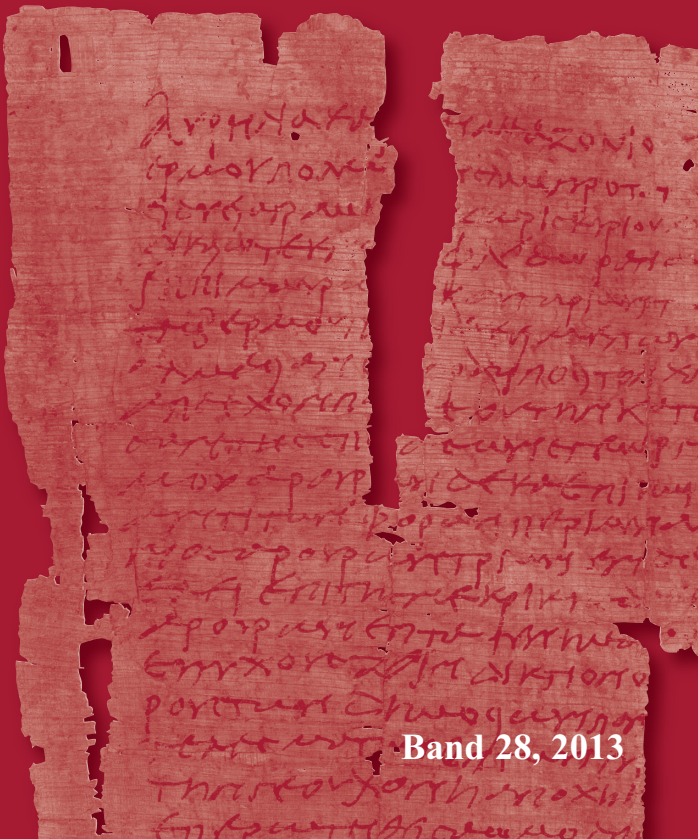


Herausgegeben von:

Thomas Corsten
Fritz Mitthof
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Hans Taeuber

TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
Papyrologie und Epigraphik





**Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte,
Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

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JOHN A. N. Z. TULLY

Samos, Hegemony, and the Nicuria Decree

The Nicuria decree, first published by Homolle in 1893, records the decisions of representatives of the islanders (a.1: συνέδροις τῶν νησιωτῶν) at Samos about their involvement in sacrifices and games which Ptolemy II was arranging in honour of his father in Alexandria.¹ It swiftly became central to ongoing debates about hegemonical flux in the Aegean, as it seemed to offer at least three clear data points which have never since been questioned. Its description of Ptolemaic liberation of islanders from previous oppression (a.14–16) was understood as evidence of immediately preceding control by the Antigonids; its secure approximate date early in the reign of Ptolemy II indicated that Ptolemaic control of the region was secure at this time; and its reference to a league of islanders (a.56: [κ]οινοῦ τῶν νησιωτῶν) was connected with other similar references as evidence for the semi-permanent existence of a League of Islanders in the third century. Hence, all subsequent reconstructions of this period have involved Macedonian domination of the Aegean into the 280s, its replacement at that time by the Ptolemies, and the creation of a League of Islanders as a statutory body by one of Antigonos I, Demetrius I, or Ptolemy I.²

Much of this reconstruction is ripe for reinterpretation in the light of changes in our understanding of nature of epigraphic discourse, and of the relationship between monarch and city. Where previous generations of scholars effectively applied a unipolar hegemonic model to the Hellenistic period, we are now more aware on the diverse range of relationships between cities, leagues, and kings that existed. Here, I illustrate

¹ Nicuria decree: *IG XII.7 506*, first published in T. Homolle, *Nouvelles et correspondance*, BCH 17 (1893) 205–207. I would like to thank the many colleagues and friends who have offered sage advice, not least Marc Domingo Gygax, Erich Gruen, Nino Luraghi, Alfonso Moreno, Julia L. Shear, T. Leslie Shear Jr, Daniel Tober, and the anonymous reviewers for *Tyche*. Responsibility for any infelicity or error is, however, mine alone. All dates are BC unless otherwise specified.

² For two different reconstructions that illustrate at greater length the agreement on these fundamentals and summarise previous bibliography, see W. König, *Der Bund der Nesioten, ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Kykladen und benachbarten Inseln im Zeitalter des Hellenismus*, Halle an der Saale 1910, especially 13–18, and K. Buraselis, *Das hellenistische Makedonien und die Ägäis: Forschungen zur Politik des Kassandros und der drei ersten Antigoniden (Antigonos Monophthalmos, Demetrios Poliorketes und Antigonos Gonatas) im Ägäischen Meer und in Westkleinasien*, Munich 1982, especially 70 and 80–81, summarised at 188. For bibliography and analysis specifically on the development of interpretation of Nicuria decree, see R.A. Hazzard, *Imagination of a monarchy: studies in Ptolemaic propaganda*, Toronto 2000, 47–52.

as a case-study the way in which that scholarly insistence on unipolar hegemony, on the necessary succession and exclusivity of relationships between monarchs and cities, has caused the Nicuria decree consistently to be misdated to 281 at the earliest, rather than to 282. I leave for another occasion the ramifications of this redating, and of a broader reconceptualisation of the region at this time as a multipolar space.

It is now almost certain that the Nicuria decree dates from the middle of 282. It explicitly postdates the death of Ptolemy I (a.17–18), which is currently placed early in that year.³ It also predates the first Ptolemaea in his honour, which was most plausibly also held in 282, just before the first Panathenaea held after Athens' revolt from Demetrius Poliorketes in either 287 or, more probably, 286.⁴ Scholarly consensus, however, has insisted that the decree must date from 281 at the earliest, because it is considered certain that the island of Samos was Lysimachean before the battle of Corupedium in January or February 281, when Lysimachus was killed. Hence, according to the unipolar paradigm, the presence of a Ptolemaic fleet at Samos before that date is impossible: Lysimachus would not have allowed it.⁵ Since this argument was first made by Delamarre in 1896, almost the only author to contravene this firm terminus post quem is Nerwinski, in his often overlooked unpublished dissertation. Even Nerwinski, however, does not question the paradigm. He justifies his conclusion by arguing that Ptolemy and Lysimachus might well have been allied in 282 against

³ Ptolemy I Soter's death: between the start of Ptolemy II's second year of coregency on Dystros 26 (either early January 282 or early March 282) and the end of the Olympic year in the summer of 282. The basic argument presented by A.E. Samuel, *Greek and Roman chronology: calendars and years in classical antiquity*, Munich 1972, 28–30 is widely accepted. More recent attempts to narrow the span argue for the earlier end of this range: see, eg, L. Koenen, M. al-Miṣrī, *Eine agonistische Inschrift aus Ägypten und frühptolemäische Königsfeste*, Meisenheim am Glan 1977; R.A. Hazzard, *The Regnal Years of Ptolemy II Philadelphos*, Phoenix 41 (1987) 140–158; E. Grzybek, *Du Calendrier macédonien au calendrier ptolémaïque: problèmes de chronologie hellénistique*, Basel, 1990.

⁴ That the first *Ptolemaea* was held precisely before the first *Panathenaea* after the revolt of Athens is confirmed by Shear's recent autopsy of the Callias decree (T.L. Shear Jr, *Kallias of Sphettos and the Revolt of Athens in 286 B.C.* Princeton/NJ 1978 = *SEG* 28.60), which confirms τότε πρ[ὸ]τ[ο]ν (65–66: Π not dotted; so not, eg, τρίτον) as the necessary reading: J.L. Shear, *Demetrius Poliorketes, Kallias of Sphettos, and the Panathenaea*, in: G. Reger, F.X. Ryan, T.F. Winters (edd), *Studies in Greek epigraphy and history in honor of Stephen V. Tracy*, Bordeaux 2010, 135–152; contra: M.J. Osborne, *Athens in the third century B.C.*, Athens 2012, 186–187. Shear also convincingly restates the case for 286 for the revolt against the scholarly consensus of 287 since C. Habicht, *Untersuchungen zur politischen Geschichte Athens im 3. Jahrhundert v. Chr.*, Munich 1979; M.J. Osborne, *Kallias, Phaidros and the Revolt of Athens in 287 B. C.*, *ZPE* 35 (1979) 181–194. Note that a Panathenaea is now attested for 282 by *IG* II² 3079 independently of the debate over the date of the Athenian revolt from Demetrius Poliorketes.

⁵ For a recent restatement, conveniently also summarising previous scholarship in his support: H. Hauben, *A Phoenician King in the Service of the Ptolemies: Philocles of Sidon Revisited*, *AncSoc* 34 (2004) 39, especially n.73. Note that Hauben further argues that Samos probably only became Ptolemaic still later in 281, after Seleucus I's death in August/September 281, because of his belief in a secret agreement between Ptolemy II Philadelphus and Seleucus I.

Seleucus. Hence, the Ptolemaic fleet might have been there with the permission of Lysimachus.⁶

Nerwinski's insistence on 282 is noteworthy, but his solution to enable this date is insufficient. Not only is Lysimachus to have allowed the Ptolemaic fleet to dock at Samos, but he is also to have permitted the Ptolemaic officials to use Samos as a base for communal rituals of allegiance to Ptolemy — all without calling into question Samos' allegiance to Lysimachus. It is unsurprising that subsequent scholars who cleave to the hegemonic paradigm by which Samos must have been subject to someone have found this approach unconvincing. An alternative solution that still remains within this hegemonic model would be to 'reassign' Samos from the Lysimachean sphere to the Ptolemaic sphere with the arrival of the Ptolemaic fleet attested on Samos by this inscription. A more thorough analysis is justified, however, not least since Ptolemaic involvement on Samos at this time is only attested by this inscription, and, as I argue below, the evidence for the existing Lysimachean hegemony is slim and deeply problematic. The entire frame in which the debate has been undertaken needs to be reconsidered.

The universal assumption of Lysimachean hegemony on Samos in 282 effectively derives from a single inscription. This inscription, found on Samos, records a letter sent by Lysimachus in 283/282 stating the results of his arbitration of a dispute between Priene and Samos: plausibly confirmation of the Samians' possession of an area on mainland opposite Samos, Batinetis.⁷ Lysimachus' involvement is noteworthy

⁶ J. Delamarre, *Les deux premiers Ptolémées et la confédération des Cyclades*, RPh 20 (1896), 106–107; L.A. Nerwinski, *The Foundation Date of the Panhellenic Ptolemaea and Related Problems in early Ptolemaic Chronology*, Ph.D. thesis, Duke University 1981, 45–46. M. Holleaux, *Sur une inscription de Thèbes*, REG 8 (1895) 32 had argued for 285 or 283; Hiller von Gaertringen accepted 285 in the second edition of the *Sylloge*, printed in 1898, but followed Delamarre in the 1915 third edition.

For rare dissent from the focus on 281–280, see Hazzard, *Imagination* (s. n. 2), 47–59, arguing for 263. Not least because Philocles and Bacchon are well attested on Delos, but only before 276, Hazzard's argument seems difficult. Hazzard is also unaware of the redating of the Delphic *archon* Pleiston, critical to his argument, to 262/1 (universally accepted since R. Étienne, M. Piérart, *Un décret du koinon des Hellènes à Platées en l'honneur de Glaucon, fils d'Étéoclés, d'Athènes*, BCH 99 [1975] 51–75); and of Nerwinski *op.cit.*, which demonstrates at 6–19 that the length of the lacuna between the Amphictyonic prescript dated by the archonship of Pleiston, and the recognition of the *Ptolemaea* mentioned on a separate fragment of the same *stèle* is unknown: hence, the Delphic *Ptolemaea* fragment may be a restatement of previous measures. For earlier discussion of the Delphic decree: P.M. Fraser, *Two Hellenistic Inscriptions from Delphi*, BCH 78 (1954) 49–67; J. Bousquet, *Inscriptions de Delphes*, BCH 82 (1958) 61–91, 77–82; P.M. Fraser, *The Foundation-Date of the Alexandrian Ptolemaieia*, HThR 54 (1961) 141–145. On Philocles, see Hauben 2004 (s. n. 5) 38–44; H. Hauben, *Philokles, King of the Sidonians and General of the Ptolemies*, in: E. Lipinski (ed), *Studia Phoenicia V: Phoenicia and the East Mediterranean in the first millennium B.C.*, Leuven 1987, 413–428; and, more cautiously, J. Seibert, *Philokles, Sohn des Apollodoros, König der Sidonier*, Historia 19 (1970) 337–351.

⁷ Plausibly: the actual decision is lost. The argument that the decision must have been at least (partly) favourable because the *stèle* was found on Samos, and the Samians would not

in several respects. First, he is presented not as allocating royal land, but as arbitrating ownership of land claimed by two cities. Second, not only does Lysimachus refer to the land as ‘yours’, but he apologises: had he realised that the land had been Samian for so long, he would never have undertaken to judge the case. Instead, on the basis of information supplied by the envoys from Priene, Lysimachus had supposed that the Samians had only recently invaded the land. Finally, Lysimachus is also presented as intervening on the request of the people of Priene, not as imposing himself in the decision.⁸

We do not need to take the rhetoric at face value. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that the letter takes pains to acknowledge the agency, sovereignty and autonomy of the Samians. On the basis of this same letter, however, as interpreted through the hegemonic lens, the Samians have been deprived of agency, Lysimachus granted control of Samos, and all other actors excluded from this part of his imperial sphere until after his death at Corupedium. This approach cannot be justified. Arbitration was undertaken by a variety of state actors in the Greek world.⁹ Of itself, it does not imply subjection to the arbitrating power. In the context of other evidence for hegemony, we could understand arbitration as a ritual undertaken by hegemon and dominated states that does encode such relations. Alternatively, it could be precisely an attempt by the putative hegemon arbitrating to gain some acknowledgement of their authority, or by the state(s) whose dispute is under consideration to gain leverage by involvement of

otherwise have erected the *stèle* is perhaps not illuminating, but the first few lines do seem to imply a decision (at least partly) favourable to them.

C.B. Welles, *Royal Correspondence in the Hellenistic World*, New Haven 1934, 7 = S.L. Ager, *Interstate Arbitrations in the Greek World, 337–90 B.C.*, Berkeley/CA, 1996, 26 = R.S. Bagnall, P. Derow, *Greek Historical Documents. The Hellenistic Period*, Chico/CA, 1981, 12; new edition: *IG XII.6 155* = A. Magnetto, *L'arbitrato di Rodi fra Samo e Priene*, Pisa, 2008, 186–187, 2.

On the history of Samos at this time, see the discussion at *IG XII.6 155 ad loc.*, and G. Shipley, *A history of Samos, 800–188 B.C.*, Oxford 1987, 169–201, especially 181–184 on the Ptolemaic takeover, and 199–201 on the strategic importance of Samos. In keeping with the consensus noted here, Shipley dates Ptolemaic control from 281 or 280, and points to the Nicuria decree as the earliest evidence (182, where he dates the Nicuria decree to late 280 following Fraser 1954 [s. n. 6]; Fraser 1961 [s. n. 6]). Cf. J.P. Barron, *The silver coins of Samos*, London, 1966, 144, which also considers 281 the occasion of Samos' transfer from Lysimachus to Ptolemy II (through Lysimachus' widow, Arsinoe II, who subsequently married Ptolemy II). None adduces further evidence for Lysimachean control in the 280s beyond *IG XII.6 155*.

⁸ Is presented: strictly, we cannot be certain that Lysimachus presents himself in this way. The Samians were presumably on some level responsible for the erection of the *stèle*, and, by extension, may also have been at least partly responsible for the narrative pose and tone. Given the implications for hegemon-island relations derived from this decree, questions of authorship and degree of responsibility are not irrelevant. They are, however, highly tentative, and so are set aside for ease of argument and consistency with previous scholarship. It is enough to note, as in the main text, that the decree does not self-evidently present an ineluctably vertical relationship between Lysimachus and the Samians.

⁹ For a recent synthesis of the evidence for Hellenistic arbitration: Ager, *Interstate Arbitrations* (s. n. 7).

another power on their side. A variety of other configurations can also be envisaged. In order to determine which are more or less plausible, we need to embed the arbitration in its broader context.

This context is telling. If we broaden our focus just slightly from Samos in 283/282, we have evidence for activity not only by Lysimachus and Ptolemy, but also by Demetrius and Seleucus in the immediate vicinity of Samos in the previous five years.¹⁰ To insist that the arbitration must encode Lysimachus' hegemony is thus implausible: it is evidence of engagement, but evidence for engagement alongside other powers in what was a multipolar space in which multiple kings were competing for recognition and allegiance. Lysimachus was so eager to engage because he was not the inevitable intermediary for the dispute with the Prieneans, and so could strengthen his position in Samian internal discourse relative to the other diadochs active in the region. Rather than providing evidence for successive unipolar, hegemonic relationships between Samos and Lysimachus, and Samos and Ptolemy, this arbitration and the Nicuria decree together become testaments to the dynamic multipolar situation in which the Samians, Lysimachus, and Ptolemy operated at this time.

Without the ability to insist on exclusive, unipolar readings of *IG* XII.6 155 and *IG* XII.7 506, certainty as to the exact position of Samos relative to Lysimachus and Ptolemy in the years around 282 is impossible on the current evidence. Whichever formulation we prefer in future analyses, however, the difficulties caused by past insistence on a unipolar model as a necessity in the form of Lysimachean hegemony on Samos remain noteworthy: the lower terminus post quem for the Nicuria decree it implied has had significant implications on broader discussions, including the date of Ptolemy I's death, the establishment and possible reform of the Ptolemaea in Alexandria, and the 'liberation' of Athens by Callias. It is a fine tribute to the power of the unipolar, hegemonical vision which has dominated scholarship of the Hellenistic world that, despite the rhetorical thrust of the arbitration, the complex contemporary political situation, and the numerous cruxes which would have been thus eased, scholars have continued to insist from *IG* XII.6 155 that Lysimachus must have had hegemony over Samos until Ptolemy's arrival, and so to deny even the possibility of dating the Nicuria decree in 282.

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¹⁰ Note that Demetrius' ill-fated expedition to Asia Minor started from Miletus, just thirty miles from Samos on the Anatolian coast (Plutarch *Demetrius* 46–50).