
History in/of Hellenistic Thessaly

by Charles D. Graninger
University of California, Riverside
Denver.Graninger@ucr.edu

ABSTRACT This essay explores the tensions between two types of historical narrative of Hellenistic Thessaly, which was so integral to the fortunes of the Argead, Antipatrid, and Antigonid dynasties: one diachronic and event-based, the other synchronic and thematic in organization.

KEYWORDS Thessaly, Hellenistic age, Macedonia, mobility, cooperation, non-elite.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Hellenistic period enjoys a generation of scholarly renewal. The continual refining of interpretive frameworks and the steady uncovering of new –and rereading of old–sources have allowed innovative research foci to emerge: Greek and non-Greek interactions, for example, are now often viewed in less hegemonic, more consensual terms, and the *polis* or city-state, that essential unit of social and political organization in the ancient Greek world, is seldom regarded today as moribund and passive in so many dynastic struggles, but as a potentially vital political agent¹. With the addition of such perspectives, the dynamics that shaped the Hellenistic world resonate increasingly strongly with urgent, contemporary social and political debates and can allow students of the period both to reimagine their place in an increasingly complex Twenty-First Century global environment and to rethink how one might “do” history.

In what follows, I aim to reassess the position of Thessaly in this new Hellenistic world and to make it a more substantial part of these important new scholarly conversations. I take as my point of departure for this investigation, however, a somewhat earlier document –the concluding paragraph of H. D. Westlake’s still valuable book on Fourth-Century Thessalian history:

“It was many years since the Thessalians had been politically independent of Macedon and from this date [*ca.* 321², in the immediate aftermath of the Lamian War] they may also be said to have lost the last traces of historical independence also. Henceforward the history of Thessaly is no longer separable in any way from that of Macedonia and the Hellenistic world in general, just as at the same date Greek history ceases to be intelligible as a separate unit and becomes indissolubly merged with world history. During the wars of the Successors, which tore asunder the empire of Alexander, Thessaly is a pawn of such insignificance in a highly

¹ Hellenism, Hellenization, and the like: see, e.g., MOYER 2011; NANKOV 2012, among others. *Polis*: see, e.g., the papers collected in MARTZAVOU–PAPAZARKADAS 2013, especially the editors’ introduction. There remains a risk that the interpretive pendulum swing too broadly, though: see the perceptive critique of “overly eirenic” readings of the Seleucid empire at KOSMIN 2018, 8 and *passim*.

² All dates BCE unless otherwise indicated.

complex game that ancient writers may readily be forgiven for their failure to preserve any continuous account of its fortunes. It is recorded that in 317 Cassander operated successfully in Thessaly against Polyperchon and with less success fifteen years later against Demetrius. But these events belong to the history of the Successors and not to that of the Thessalians, who had no power to prevent the use of their lands as a battlefield and could only hope to save themselves from hardship by submission to the stronger party. Even in their own narrow sphere of northern Greece they were now eclipsed by the Aetolians, who early in the Third Century usurped their control of the Amphictyonic Council. Further, with the foundation of Demetrias on the shores of the Gulf of Pagasae, Thessaly became yet more ‘macedonized’, until a century later the coming of the Romans brought to birth a new and very different Thessalian League. But, even when their country became the possession of Rome, the Thessalians, thanks to their geographical position between Macedon and Greece, were not always given the opportunity to cultivate their lands in peace. And on Thessalian soil was fought the most vital battle in the history of the Roman Republic”³.

The attitudes toward Thessaly and Hellenistic history more broadly articulated here were representative of the *status quaestionis* until comparatively recently, particularly in the Anglophone world. Sources are part of the problem: Westlake is primarily reliant on literary texts and they are simply not as numerous, well-informed, or, frankly, trusted for Hellenistic history as they had been in the preceding Classical period. But Westlake can excuse in some measure their poverty on the matter of Thessaly, for its history, in local or regional perspective, had effectively ended together with that of much of the Greek resistance to Macedonia at the end of the Lamian War. Thessaly is thus rendered a neutral canvas, upon which sparring Macedonian dynasts confront now one another, now Aetolia, now Rome; a new city-foundation at Demetrias deepens the Macedonian imprint, which yielded in the final analysis to a Roman reorganization of the region as a *koinon*; geography and political weakness lead to the continuing inability of Thessaly to chart an individual course even “in their narrow sphere of Northern Greece,” here imagined as an entirely parochial space, however, and its inhabitants are destined to not “cultivate their lands in peace.”

Westlake’s capsule account is factually correct in broad outline and its tacit refusal to embrace the challenge of recovering local and regional history is emblematic of approaches to Hellenistic history that were normative in his era, when many relied solely on supra-regional political forces to explain change. Broader shifts in the practice of historiography can be applied in the case of Hellenistic Thessaly, however, and authorize alternative narratives. Foremost among these, for the purposes of this essay, is a distinction between history “in” a region and history “of” that region:

“...we have instead been prompted to start from a distinction of subject matter between, on one hand, history *in* the region, contingently Mediterranean or best conceived under some other heading, and, on the other hand, history *of* it –history either of the whole Mediterranean or of an aspect of it to which the whole is an indispensable framework...That ‘in/of’ distinction affects our presentation of evidence. All kinds of history –political, social, economic, religious– come to be included in our micro ecological investigations (‘history of’). There is, however, no chapter on Mediterranean political, social, economic, or religious history *per*

³ WESTLAKE 1935, 235-236.

se – such as might reasonably be expected of a broad survey– because we see all that as belonging to ‘history in’⁴’.

Much of what was regarded as simply “history” by the readers of foundational thinkers like von Ranke, an attitude that persists to the present day in popular culture and among conservative practitioners of the craft, emerges in this framework as clearly studies of history “in” –war, politics, great men, great powers, with corresponding assumptions about what constitutes appropriate evidence: official, archival, public, elite. Such approaches tend toward a diachronic narrative structure that can often seem to resolve Hellenistic history into a series of numbered wars, be they Diadoch, Syrian, Illyrian, Macedonian, Punic, or Mithridatic.

Interest in history “of” flows most clearly forward from Annaliste historiography, of which F. Braudel is the most celebrated, or notorious, exemplar among ancient historians. Space and time are imagined on a vaster scale here and come to play central roles in the structuring of narrative. The scope of what constitutes “evidence” expands exponentially as a result. A full range of material sources becomes legitimate for the historian to mine and should accordingly be weighed in the balance with more traditional literary sources. But this is not easy work and the responsible combination of literary and non-literary sources continues to be a great desideratum for all writing history of the ancient Mediterranean world⁵. Organization of such narratives tends to have strong synchronic and thematic components and allows for the recovery of, and can hence privilege, non-elite perspectives. For these reasons, histories “of” often tend to share conceptual space, however distantly, with histories written “from below,” much as histories “in” become by default histories “from above.” A great drawback of history “of” is that it may easily descend into antiquarianism⁶. And the risk is especially great in the case of a region like Thessaly, whose apparent marginal status in antiquity is regularly invoked, if not celebrated, by modern specialists: “somewhat of a land apart⁷,” “another Greece, sometimes forgotten⁸.”

The history “in/of” distinction never exists so absolutely, of course; these alternatives are best thought of as ideal types that mark out the poles on one spectrum of possible historiographical praxis. Nonetheless, I find the framework useful for thinking about how to do the history of Hellenistic Thessaly.

2. HISTORY IN THESSALY

The section falls into two distinct, if interrelated, parts: first, Thessaly in the early Hellenistic period, from Philip II’s appointment as archon of the Thessalian League (probably *ca.* 352) to the end of the Second Macedonian War in 197 and the subsequent refoundation of the Thessalian League under the leadership of the victorious Roman commander, T. Quinctius Flamininus; and, second, Thessaly in the later Hellenistic period, from the Flaminian refoundation to Augustus’ term as League *strategos*. The Second Macedonian War and its aftermath emerge here as a great hinge of the period.

⁴ HORDEN–PURCELL 2000, 2. Such a distinction between of course has far deeper roots and can be traced, for example, to Herodotus and Thucydides.

⁵ See, e.g., HALL 2014.

⁶ FINLEY 1975, 61.

⁷ LARSEN 1968, 281, writing of Hellenistic and Roman Thessaly, and recently quoted with approbation at BOUCHON–HELLY 2015, 240.

⁸ POUILLOUX 1979, vii.

The goal of the narrative is not to be complete and exhaustive, but selective and representative, and ultimately to provide a useful chronological framework for the thematic studies that follow.

Thessaly can be fairly seen to enter a Hellenistic condition somewhat earlier than much of the central and southern Greek world. Philip seems to have first campaigned in Thessaly in the early 350s, perhaps in support of traditional Achaean allies in Larissa who sought to exploit the death of Alexander of Pherai, their rival, in 358⁹. He was again campaigning there in the context of the Third Sacred War in 352, where he won a major victory over Onomarchos of Phokis at the Krokian Field and allowed Lykophron of Pherai to depart peacefully from the city, thus bringing to a conclusion a lengthy period of regional instability. It was perhaps at this time that Philip was elected archon of the Thessalian League and began to intervene politically and economically in the region, e.g., collecting harbor and market taxes, fortifying settlements, cultivating new allies in the region like the Daochids of Pharsalos; he likely exercised the traditional prerogatives of the archon in perioikic Perrhaibia, Magnesia, and Achaia Phthiotis as well. With Philip's death, the league archonship eventually fell to Alexander and Thessalian cavalry accompanied Alexander on his eastern campaign¹⁰.

But the region emerged as a center of anti-Macedonian resistance in the so-called Lamian War that followed Alexander's death. Greek failure in that conflict inaugurated a period of prolonged uncertainty for Thessaly under the Successors that extended throughout the Third Century¹¹. Cassander is the most imposing, but far from unchallenged, figure; he, together with Demetrios Poliorketes, Pyrrhus, and others, vied for control of Thessaly as part of their overall goal of securing lasting rule over the Macedonian kingdom. Instability verging on anarchy ensued and yielded a generation-length crisis that culminated in the Celtic invasions of 279/8. By 277, though, Antigonos Gonatas was recognized as king and formally established a new dynasty in Macedonia, the Antigonid. He was succeeded by Demetrios II in 239, upon the death of whom in 229 some of tetradic Thessaly rebelled from Antigonid rule and joined the Aitolian League. Much of this territory was quickly regained by Antigonos Doson, who served as regent for Demetrios' son, Philip V, who became king in 221 after Doson's death. His progressive entanglements with the expanding Roman state culminated in a draw after the First Macedonian War (214-205) and an emphatic defeat to T. Quinctius Flaminius at Kynoskephalai in Thessaly in 197, which brought the Second Macedonian War to a close. At Isthmia in 196, Flaminius began to reorder the political geography of northern Greece by freeing from Macedonian hegemony the Perrhaebians, Magnesians, Phthiotic Achaeans, and Thessalians, among others¹²; with the exception of Phthiotic Achaia, which was subsequently incorporated with Thessaly, each of these regions would in turn be organized as a *koinon* or league and allowed to administer its own affairs¹³.

The Spercheios valley followed a different trajectory. While Ainis and Dolopia sided with the Greeks in the Lamian War, the important cities of Lamia and Heraklea Trachinia supported Macedon, a fact that may suggest that their respective *ethne*, Malia and Oitaia, were likewise pro-Macedonian. How Antipater's settlement imposed on the

⁹ WORTHINGTON 2008, 35-37, 53-73, 76-77, 110-111 and *passim* offers good coverage of Philip's activities in Thessaly, including citation of the principal ancient sources and modern scholarship. Un – do

¹⁰ See, e.g., BOSWORTH 1988, 264; STROOTMAN 2010-2011; MENDOZA 2022.

¹¹ For an excellent recent treatment of Thessaly in the Third Century, see HELLY 2009.

¹² For the Flaminian "liberation" of Greece, see now BRISSON 2018.

¹³ GRANINGER 2011, 27-34.

Greeks after the war impacted these *ethne* is less clear. Aitolia would lead a coalition of Greeks to repel the Gallic invasion of central Greece in 279, including defense of Herakleia Trachinia, which had previously joined the Aitolian League in 280; Dolopia soon followed, as did Ainis and Malis. Now well-established in the Spercheios Valley, Aitolia was thus encouraged to seek continued expansion to the north and to challenge Macedonian holdings in Thessaly in 229¹⁴.

Aitolia enjoyed a fraught collaboration with Rome against Macedonia, but a series of perceived slights emboldened the Aitolians to invite Antiochus III to invade Greece and challenge the developing Roman organization of the region. Thus the so-called Syrian War (191-188) began, which resulted in a humiliating defeat for Antiochus and his allies and initiated the territorial retreat of the Aitolian League; this development would be further hastened by subsequent Roman victories in the Third Macedonian War (172-168), against the pretender Antigonid Andriskos, and in the Achaian War that led to the liberation of Ainis, Malis, and Oitaia from Aitolian control and their organization as independent *koina*. Each of these new or newly reorganized regional states, with the exception of the Magnesians, would in turn be incorporated within the Thessalian League over course of the later Hellenistic period¹⁵. Thessaly would again be a theatre of conflict during the Mithridatic War, a target of Thracian invaders in the 80s, and played a prominent role in the Pharsalos campaign. Octavian ultimately won victory in the Roman civil wars and subsequently reorganized the Greek mainland.

Thessalian freedom, presumably the status of *civitas libera*, was awarded by Caesar after defeating Pompey at Pharsalos in 48, but may have been revoked during the reign of Augustus¹⁶. While the proximate cause is unclear, literary sources suggest some problems in the region under Augustan rule that could individually or in total have motivated the removal of such a status¹⁷. There appear equally clearly in the epigraphic record hints of a countervailing policy of mollification of Augustus and integration within the broader Empire, including, for example, the Thessalian adoption of the Roman denarius as currency for payment of manumission tax, the appointment of Augustus as League *strategos*, and cult honors for Augustus and other members or associates of the imperial family¹⁸. Thessalian politics thus remain complex and multiform as the region is formally incorporated within the Roman empire.

3. HISTORY OF THESSALY

One reads a brief survey like that above and quickly realizes that one has not learned very much about Thessaly at all. Wars and territorial adjustments are significant to a point, to be sure, but they are not an interpretive end in themselves. And so I turn in this section to explore a series of Thessalian inflections of key themes in recent Hellenistic historiography: mobility, cooperation, and non-urban, non-elite elite perspectives. Such a focus will allow us to begin to think about history “of” Thessaly and to get beneath the super-regional political drivers of my presentation thus far. Enough has been written of kings and consuls and I will not treat them explicitly here, although they are

¹⁴ For Aitolian expansion in central Greece in the early Hellenistic period, see SCHOLTEN 2000, 29-95.

¹⁵ GRANINGER 2011, 36-39.

¹⁶ BOUCHON 2008, 441-442.

¹⁷ BOUCHON 2008, 438, 440.

¹⁸ Manumission tax: BOUCHON 2008, 445-449; cf. HELLY 1997; appointment of Augustus as League *strategos*: BOUCHON 2008, 449-450; cult honors for Augustus, and other members or associates of the imperial family: BOUCHON 2016, 288-293.

implicated, often deeply, in what I have chosen to discuss. The narrative frame privileges continuity over change and may flatten out as a result important variations in practice and experience within the region.

3.1 Mobility

Mobility has become a central interest in the study of the ancient Mediterranean world and the Hellenistic period yields suggestive evidence¹⁹. While it can be difficult to quantify the extent of the phenomenon and to generalize about the relevant push and pull factors motivating it, careful study of individual cases from Hellenistic Thessaly may offer important perspectives on how mobility functioned in the region²⁰. I present a series of brief studies in what follows, focusing on military, trade, and other cultural drivers, including religion.

People and things moved in physical space and it is important to stress some essential features of Thessalian topography. The primary access points to the sea were in the east and southeast of the region: Pagasitic Gulf (especially Pagasai, Phthiotic Thebes, Halos, and above all Demetrias, which incorporated Pagasai in the foundation synoikism) and the Malian Gulf (especially Phalara, port of Lamia, but including other towns in coastal Achaia Phthiotis and Malis); the eastern/Aegean coastline of Magnesia seems to have been particularly inhospitable. There may have been considerable movement of people and goods by river and land routes associated with river valleys in the region²¹. The region's awesome mountains—for example, Pindos in the west, Olympos in the north, and Othrys in the south—were not impenetrable barriers, but passable and facilitating rather than hindering the potential for close contacts with neighboring populations²². Milestones offer good evidence for a Thessalian road network in the Roman period and one may infer from them with caution the basic outline of an earlier Hellenistic network²³.

Military service was among the most significant drivers of mobility in Hellenistic Thessaly, as elsewhere. Thessalian cavalry certainly served with both Philip II and

¹⁹ See, e.g., ARCHIBALD 2011.

²⁰ See, e.g., STAMATOPOULOU 2009, who traces the distinct trajectory of Pharsalos, from high elite mobility in the Archaic and Classical periods to low or non-existent mobility in the Hellenistic period; the change seems to reflect a progressive weakening of the city at this time that may be visible in the archaeological record.

²¹ E.g., Titaresos (Perrhaibia): LUCAS 1997, 36-39; Enipeus (Phthiotis): DECOURT 1990b, 44-45. The Peneios may have been navigable for some stretches of its course, e.g., Atrax to Larissa: see TZIAFALIAS 2016, 4. For routes in and around the Spercheios valley, see BEQUIGNON 1937, 21-49; the river does not seem to have been navigable, though (BEQUIGNON 1937, 49-50). Note the use of λιμὴν, “harbor,” to denote “agora” in Thessalian dialect, although there is debate about a possible metaphorical use of the word in these contexts: cf. GARCIA RAMON 2004; MILI 2015, 126-127.

²² For Othrys and Oita, see, e.g., BEQUIGNON 1937, 21-23; for Olympos, see, e.g., GRANINGER 2010, 309.

²³ Roman network: DECOURT–MOTTAS 1997. As G. Pikoulas notes, the Roman milestones “do not attest new road construction, but only the maintenance of existing roads” (PIKOULAS 2007, 85). For the apparent paucity of pre-Roman remains, see PIKOULAS 2006. Compare the popularity of a particularly Thessalian divinity like Ennodia, the goddess “on the road”: see, e.g., MILI 2015, 42-43, 147-158, and *passim*. Research teams led by G. A. Pikoulas have exposed impressive fragments of ancient carriage roads throughout the region; I note only two representative publications of this fundamental research: PIKOULAS 2004; PIKOULAS 2012. Pikoulas, who passed away in 2022, leaves a powerful legacy, as the Association of Greek Archaeologists has described: μελέτησε τους αρχαίους δρόμους αλλά άνοιξε και νέους δρόμους με το έργο του και το προσωπικό του παράδειγμα.

Alexander²⁴; some of these individuals will have died on campaign, others returned home, and still others may have spent time in the settlements for which the two kings are noted²⁵. Thessalians continued to be prized cavalymen and served prominently in the armies of various Successors, Antigonids, and Athens, as well as in the Ptolemaic kingdom, where they formed a substantial settler population and core of a major cavalry division (*hipparchia*) in the Ptolemaic army²⁶. Other residents of greater Thessaly likewise found employment as mercenaries abroad, including Ainianes, Malians, Dolopians, Oitaianes, and Magnesians, some of whom likewise settled in Ptolemaic Egypt²⁷. Seleucid service is also assured, for military colonists from Thessalian Larissa had been settled, probably by Seleukos I Nikator, in a new city in Syria also named Larissa, as thanks for their brave and loyal service²⁸. Some certainly came home²⁹. A number of Thessalian women are attested abroad in regions where Thessalians are known to have served as mercenaries and may have accompanied family members abroad³⁰.

Military service could be an equally powerful pull for movement into Thessaly from outside of the region. Funerary stelae from Demetrias offer copious examples of both Macedonians and mercenaries in the service of the Macedonian king; in some cases these mercenaries are also associated with women³¹. Inland Thessaly too knew well of mercenary soldiers serving the Antigonid king. The mercenary captain Orthotimos of Tylissos, for example, was honored by two Thessalian cities, Atrax and Trikke, in the

²⁴ Thessalian cavalry in Philip II's army: see, e.g., WORTHINGTON 2008, 26, 147, and *passim*; in Alexander's army: see, e.g., BOSWORTH 1988, 264. See now STROOTMAN 2010-2011; MENDOZA 2022.

²⁵ Philip II's settlements: for Thrace, see, e.g., ADAMS 1997; 2007: his possible settlements within Thessaly will be discussed below. Alexander's settlements: see, e.g., BOSWORTH 1988, 245-250; FRASER 1996. Those who returned home before the push into Bactria are likely to have been phenomenally wealthy: see HOLT 2016, 120-124. On Thessalians in Bactria-Sogdiana, see now MENDOZA 2021, who urges caution.

²⁶ For the Successors and Athens, see, e.g., the now outdated but still useful account of LAUNEY 1949, 1.212-223, 2.1139-1143. For Thessalian cavalry and the later Antigonids, see HATZOPOULOS 2001, 33, 36. Ptolemaic settler population: see, e.g., MUELLER 2006, 166-174, where "Thessalian" is observed as sixth most common ethnic designation in Ptolemaic Egypt and third most common among Greek designations, following only Crete and Attica; cf. LA'DA 2002, 80-85. *Hipparchia*: FISCHER-BOVET 2014, 127. Long-distance immigration to Ptolemaic Egypt largely comes to an end by the late Third and early Second Century (MUELLER 2006, 180). Other mercenary service: see, e.g., GAUTHIER 2003 (Old Kolophon, 300-250).

²⁷ General: LAUNEY 1949, 1.172-176, 210-211, 223-228; Egypt: LA'DA 2002, 11-12, 47, 164-166, 222.

²⁸ COHEN 2006, 117-118; cf. 1978, 29, 31. Others may have ventured further still. Medeios of Larissa and Kyrtilos of Pharsalos, both of whom campaigned with Alexander in Asia, continued their careers under the Successors and treated in their writings links between the culture and topography of Thessaly and Armenia, which has been thought by some to imply autopsy of the latter. See *BNJ* 129-130, with Meeus' skeptical comment. Ai-Khanoum, the famous Hellenistic settlement in Bactria (mod. Afghanistan), was founded by a Kineas, whom L. Robert has plausibly argued was a Thessalian (ROBERT 1968, 434-438; cf. COHEN 2013, 260-263; MENDOZA 2021, 59-65).

²⁹ See, e.g., the tantalizing case at SEKUNDA 1998.

³⁰ For discussion of the phenomenon, see CHANIOTIS 2002, 110-111. E.g., Alexandria, for the Thessalian mercenary presence at which see FRASER 1972, 70. For two Thessalian women attested on late fourth- or Third-Century Alexandrian tombstones, see BRECCIA, 1976, 132 (no. 243, identified simply as "Thessalian"), 156 (no. 299a, identified as "Heraklean", i.e., possible from Heraklea Trachinia in Oitaia).

³¹ E.g., ARVANITOPOULOS 1909, 155-164 (no. 20: Archedike from Tylissos), 188-194 (no. 28: Aphrodeisia from Epiros), 292-294 (no. 79: Anois from Crete), 299-300 (no. 86: Dazis from Illyria), 320-322 (no. 103: Sokratis from Bouchetia), 350-353 (no. 121: Stratonike from Illyria), 462-463 (no. 216: Nikippe from Akarnania). For Macedonians serving as garrison forces in broad range of Thessalian cities, see HELLY 2009, 349-351.

late Third or early Second Century: there is no shortage of possible contexts for his activity³².

Economic factors like trade could also drive mobility in Thessaly. The cosmopolitan city of Demetrias has yielded evidence of a stunning range of foreign residents. Phoenicians, for example, appear numerous there, where they likely engaged in merchant trades, including importing luxury items like purple, spices, ivory, and perfumes, as in other major commercial centers of the Aegean³³; Phoenician women are also prominent in the funerary epigraphy of the city³⁴. There was an elite market for such goods in Thessaly and Macedonia³⁵. Several Phoenician priests are attested, which suggests that the community continued to practice traditional cult³⁶.

A Roman and more broadly Italian presence is also detectable quite early in Thessaly, beginning with honors for Roman magistrates and officials in the Second Century and continuing with evidence for individual Romans and Italians in the First; in some cases they formed resident communities and in general are visible playing a broad range of roles in Thessaly –practicing cult, manumitting slaves, participating in festival contests– all of which suggests a high degree of integration³⁷; B. Helly describes them as “having arrived progressively and being installed on cultivable lands in order to exploit...a rich agricultural domain, the products of which, like those of other regions, would become more and more necessary at Rome” and not as the great *negotiatores* known from cities like Delos³⁸. Here, too, there are significant numbers of women represented³⁹.

Economic interests may likewise have driven smaller associations of individuals to transact business in Thessaly. Leonidas of Halikarnassos, for example, dedicated a stoa and the shops within to the city of Pharsalos, the revenues from which were decided by the city to be used for the provision of oil to youths exercising in the gymnasium and for the conduct of an athletic contest named the Leonidaia in honor of the city’s benefactor⁴⁰. There must have been some privileges extended by the *polis* to associate with Leonidas’ generous benefaction, but it is not clear what this might have been. Another Halicarnassean received proxeny and citizenship from Pharsalos at some point in the Third Century, probably later than Leonidas’ establishment of a foundation for the city’s gymnasium, and one must assume that Leonidas received such honors at a minimum⁴¹.

³² Atrax: *I Atrax* 8; Triikka: HELLY 1991. The same Orthotimos was honored at Ambryos (Phokis): *IG* 9.1 33; he may also be known in Elatea (*IG* 9.1 101).

³³ MASSON 1969 collects the essential evidence, again from the funerary stelai, which dates entirely to the Third Century. See now Demetriou 2023

³⁴ See, e.g., ARVANITOPOULOS 1909, 268-269 (no. 59: Nikokleia from Sidon), 278-280 (no. 66: Dionysia from Sidon), 368-369 (no. 129: Kallisto from Sidon). Compare MASSON 1969, 689-692, who plausibly suggests that Dorkas from Argos (ARVANITOPOULOS 1909, 327-328 (no. 107)), listed on an epitaph with her apparent husband, Philostratos of Sidon, was herself a Phoenician who had previously acquired citizenship in Argos.

³⁵ MARASCO 1988, 168-171. Cf. BASLEZ 1987.

³⁶ MASSON 1969, 694-696.

³⁷ HELLY 1983. For an association of “toga-wearers”, i.e., Roman citizens, in Larissa at the time the First Mithradatic War, see BOUCHON 2007. Cf. the still valuable study of HATZFELD 1919, 23-25, 65-66, and *passim*.

³⁸ HELLY 1983, 379-380. In truth, the occupations of these individuals are rarely noted in the epigraphic record.

³⁹ See, e.g., HELLY 1983, 368-369.

⁴⁰ *I Enipeus* 52, ca. 300-250.

⁴¹ *I Enipeus* 51, ca. Third Century.

While it is more difficult to grasp the movement of Thessalian merchants outside of Thessaly in this period, there is impressive evidence for the continued periodic export of grain to non-Thessalian cities⁴². The region's proverbial fecundity did not insure it against experiencing shortages of its own, however⁴³.

Other cultural factors could draw equally powerfully non-Thessalians into the region and Thessalians out of it. Theoroi from outside of Thessaly would announce invitations to important festivals, which some Thessalians attended, either as representatives of their home city or *koinon*⁴⁴. And Thessalians traditionally played an influential role in the management of the Pylaio-Delphic Amphictiony; while their importance waned under Antigonid leadership and during the period of Aitolian dominance at the sanctuary, Thessalian representatives are again attested regularly after the Second Macedonian War⁴⁵. Major festivals like the Itonia sponsored by the pre- and post-Flaminian Thessalian *koinon* were likewise attended by non-Thessalians⁴⁶. The penteteric Eleutheria, organized by the Thessalian League to commemorate the freedom from Macedonian hegemony achieved with the Flaminian declaration in 196, also attracted competitors from throughout the Mediterranean, from Syracuse and Corcyra in the west to Alabanda, Magnesia on the Maiander, and other Anatolian cities in the east, in addition to substantial numbers of mainland Greeks⁴⁷. Thessalians themselves are known, too, from competitions abroad: in some cases, the competitors seem to have traveled from Thessaly or to have otherwise taken part in a competition circuit⁴⁸, in others Thessalians competed where they were themselves resident⁴⁹. Itinerant performers, unconstrained by the formal structure of a festival program, were equally at home in Thessaly: Larissa, for example, honored with citizenship the rhetor Bombos from Alexandria Troas, who recounted famous events in Larissa's history and celebrated the shared legendary past of the two cities⁵⁰; and the city of Lamia in 218/7 honored Aristodama of Smyrna for celebrating the Aitolian *ethnos* in her poetic performance⁵¹.

3.2 Cooperation

Under the heading of cooperation, I package together some key local actors in Hellenistic Thessalian politics, above all cities and leagues, and discuss their interrelation. The grim view of Hellenistic Thessaly as military thoroughfare and politically dominated by Macedonia, Aitolia, or Rome can overwhelm the substantial evidence for vibrant civic cultures and their ability to address challenges.

A fundamental unit of social and political organization in Hellenistic Thessaly was the city-state. Cities are now recognized as having played an essential role in shaping

⁴² The evidence is well surveyed at HELLY 2008, 103-108.

⁴³ GALLANT 1989.

⁴⁴ GRANINGER 2011, 135-150.

⁴⁵ GRANINGER 2011, 117-135.

⁴⁶ E.g., Kos (12.4.1 133: dated *ca.* 294-288; 207: dated *ca.* 250-200), Mytilene (TZIAFALIAS-HELLY 2004: late Third or early Second Century), Aigai in Aiolis (MALAY-RIEL 2009: before 250), Ambracia (HABICHT 2006b: *ca.* 179-165).

⁴⁷ For the Eleutheria, see GRANINGER 2011, 67-85, 159-182.

⁴⁸ See, e.g., SEG 3.367, a fragmentary victor list from Second-Century Lebadeia for the Basileia; *IOropos* 529, a fragmentary victor list from Oropos for the Amphiarraia and Romaia, dated *ca.* 80-50.

⁴⁹ As in, e.g. Ptolemaic Egypt: see KOENEN 1977, a victor list from the Ptolemaic Basileia in 267.

⁵⁰ Now consult HELLY 2006. Cf. CHANIOTIS 2009, 261.

⁵¹ IG 9.2 62. Lamia was at this time a member of the Aitolian League. Aristodama was probably honored in Lokrian Chalaion, too (FD 3.2 145). Cf. RUTHERFORD 2009; LOMAN 2004.

the Hellenistic world system; they did not end after Chaeronea. That there was a link between the Argead or Antigonid king and Thessalian cities cannot be denied –for city health, here as elsewhere, was key to a fully functioning royal policy– but the relationship should more properly be seen as rooted in negotiation and consent, rather than in strictly hegemonic terms⁵².

If the broader paradigm for assessing city-king relationships and the overall dynamism of Hellenistic *poleis* has shifted, it remains the case that Thessaly has provided some of the clearest evidence in support of the traditional view. Consider, for example, Philip II's occupation of the port of Pagasai after the Third Sacred War and his seizure of tax revenues, or the inscribed dossier from Larissa that reveals an extended, and at first glance one-sided, dialogue between that city and Philip V concerning the enrollment of new citizens. Both cases, often regarded as paradigmatic, can be read with different emphasis, though. At Pagasai, Philip II exercises the traditional prerogatives of the archon of the Thessalian League on the one hand and those of the conqueror of Pherai, for which Pagasai served as principal harbor, on the other. At Larissa, one notes, the city's initial passive resistance to acting on Philip V's wishes and their subsequent undoing of what he had requested from them. More striking are the contrasting dialects of the documents: Philip's letter is faithfully transcribed in koine, while the Thessalian city's decrees in response are rendered in local dialect. Even if a power differential is here expressed and threatened to be acted upon, Larissa champions its own cultural difference from the Antigonid king.

Cities formed the social, economic, and military basis of the Hellenistic states. This was true for the later Argeads, the Antigonids for the duration of their kingdom, even the Aitolian *koinon*, and it came to be true in part for Rome as well. Enduring rule was predicated on the existence of healthy cities. In some cases this meant privileging some at the expense of others: compare, for example, Philip V's treatment of Aitolian-held Phthiotic Thebes in the Social War: walls were pulled down, the city's inhabitants were enslaved, and Philip refounded the city as Philippopolis with the introduction of new, Macedonian settlers⁵³. Other established cities that were flagging due to shrinking population, economic crisis, or both could be propped up by a variety of expedients, including citizen enfranchisement and debt amelioration⁵⁴.

The Hellenistic period was also a great era of new city foundations. While one could argue that such foundations were characteristic, albeit on a less dramatic scale, of the preceding Archaic and Classical periods, too, what sets the Hellenistic period apart is the emergence of city building as an aspect of royal policy. Synoikism, the physical and/or institutional merging of existing, smaller scale settlements into a larger polity with an urban center, was a preferred mode. While traditionally scholars viewed such processes enacted as if by a king moving pieces on a chessboard, recent historiography seeks to recover the agency of participant communities and to see such transactions as ultimately rooted in negotiation between royals and citizens⁵⁵.

Thessaly proved an appealing canvas for such activities. The foundation at Goritsa, located on a low spur of Pelion above modern Volos on the Pagasitic Gulf, has been tentatively, if plausibly, associated with Philip II's activities in the region. This was a new, planned settlement with blocks of houses laid out on an orthogonal grid, a quasi-

⁵² See, e.g., MA 1999.

⁵³ COHEN 1995, 118.

⁵⁴ Enrollment of new citizens during the period of the Antigonids at Larissa, Phalanna, and Pharsalos: see, e.g., GRANINGER 2010, 321-322. Roman intervention in debt crisis in 170s: WALSH 2000.

⁵⁵ See now BOEHM 2018, an important study.

agora space, and stout fortifications including a precocious complex of artillery towers⁵⁶. Philip's interests were not limited to the Pagasitic Gulf area. Gomphoi, a strategic town in western Thessaly, seems to have been refounded under his leadership with the name Philippi or Philippopolis⁵⁷. And, while it is always perilous to date fortifications closely by masonry styles, it is at least plausible that Philip invested in other cities in the region like Gonnoi and Pagasai⁵⁸; population movements are not explicitly attested in these cases, but given Philip's activities elsewhere, it is not implausible to imagine them taking place here as well.

Goritsa would itself be soon eclipsed by another new foundation on the Pagasitic Gulf that is clearly attested in the literary sources as having been created through by synoikism, Demetrias. Established probably in the late 290s by Demetrios Poliorketes, the city would function as a major Macedonian naval outpost, market center, and royal residence; it possessed a vast territory that included much of Magnesia and eventually extended to the Tempe. The fortunes of those communities so synoikized varied widely. Goritsa, which certainly took part, seems to have been abandoned by the middle of the Third Century. Other settlements may have been actively rooted out and destroyed, while still others seem to have persisted as functioning dependent polities, not unlike Athenian demes⁵⁹. There are additional traces elsewhere in the later Fourth and Third Centuries of similar types of activity, represented by expanded wall circuits or new foundations⁶⁰.

At the same time, Thessaly was a region that encompassed a number of populations traditionally organized as *koina* (sg. *koinon*) or "leagues." Recent scholarship takes these associations more seriously than previously and regards them as powerful mechanisms for small communities to share resources and build security in an uncertain world, organized, as often as not, along the the lines of preexisting economic or cultic networks⁶¹. The governing assumption during the Antigonid period was that the region's principal *koina* were essentially defunct, a hypothesis that was thought to reflect the debased condition of the region under Macedonian rule. New evidence, coupled with a rereading of older documents, now suggests strongly that a Thessalian *koinon* continued to function during the Third Century⁶². How this organization worked cannot be glimpsed in meaningful detail, although it is worth noting that the sanctuary of Athena Itonia was clearly a location of central importance. Some of the Phthiotic Achaians may have enjoyed a similar organization in the early Hellenistic period under Antigonid patronage⁶³. The situation for the Perrhaibians and Magnesians is more difficult to ascertain: the Perrhaibian Tripolis in the north of the region seems to have been administered as if it were part of the core territory of the Macedonian state, while the synoikism of Demetrias, a major Macedonian settlement, would come to incorporate much of the territory of Magnesia⁶⁴.

⁵⁶ BAKHUIZEN 1992. For Philip's policy of synoikism in Thrace, which may offer some parallels to his work in Thessaly, see ADAMS 1997; ADAMS 2007.

⁵⁷ For discussion of the identification, see COHEN 1995, 116-118.

⁵⁸ Gonnoi: HELLY 1973b, 82; Pagasai: STÄHLIN 1924, 67.

⁵⁹ MILI 2015, 197-209. Cf. COHEN 1995, 111-114.

⁶⁰ MILI 2015, 209.

⁶¹ See, e.g., MACKIL 2013; BECK-FUNKE 2015.

⁶² New evidence: MALAY-RICL 2009. Cf. PARKER 2011. See also HATZOPOULOS 2012, who refers to earlier Third-Century documents, e.g., *IG* 12.4.1 133, 207; *IG* 12 Suppl. 3.

⁶³ For the numismatic evidence, see, e.g., REINDERS 2004b, 192-193; HARVEY 2016, 139.

⁶⁴ TZIAFALIAS-HELLY 2011, 104-117. This part of Perrhaibia seems to have maintained a close relationship with Macedonia from an earlier period: see, e.g., WACE-THOMPSON 1910.

After Macedonia and Aitolia were stripped of their Thessalian possessions in the first half of the Second Century, the picture becomes somewhat clearer. The Thessalian League in particular emerges in sharp focus; key elements include⁶⁵: a *synedrion*, or senate, meeting monthly in the capital city of Larissa and drawing representatives from Thessalian cities⁶⁶; officials like the *strategos*, “general,” the titular head of the league, secretary of the *synedroi*, who exercised powerful archival and judicial functions, and treasurer, who supervised the League’s common revenues; common tax policy on grain exports and manumissions; and the eventual adoption of a calendar and festivals common to the League⁶⁷. While it is doubtless correct to imagine the strong hand of Flamininus shaping the early institutions of the League, we must reckon equally with the likelihood that the League adapted to suit changing conditions⁶⁸. Perrhaibia may have enjoyed a similar institutional setup, although it is much less well documented and seems to have ceased functioning as an independent *koinon* in 146, when it was incorporated with the Thessalian League⁶⁹. Magnesia, like Perrhaibia and Thessaly, was liberated in 196 and presumably organized as a *koinon*, but soon thereafter appears again as an Antigonid possession. After Pydna in 167, a *koinon* was reformed and continued to function until the later Roman Empire⁷⁰.

Little is known about the *ethne* of the Spercheios valley from the end of the Lamian War through their incorporation into the Aitolian League over the course of the Third Century. Once joining with the Aitolians, however, they enjoyed representation in the league’s assembly and senate, both of which expanded in size to match the expanding territorial holdings of the league; and the greater Aitolian state largely respected local institutions and attempted to utilize them for administrative purposes like tax collection⁷¹. Thus, when the Spercheios territories fell away from the Aitolian League, these *ethne* seem to have been able to swiftly administer their own affairs as autonomous polities⁷². Each of these leagues would be incorporated within the Thessalian League over the course of the second and first centuries.

These principal Thessalian actors sketched above employed an extraordinary range of means for relating to one another and with Macedonian, Aitolian, and Roman hegemon. To these I now turn.

The close control of tetradic Thessaly, Magnesia, and Perrhaibia by the later Argeads and Antigonids resulted in a somewhat shifted dynamic between city and king than that witnessed in other parts of the Hellenistic world, where elites negotiating as intermediaries between their home cities and royal courts played a necessary role between these “interpenetrating sovereignties⁷³.” Certainly earlier Argeads had cultivated relationships with a range of Thessalian elites, especially the Aleuads of Larissa, and Philip II expanded this network to include non-traditional players, like elites from Pharsalos⁷⁴. Alexander’s policy is less clear, although both Larissans and

⁶⁵ For what follows, see BOUCHON–HELLY 2015, 240–249.

⁶⁶ 334 individual senators are attested in an early Imperial decree: *IG 9.2 507 = IEnipeus 13*.

⁶⁷ See GRANINGER 2011, 43–114.

⁶⁸ See, e.g., BOUCHON–HELLY 2015, 246–247, for the development of a new conception of territorial organization alongside the traditional tetrads.

⁶⁹ Evidence for Perrhaibian League: GRANINGER 2011, 33. Dissolution of League: KRAMOLISCH 1979.

⁷⁰ The details of the organization of this sequence of *koina* are here too are controversial. See INTZESILOGLOU 1996.

⁷¹ For the Aitolian League, see now FUNKE 2015.

⁷² FUNKE 2015, 115. For two examples of the “microfederalism” characteristic of central Greece, see ROUSSET 2015, who discusses Doris and Oitaia.

⁷³ For a study of the phenomenon, see now PASCHIDIS 2008; cf. DAVIES 2002.

⁷⁴ Daochids of Pharsalos: see GRANINGER 2010, 316.

Pharsalans are known among his *hetairoi*⁷⁵. Thessalians continue to be present at Antipatrid and Antigonid courts, some of whom may be related to traditional centers of power in Thessaly⁷⁶, others who may represent newly emerging elite families⁷⁷. Such individuals should not be regarded in any way as representatives of Thessaly or Thessalian interests at court, although in some cases that may have been an outcome of their status; rather, these men were selected by the king and served his ends, chiefly as military commanders, regional administrators, or ambassadors⁷⁸.

The role of intermediaries in the Aitolian-controlled territories of the Spercheios valley is similarly subdued, although for somewhat different reasons. The Aitolian League's methods of expansion were largely peaceful and typically based on *sympoliteia* agreements with new member territories. There was thus a more equitable integration of territory and institutions that offered an alternative to the large monarchic states administered by Ptolemies, Seleucids, and Antigonids.

This deceptively stable picture was forever altered in the wake of the Second Macedonian War, when new *koina* in the Thessalian region emerged alongside an increasingly prominent Rome and persisting Antigonid Macedonia and Aitolian League. Consider, for example, the career of Eurylochus, head of the Magnesians League in 192, who advocated a strongly anti-Roman and by extension anti-Antigonid policy that swiftly embroiled the Magnesians League in a developing conflict between the Aitolian League and their Seleucid ally, Antiochos III, on the one side and Rome and Philip V on the other; Eurylochus secured Demetrias for the Aitolians and Antiochos, but elected to commit suicide in 191 after the Seleucid disaster at Thermopylae and the arrival of Philip at Demetrias⁷⁹.

Interstate arbitration is another well-documented field of activity in Hellenistic Thessaly⁸⁰. One spectacular example points out how fiercely neighboring cities could continue to dispute boundary territories. An important inscription (IG 9.2 89) from ancient Narthakion in Thessaly describes well a conflict between Narthakion and its neighbor to the north, Melitaia, concerning public or common land, which contained sanctuaries, and a deserted fort, all of which presumably lay along the perceived formal, however ill-defined, boundary between the two cities⁸¹. The simple longevity of the feud is noteworthy, which persisted through several tectonic shifts in regional politics. The first adjudication was conducted by a certain Medeios, the next by a group of Thessalians, it would seem, and a third by a group of Macedonian judges led by one Pyllos. Absolute chronology is difficult to establish here, unfortunately, but all must

⁷⁵ E.g., Medeios of Larissa, Ariston of Pharsalos, Polydamas (of Pharsalos?): cf. HECKEL 2006, 48, 158, 225-226; MENDOZA 2022.

⁷⁶ E.g., Medeios, who found continued favor among Antipatrids and Antigonids alike after Alexander's death, or his nephew, Oxythemis, who was a favorite of the early Antigonids: see, e.g., HABICHT 2006a.

⁷⁷ E.g., Petraios, who was an intimate of Philip V; the name becomes increasingly prominent in later Hellenistic politics.

⁷⁸ For general discussion of the function of Antigonid *philo*i, see LE BOHEC 1995. How they acquired such status in the first place is very much unknown, aside from the fact that they seem to have been deliberately selected by the king. New discoveries may shift this perspective, however. For example, a case has been made that the Petraios who served as *philo*s to Philip V is to be identified with one of the Larissan envoys to the king mentioned in IG 9.2 517 (e.g., HABICHT 2006a, 73; but see LE BOHEC 1995, 110-111, who argues against this possibility).

⁷⁹ For sources and more detailed discussion, see PASCHIDIS 2008, 347-348.

⁸⁰ See the important collection of documents in AGER 1996. CROWTHER 2006 treats overlapping phenomena; cf. ROBERT 2007, 312-313.

⁸¹ IG 9.2 89. For the fort, see BAKER 2000.

predate the Flaminian reorganization⁸². We are on firmer ground with the next series of arbitrations, these apparently won by Narthakion: a resolution achieved in accordance with the Thessalian laws that Flamininus had established in the region following the Second Macedonian War and perhaps bearing traces of his direct intervention; a decision reached by a panel of judges from Samos, Kolophon, and Magnesia in the third year before the last decision in the sequence; and finally, a ruling by the Roman Senate in *ca.* 140, which reaffirmed the Flaminian settlement⁸³. In addition to this long running feud with Narthakion, Melitaia sought external resolution to border disputes with other neighbors during the period of Macedonian and Aitolian administration of Achaia Phthiotis⁸⁴, as well as on at least one other occasion after 146⁸⁵.

Thessaly had changed rapidly and dramatically over these more than two centuries, from local rule as *poleis* (sometimes organized within *koina*), to membership in an expanded Argead and Antigonid Macedonian state, which was in turn contested, sometimes successfully (as in the case of Achaia Phthiotis) over the course of the Third Century by the Aitolian League and more permanently so by Rome after the Second and Third Macedonian Wars, to local rule by *poleis* again, but these now incorporated within larger *koina*. At every stage of these transformations, the motivations and goals of a city like Melitaia remain relatively consistent, as, by implication, do those of its neighbors: more access to more territory, and all of its attendant political, economic, and symbolic benefits.

Proxeny is similarly well-attested in Hellenistic Thessaly⁸⁶. Recent scholarship has shown that proxeny as an institution, and the expectations of the individuals and communities implicated in such relationships, remained remarkably consistent over half a millennium, although evidence, particularly the inscriptions, tends to cluster from the fourth to the early Second Century⁸⁷. Expanding evidence for the institution does not imply a degradation of its core functions but a change in epigraphic habit. Interstate anarchy characterized political relationships in the Aegean and on the Greek mainland including Thessaly from the Fourth Century well into the Hellenistic period: such conditions were ripe for the maintenance of proxeny networks. With the progressive incorporation of the Hellenistic states with the Roman empire, there was a corresponding transition from anarchy to hierarchy with a concomitant deemphasizing of proxenoi; other institutions influencing and structuring interstate relations were

⁸² PICCIRILLI 1973, 153-154, no. 35, endorsed by AGER 1996, 104, identifies Medeios as Medeios of Larissa, a powerful Aleuad dynast in that city in the late fifth and early fourth centuries, and dates the arbitration to “dopo il 395 a. C.” While no ethnic is provided here, the name is common in Larissa and only attested here and once at Herakleia Trachinia in Thessaly outside of Larissa, so Larissa is a good bet. Which Medeios and when are less certain. PICCIRILLI 1973, 196, no. 51, again endorsed by AGER 1996, 104, relies on an uncertain and frankly dubious restoration of l. 28 to see “autonomous Thessalians” rendering the second judgment, which he dates “*ca.* 361/60 a. C.” The third, a Macedonian arbitration conducted by a group of judges led by Pyllus, is similarly difficult to place. AGER 1996, 103-105, no. 32, notes two plausible Antigonid contexts: *ca.* 270-260, when a team of judges from Kassandreia handled territorial disputes in Achaia Phthiotis, including the *polis* of Melitaia; and *ca.* 210 or shortly afterwards, when Achaia Phthiotis was again in Antigonid possession; Philip V intervened in territorial disputes in Perrhaibia during his reign: HELLY 1973a, nos. 93A-B, 98.

⁸³ For discussion of the entire string of settlements, see AGER 1996, nos. 32, 79, 154, 156.

⁸⁴ AGER 1996, nos. 30-31, 55-56; MAGNETTO 1997.

⁸⁵ *JG* 9.2 103, with HELLY 2001.

⁸⁶ See, e.g., MAREK 1984, 281-296.

⁸⁷ MACK 2015, 81-87.

similarly impacted, although to a lesser degree (e.g., *theoroi*, treaties, interstate arbitration and foreign judges)⁸⁸.

3.3 Beyond urban elites

Even when attempting to write in good faith history of Hellenistic Thessaly, one may be forgiven for thinking that one set of elites, be they Macedonian or Roman, for example, has simply been replaced by another that is Thessalian and urban and that both are essentially urban, elite stories. To some extent, this circumstance reflects the character of the sources. Nonetheless, other groups have left tantalizing traces in the ancient sources: to these I now turn.

The Thessalian *penestai* seem to have been a serf-like underclass in Archaic and Classical Thessaly comparable in some respects to the Helots of Laconia and Messenia⁸⁹. It has been plausibly suggested that a number of Thessalian cities enrolled new citizens from the ranks of the *penestai* near the end of the Third Century⁹⁰. Evidence for *penestai* is near non-existent in the ensuing centuries and it is generally accepted that the institution was in decline by 200. While the enfranchisement of *penestai* had not been unknown previously in the region⁹¹, the scale of such apparent grants of citizen status to *penestai* suggests a different set of causes. Thessalian cities had experienced persistent shortages of citizens, as indicated for example by the lengthy dossier between Philip V and Larissa discussed above, and it is probable that enfranchising *penestai* was a solution to the problem. The embrace of such an expedient implies in turn that attitudes toward citizenship were themselves in flux.

Additional social and economic factors were likely in play. Compare, for example, another characteristic component of the Hellenistic profile of Thessaly as a region –the explosive appearance, beginning, it would seem, soon after 200, of vast numbers of inscriptions recording the payment of a fee associated with the manumission of slaves. More than 300 inscriptions attesting to the manumission of more than 1,700 manumitted individuals are known throughout the region ranging in date from the Second Century BCE to the Third Century CE; the uniformity of payment suggests that, while payments were certainly made on a local basis, a broader regional logic governed the institution that may be associated in some measure with the Flaminian reforms⁹². Chattel slavery, as distinct from the *penestai*, must thus be regarded as a significant institution in later Hellenistic Thessaly. But had it always been so? Earlier literary sources casually attest the existence of chattel slavery in Thessaly, including export of slaves from the major Thessalian port at Pagasai, and some scholars have wondered whether this shift in the evidentiary record reflects a change in epigraphic habit rather than a broader social shift⁹³. But even a changed epigraphic habit reflects a social

⁸⁸ MACK 2015, 233-281.

⁸⁹ For extensive discussion of the *penestai*, see DUCAT 1994, 104-113; cf. DECOURT 1990a; HELLY 1995, 186, 302-311.

⁹⁰ Pharsalos: see *IThessEnip* 50, with earlier bibliography; Krannon: DECOURT-TZIAPHALIAS 2001, 144; Mopsion: GARCIA RAMON 2007, 98.

⁹¹ Theopompus, for example, notes at *BNJ* 115 F81. that one Agathokles, a *penestes*, had won such favor with Philip II that the Argead appointed to him an administrative position in Perrhaibia; his status as *penestes* has been doubted by some: see, e.g., HECKEL 2006, 153.

⁹² ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ 2013.

⁹³ VLASSOPOULOS 2014, observing the curious density of these documents in the smaller *poleis* of central and northern Greece; for additional discussion of an important and numerous series of manumissions from one such community, Delphi, see the still valuable HOPKINS 1978, 133-171. For a series of inscriptions attesting to manumission from late Third-Century Larissa, see TZIAPHALIAS-DARMEZIN 2015.

change, albeit one somewhat more obliquely related to the phenomena described in the documents themselves⁹⁴. In the case of these Thessalian manumissions, Zelnick-Abramovitz has plausibly suggested a double explanation: Thessalian cities, perpetually beset by financial crisis in the late Third and early Second Centuries, sought to generate revenue by essentially taxing a process that was widespread (they were encouraged in this initiative by the Thessalian *koinon*); at the same time, publication of such transactions and the naming of those implicated therein, above all the newly manumitted, helped communities to police the boundary between citizen and non-citizen⁹⁵; one may wonder if such divisions assumed still greater prominence in the wake of the decision to enroll *penestai* as citizens and may even have been motivated by this new citizen population eager to mark its difference from freedmen and women.

The character of human settlement, activity, and life outside of the prominent urban centers in Hellenistic Thessaly is less well known at the moment. In other areas of the eastern Mediterranean, one might appeal to the findings of regional archaeological projects to discern longer term settlement patterns uncovered by extensive surface survey. Such results have often disrupted traditional historical narratives in productive ways. For example, the campaigns of Alexander and ensuing conflicts among his generals after his death does not seem to have appreciably impacted settlement patterns across a large swath of the eastern Mediterranean and southwest Asia; instead, a visible hinge exists not between Classical and Hellenistic, but between earlier and later Hellenistic, with a tendency toward fewer but larger rural settlements in the later Hellenistic period, which may reflect some broader social and economic changes of the period hinted at in literary and epigraphic sources, such as increasing urbanization and growing disparity between elites and non-elites⁹⁶. Local factors remain significant, however, and can shape these trajectories in important ways⁹⁷.

Unfortunately, formal regional surveys have not often targeted Thessaly and those that have remain in incomplete states of publication. The Sourpi plain in eastern Thessaly, which overlay to a great extent the hinterland of New Halos, is a partial exception⁹⁸. V. Stissi draws attention to 11 settlements in the Halos hinterland in the Classical-Hellenistic period; these are interpreted as “farmsteads” with full awareness of the difficulties attendant on the use of that word as a term of analysis⁹⁹. Comparison with results from other survey projects leads to a provocative conclusion:

“...one may argue that the ‘typical’ farm assemblage was to a large extent context-independent. One possible line of explanation may be that practical, economical and/or agricultural/functional constraints were so similar, that they would obscure any differences in socio-political or ideological factors affecting the material remains we can trace. An alternative hypothesis may be that, at least for some (and not necessarily overlapping) periods in the Classical-Hellenistic period, social conditions in the Greek countryside were so similar in different areas, and even under different political conditions, that a certain degree of standardization in farming life developed, more or less spontaneously¹⁰⁰.”

⁹⁴ MACMULLEN 1982; CHANIOTIS 2004.

⁹⁵ ZELNICK-ABRAMOVITZ 2013, 133-134.

⁹⁶ ALCOCK 1993, 1-92; ALCOCK 1994.

⁹⁷ See, e.g., SHIPLEY 2002 and 2005 on southern Greece and the Peloponnese, with an emphasis on Laconia.

⁹⁸ See, e.g., REINDERS 2004a.

⁹⁹ STISSI 2012.

¹⁰⁰ STISSI 2012, 399.

In the final analysis, Thessaly's numerous social, political, and environmental idiosyncrasies may have had relatively little impact on rural settlement.

4. CONCLUSION

In the preceding, I have sketched two sets of possible foundations for a history of Hellenistic Thessaly: one diachronic and rooted in the exercise of external political order, the other synchronic and grounded in social, thematic approaches that on their own merits do not lend themselves to a tidy summation. Both stories are to some extent true, if not equally so: one does not refute the other. One might even argue that history “of” requires history “in” to be meaningful, and vice versa. But I hope to have made it impossible to think of Hellenistic Thessaly as simply an insignificant pawn, submissive, possessed by outsiders, and ultimately lacking a distinctive history.

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