

256 Decree of the League of Islanders on the acceptance of the
Ptolemaieia (c.280)

The 'League of Islanders', which included the smaller islands of the central Aegean (cf. **1**, **257**) was founded by Antigonus the One-Eyed in 315/14 as part of his attempt to enlist the support of the Greek world (**35**). It was subsequently

controlled by his son Demetrius Poliorcetes before passing into Ptolemaic hands by c.286 where it remained for some 30 years. The League is not mentioned in extant literary sources and the evidence for it is purely epigraphic. Like other Leagues founded under royal patronage (cf. 50), it was used as an instrument of royal control. See I. L. Merker, *Historia* 19 (1970), 141–60; Fraser I (1972), 224, 231f.; Bagnall (1976), 136–58; T. L. Shear, *Hesperia* Supplement 17 (1978), 30–44. For a lower dating of this inscription (263) cf. Hazzard (2000), 47–58 and 168–75.

[Resolved] by the delegates (*synedroi*) of the Islanders; concerning the matters about which [Philocles] king of the Sidonians¹ and Bacchon the [nesiarch² wrote] to the cities, that they should send delegates to Samos³ to / discuss the 5 (question of the) sacrifice, the sacred envoys (*theoroi*) and the contest which King Ptolemy (II) is instituting in honour of his father in Alexandria,⁴ to be equal in rank with the Olympic Games [and (concerning which)] Philocles and Bacchon have [now conversed] with the [delegates] who have arrived from the cities, be it / resolved by the common body (*koinon*) of the delegates, 10 since King Ptolemy (I) Soter (the Saviour) has been responsible for many great blessings to the Islanders and the other Greeks, having liberated the cities,⁵ restored their laws, / re-established to all their ancestral constitution 15 and remitted⁶ their taxes, and (since) now King Ptolemy (II), having inherited the kingdom from his father, continues to show the same goodwill and concern for the Islanders and / the other Greeks, and is offering a sacrifice in honour 20 of his father and instituting a gymnastic, musical and equestrian contest to be equal in rank with the Olympic Games, preserving his [piety] towards the gods⁷ and maintaining his goodwill towards his [ancestors], and (since) for this purpose he is inviting / [the] Islanders and the other Greeks to [vote] that 25 the contest should be equal in rank with the Olympic Games, and (since) it is fitting that all the Islanders, who were the [first] to have honoured Ptolemy Soter with godlike honours⁸ [both because] of his [public benefactions] and because of his [services] to individuals, / should collaborate [in other matters 30 with King] Ptolemy (II) at his invitation and should now [vote with all] zeal in accordance with [his wish . . . to grant] worthy honours / [. . . of] their goodwill, 35 [to accept] the sacrifice and [to send] the sacred envoys at the [appropriate season for] all time to come, as instructed by the king; [and] that the contest should be equal in rank with the Olympic Games, and that the victors / [from 40 the Islanders] should enjoy the same honours which are [written down in] the laws among each of the Islanders for the victors at the Olympic Games; and to crown king Ptolemy son of King Ptolemy Soter with a [golden] crown for merit / [worth] a thousand staters, for his excellence and his goodwill 45 towards the Islanders, and that the delegates should inscribe this decree on a

stone stele and [set it up at] Delos next to the altar of [Ptolemy] Soter. [In]
50 the same way let the cities participating in the council (*synedrion*) pass this /
resolution, inscribe it on stone stelae and consecrate it in the sanctuaries
in which the other honours are inscribed in each city. The delegates shall
55 appoint three sacred envoys to go / to Alexandria, sacrifice to Ptolemy Soter
on behalf of the League (*koinon*) of Islanders and hand over [the] crown to
the king. The money for the crown, for the journey and expenses of the
60 sacred envoys shall be contributed by the cities, each / [according to] its
share, and they shall give it to the person [designated by Bacchon]. Glaucon
of [Cythnus, . . . of] Naxos, Cleocritus of Andros were appointed sacred
envoys.

*Syll.*³ 390; Burstein 92

1. A hellenised ruler of Sidon, allied to the Ptolemies and admiral of their fleet; cf. **155**, BD 73 and Merker, *op. cit.*, 143–50; Bagnall (1976), index s.v. Philokles; M. Wörrle, *Chiron* 8 (1978), 225–30.
2. On Bacchon cf. **257** and Merker, *op. cit.*, 150–2; Bagnall (1976), index s.v. Bacchon; K. J. Rigsby, *AJP* 101 (1980), 194–6. The ‘nesiarch’ was (probably) a royal appointee who acted as the king’s delegate towards the islanders; it is not clear that he was subordinate to Philocles the admiral.
3. The council of the League usually met on Delos; it is not clear whether Samos, a naval base of the Ptolemies, formally belonged to the League (Bagnall (1976), 80 and n. 2). Cf. **132**, **145**.
4. i. e. the quinquennial *Ptolemaieia*, cf. **55**, **132**, **141**, **255** nn. 12 and 13, **258**, **294** n. 5. The attempt to raise the status of the *Ptolemaieia* to equal that of the Olympic Games and to involve the Greek world in its celebration was far more ambitious than anything practised by the other Hellenistic monarchies.
5. A reference to Ptolemy I’s campaigns in Greece and the Aegean in 310–308 when he posed as ‘champion of the Greeks’ (**35** and n. 9).
6. The Greek word could mean either ‘lighten’ or ‘remove’, cf. Merker, *op. cit.*, 151 n. 46.
7. Cf. **255** n. 9.
8. Presumably therefore earlier than Rhodes (cf. **47(b)**); cf. too **265** and see generally **39**.