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Chapter 10

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The Eleutheria and Larisa

Evidence

The direct evidence for the Thessalian Eleutheria is chiefly epigraphic, with which some numismatic, literary, and archeological evidence has been productively associated. The inscriptions consist of: a number of fragmentary lists documenting victors in festival contests;[1] several monuments commemorating an individual's victories in the Eleutheria;[2] and decrees of the Thessalian League and the Delphic Amphiktyony, which mention the sanctuary of Zeus Eleutherios in Larisa as an *epiphanéstatos tópos* for the publication of Thessalian League decrees and the Eleutheria festival as a principal occasion for honoring benefactors.[3] Most of the epigraphic evidence dates to the second and first centuries.

Coinage can be brought indirectly into conversation with the epigraphic record in two ways. First, the coinage of the Thessalian League in the second and first centuries typically represents what are thought to be Zeus Eleutherios and Athena Itonia, the chief recipients of League cult, on the obverse and reverse. The prominence of Zeus on this League media indicates his high status in the regional pantheon and suggests, by extension, that the festival in his honor was viewed accordingly. Second, a number of curious contests in the festival program seem to reflect a Thessalian agonistic tradition – especially the *aphippodromás*, *aphippolampás*, and *taurothēría* – and may be depicted on some earlier polis coinages of the region.[4]

1 These victor lists have been collected recently at Graninger 2011. All dates BC unless otherwise indicated.
2 E.g., *IG* VII 48.
3 *CID* 4 106, 128; *IG* IX 2.507–509; *SEG* 34.558.
4 See, e.g., Gallis 1988: 219–225 (*aphippodromás*; *taurothēría*); Zafiropoulou 2004: 115–117 (*taurothēría*); Axenidis 1947: 15–24 (*taurothēría*).

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Salvage excavations in Larisa have brought to light two theaters, either of which is likely to have furnished a venue for some contests in the festival program. Other architecture in the city has been tentatively associated with the sanctuary of Zeus Eleutherios.[1] Direct literary evidence for the festival is conspicuously, albeit not unexpectedly, muted.[2]

Foundation

The Eleutheria are likely to have been established in the wake of the Roman defeat of Philip V in the Second Macedonian War at Kynoskephalai in 197. T. Quinctius Flamininus, the victorious consul in the campaigning, famously proclaimed free Thessaly and several other regions of northern Greece that had been under Macedonian control at the celebration of the Isthmian games in 196 and set about reorganizing these territories in subsequent years during a series of visits to the region. Bruno Helly has plausibly further specified the precise foundation date for the festival as 193/92.[3]

Like most festival names, the Eleutheria are most probably derived from the name or *epíklēsis* of the divinity in whose honor it was celebrated, who was almost certainly Zeus Eleutherios. His cult is not earlier attested in Thessaly and was probably installed in Larisa after the Second Macedonian War.[4] The Thessalian Eleutheria thus seem likely to have been a "freedom festival," a particularly popular type of festival in all periods of Greek history, that commemorated an historical event.[5]

Organization

The Thessalian Eleutheria were organized by the Thessalian koinon and are likely to have been a penteteric festival.[6] Chaniotis has described common elements of "freedom festivals" and it is probable that several were present in the Eleutheria program, despite not being formally attested:[7]

1) Crowning of participants, council members, commemorative monuments;

5 References to these remains will be discussed below ("Facilities and Spectators").
2 Discussed at Graninger 2011: 78–80: these are references not to the Eleutheria per se, but perhaps to the *aphippolampás* and *taurothēría* as Thessalian contests.
3 *BE* 2013, no. 224, based on *CID* 4.106 and a plausible emendation of *IG* IX² 508, presented *ad loc*.
4 Bouchon and Helly 2013: 218–222, have hypothesized recently that the cult of Zeus Eleutherios was related to the cult of Zeus Olympios, which is now known to have been a significant cult in the region in the third century (Malay and Ricl 2009); cf. Parker 2011.
5 Chaniotis 1991; Chaniotis 2005: 227–233.
6 Preuner 1903: 372; Graninger 2011: 76–77.
7 Chaniotis 1991: 127–131.

2) Procession to the location of sacrifice. It is likely that prominent officials of the Thessalian League would have taken part or perhaps representatives of member cities. Chaniotis observes the occasional participation of foreigners in such processions and stresses the importance of the participation of youths, which marks out the importance of the gymnasium in Hellenistic urban life: both categories of participant seem plausible for the Eleutheria;
3) Sacrifice. There must certainly have been a sacrifice to Zeus Eleutherios in his sanctuary in Larisa;
4) Prayer. It was common for prayers to be uttered by the priest or sacrificial officiant in remembrance and celebration of those who participated in the events commemorated by the festival as well as the divinity or divinities associated with both the historical event and the festival;
5) Singing of hymns or other types of cult song. Zeus Eleutherios and, indeed, Flamininus himself, if the literary sources do not mislead concerning his prominence in both the victory over Philip V and the reorganization of the region, emerge as likely recipients of such song;
6) Sacrificial meal;
7) Contests;
8) Orations concerning the events commemorated by the festival; and
9) Dramatic representation of the events commemorated by the festival.

While only one of these nine elements is firmly attested in the case of the Thessalian Eleutheria, 7) contests, Chaniotis' study offers us an opportunity to imagine the conduct of the festival in somewhat more vivid detail. Garlanding, procession, sacrifice, prayer, song, and consumption of meat are common elements of most normative religious festivals in the ancient Greek world (and contests are not uncommon); we can reconstruct their presence in the Thessalian Eleutheria without difficulty.[8] Indeed, in some cases, there exist chronologically close potential parallels.[9] Orations and dramatic

8 For example, an honorary statue of Flamininus is known from Thessalian Skotussa, dedicated by Praulos, son of Phoxinos, who served as *stratēgós* of the Thessalian League 190/89 (ed. pr. Mastrokostas 1964: 309–310, no. 2a [*SEG* 23.412; *BE* 1965, no. 213]); Praulos does not describe himself as *stratēgós*, so the dedication may date to before or after his term of office, or even Skotussaios, which may hint at the purely local significance of the gesture, and Flamininus is not here described as *hýpatos*, *stratēgós hýpatos*, or with any other designation of office – he appears in effect as a private benefactor. One may easily imagine the existence of such a statue in Larisa and hypothesize that such a monument would have been crowned at the time of the Eleutheria. For additional discussion, see Daux 1965: 301–303.
9 For the possibility of a cult hymn in honor of Flamininus, see Plut. *Flam.* 16.4, where his 13 intercessions on behalf of Chalkis with the Roman consul M'. Glabrio at the time of the war with Antiochos III led to the institution of a priesthood for Flamininus: "Moreover, even does to our own day a priest of Titus is duly elected and appointed, and after sacrifice and libations in his honor, a set hymn of praise is sung: it is too long to be quoted entire, and so I will give only the closing words of the song: 'And the Roman faith we revere, which we have solemnly vowed to cherish; sing, then, ye maidens, to great Zeus, to Rome, to Titus, and to the Roman faith: hail, Paean Apollo! Hail, Titus our savior!'" (transl. Perrin).

reenactments are more specific to the genre of commemorative festival and appear more variable in how they are deployed within specific festival settings. And it is tempting to speculate about how other historical commemorative festivals, particularly freedom festivals like the Eleutheria, and other festivals so-named, may have influenced one another; the Plataian Eleutheria may loom especially large here.[10] What emerges from a plausible filling out of the festival program via comparison with other events is the likelihood that Rome and, indeed, the figure of Flamininus were specifically celebrated by the Thessalian League alongside Zeus Eleutherios.[11]

More concrete details can be offered on the matter of the festival's contests. While no single complete victor list survives offering a snapshot of the agonistic program at one particular time, it is possible to cobble together a composite program for the second and first centuries from the fragmentary lists and other commemorative victor monuments. One may distinguish between four categories of events occurring in the preserved victor lists: 1) melic contests: trumpeters, heralds, *aulētaí*, kitharists, *kitharōdoí*; 2) the spectacles: *taurothēría*, *aphippolampás*, *aphippodromás*; 3) gymnic contests (age classes in parentheses): *péntathlon* (boys, youths, men), *dólichos* (boys, men), *stádion* (boys, youths, men), *díaulos* (age classes unknown), boxing (age classes unknown), *pankrátion* (boys, youths, men); 4) hippic contests: foal race, horse race, two-foal chariot race, two-horse chariot race, four-foal chariot race, four-horse chariot race. A fragmentary victor list from early first-century Larisa indicates that dramatic contests took place there at that time; the Eleutheria make good sense as a venue for such contests.[12] Catalogues of *theōroí* or *theōrodókoi* do not survive, unfortunately, and so it is difficult to know the festival's *epangelía*. It is probable, however, that, as a festival organized by the Thessalian koinon, the Eleutheria would have been announced within the cities of the koinon and, as the territory administered by the koinon expanded over the course of the second and first centuries, so too did its regional *epangelía*.[13]

Athletes

The Eleutheria victor lists present the complete (or, if fragmentary, plausibly restored) ethnica of approximately 50 victors: 25 are Thessalian, 25 are non-Thessalian. Among the

10 For the Plataian Eleutheria in the early Hellenistic period, see Wallace 2011; cf. Schachter 1981 III: 125–143.
11 Compare the rather more explicit Titeia festival celebrated at Argos, which recognized Flamininus' "liberation" of the city, that is, its reincorporation within the Achaian League, in 195: Daux 1964; Kralli 2017: 324.
12 Graninger 2011: 180–182. For a more complete text, see *BE* 2013, no. 224.
13 For territorial expansion of the Thessalian League in the later Hellenistic period, see Graninger 2011: 35–39.

Thessalians Larisa dominates (18, 72% of the Thessalian victors and 36% of the 50 total),[14] with stray participation by other principal cities: Atrax (1), Gyrton (1), Kierion (2), Metropolis (1), and Pherai (2). The non-Thessalian victors are quite fragmented, with no single city or ethnos home to more than three victors. We may organize into four larger geographic groups: central and northern Greece (7);[15] Peloponnese (7);[16] the Greek east (9);[17] and the western Greeks (2).[18] Stray reference to victories at the Thessalian Eleutheria in other commemorative monuments do not shift the overall impression offered by the victor lists.[19] In a synchronic perspective, it is the prominence of Thessalian, and notably Larisan, victors in the sample that is most striking, rather than the presence of any particular non-Thessalian participants. Among Hellenistic festivals outside the "big four,"[20] we may contrast festivals like the Amphiaraia (and variants) at Oropos, where the local is underrepresented (only eight of the 165 victors with preserved ethnic are from Oropos [ca. 5%]), or the Herakleia at Chalkis, where the local is overrepresented (25 Chalkidians among the 33 victors with preserved ethnic [ca. 76%]); a closer comparandum may be offered by another federal festival like the Basileia at Lebadeia, where, although Lebadeians are absent, Boiotians (from, e.g., Anthedon, Chaironeia, Koroneia, Thebes, and Thespiai) account for victors among the 42 attested with preserved ethnic (ca. 38%) with Thebans responsible for eight (or 50% of Boiotian victories and ca. 19% of total)[21] and Thespians for five (ca. 31% of Boiotian victories and ca. 12% of total).[22]

While the logic of koinon sponsorship and geographic proximity may drive in some measure the particular profile of Thessalian victors at the Eleutheria, a decisive role was

14 I have not included in this count "Kratinos, son of Pythonikos, Thessalian [from….]" (*IG* IX² 525, l. 14) whose city ethnic has been plausibly restored on prosopographic grounds as "[from Larisa]"; see Graninger 2011: 161 for discussion of the question.

15 Athamania (1), Boiotia (2), Epiros (1), Kerkyra (1), Thasos (1), and Thebes (1; I regard this as a reference to Boitian Thebes). I do not include in the count Kallon, son of Xenophilos, (*IG* IX² 529, l. 19) whose ethnic has been plausibly restored on prosopographic grounds as "[from Opous]"; see Graninger 2011: 175 for discussion of the question.

16 Kleitor (1), Lakedaimon (3), Patras (1), and Sikyon (2).

17 Alabanda (1), Antioch on the Maiander (1), Ephesos (1), Kos (1), Kyme (1), Kyzikos (1), Laodikeia (1), Magnesia on the Maiander (1), and Miletos (1).

18 Neapolis (1) and Syracuse (1).

19 E.g., *IG* VII 48, for a Megarian who won victories in boxing and *pankrátion* at "the Eleutheria in Larisa" and *IG* IX² 614a, for a Larisan who took "one [crown] from the Thessalian Eleutheria of Zeus"; the latter monument will be discussed in greater detail below.

20 I have used the Mannheim database for the numerical estimates that follow.

21 The Theban total may be artificially high: one individual is responsible for six victories as the commemorative epigram is generally understood (*IG* VII 4247; Ebert 1972: no. 70–the text and its meaning are difficult, however).

22 Comparison with the Herakleia at Chalkis, Amphiaraia at Oropos, and Basileia at Lebadeia reveals another distinctive feature of Eleutheria: the absence of Roman or Italian victors. I am inclined to read this gap as an area where our data are not especially representative. For the substantial Roman and Italian presence in Thessaly in the second and first centuries, including office holders and victors in a local, Larisan competition, the so–called Stena, see Helly 1983; cf. Bouchon 2007.

played by a festival program with a major complement of equestrian contests and a unique suite of spectacle events – *taurothēría*, *aphippodromás*, *aphippolampás* – that drew on particular regional Thessalian agonistic tradition. Only Thessalians are attested as victors in both categories of event. And these were no ordinary Thessalian elites, but often had direct ties to high offices in the Thessalian koinon, including that of League *stratēgós*.[23]

A diachronic frame of analysis reveals a festival that seems to have drawn from a fairly modest pool of competitors in Thessaly and central Greece in its early years but which acquired a more prominent position in the wider Aegean and eastern Mediterranean world by the first half of the first century. Dated to the late 190s or 180s, the earliest preserved list, *IG* IX² 525, is fragmentary: of the five contests for which victors are preserved, only Thessalians (two Larisans, plus another individual marked with the ethnic Thessalos but whose city of origin is not preserved) or Boiotians (two) are listed as victors. Contrast the victors in the same series of contests in *IG* IX² 528, dated to approximately 80 to 120 years later: Thessalians are again prominent (one Larisan, one from Kierion), but in place of Boiotians, who are now absent, we find champions from: Asia Minor – Ephesos (one), Antioch on the Maiander (one), Kyzikos (one); the western Greek world – Neapolis (one); and the Peloponnese – Patras (one). A list that seems to have fallen between these two, *IG* IX² 526, preserves the extensive end of a victor list and suggests that already by the middle of the second century interest in the festival had spread; thirteen victors are here attested: alongside a heavy Thessalian presence (seven total: one each from Metropolis and Atrax, five Larisans), victors from central Greece (one Theban), the north Aegean (one Thasian), the northwestern and western Greek world (one each from Corcyra, Syracuse, and Kyme), and Asia Minor (one from Magnesia on the Maiander) are listed. We unfortunately do not possess festival invitations, *theōrodókoi* catalogues, and the like for the Eleutheria and so cannot reconstruct a general catchment area for the festival.

Cheating

There are no known instances of cheating in the Eleutheria, but cheaters there must have been. Punishments known from other games may offer a useful guide: fines, flogging, expulsion;[24] a third-century epitaph from Larisa identifies the deceased by his occupation as a *rhabdoúchos*, "rod-bearer."[25]

23 Graninger 2011: 82–84.
24 See, e.g., Crowther and Frass 1998. For the Zanes at Olympia, bronze statues of Zeus funded by fines paid by cheating athletes, a highly marked commemoration of cheating mentioned at Paus. 5.21.2, see Buraselis 2017.
25 *IG* IX² 735.

Continuity and Change

The absence of any single complete, or nearly so, victory list, let alone a sequence of them, renders any diachronic claim about continuity or change difficult to sustain. All is not lost, however, and one may make some plausible inferences.

Cult officials of Zeus Eleutherios may have become more prominent in the conduct of the festival. Victor list preambles offer useful perspective on the administration of the Eleutheria festival. Two such preambles are partially preserved, from the first decades of the second century to the first half of the first. The earlier of the two is simple and consists of a dating formula based on the federal office of agonothetes: "When Androsthenes, son of Italos, from Gyrton was agonothete of the Thessalians…". The later monument offers an additional date: "When Isagoras [son of so-and-so was agono]thete….and when [so-and-so], son of Kleonikos, from Gyrton was [prie]st of Zeus Eleu[therios…"[26] The higher visibility of the priest of Zeus Eleutherios in the victor lists may suggest a more prominent role for the official in the organization of the contest or, at the very least, an increased standing within the wider framework of the festival.

Increasing prominence of the "Thessalian triad" may also be observed. *IG* IX² 525, the earliest of the Eleutheria victor lists, which Helly argues commemorates victors in the inaugural Eleutheria, presents first the group of victors in the melic contests, followed by the victors in the gymnic contests. *IG* IX² 528, dated ca. 90–70, offers a similarly full presentation of melic victors, but lists after them victors in the "Thessalian triad," before proceeding to the gymnic victors. Such an epigraphic change may reflect either the introduction of the events to the Eleutheria program at some point after 194 or, more plausibly, the movement of these events from a later to an earlier period in the festival, assuming, as is reasonable, that the order of events on the victor list reflects the actual temporal order in which these competitions took place.

Other changes can be imagined on the basis of other shifts that we know to have taken place in Larisa and Thessaly during the later Hellenistic period. Significant among them must have been the appearance of a new festival, the so-called Stena, which, like the Eleutheria, commemorated military events in which Thessaly, Rome, and Antigonid Macedon were implicated: the Third Macedonian War. The respective position of Thessaly and Rome in the foundation narratives of the two festivals seem likely to have shifted, however: from Rome as savior of Thessaly in the Second Macedonian

26 The word "priest" is incomplete and one may well imagine other possible supplements. That this individual, whatever his role, was somehow connected with the cult of Zeus Eleutherios is clear, however.

War/Eleutheria to Rome as saved by Thessaly a generation later at Kallinikos during the Third Macedonian War/Stena.[27] While the Stena shared certain elements of its agonistic program with the Eleutheria, including the events of the so called Thessalian triad, and so must have shared in addition some competition venues, further facilitating comparison between the two festivals, the Stena offered a much more unusual program of events, participation in which appears to have been limited to Thessalians alone. How precisely the emergence of this new festival would have impacted perception of the Eleutheria, particularly among its Thessalian and more narrowly Larisan audiences, is uncertain, but the sensitivity of local historical consciousness to competing commemorative claims is well known.

Notes of continuity are struck by the overall program of competition – excepting the possible shift in order of competitions noted above, the types of competition represented in the victor lists remain consistent in the preserved victor lists – and the healthy presence of Thessalian participants, especially in the spectacle and equestrian events and including regional elites who held high office in the koinon.

"Connecting festivals"

The Eleutheria existed in a wider ecosystem of festivals in the Hellenistic Mediterranean world. A significant question centers on the participation of athletes from Eleutheria host communities, Larisa as well as the other member cities of the Thessalian koinon, in other festivals. Hellenistic evidence preceding or contemporary with the conduct of the Eleutheria suggests some interesting patterns.[28] The Mannheim database indicates three principal groupings: one is closely associated with Olympia and is largely limited to the third century (I treat here as well the smaller number Thessalian participants in the Pythia at Delphi); the second is tied to the participation of Thessalian klerouchs in Ptolemaic Egypt in local contests, again in the third century; a third grouping is rather more significant for locating the Eleutheria in a network of contemporary festivals and consists of victors in central Greek, especially Boiotian, contests, many of whom were active during the second and first centuries.

27 For the Stena foundation narrative, see *BE* 1964, no. 227; cf. Helly 2007.

28 For Thessalian victors in Panhellenic and local competitions in the Archaic and Classical period, see Stamatopoulou 2007: *passim*, with incisive discussion of Thessalian patronage of Pindar, Bacchylides, and Simonides. For the apparent dearth of Thessalian equestrian victors in Panhellenic contests in these centuries, see Aston and Kerr 2018.

Of the twelve known Olympic victors from Thessaly during the Hellenistic period, ten won in equestrian contests during the first three quarters of the third century;[29] the two non-equestrians were *stádion*-runners.[30] The character of the source material is partially responsible for this impression: five of the third-century equestrian victors are known from epigrams of Poseidippos and the remainder from Eusebius and a fragmentary second-century AD papyrus from Oxyrhynchus containing an Olympiad chronicle with quite detailed knowledge of Hellenistic Athens (*P.Oxy*. XVII 2082 [*BNJ* 257a]).[31] While Pharsalos and Krannon are explicitly marked as cities of origin for two victors, it is striking how, in the Poseidippan material, equestrian victors in these commissioned monuments seem to downplay their membership in a particular polis in preference to celebrating the regional, Thessalian, origin of the horse or horses with which the victory was gained;[32] and it is equally striking that of the four equestrian victors mentioned in *P.Oxy*. XVII 2082 (*BNJ* 257a), two appear with a regional ethnic Thessalos rather than a city ethnic, while a third seems to have been designated by a combination of regional and city ethnics.[33] There may appear here then, in an otherwise murky period of Thessalian history about which little is known and even worse has been suspected, evidence for a

29 1) Pandion of Thessaly, no city ethnic mentioned, victorious in the *kélēs* in 296 (*P.Oxy*. XVII 2082 [Moretti,1957, 134, no. 523; *BNJ* 257a F4; not in Mannheim]).
2) Amyntas, no city ethnic mentioned, victorious in the *kélēs* ca. 280–240 (Poseidipp. AB 85 [XIII 23–26] [Mannheim 50]).
3) Hippokrates, no city ethnic mentioned, victorious in the *kélēs* in 256 (Moretti, 1957, 138, no. 558 [Mannheim 536]).
4) Karteros of Thessaly, victorious in the four-horse chariot ca. 268 (*P.Oxy*. XVII 2082 [Moretti 1957: 136, no. 546; Mannheim 585; Rzepka *ad BNJ* 257a F6 suggests emending to Krateros on no good grounds]; while the precise date remains somewhat uncertain, the 260s seem virtually certain [see *BNJ* 257a F6]).
5–6) Two other Thessalian victors are also mentioned at *BNJ* 257a F6, although little has been preserved of their names: one, M[——] from Krannon, was victorious in the *kélēs* (Moretti, 1957, 136, no. 547 [Mannheim 659]); the other, [——] of Thessaly, won the *synōrís* competition (Moretti 1957: 136, no. 548 [Mannheim 1109]; Rzepka *ad BNJ* 257a F6 suggests that the winner of the *synōrís* was also Karteros on the basis of the shared preserved ethnic, Thessalian, but this seems an unnecessary inference, given the apparently marked preference in the Poseidippos epigrams for similar regional identification).
7) Poseidipp. AB 84 (XIII 19–22 [Mannheim 871]) commemorates an anonymous Thessalian victorious in the *kélēs* ca. 280–240.
30 Philomelos of Pharsalos, victorious in 284 (Moretti 1957: 135, no. 534 [Mannheim 855]; for the declining fortunes of Pharsalos in the Hellenistic period, see Stamatopoulou 2009); Demostratos of Larisa, the chronological outlier in the series, was victorious in 84 (Moretti, 1957: 148, no. 669 [Mannheim 321]). Nothing further is known of either individual: see *LGPN* IIIB s.v. Φιλόμηλος 19; Δημόστρατος 9.
31. Poseidipp. AB 83 (XIII 15–18), 84 (XIII 19–22), 85 (XIII 23–26). For further discussion of the *Hippika* of Poseidippos and the programmatic position of Thessaly and Thessalians within that collection, see Fantuzzi 2005. For Eusebius, see Christesen 2007: 232–276 and *passim*. For *P.Oxy.* XVII 2082 (*BNJ* 257a), see Christesen 2007: 334–336, 520 n. 4.
32 For these strategies of elite self–representation in the Hellenistic period, see Scharff 2016.
33 *P.Oxy* XVII 2082 (*BNJ* 257a F6): Κ̣αρτεροῦ Θεσσαλο[ῦ | ἀπὸ . . . . . .]ς τέθριππον. Larisa, [Λαρίση]ς, would fit the lacuna and is a plausible restoration, especially given the prominence of the city. Such a fashion of describing Thessalian victors by both regional and city ethnics becomes typical in second and first century victor lists. The sources accessed by the author of the history preserved in *P.Oxy.* XVII 2082 may thus have preserved Thessalian victors at Olympia during the first half of the third century with three distinct forms of self–designation: by polis alone, by region alone, or by a combination of region and polis.

powerful regional elite possessed of Panhellenic aspirations and participating in a continuing public discourse about Thessaly and Thessalian identity.[34]

Evidence for Thessalian participation in other of "the big four" festivals in the Hellenistic period is slender. Two victors are known from the Pythia: one, an equestrian and *stádion*-runner commemorated in a Poseidippan epigram, is dated ca. 280–240,[35] while the other won the boy's *díaulos* after the middle of the second century.[36] An honorary inscription from Larisa documents victories won by an individual in non-equestrian competitions at several festivals, including Nemea; the monument will be discussed in greater detail below.[37] The few known Thessalian victors at Isthmia date to the Classical period.[38]

A second, smaller group of Thessalian victors in non-Thessalian contests, consisting in fact of one individual, warrants cursory mention. Kineas, son of Alketas, a Thessalian, is listed as victor in both the Ptolemaic *paídes* and adolescent's *stádion* race at a Basileia celebrated in Egypt somewhere outside of Alexandria in 267.[39] The festival apparently mirrored an official celebration of the same festival in Alexandria; while the provenance of the stone within Egypt is unknown.[40] The festival seems to have been organized by and for klerouchs in the region, among whom Thessalians were quite prominent.[41] Louis Robert identified this victor with a Kineas, son of Alketas, attested in a papyrus from

34 For a revision of traditional "decline" narratives of this period in Thessalian history, see Helly 2009. For earlier contestations of Thessalian identity in the Classical period, see Graninger 2009.

35 Hippostratos of Thessaly was victorious in both the *kélēs* and *stádion* (Poseidipp. AB 71 [XI 3921–24] [Mannheim 540, although only the *kélēs* victory is noted there]). Father's name and city ethnic are not mentioned in the epigram. This Hippostratos appeared too late to be treated in *LGPN* IIIB, although the name was not uncommon in the region (see *LGPN* IIIB s.v. Ἱππόστρατος 1–14).

36 Neon son of H[egemo]n (?) (ed. pr. Woodward 1910: 146–147, no. 2 [Mannheim 1502]). The date is as suggested by ed. pr. on the basis of the lack of iota adscript; letter forms as described by ed. pr. seems broadly consonant with a later Hellenistic or early Imperial date. The findspot in Raches may suggest an initial locus of publication in southern Achaia Phthiotis; Stählin 1924: 186n2, associated the monument with ancient Alope, but other candidates in the area may be more likely (e.g., Echinos, Larisa Kremaste). This Neon is otherwise unknown (*LGPN* IIIB s.v. Νέων 28).

37 *IG* IX² 614a. Although the specific competitions are not themselves preserved in the fragmentary inscription, the fact that the victor is described as having been victorious in both boy's and adolescent's age categories proves that these were non–equestrian events.

38 Farrington 2012.

39 Koenen 1977: l. 19–22a (*SEG* 27.1114; *BE* 1977, no. 566). For the age–class distinction *Ptolemaikoí paídes*, compare the *Olympikoí*, *Pythikoí*, and *Isthmikoí paídes* attested in other areas of the Greek world; see now the helpful discussion at D'Amore and Mari 2013: 235 (*SEG* 63.418), where it seems likely that these designations help to mark out specific divisions within the larger category of *paídes* in first-century Amphipolis; cf. Couvenhes 1998: 60–61. A similar purpose may be at work in this inscription, although it remains curious that Kineas could compete in two apparently distinct age classes.

40 See Bingen 2007: 86, n. 12 for a survey of scholarly opinion on likely original locus of publication. Fraser 1993: 449–451 suggests Middle Egypt since the text was inscribed on a basalt stele. Gauthier 1995: 585 suggests Memphis.

41 For the Ptolemaic settler population, see 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. For Thessalians as core of a major cavalry division (*hipparchía*) in the Ptolemaic military, see Fischer–Bovet 2014: 127.

Hibeh as priest of Alexander in 263–262 and used this finding to highlight the elite status of some Thessalians in Ptolemaic Egypt.[42]

A third trend, of greater immediate relevance for the Eleutheria, is represented by a sequence of Thessalian victors at central Greek contests, especially the Amphiareia (and Rhomaia) at Oropos, and the Basileia at Lebadeia. Early members of the group can be dated to 329/28: a victor's list from the Amphiareia Megala at Oropos preserves the names of two Thessalian victors, one in the *díaulos*, another in the *péntathlon*.[43] While Thessalians won victories at smaller Boiotian festivals like the Basileia at Lebadeia in the second and first centuries, the evidence to hand is insufficient for discerning any deeper, local pattern of engagement at those festivals;[44] rather, such data tend to resolve at the regional, central Greek level. Impressive evidence comes from early first century Oropos, where Thessalians appear especially active at the recently reorganized Amphiaraia and Rhomaia. Seven victors in a range of contests are known from victor lists associated with the festival dated to the period 80–50: *I.Oropos* 522,[45] *I.Oropos* 528,[46] and *I.Oropos* 529.[47]

42 Robert 1968: 433–435. Cf. *LGPN* IIIB s.v. Κινέας 5; Peremans and van 't Dack 1950: no. 17215, 5168; Clarysse and van der Veken 1983: 6, no. 28.

43 Epikrates of Larisa was victorious in the *díaulos* (*I.Oropos* 520, l. 13f. [Mannheim 398]), while Melanippos of Pharsalos won the *péntathlon I.Oropos* 520, l. 27f. (Mannheim 672). Father's names are not part of the commemorative format. Neither individual is otherwise known: see *LGPN* IIIB s.v. Ἐπικράτης 41; Μελάνιππος 7.

44 […]mos, son of Hippokrates, was victorious in the *kélēs* (*pōlikós*) at the Basileia at Lebadeia in the early second century (Mannheim 1145); the regional ethnic Thessalos is preserved, but the city ethnic unfortunately is not (*SEG* 3.367). The stone has been plausibly down-dated to the middle of the first century (Knoepfler 2008: 1454). *IG* IX² 614a also records a victory won most probably by a Larisan at the Basileia. Sostratos, son of Dorotheos, from Demetrias was victorious in boxing at a Boiotian festival ca. 60–50 (*IG* VII 1765, l. 32f. [Mannheim 973]); for the date and identity of the festival (often associated with the Erotidea at Thespiai on insecure grounds), see Knoepfler 1997: 34–37 (*SEG* 47.518); he is otherwise unknown (*LGPN* IIIB s.v. Σώστρατος 65). As a citizen of Demetrias, Sostratos was of course a resident of Thessaly in the broad, geographic sense of the word, although Demetrias was not part of the Thessalian League at this date, but functioned as the head of the neighboring Magnesian League (see, e.g., Boehm 2018: 206–208).

45 *I.Oropos* 522: Thessalian victorious in men's *stádion* – name, father's name, and city of origin not preserved (l. 1–2 [Mannheim 1347]); Thessalian from Larisa, son of Demet]rios (?), victorious in men's *díaulos* – name not preserved (l. 5–6 [Mannheim 1347]); Thessalian from Larisa, son of Demetrios, victorious in men's *híppios* – name not preserved (l. 9–10 [Mannheim 1347]). These three partial names are not implausibly regarded as referring to the same individual. A fourth Thessalian victory is recorded in the same victor list: Andronikos son of Sotylos, city of origin not preserved, was victorious in men's boxing (l. 27–8; Mannheim 67). Andronikos is otherwise unknown (*LGPN* IIIB s.v. Ἀνδρόνικος 56).

46 *I.Oropos* 528: Maurinas, son of Polemokrates, a Thessalian from Larisa, was victorious in boy's *péntathlon* (l. 47f. [Mannheim 667]). Maurinas is otherwise unknown (*LGPN* IIIB s.v. Μαυρίνας 1); the name is rare in the region, attested only here.

47 *I.Oropos* 529: Hybristas, son of Chanas, a Thessalian from Pelinna, was victorious in the *kélēs pōlikós* (l. 16 [Mannheim 543]); Mnasimacha, daughter of Phoxinos, a Thessalian from Krannon, in *hárma pōlikon* (l. 18 [Mannheim 718]); Polyxenos, son of Antigonos, a Thessalian from Krannon, in *arma tele* (l. 19 [Mannheim 892]); and Philokrates, son of Antigonos, a Thessalian from Larisa, in *kélēs téleios* (l. 20 [Mannheim 849]). Hybristas, Mnasimacha, and Polyxenos are otherwise unknown (*LGPN* IIIB s.v. Ὑβρίστας 3; Μνασιμάχα 4; Πολύξενος 84). For Philokrates, see above.

While discussion in the preceding has largely focused on evidence from outside of the region of Thessaly, I mention briefly a curious commemorative monument from Larisa that celebrates a series of victories won by an individual at Nemea, Delos, Tegea, Larisa, and Lebadeia (Basileia) (*IG* IX² 614ab); two victories were in the adolescent age-class, three in the men's – the specific competition (or competitions) has unfortunately not been preserved. Given the findspot, it is likely that the monument commemorated a Thessalian, probably from Larisa. The side of the base contains a second inscription, added later presumably, which commemorates victories in the boy's *stádion* and *díaulos* in the Po[seidon]ia (?) of the Thessalians and additional victories in men's *stádion* and *apobatikós* at the Kaisareia. Neither festival is otherwise attested in Larisa.

The application of network theory to Hellenistic festivals has opened up the potential for individual competitors to serve in effect as mobile nodes of contact and communication. These were not simply participants in so many athletic or cultural contests, but deeply implicated as agents in wider networks of social and political significance. Connections developed in such settings could have immediate impact beyond signifying membership in "an imagined community of Greek cities."[48] We have seen Thessalian victors in the Eleutheria play prominent political roles in the Thessalian koinon and locally within their home poleis, but consider now, for example, a recently published decree from the city of Larisa dating ca. 70. Although fragmentary, enough is preserved to indicate that a Philokrates, son of Antigonos, from Larisa, who has been identified with a victor in two-foal chariot races in both the Eleutheria at Larisa and the Amphiaraia at Oropos, made a specific demand before the Larisan assembly that citizenship be granted to Zobios, son of Zobios, from Chalkis, and his son Dionysos.[49] While it is now clear that Oropos is not to be read in the document[50] – the initial reading in the *editio princeps*, particularly tantalizing given that Chalkis, Oropos, and Larisa each hosted prominent festivals and Philokrates had been victorious at two of them – it remains an intriguing possibility that Philokrates' success at Oropos conferred status sufficient to petition in support of Zobios, who hailed from nearby Chalkis. The document may touch on another prominent theme in this chapter, Larisa qua polis and qua capital of Thessalian League, for Zobios had previously been awarded proxeny by the Thessalian League, which status is mentioned prominently in the document.

48 Van Nijf and Williamson 2016: 57.
49 Tziafalias and Helly 2004: 407–417 (*SEG* 55.608; *BE* 2007, nos. 322, 332).
50 *BE* 2008, no. 316.

Facilities and spectators

The question of facilities and spectators is tightly bound with the broader question of festival program discussed above. Three main types of facility can be distinguished: first, and most significant, are the sanctuary and related cult buildings dedicated to the divinity in whose honor the festival is held; second are competition venues – theaters, stadia, and the like – where contestants vied with one another for prizes and fame; and, finally, other supporting infrastructure for both contestants and spectators which may include stoas, inns, and gymnasia. It is important to note at the outset that many of these categories of architecture could and did support other types of activity.[51] This is even true for stadia and hippodromes, which, while appearing as perhaps the most specialized in function, could be used for other purposes.

A second general consideration concerns the broader topography of the festival. Comparison with "the big four," each of which was conducted in relatively close confines within or adjacent to the sanctuary of the honored divinity (with the exception of the hippodrome, which seems to have posed problems of siting in virtually every location), offers a pointed contrast with festivals conducted in more urban settings, where it is the polis, understood in this instance as an urban area, that provides the essential spatial framework. It is likely that contestants and spectators alike at the Eleutheria would have moved in and through different areas of Larisa.

Finally, a central tension in the ideological construction of the Eleutheria concerns the relationship of polis and koinon, of the Thessalian League and its capital city, Larisa. Such tension was imprinted upon the topography of Larisa, as some polis-centered or – specific venues were re-appropriated for use in this festival for the koinon, while other locations, more central to the life of the koinon, received greater attention than usual; this condition was doubtless hastened by the emergence of the Stena as a second major agonistic festival celebrated in Hellenistic Larisa, which shared contests and doubtless competition venues with the Eleutheria while reversing the benefactor/beneficiary relationship of Rome and Thessaly commemorated therein. Conditions in Larisa were particularly dynamic. The restrictive franchise imposed by Flamininus doubtless created both winners and losers at the local level and Philip V had enjoyed considerable support in the region; he and Perseus are mentioned as contributing to the renovation of a gymnasium in Larisa soon after the Second Macedonian War.[52] The Stena, too, may have provided a vehicle for

51 Cf. Scott 2014: 305 (and *passim*), on the "indeterminacy" of athletic spaces and structures in the Archaic and Classical periods. While festival facilities tended to acquire more fixed architectural form in the Hellenistic period, such buildings are often documented as being used for a wider range of activities.
52 Habicht 2006.

additional contestation a generation later. And one wonders how the recent past would have been described by Bombos, from Alexandria Troas, who was honored by Larisa for his presentations in the city's gymnasium.[53] While we do not know how such tension would have been negotiated, we can confidently surmise that there would have been rather more at stake for participants, spectators, and their hosts than simple movement from lodging to cult and competition locations.

It is appropriate to consider first the sanctuary of Zeus Eleutherios, which is likely to have been a prominent, perhaps terminal, location on the processional route of the festival and site of sacrifice, prayer, feasting, and hymning in honor of the god. It is plausible to imagine *témenos* wall, altar, temple, and cult image at a minimum, perhaps supported by ancillary buildings (e.g., stoas, dining rooms) and display areas for dedications and decrees. A. Tziafalias has tentatively associated with the sanctuary architectural remains in the Doric order exposed by rescue excavations in the city.[54] A section of road bed covered with marble paving slabs has recently been excavated between this proposed sanctuary area and the 1st theatre of Larisa. One may imagine urban processions associated with the festival traversing such a road.[55]

Melic and dramatic contests were likely held in the so-called first theatre of Larisa, which has been excavated and painstakingly restored.[56] While a final excavation report is eagerly awaited, reports and in-progress studies offer some basic interpretive guidelines. The theatre seems to have been constructed during the third century and would presumably have served as a venue for musical and theatrical performances, in addition to other civic functions. It was probably this facility that hosted individual contests of that nature during the Eleutheria, at least until the first century, when Larisa was equipped with a second, smaller theatre nearby – the so-called "second theatre".[57] Other prominent cities in the Greek world were similarly equipped with two theaters (e.g., Argos, Epidaurus, etc.), although the motivation in Larisa remains uncertain;[58] it is plausible that the second theatre also served as a competition venue during the Eleutheria.

53 Helly 2006.

54 Tziafalias 1994: 170–172. It is significant that the sanctuary was not located on Larisa's acropolis, which seems to have still been commanded by Athens Polias.

55 Tziafalias and Karagkounis 2017: 8.

56 The theatre is mentioned in a third- or second-century inscription, *IG* IX² 522 (*SEG* 13.391; *BE* 1953, no. 99).

57 For recent discussion of the architectural history and potential uses of the second theatre, see Tziafalias and Darmezin 2015, with reference to earlier scholarship.

58 Tziafalias and Karagkounis 2017: 4 suggest that the first theatre had at that time been converted to an arena for the performance of gladiatorial style contests. Such transitions are well attested in the Aegean world, of course, but at a somewhat later date in the first and second centuries AD; see, e.g., Welch 1998: 122.

Gymnic and equestrian competitions would presumably have been held in a stadium and hippodrome respectively. A stadium has yet to be physically located in Larisa.[59] Two Roman-era epitaphs from Larisa do refer to gladiatorial combat ἐν σταδίοις, however, and it seems certain that the city would have possessed some such formal venue.[60] An ancient hippodrome has also yet to be identified in Larisa.[61] A Roman period epitaph for a Larisan who had been victorious at the Olympia and in the Hadriania mentions that the deceased was buried near the city's hippodrome, where he had previously been active.[62] The proximity of a burial to this monument may indicate that the hippodrome was located outside the walls of the ancient city; T. Axenidis has attractively speculated that the location of the ancient hippodrome may be sought in the vicinity of the Ottoman hippodrome.[63]

Beyond cult and competition locations at the Eleutheria, other facilities are likely to have been utilized in support of the festival. Larisa had an active gymnasium culture, well-attested beginning in the third century and continuing into the Roman era.[64] At least two gymnasia are known in the city in the Hellenistic period, either (or both) of which could have been used by local or visiting athletes in preparation for the Eleutheria.[65] A palaistra is attested in Larisa on the acropolis of the city in the third century and may have been similarly utilized.[66]

Who attended the festival? We have treated in some measure earlier in this chapter two principal categories of participant, namely, the festival organizers and contestants. A third

59 Scott 2014: 295–296, elaborating on the tentative and early interpretation of Gallis 1988: 231, writes: "…no stadium has been found in the city of Larisa, home to the Eleutheria festival; there was instead an open-air, horseshoe shaped structure…" That structure is now known to have been the lowest several rows of seats in the cavea of the second theatre.

60 *IG* IX² 644; *SEG* 32.605; cf. Welch 1998: 127–128: the expression was standard in the genre and is thought to reflect the performance of some gladiatorial combat in stadia. The matter is complicated for Larisa since the first theatre seems to have been converted at an early date, already in the first century.

61 See Scott 2014: 296, who notes that the number of physical hippodromes that have been identified and studied from the ancient Mediterranean is actually quite small and hypothesizes that such facilities often lacked formal architecture and took advantage of existing features of the landscape (e.g., Olympia). Cf. Mann and Scharff 2020 (= Mann and Scharff 2022). For the comparatively well-understood hippodrome associated with the Arcadian Lykaia, see Romano 2019.

62 *IG* IX² 645. While the text of the epitaph most probably suggests the deceased had indeed won victories in the Larisan hippodrome, festivals otherwise unattested or poorly attested in the region – the Hadriania and the Olympia – are singled out for specific reference with inscribed crowns in the field beneath the epigram. It remains possible that festivals so–named were celebrated in Larisa in this period. Axenidis attractively suggests that these two festivals are to be associated with Athens and the creation of the Panhellenion under Hadrian's patronage (Axenidis 1947: 37). Cf. De Sanctis 1898: 49–50, no. 62.

63 Axenidis 1947: 26. See now Helly 2019.

64 For full discussion of the gymnasiarchy at Larisa, including citation of the principal ancient sources, see Helly 2006: 183–190.

65 Helly 2006: 190.

66 Helly 1970: 281, 295.

group, essential to the conduct of ancient Greek sport, must also be mentioned: spectators. These may be subdivided into two basic groups. First, non-Thessalian spectators, who likely were political elites representing their home poleis or koina as diplomats and *theōroi*. Second, we must imagine the presence of Thessalian spectators, some elites in an official capacity, others, including elites and non-elites, who were there for the show and, often enough, to service the crowd itself.[67]

Agṓn and polis

Among other festivals sponsored by the Thessalian League in the post-196 era, only the Itonia in honor of Athena Itonia can be considered a peer of the Eleutheria, but it apparently lacked an agonistic program.[68] While the city of Larisa qua polis was more significant to the conduct of the games spatially and symbolically than administratively, it is well known that additional festivals with agonistic components took place in Larisa that were directly administered by the city, the most significant of which where the Stena.[69]

The evidence at hand for the Eleutheria provides no guidance as to how or to what extent the contests could be described using any of the evaluative terms characteristic of the Hellenistic era (and beyond), viz., thematic, stephanitic, sacred, isolympian, isopythian, etc. And, indeed, as much of the wider debate about the significance of these statuses hinges on the type of award given to victors by the organizing authority of the festival and on how that victor was recognized by his home polis,[70] it is important to point out that we have no clear response to either question in the case of the Eleutheria. Some hint may be offered by a commemorative epigram from Larisa (*IG* IX² 614a), where a Larisan is described as having fit five crowns about his temples: one each from Nemea, the Delia at Delos, the Alea at Tegea, the Thessalian Eleutheria, and the Basileia at Lebadeia. But one cannot be sure if the "crowns" of the inscription are meant to indicate simply victory in a generic, poetic manner or if in fact they communicate something significant about the high status of the festivals in which the honorand competed and won, which could in turn impact the victor's status in Larisa.[71] A similar problem is posed by other commemorative monuments in which a victory at the

67 See, e.g., Mann 2014: 279, 282–284, with reference to additional scholarship.
68 For the federal Itonia at Philia, see Graninger 2011: 58–67.
69 See the section on "Continuity and Change" above.
70 For recent discussions of the status quaestionis, see, e.g., Remijsen 2011 and Slater 2012, with copious reference to earlier scholarship.
71 For the status of stephanitic victors in their home poleis, see Slater 2012: 170–173.

Eleutheria is signified visually by the presence of an enclosing crown around the contest and festival name.[72]

Conclusion

The Thessalian Eleutheria offers a stimulating case study of the dynamic, complex relationship between cultural contest and sociopolitical context in an era of momentous change in the northern Greek world in the later Hellenistic period. One glimpses here in the conduct of a single festival program a venue for: the relation and interplay of supra-regional, indeed global, states; the expression of tensions between regional, Thessalian and local, Larisan conceptions of past and present; and the ever-present churn of individuals competing for glory and, often enough, to perform their political power.

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72 E.g., *IG* VII 48 (Megara), where not all victories so designated are attested as stephanitic.

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