumerable later comedies in Western literature (for example, *The Marriage of Figaro* or Wodehouse's 'Jeeves' stories). Some scholars believe that this element in New Comedy provides evidence of an actual social development through the fourth century BC towards closer, more familiar and open relations between masters/mistresses and their favourite slaves; but it is probably rather to be seen as a useful comic convention, accepted by audiences, which bore no relationship to any general change in Athenian society.

Finally, one may mention one popular genre of literature to which slaves and ex-slaves may possibly have contributed, and which at times seems to reflect the feelings of slaves and other downtrodden members of Greek society – the fable. Fables, very often animal fables, were told throughout Greece, and used rhetorically to point morals or give political messages. From the fifth century BC on collections of fables were associated above all with one Aesop, supposed to have been a Thracian slave in the sixth century, who lived and was set free in Samos and became famous for his stories. But it is impossible to know which of the hundreds of fables later collected as Aesopian were actually told by him. Many of them can be seen to have some relevance to the lives of slaves:

for example, praising freedom with poverty over a cushy existence as a slave, encouraging the acceptance of existing hard labour for fear of suffering worse (e.g., by running away or changing masters), or (like the Brer Rabbit stories of the American South) celebrating the low cunning of the weaker animals.

A case-study: Pasion, Apollodoros and Phormion

The most famous and successful slaves we know about in classical Athens are the father and son Pasion and Apollodoros; their careers are totally exceptional, but full of interest. They reveal the maximum degree of social mobility possible in Athenian society. Pasion started working as a slave, probably in the late fifth century, in a bank owned by two partners who first gave Pasion his freedom, as he showed himself exceptionally proficient, and then left him in control of the bank. The first point then is that banking (that is, briefly, money-changing, money-holding, and some money-lending), above all urban activities in Athens, involved such professional expertise and trustworthiness that ex-slave managers were quite often left the business by the former owners, in preference to their own sons. Once a freedman-metic and in control of the bank, Pasion prospered, developed shield-manufacturing (thereby employing increasing numbers of slaves) and became rich enough to progress, in stages, to be granted full citizenship by decree of the Athenian people in recognition of his very generous grants of money and shields to the state. Once a citizen, he was now able further to diversify his interests into land, while maintaining the bank and the shield-making (metics were unable to own land). As a citizen, he could now also loan money to others on the security of their land.

At his death his son Apollodoros, who wanted above all to be accepted as a rich citizen, and even as a gentleman and politician, found that the banking pattern was being repeated and the bank and other properties were not left directly to him but were leased to Phormion, an ex-slave freed by Pasion, with experience at managing the bank. Phormion was to act as guardian for the various properties until Pasion's younger son came of age; he was also to marry Pasion's widow Archippe, whose status was apparently left undefined when her husband became a citizen. Apollodoros unhappy with Phormion's management, contested the will in the courts, became involved in many other law suits over a period of years, and also began to play a part in Athenian politics. We know a fair amount about Apollodoros because a large number of law-court speeches delivered by him, or involving him, or the financial

affairs of the bank, have been preserved, mostly among the speeches supposedly by Demosthenes. From his speeches, it is clear that throughout his financial and political career he was acutely, perhaps neurotically, sensitive about his origins as the son of a slave, and he exhibited also the disturbing snobbery and cruelty of the social climber, above all in his distasteful attacks on Phormion as an ex-slave and on his own mother for marrying him (Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Stephanos* 45). In fact, Phormion too repeated the pattern of success, became a citizen, and ran his own bank.

It is clear too that Apollodoros had to meet a lot of hostility and prejudice because of his origins, as he tried to win popularity by lavish expenditure on public services (like running a trireme), and to build a political career. He himself reports how on one occasion a rival trierarch justified causing him trouble by delaying taking over the running of the ship from him, as he was supposed to do, by saying to others 'the mouse has tasted pitch – he wanted to be an Athenian': that is, Apollodoros deserved to suffer a bit for being such an upstart (Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Polyctes* 50.26). To move so fast from slavery to prominent citizenship was quite remarkable in Athens; and whereas freedmen might quite often be able to merge, over a generation, into the ranks of the metics, it was much more difficult for the son of an ex-slave who was a citizen to forget, or to be allowed to forget, his slave origins.

Chapter 6

Resistance, Flight and Revolt

Most chattel slaves in classical Greece, with little realistic hope of manumission, will have had good grounds for hating their masters and seeking a change or at least some retaliation. Domestic or independent slaves, encouraged to hope for freedom, might, one may suppose, react against delay or disappointment. This chapter briefly considers what means of resistance were open to chattel slaves, and why large-scale revolts were not more frequent, in contrast to the situation with the helots in Sparta.

Sabotage

Studies of slavery in the southern states have demonstrated a vast amount of all types of sabotage by disgruntled slaves, from malingering, tool-breaking, theft, slow-working, and brutality to farm-animals, to more serious acts of arson, self-mutilation, violence against masters or overseers, and flight. In all, this seriously reduced the productivity of the system. The evidence from classical Athens, much less full as it is, presents comparable features; the economic effects naturally cannot begin to be quantified.

Advice to slaveowners emphasises the need for strict regimen and punishments to eradicate such defects. Xenophon provides a convenient short list (his Socrates is arguing against an advocate of a life of easy-going pursuit of pleasure):

'But let us consider how masters treat slaves of that type. Surely they bring their lustfulness under control through starvation; they prevent them from stealing by locking up the places from which they could take anything; they stop them running away by chaining them; they drive out their laziness by blows. Or what do you do, when you discover that one of your slaves is like that?'

'I punish them with every sort of hardship until I compel them to behave as slaves.'

(Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.1.16)