

RHODES AND DEMETRIUS POLIORCETES AT THE END OF THE FOURTH CENTURY BC*

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Abstract: At the end of the 4th century, in 305 BC, Demetrius the Besieger decided to blockade the city of Rhodes: this siege is perhaps the most famous episode in the history of the island. Our principal source is a detailed narrative by Diodorus, in eighteen chapters (81–88; 91–100) of his *Library's* Book 20. Most scholars believe that Diodorus employed a Rhodian source, perhaps Zeno. Diodorus' narrative indicates a 'Rhodocentric' viewpoint, which focuses on the emotions of the citizens of Rhodes: their great fear, but also their extraordinary courage and the strength of their despair. The whole long tale of Diodorus tends to exalt the behaviour of the Rhodians, who resist until Antigonos orders his son Demetrius to end the siege. At the end of Diodorus' narrative, the memory of the Rhodians' emotions survives unforgettable in all readers. With their courage, they were able to gain well-deserved freedom.

Keywords: Demetrius the Besieger – Antigonos – Diodorus – Rhodes – siege

The great siege of Rhodes, started in the summer of 305, is definitely among the most famous and important events of the history of the island: Diodorus devotes as many as eighteen chapters in Book 20 of his *Library* (81–88; 91–100) to this episode.¹ The historian deals with both the besieged and the besieger, the still young Demetrius, Antigonos' son, who thanks to the siege of Rhodes became famous all over the world as Demetrius the Besieger.²

According to Diodorus, Demetrius was called the Besieger for the military innovations he introduced during the siege of Rhodes:

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* All dates, unless otherwise noted, must be considered BC.

¹ All the reflections on the contents of Books 19 and 20 of Diodorus' *Library* are naturally from Landucci 2021 (in particular on the siege of Rhodes, see 243–273).

² Already in 19.45.1–8, Diodorus had dealt with another event in Rhodes, i.e. a great flood that had hit the island in the same period of the death of Eumenes, in three close steps. The last step of the flood occurred during a spring to be identified with the one immediately following the January in which Eumenes was captured and killed. In the chapter Diodorus focuses on detailed descriptions of the damage suffered by the island, including an indication of the number of victims: more than five hundred islanders died because of this natural calamity. His interest in Rhodes, however, dissolves at the end of 19.45, and he returns to the topic only when speaking of the siege suffered by the island in 305/4.

εὐμήχανος γὰρ ὢν καθ' ὑπερβολὴν ἐν ταῖς ἐπινοίαις καὶ πολλὰ παρὰ τὴν τῶν ἀρχιτεκτόνων τέχνην παρευρίσκων ὠνομάσθη μὲν Πολιορκητής.

being exceedingly ready in invention and devising many things beyond the art of the master builders, he [Demetrius] was called Poliorcetes [the Besieger].³

The nickname 'Poliorcetes' is also present in Plutarch, *Demetr.* 42.10–11, where it is inserted in a long reflection on the personality of Demetrius at the time of the conquest of the Macedonian throne, about ten years after the siege of Rhodes. According to all scholars, Diodorus' and Plutarch's quotations most likely depend on Hieronymus of Cardia,⁴ therefore considered the 'inventor' of the nickname reiterated until the Byzantine age, without any mention of its origin.⁵

In any case, beyond Demetrius' nickname, we are interested in the emotions of the Rhodians as a result of the siege suffered since the summer of 305.⁶

The city of Rhodes had been constructed *ex-novo* at the end of the fifth century, on the northern tip of the homonymous island, when the three ancient island *poleis*, Ialysos, Kamiros and Lindos, through a synecism, had merged into one *polis*: by common decision, the newly founded entity played the role of political center of the island.⁷

As already mentioned, Diodorus devotes eighteen chapters to this siege in Book 20 of his *Library* (81–88; 91–100): in 20.81.1, the historian cites the name of the Athenian archon Euxenippos (305/4) as a starting point of his account. These eighteen chapters are divided into two great sections (81–88 and 91–100), separated by two chapters (89–90) on Agathocles of Syracuse. The second section also opens with a chronological indication, the name of Pherecles, archon of Athens in the year 304/3.

The description of the siege is the most in-depth topic of Book 20, and its breadth is unmatched in the rest of the tradition. In effect, Paus. 1.6.6 devotes only few lines to the siege, focuses on the defensive capabilities of the besieged and on the fundamental support of Ptolemy of Egypt, and concludes with the failure of the Antigonid attack. On his part, Plutarch, in *Demetr.* 21–22, offers the reader few details on the progress of the siege: after announcing Demetrius'

³ Diod. 20.92.2.

⁴ See Andrei, Scuderi 1989, 51–52 (O. Andrei).

⁵ In general, on the epithet Poliorcetes, see Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 307–310; Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 150–151. On the possible irony of Demetrius' nickname, see now Rose 2019; Wheatley 2020.

⁶ Much has been written on 'emotions' in the Greek world in recent years; the three volumes edited by Angelos Chaniotis are certainly a milestone on the subject: see *Unveiling Emotions; Unveiling Emotions II; Unveiling Emotions III*.

⁷ On the synecism that led to the foundation of the city of Rhodes, see Berthold 1984, 19–37; Carusi 2003, 219–224. For the Hellenistic Rhodes, see in particular, beyond Gabrielsen 1997, also Wiemer 2002, with a wide bibliography.

attack, he limits himself to citing a long series of anecdotes, and concludes with the announcement of a compromise peace between the contenders.

Justin, on the other hand, does not speak of the siege, although Pompeius Trogus dealt with the topic in Book 15, as can be seen from the corresponding prologue (*Ut Cypro Ptolomaeum vicit classe Demetrius idemque ab obsidione Rhodi summotus est. Repetita in excessu origo Rhodiorum*).

In the tradition as a whole, from the *Marmor Parium* (FGrHist 239 B23) to the *Suda* (s.v. Πρωτογένης, Π 2963), the references to the siege are obviously numerous, yet add nothing to the description in the *Library*.⁸

As for Diodorus' story, scholars have primarily focused on the identification of the source used by the historian: they agree that it can be neither Hieronymus of Cardia, nor Duris of Samos, the two authors considered points of reference for Greek-Eastern history in *Library* Books 18–20.⁹ Diodorus, in fact, has first-hand information on the Rhodians at the time of the siege: we must therefore think of a local historiographer convinced that the island had been the protagonist of an epochal event in the last decade of the fourth century. Diodorus must have known the work of the second-century historian Zeno of Rhodes:¹⁰ therefore, the latter is considered Diodorus' source on the siege of Rhodes by most scholars.¹¹

I too embrace this hypothesis: in my opinion, moreover, Diodorus may have gotten to know Zeno's histories during his journey to Egypt, in 60–57, as the historian himself states in 1.44.1.

Without retracing all the phases of the long siege, we shall try to highlight those points in which Diodorus focuses not so much on the maneuvers of the Besieger, but rather on the reactions and feelings of the Rhodians who had to tackle them: thanks to the use of a pro-Rhodian source, the historian shows great interest in the emotions of the islanders, forced to repel such a strong and dangerous enemy.¹²

Already in the first chapter dedicated to the siege, in 20.81.1–4, Diodorus dwells on a 'hagiographic' description of the political, social and economic situation of the island: this description immediately gives evidence of the pro-Rhodian orientation of its source.

According to Diodorus, indeed, «the city of the Rhodians, which was strong in sea power and was the best governed city of the Greeks, was a prize

⁸ Same view in Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 180. The length of Diodorus' text has always attracted the attention of modern scholars: many pages and even a monograph (Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011) have been dedicated to the siege of Rhodes. For very interesting reflections, see Berthold 1984, 66–80; Billows 1990, 166–169; Wiemer 2002, 85–92; Wiemer 2011; Champion 2014, 130–142; Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 179–201.

⁹ For an analysis of the main sources of Diodorus for the Greek-Eastern part of *Library* Books 18–20, see Landucci 2021, xi–xxi.

¹⁰ Diod. 5.56.7: *περὶ μὲν οὖν τῶν ἀρχαιολογουμένων παρὰ Ῥοδίοις οὕτω τινὲς μυθολογοῦσιν· ἐν οἷς ἔστι καὶ Ζήνων ὁ τὰ περὶ ταύτης συνταξάμενος.*

¹¹ See Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 31–36; Rathmann 2016, 264 n. 411, and Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 180–184.

¹² For a bibliography on emotions in the Greek world, see above n. 6.

eagerly sought after by the dynasts and kings, each of them striving to add her to his alliance».¹³

The city, however, tried to keep good relations with everyone, and with its powerful fleet fought the pirates who infested the eastern Mediterranean: thus, in the second half of the 4th century, Rhodes could be considered an important player in the military policy between the Aegean and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁴

As a last and most important sign of the fame enjoyed by the Rhodians, Diodorus adds that Alexander the Great had deposited his will on the island. The history of the privileged relations between Rhodes and Alexander can be found, in addition to this brief reference by Diodorus, only in the so-called *Romance of Alexander*, an imaginative collection of tales about the great Macedonian ruler.¹⁵

Diodorus, moreover, in the last paragraph of this chapter, states that the Rhodians had good relationships with all the Diadochi, but had a great friendship with Ptolemy, also thanks to the series of commercial ties that existed (and continued existing for the next 150 years) between the island and Egypt.¹⁶

Diodorus is again involved in the emotions of the Rhodians in 20.83, as the islanders understood that the war against Antigonos and Demetrius was unavoidable.¹⁷ Filled with sorrow and worry, at Antigonos' request to deliver the hundred most prominent citizens as hostages and to welcome Demetrius' fleet in the city harbour, the Rhodians began the war preparations. Demetrius' ships were already anchored in Loryma, at the southernmost tip of the so-called Carian Chersonese, the closest headland to Rhodes.¹⁸

¹³ Diod. 20.81.2: ἡ πόλις ἢ τῶν Ῥοδίων ἰσχύουσα ναυτικαῖς δυνάμεσι καὶ πολιτευομένη κάλλιστα τῶν Ἑλλήνων περιμάχητος τοῖς δυνάσταις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν ἦν, ἐκάστου σπεύδοντος εἰς τὴν αὐτοῦ φιλίαν προσλαμβάνεσθαι.

¹⁴ It should be noted, with Durvyne 2018, 244 n. 529, that the noun πειρατής appears in the *Library* only in Book 20 concerning the years 305–302, in seven occurrences: six of these refer to the siege of Rhodes, while the last one is related to an attack by Demetrius to the city of Pherae in Thessaly (in general on piracy in the ancient world, see Ferone 1997; de Souza 1999; on piracy in the Hellenistic age, still fundamental Davies 1984). On the hypothetical hegemonic dreams of the Rhodians in the 3rd and 2nd century, see Wiemer 2011.

¹⁵ About relations between Alexander and Rhodes, see Durvyne 2018, 244 n. 530. On the *Romance of Alexander*, see Stoneman 2007. As already said elsewhere (Landucci 2019, 21), the *Romance of Alexander* has an open narrative structure: over time, this work included new elements that foregrounded the pleasure of storytelling, beyond and above fidelity to facts, with interpolations of various kinds. One interpolation has been identified precisely in the story of Alexander's relations with Rhodes and, according to Hauben 1977, 307–316, whose opinion is now widely shared (see e.g. Will 1979, 74; Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 54–55; Durvyne 2018, 244 n. 530), it may have been conceived in Rhodes, but forged in Alexandria, and be a proof of the excellent relations between the island and the Ptolemies.

¹⁶ On this relationship, see, in particular, Gabrielsen 2013; about the structure of the Rhodian state at the beginning of the Hellenistic age, see Berthold 1984, 38–58; Gabrielsen 1997. For the island's status before the siege, see Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 53–115.

¹⁷ For a bibliography on emotions in the Greek world, see above n. 6.

¹⁸ This territory was the so-called 'integrated Peraia', i.e. that part of the Asian mainland whose settlements were 'an integral part' of the civic subdivisions of the Rhodian community (Carusi 2003, 219–224). On the Rhodian Peraia, see Fraser, Bean 1954; Rice 1999; Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 108–114.

At 20.83.1–2 Diodorus describes with dramatic tones how Demetrius' great fleet moved closer to the island, through the narrow stretch of sea that separates it from Loryma harbour. If in the previous chapter the presentation of the Antigoniid army had been reduced to a dry list of ships and soldiers, in these paragraphs the story appears to have been elaborated 'from the perspective' of the Rhodians. As from a theater's auditorium, they anxiously watched the magnitude of the fleet and the glitter of the weapons: they saw their entire existence in danger and their faces showed infinite fear.

According to Diod. 20.83.3–4, after disembarking his army, Demetrius took position near the city, setting up his camp out of range of missiles. He at once sent out fit and proper men from the pirates and others to plunder the island both by land and by sea. He also cut down trees in the region nearby, and destroyed the farm buildings, and with this material he fortified the camp, surrounding it with a triple palisade and with great, close-set stockades, so that the loss suffered by the enemy became a protection for his own men. Then, using his whole army and crews, in a few days Demetrius closed with a mole the space between the city and the exit, and made a port large enough for his ships.

Diodorus does not mention the place where Demetrius built the harbour for his fleet. According to Richard Berthold,¹⁹ followed by most critics,²⁰ Demetrius landed in the gulf of Ialysos, on the east coast of the island, south-east of the city; according to Isabelle Pimouguet-Pédarros,²¹ instead, he landed on the west coast of the island, southwest of the city, in Zephyros bay.

We must, however, admit that there are no archaeological findings that support either hypothesis, although two facts, one in favor and one against Berthold's view, must be mentioned: 1) the Gulf of Ialysos is the closest landing point to Loryma harbour; 2) the harbours (military and commercial) of the city of Rhodes are located exactly on the opposite coast to that of Ialysos.

Thus, had Demetrius landed in that gulf, at each attack his ships would have to circumnavigate the tip of the island where the city was located. Zephyros bay, on the contrary, is immediately south of the city harbours: once reached it on the way from Loryma, passing by Rhodes (and thus allowing the inhabitants that perfect view described by Diodorus at 20.83.1–2), ships would be able to attack the city harbours very quickly. In my opinion, therefore, we can assume that Demetrius anchored his fleet in Zephyros bay.

Impressed by the parade of Demetrius' fleet, the Rhodians continued preparing the war; in 20.84.1–3, Diodorus focuses on their diplomatic, political and social choices. They sent delegations to Cassander, Lysimachus and Ptolemy to ask for help,²² and invited foreigners who were on the island to decide whether

¹⁹ Berthold 1984, 68–71.

²⁰ See Murray 2012, 114; Champion 2014, 133; Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 186.

²¹ Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 130–131 and Table VI, which embraces an old hypothesis of Rodgers 1937, 247, reaffirmed by Boëldieu Trever 2010, 65–66.

²² A request for help to Ptolemy is also mentioned in the so-called *Lindos Chronicle*, a long inscription in Doric dialect, dating back to 99, engraved on a stone slab reused for the flooring of the Byzantine

to stay and fight, or leave, in the attempt to, on the one hand, limit the consumption of food and, on the other, drive away possible traitors.

In the end, the Rhodians could count on six thousand citizens and one thousand foreigners ready to fight. To these men, they also added several strong young slaves, buying them from their owners and arming them, promising them freedom had they fought bravely against Demetrius.

The Rhodians, moreover, undertook to guarantee both subsidies and protection to the families of the men killed in the war: thus, they managed to build strong solidarity among all citizens, who were in awe of Demetrius yet braver in sharing the risks.

In 20.84.4 Diodorus affirms, indeed, that all the citizens competed to participate in the military preparations: the rich offered their economic resources and the poor would work for free.

Meanwhile, with some of their ships, the Rhodians also managed to intercept and capture several merchant ships carrying supplies to Demetrius. They set fire to the boats and used prisoners to obtain money: they demanded a ransom of 1,000 drachmas for a free man and 500 drachmas for a slave.²³

The Rhodians also knew that Demetrius was on the verge of attacking their two harbours. Therefore, they brought several war machines to the quay of the small harbour to defend the war fleet, whereas in the large harbour they mounted catapults on merchant ships. In this way, they created a double line of defense and showed that these desperate conditions had sharpened their wits.

In four chapters, 20.85–88, Diodorus focuses on the effort of the Rhodians to repel Demetrius' continuous assaults by sea: the historian's pro-Rhodian source insists on the Rhodians' ability to counter Demetrius' forces, despite their apparent superiority. Of course, the islanders had to suffer many painful losses: after a week's truce, Demetrius attacked with such a violence that the *pritanes* (i.e., the supreme magistrates of the city) decided to organise a counterattack, to drive the enemy away.²⁴

For the first time, not only did the Rhodians repel Demetrius' attacks, but also armed three ships and ordered their helmsmen to ram the war machines loaded on the enemy ships. This tactic was successful, although the Rhodians paid courage with the loss of a ship.

Church of St. Stephen, and found in Lindos in 1909 by a Danish archaeological expedition: see Higbie 2003; *La gloria di Athena Lindia*. The document, as stated in the text (section A, line 12), was drafted by two Rhodian scholars, Tharsagoras of Ladarma, *aliter ignotus*, and Timachidas of Lindos, often quoted by the erudite tradition: on Timachidas, see now Matijašić 2020. The last surviving lines of the stele mention the third theophany of the goddess (D 95–115 [*Epiph.* III]): when the city was besieged by Demetrius, the goddess appeared in a dream to Callicles, former priest of Athena Lindia, and ordered him to report to a magistrate of the city, Anaxipolis, to write to Ptolemy and invite him to come to the rescue of the city. Callicles, however, acted only after the goddess had appeared to him in a dream for six nights and had given him the same order; he went to the city, reported the dream and Anaxipolis was sent to Ptolemy. At this point the stele becomes unreadable.

²³ In general, on the military forces available to the Rhodians, see Pimouguet–Pédarros 2011, 193–229.

²⁴ Diod. 20.88.3–6.

Demetrius was enraged by the Rhodian counterattack. He thus placed a war machine three times bigger than the lost ones on a new ship, although a storm made the machine collapse and blocked the ship during the attack to the island's harbour.

Seeing that their enemies were in trouble due to the storm, the Rhodians went out on the dock and attacked the sailors of the ship who were left alone and eventually had to surrender: in this way, the Rhodians were able to take about four hundred prisoners.

Along with this defeat, Demetrius could not prevent the arrival of a first contingent of aid, consisting of one hundred and fifty Cretan mercenaries and over five hundred men sent by Ptolemy, many of whom were Rhodians that had been mercenaries in Egypt for a long time.

The war season of 305/4, therefore, ended badly for Demetrius, who decided to abandon the assaults to Rhodes by sea and prepare for an attack on land.

At this point, in 20.91, Diodorus focuses on the description of the land machines of war built by Demetrius and, in particular, on the gigantic *helepolis* («taker-of-cities»), an increasingly enhanced version of the one he had already deployed during the siege of Salamis of Cyprus in 306.²⁵

Also Plutarch, *Demetr.* 21.1–3, speaks of the *helepolis* and emphasises that «it caused fright to the soul and fascination at the sight of those who looked» (θάμβος ἄμα τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ χάριν τινὰ τῇ ὄψει τῶν θεωμένων παρεῖχε).

Faced with Demetrius' great preparations, the Rhodians had a new brave reaction:²⁶ worried by the land attack that the Besieger was organising, they built a second wall parallel to the one the enemy was targeting, with stones recovered from the demolition of the theater, the adjoining houses and some sacred buildings – vowing, however, to rebuild them as soon as the city would be safe, because despite their difficulties they were and always remained respectful of gods' prerogatives.

At the same time, the Rhodians realised that many Antigonid ships could no longer sail because their crews were working on land. Thus, they decided to arm nine of their ships and 'go hunting' for the merchant ships that brought supplies to Demetrius.

This ploy was very successful and strengthened the citizens' conviction to continue their war for freedom, despite the deadly risks this entailed.

Shortly below, in 20.93.6–7, Diodorus focuses on a public assembly held on the island: the citizens rejected the proposal to tear down the statues of Antigonus and of Demetrius as they decided to prove themselves better than the king who was besieging them.

²⁵ See Diod. 20.48.1–8, with the commentary by Landucci 2021, 223–225. Diodorus does not say the name of the builders of the two *helepoleis* of Demetrius. From sources of the Augustan age, we do know, however, that the *helepolis* of Rhodes was built by an Athenian architect named Epimachus: see Athen. Mech. 27; Vitruv. 10.16.4. On Athenaeus Mechanicus, see Whitehead, Blyth 2004; for a large bibliography on Vitruvius, see Cuomo, Formisano 2016.

²⁶ See Diod. 20.93.1–7.

Certainly in the wake of his source, Diodorus enthusiastically approves of this decision: the Rhodians deserved the praise of all the Greeks and Macedonians for their generosity, and showed a great capacity to endure their misfortunes – while, in case of defeat, this could have reminded the winner of the correctness of their behaviour.

In the meantime, Demetrius also tried to penetrate the walls of Rhodes through an underground tunnel dug by his men; the besieged, however, had been informed by a deserter of Demetrius' ploy and dug a deep trench to block the enemy.²⁷

Finally, Demetrius also tried bribery, secretly sending money to Athenagoras of Miletus, commander of the mercenaries arrived from Egypt. The latter, *aliter ignotus*, pretended to betray his allies and made an appointment with one of Demetrius' officers to decide where the Antigonid soldiers should gather to enter the tunnel.

Athenagoras had, however, informed the city council: the Rhodians then set up a trap for Demetrius' officer, who, after being captured, was ransomed by Demetrius.²⁸ Conversely, the Rhodians paid great honours to Athenagoras, not only to reward his loyalty, but also to arouse goodwill towards their institutions also in the other mercenaries present in the city.²⁹

Diodorus³⁰ then passes to describe the assault of the *helepolis* to the city walls, and informs about the arrival of a lot of supplies to the island, sent by Ptolemy, Cassander and Lysimachus to support the Rhodians. These aids were crucial to allow the Rhodians to resist the siege for long, and to reinforce the courage with which they fought for their homeland.

Diodorus then dwells on Demetrius' assaults and the countermoves of the Rhodians who managed to damage the *helepolis* with an incessant launching of incendiary bullets. Also in this battle, as in the siege of Salamis of Cyprus, the *helepolis* proved to be a very fragile giant that was potentially dangerous for those using it.

Demetrius, however, was still stubbornly attacking the city, and eventually managed to take down two sections of the walls, despite the courageous fighting of the Rhodians on the intermediate tower in order to keep the enemy out of town. Many Rhodians died: a general too, Ananias, died after fighting bravely. As always, Diodorus highlights both Demetrius' failures and the seemingly endless ability of the Rhodians to counter all his moves with a total disregard for danger and no fear of death.

²⁷ See Diod. 20.94.1–4. Also *PBerol.* 11632 (in *BNJ* 533 F 2) deals with these excavations on both sides: starting from line 12 and to line 48, the last surviving line, this papyrus narrates the same events Diodorus deals with.

²⁸ Diodorus says nothing about the fate of this officer. From *PBerol.* 11632, lines 45–48, we know that he was condemned to death, but he was not executed because the Rhodians accepted the ransom offered by Demetrius.

²⁹ See Diod. 20.94.5. On the same line *PBerol.* 11632, lines 40–44.

³⁰ Diod. 20.95–96.

The fate of the siege was decided shortly afterwards while the Rhodians were still receiving aid from Ptolemy: not only food supplies, but also (and above all) as many as fifteen hundred soldiers headed by an *aliter ignotus* Antigonus of Macedonia, to replace their losses sustained in battle.³¹ After a short respite, Demetrius prepared yet another assault on the city; in the night, a task force of fifteen hundred men rushed to where the wall had already been knocked down whereas the bulk of the army charged by land and sea, at daybreak, at Demetrius' signal.

When the destiny of the city seemed doomed, fate served a twisted outcome:³² the Rhodians fought in desperation «for their native land and their most precious things» (ὕπερ πατρίδος καὶ τῶν μεγίστων) and prevailed in the clash, killing many enemies, both soldiers and officers. Several of Demetrius' men were captured and only a few managed to escape: the Rhodians too suffered heavy losses, but the city was now safe.³³

In 20.99.1, we read that «when Demetrius realized that Fortune had snatched from his hand the capture of the city, he made new preparations for the siege» (Δημήτριος δὲ τὴν τῆς πόλεως ἄλωσιν ὑπολαβὼν ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ τὴν τύχην ἀφῆρησθαι πάλιν παρεσκευάζετο πρὸς τὴν πολιορκίαν). The intervention of the τύχη, a key concept in Diodorus' *Library*,³⁴ actually put the final seal on Demetrius' adventure: according to the historian, Antigonus invited his son to bring the matter to an end with an honourable compromise. This happened very quickly, as Ptolemy too convinced the Rhodians to accept a fair solution of the siege. The peace provided for the full autonomy of Rhodes, free of tribute and garrisons; the Rhodians, however, allied with Antigonus – except in the event of a war against Ptolemy – and handed over one hundred hostages, but no magistrate.

The siege of Rhodes ended with this peace, signed in the summer of 304: neither contender had scored an overwhelming victory. For sure the Rhodians had not been defeated, while most scholars think that the real loser was Demetrius³⁵ – although in recent years there have been attempts to re-evaluate his position³⁶ as the island had been on the verge of surrendering and had suffered much damage.

In my opinion, the draw sanctioned by the peace seems to have been a great success for the Rhodians: they had tenaciously defended their autonomy, shown great courage and fought resolutely.

In 20.100.1–4, Diodorus lists the honours decreed by the Rhodians for those who had helped to save the city: they bestowed gifts on the most valiant fighters,

³¹ See Diod. 20.98.1–9.

³² See Diod. 20.98.9.

³³ See Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 263–282; Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 198–199.

³⁴ See the pages of Sacks 1990, 38–41, reiterated in subsequent bibliography.

³⁵ See Billows 1990, 186, speaking of Demetrius' «debacle»; for a detailed bibliography see Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 200 n. 79.

³⁶ See Pimouguet-Pédarros 2011, 307–310; Champion 2014, 140–141, and, naturally, Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 199–201.

and, as promised,³⁷ freed the slaves who had fought for the island, granting them citizenship as well. They raised statues in honour of Cassander and Lysimachus, but above all they honoured Ptolemy, who was revered as a god after a consultation of the oracle of Ammon in the oasis of Siwah.³⁸

As for the honours the Rhodians bestowed on Ptolemy I, Pausanias, in 1.8.6, lists the nicknames of all Ptolemaic sovereigns, and says:

ὄνόματα μὲν δὴ κατὰ τὰ αὐτὰ Πτολεμαῖοί σφισιν, ἄλλη δὲ ἐπὶ κλησὶς ἄλλω· καὶ γὰρ Φιλομήτορα καλοῦσι καὶ Φιλάδελφον ἕτερον, τὸν δὲ τοῦ Λάγου Σωτήρα παραδόντων Ῥοδίων τὸ ὄνομα.

they are all alike called Ptolemy, but each has his own surname. For they call one Philometor, and another Philadelphus, while the son of Lagus is called Soter, a name given him by the Rhodians.

In fact, there is a long historical and historiographical diatribe on Ptolemy I's nickname, linked to a famous episode in the Alexander saga, the capture of the city of the Mallians on the west bank of the Indus in the autumn of 326, when the sovereign was seriously injured.³⁹

This issue cannot be delved into here, yet we must point out that Ptolemy himself, in his *Histories*, denied having saved Alexander in the city of the Mallians. It is therefore certain that Ptolemy was called *Soter* by the Rhodians, as Pausanias (1.8.6) tells us, to thank him for the help he had sent during the siege.⁴⁰

The most famous action of the Rhodians for the narrow escape was, however, the construction of the so-called Colossus of Rhodes, the giant bronze statue of the Sun God: the location of this statue at Rhodes Harbour is not confirmed by ancient sources nor by the results of archaeological excavations. However, wherever it was placed, this statue was certainly visible to anyone approaching the city by sea: it well expressed the joy of the people of Rhodes and was considered by the ancients one of the seven wonders of the world.

Even if the historiographical sources on the siege do not mention this statue, it is referred to by the erudite tradition and by three epigrams that exalt its magnitude.

The Colossus therefore remained well imprinted in the memory of the ancient world, despite the short duration of its existence terminated as it collapsed to the ground due to the great earthquake that struck the island in 228. The bronze used for the statue remained there until the Arab conquest of AD 652–

³⁷ See Diod. 20.84.1–6.

³⁸ On the fame of this oracle, mainly due to the visit of Alexander the Great, see Landucci 2019, 127–128.

³⁹ About this, see Landucci 2019, 198–201.

⁴⁰ On the epithet *Soter* of Ptolemy I, see Worthington 2016, 168–169; in general about this nickname shared by other Hellenistic rulers, see Muccioli 2013, 81–94.

653, when it was sold by the winning commander to a Jew from Emesa who used hundreds of camels for its transport.⁴¹

The three longest descriptions of the statue are found in Strabo (14.2.5 [C 652]), Pliny the Elder (*HN* 34.18.41–42) and in a treatise on the seven wonders of the ancient world (*De septem orbis spectaculis*).⁴² As for the three epigrams dedicated to the Colossus, the first, and most famous, retains the dedicatory inscription of the statue (*AP* 6.171). The second is an epigram by Antipater of Sidon, a poet who lived in the second half of the second century, which is the oldest text to list the seven wonders of the world (*AP* 9.58). The third, instead, is a recent discovery because it is one of the many epigrams by Posidippus of Pella contained in the now famous papyrus of Milan (*PMil.Vogl.* 8.309), published at the beginning of the third millennium.⁴³

Posidippus' epigram no. 68 is dedicated to the sculptor of the Colossus, Chares of Lindos, explicitly mentioned by Strabo and Pliny too. *Sic stantibus rebus*, Posidippus' epigram seems to be the most ancient reference to the Colossus, evidence of the fact that the fame of this monument had very rapidly spread throughout the Greek–Eastern world as early as in the first decades of the third century.⁴⁴

As a matter of fact, the great Colossus well represented the sense of liberation of the Rhodians after a year of siege: fear, the risks taken, and the human losses suffered had stirred terrible emotions in the islanders, which were only overcome when Demetrius' fleet left the island and headed towards Greece.⁴⁵

The courage of a handful of men, determined to die for their homeland, had prevailed over the immoderate ambitions of Demetrius (and his father). A period of great splendour began for Rhodes, in the name of freedom and autonomy, values that were so dear to the founding ideology underlying every Greek *polis*.

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⁴¹ See Const. Porph. *De adm. imp.* 20–21. For a detailed history of the Colossus, see Hoepfner 2003; Vedder 2015; *status quaestionis* in Wheatley, Dunn 2020, 443–448.

⁴² Ancient tradition attributes this treatise to Philo of Byzantium, a Greek writer of technical subjects who lived at the end of the third century; however, according to most recent philological studies, it dates to much later, not earlier than 5th century AD. See Lanowsky 1985; for an edition of the text, with the confirmation of its dating to 5th or even 6th century AD, see Brodersen 1992.

⁴³ *Editio princeps*: Bastianini, Gallazzi 2001; see also Austin, Bastianini 2002 and Gigante Lanzara 2009, which, in addition to the Greek text, with Italian translation, also contains a careful survey of all the extensive bibliography published in 2001–2009.

⁴⁴ On this epigram, beyond philological observations in Angiò 2003, see also Wiemer 2011: he offers interesting reflections on the propagandistic use that the Rhodians made of the Colossus, which he considers the image of the hegemony on the eastern Mediterranean longed for by the islanders.

⁴⁵ For a bibliography on emotions in the Greek world, see above n. 6.

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