

= Battle of Salamis (306 BC) =

The naval Battle of Salamis in 306 BC took place near Salamis , Cyprus between the fleets of Ptolemy I of Egypt and Antigonus I Monophthalmus , two of the Diadochi , the generals who , after the death of Alexander the Great , fought each other for control of his empire . Antigonus ' fleet was led by his son Demetrius , who had invaded Cyprus and was besieging Ptolemy 's brother Menelaus at Salamis . The battle was a complete victory for Demetrius , and resulted in the surrender of Menelaus and his capture of Cyprus . As a result , Antigonus assumed the royal title that had been vacant since the murder of Alexander 's underage son , followed by the other Diadochi soon after .

= = Background = =

During the wars of the Diadochi that followed the death of Alexander the Great , Ptolemy , who had seized control of Egypt , had taken over the island of Cyprus and used it as a base of operations against his rival Antigonus I Monophthalmus . From Cyprus , Ptolemy 's forces were able to raid the coasts of Syria and Asia Minor . In early 306 BC , Antigonus resolved to remove this threat , and ordered his son , Demetrius , to capture the island . Demetrius at the time was in Greece , where he had in the previous year overthrown the garrison installed in Athens by the ruler of Macedon , Cassander . The city , along with neighbouring Megara , was restored to democratic rule , and allied itself with Demetrius . As a result , when Demetrius sailed from Athens in spring 306 to capture Cyprus , he was accompanied by 30 Athenian quadriremes .

Crossing the Aegean , Demetrius made for the coast of Caria , whence he called upon the Rhodians to join him , per their alliance with his father . The Rhodians , however , who maintained good relations with Ptolemy , refused . Going on to Cilicia , where he was reinforced with more troops , Demetrius then crossed over to Cyprus with an army of 15 @,@ 000 infantry and 500 cavalry . This was accompanied by a fleet numbering 53 heavy ships ? 7 heptereis , 10 hexereis , 20 quinqueremes ? and upwards of 110 lighter vessels ? triremes and quadriremes ? although the exact numbers are somewhat unclear . He was opposed by Ptolemy 's brother , Menelaus , who disposed of 12 @,@ 000 infantry , 800 cavalry , and 60 ships .

Demetrius landed on the Karpasia Peninsula on the northeast of the island and captured the towns of Carpasia and Urania . Leaving his fleet there , he then marched on land against the city of Salamis . Menelaus confronted Demetrius in battle some five miles from the city , but was defeated with heavy loss (1 @,@ 000 dead and 3 @,@ 000 captured) and had to retreat behind its walls . Demetrius then brought his fleet and siege train into action and laid siege to the city . This was the first of the sieges that would earn Demetrius his later nickname of " Poliorcetes " (" the Besieger ") , featuring for the first time a nine @-@ story siege tower or helepolis . Demetrius ' machines opened a breach in the wall and his subsequent assault nearly proved decisive , but Menelaus was able to repel the attack and burn down the siege machines . In the meantime , in response to his brother 's appeals , Ptolemy himself had arrived at Paphos at the head of 140 warships (all quadriremes and quinqueremes) and over 10 @,@ 000 men on 200 transports .

= = Battle = =

Ptolemy decided to try to make a night dash from Citium , round Cape Greko , to Salamis , hoping to surprise Demetrius and combine his fleet with his brother 's sixty ships so they could then outnumber Demetrius . Demetrius , however , informed of Ptolemy 's arrival , took steps just in order to prevent this from happening : he equipped his ships with missile @-@ throwers , brought aboard his best troops as marines , and sailed his fleet to anchor just outside the harbour of the city , bottling up Menelaus in the harbour and interposing himself between the two enemy fleets . This meant that Demetrius took a calculated risk that he would be able to defeat Ptolemy before Menelaus could sail out of the harbour and attack him in the rear .

As Ptolemy 's fleet came into view of the city right after dawn on the day of the battle , they found Demetrius ' fleet deployed and waiting for them . His fleet augmented to some 180 vessels with

ships captured in Cyprus , Demetrius concentrated the bulk against Ptolemy , leaving only 10 quinqueremes under Antisthenes to blockade the narrow exit of the harbour of Salamis and prevent or at least delay Menelaus ' intervention . Demetrius had gathered his best ships ? the 7 Phoenician heptereis , the Athenian squadron , and behind them 10 hexereis and 10 quinqueremes ? on the left , under command of the admiral Medius of Larissa . Medius was apparently the actual overall commander of the fleet , although Demetrius himself was also present on the left wing on his flagship , a hepteres . His centre comprised the lightest vessels in his fleet , under the command of Themison of Samos and Marsyas of Pella , while the right was entrusted to Hegesippus of Halicarnassus and Pleistias of Cos , the chief pilot (archikybernetes , the second @-@ in @-@ command after Medius) of the fleet . Ptolemy quickly matched his fleet to mirror his opponent 's dispositions : he ordered the transports carrying his army to fall back , and massed the largest ships of his fleet on his own left , which he commanded in person . As the historian Richard Billows writes , " the battle was in effect a race to see which of the two dynasts could first defeat the enemy 's right wing and turn to attack the enemy 's center " , with the " added question of whether or not Menelaus would succeed in breaking out of Salamis in time to intervene " .

According to Diodorus Siculus , who provides the fullest , and probably most reliable , account of the battle , when the two fleets were about three stadia apart , both Demetrius and Ptolemy raised the signal to attack (a gilded shield) , and the two fleets charged each other . Diodorus describes the ramming and boarding actions , as well as the missile exchanges , that dominated the fight :

[U] sing their bows and their ballistae at first , then their javelins in a shower , the men wounded those who were within range ; then when the ships had come close together and the encounter was about to take place with violence , the soldiers on the decks crouched down and the oarsmen , spurred on by the signalmen , bent more desperately to their oars . As the ships drove together with force and violence , in some cases they swept off each other 's oars so that the ships became useless for flight or pursuit , and the men who were on board , though eager for a fight , were prevented from joining in the battle ; but where the ships had met prow to prow with their rams , they drew back for another charge , and the soldiers on board shot at each other with effect since the mark was close at hand for each party . Some of the men , when their captains had delivered a broadside blow and the rams had become firmly fixed , leaped aboard the ships of the enemy , receiving and giving severe wounds ; for certain of them , after grasping the rail of a ship that was drawing near , missed their footing , fell into the sea , and at once were killed with spears by those who stood above them ; and others , making good their intent , slew some of the enemy and , forcing others along the narrow deck , drove them into the sea . As a whole the fighting was varied and full of surprises : many times those who were weaker got the upper hand because of the height of their ships , and those who were stronger were foiled by inferiority of position and by the irregularity with which things happen in fighting of this kind .

Demetrius himself won distinction for his bravery when Ptolemy 's men boarded his flagship , " by hurling his javelins at some of them and by striking others at close range with his spear " , despite being himself subject to " many missiles of all sorts " . Of his three bodyguards , who tried to protect him with their shields , one was killed and the others severely wounded . The Athenians also fought with distinction , as Demetrius awarded 1 @, @ 200 suits of armour to Athens from the spoils taken . In the end , both left wings proved victorious , but it was Demetrius who won the race : by the time Ptolemy turned to attack Demetrius ' centre , he found the rest of his fleet already defeated and in flight . Menelaus ' 60 ships meanwhile , under the command of Menoetius , managed to break through Demetrius ' blockade , only to find the battle already lost . Demetrius tasked Neon and Burichus with pursuing the defeated enemy and picking up the men from the sea , and returned in triumph to his camp . His fleet had only lost 20 damaged ships , all of which returned to service after repairs , while Ptolemy 's fleet had lost 80 ships . More importantly , Demetrius ' forces had captured fully 40 of Ptolemy 's warships intact with their crews , as well as over a hundred of the transports with some 8 @, @ 000 troops aboard .

= = Aftermath = =

Following this defeat , Ptolemy retreated to Egypt , and Menelaus was forced to surrender Salamis and its garrison , further increasing Demetrius ' strength . Demetrius then moved to take over the rest of Cyprus , taking over the garrisons , some 16 @,@ 000 infantry and 800 cavalry , into his own army as well . Menelaus and other relatives and friends of Ptolemy , however , who had been captured , were soon sent back to Egypt with their personal possessions .

The victory at Salamis was used by Antigonus as a suitable pretext for his own royal proclamation , the Macedonian throne having lain vacant since the murder of Alexander IV of Macedon by Cassander in 309 BC . At the same time , Demetrius was raised to co @-@ king alongside his father . Antigonus ' assumption of the royal title was followed by an attempt to eliminate Ptolemy for good in a massive , but failed , invasion of Egypt in autumn 306 , and then by the celebrated , but equally unsuccessful , Siege of Rhodes by Demetrius in 305 ? 304 BC . Finally , in 302 BC the remaining dynasts ? Ptolemy , Cassander , Seleucus , and Lysimachus ? having in turn assumed the royal title themselves , allied against Antigonus and defeated him in the Battle of Ipsus in 301 BC . Antigonus was killed , and his realm was broken up and divided among the victors .

The Battle of Salamis is proposed by modern scholars as one of three possible naval battles ? along with the Battle of Amorgos (322 BC) and the Battle of Cos (261 / 255 BC) ? that provided the occasion for the erection of the statue of the Nike of Samothrace .