DEDICATION BY THE
THESALIAN LEAGUE
TO THE GREAT GODS
IN SAMOTHRACE

ABSTRACT

The document published in this article was found in 1986 during excavations in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace. The inscription represents a dedication by the Thessalian League to the Great Gods. It provides important information about the Thessalian League in the 2nd century B.C., one of the most active periods in the League's history, and contributes to our knowledge of places in mainland Greece that sent theoreoi to Samothrace.

The new inscription presented here was recovered in excavations undertaken by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University in the Sanctuary of the Great Gods at Samothrace.1 The document informs us that the Thessalian League sent sacred ambassadors to Samothrace between 170 and 140 B.C. It also allows us to identify the leader of the delegation, Damothinos, son of Leontomenes and a member of a prominent Pheraian family, as the strategos of the League in 161/60. Moreover, the document nicely supplements current evidence about the League's history during one of the most active periods of its existence, following liberation from Macedonian rule.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Samoctrace inv. 01.2

H. 0.804, W. 0.47, Th. 0.20, H. of letters: 0.010–0.025 m

Block of coarse-grained white marble, broken below, smooth on the left, rough-picked in back, moderately rough-picked above, built into a wall of a Byzantine structure in the northwest corner of the Neorion. Two dowel holes with pour channels are visible on top, placed in opposite corners. One hole is situated 0.055 m from the left edge and 0.04 m from the front. The second occurs in a similar position in the right rear corner, with some lead preserved in it. The position of the dowel holes suggests that a rectangular object, possibly a relief, covered the top of the base. There is a small, shallow rectangular cutting (ca. 0.05 m wide) approximately midway down the left side, 0.045 m from the front edge.
Figure 1. Block with inscribed dedication by the Thessalian League to the Great Gods in Samothrace. Photo N. Dimitrova

Discussion: McCredie 1990, p. 184 (brief mention); Pounder 1987 (abstract).

170–140 B.C.

tò koinòn ßesalòn
 theòs megálous
 étì ðeòròn

vacat ca. 0.02 m

Δαμοθόνου τοῦ Λεοντομένου

5 Φιλονίκου τοῦ Φιλίππου
 Φεραίων
 Παμφίλου τοῦ Βαθυκλείους
 Λυχίσκου τοῦ Βαθυκλείους
 Λαρισαίων

vacat ca. 0.02 m

10 étì basileías
 Νυμφοδώρου τοῦ Θεώνδου.
EPIGRAPHICAL COMMENTARY

The letters are clear, carefully executed in comparison with most other Samothracian inscriptions, and adorned with finials. The omicron and theta are usually smaller (0.010–0.012 m) than the other letters. The lettering resembles that of three Samothracian records of theoroi-proxenoi and a new theoroi list mentioned by Chryssa Karadima. It is consistent with lettering in 2nd-century inscriptions, notably a Samothracian list of theoroi-proxenoi and a municipal document of Skotoussa, dated by the eponyms of the Thessalian League to 161/60 B.C.

GENERAL COMMENTARY

This document is a dedication by the Thessalian Confederacy to the Great Gods in Samothrace. The Thessalian delegation consists of two citizens from Pherai and two from Larisa. It is headed by the Pheraian Damothoinos, son of Leontomenes, without doubt none other than the strategos of the Thessalian League in 161/60. The other three theoroi seem to be unknown, although (with the exception of Bathykles) their names are attested in Thessaly.

The expression ἡπὶ θεωρῶν in line 3 should be understood as “represented by the theoroi” or something similar. A parallel for such usage can be found in Delian inventory lists, e.g., IG XI.2 184, 186, 188, 190, and many others, where a gift by a certain delegation, whose leader is mentioned by name, is referred to as “ἀνάθημα ἡπὶ ἄρχεωρου so-and-so.”

Damothoinos, son of Leontomenes (line 4), is known from other inscriptions, where he is mentioned as strategos of the League. He was part of a famous Pheraian family, whose members, attested from the 3rd century B.C. until the 1st century A.C., performed important public duties. Both his great-grandfather Epikratidas and his grandfather Damothoinos II were gymnasiarchs at Pherai, ca. 241 and 216 B.C., respectively. His father Leontomenes, son of Damothoinos, was strategos of the Thessalian League in 186/5, as IG IX.2 64, 67, and 274 testify. In the next year, 185/4, Leontomenes’ brother (and Damothoinos’s uncle) Pausanias held...
that same office. Damothoinos's grandson, Leontomenes, son of Megalo-
kles, was also strategos, ca. 100–90.10

A date before 170 B.C. for the present inscription is unlikely: Damo-
thoinos, son of Leontomenes, would probably have been too young to
head the embassy. As just noted, his father, Leontomenes, son of Damo-
thoinos, was strategos in 186/5, which suggests that he was probably be-
tween 40 and 55 years old at the time. His son was then probably born
between ca. 205 and 190, and in 170 would have been between 20 and 35
years old, not a very plausible (though theoretically possible) age to hold
such an important public office as the head of an embassy.

The eponymous king Nymphodoros, son of Theondas (lines 10–11),
is otherwise unattested. The rare name Theondas, however, occurs else-
where in connection with Samothrace: a Hadra vase from Egypt mentions
a Samothracian ambassador to Alexandria named Theondas, who died in
219 B.C.11 According to Livy, a Theondas was an eponymous king of
Samothrace in 168 B.C.12 The name is also attested on coins, dating per-
haps from the same year, 168.13 The eponymous king recorded in the present
dedication would have been too old between 170 and 140 B.C. (the sug-
gested date of the document, see below) to have been the son of the am-
bassador Theondas. He would have been at least 55–85 years old at
that time, if we assume that his father had died as early as age 40, which
is possible, but unlikely. He might have been the son of the other Theondas,
who was king in 168. This would mean that if the inscription is to be
dated ca. 160 B.C., the time of Damothoinos's service as strategos, Nym-
phodoros must have served as eponymous king at a relatively early age
(ca. 40), while his father served at a relatively late age (ca. 60), which
is theoretically possible.

A date around 150–140 B.C. for the inscription would suit this scheme
a bit better, but of course one cannot be sure whether the two kings were
indeed father and son. It is also unclear whether the ambassador Theondas
was related to the eponymous king of 168, but the time interval is compat-
ible with the possibility that he was the latter's grandfather, thereby con-
forming to the Greek custom of naming the grandson after his grandfa-
th. In view of the name's rarity, the hypothesis that the eponymous king
of 168 was the grandson of the ambassador Theondas and the father of the
Nymphodoros in the present inscription is attractive.

Thus, a date between 170 and 140 can be safely suggested, in view of
Damothoinos's generalship, which is dated to 161/60, and of Nympho-
doros's possible relation to the eponymous king of 168.

Another question that the document poses is whether there was a
specific occasion for the dedication. Such an event might have been the
capture of Perseus by the Romans in August 168, followed by the libera-
tion of Samothrace from Macedonian rule. As mentioned above, Theondas
was the eponymous king of Samothrace in 168 B.C., at the time when Per-
seus was captured, while the eponymous magistrate of the present inscrip-
tion is Nymphodoros, son of Theondas. The inscription, therefore, cannot
be dated to a civil year that included August 168. If the Samothracian cal-
endar was similar to the Athenian, i.e., if the year began with the first new

10. Kramolisch (1978, p. 31) pro-
vides a useful stemma of Damothoi-
nos's family.
11. Sammelbuch 1, p. 1639.
12. Livy 45.5.6–12.
that the name Theondes/Theondas
appears on a posthumous Alexander
tetradrachm of the early or mid-2nd
century B.C. and on pseudo-Rhodian
coins, which he is inclined to date to
168 B.C. and thereby acknowledge their
Samothracian origin (we are grateful
to A. Bresson for this reference). For
Samothracian coins, see also Mün-
sterberg [1911–1927] 1973, p. 28;
IG XII.8, p. 41. The name Theondes
is also attested in a lead curse tablet
that Dusenbery considers Samothra-
cian (Samothrace 11.2, pp. 1165–1168).
moon after the summer solstice, the first half of 167 is also precluded. The Thasian year, on the other hand, possibly began with the winter solstice (as did the Parian one), as Jean Pouilloux observed. If Samothrace followed the example of Thasos (and if the Thasian year indeed began in the winter), then the inscription could be dated to 167, i.e., shortly after Perseus’s defeat. Too little is known, however, about the Samothracian calendar to provide a secure argument. Our only evidence is that Maimakterion, Mounychion, and possibly Poseideon were Samothracian months.

The Thessalian League may, however, have sent sacred ambassadors to Samothrace without their visit being tied to a specific event. There is no indication that any theoroi from other Greek states visited the island in connection with a particular event, such as an annual festival, for instance, despite the common assumption that theoroi were sent to attend such festivals. In fact, the documentary sources for the Samothracian festival are rather slim. One record of initiates, CIL III 720, line 4, mentions at least three consecutive days when people became mystae pii. Susan Cole cites this document as evidence for “the festival at Samothrace,” presumably because of the listing of consecutive days. This, however, cannot be taken as secure evidence for a festival. It is possible that the people enumerated in the document were initiated during a sequence of days unrelated to a festival. The document, in any case, is too fragmentary to yield any conclusions about either a festival or the possibility that initiation could be performed every day, if needed, which seems to be the alternative interpretation.

Some literary sources, on the other hand, suggest the existence of a festival. Plutarch (Luc. 13.2) writes that Bokonios was delayed ἐν Σαμοθράκη μονούμενος καὶ πανηγύριζον, implying that initiation was separate from the panegyris. A panegyris was a typical feature of a festival. Most of the initiation documents preserving the name of a month are dated in June, which prompted Cole to suggest that June may have been the month of the annual festival. Thus the existence of a festival, perhaps in June, is a reasonable hypothesis, but there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that theoroi visited Samothrace in order to attend that festival.

Parallels for theoroi who were sent not in connection with a festival can be found elsewhere in the Greek world. The Delian inventory catalogues, for instance, list gifts presented by various officials, among whom theoroi and architheoroi appear frequently, but these individuals were neither attending nor announcing a festival. The Pythais, which can be viewed as a kind of theoria, was specifically an Athenian institution, not connected with any Delphic festival. The only secure information that the Samothracian inscriptions provide is that the theoroi were respected delegates of their home cities, usually honored with proxenia, at least in the 2nd and possibly the 1st century B.C.; that they probably underwent initiation; and that some of them set up dedications to the Great Gods.

The document published here is not unique in mentioning theoroi setting up a dedication in Samothrace. A statue base and a round altar mention theoroi from Paros offering dedications to the Great Gods. The present inscription, however, adds to the geographical range of cities and

14. ÉtThas 3, p. 149; see also pp. 456–458. A recent discussion of the Thasian and Parian calendars has been provided in Trumpy 1997, pp. 65–72. We thank C. Habicht for this reference.

15. See Samuel 1972, p. 130. He lists two Samothracian months, Maimakterion (Samothrace 2.1, no. 5) and Poseideon (IG XII.8 169). Poseideon is not certainly attested: the remains on the stone are almost illegible, and the placing of the supposed month—following the ethnic Κοινωνία—is rather awkward, since one would expect an ambassador’s name at this position. Cole (1984, p. 40, with n. 333 on p. 119) observes that “neither Mounychion, nor Artemisios is listed by Samuel as a Samothracian month.” Mounychion appears in an initiate list, published by McCredie (1965, p. 115). It corresponds to Roman May. Artemisios is mentioned in another list of initiates (Robert 1936, pp. 52–53, a corrected version of IG XII.8 195), but as a Macedonian, not a Samothracian, month. Trumpy (1997, p. 118) lists only Maimakterion for Samothrace.


18. IG XI 161, 199, 287; IDelos 291, 298, 313, 1421, 1425, 1430, 1432, 1441, 1450, etc.; see also Bruneau 1970, pp. 94–100, 111–112.


institutions connected with Samothrace. Pherai and Larisa in Thessaly can now be included in the list of places known to have sent sacred ambassadors. The certain records of theoroi, i.e., those that explicitly contain the term theoroi, mention Keramos, Kyme, Ephesos, Halikarnassos, Kolophon, Priene, Samos, Klaizonenai, Alabanda, Astypalaia, Maroneia, Kaunos, Abdera, Kos, Rhodes, Iasos, Stratonikeia in Karia, Parion, Dardanos, Paros, Myrina (perhaps in Asia Minor), Teos, and Elis. Almost as certain, i.e., attested in presumed records of sacred ambassadors (which happen to be missing the opening formula containing the term theoroi), are Thasos, Phokaia, Aigai/Aigeai, Kyzikos, Chios, Eresos, Mylasa, Mytilene, Bargylia, Naxos, Nysa, and Tarentum. Thus it is evident that the best-represented regions in the Samothracian lists of theoroi are Asia Minor and the Aegean islands. Hitherto the only other place in mainland Greece that was attested to have sent theoroi (excluding Macedonia and Thrace, which were traditionally connected with Samothrace) was Elis, as a record of theoroi-initiates, IG XII.8 176, testifies.

The new information that Thessaly sent theoroi suggests that we re-examine the identity of the city of Larisa attested in Fraser's edition of Samothracian inscriptions (Samothrace 2.1, no. 23, line 3) as having sent theoroi. Although it is not certain that Thessalian Larisa is meant, this possibility is now well worth considering.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The document introduced here is also interesting from a historical perspective. The Thessalian League underwent various stages of development during its long existence. In order to situate the present document within its historical context, we will focus on the League's history in the first half of the 2nd century B.C. A brief overview of the major events should suffice.
After the Second Macedonian War (200–197 B.C.), the Thessalian Confederacy was liberated by the Romans. In 194 Flamininus reorganized its structure by establishing strategoi, who presided over the federal government as annual officers.25 A typical feature of the new constitution was the council, synedrion, which functioned as a representative government.26 The Greek face of the new organization reflected the Roman desire to demonstrate that the League was indeed set free from Macedonian supremacy. The territory of the refounded state did not include some of its northern areas, formerly inhabited by perioeci, but in the south it gained Phthiotic Achaia, Aitolian Lamia, and other regions.27

The following period—the first half of the 2nd century B.C.—directly concerns our inscription. The Thessalian League experienced a full-fledged revival, marked by considerable political activity, with an expanded geographical scope. We learn from a decree of Phokaia, honoring a certain Apollodoros from Priene and dated ca. 190 B.C., that Priene was visited by Thessalian ambassadors.28 A decree found at Delphi, dated to 186 or 184 B.C.,29 honors Nikostratos, son of Anaxippos, a prominent citizen of Larisa. He fulfilled various diplomatic duties with distinction, including service as a hieromnemon of the Thessalians in the reorganized Amphictyonic Council, which now consisted of autonomous members (lines 3–4), as opposed to its previous dependence on the Aitolians.30 A decree of the Thessalian League found in Philia, near the federal sanctuary of Athena Itonia, and dated to 179–165 B.C.,31 discusses financial aid given to Ambracia by the League and can serve as evidence for their good relations: Ambracian citizens were granted proxenia and invited to the sacrifice in honor of Athena Itonia. As Habicht has observed, the Thessalian koinon also sent theoroi to the Asklepieia in Mytilene and participated in the Klaria of Kolophon, while Larisa, the capital of the League, honored officials of Eumenes II.32

The League fought on the Roman side against Perseus during the Third Macedonian War (171–168 B.C.), and subsequently regained the cities it had indirectly lost to Philip V during the Roman war with Antiochus III and the Aitolians in 192–188. (Philip had been allowed to

25. Livy 34.51.4–6. The reorganization of the Thessalian League by T. Quinctius Flamininus and the ten legati are also referred to in SIG 674, lines 50–54.
26. Flamininus presumably drew inspiration from the Achaian League, which had already had a synedrion for 200 years. See Larsen 1968, p. 284.
29. *SIG* 613.
30. See especially Habicht’s (1987, pp. 60–62) discussion of the decree. For the new Amphictyonic Council, see also Lefèvre 1998, p. 205; Sanchez 2001, pp. 496–509 (we owe these references to C. Habicht).
32. C. Habicht, pers. comm.; see above, n. 1. For Mytilene, see *IG* XII, suppl., 3, dated after 196 B.C. For the Klaria of Kolophon, see Picard 1922, pp. 345–347. For Larisa, see Polyb. 22.6; *IG* IX.2 512 (revised text, *SEG* XXXI 574); Gallis 1981–1982, pp. 246–249, no. 1 (= *SEG* XXXI 575), both inscriptions of 171 or 170 B.C., according to Habicht.
conquer some Thessalian territory as a reward for his help to the Romans.) The Thessalian cavalry performed feats of bravery by helping the Romans at Kallikinos in 171, and in general played an active part in the war.\(^3\)

To celebrate the Thessalians’ valor, the contest of the Eleutheria in Larisa was founded.\(^3\) Thessaly, on the winning side at last, was in a position to exert the influence that must have accompanied victory. In 168, immediately after Perseus reached Samothrace, embassies from Thessaly were dispatched: L. Aemilius Paullus gave audience to numerous delegations at Pella, according to Livy, “maxime ex Thessalia.”\(^3\)

Against this background, the present monument informs us that the Thessalian League sent theoroi to Samothrace—a fact hitherto unknown, and one that enriches our knowledge of Thessalian and Samothracian history in the 2nd century B.C.

REFERENCES


Boëthius, A. 1918. Die Pythais: Studien zur Geschichte der Verbindungen zwischen Athen und Delphi, Uppsala.


33. On the correct version of the name Kallikinos, see Helly 1995, p. 264, n. 150. For the battle, see Livy 42.55–60.

34. Robert and Robert 1964, no. 227; Walbank 1979, p. 305; IG IX.2 553.

35. Livy 44.46.9.
Sammelbuch 1 = Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten 1, Strasbourg 1915.
Samothrace: Excavations Conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University
2.1 = P. M. Fraser, The Inscriptions on Stone (Samothrace 2.1), New York 1960.


Robert L. Pounder

Vassar College
Department of Classics
Box 511
Poughkeepsie, New York 12604
ropounder@vassar.edu

Nora Dimitrova

Cornell University
Department of Classics
120 Goldwin Smith Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853
nmd5@cornell.edu