The preceding chapters have explored the history and religion of the Thessalian League in the second and first centuries. To do so, it has been necessary to consider first Thessaly’s Archaic, Classical, and early Hellenistic history. Early incarnations of the Thessalian League lack a distinct profile in the realm of cult. Some of this impression may be due to the character of the preserved evidence, some to the relative weakness and instability of the League in its opening centuries. Whatever the reason, the contrast with the later Hellenistic League is striking. In these years a strong league emerged under Roman patronage that took a leading role in cult, both at home and abroad. The League’s founding of a cult of Zeus Eleutherios in Larisa celebrated this new history of the League and, most probably, Rome’s leading role within it, while the League’s reinvigoration of the cult of Athena Itonia at Philia looked to a more ancient past. The spread of a unified regional calendar likewise organized the passage of the year around festivals honoring divinities in a sometimes very ‘Thessalian’ aspect. Thessalian League theoroi traveled far and wide to represent the League in international cult contexts.

Against this narrative of unity and the expression of shared Thessalian identity in the language of cult, it is possible to read another narrative, one of fragmentation and disjuncture. There is no hint of participation in the cults of Athena Itonia or Zeus Eleutherios by new League members, the non-tetradic perioikoi, and this fact mirrors the political leadership of the Thessalian League at this time. While the League calendar gained acceptance throughout the tetrads relatively quickly, some perioikoi persisted in their epichoric calendar traditions deep into the first century. And although the League theoroi were major players within the network of new international festivals in the later Hellenistic period, the conservatism of the Delphic Amphictiony allowed all of the new Thessaloi representation to participate as distinct, independent ethne. The persistent polyvalence of cult thus complicated, indeed contested, this Thessalian identity in precisely those arenas where it had been asserted.

The dynamism of these twin narratives does not fade in 27 with the full incorporation of the Spercheios ethne into the Thessalian League and the
inclusion of the League within *provincia Achaia*. As a coda to the present study, I offer a brief case study of Ainis, the last of the *perioikoi* described in this work to enter the Thessalian League.1 The religious history of Ainis in the later Hellenistic and Roman periods indicates the continued vibrancy of the individual religious traditions of the Thessalian *ethne*. After joining the Thessalian League in the first century BCE and becoming politically invisible, the *ethnos* of the Ainiænes nevertheless remained salient in cult and, over the course of the first and second centuries CE, there are indications that the political center of gravity of the Thessalian League began to shift southwards, from Larisa to Hypata.

But I begin at an earlier period. The elaborate migration tradition of the Ainiænes discussed briefly in Chapter One,2 and to which I shall soon return, represented one strategy by which the Archaic and Classical *ethnos* forged a link with its Homeric past. Other outlets were available. The pseudo-Aristotelian ‘On Matters Wondrous to Hear’ recounts an Archaic dedication allegedly made by Herakles in Ainis: ‘In the country called Ainin, in that part called Hypate, an ancient pillar is said to have been found; as it bore an inscription in archaic characters of which the Ainiænes wished to know the origin, they sent messengers to Athens to take it there. But as they were traveling through Boiotia, and discussing their journey from home with some strangers, it is said that they were escorted into the so-called Ismenion in Thebes. For they were told that the inscription was most likely to be deciphered there, as they possessed certain offerings having ancient letters similar in form. There having discovered what they were seeking from the known letters they transcribed the following lines: Herakles dedicated a sacred grove to Cythera Phersephassa, /When driving the flocks of Geryon and Erythea./ The goddess Pasiphassa subdued him with desire for her./ Here my newly wed Erythe brought forth a son Erython;/ then I made a gift of the plain in memory of our love under a shady beech-tree.’3 In this rich passage some Ainiænes attempt to implicate themselves in the career of a more broadly

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1 Magnesia, which had been founded (or refounded) as a *koinon* as part of the Flaminian reorganization of central Greece in the 190s and had remained independent continuously since the conclusion of the Third Macedonian War in 167, was formally incorporated into the Thessalian League at the time of Diocletian.