

DEDICATION BY THE THESSALIAN 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 *theoroi* to Samothrace.

1. An earlier version of this article was presented at the Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America in San Antonio, Texas, in December 1986 (Pounder 1987). The document is also included in Dimitrova 2002, pp. 132–145.

We would like to thank James R. McCredie, director of the Samothrace Excavations, for permission to publish this document, for commenting on our manuscript, and for his generous support of our work at Samothrace. Letters from Christian Habicht of the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, of 13 January 1987 to Robert Pounder, in which he discussed various aspects of the inscription, and of 26 November 2001 to Nora Dimitrova, in which he proposed valuable revisions, have been very helpful. We are also indebted to Kevin Clinton (Cornell University) for his useful corrections and comments, Rachel Kitzinger (Vassar College) for her helpful advice, and Alain Bresson (Université de Bordeaux) for his valuable suggestions. We wish to acknowledge with gratitude assistance from the Haight Fund of Vassar College. We also thank the *Hesperia* anonymous reviewers for their careful remarks.

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

Samothrace inv. 01.2

Fig. 1

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.

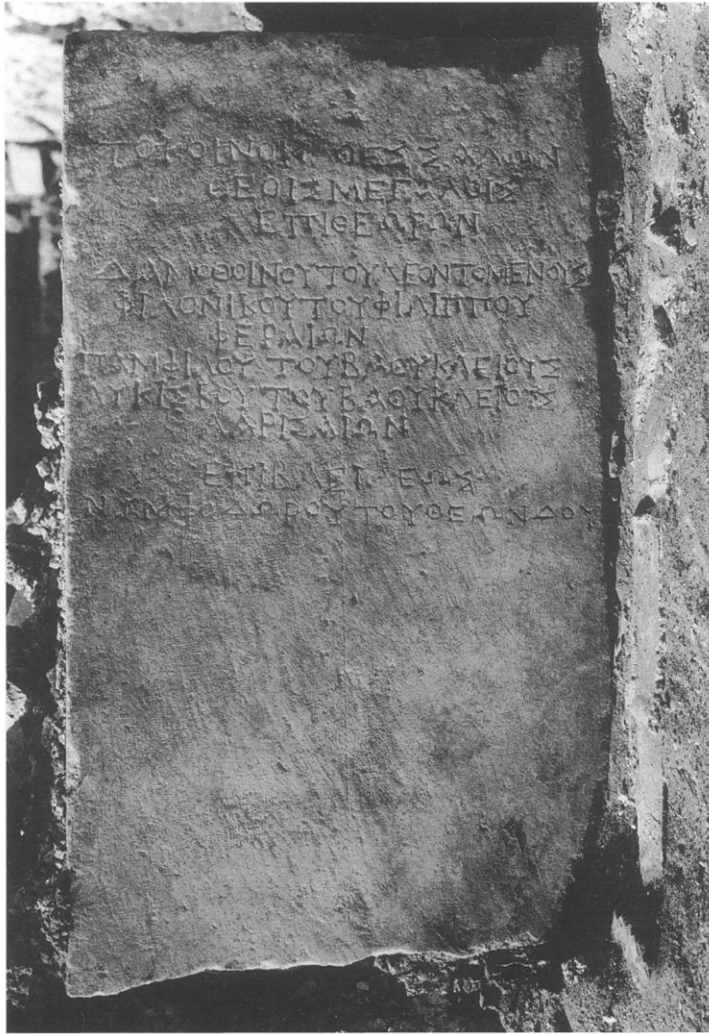


Figure 1. Block with inscribed dedication by the Thessalian League to the Great Gods in Samothrace.
Photo N. Dimitrova

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

170–140 B.C.

τὸ κοινὸν Θεσσαλῶν
θεοῖς μεγάλοις
ἐπὶ θεωρῶν
vacat ca. 0.02 m

5 Δαμοθοίνου τοῦ Λεοντομένους
Φιλονίκου τοῦ Φιλίππου
Φεραίων

Παμφίλου τοῦ Βαθυκλείους
Λυκίσκου τοῦ Βαθυκλείους
Λαρισαίων

vacat ca. 0.02 m

10 ἐπὶ βασιλέως
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-proxenoí*² and a new *theoroi* list mentioned by Chryssa Karadima.³ It is consistent with lettering in 2nd-century inscriptions, notably a Samothracian list of *theoroi-proxenoí*⁴ and a municipal document of Skotoussa, dated by the eponyms of the Thessalian League to 161/60 B.C.⁵

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 Damothinos, son of Leontomenes, without doubt none other than the *strategos* of the Thessalian League in 161/60.⁶ The other three *theoroi* seem to be unknown, although (with the exception of Bathykles) their names are attested in Thessaly.⁷

The expression ἐπὶ 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 ἐπὶ ἀρχιθεώρου so-and-so.”

Damothinos, son of Leontomenes (line 4), is known from other inscriptions, where he is mentioned as *strategos* of the League.⁸ 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 Damothinos II were gymnasiarchs at Pherai, ca. 241 and 216 B.C., respectively.⁹ His father Leontomenes, son of Damothinos, 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 Damothinos’s uncle) Pausanias held

2. *Samothrace* 2.1, no. 23; *IG XII.8* 163, 171.

3. Karadima 1995, p. 492.

4. *IG XII.8* 170b (mid-2nd century B.C. or shortly thereafter). The date of this document is based on the mention in line 67 of a Timapolis, son of Euphragoras, attested also in *Lindos* 2, 223 (ca. 149) and 228 (138), and in line 79 of two ambassadors of King Attalos II (159–138) or III (138–133).

5. Pouilloux 1955, pp. 443–459 (= *SEG XV* 370). For the date of this

document, see Kramolisch 1978, p. 57, n. 3.

6. Although Damothinos is not called *architheoros*, the listing of his name before those of the other *theoroi* suggests that he was probably the most important member of the delegation.

7. For instance, the name Pamphilos is attested in *IG IX.2* 474A, line 42; 517, line 54; 557, line 25; 562, line 17; Lykiskos in *IG IX.2* 109a, line 38; 121, line 1; 275, lines 8–9; 288, line 12; 290a, line 2; 527, line 1; 851, line 1;

and Philonikos in *IG IX.2* 65, line 11; 234I, line 32; 257, line 1. Philippos is a very common name in Thessaly and is found elsewhere in Pherai, *IG IX.2* 415, lines 51–52.

8. Pouilloux 1955, pp. 443–459 (*SEG XV* 370); *SIG*³ 668, line 19 (see *SEG XXVIII* 505); and possibly Axenidis 1939, line 21 (see *SEG XXVIII* 505). For the two restorations in *SEG XXVIII* 505, see Kramolisch 1978, p. 58.

9. See Kramolisch 1978, pp. 28, 31.

that same office. Damothoinos's grandson, Leontomenes, son of Megalokles, was also *strategos*, ca. 100–90.¹⁰

A date before 170 B.C. for the present inscription is unlikely: Damothoinos, son of Leontomenes, would probably have been too young to head the embassy. As just noted, his father, Leontomenes, son of Damothoinos, was *strategos* in 186/5, which suggests that he was probably between 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 elsewhere 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 perhaps 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 suggested date of the document, see below) to have been the son of the ambassador 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*, Nymphodoros 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 compatible with the possibility that he was the latter's grandfather, thereby conforming to the Greek custom of naming the grandson after his grandfather. 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 Nymphodoros'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 liberation of Samothrace from Macedonian rule. As mentioned above, Theondas was the eponymous king of Samothrace in 168 B.C., at the time when Perseus was captured, while the eponymous magistrate of the present inscription is Nymphodoros, son of Theondas. The inscription, therefore, cannot be dated to a civil year that included August 168. If the Samothracian calendar was similar to the Athenian, i.e., if the year began with the first new

10. Kramolisch (1978, p. 31) provides a useful stemma of Damothoinos's family.

11. *Sammelbuch* 1, p. 1639.

12. Livy 45.5.6–12.

13. Ashton (1988) demonstrates 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 Münsterberg [1911–1927] 1973, p. 28; *IG XII.8*, p. 41. The name Theondes is also attested in a lead curse tablet that Dusenbery considers Samothracian (*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.¹⁴ 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶ 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 μυσούμενος καὶ πανηγυρίζων, 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.¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ The Pythais, which can be viewed as a kind of *theoria*, was specifically an Athenian institution, not connected with any Delphic festival.¹⁹ 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.²⁰

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.²¹ 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 Trümper 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 Κυζικηνῶν—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. Trümper (1997, p. 118) lists only Maimakterion for Samothrace.

16. Cole 1989, p. 1568, n. 21.

17. Cole 1984, p. 39.

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.

19. Boëthius 1918, p. 137.

20. See Dimitrova 2002, pp. 20–29.

21. McCredie 1979, p. 26; *Samothrace* 2.1, no. 13.

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, Klazomenai, 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.²² 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.²³

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.²⁴

22. These lists are based on a new study of both published and unpublished documents; see Dimitrova 2002, pp. 28–29.

23. Fraser assumes (*Samothrace* 2.1, no. 23) that Larisa-on-Hermos is meant. The reason for this assumption seems to be its geographical proximity to Ephesos and Kyme, which are listed in the same inscription as sending sacred delegates. In his introduction (p. 14), Fraser treats this identification as certain. J. and L. Robert (1964, no. 372), however, suggest Larisa in Thessaly. The names that follow, [. . .]ΙΑΣ Ἀριστομένους, [Εὐ]δημος Εὐδδήμου, [Ἰ]Α ντίγονος Θεροσίππου. Δημήτριος Νικολάου, are too common

to allow any definite conclusions, except that Ἀντίγονος is extremely popular in Thessaly, as a result of Macedonian influence, as is Νικόλαος. A Larisean inscription containing two decrees in accordance with Philip V's letters to the Thessalians, *IG XI.2 517*, mentions a Samothracian who is given citizenship (cf. *Samothrace* 2.1, p. 9). On the other hand, no connection between Samothrace and Larisa-on-Hermos is known. The matter is further complicated by the fact that there are two other Larisas in Asia Minor: the Troadic and the Ephesian ones. Cook (1968, p. 38, n. 8; 1973, p. 221) suggests that Larisa in the Troad is more likely to have sent

theoroi than Larisa-on-Hermos, which was not a very significant city in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, while the Ephesian Larisa was even less important than the one on the Hermos and perhaps lacked the status of a city. There is no evidence, however, for connections between Larisa in the Troad and Samothrace. Thus, the suggestion that Larisa in Thessaly is indicated seems slightly preferable. See Dimitrova 2002, p. 38.

24. The 2nd-century history of the League presents complex and controversial issues that we will not attempt to solve here, since they do not concern our inscription directly.

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 *strategoï*, 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 Amphictionic 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*³ 674, 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.

27. Larsen 1968, p. 282.

28. *IPriene* 65, lines 8–10.

29. *SIG*³ 613.

30. See especially Habicht's (1987, pp. 60–62) discussion of the decree. For the new Amphictionic Council,

see also Lefèvre 1998, p. 205; Sanchez 2001, pp. 496–509 (we owe these references to C. Habicht).

31. *SEG* XXVI 688 (= Habicht 1976).

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.³³ To celebrate the Thessalians' valor, the contest of the Eleutheria in Larisa was founded.³⁴ 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."³⁵

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.

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.

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