*1. Introduction and Argument*

In the 1880s, the epigrapher H.G. Lolling found a Greek inscription on a stone in a Turkish cemetery in the modern city of Larisa. His edition indicated that the inscription comprised the following texts:

1) A decree from by the Larisaeans in which they granting citizenship to some number of men.

2) In that decree, the Larisaeans reproduce a letter Philip V sent them.

3) A second decree, again granting citizenship to over two hundred men.

4) In that decree, the Larisaeans reproduce a second letter Philip sent them.

5) A list of the new citizens. Two hundred and three of the extant names are legible.

Of these five texts, Philip’s second letter immediately attracted attention, as in it he commented on the Romans, specifically how they treated their freedmen. Indeed, some collections of translated inscriptions, such as Burnsteins’s, excerpt the second letter from the rest of the inscription.

But to extract Philip’s letter from this inscription is to ignore how the letter participates in a historical archive, a collection of documents that presents the Larisaeans as ambivalently subordinate to the Macedonian King. The context of the Larisaeans reproduction of Philip’s observations about Roman manumission and citizenship points to how the Larisaeans defined their own practice of citizenship in opposition to the Romans. Such negative definition occurs against the backdrop of the Thessalian ownership of the *penestai*, a practice that ancient writers frequently compared to Spartan helotage. As a result, when the Larisaeans received and reproduced Philip’s conception Roman manumission, this description of the Roman practices of slavery and citizenship became part of Thessalian discourse on the *penestai* and citizenship.

In this paper I pursue two separate lines of analysis. First, I analyze how the destruction and commemoration of texts in this inscription are part of the political relationship between Philip and Larisa. Second, I examine how the Thessalian practice of *penestai* provides a distinct context for Philip’s praise of Roman manumission.

*2.* IG *IX 2 517 as a History*

Key to this inscription is that on the one hand the Larisaeans want to maintain that they are an independent polis, but on the other hand they are in no position to directly refuse commands from Philip. Indeed, in his reading of Justin’s epitome of Trogus, Scholten notes that the Thessalians lead a revolt against Macedonian rule in 229. Even though the Aetolians supported the Thessalians, the Macedonians thoroughly crushed this uprising and reasserted their control over central Greece. As a result of this lack of true independence, the Larisaeans followed Philip’s suggestion about granting citizenship to the men in the first letter. However, sometime after the passage of this decree in 217 BCE, the Larisaeans decided to rescind this grant of citizenship, a decision both directly and symbolically enacted by the defacement of the list of citizens, recounted by Philip V in **Handout** **One**. Someone, perhaps a Macedonian soldier, perhaps one of the disenfranchised, reported this volte-face to Philip, prompting him to send the second letter encouraging them to reinstate the franchise. The Larisaeans, deciding that it was not worthwhile to defy Philip over this issue any longer. Instead, in 215 they agreed to Philip’s request, passed the second decree and memorialized their earlier resistance.

By reconstructing the past of the current legislation, the Larisaeans commemorate their initial refusal of Philip’s request. True, the commemoration of this disobedience is indirect and indistinct, as it is Philip chastisement the Larisaeans. But given Philip’s control over Larisa, neither blatant rejection of Macedonian policies nor open commemoration of such rejection was possible. It is by commemorating how Philip had to chastise them for rejecting his past commands that the Larisaeans represent themselves as loyal enough to the king to inscribe his letters to them and as independent enough to have rejected his previous orders.

In other words, the Larisaeans’ method of commemoration articulates the ambiguous relationship between Philip and Thessaly. This relationship was ambiguous because the Thessalians were not subjects of Philip as the Macedonians were. Instead, it was the Thessalian confederacy that ruled in Thessaly. In the fourth century, Philip II made himself the head of the confederacy and took the power to appoint Thessalian tetrarchs. Philip V never styled himself the official leader of the confederacy, but instead asserted his power unofficially in Thessaly.

But the Larisaeans only included the list of the enfranchised men after the second decree, not the first, and as a result the first decree does not preserve the only information fundamental to the enactment of the new decree. What then is the purpose of supplying the first letter as well as the first decree? It is easy to imagine the second decree without the first one. It is similarly easy to imagine the Larisaeans writing these two decrees, which the council passed after an interval of two years, on two different surfaces. However, the Larisaeans chose instead to consolidate the letters and decrees into a single document, thereby creating a history of the current legislation.

I use the word history purposefully. The writer, or writers, of this inscription created an organized archive. The writers use the contents and the juxtaposition of these documents to narrate the changing relationship between the people of Larisa and Philip. Furthermore, these Larisaean writers had to confront similar problems as Hellenistic historians, namely, how to depict kings. There are many possible examples of the ways historians negotiated this problem, but how Ptolemy I threatened and ultimately expelled the historian Theopompus indicates how describing Hellenistic courts was a hazardous endeavor. Furthermore, Theopompus’ participation was not unique but a standard aspect of being a historian, as part of a historian’s authority came from being either a former or current participant in political events, like the Larisaeans. Historians also had to imagine kings as readers of their texts, because of royalty’s power over publication, distribution and conservation. Likewise, these Larisaean writers had to imagine Philip, or his representatives, as readers of this documentary history. Indeed, Polybius and Livy, who used Polybius for this part of his history, note how Philip himself went to Larisa, documented in **Handout Two**. These visits are not surprising, as while Larisa was small, its position near the pass to Tempe meant that it played an important role in the Macedonians’ antagonisms with the Aetolians. As a result, the spaces where the Larisaeans displayed these this text, the temples and agora, were spaces under Philip’s surveillance and control.

Indeed, Polybius provides an example of how Philip exercised his control over texts in Larisa. After losing a battle to Flamininus, Philip sent a messenger to Larisa in order to destroy the royal correspondence kept there. Polybius does not mean Macdonian correspondence to Larisa, but rather the royal Macedonian archive, a collection that included descriptions of the king’s daily activities and his dealings with foreign emissaries. Philip did not want Flamininus and other Romans to become readers of this text, presumably because of the advantages it would give them in their diplomatic relations with other Greeks. Examples such as Pompey’s discovery of Mithridates’ archive or the Romans’ interception of Hannibal’s treaty with Philip himself suggest that his worries are not unfounded, but rather are rather an indication that he appreciated the power of texts. Philip attempted to control that power by destroying those texts.

In both cases, however, erasing the past was in itself not sufficient to manipulate the future. Even though Philip destroyed this archive and kept his governmental workings secret, nonetheless he had to broker peace with Flamininus. In the Larisaeans’ case, by erasing the list of new citizens they only temporarily denied these men their legal identities; eventually Philip upon the city to follow through on their initial commitments. Philip’s second letter demonstrates that it is not always easy to forget kings, especially when they are still alive.

*3. Thessalian* Penestai *and Roman Manumission*

I now come to the second half and change topics. Because of the uniquely Thessalian practice of owning *penestai*, Philip’s comments about the strange ways that the Romans treat their slaves has a different resonance than if he had sent this letter to other Greeks. That is, when Philip describes Roman slavery, manumission and freedmen, he is not simply contrasting these practices to how the Greeks treat slaves and freedpeople but to how Thessalians treat *penestai*.

While Greek writers were interested in the topic of *penestai*, as it was a practice was unique to Thessaly and therefore worthy of comment, there is no elaborate description of what was unique about how the Thessalians treated the *penestai*. Instead, beginning with Plato, ancient writers explicitly compared the *penestai* to helots, see **Handout Three**. Along with other comments, this evidence suggests that the Thessalians had collectively ownership over the *penestai* similar to Spartan helotage. However, there were key differences between the two. The Spartan state directed helots into battle, while individual Thessalian aristocrats led *penestai* into battle, as Demosthenes describes Menon of Pharsalus doing. But while the Spartan state granted groups of helots freedom on a number of occasions, there are no extant descriptions of any Thessalians explicitly freeing *penestai*.

But while the Thessalians saw the *penestai* as contemptible descendants of a conquered people, outsiders such as the Macedonians did not abide by this practice when they dealt with *penestai.* In **Handout Four,** Theopompus records how Philip II gave a certain Agathocles tremendous power because Agathocles shamelessly flattered the Macedonian king. When Theopompus describes Agathocles as originally a *penestes*, it is entirely possible that he is reproducing slanderous accusations about Agathocles’ lowly background and heritage. Indeed, the historian’s description is unclear when Philip II promotes him if Agathocles is a freedman or a slave; in the fourth century certain slaves in Athens such as Posoin amassed great wealth and power without being manumitted. Nonetheless, Theopompus depicts Philip II as having no patience with the Thessalian practice of *penestai* and as willing to open the doors of government to a man with a servile background.

Like Philip II, Philip V showed equal disregard to Thessalian contempt of *penestai*. His praise of how the Romans permit former slaves extensive rights within their government indicates that he did not think that slaves or former slaves were incapable of military participation as a citizen-soldiers. This kind of participation would have been important to Philip as unlike mercenaries, citizen-soldiers could be compensated in ways other than hard coin. Furthermore, his description of Roman slavery suggests that he thought that frequent manumission increased the political strength of a society. By discarding allegiance to a careful representation of Roman practices and policies, in his letter to the Larisaeans Philip portrays Rome as a location of upward social mobility. **Handout Five** includes his description of Roman manumission:

“the Romans are among such people, and when they free their slaves, they receive them into the franchise and give them magistracies, and on account of this practice they have not only increased their own fatherland but they have sent out colonists to nearly seventy locations.”

According to Philip, the Romans not only allow freedmen to become citizens but also to become magistrates and colonists, painting a picture of a society in which there was little to no distinction between a former slave and a citizen. The description of freedmen as the colonists of nearly seventy colonies also means that Philip imagines Romans as freeing a great number of slaves. Furthermore, Philip understands all of these aspects as connected to Roman success: both the large number of manumissions and the acceptance of the freedmen into the government increases the power of the Roman government and military.

Philip’s comments on Roman manumission also intersect with Thessalian *penestai* in another context: the end of *penestai*. Unlike the end of helotage, on which some Greek writers explicitly comment, no writers provide any sort of timeline for when the Thessalian stopped owning *penestai*. However, at some point the Thessalians did so, as in the Imperial Period a number of Greek writes about *penestai* as though these people no longer exist. Indeed, in his study of *penestai*, Ducat argues that the Thessalian city of Pharsalus enrolled a number of *penestai* as citizens, an act which *IG* IX 2 234 records. But as the only indication that these men were *penestai* is that they lack patronymics, the connection is tenuous. In a recent chapter Oetjen argues that these men were Macedonian soldiers. Whether or not Ducat’s interpretation of that inscription is correct, the absence of *penestai* in the Imperial Period points to how during the Hellenistic Period this practice ultimately dissolved.

The Hellenistic Period was also when the Thessalians began to record a large number of manumissions on inscriptions. Zelnick-Abramovitz counts over 1,700 individual manumissions in over three hundred different inscriptions ranging from the third century BCE to the second century CE. She suggests that with the dissolution of the ownership of *penestai*, the Thessalians required more slaves, whom the Thessalians then manumitted. Unfortunately, since the only information on the number of slaves that the Thessalians owned during this period is from the manumission inscriptions, it is impossible to compare the number of manumitted slaves against a larger population in order to determine what proportion of their slaves the Thessalians were manumitting. Also, as the Thessalians began archiving these manumissions around the same time as the Delphians did, the answer to why the Thessalians began inscribing these lists when they did likely includes panhellenic factors as well as a local ones, such as the relationship between the Thessalians and the Macedonians.

When Philip wrote to the Larisaeans about slaves, he could not and likely did not assume that they would only think of the individually owned slaves that were common to all of Greece. Instead, he had to take seriously that the Thessalians would instead think of their own *penestai* when thinking of slaves and slavery.

*4. Conclusion*

In the fourth and third centuries, the Thessalians were nominally free but were under Macedonian control. After leading a successful campaign against the Macedonians, Flamininus declared at the Isthmian games of 197 that the Thessalians, and a number of other Greek peoples, were now free. Of course, what Flamininus meant was that the Thessalians were free to be under Roman control, but it is true that the Thessalians did maintain a great deal of autonomy. They had their own government, own armies and their own coinage. They also had their own dialect, which they used when writing treaties such as the two in this inscription. In contrast, Philip wrote in pure Attic, a choice that the Larisaeans preserved when they copied his letters. The juxtaposition between the two dialects in the single inscription emphasizes how there are two different voices competing to tell their own story about the past.