

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

In his 1936 entry “Thessalia (Geschichte)” in Pauly-Wissowa, Hiller von Gaertringen commented on the subject of Thessalian religion: “Eine klare, die Tatsachen gebende Sammlung der Kulte fehlt noch.”<sup>1</sup> Some 70 years after Hiller’s statement, a basic foundation for the study of Thessalian religion is still wanting.

#### *Thessalian Studies: Retrospect*

Two works are responsible for the birth of Thessalian studies: O. Kern’s 1908 Inscriptiones Thessaliae (= IG ix.2) and F. Stählin’s 1924 Das hellenische Thessalien. Kern’s corpus, which continues to furnish the epigraphic basis for all research on the region, made a systematic analysis of Thessalian social and political institutions possible. Stählin, a practitioner of the traditional art of historical geography, put Thessalian topography on a firm basis. Although not all of his identifications have been adopted in recent scholarship, his work has been the source of much productive disagreement.

The Maison de l’Orient in Lyon has been associated with Thessalian studies for 30 years. Their numerous publications have helped to clarify many of the topographical problems in Stählin and have, in general, greatly augmented our knowledge of Thessalian society, e.g., the army, cadastration, *penestai*, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Religion, with a few notable exceptions, has received much less attention on the whole. The witches of Thessaly continue to be popular, but scholars have tended to focus on their literary manifestations: Their imprint on the material record is

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<sup>1</sup> RE vi A, 1 s.v. Thessalia (Geschichte) col. 137.

<sup>2</sup> The works of Helly and Decourt are especially prominent.

insubstantial.<sup>3</sup> Daffa-Nikonanou has written a monograph on prominent Demeter cults in Thessaly, with special emphasis on votives.<sup>4</sup> Chrysostomou is author of a pair of important articles on Thessalian and Macedonian cults of Zeus and a major monograph on Ennodia.<sup>5</sup> In an influential but methodologically difficult monograph on Macedonian rites of initiation, Hatzopoulos has discussed the important Thessalian cult of Artemis Throsia.<sup>6</sup>

There have been sporadic attempts at recovering a regional perspective on Thessalian religion. P. Philippson ambitiously and problematically attempted to sketch the initial fusion of Indo-European and indigenous, Aegean religious elements, which she argued took place first in Thessaly, and their subsequent development throughout the Bronze Age into a coherent religious system: She suggested that traces of this system are visible in the myths and cults of Thessaly of the historic period.<sup>7</sup>

Tziaphalias and Rakatsanis have assembled all of the evidence for cult from the tetrad of Pelasgiotis.<sup>8</sup> Finally, Morgan has suggestively sketched some broad trends of prominent Thessalian cults in the Protogeometric to Archaic Age.<sup>9</sup>

### *The Regional History of Religion*

The present dissertation is a preliminary attempt to write a history of Thessalian religion. Studies of this genre have a rich ancient and modern pedigree.<sup>10</sup> It

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<sup>3</sup> Most recently, Phillips 2002; Cazeaux 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Daffa-Nikonanou 1973.

<sup>5</sup> Chrysostomou 1989-1991; Chrysostomou 1993-4; Chrysostomou 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Hatzopoulos 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Philippson 1944. Prominent reviews, all critical: Nilsson 1949; Edelstein 1953; Rose 1944; Fontenrose 1948. The idea of historical Thessaly as a primitive, never-never-land has been surprisingly slow to die.

<sup>8</sup> Rakatsanis and Tziaphalias 1997. This work is characterized by a number of hasty interpretations and ultimately fails to deliver the regional perspective implied by its title.

<sup>9</sup> Morgan 2003.

<sup>10</sup> For ancient regional histories, cf. the fragments collected in Tresp 1914. Contained therein are the remains of, e.g., Theognis' and Gorgon's "On the sacrifices at Rhodes," Ister's "Collection of Cretan Sacrifices," Sosibios "On the sacrifices in Lakedaimon." For modern regional studies, cf. the bibliography after Graf's introduction to Nilsson 1995.

is nevertheless worth considering the question anew: Why write a regional history of religion? Among histories of religion which have a geographic orientation,<sup>11</sup> the regional history occupies an intermediate contextual ground between the grand, panhellenic survey and the narrower study of the cults of an individual polis or archaeological site. In the latter case, it cannot be emphasized enough that very few sites in the Greek world furnish enough source-material to make such a study possible: The confluence of large-scale, well-published excavation with an extensive epigraphic corpus and ample references in literary sources is rare.

By adopting a broader frame of geographic reference, though, one can begin to use important pieces of evidence that could otherwise be left in terminal isolation. So, in the case of Thessaly, the cult of Dionysus Karpios is attested in five inscriptions, summarized below in Table 1:

Table 1  
Dionysus Karpios in Thessalian Inscriptions

<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1. Larisa (Pelasgiotis)	450- 425a	Dedication  (Dedicator Unknown)	SEG 35.590a = Kontogiannis 1985; Ed. pr. Theocharis 1960: 185 = McD 355

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<sup>11</sup> As opposed to, for example, studies of individual cult figures, e.g., Herakles, Artemis, or types of religious practice, e.g., sacrifice, libation, supplication.

Table 1 (Continued)

2. Larisa (Pelasgiotis)	Ia	List of priestesses of Demeter Phylake who officiated at the <i>πετροετειρίς</i> for Dionysus Karpios	SEG 17.288 = Ed. pr. Oikonomides and Koumanoudes 1956-7: 17-22, no. 1
3. Larisa (Pelasgiotis)	?	Ibid.	Arvanitopoulos 1911: 123, no. 26
4. Mikro Kaserli (?) (Pelasgiotis)	Ia	Group Dedication ( <i>phrouroi</i> )	SEG 23.445 = McD 653 = Ed. pr. Mastrokostas 1964: 318-9, n. 2
5. Gomphi (Hestiaiotis)	aet. Aug.	Manumission dated by league strategos and priest of Dionysus Karpios	IG ix.2 287b

In a history of the cults of Larisa, primary focus would fall on inscriptions 1-3. With a regional frame of reference, however, it is possible to incorporate the inscriptions from Gomphi and Mikro Kaserli, two minor sites that are not particularly well explored or published, two places that have produced tiny epigraphic corpora. These texts make a substantial contribution to our understanding of the cult. Both texts are late Hellenistic or early Roman in date and seem to mirror the increased activity of the cult that we see in Larisa in this time frame. The dedication by *phrouroi* in the Mikro Kaserli text, perhaps the Thessalian equivalent of an ephebic class, broadens our understanding of the kind of individuals or collectives that honored this divinity. That the priest of Dionysus Karpios was an eponymous official in Hestiaotid Gomphi implies a cult of

some stature in that community. So, in the case of Dionysus Karpios at least, a regional frame of reference pays dividends.

On the other side is the grand panhellenic survey, where the often unmanageable geographic frame of reference can lead to conclusions about Greek religion that often have little relevance to a particular locality. Here the regional history of religion can offer a productive check. For example, a common, perhaps dominant, narrative of Hellenistic religion states that traditional cults of the Greek poleis went into decline, receding before the rising popularity of “oriental” cults and an increasing focus on the personal experience of divinity. Two recent regional histories have demonstrated that part of this narrative is simply false. Fritz Graf, in his study of northern Ionian cults, revealed that priesthoods of traditional polis deities were maintained throughout the Hellenistic period.<sup>12</sup> Jon Mikalson has recently demonstrated that this was also the case in Athens and Attica.<sup>13</sup> If we must admit the fallibility of the traditional narrative in these two cases, then one becomes suspicious about where in fact this narrative does apply.

The bar for non-Attic, regional histories of religion has been set very high. I signal here the recent contributions of Graf on northern Ionia, Schachter on Boiotia and Jost on Arcadia.<sup>14</sup> While the present dissertation aspires to be a foundation for a work that will eventually be placed alongside them, one crucial feature sets it apart: Jost, Schachter and Graf treat every cult attested in their chosen geographical region. As a region, however, Thessaly is simply too vast and the cults attested therein too numerous and problematic to find adequate coverage between the covers of a dissertation.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Graf 1985: *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> Mikalson 1998: 318ff.

<sup>14</sup> Graf 1985; Schachter 1981-; Jost 1985.

<sup>15</sup> Schachter’s history began as a DPhil thesis (Schachter 1981-: 1.ix).

I have therefore been forced to make a selection realized at two different levels. From the perspective of geography, I have restricted myself to so-called tetradic Thessaly, i.e., the plains which dominate the region, as opposed to greater Thessaly, i.e., the tetrads together with their mountainous, perioikic hinterland.<sup>16</sup> While the political distinction between perioikic and tetradic Thessaly, largely a feature of the Archaic and Classical period, breaks down in the Hellenistic and Roman period, with the conspicuous exception of Magnesia, this dissertation will maintain this distinction in all chronological periods.

I have also limited the types of cult which are to be considered. The logic of this selection is best explained through a brief thought project. Let us imagine the totality of Greek cults as lying on a spectrum. At one end lie those cults which are panhellenic, i.e., they are observed throughout the Greek world. At the other end lie those cults which are exclusively local, i.e., they are observed in only one locality in the Greek world. In between there are a vast number of cults with divergent patterns of geographic distribution. Let us now extract all of the cults of Thessaly from this spectrum. Some of these cults will have belonged to the panhellenic end of the spectrum, others to the local end of the spectrum.<sup>17</sup> This dissertation aims to throw the schematic middle ground into very high relief, viz., those cults which are attested in more than one location in Thessaly but do not approach panhellenic distribution. I term these the “regional cults” of Thessaly.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter 2 will discuss this distinction in some detail.

<sup>17</sup> In Appendix 1, “An Epigraphic Inventory of the Cults of Tetradic Thessaly,” I offer an outline of what such a spectrum might look like in the case of tetradic Thessaly on the basis of epigraphic evidence.

<sup>18</sup> While it is a very small step to move from territory to society, to call these the “cults of the Thessalian *ethnos*” rather than the “regional cults of Thessaly,” it is a step that I am unwilling to take at this juncture. The Greek *ethnos* is gradually attracting more scholarly attention, but it remains rather poorly understood.

Cults of this sort fall into three basic groups, each of which I treat in a separate chapter: 1) Cults known from the Thessalian calendar, the regional status of which is implied by the use of a common calendar throughout Thessaly from at least the Hellenistic period, but perhaps earlier; 2) Federal cults, i.e., cults which receive some form of federal investment, often at a central sanctuary. While these cults may not meet the admittedly very minimal criteria for regional status, their connection with a political collectivity which had a regional orientation—the Thessalian League—merits their inclusion in this dissertation; 3) Other regional cults, i.e., those cults which are attested in more than one location in Thessaly but which lack panhellenic distribution.

### *Categories of Evidence*

The basic categories of evidence available for a study of Thessalian religion are largely the same as those available for other regions of the ancient Mediterranean world. Within each region, however, the character of each category of evidence and its ratio, with respect to both quality and quantity, to the other categories is distinctive. For example, regional histories of Arcadian and Boiotian religion must confront the testimony of Pausanias on practically every page. Detailed awareness of the history of Athens and Attica allows one to view religion in its social and political context to a degree unthinkable elsewhere. The dominant body of evidence in the case of Thessaly is, as we will see, epigraphic.

The literary sources available for the history of Thessalian religion are not appreciably different from those available for other regions, with one major exception: Pausanias is absent. The degree to which this will affect the contour of the present study cannot be overemphasized. There will be little, e.g., in the way of ritual detail or description of cult images. But this absence is as much an opportunity as a liability, for

the periegete's testimony too often exercises undue influence on the interpretation of religious phenomena.

Coinage provides some of the most tantalizing, if intractable, evidence for the history of religion. The methodological problems posed by coins as a class of evidence are severe, for the presence of types on coinage served one fundamental purpose: "the type identified the issuing authority, and so not only made the coin acceptable to those who trusted or were subject to that authority, but also guaranteed its acceptance back by that authority if tendered to it in future payments."<sup>19</sup> There is no evidence that types were selected by vote or popularity. When cult imagery appears, it reflects the perspective of the minting authority alone.

Nevertheless, the correspondence between numismatic type and literary or epigraphic description is occasionally so precise that one is tempted to use the two bodies of evidence to illuminate one another. In the case of Thessalian coinage, in addition to the standard numismatic corpora, the work of Moustaka has been especially helpful.<sup>20</sup> In general, though, numismatics will play a subordinate role in this study and will primarily be used to supplement the image developed from other, chiefly epigraphic, sources.

When compared with the archaeology of the rest of the Greek world, Thessaly is notable for the extensive excavation and publication of Neolithic and Early Christian material. Between these two periods, however, the quantity of excavation and publication drops off considerably. I have made extensive use of a number of syntheses and gazetteers of work accomplished to date, especially the publications of Gallis,<sup>21</sup> Leekley and Efstratiou,<sup>22</sup> as well as the annual Archaeological Reports.

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<sup>19</sup> Kraay 1976: 2.

<sup>20</sup> Moustaka 1983.

<sup>21</sup> Gallis 1975a.

<sup>22</sup> Leekley and Efstratiou 1980.

Large scale excavation and publication of Thessalian sites of the Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods is largely limited to Pherai and the sanctuary of Athena Itonia near Philia. Perioikic Thessaly has been more fortunate in this regard, where the sites of Demetrias, Goritsa, Gonnoi and Halos have all received definitive publication.

The research presented in this dissertation draws most heavily on inscriptions. The number of Thessalian inscriptions has nearly tripled since Kern's publication of IG ix.2. My familiarity with the post-IG body of evidence depends primarily on the Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (Leiden: 1923-71, 1976-present) and the indispensable Inscriptions from Thessaly: An Analytical Handlist and Bibliography of A. S. McDevitt (Hildesheim: 1970) (= McD). I have also made extensive use of the Bulletin Epigraphique and the Epigraphical Bulletin of Greek Religion. I have made every attempt to be comprehensive, but some texts, through no fault other than my own, have doubtless escaped me.

### *Outline of the Project*

The program of this dissertation has been heavily influenced by Graf's Nordionische Kulte. Following this introduction, chapter 2, "An Outline of Thessalian History," attempts to provide a useful frame of reference for the findings presented later in the dissertation. This chapter draws heavily on both literary and material evidence in sketching the major currents in the social and political history of Thessaly from the Iron Age to the Empire, with special emphasis on the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.

Chapters 3-5 are the heart of the dissertation and offer the most substantial and original scholarly contributions of the project. Chapter 3, "The Thessalian Calendar," begins with an illustration of the relationship between cult and calendar in the ancient Greek world in the specific case of Athens. I then focus more narrowly on the calendar

of the Thessalian *koinon* and its potential contributions to the history of Thessalian religion.

Chapter 4, “Federal Sanctuaries,” begins with some general reflections on the concept of a “federal sanctuary.” I then present and discuss the evidence for the two certain federal sanctuaries of Thessaly, Athena Itonia at Philia and Zeus Eleutherios at Larisa, and examine the possibility that the sanctuary of Athena Itonia at Iton was also federal.

Chapter 5, “Regional Cults,” proposes two criteria for the classification of a cult as a regional cult. The chapter then considers the eight prominent Thessalian cults which meet these criteria: Apollo Kerdoios, Artemis Throsia, Dionysus Karpios, Ennodia, Poseidon Petraios, Themis, Zeus Homoloios, Zeus Thaulios.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion,” offers some general observations about the findings of this dissertation and sketches some further lines of inquiry.

Appendix 1, “An Epigraphic Inventory of the Cults of Tetradic Thessaly,” offers a sense of the full range of cults—local, regional, panhellenic—attested in the inscriptions of tetradic Thessaly.