# Forging the Sword of Damocles:
# Memory, Mercenaries, and Monarchy on Sicily

DISSERTATION

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By

Stephen Kyle Tadlock

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The Ohio State University

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Dissertation Committee:

Professor Gregor Anderson, Advisor

Professor Nathan Rosenstein

Professor Timothy Gregory

## Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to lay the foundation for a new understanding of Sicilian history that returns these western Greeks to the fold of Hellenic history by showing that their experiences, both political and military, were not as unique as previously argued. The argument begins with mercenaries and tyrants, but then branches out to consider larger questions, such as the relationship between the Greek colonists and the natives of Sicily and the relative health of the *polis* system on the island. I begin by arguing, based on archaeological evidence, that the Greek colonists on Sicily were able to live at peace with those with whom they shared the island for at least a century. During this time, the Sicilian Greeks were able to transform their small colonies into thriving, politically-stable Greek cities, often rivaling and surpassing their metropoles in size and wealth. In the Archaic Age (800-490 BC), tyrants emerged on the island in similar numbers and used similar methods to obtain power as on the mainland. In neither location were mercenaries a primary means of seizing or maintaining power. Mercenaries only began to be used commonly on Sicily in the Classical Age (490-323 BC), when hired soldiers were becoming increasingly common in Greek warfare across the Mediterranean. It was also at this time that the relationship between tyrants and mercenaries was established by propaganda produced at Athens against Dionysius I, tyrant of Syracuse (r.405-367). In the end, I conclude that Sicily and mainland Greece were similar in terms of their military and political development.

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife Lee Anne, whose years of loving support made its completion possible, and to my two little imps of distraction who have kept me from taking myself too seriously during the process.

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## Vita

May 2002 .....Presbyterian Christian High School
2006.....B.A. History and Classics, University of Mississippi

2012.....M.A. History, North Carolina State University

2012 to present .....Graduate Teaching Associate, Department of History, The Ohio State University

### Publications

2011. "Behind the *Pelte*: The Identity of Athenian and Spartan *Peltasts* in the Peloponnesian and Corinthian Wars," *Tuckasegee Valley Historical Review* 27: 54-79

2017. *"*A Fragmented History of Ancient Generalship*."* Review of J. Roisman, *The Classical Art of Command: Eight Greek Generals Who Shaped the History of Warfare* Book Review Published in *Origins*: *Current Events in Historical Perspective* (June)

### Fields of Study

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| Alc. | Alcaeus |
| Arist. | Aristotle |
| *Ath. Pol.* | *Athenaion Politeia* |
| *Oec.* | *Oeconomica* |
| *Pol.* | *Politica* |
| Arr. *Tact.* | Arrian, *Tactica* |
| Ath. | Athenaeus |
| *BNJ* | *Brill's New Jacoby* |
| Cic. | Cicero |
| *Orat.* | *Orator ad M. Brutum* |
| *Tusc.* | *Tusculanae disputationes* |
| Diod. Sic. | Diodorus Siculus |
| Diog. Laert. | Diogenes Laertius |
| Dion. Hall. *Ant. Rom.* | Dionysius Halicarnassensis, *Antiquiates Romanae* |
| *FGrH* | *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* |
| Frontinus*, Str.* | Frontinus*, Strategemata* |
| Hdt. | Herodotus |
| Joseph. *Ap.* | Josephus, *Contra Apionem* |
| Justin. *Epit*. | Justinus, *Epitome* (of Trogus) |
| *LSJ* | Liddel, Scott, and Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon* |
| *Lys.* | Lysias |
| Nep. *De. Reg.* | (Cornelius) Nepos, *De Regibus* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *OCD*[3] | *Oxford Classical Dictionary, 3rd Edition* |
| *P. Oxy* | *Papayrus Oxyrhynchus* |
| Pl. | Plato |
| *Resp.* | *Respublica* |
| Plut. | Plutarch |
| *Ages.* | *Agesilaus* |
| *Alex.* | *Alexander* |
| *Mor.* | *Moralia* |
| *Quast. Graec.* | *Quaestiones Gracae* |
| Polyaenus, *Strat*. | Polyaenus, *Strategemata* |
| Pritchett, *GSW* | K. Pritchett, *The Greek State at War* |
| Rose | V. Rose, *Aristotelis qui ferebantur librorum fragmenta* |
| Sen. Q. Nat. | Seneca (the Younger), *Quaestiones naturales* |
| Thuc. | Thucydides |
| West | M. L. West, *Greek Lyric Poetry: The Poems and Fragments of the Greek Iambic, Elegiac, and Melic Poets (excluding Pindar and Bacchylides) down to 450 B.C* |
| Xen. *Hell.* | Xenophon, *Hellenica* |

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## Introduction: Spears and Sovereigns

Cicero (106-43), while expounding Stoic philosophy in his *Tusculan Disputations*, offered the following story from the court of the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius II (r. 367-357, 346-344) which bears reproducing in its entirety:[1]

> Indeed this tyrant himself gave his judgment as to how fortunate he was. For when one of his flatterers, Damocles, mentioned in conversation the wealth of Dionysius, the majesty of his rule, the abundance of his possessions, the magnificence of the royal palace and denied that there had ever been anyone more fortunate, he said, 'So, Damocles, since this life delights you, do you wish to taste it yourself and make trial of my fortune?'
>
> When Damocles said that he desired this, Dionysius gave orders that the man be placed on a golden couch covered with a most beautiful woven rug, embroidered with splendid works; he adorned many sideboards with chased silver and gold; then he gave orders that chosen boys of outstanding beauty should stand by his table and that they, watching for a sign from Damocles, should attentively wait on him; there were unguents and garlands; perfumes were burning; tables were piled up with the most select foods. Damocles seemed to himself fortunate.
>
> In the middle of this luxury Dionysius ordered that a shining sword, fastened from the ceiling by a horse-hair, be let down so that it hung over the neck of that fortunate man. And so he looked neither at those handsome waiters nor the wonderful silver work, nor did he stretch his hand to the table. Now the very wreaths slipped off. Finally he begged the tyrant that he should be allowed to depart because he no longer wanted to be fortunate.[2]

This story, in its various forms, is usually cited as a lesson about the perils of power and the temporary nature of wealth and fortune, a theme as common in the ancient

[1] All dates BC unless otherwise noted.
[2] Cic. *Tusc*. 5.61.

world as in the modern. Dionysius II, regarded (falsely) by later authors as a philosopher-king, recognized this truth and wanted Damocles and the rest of his courtiers to also understand it. Although this story is likely apocryphal, there was a very real "Sword of Damocles," hanging over Dionysius II and all of Sicily: mercenaries. Dionysius' II father, Dionysius I, had hired thousands of soldiers from across the Mediterranean to secure his position and expand his power across the island and beyond. In so doing, he was carrying out the prerogatives of the tyrants who had preceded him, many of whom had used mercenaries to establish and maintain their power. Such a state of affairs was only natural, since an unlawful autocrat could not count on the support of the citizens of his city and thus had to rule by force. Similarly, the fact that tyranny arose on Sicily should not be surprising, since the *polis* system, one of the defining features of the ancient Greek world, had never fully taken root there.

Or at least that is what the traditional view on the relationship between tyranny, mercenaries, and the *polis* on Sicily has been since the days of Plato and Aristotle. They, and many other like-minded Athenians, saw the events of their own age, in which tyranny stubbornly persisted on the island long after it had become unfashionable on the mainland, and assumed that such had always been the case there. They furthermore noted the large mercenary armies fielded by Dionysius I and assumed that was how he maintained his power, since no proper Greek would submit to autocratic rule unless forced to do so. Their view has, with few exceptions, been adopted by modern scholars, with the result that tyrants and mercenaries are often considered to have been interdependent.[3] To this ancient insight has been added some modern circular reasoning, and Sicily is often cited as a case study on both the failure of Greek self-rule and the

[3] See, for example, Trundle 2006: 68-9; Griffith 1968: 194, Parke 1933: 63.

relationship between mercenaries and tyrants. M. I. Finley, for instance, declared that tyrants were the "main cause" of the failure of the *polis* system on Sicily, although he also noted that the presence of mercenaries on the island after 346 made any kind of political action impossible.[4] Mercenaries and tyrants are thus linked as either the cause or the symptoms of self-rule failing to take root on the island. Such a reading of Sicilian history, however, falls apart upon a closer examination.

**The Historical Question**

The purpose of this dissertation is to lay the foundation for a new understanding of Sicilian history that returns these western Greeks to the fold of Hellenic history by showing that their experiences were not unique as previously argued. The argument begins with mercenaries and tyrants, but will also branch out to consider larger questions, such as the relationship between the Greek colonists and the natives of Sicily and the relative health of the *polis* system on the island. Using these facets of the political and military history of the island, I will argue that the Sicilian Greek experience was similar to that of their mainland counterparts and that supposed differences largely stem from scholarship that examines Sicily without placing events on the island into the larger context of the Greek world.

I will do this first by examining the foundation of the Greek colonies of Sicily and how the colonists adapted to their new circumstances and the peoples with whom they found themselves sharing the island. The purpose of this examination is to show that the initial relationship between the Greeks and native Sicilians was more peaceful than the later historians claimed and that the armed conflict for which the island became famous in antiquity came later than traditionally assumed. Next, I will compare the careers of the

[4] Finley 1979: 41, 72-3, 94.

Sicilian tyrants who reigned from 600-461 to those of their Greek mainland counterparts. This study will focus particularly on how these tyrants seized and retained their power and what role mercenaries played in these endeavors. Based on the ancient evidence, I will argue that the experience of tyranny on Sicily and the Greek mainland were quantitatively and qualitatively similar, and that in both locations, mercenaries played little to no role in the establishment and maintenance of tyrants. Lastly, I will examine the life and deeds of Dionysius I of Syracuse and the Athenian reaction to it, with a view to show that he was maligned in his own lifetime and that that warped image of him was the foundation upon which the ancient ideal of the tyrant was built. This ideal, I argue, birthed by the playwrights and philosophers of Athens, matured by Aristotle, and made immortal by ancient historians, has had great influence on modern scholars, despite being flawed from its inception.

Woven into the analysis of tyrants and mercenaries will be an examination of the health of the *polis* system on Sicily. The failure of the *polis* to take root on the island is often evinced as a cause and/or effect of the frequency of tyranny there, as well as a reason for the island to be considered at a remove from "normal" Greek history. Through my examination, I endeavor to show that the *polis* system as it emerged on Sicily was as stable as that on the Greek mainland, at least during the Archaic Age (800-490). As I will argue, the colonies on Sicily had enough time to mature into *poleis* before the advent of tyranny in the sixth century and that even decades of tyrannical rule did not stop the Greeks of Sicily from being able to govern themselves. Indeed, there is evidence that even when ruled by tyrants, the Sicilians were able and even enthusiastic participants in their own government. Lastly, I argue that only weakness of the *polis* in Sicily was that

inherent to the system as a whole: the inability to cope with prolonged crisis, especially military crisis, without breaking or transforming.

Although this dissertation is intended to cover all of Sicily, much of the focus will be on the city of Syracuse. This is only natural because Syracuse was at many times the leading city of the island, especially during the reigns of the various tyrants being discussed. Its location and wealth made the city an object of interest to Greeks all over the Mediterranean, and the ambitions of its leaders, both tyrants and democrats, ensured its place in the histories being written at the time. Due to this interest, most of the literary evidence we have concerning Sicily focuses on this one city and its inhabitants. Much of what we know of the rest of the island comes from archeology, and I will consider this evidence as required.

**Scholarship on Greeks in the Western Mediterranean**

The general historiography on the island of Sicily is surprisingly underdeveloped. The only book-length histories of Sicily are M. I. Finley's *Ancient Sicily*, which details the history of the island from just before the Greek colonists arrived until the medieval period, and T. J. Dunbabin's *The Western Greeks, the History of Sicily and South Italy from the Foundation of the Greek Colonies to 480 BC*. Both works are primarily descriptive in nature and argue only that scholars should pay more attention to events on Sicily because of both the unique nature of island and its importance in linking the Greek world of the eastern Mediterranean to the Roman world of the western. The more thesis-driven monographs concerning Sicily typically only consider the reign of a single tyrant or war and not the larger implications of wars or regimes over the whole span of time which this dissertation covers. Thus, this present works serves to provide an in-depth

look at one of the most formative periods of Sicilian history while avoiding the current trend of strict periodization.

Those few works which do consider Sicily over a larger chronological span typically focus on a single aspect of life on the island. The most useful of those works to this project are those which explore Greek and native interactions, particularly the works of E. Sjöqvist, R. R. Holloway and R. Leighton, all of whom use archeology to paint a fuller picture of the native Sicilians and their interactions with the Greek colonists than the literary sources alone provide.[5] There are also several articles about Greek-native interactions on the island, most of which use varying kinds of evidence to argue that the cultural exchange between these two groups was bi-directional, despite the claims of the Greek historians. [6]

**The Ancient Sources**

The goal of this project is not the discovery or use of new sources, but rather the revaluation and reinterpretation of old, familiar evidence. The major source for Classical Age (490-323) Sicily is Diodorus Siculus, a Greek historian of the first century BC. Diodorus was a native of Sicily and thus interested in preserving the history of his homeland in his universal history. Although he lived well after the events in question, he did have access to the work of earlier historians, many of which only survive to the present day in fragmentary form. The value and influence of Diodorus Siculus as a source will be discussed more fully in chapter four.

Two other important sources for the history of Archaic and Classical Age Sicily are Herodotus and Thucydides, respectively. Herodotus, who wrote in the fifth century

[5] The works in question are Sjöqvist 1973, Holloway 2000, and Leighton 1999, all of which will be cited in chapter 1.
[6] See, for example, Procelli 1996, DeAngelis 2003, and Spatafora 2013.

BC, provides important information about the careers of the tyrants active during and shortly before the Persian Wars (499-449), particularly those of Syracuse. He is thus valuable in reconstructing the history of the Deinomenid dynasty (491-466), members of which controlled much of Sicily in the early fifth century and were frequently involved in events further afield. Herodotus was not a contemporary of much of what he described, but he was well-traveled and compiled his history from many documentary and oral sources, although much of what he says is of admittedly questionable value.

The Athenian military historian Thucydides (c.460-395) was an active participant in the Peloponnesian War and a contemporary of the events he described in his work on that war. His main contribution to this dissertation is his description of the Athenian expeditions to Sicily in 415 and 414, although he also provides a brief excursus on the earlier history of the island. Most valuable to our present purposes are the speeches he presents which he claims were delivered in the Syracusan assembly concerning how the city should respond to the Athenian invasion. He thus provides a vital glimpse of how democratic Syracuse functioned, at from an outsider's perspective.

The last major source is one worth discussing in greater detail. Polyaenus was a Macedonian military writer of the second century AD who compiled a collection of military anecdotes now known as the *Stratagems*, perhaps to ingratiate himself with the emperors Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.[7] Among these vignettes are stories of how various Greek tyrants seized power through cunning ploys, including some descriptions which survive nowhere else. Despite the immediately apparent utility of Polyaenus as a source for this dissertation, his reputation as both an historian and a military writer has

[7] Wheeler 2010: 8, 12-14.

traditionally been poor.[8] While it is true that he was perhaps interested more in rhetorical style and the number of the anecdotes that he could collect than in their historical accuracy, there is still much to recommend him as a source.[9] In particular, when writing in general about events on Sicily, he may have relied on Sicilian sources, likely either Timaeus of Tauromenium or Philistus of Syracuse, both of whom only survive in fragmented form.[10] For the tyrants in question, he may, however, have relied on a previously compiled collection of anecdotes about Greek tyrants.[11] The provenance and veracity of this collection are entirely matters of speculation, but it seems likely that it would have drawn upon the major historians of Sicily as well. Also, as J. R. Phillips demonstrated, where Polyaenus can be compared to other sources considered more reliable, he generally follows the same narrative except when he becomes careless with details or condenses the account.[12] Despite the uncertainty of some of his sources and his general approach to history, Polyaenus remains an important source for the deeds of the Archaic tyrants, as he preserves much material that is otherwise lost. Perhaps just as importantly, because of the nature of his work, Polyaenus was able to ignore much of the biases of his sources, a fact which will become increasingly relevant as we consider the reputation and image of the Archaic tyrant in the closing chapters.

**Scholarship on Sicilian Politics and Tyranny**

While the politics of the ancient Greeks has been a subject of academic interest and writing for centuries, much of focus has been on the Greek mainland. Modern scholarship on democracy, for instance, which one must understand before one can

[8] Wheeler 2010: 7.
[9] Wheeler 2010: 39; Phillips 1971: 78, 209-10.
[10] Phillips 1971: 89, 92. Both historians will be discussed in detail in chapter four.
[11] Phillips 1971: 98, 105, 116, 119.
[12] Phillips 1971, especially 209-11.

discuss tyranny, is almost solely concerned with Athens. The only major work that deals with democratic Syracuse is the relevant section of E. Robinson's *Democracy Beyond Athens: Popular Government in the Greek Classical Age*. There are also a small handful of articles that consider Syracusan democracy, notably N. Rutter's "Syracusan Democracy: 'Most Like Athens?" which is important to this study because the author completely disagrees with Robinson despite using the same evidence. As this discrepancy indicates, the field of ancient democracy is one with its own complexities.

On the other end of the political spectrum, there has been surprisingly little interest in the ancient tyrants of Sicily. Of the first generation of tyrants on the island (those who reigned 600-461), only the Deinomenids have attracted much scholarly attention, and much of the most recent literature on them is concerned with what Pindar and other epinician poets wrote about their rule.[13] As for the Classical Age tyrants, only Dionysius I has received similar care, and the literature on him is voluminous in comparison. The most venerable of these works is K. F. Stroheker's *Dionysios I*, published in Germany in 1959. Although now quite old, it is hardly outdated, and many of his observations and conclusions about the life and legacy of Dionysius I are still accepted in the academic community. The first English biography of the tyrant, B. Caven's *Dionysius I: Warlord of Sicily*, was not published until 1990. This work naturally focuses on the life and deeds of Dionysius, but also tries to understand his personality, the nature of his empire, and his place within the history of Sicilian tyranny. Caven spends less time discussing Dionysius' historical legacy than does Stroheker, but nonetheless challenges some of the latter's conclusions. Although not as highly regarded

[13] See, for example, Nicholson 2015 and Morgan 2016.

as Stroheker's monograph, Caven's biography has been cited in almost every subsequent work on Dionysius I, and this dissertation will be no exception.

The current leading scholar on the ancient reputation of Dionysius I is L. J. Sanders. Sanders has written multiple books and articles about how Dionysius I was portrayed in the ancient world, particularly by Diodorus Siculus. Of particular importance to this present work is *Dionysius I of Syracuse and Greek Tyranny*, in which Sanders discusses the account of Dionysius I in Diodorus Siculus and then attempts to trace the threads of the various incidents back to their original sources. Like Stroheker and Caven, Sanders is often referenced in works on Dionysius I and Diodorus Siculus, although his conclusions are more often challenged than either of the above. Much of this contention stems from his highly opinionated and sometimes overstated arguments. Sanders will be referenced frequently in the fourth chapter of this dissertation, as my work necessarily builds in part upon his.

**Definition of the "Tyrant"**

Any attempt to correct the above deficiencies must begin by defining tyrants and tyranny. The traditional, if broad, definition of a tyrant is one who seized and maintained control of a city by illegal or extralegal means.[14] To unpack this definition further requires knowledge of the way in which the Greek *poleis* of the Classical Age were governed. Unlike their contemporaries in the Near East, most *poleis* were governed by their own citizens. Who was a citizen and who among even that group was allowed to exert any political influence varied greatly by city. Traditionally, those cities in which a relatively large percentage of the population could shape policy are labeled "democratic," while those with more restricted participation are called "oligarchical." In practical

[14] Based on Anderson 2005: 175.

terms, the differences between the two systems comes down largely to a matter of percentages, since even in "democratic" Athens, perhaps only thirty percent of the population made decisions for the rest.[15] Thus it is better to imagine the Greek *poleis* existing on a continuum between the poles of universal participation and singular authoritarianism, rather than as possessing one of two opposed systems of government.

One thing that held true across the spectrum was the belief that power should be shared among a group of citizens, while the concentration of power into the hands of a single individual was to be avoided. As far as the Classical Age Greeks of the mainland, and Athens in particular, were concerned, the age of kings and autocrats lay behind them. Furthermore, such a form of governance was only fit for slavish people, although Aristotle allowed that a just king ruling for the benefit of all was one of the best forms of government, while tyranny was the worst.[16] This was despite the reality that Athens itself had been ruled by a largely beneficent tyrant, Peisistratus, only a few decades before the dawn of their own age. Nonetheless, already by the fifth century, and especially by the forth, tyranny and tyrants were considered uniformly bad. Tyranny, it was argued, was the exercise of personal power for the benefit of the tyrant and his supporters.[17] Furthermore, it was a system based on violence against opposition, while the *polis* system instead rested on the concept of justice.[18] How this definition was developed will be discussed further in chapter four.

While the ancient writers had, it seems, a uniform view of tyranny, at least during the Classical Age, modern scholars have been arguing for years about its nature and how

[15] Hansen 1991: 91.
[16] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1279a-b.
[17] Dewald 2003: 28; McGlew 1993: 5, 28.
[18] Salmon 1997: 69.

it arose in mainland Greece in the Archaic Age. Andrewes, whose view can be considered perhaps the most traditional, argued that tyrants emerged when the *polis* faced a crisis which the traditional aristocracy was unable to meet or when the aristocrats themselves became the problem.[19] Thus to him, although being unconstitutional and having no formal place in the *polis*, the tyrant had the support of at least part of the populace of the city, perhaps the middle-class hoplites.[20] Indeed, according to Andrewes, tyrants were vital to the formation of democracy because they were able to break the power of the aristocrats and concentrate it in themselves. Once they were gone or their dynasty ended, this power then fell to the *demos* (used here and later to refer to the people of a *polis* as a whole), leading to self-rule. As for the Sicilian colonies, he noted that tyrants emerged there because the colonies were too new and their populations too frequently changed by new immigrants or the policies of the tyrants themselves to form deep roots.[21] Syracuse, in particular, he argued, could not form a democracy strong enough to meet the military threat of Carthage or Athens, thus necessitating the rise of men like Gelon and Dionysius I.[22] These tyrants distinguished themselves from their mainland counterparts by often supporting the aristocrats against the *demos*, instead of the reverse.[23]

Other scholars since Andrewes have advanced their own theories about the nature of tyranny. McGlew, while not necessarily refuting any of Andrewes' claims, created a much more elaborate model of the Archaic tyrant. He argued that tyrants emerged because they offered the chance of justice to those too oppressed by another group to

[19] Andrewes 1956: 8.
[20] Andrewes 1956: 25, 26, 36.
[21] Andrewes 1956: 128.
[22] Andrewes 1956: 136-7.
[23] Andrewes 1956: 135.

seize it any other way.[24] The tyrants did so by taking power into their own hands in a way which made it personal and nontransferable. By so doing, they also ensured their own destruction, since the only way the *demos* could take the power was by ending the tyranny.[25] Furthermore, tyrants had to use the powers they had been given in order to justify their position, but the use and abuse of those powers also opened them up to criticism.[26] Ogden took a totally different view from McGlew and Andrewes, arguing instead that the Archaic tyrants were in fact the legitimate heirs of Archaic and even Dark Age (c.1100-800) kings and that most tyrants inherited their powers from previous autocrats whose names have been forgotten. The historical tyrants merely appear as remarkable and isolated individuals because of spurious tales invented to justify their claims to power when the real reason had been lost.[27]

A more recent theory, proposed by G. Anderson, posited that tyrants were not as high-minded as previously thought. Rather than being deliberate agents of change or the tools of the *demos*, Anderson claimed that tyrants were instead aristocrats who had achieved ultimate success in the battle for political influence by driving away or silencing their rivals.[28] Drawing upon a new trend in scholarship that sees the Archaic *polis* as being less developed than that of the Classical Age (and what the writers of that age said about it), Anderson argued that the governments of that time were defined not by self-rule, but by aristocratic competition, be it for the law-bound magistracies or the more subtle, but perhaps more important, realm of public opinion.[29] Thus rather than breaking the laws and constitution of the *polis*, a tyrant achieved success by playing the political

[24] McGlew 1993: 10.
[25] McGlew 1993: 5.
[26] McGlew 1993: 83.
[27] Ogden 1996: 148-9.
[28] Anderson 2005: 202.
[29] Anderson 2005: 177-81.

game to its logical conclusion. Since they did nothing illegally and generally achieved their position by building a broad base of support at least among their aristocratic peers, tyrants were not seen as evil by their contemporaries, but rather as objects of envy.[30]

Most recently, M. Kõiv has argued that there was no difference in the early Archaic period between kings, monarchs, and tyrants, other than a preference for the former term. Where we find other words being used, it not indicative of legal vs illegal autocratic rule, but rather of a literary or traditional preference.[31] Moreover, he sees monocratic rule enduring long into the Archaic Age, existing alongside collective self-rule, sometimes even in same *polis*.[32] This state of affairs came about because during and after the eighth century, the elites began to accumulate more power as cities became more complex and new opportunities for wealth opened up to them. Their attempts to gain even more power for themselves stressed the political systems which were then forced to evolve. If one person or faction was able to gain a preponderance of power and build a wide enough base of support, then a monarchy was produced. If the balance of power was such that no elite or one group of elites could dominate the others, then collective self-rule resulted. Over time, the system which lasted and produced stability became the "traditional" and "legitimate" form of rule for that city, thus making it impossible to say that one form was "universally legitimate" for all of Greece.[33] That being said, unlike in the Near East, the Greek monarchs were unable to build lasting dynasties, for reasons that were beyond the scope of his article.[34] Although he comes to

[30] Anderson 2005: 194-5, 202, 209.
[31] Kõiv 2016: 67.
[32] Kõiv 2016: 68-9.
[33] Kõiv 2016: 70.
[34] Kõiv 2016: 71.

his conclusion through different means, Kõiv, like Anderson, does not see tyrants as a deviation from "normal" self-rule, but as an equally legitimate alternative.

As even the cursory overview above demonstrates, defining a tyrant is not as simple as might first appear. Greatly complicating the issue is the fact that tyrants are tied up in the events surrounding the rise of the *polis* in the late Archaic Age, which is itself a subject of great academic debate. Most of this debate is focused on the mainland, but as I will argue in this dissertation, the Sicilian colonies followed a similar trajectory in political matters, at least during the Archaic Age, and thus many of the same historiographical problems apply. There is no surviving evidence on how most of the Sicilian colonies were governed, although it does seem that by the Archaic and early Classical Ages, most that we know of were oligarchies. This would suggest that the same forces which shaped the mainland *poleis* was at work in the colonies as well. The question remains, however, if they were fully functioning *poleis* in the Classical sense of the word or still stuck in the aristocratic phase of development postulated by Anderson when tyrants emerged in the sixth century. Thus, we still face the problem of legitimacy (or lack thereof) as the defining trait of the tyrant. For this current exercise, I will set aside questions of legitimacy and, following Kõiv's reasoning, call all autocratic rulers of Greek *poleis* after c.700 tyrants. This is obviously not a perfect solution, as it does contradict traditional reasoning and because it was possible, at least in the eyes of some Classical thinkers, for a legitimate king to become an illegitimate tyrant.[35] Nonetheless, I believe it will suffice for our present purposes.

[35] See, for example, the career of Pheidon of Argos in chapter two.

**Greek Warfare**

Having defined tyrants, it remains to discuss and define mercenaries. Before doing so, however, we would do well to briefly outline the Greek way of war to show how mercenaries fit into the scheme. During the Classical Age and at least some part of the Archaic Age, the definitive Greek soldier was the hoplite. This heavy infantryman wore and carried a seventy pound panoply consisting of a breastplate, greaves, helmet, spear, sword and shield.[36] Perhaps not every hoplite carried this full panoply, but would have at least had the heavy round shield (ὅπλον) and the long thrusting spear.[37] Because of the heavy nature of their armaments, hoplites relied on discipline and tight formation instead of mobility and individual prowess as they fought in a phalanx.[38] The phalanx was a close-order formation in which each soldier was protected on his left side by his own shield and on his right by the shield of his neighbor.[39] This dependence of each warrior on the man next to him necessitated trust, unit cohesion, and discipline to stand and fight. This was the greatest strength of both the hoplite and the phalanx.[40] When hoplites were ready to engage their enemy, they would advance, protecting themselves and their neighbors with their shields as they probed with their thrusting spears at any exposed areas of their enemy which, in most cases, was another phalanx.[41] This tight formation and the use of spears made the hoplite effective against both cavalry and other infantry as long as the formation held. The primary limitations of the phalanx were the need for level terrain, the vulnerability of the individual hoplite should the integrity of the

[36] Hanson 1989: 57.
[37] Hanson 1989: 65, 83.
[38] Hanson 1989: 119.
[39] Hanson 1989: 28.
[40] Hanson 1989: 119.
[41] Hanson 1989: 84.

phalanx be broken, and the weakness of the flanks to attack by faster, more mobile soldiers.

At the opposite end of the military spectrum were the *psiloi* ("light armed"). These were skirmishers who did not come into close contact with their opponents, but instead used bows, slings, javelins, or even rocks to assault their foes from a distance.[42] Their actual role in the Classical Age is uncertain but, according to one account in Thucydides, they usually fought their opposite numbers, attacking and retreating, as a sort of prelude to the clash of hoplite phalanxes.[43] By the Hellenistic Age, if not earlier, they were deployed either behind their heavy-infantry compatriots for safety, or on the flanks to prevent encirclement of the phalanx during the hoplite battle.[44] Their primary tactical role was to provide missile support for the hoplites and also to act as screens and scouts for the army.[45] Many soldiers labeled as *psiloi* by ancient writers were also used to plunder, ravage, and forage enemy land in conjunction a hoplite phalanx.[46]

Between these two extremes stood the peltast.[47] The *peltast* was a light-infantry soldier carrying a smaller, crescent-shaped shield (πέλτη), and either a pair of javelins or a single long thrusting spear as his primary weapon.[48] Unlike the *hoplon*, the *pelte* could only provide protection for one person, indicating that the *peltast* was meant to operate as an individual, rather than as part of a formation.[49] In addition to the javelin or thrusting spear, *peltasts* might also carry a dagger or a slashing sword known as a *machacia*.[50]

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[42] Thuc. 6.69; Tyrtaeus fr. 11 West.
[43] Thuc. 6.69.
[44] Arr. *Tact*. 9, 13. Perhaps also in Tyrtaeus fr. 11West, although the meaning of the passage is debated.
[45] Arr. *Tact*. 14.
[46] Hanson 1998: 19-25, 30.
[47] Best 1969: 4.
[48] Ducrey 1986: 112; Griffith 1981: 162.
[49] Anderson 1970: 112.
[50] Hdt. 7.75; Ducrey 1986: 112.

*Peltasts* served as both skirmishers and melee combatants and could even be effective against hoplites where terrain and/or heavy infantry support gave them an advantage.[51]

The majority of mainland Greece was not suitable for raising large numbers or large breeds of horses due to the mountainous terrain and poor soil for growing fodder.[52] Thus cavalry was usually relegated to a role similar to that of light infantry, including harassment of enemy troops, flank protection, scouting flat land, and outflanking opposing hoplites.[53] Greek cavalry frequently used javelins in the same manner as *psiloi* or *peltasts*, but there was no specialized or standardized equipment for them, unlike hoplites.[54] The primary advantage that cavalry had over infantry was one of speed and mobility, useful for outflanking a phalanx or running down enemy hoplites fleeing from a rout.

How and why hoplites and the phalanx were developed are matters of great academic debate, the details of which are not strictly relevant to the discussion at hand. What is important, however, is how the Greeks of the Archaic Age, i.e. those who initially colonized Sicily and fought in the armies of the earliest tyrants, went to war. Here, opinion is divided between those who think that the phalanx was fully-formed during the Archaic Age and those who think that it was still in a transitional stage. Those who favor the latter view, notably Krentz, see Archaic Greeks fighting in a mixed formation with the wealthy aristocrats arming themselves and their retainers as hoplites and filling out the rest of a loose phalanx with various kinds of light infantry.[55] The evidence, taken from a mix of literary and archaeological sources, while admittedly

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[51] Ambushes: Xen. *Hell*. 4.6.10-11, 5.1.12. Rough terrain: Arr. *Tact*. 14; Thuc. 4.32, 5.10
[52] Sage 1996: 46-47.
[53] Ducrey 1986: 102; van Wees 2004: 66.
[54] Rawlings 2007: 87-88.
[55] Anderson 1991: 15-21; Krentz 2010: 59-60.

ambiguous, seems to strongly suggest that hoplites and the phalanx were both realized well before the end of the Archaic Age on mainland Greece, and perhaps as early as the mid-seventh century, when definitive evidence for mercenary hoplites becomes available.[56]

Thus, there is no certainty that the mainland Greeks had adopted hoplite warfare in its classical form before the first wave of Sicilian colonists left for their new homes. Even if they had, however, that does not mean that the first settlers would have necessarily fought as hoplites. If the colonies of Sicily were established by aristocratic effort rather than that of the *polis*, as I will argue in the following chapter, those leading the expedition would have had to choose between arming just their retainers to ensure their hold on power or arming the entire expedition to maximize their military potential in their new homes. On balance then, there is the strong possibility that the first wave of Greek settlers on the island fought in the freewheeling style of the Homeric heroes, or in the more organized, if still loose and mixed, Archaic Age phalanx envisioned by scholars like Krentz and H. van Wees.[57] Indeed, scholars of military history have long noted that even in the Classical Age, the Greeks of Sicily never fully subscribed to the hoplite ethos, and the tyrants of Syracuse and Gela in particular fielded *psiloi* and formidable cavalry forces alongside their hoplites.[58] It seems likely that if the Classical Age Greeks of Sicily were able to resist the siren call of "traditional" Greek warfare, their predecessors likely did the same and also fielded armies that were more mixed than those of the mainland.

[56] For a recent and thorough overview of the evidence and arguments, see Schwartz 2013: 102-46.
[57] van Wees 2004: 166-83. For the Homeric style of fighting, see van Wees 2004: 153-65.
[58] See, for instance, Wheeler 2007: 188.

**Mercenaries and their Role in Warfare**

Although one of the goals of this work is to question the link between tyrants and mercenaries in Sicily, it is impossible to deny that the latter were a frequent sight on the island. Thus, it is important to define both mercenaries and their role in Greek warfare in general and on the island of Sicily in particular. Defining mercenaries, however, is not as easy an endeavor as might appear on the surface. Despite their utility and obvious value to both self-governing *poleis* and tyrants, there was for a long time a stigma attached to mercenary service in the Greek world. The odium came not from the fighting aspect of the occupation, for the Greeks accepted that war was a necessary facet of political and social life, but rather from the taking of money.[59] The Greeks, and particularly the Athenians, equated the taking of wages as slavery, and thus argued that no wage-earner could truly be free. For this reason, there was no single Greek word for "mercenary," and instead ancient commentators relied on handful of euphemistic and changing terms when speaking of them. Fortunately for our purposes here, by the time of Dionysius I and most of the sources used in this dissertation, the Greeks had made their peace with reality and mercenaries could be discussed frankly.[60]

Further complicating matters is that there has been no monograph or other work specializing on the utilization of mercenaries in Sicily, despite the renewed interest in mercenaries in general over the last few decades. Most of the older and venerable works on mercenaries, such as H. W. Parke's *Greek Mercenary Soldiers: From the Earliest Times to the Battle of Ipsus* and G. T. Griffith's *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* focus on the use of mercenaries in general and their political repercussions, while most of

[59] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1278a; Trundle 2004: 19-21.
[60] See Trundle 2004: 10-21 for a discussion of the terms.

the newer contributions, such as those of M. Trundle, focus on specific problems such as the recruitment, payment, and motivations of ancient mercenaries.[61] Notably absent in the literature are works focusing on the "barbarian" light infantry that was frequently employed by Greek cities, Syracuse included.[62] Thus this dissertation will fill an important void by examining the role that mercenaries played in the politics of Sicily, although it will unfortunately fall short of illuminating the peoples who filled that role, as there is simply not enough information available to provide anything but the barest sketch.

This lack of secondary literature is matched by a dearth of ancient sources detailing the kind of men who undertook mercenary service on Sicily. We have some evidence and a great deal of scholarly speculation for why Greek hoplites might have become mercenaries, but none for the many native Sicilians and other non-Greeks who served in Sicily. These men left no known accounts of themselves, and no surviving Greek writer bothered to record their identities or motivations. Despite this silence, many of the reasons postulated for Greeks to become mercenaries are broad enough to be considered universal. These reasons include personal friendship or even formal alliance among the mercenary leader(s) and their employers, lack of better opportunities, statelessness due to exile, criminal activity, slavery, etc., the dream of quick wealth, the hope of making friends with powerful men, and the simple desire for adventure and travel.

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[61] Trundle 2004; 2006.

[62] The singular exception to this lacuna is J. G. P. Best (1960) *Thracian Pelstasts and their Influence on Greek Warfare*. Unfortunately, since Thracian mercenaries are notably lacking in Sicilian mercenary armies, that work is not directly relevant to this project.

To this list should also be added state-sponsored mercenary service. Greek *poleis* might occasionally hire out their citizen hoplites to foreign powers, particularly Persia, in exchange for money deposited into the state coffers. Sparta took advantage of this opportunity on at least two occasions in the fourth century, and Athens at least once around the same time. Although we do not know of any mercenaries being hired in such a manner by the tyrants of Sicily, we do know that the Spartans gave Dionysius I permission to recruit in the Peloponnese as part of their alliance with him, and that he may have courted them for precisely that purpose.[63] Part of this arrangement may have included payments made directly to Sparta for the privilege of recruiting from among its allies or even bribes, although we have no evidence of either.

The rewards for mercenary service could be diverse as the reasons for undertaking it. Money, usually in the form of coins, for a set period of service was the most common form of remuneration for mercenaries. This form of pay varied widely by the needs and ability of the employer and the negotiating abilities and position of the mercenaries and their leaders. Additionally, there was an entire specialist vocabulary that was used to describe mercenary pay, which further muddies the waters.[64] Formal pay, however, was often the smallest part of a mercenary's wages. Far more could be made from plunder, and most armies, mercenary and civilian, had rules for its distribution.[65] Land and citizenship were other common rewards in the ancient world, and often used as an emergency measure when the employer ran out of money. The tyrants of Syracuse in particular were fond of enrolling mercenaries and former mercenaries as citizens, either in Syracuse or in other subject cities. Such a policy worked out well for them, as it gave

[63] Diod. Sic. 14.44.2; Yalichev 1997: 210; Trundle 2013: 338.
[64] Trundle 2004: 80-90.
[65] Pritchett, *GSW* 5.382-4, 388.

them loyal supporters at a low cost, aside from the ire it drew from the established citizenry. Similarly, when the Syracusan tyrants ran out of gold, they often gave discharged mercenaries land, usually that of conquered towns.[66] Like citizenship, such forms of pay cost them little and gained them much, although mercenaries settled in such a manner were not always as grateful or loyal as the tyrants might have wished.

Mercenaries would not have been so popular had their employers not benefited from their use as well. The most frequently discussed advantage of mercenaries to tyrants and others who held power on a personal basis is that they were loyal to their paymaster alone and tended to not involve themselves in city politics. Such was not the case with civilian soldiers, who expected political rights to match their military responsibilities. There were other advantages as well. Mercenaries, generally speaking, were professional soldiers in a world of predominately amateur troops.[67] This gave them an advantage over citizen hoplites and *psiloi*, who were essentially a militia force called out only for battle. Their professional nature also meant that could be retained year-round, whereas citizen soldiers had their own farms and other livelihoods to which they had to attend most of the year. Such availability thus made mercenaries eminently suitable for long campaigns, garrisons, and bodyguard duty, all of which required long-term commitment. Mercenaries could also make up a deficiency in either numbers or kinds of troops, although the latter seems to be less of an issue on Sicily than on the mainland, where the most common mercenaries of the fifth century were *psiloi* and *peltasts*. Lastly, standing mercenary forces came with their own captains, many of whom

[66] See chapter three for examples of Dionysius I doing this, and he was following the practice of previous tyrants.
[67] Parke 1933: 235-8.

were capable generals and leaders whose skills and experience could be of great service to their employers, provided that their ambition could be suitably checked.

There were of course disadvantages to hiring mercenaries. The most obvious is that their primary concern was with their pay, and not with any grander issues of patriotism or loyalty. This meant that mercenaries could be lured away from their current employer with promises of higher pay, better conditions, or because of real or imagined slights from their paymasters. The Persians, with their practically endless coffers, were particularly successful at luring away talented commanders and experienced troops from their enemies, as the Egyptians discovered to their dismay in 346.[68] The employment of large numbers of mercenaries also tended to cause civil unrest and discontent, as mercenaries usually had poor reputations and often provoked civilians. Non-Greek mercenaries were viewed as even worse, since they were both barbarians and hirelings.[69] Even more frightening than working mercenaries were unemployed ones, since such men often turned to brigandage and outright conquest to support themselves. This was particularly an issue on Sicily, where multiple cities were taken over by unemployed mercenary bands, most famously Messene by the Mamertines.[70]

Finally, and perhaps most obviously, hiring large numbers of mercenaries was an expensive undertaking. How expensive varied greatly due to the factors mentioned above, and there are no figures from Sicily during any period. A few averages, however, should illuminate the possibilities. During most of the Peloponnesian War, both Athenian citizen hoplites and foreign mercenaries were given one drachma (six obols) a day in total pay. Pay for those in the service of the Greek *poleis* dropped rapidly in the

[68] Diod. Sic. 16.43.1, 45.1
[69] Trundle 2010: 143. See also Thuc. 1.5-6, 3.94 and Hall 2002: 195.
[70] Polybius 1.7-10; Diod. Sic. 23.1.4.

fourth century, however, where it may have sunk as low as two obols a day and the hope of plunder until the Third Sacred War (356-46), when the Phocians raided the treasures of Delphi to offer lavish pay to their mercenaries. Greek hoplites in the service of Near Eastern monarchs could generally expect higher wages, due to the greater funds and greater need of these kings, and their pay averaged between three and seven and half obols per day during the same period.[71]

For Sicily, we know from Diodorus Siculus that Syracusan soldiers were being paid by the time of Dionysius I, for one of the promises the aspiring tyrant made was to double their pay, as well as that of the mercenaries which were with him.[72] From this information, one can draw the conclusion that in Syracuse, as in Athens, mercenary and citizen pay was linked, assuming that Dionysius and his successors continued the practice. Although no figures have survived, it seems that whatever that pay was, it was sufficient to have drained the coffers of even the wealthiest tyrants of the city on more than one occasion, so it was likely a sizable sum.

Taking all these facts into considerations, a mercenary will be defined for the purposes of this dissertation as "one who fights for a city of which he is not a citizen, slave, or resident alien for the purposes of remuneration." This definition is deliberately broad, since we know little about the mercenaries who were employed by the Sicilian tyrants or their terms of employment. This definition also leaves out state sponsored mercenary service, which is acceptable in this case, as, with the possible exception of Sparta mentioned above, we know of no such examples involving the cities of Sicily.

[71] Trundle 2004: 91-8.
[72] Dio. Sic 13.93.2, 95.1; Parke 1993: 64-5.

**Chapter Summaries**

This dissertation has been divided topically into four chapters. The first deals with the nature of the Greek colonization of Sicily and how these early colonies became fully functioning *poleis*. In this chapter, I also consider the other parties interested in the island, including the native Sicilians, the Phoenicians, the natives and Greek settlers of nearby Italy, and the Greeks of the mainland. This chapter also examines the relationship between the Greeks and the natives on the island to see how well they got along. The literary evidence left to us by the Greeks paints a picture of conquest and hostility, but the archaeological evidence, particularly that of graves and walls, reveals a far more complex tapestry of interaction. This evidence ultimately leads to the conclusion that the island was relatively peaceful until the late seventh and early sixth centuries. The second chapter explores the development of tyranny on both Sicily and the Greek mainland, with an emphasis on how tyrants gained and kept their power and what role mercenaries played in both efforts. With a few important exceptions, this examination reveals that tyranny was quantitatively and qualitatively similar on Sicily and the mainland and that mercenaries were seldom used to establish or maintain tyrannies in either location. The third chapter investigates the career of Dionysius I, how he came to power, and how he used mercenaries. In the final chapter, I postulate how Dionysius' image was created in Athens and then transformed into the archetype of the Sicilian tyrant of all ages.

## Chapter 1: Colonists and Conflicts

To understand the alleged mercenary problem of Sicily, one must first understand the history of the island and the peoples competing for its resources. The most logical place to begin the examination is with the Greek colonists who hired the mercenaries and whose arrival on the island marked its entry onto the historical stage. Once we have discussed them, we will then examine the natives of Sicily and the Phoenician colonists with whom both groups shared the island. Lastly, we will broaden the geographic scope and consider the other peoples and polities who had an interest in the island, starting in Italy and working eastward. Lastly, we will examine the nature of armed conflict on Sicily, to see how these competing groups got along and if we can determine when the cycle of violence for which the island was famous in antiquity truly began.

### The Nature of a Greek Colony

It is necessary to briefly discuss what a colony was, both to modern historians and to our Greek sources. The Greeks generally used the terms "emporion" (ἐμπόριον) and "apoikia" (ἀποικία) when speaking of Greeks living oversees from the mainland. Modern scholars usually interpret *emporia* as trading posts or foreign markets established primarily for the exchange of goods and *apoikia* as settlements of enough size and social complexity to be considered *poleis* in their own right. *Emporia* were usually ad-hoc affairs that might disappear if the trade dried up, whereas *apoikia* were founded with the

intention of permanence.[73] The Greek colonies on Sicily fall firmly in the latter category, since they were usually sited in rich agricultural land and swiftly grew to *polis* size.

How and why the colonies on Sicily were founded is a far more difficult question. According to the traditional view, taken directly from Classical Greek sources, the mainland Greek *poleis* established colonies to deal with overpopulation.[74] Such an undertaking presupposes an intentional and centrally-directed effort by a strong and fully-formed city, which many scholars now doubt existed at such an early juncture. If colonization was not a "state" venture, it would perforce have to have been a "private" one, to use modern terminology.[75] The only logical candidates to carry out such an operation would have been the aristocrats, and Holloway made a convincing argument that it was these men, seeking to preserve their own power against the rise of self-rule, who established the Sicilian colonies.[76] The aristocratic and "private" nature of colonial ventures would also help explain the relative indifference that colonies and their metropoles showed each other throughout most of the Classical Age.[77]

No matter how they may have gotten to their new homes, most Greek colonists seem to have had a similar experience upon arrival. Most of the colonies show signs of urban planning, although scholars are uncertain on whether this was done upon arrival or before leaving Greece.[78] According to this plan, land was distributed among the settlers, usually on an egalitarian basis.[79] The rich soil of Sicily meant that most colonies became

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[73] *LSJ* s.v. "ἀποικία;" *OCD*[3] s.v. "apoikia." *LSJ* s.v. "ἐμπόριον;" *OCD*[3] s.v. "emporion."
[74] Cankwell 1992: 289-90; De Angelis 1994: 84. Snodgrass (1997: 1-2) believed in central planning of colonies, but argued men were sent out because of unequal access to land, not a shortfall of it.
[75] Osborne 1998: 256, 264-5, 298.
[76] Holloway 2000: 48-9.
[77] Antonaccio 2001: 122; Shepherd 2000: 55. Cf. Andrewes 1956: 128.
[78] Leighton 1999: 237; Di Vita 1990: 348-9. Osborne (1998:261) thought that the colonies were laid out on the spot.
[79] Di Vita 1990: 350.

not only quickly self-sufficient, but were even able to export agricultural goods back to the mainland.[80] Tales of the richness of this new land likely came back with these shipments, and new colonists continued to arrive on the island. Trade with the native peoples of the island was also a source of revenue for the colonies, although it is difficult to gauge how much went on at this early juncture.

Given all of the above, we can define the first generation of Greek colonies on Sicily as settlements founded by Greeks from the mainland with the intention of remaining to exploit the agricultural land of the island. This interpretation, although broad, avoids the modern, postcolonial definition of colonization, which considers the exploitation of the natives an essential element of colonialism.[81] While the Greeks may have driven off and/or enslaved many of the natives of Sicily, one cannot not say that was the entirety of their relationship, nor can it be said that was their intention when they set out from Greece.[82]

Moving on to the history of the colonies, we find ourselves on firmer ground. Thucydides records the foundation dates of the colonies as they were remembered in his own day, and archeology has for the most validated his claims, although some historians remain skeptical.[83] According to Thucydides, Naxos was the first Greek colony in Sicily, founded by settlers from Chalcis in 735 BC. The next year came Syracuse, founded from Corinth. In short order, central and eastern Sicily were dotted with Greek colonies. Within seven years, these first-generation colonies sent out their own settlers, a process that began with Naxos founding Leontini and continued for much of the island's ancient

[80] Dunbabin 1948: 211; Cankwell 1992: 297; Sherrat 1995: 145.
[81] Hodos 2006: 14.
[82] The relationship between the Greeks and natives of the island will be discussed in greater detail below.
[83] Morris 1996: 51. Di Vita (1990: 345) and Leighton (1999:225) both argued that the dates recorded in Thucydides mark not the first settlers, but some milestone or recognition.

history. By the Classical Age, Sicily was home to at least fourteen colonies of which records survive, and there is the possibility that more were planted but failed or were destroyed.

The most important first-generation colony to this work is Syracuse. The site for this city was a fine one for a trade center, having both an outer Great Harbor suitable for large ships to dock and a Little Harbor perfect for ship construction and repair. Indeed, early traders, perhaps Mycenaeans, had already used the site in previous centuries and there was already a native village on the nearby island of Ortygia.[84] The first Greek colonists settled on the island as well, which remained the nucleus of the early settlement.[85] In addition to its harbors, the site also possessed a large natural hinterland, one that the Syracusans took steps to consolidate by establishing their own colonies and forts during the seventh century. Once this process was complete, Syracuse controlled an area of some fifteen hundred square miles, making it the second largest Greek city in land area.

**The Native Population(s) of Sicily**

Sicily was already home to a native population of indeterminate size when the Greeks arrived, and Greek goods have been found in native graves dating back to before 735. Hodos saw these objects as evidence of precolonial trade or as gifts given to local elites, perhaps as a way to their curry favor and smooth the way for later colonists, while Dunbabin posited the possibility of a few isolated Greek potters living among the natives and producing these wares.[86] Procelli noted in particular the presence of Greek wine-

[84] Dunbabin 1948: 48, 50.
[85] Dunbabin 1948: 48,50. Dunbabin argued that both the mainland and the island were developed concurrently.
[86] Hodos 2006: 94-5; Dunbabin 1948: 43.

drinking paraphernalia on the eastern half of the island before colonization, although she is less certain that these objects indicate the presence of Greeks themselves.[87] Other scholars like Di Vita doubted the presence of any intense precolonial trade or contact, although he offered no solution to explain the presence of Greek goods on the island.[88] Going further back in time, there is ample evidence that the island had been connected to the Bronze Age Mycenaean trade network, although once again, that does not necessarily prove contact with the Mycenaeans themselves.[89] It seems, then, that whether or not the Greeks were aware of the natives before they landed on Sicily, the natives were aware of the Greeks.

However and whenever they learned of them, by the Classical Age, the Greeks had placed the native Sicilians into their own history and mythology. Both Thucydides and Diodorus Siculus provide accounts of the early history and prehistory of the island and its people, which agree in the main details, if not the particulars. Both state, for instance, that the island was divided among three groups of Sicilians: the Sikeloi on the eastern portion on the island, the Elymoi on the western, and the Sikanoi in the middle, even if they did not agree on from where these groups originated.[90] Despite that disagreement, both historians also record that these natives were easy prey for the Greeks, who quickly enslaved or drove them off to make room for their new settlements.

Modern archeology has greatly expanded our knowledge of these people and shown much of what the Classical authors wrote to be false, or at least anachronistic. The material culture across the island was remarkably consistent, leading many

[87] Leighton 1996: 168-9; Procelli 1996: 167-9.
[88] Di Vita 1990: 345.
[89] Holloway 2000: 32-7; Hodos 2000: 37; Serrati 2000: 10.
[90] Diod. Sic. 5.6.1-4; Thuc. 6.2.

archaeologists and others to postulate that there was only one native Sicilian people across the island.[91] Goods are not everything, however, and Leighton has cautioned that there may have been divisions based on criteria that are archaeologically invisible.[92] Nonetheless, it seems that the neat tripartite system outlined by the later historians either did not exist or was created by extended contact with Greek and Phoenician colonists and then projected backwards in time by Classical authors.[93]

The ease with which the Greeks displaced the natives was also likely greatly exaggerated. Archaeologists generally agree that the Sicels (used here and later in its Anglicized form to refer to the entire native population of the island) were sophisticated in terms of trade and technology and may have been close to or equal to the early Greek settlers in that regard.[94] Nor did all the Greeks immediately seek the displacement of the Sicels, despite the assurances of the later sources. The archaeological evidence indicates that the Greeks of the Chalcidian colonies (i.e. those founded from Chalcis: Naxos, Catane, and Leontini) along the eastern coast of Sicily lived in relative peace with the Sicels, at least for the first century or so.[95] Perhaps more surprisingly, the literary record preserves that the Sicel king Hyblon offered sanctuary within his territory to a group of Greek settlers from Megara who had been displaced from previous sites by other Greeks.[96] Not only did the king allow the Greeks to settle within his land, De Angelis has argued that without Sicel support, the colony of Megara Hyblaea, which still contained a mixed population of Sicels and Greeks at least as late as 650, would have

[91] Dunbabin 1948: 40; Hodos 2006: 93; Spartafora 2013: 38; Serrati 2000: 9.
[92] Leighton 2000: 18.
[93] Spatafora 2013: 42-3.
[94] Garbani 1999: 11, De Angelis 2003a: 28; Leighton 2000: 19. Perhaps because they were the most often encountered native group, the Greeks eventually began to refer to all native Sicilians as Sikeloi, a practice that has been followed in modern scholarship. See Leighton 1999: 221-2.
[95] Sjöqvist 1973: 57.
[96] Thuc. 6.4.1

failed.[97] Sjöqvist has even postulated that by the late fifth century, most "Sicel" communities in fact contained mixed populations of Greeks and natives living in harmony.[98] Thus it seems the Sicels may have been more resilient and the Greek colonists less rapacious than later sources claimed.

Nonetheless, the arrival of the Greeks, and later the Phoenicians, did cause some profound changes in the way in which the Sicels lived. After two hundred years of Greek colonization, most of the free native population of the island had moved into the interior, living in larger mountaintop settlements that often had access to river basins.[99] Leighton argued convincingly that the latter feature especially indicates that the natives were not so much fleeing from the Greek colonists as trying to strengthen their military and economic bargaining position with them.[100]

With trade (and other contact) also came elements of Greek culture. How much the natives absorbed from their Greek neighbors and how we can tell is another major topic of debate and one that hinges upon the very definition of "Greek" and the process and nature of Hellenization. A full discussion of these issues could easily take up a monograph itself (and has in the past), so instead only a few of the more salient points will be addressed. There are many scholars who reject the idea that the natives of Sicily became as quickly and thoroughly Hellenized as previous generations believed. Hodos noted that the material remains argue instead that the Sicels took what they wanted from the Greeks and adapted it to their own culture, such as placing Greek motifs on their own

[97] De Angelis 2003b: 200.
[98] Sjöqvist 1973: 35.
[99] Hodos 2006: 99; Leighton 2000: 21-6; Muhlenbock (2008: 30) argued that this process was not the result of foreign colonization but rather already occurring.
[100] He (2000: 21-2) made this argument for these cities close to Syracuse, but the pattern holds across most of Sicily.

forms of pottery.[101] Leighton similarly argued that the literary sources, while troublesome, do not speak of or even imply a rapid Hellenization of the island.[102] Indeed, it may have been that only members of the Sicel upper classes adopted Greek elements at all, as a way of defining themselves in opposition to the lower classes of their own society, if the finds from elite burials at the site of Morgantina can be extrapolated across the whole island.[103]

To summarize, the island of Sicily was home to a vigorous and seemingly homogeneous culture before the Greeks arrived. Despite the testimony of later Greek authors to the contrary, these Sicels seemed to have been culturally and technologically sophisticated enough to have presented a challenge to the first colonists. Instead of simply enslaving or displacing them, it seems the earliest Greek colonists were able to live peacefully among the Sicels, at least for a time. Even after the Greek colonies became stronger and more aggressive, the Sicels were still able to hold their own against them by moving to the interior and maintaining their unique culture when they chose to do so.

**Phoenicians on Sicily**

The Greeks were not alone in their interest in Sicily. The Phoenicians had, since the beginning of the Iron Age, sailed across the Mediterranean seeking both luxury goods and raw materials for trade. Because of its location, Sicily would have been a logical stop for ships traveling along the East-West axis of the Mediterranean. Indeed, Thucydides claimed that the Phoenicians had established colonies on the island before the Greeks arrived.

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[101] Hodos 2006: 13, 110. See also Holloway 2000: 87-8 and Hall 2002: 108.
[102] Leighton 2000: 20.
[103] Lyons 1999: 177-87.

Archeology, however, has not born out his statement. The remains of most of the Phoenician settlements on the island cannot be dated earlier than the eighth century, which places them roughly contemporaneous with the Greek colonies.[104] Different theories have been advanced to explain the discrepancies, sometimes as much as three hundred years, between the literary dates given for the founding of colonies and the earliest archaeological remains on a site. Some scholars, led perhaps most ably by M. Aubet, have argued that most of the dates for the early Phoenician colonies are the product of Hellenistic mythologizing and have no basis in fact.[105] Others, including H. G. Niemeyer and C. Picard, have maintained that the Greek historians preserve the memories of archaeological invisible trading missions that were carried out for years or centuries before more permanent colonies were established.[106]

The exact nature of a Phoenician "colony" is also in dispute. The traditional view is that Phoenician colonies more closely resembled Greek *emporia* than *apoikia* and continued to serve primarily as trading ports and /or centers of production for export even as they grew. Many scholars also maintain that this singular purpose caused the Phoenicians to neglect the *chora* of their colonies, which in turn led to better relationships with the local populations. Yet others go even furthering by claiming that these colonies contained large numbers of natives working alongside the Phoenicians.[107] If these scholars are correct that the Phoenicians were better neighbors than the Greeks, they apparently weren't perfect, since the historical record indicates the Sicels at least

[104] Muhly 1985: 179-80.
[105] Aubet 2001: 194-211; Leighton 1999: 230.
[106] Niemeyer 1993: 341; Niemeyer 2006: 151-2; Picard 1969: 24-8.
[107] Niemeyer 1990: 486-7; Crielaard 1992-3: 248; Whittaker 1974: 70; Frankenstein 1979: 288; Leighton 1999: 230; Hodos 2006: 20. Cf. Culican 1992: 485; Whittaker 1974: 60-1.

were perfectly willing to side with either or neither party on the numerous occasions in which the Greeks and Phoenicians fought over the island.

There were three major Phoenician colonies on Sicily, although only of them has been well-studied by archaeologists. Motya was the most important Phoenician site on Sicily until it was destroyed in 397 and was located on an island of the same name off the western coast. The island itself sat in a lagoon formed by the Sicilian mainland to the east and the much larger Isola Grande to the west, which sheltered the island from wind and waves and gave it good portage. The city's founding is not described or even mentioned in any extant source, but archaeological evidence places it sometime at the end of the eighth century.[108] Perhaps originally a trading post or workshop, the site began to grow after c.650, until it became a proper urban center with an estimated population of almost sixteen thousand in the sixth century.[109]

We know very little about the two other Phoenician sites on Sicily. The first of these, Sys, more commonly known by its Greek name Panormus, is currently buried under the modern city of Palermo, making it difficult for archaeologists to access anything but the necropolises.[110] The findings from these seem to indicate that the city became prosperous under the auspices of Carthage after 550. Near Sys was Soluntum, another city that fell under Carthaginian influence, and about which little else is known.[111]

The Phoenician colony that had the most impact on Sicily was the North African city of Carthage. However scholars conceive of Phoenician colonies in general, most

[108] Aubet 2001: 231.
[109] Aubet 2001: 231-3.
[110] Niemeyer 2000: 89; Aubet 2001: 234.
[111] Aubet 2001: 234.

agree that Carthage, founded by Tyre, was an exceptional one, established from the beginning as a fully-functioning Phoenician urban center.[112] The city's site was chosen with an eye toward the sea, in this case a promontory jutting out into Gulf of Tunisia.[113] This terrain provided a sheltered natural harbor on the inland side and made it easy to control the land routes into the city. The acropolis, presumably the oldest part of the city, was located on a nearby hill known as the Byrsa.[114] The adjacent land was agriculturally rich, and the possession and exploitation of this agricultural hinterland is one of the main features that sets the city apart from other Phoenician colonies.[115]

As with the other Phoenician colonies, our sources disagree about the founding date of Carthage. The Greek literary tradition provides the precise date of 814 BC, and there are no surviving Carthaginian or Tyrian accounts with which to compare. The material evidence from the site, however, only extends definitively back to around 750-725 BC, which most scholars accept as the date at which an actual city was built.[116] It is possible, however, that trade and/or other commercial activities were being conducted on or near the site before then.[117] Whatever its origins, the colony became, at least according to Niemeyer, a viable Near Eastern city shortly after its founding.[118] Despite its size, however, it would not become a true Mediterranean power until the mid-sixth century, when it gained full independence following the conquest of Tyre by the Babylonians.[119]

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[112] Niemeyer 1990: 486; Niemeyer 1993: 337-8; Niemeyer 2006: 161-2. See also Aubet 2001: 214-218.
[113] Niemeyer 2000: 104 and fig. 10.
[114] Aubet 2001: 218-9.
[115] Whittaker 1974: 67
[116] Culican 1992: 492-3; Niemeyer 2006: 160; Winter 1995: 254; Picard 1969: 33. Aubet (2001: 219) argued for 775 based on remains of Greek pottery.
[117] Picard 1969: 30-5.
[118] Niemeyer 2000: 108.
[119] Hodos 2006: 91-92; Niemeyer 2000: 105-6; Niemeyer 2006: 162-3; Picard 1969: 45.

**Other Parties with an Interest in Sicily**

Sicily was also of strategic and economic interest to many other polities and peoples besides those who resided upon it. The residents of southern Italy had a natural interest in what happened on the island, given their proximity, and one can easily imagine that there was much trade in material, people, and ideas between the two regions. This transfer would only increase in later years as many natives, especially from among the Campanians and Oscans, were hired as mercenaries and subsequently settled on the island.

The native peoples of southern Italy, just like the Sicels, had to share their land with Greek colonists. Indeed, the Greeks had colonized the Italian mainland at roughly the same time as Sicily, and even more thoroughly.[120] By 433, many large and important Greek cities covered southern Italy, leading the Romans to call the area Magna Graecia, or "Greater Greece." These rich Greek cities were tempting targets for the more ambitious tyrants of Sicily, including Gelon of Gela (r. 491-478) and Dionysius I, and were thus often brought into the affairs of the island. Rhegium, for example, just across the Strait of Messina from Sicily, was frequently a target of Sicilian tyrants who wanted to control access to Italy or to the eastern seaboard of Sicily. Magna Graecia also provided a haven for those Sicilian Greeks who had been exiled from their own cities but wanted to remain nearby in hopes of regaining their positions, such as the knights of Syracuse during the reign of Dionysius I. This interest was not reciprocated, however, and the Greeks of southern Italy rarely took an interest in Sicily except when threatened.

The powers of central Italy, although further removed, also had a vested interest in what occurred on the island. Both the Etruscans and their Roman conquerors

[120] *OCD*[3] s.v. "Magna Graecia."

followed, and occasionally intervened in, Sicilian affairs, albeit in different ways. The Etruscans were concerned about the rise of powerful Greek tyrants in Sicily and at times deployed their navies to check their power and keep them on the island. Often, they undertook these actions in concert with the Carthaginians, with whom they may have been allied.[121] Rome's interest in the island came much later and was primarily tied to their rivalry with Carthage, with Sicily being literally caught between the two.

Moving further east, the Greeks of the mainland were also concerned with their fellow Hellenes, although not in the way one would immediately expect. The colonizing *poleis* themselves, except for Corinth, generally paid little attention to events in Sicily.[122] Indeed, the Greek *poleis* that affected Sicily the most were the two who had not practiced colonization at all: Athens and Sparta. The attempted Athenian invasion of Syracuse during the Peloponnesian War changed the trajectory of Classical Age Sicily and was arguably responsible for the resurgence of tyranny on the island. The Spartans played a more indirect role in affairs of the island by allowing tyrants and democracies alike to recruit mercenaries and mercenary leaders from their allies and by sending military advisers to aid Syracuse against the Athenians and possibly to the court of Dionysius I as well.

Lastly, the Persian Empire may have also actively interfered in events on Sicily, if the Greek sources can be trusted. According to Diodorus Siculus, the Persians made an agreement with the Carthaginians to conquer the island of Sicily at the same time the former were attacking mainland Greece.[123] Not all scholars accept this claim as legitimate, however, and S. Harrell argued that it originated in Deinomenid

[121] Yalichev 1997: 208; Dunbabin 1948: 418-9; Picard 1969: 65, 67, 72.
[122] Shepherd 1992: 55; Antonaccio 2001: 122. Cf. Andrewes 1956: 128.
[123] Diod. Sic. 11.20.1

propaganda.[124] Given the lack of Persian and Carthaginian records, we may never know the truth. Nonetheless, it is true that the Persians took an active interest in the affairs of the Greeks of Ionia and the mainland, and it is not difficult to imagine a desire on their part to play a similar role in Magna Graecia, if only to stop the Greeks there from joining the frequent anti-Persian efforts of the closer Greek cities.

As even the brief survey above shows, Sicily certainly earned its moniker as "the crossroads of the Mediterranean." The presence of the Sicels and Phoenicians on the island, as well as the interest and occasional interference of other, more distant polities, meant the Greeks on the island had a different experience than their counterparts on the mainland or even the previous wave of Greek colonists in Ionia. Understanding the relationships between the Greeks and those with whom they shared their island is thus essential for understanding how things "went wrong" according to the traditional view, causing the proliferation of both mercenaries and tyrants on Sicily.

**The Genesis of Conflict on Sicily**

It is currently impossible to know with any certainty how the Sicels treated each other before the Greeks arrived and not much easier after that. Aside from a relatively large body of epigraphs, the Sicels left behind no written evidence about themselves, and although archeology has revealed a single material culture across the island, that does not preclude the existence of archaeologically invisible barriers or differences.[125] Indeed, we have little idea what the political, commercial, and military relationships between the various native settlements were.[126]

[124] Harrell 2006: 124, 130-3.
[125] Leighton 2000: 18. For Sicel writing, see Hodos 2006: 147-52.
[126] Graham 1988: 316.

What the archaeological record can tell us about the situation is largely negative. One of the most frequent targets of archaeological investigation on Sicily is graveyards, and archaeologists have noted a dearth of clearly-defined warrior burials like those of Mycenaean Greece and even contemporaneous southern Italy.[127] Small numbers of graves have been found which contain weapons, but they are widely distributed both geographically and chronologically across Sicily. The finds from these graves include Copper Age (3900-2300) mace-heads that may have been ceremonial in nature, Bronze Age (2300-1100) weapons at Thapsos which may have belonged to either Sicels or foreign mercenaries guarding Mycenaean shipments, and Iron Age warrior burials at Madonna del Piano and Montagna di Marzo which contained functional weapons and armor.[128] These burials cover a long span of time and there is there is no noticeable increase in warrior burials after the arrival of the Greeks.

What this archaeological evidence means is debatable. On the face of it, however, it seems that while there were indeed soldiers (or at least people taking up arms) among the native Sicels, they seldom if ever achieved the status of the warrior nobility familiar from Bronze Age Greek burials and Homer's epics. The seemingly low status and occurrence of soldiers does not necessarily indicate a lack of aggression, but it would suggest that warfare was not glorified. Indeed, Leighton has tendered the possibility that the Iron Age warriors may have served to guard livestock from rustlers and derived no special status from their service.[129] Another curious find from Sicily that may speak to a lack of military aspirations is that during the historical period, weapons are found more

[127] Leighton 1999: 87.
[128] Copper Age: Leighton 1999: 88, 104. Bronze Age: Leighton 1998: 167; Holloway 2000: 38. The connection between the warrior burial and Mycenean presence is my own, not Holloway's. Madonna del Piano: Leighton 1999: 198. Montagana di Marzo: Fisher-Hansen 2001: 165.
[129] Leighton 1999: 198, 202.

frequently in metal hoards than in burials.[130] This could indicate that weapons were more valuable for their metal composition than for killing or as status symbols.

Not all scholars, however, would agree with this assessment. Hodos has concluded that the appearance of cavalry motifs at native sites across the island in the sixth and fifth centuries indicates an increasing militarization among the Sicels as a result of their conflicts with the Greeks.[131] A possibility that Hodos does not address, however, is the frequent hiring of Sicel mercenaries by both the Greeks and the Carthaginians, which could have likewise led to an increase in military motifs and paraphernalia, if not the creation of a warrior class. De Angelis also saw evidence from the cemeteries of Pantalica that the Sicels of that city were concerned with warrior status.[132] It should be noted, however, that Pantalica was inhabited for six hundred years and includes five thousand surveyed tombs, and thus it is possible that the burials there represent either a brief period of warfare or a small number of warriors spread out over the entire history of the city.

Walls are another indicator of the presence of a militaristic society, either that of the builders or their neighbors. Native sites on Sicily dating back to as early as the Neolithic period were surrounded by walls and ditches, although the purpose of the former especially is debated. Leighton noted that ditches could have served numerous purposes other than defense, such as water transport and storage, drainage, keeping cattle and other livestock inside the settlement, and/or ritual delineation. Indeed, many of these ditches were later filled with trash from the settlements, presumably indicating that their

[130] Leighton 1999: 242.
[131] Hodos 2006: 147.
[132] De Angelis 2003a: 25.

intended purpose had been fulfilled.[133] Walls are more difficult to explain as a non-defensive measure, especially the turreted walls that appeared in the early Bronze Age, although Leighton argued that some of these may not have been defensive in purpose.[134]

Not all Sicel cities had walls, and it is also important to note that the native Sicilians were largely unsettled, building new sites and abandoning old ones on a routine basis. Leighton and Holloway both argued that these movements may have been related to the presence or absence of foreign traders and others, with coastal cities gaining importance in times of frequent contact with the outside and inland cities during the more isolated periods.[135] This was not an absolute pattern, and there were at all times a mixture of inland and coastal Sicel sites.

When the Greeks arrived, it seems that the Sicels were in a period of predominately coastal habitation, although there were also strong inland sites.[136] Most of these sites were unfortified until well after the Greek colonists arrived. For instance, in a survey of twenty-three Sicel sites from the area around the Greek colonies of Gelon and Acragas, T. Fisher-Hansen found that seventeen had walls. Of these sites, only three had walls that predated the sixth century. At least one of these sites had fallen under Greek influence early, which might explain the existence of circuit fortifications.[137] As Holloway has pointed out, this area of Sicily was one of the places where Greek influence penetrated the furthest inland, and part of that influence may have been the idea that cities needed walls, and thus the results of Fisher-Hansen's survey may not be applicable to the

[133] Leighton 1999: 69-70.
[134] Leighton 1999: 116.
[135] Leighton 1999: 192; Holloway 2000: 38.
[136] Hodos 2006: 99.
[137] Fisher-Hansen 2002.

rest of the island.[138] In any case, the late date of the walls at an area so near a major, and expansionist, Greek colony would indicate that the Sicels felt they had little to fear for centuries after the Greeks arrived on their island.

Taken together, this evidence suggests that the Sicels generally got along well with each other. There are signs of neither endemic warfare nor any indications that warriors and war was glorified at any site for prolonged periods of time. There is also no indication that the arrival of Greek and/or Phoenician traders and their goods caused warfare to erupt over access to these goods. Rather, it seems that they radiated peacefully inland from the coastal cities, presumably indicating the presence of local and regional trade routes, much like those that we can trace following Greek colonization.[139]

Another argument, from logic more than evidence, would be that there was no need to fight over resources. There are no estimates on the native population of Sicily before the Greeks arrived, but it is doubtful that they were in danger of straining the resources of the island. This can be concluded by noting that even with the arrival of thousands of Greeks and Phoenicians over the course of the eighth, seventh, and sixth centuries, there was more than enough land to support the Sicels, the colonists, and a thriving economy built on agricultural export. Unlike the settlement of the Americas, for instance, there is no evidence that the Greeks brought with them deadly diseases or perpetrated mass murder of the natives. Rather, the literary record indicates enslavement or displacement, while archeology shows a movement to the interior of the island. Thus, it seems that the arrival of the Greeks and Phoenicians increased the carrying capacity of Sicily rather than diminished it.

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[138] Holloway 1999: 87.
[139] Holloway 1999: 170-71; Mühlenbock 2008: 177-8.

The availability of land does not necessarily mean the availability of equal access to it, however, and it is there that scholars such as Hodos have argued the seeds of conflict were planted.[140] As mentioned previously, the Greeks remembered their colonization of Sicily as one of conquest over the native population. Syracuse and Leontini were already settled by the Sicels when the Greeks arrived and ran them off, at least according to Thucydides.[141] If such were the case, the pattern would have been repeated frequently, since most of the Greek colonies were established on sites that also show evidence of previous native occupation.[142] But did the colonists truly have such an easy time with the Sicels, or did the later authors elide a more complicated development?

The literary evidence is of little help in this debate. Thucydides only mentions the displacement of the natives from Syracuse and Leontini, and even the peaceful settlement of Megara Hyblea is phrased as a surrender (προδόντος) of native territory to the Greeks.[143] Diodorus Siculus glosses over the finer points of the initial colonization and instead opens with the Sicels becoming thoroughly Hellenized and joining the Greeks as Siceliotes (Σικελιώτης).[144]

One particular incident from Sicilian history that has been frequently used as evidence that the Greeks treated the Sicels harshly is the revolt against the Syracusan *Gamoroi*. Herodotus mentions in his account of the deeds of Gelon that he restored the aristocrats of Syracuse, whom the historian calls the *Gamoroi*, to their city, from whence they had been driven out by a revolt of the common people and slaves around 490.[145] These slaves, according to the historian, were known as the Kyllyrioi (Κυλλυρίοι), and

[140] Hodos 2006: 91.
[141] Thuc. 6.3.2
[142] Leighton 2000: 20; Boardman 1980: 189.
[143] Thuc. 6.3.2-3, 4.1
[144] Diod. Sic. 5.6.5.
[145] Hdt. 7.155.2. Date taken from Rutter 2000: 140.

some scholars have assumed that these were the original Sicel inhabitants of Syracuse and their descendants, but there is nothing in the ancient literature that substantiates that claim.[146] This assumption instead seems to have originated with T. J. Dunbabin, who argued that the Sicels were the only logical choice to make up such a large body.[147] While Dunbabin's argument does make sense, it is important to remember that it does not rest on any certain evidence. Nor is it necessary to conclude, as Dunbabin and others after him have, that the native Sicels in the vicinity of Syracuse were enslaved early on and that there was no significant Sicel presence there after the seventh century.[148] The enslavement of the Sicels, assuming it happened it all, need not have taken place so soon. While it is true that the Syracusans began the process of consolidating their interior territory by building forts and daughter colonies around the mid-seventh century, that does not mean that they immediately removed or enslaved all the natives they encountered. The Sicel component of the Kyllyrioi, assuming there was one, could have been captured at any time during the centuries-long process of consolidation. Likewise, the Kyllyrioi may have been enslaved as punishment for Sicel aid in Camarina's bid for independence in 552.[149]

We may never know who the Kyllyrioi were or how they became enslaved, and we should be cautious in using their story to illustrate how the first Greek colonists treated the natives they encountered. This is especially important considering that there were large Sicel settlements close to Syracuse until the mid-seventh century, particularly

[146] See, for example, Sjöqvist 1973: 36.
[147] Dunbabin 1948: 111.
[148] Dunbabin 1948: 110-2.
[149] Dunbabin 1948: 105; Thuc. 6.5.

at Pantalica and Finocchito.[150] This is in addition to the Sicels who hosted the Greeks at Megara Hyblea, which was only ten miles from Syracuse.[151] The existence of such large native settlements indicate either that the Syracusans' position in respect to the natives was relatively weak until the mid-seventh century, or that they chose to live peacefully with the Sicels until such a time as they were able or willing to tighten their grip on "their" territory.

The literary evidence, though sparse, paints a consistent picture of enslavement, displacement, and Hellenization. The archaeological record, however, casts grave doubts on this portrait. Unfortunately, the finds from the excavations of native and Greek sites, while tantalizing, are not conclusive and scholars are unsure about what, if anything, they can tell us about Greek and native interactions.

**Archaeological Evidence: Graveyards**

As mentioned above, graveyards are some of the most commonly excavated sites on Sicily. In the Greek colonies, these were usually located on the outskirts, giving modern archaeologists easier access to them than to the often still-inhabited urban centers. Likewise, the cemeteries of many of the Sicel sites are also easily accessible. One of the most notable features of burials in Greek cemeteries is the variety of funeral practices present, which often reflect a mix of Greek and native customs, and often differ from the burial practices of the metropoles.[152] Many of these graves likewise contain a mixture of Sicel items or Sicel forms of Greek items, such as fibulae, and more demonstrably Greek items, such as symposium paraphernalia.

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[150] Dunbabin 1948: 95-7.
[151] Dunbabin 1948: 19.
[152] Hodos 2006: 116; Leighton 1999: 234, 241; Lyons 1996: 187; Procelli 1996: 171-2; Shepherd 2005: 118-9; Frederiksen 1999: 249-50; Sjöqvist 1973: 35.

What these grave finds mean is the object of lively debate. Many scholars have assumed that these objects indicate the presence of Sicels at Greek sites, particularly Sicel women.[153] The presence of a mixed population is furthermore taken to mean that there were peaceful interactions between natives and Greeks as well as intermarriage during at least the first few generations of Greek presence. At most Greek sites, evidence of native burial customs tapers out and ceases over time, and this is usually interpreted as a sign that the natives were excised or became sufficiently Hellenized to be indistinguishable from the Greek population.

Not everyone agrees with this interpretation. Some, such as Hodos, have argued that the differing burial types as well as the divergence from the norms of the metropoles are a deliberate attempt by the colonies to forge a distinct identity, a view that G. Shepherd shared.[154] Furthermore, Shepherd made a convincing argument that the notion that native goods equal native people was rooted in the rather chauvinistic notion that Greeks would not adopt native fashions or use native artifacts, and so any such objects found must have belonged to Sicels living at the site.[155] She concluded by saying that the only thing that native grave goods can tell archaeologists is that people living at Greek sites used native goods and that their presence cannot be used to prove the ethnicity of the deceased nor intermarriage.[156]

Thus, there is no clear consensus on what the graves and their objects mean. On balance, it seems that the Greeks were indeed influenced by native customs and material culture, and personal contact would have been the best medium of transfer for these.

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[153] Leighton 1999: 235-6; Shepherd 2005: 116-7; De Angelis 2003a: 29; Shepherd 1999: 275.
[154] Hodos 2006: 13; Shepherd 2005: 115.
[155] Shepherd 1999: 275-6, 297-8.
[156] Shepherd 1999: 289, Shepherd 2005. See also Procelli 1996: 171-2.

Indeed, even someone as skeptical as Shepherd believed, based on the foundation stories and other evidence, that it is likely that at least the first generation of colonists intermarried with Sicel women, if for no other reasons than because of their limited numbers.[157]

**The Size of Greek Colonizing Parties**

This observation leads neatly to the next topic of consideration, the size of the original colonizing parties, as the approach that the initial settlers took toward the Sicels was likely heavily influenced by their relative numbers. Unfortunately, the ancient sources are completely silent on this subject, although there is some circumstantial evidence from the Classical Period that suggests most colonizing parties during that time consisted of between one and two hundred men.[158] If Holloway is correct about the informal and aristocratic nature of the early colonies, it is likely that those of the Archaic Age were smaller, given that the aristocrats in charge would have had to have provided the men and the means to get them to Sicily. Shepherd has argued, based on North American parallels, that less than a hundred people could have founded a Greek colony, while De Angelis has concluded that Megara Hyblea was initially established by a group of similar size and thinks most Greek colonies were as well.[159]

There was likely a wide variation in the size of colonizing parties, depending upon the wealth and personal power of the aristocrats involved in settling each colony, although all were likely smaller than those of the Classical Age. Even a party of the latter size, however, was likely not enough to simply sweep the natives before them, especially

[157] Shepherd 1999: 275-6, 296-7; 2005: 116, 129-30. See also Hall 2002: 100-1; De Angelis 2003a: 28-31.
[158] Shepherd 2005: 129n42. See also Cawkwell 1992.
[159] Shepherd 2005: 129; De Angelis 2003a: 28-9. Cf. Di Vita (1990: 346) who argued for larger parties numbering hundreds of men.

if the Sicels had any sort of fortifications in place around their cities. If the Iron Age weapons found at Madonna del Piano are indicative of the state of military technology on Sicily at the time of colonization, the Greeks would have held no advantage there, since they would have been fighting with similar weapons and without the advantages that the later hoplite "revolution" would have brought them.[160] Even if the Sicels were not aggressive, as argued above, it seems unlikely they would have allowed themselves to be run off their own land by a party of Greeks smaller or just as numerous as themselves. Thus, it seems more likely that the Greeks sought peaceful relationships with the natives at first, at least until enough of their countrymen joined them to give them an advantage.[161] This assumes, of course, that the Greeks always planned to seize large parts, if not all, of Sicily away from the Sicels, a supposition that seems to underlie much of the work of ancient and modern historians but which cannot be taken as true based on the remaining evidence.

If the conflicts that plagued Sicily in the Classical and Archaic Ages did not originate from the founding of the colonies, their cause must lie at some other point. The Greek cities did not remain small, and their population increased both from births and further immigration from the Greek mainland.[162] With larger populations came the need (or at least desire) for more land. Shortly after their foundations, some of the colonies, most noticeably Syracuse, began to claim larger and larger swaths of interior land. This was primarily accomplished through the planting of daughter colonies and forts in "their" territory. Many of these colonies, especially those of Syracuse, were heavily fortified, which suggests they were intended to restrict access to this newly claimed land from the

[160] Madonna del Piano: Leighton 2000: 198.
[161] Cf. Hall 2002: 98-9.
[162] Andrewes 1956: 128.

Sicels and other Greeks. The Chalcidian colonies, on the other hand, tended instead toward much smaller secondary foundations that show evidence suggesting mixed populations.[163]

**Archaeological Evidence: Walls**

The timing of the fortification of the Greek colonies themselves supports the idea that tensions did not increase until well after they arrived. The dating of fortification walls is slightly less problematic at Greek sites than at Sicel ones given the greater presence of datable pottery, but there is still room for doubt. What follows are dates primarily based on archaeological evidence, except where noted.

Megara Hyblaea was the earliest known Greek city on Sicily with fortifications, possessing an earthen rampart and ditch sometime between its foundation in 728 and c.625.[164] Given the history of the founders of the colony and the presumed presence of friendly Sicels in or near the city, it would not be unreasonable to assume that the ramparts were built at the time of founding to discourage further aggression from other Greeks, particularly those of neighboring Syracuse and Leontini. The Megarans upgraded their defenses with mudbrick walls in the sixth century.[165]

The Syracusan colonies of Casmenai (643) and Camarina (598) were both fortified at or soon after their foundation, providing credence to Sjöqvist's interpretation of them as fortified outposts intended to project the power of their metropole into its hinterland.[166] The eldest colony of Naxos is traditionally considered to have undergone its first period of wall-building in the late sixth century, although Frederiksen argued that

[163] Sjöqvist 1973: 35-7.
[164] Pottery indicates that the wall was built after c.725 and the ditch was filled in c.625, presumably having fulfilled its purpose. See Frederiksen 2011: 162.
[165] Frederiksen 2011: 162.
[166] Frederiksen 2011: 154-5. The actual dates are late sixth century for Camarina and seventh century for Casmenai.

there was an earlier circuit wall built in the second half of the seventh century and that the sixth-century walls were a "reinforcement" of the older fortifications.[167] Naxos' daughter colony of Leontini was fortified by the first half of the sixth century as well.[168] The walls of Selinus, the daughter colony of Megara Hyblaea, date to sometime between 600 and 550, meaning they were built less than a century after its foundation.[169] Gela did not have fortifications walls around the whole city until the late sixth century, although a passage from Thucydides may indicate there was a fortified acropolis there from its foundation in 688.[170] Its daughter colony, Acragas, was fortified within thirty years of its foundation, if not from the very beginning.[171] The cites of Syracuse and Messene (originally founded as Zancle and renamed in the early fifth century) are known to have been fortified by 490 when they were besieged by Hippocrates of Gela, but the walls themselves have not been excavated or more firmly dated.[172]

Assuming that the dates are accurate, the evidence paints a consistent picture. With the admittedly notable, but logical exception of Megara Hyblaea, most of the first-generation colonies were unfortified for at least the first hundred years of their existence.[173] The daughter colonies of these cities, on the other hand, were usually fortified from the beginning or within a hundred years of their foundation, with Leontini being the notable exception. All the first-generation colonies on the island and most of the second-generation ones as well were fortified by 490 at the latest, with most being fortified sometime in the late seventh or early sixth century.

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[167] Frederiksen 2011: 76.
[168] Frederiksen 2011: 159-60; Winter 1971: 128.
[169] Frederiksen 2011: 185.
[170] Frederiksen 2011: 143. The passage in question is Thuc. 6.4.3.
[171] Frederiksen 2011: 126. Cf. Winter 1971: 27.
[172] Hdt. 7.154.2; Frederiksen 2011: 192, 200.
[173] Karlsson (1989:77) made this observation as well, but without going into detail about the evidence. Cf. Winter 1971: 55.

One could assume this meant that the Greeks felt safe in their cities, but there are other possible factors. Most Greek colonies, like their mainland counterparts, were built on sites that were defended to varying degrees by the natural landscape. Elevated terrain, rivers, islands, and isthmuses were all favored spots for founding colonies. The natural defenses offered by these features might have been reason enough for a city to put off erecting artificial barriers for a time.[174] The economic and labor resources required are another possible reason for delayed action. Circuit walls are generally considered to be "monumental architecture" because of the resources and administration required for their construction.[175] Thus it is possible that a lack of walls does not indicate complacency or peacefulness as much as a lack of resources or a reasonable assurance that geography and martial valor were sufficient to guarantee safety for at least a time. Indeed, Frederiksen noted that the colonies which erected walls first, Megara Hyblaea and Naxos, were on low plateaus or coastal plains (respectively) and thus lacked the natural defenses of the other colony sites.[176]

When one compares Sicily to the rest of the Greek world, an interesting picture emerges. It seems the practice of fortifying cities emerged on both Sicily and in the Greek mainland in the seventh century, with a few notably earlier examples, such as Megara Hyblaea on Sicily and Asine on the mainland, fortified around the same time as the former. Nonetheless, the Greeks of Sicily and Italy apparently had more to fear,

[174] Winter 1971: 33n68, 54.
[175] Frederiksen 2011: 1.
[176] Frederiksen 2011: 77. Cf. Winter 1971: 28.

since, according to the data gathered by Frederiksen, sixty percent of Greek colonies in the West were fortified, as opposed to only ten percent for the Greek world as a whole.[177]

The Phoenician evidence, although limited, supports the chronology established above. Motya did not gain its massive walls until the sixth century, although that may have been as much a function of its sudden rise to an urban center around the same time and its well-protected location as of any new fears.[178] The portion of Punic wall that still stands in Panormus is usually dated to the fifth century, when the city was expanded. The excavations of Soluntum have thus far only uncovered structures dating to the Roman period, too late to be of use to the present discussion.

**Conclusions**

Taking all this evidence into account, a few conclusions can be reached. First, the Greek cities of Sicily began building walls for the most part in step with their mainland contemporaries. Despite similar beginnings, however, the Sicilian cities were fortified more quickly and thoroughly, with all the major colonies having walls before the end of the Archaic Age. As mentioned above, the greatest period of wall building seems to have been the late seventh and early sixth centuries. This would seem to indicate that there was some common threat that these cities feared that arose during this time. One could argue that it was only then that the colonies had the economic and manpower resources to construct walls, but the efforts of the founders of Megara Hyblaea argue against that conclusion. If De Angelis' estimates of the population of that colony are correct, the fifty to a hundred men who founded the city were able to fortify their site thoroughly, if

[177] Frederiksen 2011: 116-118. He actually believed that all of the Western Greek colonies were fortified, but that some have been destroyed so completely that no evidence remains.
[178] Aubet 2001: 232-3.

temporarily.[179] It would seem then that it was possible for other Greeks to have fortified their cities much earlier than they did, if they felt the need to do so.

What then was the threat the emerged in the late seventh or early sixth century that caused the Greek colonies to erect large and expensive circuit walls? Fear of the Sicels is one possibility, but there is no evidence of any wide-spread revolt among the Sicels until the Classical Age. There is also no corresponding change in the material evidence from Sicel sites, such as an increase in warrior burials, hordes of weapons, mass graves, or even increased fortifications, to indicate widespread aggression.

Karlsson argued tyrants initiated the great wall-building programs on Sicily because they had the resources to do so and wished to protect their cities against other tyrants.[180] There are two main problems with his argument. The first is that the earliest known Sicilian tyrant, Panaetius of Leontini, began his reign c.600, while Karlsson dated the increased interest in wall-building to the end of the sixth century. Thus, walls were already being erected before the time of Panaetius, and well before the time Karlsson ascribes to tyrants. The second problem is that we do not know what these early tyrants did and if they were truly a threat to their fellow Greeks. The period during which most of the walls were built was one of interior expansion, and one could imagine it was this venture which occupied most of the early tyrants' time and energy. Indeed, conflicts between cities and their tyrants don't appear historically until the early fifth century, when the Deinomenid tyrants of Gela and Syracuse tried to conquer or otherwise control the other Greek cities of Sicily.

[179] De Angleis 2003a: 28-9.
[180] Karlsson 1989: 77

If tyrants weren't erecting walls against each other, what then motivated the Greek colonies to invest the time and materials needed to create such barriers? The internal consolidation mentioned above might be one reason. Even though the Sicels might not have been a threat at the time, the Greeks may have reasonably feared that their continued expansion into the interior might eventually provoke a violent response. This would also help explain why the second-generation colonies, especially those of Syracuse, were walled so quickly after their founding, as they were often built further inland than their metropoles. It would be convenient if we could also invoke a Phoenician threat, but that seems unlikely at this early juncture. Most of the Phoenician colonies on Sicily at this time were presumably still new trading colonies, and Carthage was still under the control of Tyre. Instead, it is not until the early fifth century that we see a serious threat from Carthage.

The warfare for which Sicily later became famous in the ancient world seems to have come relatively late to the island. Despite the assertions of later historians, the evidence suggests that the Greek colonists and Sicels were able to share the island in relative peace until the seventh and sixth centuries, if the building of walls can be taken as a sign of increased tensions. This means that whatever it was that caused the Greeks to fortify their cities, it was not tyrants, for they still lay in the future. Nor does it seem likely that it was activity on the part of the Sicels, although fear of future hostilities could have been a motivating factor, especially as the Greeks began to encroach on Sicel lands.

Whatever stimulated the building of walls, two relevant points remain. The first is that the Greek colonists were able to establish both stable cities and good relationships with the Sicels that lasted in many cases for at least two hundred years. Thus, it seems

that the common assertions that the *polis* system failed to take root and that Sicily was always a place of violence are both false. The second is that it was not tyrants and their mercenaries which upset the peace or were the cause of the problems on Sicily. How they came to power and what role they may have played in the destabilization of Sicily will be discussed in the next chapter.

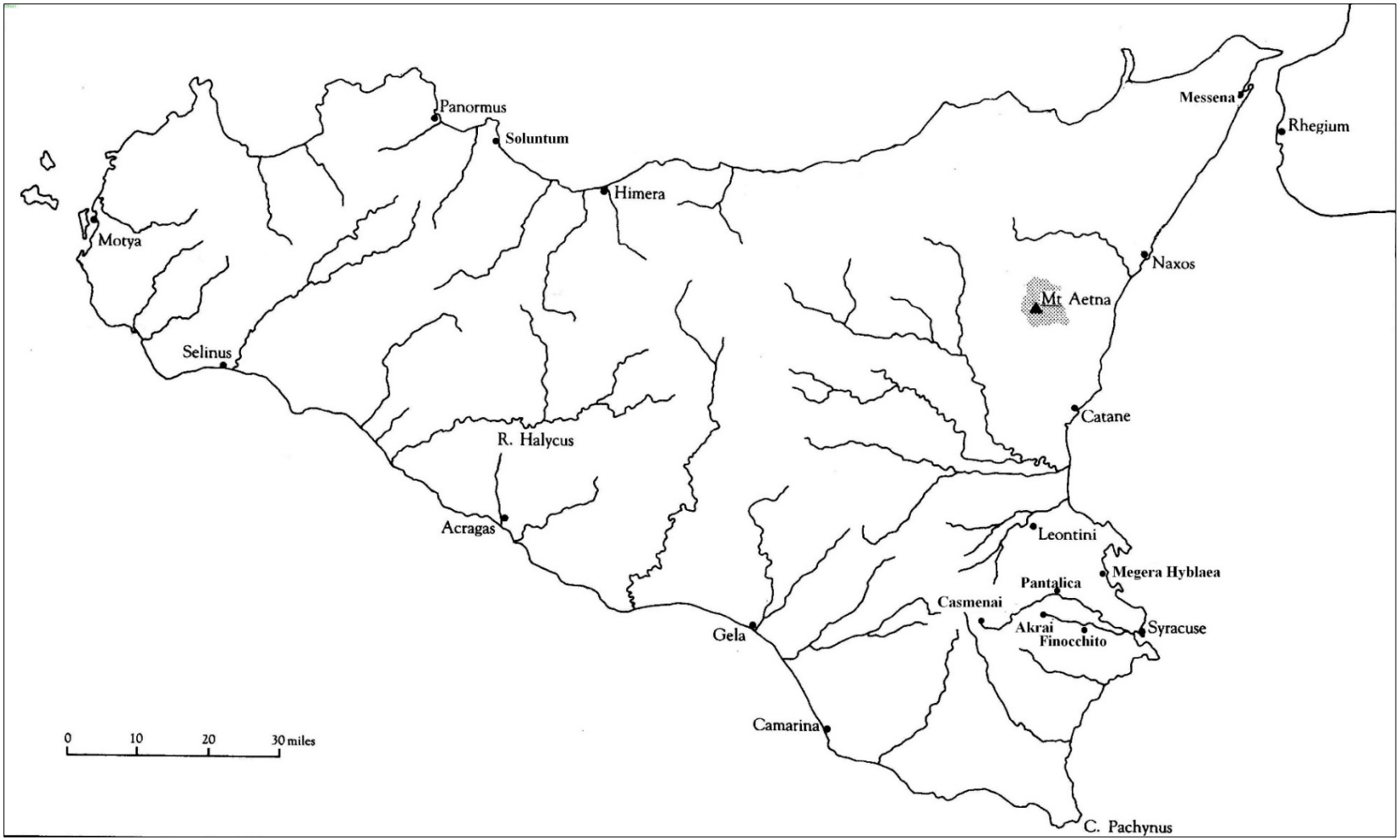


Figure 1. Map of Greek Colonies, Phoenician Colonies, and Major Native Sites
(Adapted from Caven 1990: Map C)

| Colony | Date Founded[181] | Metropole(s) | Date Fortified[182] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Naxos | 734 | Chalcis | 650-600 or 600-550 |
| Syracuse | 733 | Corinth | By 490 |
| Leontini | 729 | Naxos | c.600-550 |
| Catane | 729/730 | Naxos | |
| Megara Hyblaea | 728 | Megara | Earthen rampart and ditch between c.725-625; actual wall c.600 |
| Messena (Zancle) | 8th century[183] | Cuma, Chalcis, Euboea | By 490 |
| Gela | 688 | Rhodes and Crete | Late 6th, possibly acropolis at foundation |
| Akrai | 663 | Syracuse | |
| Himera | c.649[184] | Zancle/Messina | unknown |
| Casmenai | 643 | Syracuse | Late 7th or late 6th |
| Selinus | 628 | Megara Hyblaea | 600-550 |
| Camarina | 598 | Syracuse | Late 6th, maybe first half |
| Acragas | 580 | Gela | Before c.550 |

Figure 2. Table of Greek Colonies and Important Dates

[181] Unless otherwise noted, all dates taken from Morris 1996: Table 1.
[182] Dates taken from Frederiksen 2011.
[183] Date taken from *OCD*[3], s.v. "Zancle."
[184] Date taken from *OCD*[3], s.v. "Himera."

## Chapter 2: Monarchs and Mercenaries

Now that we have set the stage for the rise of tyrants by discussing the colonization of Sicily and where the conflicts on the island may have originated, it is time to turn to our primary topic, tyrants. In this chapter, I will survey the reigns of both the first generation of Sicilian tyrants (i.e., those who reigned from 600-461 BC) and the Archaic Age tyrants of the Greek mainland. The purpose of this comparison is to show that tyranny followed the same general course on the island as on the mainland, although it endured longer on the former. This chapter will also show that mercenaries were not the vital factor in the establishment of most of these early tyrannies.

### Tyrants of the Greek Mainland

This survey will begin on the Greek mainland, as that is where the earliest known tyrants arose. The first of these autocrats is Pheidon of Argos, who ruled sometime during the seventh century, perhaps in its first half.[185] He was already king of the city, but, according to Aristotle, became its tyrant by departing from previous customs and ruling as an autocrat.[186] He was generally portrayed as overbearing and arrogant, going so far as to drive out the Eleians in order to host an Olympic game himself.[187] On the other hand, he seems to have been a capable administrator and general who was able to

[185] *OCD*[3] s.v. "Pheidon." The ancient sources are conflicting in their chronological placement of this figure, with Pausanias (6.22.2) dating him to the mid-eighth century and Herodotus (6.127) to the early sixth.
[186] Arist. *Pol*. 1310b
[187] Hdt. 6.127; Strabo 8.358. Pausanias (6.22.2) only mentions that he helped with the hosting of the eighth Olympiad, although he also emphasizes his overbearing nature.

expand the territory of Argos and was even credited with the invention of silver currency.[188]

We are much better informed about the next tyrant, Cypselus of Corinth. Since the mid-eighth century, power in that city had been shared among the Bacchiads, who were a family or political caste who took turns acting as *prytaneis* of the city and maintained their hold on power by practicing endogenous marriage.[189] Eventually, however, one of them married outside the group and bore a son named Cypselus. According to tradition, the Bacchiads tried but failed to kill the "illegitimate" child, but it seems more likely, given his future career, that they actually accepted him as one of their own.[190]

By 657, and presumably with the support of the Bacchiads, Cypselus held the office of *polemarch* during a war with Argos and Corcyra. A successful generalship, and the notability it brought, was often used as a springboard to tyranny, although S.I. Oost argued that Cypselus may have won over the *demos* (in this context, the general population of the city) by being gentle with the civilian side of his duty, which was collecting debts.[191] Aristotle, meanwhile, credits his ascent to demagoguery, which could fit into either scenario listed above.[192] However he achieved his popularity, in 657, he was able to seize power through unspecified means and expel the Bacchiads.[193] He ruled for the next thirty years and was, according to the sources, popular enough that he did not need a bodyguard.[194] When he died, he passed the tyranny to his son, Periander.

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[188] Strabo 8.358, 376.
[189] Diod. Sic. 7.9.6; Pausanias 2.4.4; Oost 1972: 10; Drews 1983: 50.
[190] Hdt. 5.92; *OCD*[3], s.v. "Cypselus."
[191] Oost 1972: 19.
[192] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1310b, 5.1315b.
[193] Hdt. 5.92.
[194] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b

Periander is one of the more famous tyrants of archaic Greece and ruled his city for at least forty years, beginning in 627.[195] He was considered one of the seven sages of Greece by Diognes Laeritus and Ausonius, but his reputation as a political leader was a mixed one.[196] Aristotle speaks of him as both a warlike tyrant and a just, humble man who could not tolerate injustice.[197] Diogenes credited him with being the first man to change a government to a tyranny and the first to have a bodyguard, neither of which are historically accurate, but reflect perhaps a clearer memory of him than of previous tyrants.[198] Periander's son Lycrophon was estranged from his father and predeceased him, and so the former was succeeded by his nephew, Psammetichus.[199] Psammetichus only ruled for three years before he was overthrown and self-rule installed in Corinth.[200]

The establishment of tyranny in as important a city as Corinth caused a ripple effect across Greece, and the seventh and sixth centuries saw tyrants rise in many other cities. Pittacus of Mytilene (lived c.650-570) was the first of these new autocrats, although it is not known when he took power. According to Diogenes Laertius, he was given the position as a reward for his victory over the Athenians during a contest over Sigeum.[201] Strabo, perhaps not contradictorily, says he overthrew the oligarchs, acted as king, and then restored the city to independence.[202] Alcaeus the poet, who may have been one of the aristocrats whom Pittacus overthrew, agrees that he was appointed by the citizens of the city, although he argued they did not make a wise choice.[203] Aristotle

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[195] Aristotle (*Pol*. 5.1315b) gives a reign of forty-four years and Diogenes Laertius (1.98) forty.
[196] Diog. Laert. 1.13; Ausonius 13.10.
[197] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b, fr. 611.20 Rose.
[198] Diog. Laert. 1.95.
[199] Hdt. 3.53; Diog. Laert. 1.95.
[200] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b.
[201] Diog. Laert. 1.74.
[202] Strabo 13.167.
[203] Alc. fr. 6, 70-72, 74, 129, 141, 306g, 332, 348, 351 West.

records that Pittacus was offered the tyranny of the city because Alcaeus and his brothers were leading a revolution from exile.[204] Taken together, the evidence seems indicates that he was made tyrant by request of the lower classes of the city, perhaps based on military accomplishments, in order to break the power of the current oligarchy or prevent an oligarchical resurgence. Having accomplished this task, he then retired and returned power to the *demos*.[205]

A contemporary of Pittacus was Theagenes of Megara, who ruled that city as tyrant from 640 to 620. According to Aristotle, he seized power by killing the livestock of the rich and then requesting a bodyguard.[206] Reading between the lines, one could assume Megara was undergoing *stasis* between rich and poor and that by his actions, Theagenes positioned himself as a champion of the *demos*.[207] Not content with being tyrant of Megara alone, he also supported his son-in-law Cylon in his failed attempt to become tyrant of Athens in 632.[208] He was later expelled by the Megarians for unknown reasons, apparently without solving the underlying problems in the city.[209]

Cleisthenes of Sicyon is the most well-known member of the Orthagorid dynasty of tyrants and ruled his city c.600-560. It seems that Cleisthenes inherited the office from a family member, either through death or intrigue. The Orthagorids earned rare praise from Aristotle, who spoke of them as ruling Sicyon well, considering themselves under the law, and looking after the interest of the common people. They were not weak, however, and Aristotle makes it clear that Cleisthenes was a formidable man in both war

[204] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1285a.
[205] Diog. Laert. 1.75; Strabo 13.2.3; Arist. *Pol*. 3.1285a.
[206] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1305a, *Rh*. 1357b
[207] Cf. Anderson 2005: 196.
[208] Thuc. 1.126.
[209] Plut. *Quast. Graec*. 18.

and peace.[210] It is unknown what happened politically in Sicyon immediately after his death, only that c.565, the Spartans expelled a tyrant named Aeschines from the city.[211]

As for his predecessors, we know very little about them aside from some of their names and the fact they were related, and scholars have been unable to agree upon a single family tree or line of succession.[212] According to an anonymous history found among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri, Orthagaros, the first tyrant and founder of the dynasty, was an excellent soldier who was elected *polemarch* by the demos.[213] The account does not explicitly say that he used this position as a stepping stone to tyranny, but it would be reasonable to assume that this was the case. In any event, according to Aristotle, this dynasty ruled the city for one hundred years, making the Orthagorids the longest-ruling dynasty known from Archaic Greece and a notable exception to the general trend of tyrannies not lasting longer than one or two generations.[214]

Athens also experienced a period of tyranny under the Peisistratids. Peisistratus, the founder of the dynasty, presents an interesting case in that he seized the tyranny of Athens on three separate occasions, each time using a different method. He first rose to power in the 560s, when Athens was split into two geographical factions. After distinguishing himself in battle against Megara, he parlayed his influence into the creation of a third faction. He next faked an attack on himself and tricked the people of Athens into voting him a civilian bodyguard, which he then used to seize the acropolis.[215] He was run out of Athens after a brief time by a short-lived coalition of the other two

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[210] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b.
[211] *FGrH* 105 F1, quoted in Hammond 1956: 48-9.
[212] Hammond 1956 provides a good overview, as well as four different family trees which had been proposed by his day.
[213] *P. Oxy*. 1365.
[214] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b.
[215] Hdt. 1.59.

factions. The leader of one of the factions, Megacles, later brought Peisistratus back from exile and helped him regain the tyranny by convincing the Athenians that Athena supported him. This new alliance also soon fell apart, and Peisistratus had to flee once more, this time for ten years.[216]

Peisistratus did not spend this time idle, however. He and his sons toured Greece and beyond, collecting money and men from those who would support them, including the city of Thebes and the future tyrant Lygdamis of Naxos (reigned c. 546-524). He also acquired Argive mercenaries, earned or bought the support of the oligarchs (ἱππεύς) of Eretria, and hired unspecified soldiers from Thrace.[217] With this mixed force of mercenaries and allies, Peisistratus was able to take the city in 546, killing or exiling many of his rivals.[218] He may have subsequently disbanded this army after using it to conquer the island of Naxos and giving it over to Lygdamis, for Herodotus next notes that he hired bodyguards, although he does not say from whence they came.[219] Peisistratus ruled Athens justly and to its benefit until 527, after which the tyranny passed to his sons Hippias and Hipparchus jointly.[220]

The sons carried on the good work of their father, and Aristotle credits Hippias with a wise and diplomatic nature and Hipparchus with a love of poetry, if also of women and amusement. After Hipparchus was assassinated in 514, however, Hippias became crueler and more authoritarian. The Alcameonid family of Athens, who had been rivals of the Peisistratids before being exiled, finally convinced the Spartans to drive out

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[216] Hdt. 1.59-60.
[217] Hdt. 1.61; Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.2. The latter were likely Thracian mercenaries, who began appearing on Athenian art around this time. See Best 1969: 6-7.
[218] Hdt. 1.62-64. Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 15.3.
[219] Hdt. 1.64.
[220] Arist. *Ath. Pol.* 16, 18.

Hippias and effect their own return in 510.[221] The "official" version of events, however, which was already popular by the time of Thucydides, was that two Athenian citizens, Harmodius and Aristogeiton, murdered Hipparchus, who was the sole tyrant, and freed Athens from tyranny, [222] These two figures were hailed as the Tyrannicides and the saviors of Athens, statues were erected in their honor by order of Cleisthenes, and their descendants were later granted public meals.[223] Thus the Athenians changed their own history to fit better with the political ideals of the fifth and fourth centuries.

During the reign of Peisistratus, our final mainland tyrant, Polycrates of Samos (c.535-522), emerged. He and two of his brothers seized power by waiting until the men of the city had brought their weapons out of their houses for a religious festival and then attacking them while they were unarmed. Supported by troops from Lygdamis of Naxos, the brothers killed their opposition and seized the acropolis and other key positions in the city.[224] After briefly sharing power with them, Polycrates killed one of his brothers and exiled the other in order to hold sole power.[225] According to Aristotle, he maintained his tyranny by sponsoring numerous public works projects to keep the Samians too busy to revolt.[226] This strategy seems to have worked, since he ruled successfully until he was killed by the Persian satrap Oroetes in 522.[227]

**Tyrants of Sicily**

Having carried the analysis to the last of the Archaic Age mainland Greek tyrants, it is time to return to Sicily. Assuming that the dates for the earliest tyrants are correct

[221] Arist. *Ath*. *Pol*. 18.
[222] Thuc. 6.53.3-59.
[223] Podlecki 1966: 129-35.
[224] Polyaenus *Strat*. 1.23.
[225] Hdt. 3.39
[226] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1313b.
[227] Hdt. 3.120.

and that there was no earlier generation of Sicilian tyrants who have disappeared from history, it took Sicily the better part of a century to catch up to the mainland, and there were at least two dynasties of tyrants on the latter before the first known autocrat emerged on the island. As mentioned above, while tyranny on the mainland neatly falls into the conventional Greek Archaic Age, tyranny in Sicily continued well into the Classical Age, with the last dynasty ending c.461. For that reason, I am classifying these early tyrants of Sicily as "first-generation tyrants," in order to avoid chronological mislabeling and to distinguish them from those who arose later in the Classical Age.

Panaetius of Leontini is the earliest Sicilian tyrant who is more than just a name. Sometime around 600 BC, this shadowy figure took over the government of his city, which had previous been an oligarchy. Aristotle only provides that he achieved his position through demagoguery, while Polyaenus provides a much fuller account.[228] According to the latter, Panaetius was general of the city during one of its wars with Megara Hyblaea and was able to persuade the infantry and servants (πένητας, later described as ἠνιόχοις) to murder the wealthy and cavalry because the former had suffered more from the war than their victims.[229] Although not explicitly stated, given the correlation between military roles and socio-economic status in Greek armies, it is possible that the true conflict was as much over class as the relative human costs of the war. *Stasis* over such issues was common in Greek cities, and it is thus reasonable to see this event as another such incident.

Of special interest to the current discussion is the presence of six hundred *peltasts* of unknown origins whom Polyaenus notes were loyal to Panaetius and who assisted the

[228] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1310b.
[229] Polyaenus, *Strat*. 5.47

common Leontinites in disposing of their social betters. Once the wealthy and cavalry had been dispatched, it was these *peltasts* who took control of the city for their master. Without further information, is impossible to know who these soldiers were with any certainty, particularly since the term *peltast* was used inconsistently in Classical times when these soldiers were a frequent sight, and one can only guess what Polyaenus, writing in the second century AD, meant by the term.[230] They were almost certainly not the Thracian *peltasts* so common in the Greek wars of the fifth and fourth centuries everywhere except for Sicily. At the least, it seems that these *peltasts* were light-armed infantry who were in some way distinct from the regular army of Leontini. A mercenary or civilian bodyguard is a strong possibility, although that would raise the question of why the oligarchs of Leontini would trust Panaetius with such a force. Another option is that they were a mercenary force hired by the city which Panaetius was able to subvert. Either way, it seems likely that Panaetius belongs to that group of tyrants who attained their position with the help of hired soldiers.

If such was the case, most of those who followed him obtained their power in other ways. The next tyrant of whom we have knowledge is the legendarily cruel Phalaris of Acragas. Phalaris was tyrant of the Gelan colony c.570-554, which would place his reign in the first decades of the city's existence. Like Panaetius, Phalaris grasped the tyranny after holding legitimate high office, in his case that of overseer of the building of a temple to Zeus Polieus.[231] With the money given to him to undertake the project, he hired foreigner workers and purchased slaves as well as materials. He then staged a theft of these items and received permission to fortify the acropolis to prevent

[230] English 2012: 26
[231] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1310b; Polyaenus, *Strat*. 5.1

further desecration. Having secured his base, he next armed his slaves, attacked the citizens during a religious festival, and seized power.[232]

What is unusual in this account is that although he had acquired the services of both foreigners and slaves, it is only the later whom Polyaenus mentions him arming.[233] One would assume that the outsiders would be the logical choice to form a mercenary army, although it is possible these might have been foreign craftsmen hired to help keep up the illusion of progress on the temple. It is also possible that the slaves in question were Sicels taken prisoner during the inward expansion of Gela, of which the building of Acragas was itself an important part. Thus, Phalaris may have used a force which could be defined as mercenary, but a strict reading of the sources, coupled with our working definition of mercenary, which excludes slaves, means that for the purposes of this dissertation, Phalaris' force will not be considered as such.

After the end of the reign of Phalaris, there were no more known tyrants on Sicily until the practice was revived in the city of Gela by Cleander, who reigned from 505 to 498. Very little is known about him and he is usually mentioned in the primary sources as a codicil to his more successful brother, Hippocrates. It is unknown how Cleander came to power, other than that Gela was an oligarchy before him.[234] His father was an Olympic victor, which would indicate that he and Hippocrates were likely members of the aristocracy.[235] Thus he may have seized power from one of the magistracies or other offices open to aristocrats, or he may have used force or trickery to drive off his rivals.

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[232] Polyaenus, *Strat*. 5.1.
[233] Both Dunbabin (1945: 316-7) and Phillips (1971: 98-9) accepted that Polyaenus' account was accurate, with the latter adding its source was likely a Sicilian historian.
[234] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1316a.
[235] Hdt. 7.154

After Cleander was murdered in 498, power passed to Hippocrates. Although he was able to assume his position without the aid of mercenaries, he is the first Sicilian tyrant whom the sources explicitly state employed large numbers of them. Polyaenus records that Hippocrates hired the men of the Sicel city of Ergentini as mercenaries, lavishing pay and attention on them in return for their efforts on his behalf. Once he had managed to entice most of them into his service, he had them killed by his Greek forces so that he could seize their city.[236] Assuming that this account is accurate, if he was hiring the natives of one Sicel city in such large numbers, it stands to reason that he was hiring others as well.[237] Nonetheless, it seems his bodyguard and his cavalry, the most prestigious and perhaps most effective arms of his forces, were made up of Greeks, or at least men with Greek names, such as Aenesidemus, son of Pataecus and Gelon, the future tyrant.[238] With this army, he was able to take over most of the Greek cities of the island as well as many Sicel ones. He was even able to defeat Syracuse in open battle but settled for a peace brokered by Corinth and Corcyra.[239]

Hippocrates died in battle in 491, leaving the tyranny to his sons. The people of Gela, however, had grown tried of autocratic rule and revolted against the young heirs. Hippocrates' former bodyguard and general of the cavalry, Gelon, defeated the democrats, but then took up the power himself. Gelon was presumably an aristocrat, for Herodotus records that his family had held the priesthood of an unnamed earth goddess

[236] Polyaenus, *Strat*. 5.6
[237] Phillips (1971: 82) believed the story to be accurate and that Polyaenus likely drew upon either Timaeus or Philistus for its details.
[238] Hdt. 7.154
[239] Hdt. 7.154

and he had distinguished himself as a solider and general in the many campaigns of Hippocrates.[240]

Gelon was no less a remarkable tyrant than general and was able to achieve what his predecessor could not by seizing the city of Syracuse. He did so by taking advantage of the *stasis* caused by the uprising of the Kyrilloi and the common Greeks against the *Gamoroi*, discussed in the previous chapter. Gelon supported the defeated aristocrats against the common people and was able to take the city by equal parts force and diplomacy.[241] Indeed, as Herodotus notes, Gelon would frequently enslave the common people of a captured city and bring the aristocrats to Syracuse, a different approach than that taken by mainland tyrants, who usually sided with the *demos* against aristocrats. Such was the fate of Casmene, Megera Hyblaea, and Sicilian Euboia, and only the colony of Camarina escaped this treatment.[242]

As the above list indicates, Gelon was very much interested in expanding his territory, which required a substantial military force. In a speech recorded in Herodotus, Gelon boasts to the Greek ambassadors that he is prepared to send a force of twenty thousand hoplites, two hundred triremes, two thousand cavalry, and six thousand light-infantry to help the Greeks against the Persians if they would let him command the whole Greek army.[243] Military figures in Herodotus are notoriously unreliable, but this force does not seem unreasonable for a man who controlled much of Sicily, including two of its major cities, and needed a large army to control and expand his empire.[244] Another set of

[240] Hdt. 7.154-5.
[241] Hdt. 7.155.
[242] Hdt. 7.156.
[243] Hdt. 7.158.
[244] See Macan and How and Well's commentaries on the passage in question. Although both are skeptical of the veracity of the story and the exact numbers, both agree that the forces attributed to Gelon are not

figures comes from Diodorus Siculus' account of the Battle of Himera, perhaps the defining moment of Gelon's reign. On this occasion, according to the historian, the tyrant commanded fifty thousand infantry and over five thousand cavalry.[245] A force that large seems less credible, but this figure might also include the forces of Gelon's ally Theron of Acragas, whose participation Diodorus omits but Herodotus preserves.[246] Even in that event, however, it seems unlikely that Theron would have had a force equal to or exceeding that of Gelon, although it is possible that the number represents a larger coalition, such as those built by Dionysius I in the Classical Age against Carthage.

As part of his armies, Gelon maintained a large force of mercenaries, although they do not appear in any of the accounts of his battles or other deeds. Instead, they only enter the historical record after the end of his dynasty, the Deinomenids, in 466. Once rid of Gelon's successors, the people of Syracuse had to find a way to govern themselves, a feat complicated by the ten thousand mercenaries whom Gelon had enfranchised in the city, of whom seven thousand still remained.[247] As Griffith pointed out long ago, that was an impressive feat of mercenary recruitment, given that Gelon only controlled the city for seven years.[248] It is even more incredible when one considers that this may not have been the sum of his mercenaries, only those to whom he granted citizenship, and it is entirely possible that he gave other rewards to different mercenaries or that the ten thousand were only those who had survived to claim their reward.

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outside the realm of possibility. Polybius (12.26) gives a figure of two hundred ships and a generic twenty thousand land troops (πεζός), perhaps on the authority of either Ephorus or Timaeus.

[245] Diod. Sic. 11.21.1

[246] Hdt. 7.165-6.

[247] Diod. Sic. 11.72.3; Griffith 1968: 194. Aristotle (*Pol*. 5.1303b) writes that the mercenaries were enfranchised after the removal of the dynasty, but it is difficult to imagine any situation where that order of events is logical. See Robinson 2000: 192n7 for an attempt to do so, although Robinson likewise concluded that the account of Diodorus is likely the more accurate.

[248] Griffith 1968: 194.

As for who these mercenaries were, neither Diodorus Siculus nor Aristotle provide much information. Diodorus simply refers to these men as "foreign hirelings" (ξένους μισθοφόρους) while Aristotle distinguishes between foreigners and hirelings.[249] This division may hint that not all the foreign soldiers who became citizens were actually mercenaries. Some may have been allies from other Greek cities who were given Syracusan citizenship as a reward for their service. Pausanius, for instance, records that there was a least one man from the Peloponnese, Phormis of Maenalus, who fought for both Gelon and Hieron and considered himself a Syracusan. Phormis prospered so much that he was able to make dedications both at Olympia and Delphi, and it is likely that such wealth, or at least the promise of it, would have attracted many others to serve under the Deinomenids. Unfortunately, the description of his service from Pausanius is not precise enough to know if Phormis was considered a mercenary, ally, or something else.[250] Based on Phormis and other evidence, M. Trundle has concluded that Gelon maintained connections with the Arcadian nobility, and that the most likely purpose for such relationships would have been so that he could recruit Arcadian hoplites as mercenaries and/or allies.[251]

Gela and Syracuse were not the only Sicilian cities which fell under tyranny in the early fifth century. There were several tyrants in Sicily during that time, and their interactions helped shape both the present and future of the island. Perhaps the most important of these was Theron of Acragas, who reigned from 488 to 473. According to Polyaenus, Theron seized power by using the money meant for the completion of a

[249] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1303b; Diod. Sic. 11.72.3
[250] Paus. 5.27.1-2.
[251] Trundle 2013: 341.

temple to instead hire a group of citizens to become his bodyguard.[252] This account is identical to the one Polyaenus told of Phalaris, and Dunbabin rejected this story as a doublet, concluding that Theron was a rich aristocrat who achieved power by some other means. [253] This is possible, or Theron may have drawn inspiration from the previous tyrant. In the absence of any better alternative, I will follow the account of Polyaenus as written and classify Theron as one of the tyrants who gained his position by means of a civilian bodyguard. No matter how he gained power, some time before 480, Theron removed Terillus the son of Crinippus from the tyranny of Himera and replaced him with Thrasydaeus, his own son.[254]

Terillus was not without allies, namely his son-in-law, Anaxilas of Rhegium. There is no extant history of when or how Anaxilas came to power in Rhegium, but he was tyrant there at least as early as 494, when he also obtained rule over the Italian Greek city of Zancle, which he subsequently renamed Messene.[255] He did this by using refuges to force out the tyrant Scythes, who had been an ally of Hippocrates and perhaps appointed by him.[256] Instead of helping his fellow autocrat, Hippocrates sided with the newcomers and agreed to hand over the city in exchange for money, taking Scythes with him as a prisoner.[257]

According to Herodotus, the otherwise unremarkable removal of Terillus had unforeseen consequences for the whole island. Terillus sought redress from the

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[252] Polyaenus *Strat*. 6.51.
[253] Dunbabin 1945: 413. Phillips (1971: 119) thought this and the other accounts in chapter six may have come from a previous collection of anecdotes of unknown origin and veracity.
[254] Expulsion of Terillus: Hdt. 7.165. Diodorus Siculus (11.48) speaks of Thrasydaeus being tyrant of Himera sometime after 476 but does not say how long he had held that position.
[255] Hdt. 7.165.
[256] Herodotus (7.23) and Thucydides (6.4.5-6) record these refugees were Samian refuges while Pausanius (4.23.6-10) and Strabo (6.2.3) claim they were Messenians.
[257] Hdt. 6.23-4.

Carthaginians, with whom both he and Anaxilas were allied. Seeing the opportunity for gains in Sicily, the Carthaginians invaded in 480 with a large force under the command of Hamilcar. The defeat of this force by the combined armies of Gelon and Theron led to both tyrants becoming even more popular and entrenched in their cities, while Terillus vanished from history.[258] Diodorus Siculus, perhaps influenced by later Deinomenid propaganda and/or Ephorus, says only that the Carthaginian invasion was prompted by an alliance between that people and the Persians.[259] Herodotus does not speak explicitly of a treaty between the Persians and Carthaginians, but he does link the two conflicts by noting that the Battle of Himera occurred on the same day as that of Salamis, perhaps also in response to the same or similar propaganda.[260]

Once Gelon took over Syracuse, he transferred his capital to that city and left Gela in the hands of his brother, Hieron I. After the death of Gelon, Hieron also became tyrant of Syracuse and presumably ruled both cities until his death in 467, although some scholars assume that another brother, Polyzelus, took over as ruler of Gela, although there is no definitive proof of this.[261] There are competing historical traditions about Polyzelus, although they do agree that he was the son-in-law of Theron of Acragas and that this relationship almost brought that city and Syracuse to war before the brothers were reconciled.[262] At one point, Hieron even gathered a mercenary army to protect his position against his brother when he feared Polyzelus' popularity.[263]

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[258] Hdt. 7.165.
[259] Diod. Sic. 11.20.1; Harrel 2006: 133n1.
[260] Hdt. 7.166. See Harrel 2006 for a discussion of the attempts of the Deinomenid tyrants to link themselves to the wider Greek world.
[261] Morgan 2015: 50, 65, 75.
[262] Diod. Sic. 11.48.1-8; Pearson 1987: 131-2 and 132n33.
[263] Diod. Sic. 11.48.3.

Theron died in 473 and was succeeded by his son Thrasydaeus. According to Diodorus, at least, he was not nearly of the same caliber as his father and ruled over his city lawlessly and like a tyrant (παρανόμως καὶ τυραννικῶς). Fearing for his life, he gathered a large army of twenty thousand citizens and mercenaries. With this force, he planned to make war against Syracuse for an unknown cause. Thrasydaeus was defeated by Hieron and fled to mainland Megara, where he was executed. In his absence, the citizens established democracy in Acragas and made peace with Hieron.[264]

Anaxilas of Rhegium died in 476 and passed the tyranny to Micythus. According to Herodotus, this man was formerly a trusted servant, and according to Diodorus, he was intended to act as regent for the young children of Anaxilas.[265] Perhaps because of his low birth, Hieron did not approve of Micythus and in 467 he summoned the sons of Anaxilas and advised them that they were of age to take over the city. There are divergent traditions about happened next. According to Diodorus, Micythus rendered such a good account of himself that the children begged him to stay, but being a man of honor, Micythus instead stepped down and left for a life of honor in Arcadia.[266] Herodotus only mentions that he was expelled and later made dedications at Olympia.[267]

Just as in Acragas, tyranny in Rhegium did not endure for long. Leophron, the son of Anaxilas who inherited the role, only held the position for six years before he was deposed by revolts in both Rhegium and Messene.[268] Not much is known about him other than that he fed the entire assembly at the Olympic games and that he waged war

[264] Diod. Sic. 11.53.2-14.
[265] Hdt. 7.170; Diod. Sic. 11.48.2.
[266] Diod. Sic. 11.66.1-3.
[267] Hdt. 7.170. These dedications were still present in the time of Pausanias (5.26.2-5).
[268] Diod. Sic. 11.76.4-5.

against the people of the Italian Greek city of Locri.[269] Even his name is only preserved in Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[270]

As obscure as he was, Leophron managed to outlast the Deinomenids. Hieron I died in 467, and power passed to yet another brother, Thrasybulus. Thrasybulus, according to Diodorus Siculus, was a violent and evil man, and gathered to himself a mercenary army as a counterbalance to the civilian hoplites. When an uprising began, he took his mercenaries, strengthened with citizens from other cities under his domain, and fortified himself on the island of Ortygia. Despite his efforts, Thrasybulus was only able to hold on to the tyranny for ten months before making peace with the Syracusans and retiring to Locri to live a quiet life there.[271]

As was noted in the ancient world, the fall of the tyrants of Syracuse seemed to ignite anti-tyrant feeling across the island and most of the known tyrants were deposed within a decade, with Leophron being one of the last.[272] Most of the cities of which we are informed became democracies, however loosely that might have been defined. According to Aristotle, democratic Syracuse was one of the main motivators of this change, aiding other Sicilian cities in deposing their tyrants, an inverse of the policies of the Deinomenids, particularly Hieron.[273]

**An Historiographical Interlude**

Before crunching the numbers, it is worth taking a moment to notice how the ancient writers, namely Diodorus Siculus, portray the use of mercenaries by tyrants. When Diodorus wants to pass judgment on a tyrant, he speaks of them gathering

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[269] Ath. 1.3d-e; Just. *Epit*. 21.3.
[270] Dion. Hal. *Ant*. *Rom*. 20.7
[271] Diod. Sic. 11.67-8. Length of reign is from Arist. *Pol*. 5.1315b.
[272] Diod. Sic. 11.72.1, 76.4.
[273] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1312b.

mercenary armies for protection against perceived threats to themselves and their authority, as he speaks of Hieron, Thrasydaeus, and Thrasybulus doing. The latter two, he notes acted as tyrants and against the laws of the city, while Hieron's mercenaries disappear when he and his brother are reconciled. For Diodorus, at least, it seems that having mercenaries was not in itself a bad act, it was when tyrants chose to use them against their own citizens or out of paranoia that they became the mark of improper rule. The leaderless mercenaries left behind after the Deinomenids fell are also not judged poorly by Diodorus Siculus. His account of the wars between them and the inhabitants of Syracuse and the other cities of Sicily shows a remarkable lack of criticism, although he does celebrate the peace that the island enjoyed once they were gone.[274]

This observation has important ramifications for this current study. As will be discussed more fully in the following chapter, mercenaries tend to disappear in the accounts when they are acting as part of a mixed army, unless they do something notable, or more often, notorious. When they are behaving and acting as soldiers, however, they are often overlooked, even when their recruitment and dismissal is specifically mentioned. The same can also be said of when they are used to judge a tyrant's behavior. Thrasydaeus and Thrasybulus are bad rulers, and thus mercenaries remain front and center in Diodorus' account of them. Hieron, on the other hand, receives more favorable treatment from the historian, and the mercenaries he recruits against Polyzelus vanish from the narrative with the tyrant's paranoia once the two are reconciled.

**Comparison and Conclusion**

Now that we have reviewed the tyrants who ruled on both mainland Greece and Sicily, it is time to compare them. On the mainland, we have twelve tyrants and fourteen

[274] Diod. Sic. 11.72-73, 76.4-6

cases of them changing the government of a Greek city. Pheidon, Cypselus, and Orthagoras all seized the tyranny from another high office, and one could make the same argument for Pittacus, who was chosen by the people based on his military prowess. Cleisthenes, Periander, Psammetichus, Hippias, and Hipparchus all inherited tyranny from their fathers or other relatives.[275] Theagenes and Peisistratus on his first attempt both relied on civilian bodyguards, while Polycrates used a mixture of civilian conspirators and foreign troops to secure his claim. Peisistratus' second attempt defies easy categorization and might most simply be said to have been an alliance between two aristocratic factions. Both Peisistratus' third attempt and Lygadmis' placement as tyrant are marked by outright conquest by an army of allies and mercenaries.

Turning to Sicily, we see a similar pattern. Phalaris and Theron both seized power in Acragas by using city funds to hire citizens as a bodyguard to take over the city. Panaetius used both citizen conspirators and *peltasts* of unknown origins in the slaughter which brought him to power. No clear record remains of how Cleander, Scythes, Anaxilas, and Terillus became tyrants of their respective cities, but there is no mention of any of them using mercenaries once established. Hippocrates, Hieron, Thrasybulus, Micythus, Leophron, and Thrasydaeus all inherited power from a family member or colleague who had also held it. This means of transference was perhaps the most legitimate way in which tyranny was transferred, and, it seems, the most common. Gelon seized power by fighting for and then betraying the sons of Hippocrates. The sources are not explicit about how he accomplished this, but it would be reasonable to assume that he used the armies loyal to Hippocrates for this end, and these armies did contain mercenaries. Thus, of the Sicilian tyrants who ruled from c.600-461 BC, only he and

[275] As they were co-rulers, Hipparchus and Hippias are being considered as one tyrant for our purposes.

Panaetius can be said with anything approaching certainty to have used mercenaries in their bids for power.

Totaling it all up, this gives us twenty-six tyrants, fourteen from Sicily and twelve from the mainland, and twenty-four known cases of them changing the governments of their cities, although Peisistratus' second attempt will not be considered further, as it relied on circumstances unique to the city at that time. Out of the remaining twenty-three transitions, eleven tyrants inherited their position from a family member, with this method being more common on Sicily than the mainland. Four of the mainland tyrants became autocrats from another high office, typically that of general. Another four tyrants, split equally between Sicily and the mainland, acquired bodyguards of citizens and used those to kill or drive off their rivals. Lastly, mercenaries were employed only four times by potential tyrants, split evenly between Sicily and the mainland.

As for the use of mercenaries to maintain power, that is, for the purposes of intimidation of the civilian populace, it seems that too was a rarity. Diodorus Siculus calls out Thrasydaeus and Thrasybulus for using mercenaries in this manner but doesn't mention them being used by other tyrants for the same purpose. Hieron I also only used mercenaries when he feared his status was threatened by his brother, but once that crisis was over, the mercenaries disappear once again. Thus, based on this admittedly limited evidence, it seems that mercenaries were only used for the maintenance of tyrannies in extraordinary circumstances or by tyrants who preferred to rule by naked power alone.

If mercenaries did not play a critical role in the establishment and maintenance of tyrants in Sicily, or at least not any more so than on the Greek mainland, from whence did the islands' reputation come? Sicily did go through a revival of tyranny beginning in

the late fifth century, but the image of it and its tyrants was already set by the middle of the following century, after the reign of only one new tyrant, Dionysius I. It is the legacy of this one man, I will argue in the following chapters, which did more than anything else to create the ancient and modern perception of Sicily as the playground of tyrants and mercenaries.

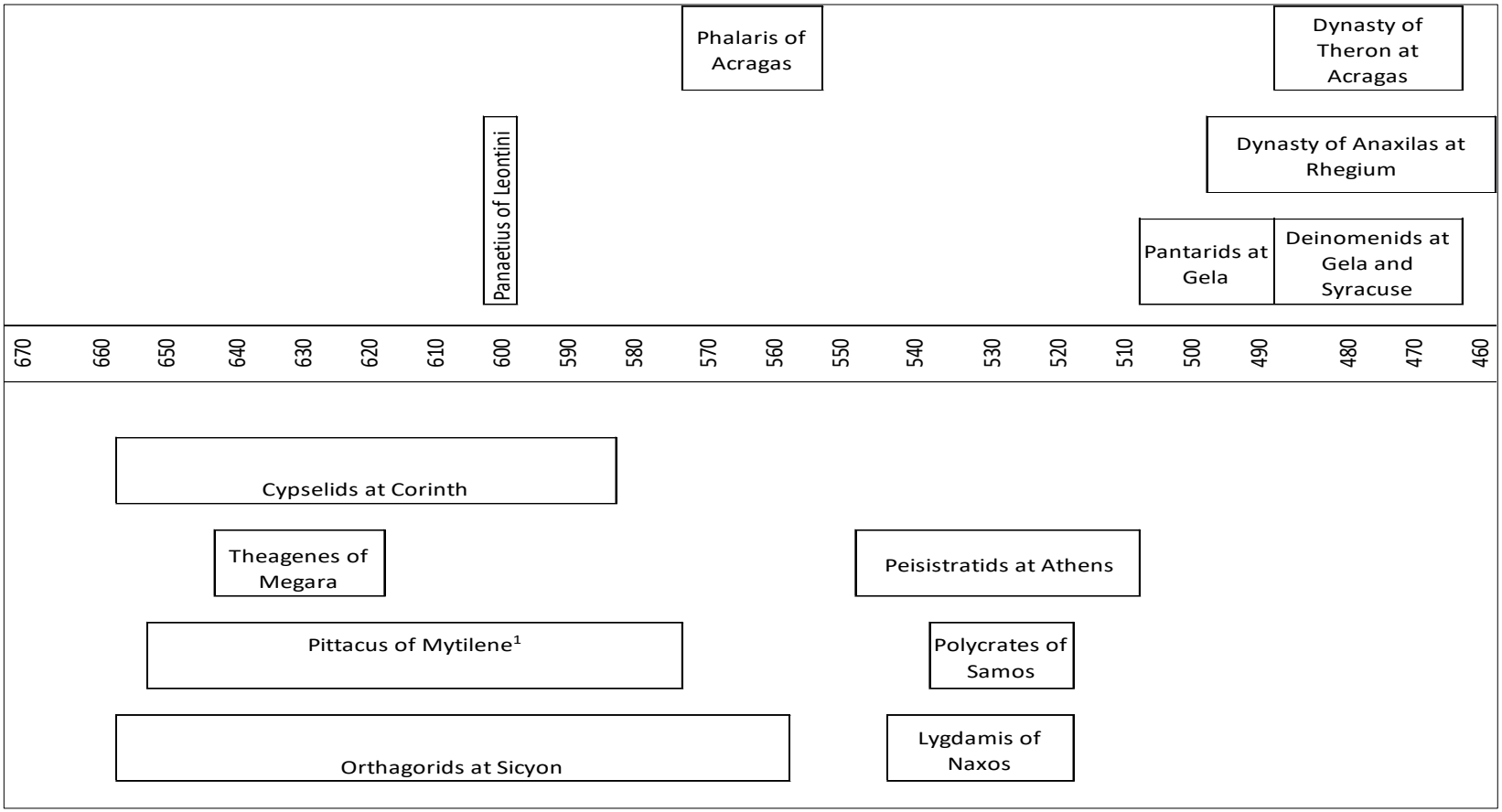


Table 1. Tyrants and Dynasties on the Greek Mainland and Sicily

## Chapter 3: The Demos and the Demogogue

The fifth century is when tyranny began to diverge markedly on Sicily and the Greek mainland. Once the Peisistratids were evicted from Athens in 510, various forms of citizen rule were the norm throughout mainland Greece. Tyrants and monarchs were found only on the fringes, while in most *poleis*, the driving force behind political change was the battle between those who held power and those who wanted it. Such would be the case until the conquest of mainland Greece by Philip II of Macedon and the subsequent developments of the Hellenistic Age rendered the *polis* impotent in the fourth century.

### "Democratic" Syracuse?

The heyday of political self-determination on Sicily was much shorter than on the mainland, but no less important to understanding later developments. Indeed, less than sixty years passed between the deposition of Leophron of Rhegium in 461 and the beginning of the reign of Dionysius I of Syracuse in 405. Much changed in that time, however, both in Sicily and in the wider Greek world, and it necessary to examine these events and changes before discussing the rise and career of Dionysius.

The exact nature of the political system which emerged in Syracuse after end of the reign of Thrasybulus in 466 and continued until 412 has been a source of scholarly contention for decades.[276] It is not lack of evidence that causes disagreement, but rather a

[276] After 412, most scholars agree that the city was a democracy on the Athenian model. See Robinson 2011: 67-8.

lack of clarity and consensus in the available sources. Aristotle, Thucydides, and Diodorus Siculus all left testimonies about Syracuse in their respective works, but these scattered passages do not agree with each other, or in the case of Aristotle, even internally. Despite these difficulties, however, the weight of the evidence suggests that the Syracusans created a system of government that could reasonably be deemed a democracy.

Thucydides, the only contemporary observer of citizen-ruled Syracuse whose work survives, paints a consistent picture of the city as a democracy, which is indeed the term that he used to describe it.[277] Unlike Aristotle and Diodorus Siculus, one can safely assume that his frame of reference was contemporary Athens, and the Syracuse that emerges from his work is one that functioned much like the former. One of the most relevant passages in Thucydides is a debate in the Syracusan assembly between Hermocrates and Athenagoras about how to deal with the Athenian threat.[278] Such a debate, if it did occur, would presuppose the existence of a legislative body in Syracuse that one could expect to sway with rhetoric. This assembly likewise reappears many times in Thucydides' narrative as a functioning organ of government in charge of electing generals, passing resolutions, and making war and peace.[279] These duties are what one would expect of a popular assembly in times of war, and one would presume it had more peaceful duties as well which fell outside of the narrative scope of Thucydides' work. Similarly, the historian notes at least one occasion where the people of Syracuse forced

[277] Thuc. 7.55.2 explicitly compares Syracusan democratic institutions to Athenian ones.
[278] Thuc. 6.32.3-40.
[279] Thuc. 6.72-73, 7.2.1,7.21, 7.73.1.

their generals to go into battle against their judgment.[280] Thus it seems that Thucydides saw in Syracuse a democracy very similar to that of his home city.

Despite this clear testimony from a source who could be considered an expert witness on democracy, many scholars remain skeptical about Syracuse's system of government. This uncertainty is largely due to the observations of Aristotle, which, despite their later date and contradictory nature, have traditionally been favored by historians over Thucydides' account.[281] Aristotle clearly states that after the deposition of Thrasybulus, the Syracusans put into a place a democracy.[282] In another passage, however, he writes that after their victory over the Athenians, the Syracusans moved from a *politeia* (πολιτεία) to a democracy by means of a revolution.[283] Further complicating matters, Aristotle defines a *politeia* both as a system of government in which the *demos* (here used with the connotation of an unruly mob) was held in check by a strong element of aristocratic control, and more nebulously as a constitution which mixed elements of aristocratic and democratic rule.[284] Faced with these two accounts, many scholars have concluded that "democratic" Syracuse was either an oligarchy, or a democracy in which the aristocracy held an inordinate or unusual amount of power.[285]

Writing much later than the previous two authors, Diodorus Siculus unambiguously calls the city a democracy, although modern scholars have rightly questioned what that term might have meant to a Greek living under the Roman

[280] Thuc. 6.63.2-65.
[281] Robinson 2011: 73.
[282] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1346a.
[283] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1304a.
[284] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1279a-b, 6.1316b-1317a, 4.1293b3, 1294a; Rutter 2000: 142-3.
[285] Rutter 2000: 146-51; Patterson 1989: 26; Berger 1989: 306-7, 1992: 38-9; Hornblower 1983: 53; Robinson 2011: 72-74; Cf. Robinson 2011: 72-89; Caven 1990: 14-5, 51.

Principate.[286] Setting aside the issue of labels for a moment, like Thucydides, Diodorus frequently mentions the Syracusans meeting in assembly to discuss important matters, including the establishment of war or peace, the election and condemnation of generals, the fate of high profile prisoners of war, and other, mostly war-related, issues.[287] In short, his description of the political process in Syracuse sounds remarkably similar to that of Thucydides, despite the fact he likely did not use him as a source.[288] The historian also mentions the practice of *petalism*, which was similar to the more famous Athenian ostracism and which will be further discussed below. This seems to be a very democratic practice, and perhaps too much so, since Diodorus notes that it was stopped after a short period of time because the better class of Syracusan citizens refused to participate in politics because of it.[289]

The evidence produced so far favors the interpretation that Syracuse possessed a political system that was comparable to that found at Athens, which is considered the model for ancient democracy. As noted above, however, not all scholars agree and many favor the view that the Syracusan aristocrats maintained a tighter hold on politics than their Athenian counterparts. This is especially the case if one compares Syracuse to the "radical" democracy instituted in Athens by Epilates and Pericles in the mid-fifth century.[290] This gap, real or imaginary, may have closed significantly after the reforms of Diocles in 412 introduced Athenian-style sortition for the selection of magistrates,

[286] Diod. Sic. 11.68.6. For a discussion of this issue, see particularly Rutter 2000: 144-5.
[287] See Rutter 2000: 144n8 for a full list. Many of these meetings and their results will be discussed below.
[288] Rutter 2000: 144. Didororus Siculus and his sources will be discussed in much greater detail in the following chapter.
[289] Diod. Sic. 11.88.4-5.
[290] Rutter 2000: 150-1; Hornblower 1983: 53. Cf. Robinson 2011: 72-89; Caven 1990: 14-15, 51.

although these changes did not have long to take root before tyranny returned to the city.[291]

Whichever view one wishes to take of Syracusan democracy between the years 466 and 412, what is important for the current argument is that based on the evidence from Diodorus Siculus and Thucydides, there were popular assemblies that met to discuss important issues, including the waging of war. More importantly, these assemblies were venues where leaders and potential leaders could sway the populace by oratory and thus change the direction of public policy. Given how much debate there is currently about the role and true power of the aristocracy even in Classical Athens, this evidence alone should give sufficient reason to consider Syracuse a democracy.[292]

Moving out from Syracuse to Sicily as a whole, the island was for the most part quiet during the time in question. As mentioned previously, the fall of the tyrants of Syracuse caused democracies and oligarchies to spring up in many other cities on the island. Diodorus calls this period one of unprecedented prosperity, although it was not a completely peaceful one.[293] Tyrants were not the only Greeks with ambition, and the Syracusans, at least, were just as rapacious left to their own devices as the Deinonmenids had been and the city continued expanding into the interior of the island and making occasional war on other Greek cities.[294]

**Major Events on Sicily**

This new normal in Sicilian affairs was interrupted by two major incidents. The first was a Sicel revolt under Ducetius which occurred in the 460s and 450s. Ducetius is

[291] Berger 1989: 306-7.
[292] See, for example, the competing views in Kallet-Marx 1994; Ober 1996: 18-31; Finley 2004: 163-184; and Rhodes 2000: 465-77.
[293] Diod. Sic. 11.72.1.
[294] Hornblower 1983: 58; Berger 1991: 135.

an interesting figure in that while he presented himself as a Sicel champion against the Greeks, many scholars agree that he was thoroughly Hellenized and may very well have modeled his behavior on Greek tyrants.[295] He was also willing to work with the Greeks to achieve his own ends, as indicated by his aiding democratic Syracuse in purging the city of Aetna of the mercenaries settled there by the Deinomenids in 461.[296] Over the course of the next few years, Ducetius was able to create a federation of Sicel cities and refound at least two sites which had been abandoned or destroyed. Eventually, however, Ducetius grew too bold and began to incorporate into his federation Sicel cities which lay in the territory of the Greek colonies. In 451, the Greeks judged that he went too far when he took over the fortress city of Motyon, which was claimed by Acragas. That city and Syracuse joined forces to punish Ducetius, but the Sicel leader was able to defeat the combined army. The Syracusans persisted, however, and the next year they overcame Ducetius in battle, after which his army and his federation quickly unraveled. Revealing just how Hellenized he was, Ducetius fled to Syracuse and took hold of one of the altars, begging for mercy. He was exiled to Corinth by order of the assembly, from whence he returned in either 448 or 446 to found a new colony at Cale Acte.[297] Despite armed opposition from Acragas, his colonial venture was successful and Ducetius remained in Sicily until his death in 440.[298]

The other major event that affected Syracuse during this time was the Peloponnesian War. Although the main parties to this conflict were Athens and Sparta, their alliances and the commerical interests of Athens quickly turned the war into an

[295] Sjöqvist 1973: 52; Antonaccio 2001: 137; Holloway 2000: 87;
[296] Diod. Sic. 11.76.3; Jackman 2006: 34-5; Sjöqvist 1973: 50.
[297] Caven (1990: 16) preferred 448 and Jackman (2006: 36) 446.
[298] Jackman 2006: 36; Caven 1990: 16.

Aegean and then Mediterranean-wide affair. Syracuse was brought into the war directly when the Athenians tried to take the city in 415 for reasons which will be discussed below.

The invasion of 415 was not the beginning of Athenian interference on the island, however, nor was it even the first time that the Athenians had set themselves in opposition to Syracuse. Indeed, their whole involvement in Sicilian affairs, or at least that which can clearly be traced, seems to have centered around aiding the enemies of that city. In 433/2, Athens and Leontini renewed a peace treaty whose original ratification date is unknown, although it was likely sometime in the 450s or 440s, when the people of Leontini grew suspicious of Syracusan expansionism and/or suspected them of supporting the return of Ducetius to Sicily.[299] When war finally did break out between Syracuse and Leontini in 427, it quickly involved the entire island, as well as Athens. More specifically, Athens, Leontini, Rhegium, Camarina, and Naxos were pitted against Syracuse, Gela, Locris, and Messina, with Sicels supporting both sides.[300] In 425, Locri and Camarina made peace between themselves and invited the other warring parties to share in it, resulting in the Congress of Gela the following year. Ironically, it was the Athenian involvement in the war that led to peace, as the Syracusan envoy Harpocrates was able to convince his fellow Siceliotes that it was in their best interest to unify in the face of imperial powers like Athens. The cities made peace and the Athenians departed the island.[301]

[299] Caven (1990: 16) supported 448, the date of Ducretius' return for the alliance, while Berger (1991: 136) favored a broader date and a general feeling of mistrust of an expansionist Syracuse.
[300] Thuc. 3.86.2.
[301] Thuc. 4.58-65.

The results of the peace were devastating to Leontini, which underwent a period of *stasis* between 424 and 422. In a bid to preserve their power against the *demos*, the aristocrats of the city appealed to Syracuse for aide. The Syracusans extended citizenship to the aristocrats and drove the rest of the population out of the city, a response reminiscent of the Deinomenid tyrants.[302] Leontini thus became a Syracusan outpost, albeit an apparently loosely controlled one.[303] The exiled Leontines, both those in mainland Greece and some who had returned to the ruins of their former home, appealed once again to Athens for help, which answered the call with claims of Ionic solidarity and support of an ally.[304] As a prelude to more vigorous action, the Athenians sent an envoy to other Sicilian cities to attempt the formation of another coalition against Syracuse. This mission met with limited success and returned to Athens without achieving its objectives, although the Athenians were able to make some new allies among the Sicels, connections which served them well when they returned in 415.

The greatest conflict between Syracuse and Athens began in 416, when, during a lull in the war with Sparta, the Athenians decided to launch an invasion of Syracuse. The exact reasons behind the expedition are unclear, and the whole affair has been widely criticized by scholars and others throughout history, beginning with Thucydides himself.[305] The stated reason for the Athenian action was that the city of Segesta, at war once again with Selinus, had appealed to Athens for aid against Syracuse, the ally of Selinus. This appeal was based on a previous alliance made during the aforementioned Athenian interventions in Sicily. The Segestan envoys appealed to both Athenian greed,

[302] Thuc. 5.4.1-3.
[303] Berger 1991: 137.
[304] Thuc. 5.4.3-5; Berger 1991: 137.
[305] Thuc. 6.1.1-2; Caven 1990: 22; Kagan 2004: 261.

by offering them sufficient funds to cover the cost of the war, and to their fears by painting a grim picture of Syracusan intervention on the side of Sparta should the former take over all of Sicily.[306] After some spirited debate in the Athenian *ekklesia*, a massive expedition of one hundred thirty-four triremes, fifty-one hundred hoplites, seven hundred *thetes*, thirteen hundred light infantry, and a mere thirty cavalrymen and their mounts set sail in June of 415.[307]

This expedition was led by three of the ten Athenian generals for that year: the reluctant Nicias, the flamboyant Alcibiades, and the aggressive Lamachus. This campaign faced difficulties from the beginning, many of which stemmed from its divided leadership. Also, much of the support they counted on from the Italian Greeks evaporated, forcing them to attempt building a new anti-Syracusan coalition, as well as to take over the city of Catane to use as a base.[308]

The Syracusans, however, were not in a state to take advantage of the initial problems faced by the Athenians. Indeed, there was considerable debate in the city about whether the Athenians were even coming or not. In the end, the generals of the city steered a middle course between alarm and apathy by sending out scouts and putting the city on a war footing.[309] These preparations were accelerated when the city received word that the Athenian fleet was in fact at Rhegium.[310]

In the end, the Syracusans would have an abundance of time to prepare. The attempt to build a new coalition failed, and the whole plan was abandoned after its architect, Alcibiades, was recalled to Athens on an unrelated matter. In his absence,

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[306] Thuc. 6.6.1-2.
[307] Kagan 2004: 267-8,
[308] Kagan 2004: 268, 270-3.
[309] Thuc. 6.41.2-3.
[310] Thuc. 6.45.

Nicias pursued his original goal of settling the conflict between Selinus and Segesta without acting against Syracuse. This too failed, however, and with winter approaching, Nicias returned with his fleet to Catane.[311]

The Athenian general, however, was not ready to give up. During the winter, the Syracusans were able to convince their generals to march on Catane. The Athenians were not there, however, but had sailed to Syracuse, landed near the harbor and the River Anapus, and fortified their position. The returning Syracusan army could not dislodge them and a set-piece battle commenced the next day. The Athenians were able to drive the Syracusans from the field but could not follow up this victory by taking the city due to their lack of cavalry.[312] Nicias and the Athenians returned to Catane and Naxos, awaiting supplies of grain and horses from Athens.[313]

The winter was not spent idle on either side. Hermocrates convinced the Syracusans to undertake several political and military reforms, including mandatory military training, the distribution of arms to men too poor to afford them, and a reduction in the number of generals and the increase of their power. All these measures were undertaken, and Hermocrates was elected as one of the new generals. Appeals were also sent to Corinth and Sparta for allies (συμμαχία) and the latter encouraged to step up assaults on Attica to force the Athenians to either recall their army or decline to send reinforcements.[314] Lastly, the Syracusans further fortified their city and established garrisons and forts along the coast and other likely areas of approach to the city.[315]

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[311] Thuc. 6.62-63.
[312] Kagan 2004: 276-8.
[313] Thuc. 6.72.1
[314] Thuc. 6.72-73; Kagan 2004: 279-80.
[315] Thuc. 6.75.1.

Meanwhile, the Athenians continued their attempt to gather allies by treaty or by threats, although they were rebuffed at both Messene and Camarina.[316] They had better success with the Sicels, convincing some to join by diplomacy and others by force. Their efforts were greatly hampered by the Syracusans, who often blocked their parties with patrols or garrisons.[317]

The campaign season of 414 opened poorly for the people of Syracuse, as the Athenians were able to seize the Epipolae, a large plateau that stood north of the city. Controlling this natural feature gave the invaders the high ground and they built a fort there to store war supplies and their treasury.[318] From there, the fighting shifted to a struggle over who would finish their wall or counter-wall first.[319] The Athenians got the better of these engagements, and morale in Syracuse dropped so low that it seemed likely that surrender or betrayal of the city was imminent.[320]

Things soon changed with the arrival of the Spartan general Gylippus and the Corinthian admiral Pythen. Although the two allies only came to the island with four ships of soldiers, they were able to accumulate a force of three thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry from the Greek and Sicel allies of Syracuse.[321] Acting quickly upon his arrival, Gylippus seized the Athenian fort on the Epipolae and its contents and kept the Athenians from completing the northern half of their wall. Under his leadership, the Syracusans were able to complete their counter-wall and drive the Athenians to the coast. They were aided in these efforts by the crew and passengers of a Corinthian fleet of twelve triremes which landed in the interim, providing the besieged city with at least

[316] Thuc. 6.74, 88.
[317] Thuc. 6.88.3-5.
[318] Thuc. 6.94.4, 97.
[319] Kagan 2004: 286-8
[320] Thuc. 7.2.1.
[321] Thuc. 7.1; Kagan 2003: 289.

another fourteen hundred men.[322] Nicias, ill and seemingly bereft of hope, bunkered down in his new forts on the coast and wrote a letter to the Athenians outlining what he saw as the hopeless situation.[323]

Against his expectations, rather than relieving him of command or recalling the expedition, the Athenians instead voted to send another large force the next year, as well as to provide new generals to work alongside him. Part of this force was dispatched immediately, while the general Demosthenes remained behind to gather men and materials to fully outfit the new expedition.[324] The first wave of this new force did not fare much better than the original, and was defeated both on the coast and in the Great Harbor.[325] Demosthenes, arriving at a critical moment, sought to turn the tide immediately with a daring night-time raid which failed spectacularly and resulted in the loss of between two thousand and twenty-five hundred men.[326] This defeat, coupled with the increasing toll that disease was taking on the Athenian forces camped out in the swampland around Syracuse, caused Demosthenes to call for the abandonment of the expedition. Unexpectedly, however, Nicias refused, arguing that the Syracusans were in severe financial straits and that there was a strong faction within the city that still supported surrender. Additionally, he may have feared for his own reputation, which until this point had been exemplary despite the setbacks.[327]

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[322] Thuc. 7.7.1; Kagan 2004: 290-2. Kagan (2004: 292) wrote that these ships carried "well over two thousand men," but the crew of an Greek trireme is usually placed at 120 men. It's possible these ships may not have been triremes at all or may have been crewed by extra men, but there's no evidence for either of these scenarios.
[323] Thuc. 7.8, 10-15; Kagan 2004: 293-5.
[324] Thuc. 7.16-17.1
[325] Thuc. 7.22-24, 36-41; Kagan 2004: 301-5.
[326] Thuc. 7.42.3-45.2; Diod. Sic. 13.11.3-6.
[327] Thuc. 7.47.3-49.4; Diod. Sic. 13.12.1-3; Kagan 2004: 310-1.

Continuing losses to disease and the appearance of another round of reinforcements raised by Gylippus finally convinced even Nicias that it was time to leave. An eclipse on August 27, 413 forestalled the retreat, however, and the Syracusans took advantage of the panic it caused among the Athenians and their allies to score another victory in the Great Harbor.[328] When the Athenians attempted to leave in their ships again, the Syracusans blockaded the entrance to the harbor to force another battle, which they also won.[329] The remaining Athenian forces then attempted to retreat overland to Catane, but were harried by Syracusan troops until they finally broke at the River Assinarus.[330] Nicias and Demosthenes were executed, and over seven thousand captured soldiers were held in stone quarries until they died or were sold into slavery.[331]

**Syracuse in the Aftermath**

Ironically, one of the results of the Syracusan victory over the Athenian expedition was the transformation of the city's political structure into one that borrowed much from its foe. Hermocrates became the hero of the city, and, had he paid more attention to politics, might have become a Syracusan Pericles.[332] Instead, at the moment of his greatest glory in 412, he led an expedition to repay the Spartans for their aid.[333] In his absence, a demagogue named Diocles was able to install a radical democracy in the city that was analogous to, and perhaps inspired by, that of Athens.[334] Diocles was not a newcomer to Syracusan politics, but had advocated for the harsh treatment given to the captured Athenian soldiers, in opposition to the more humane course advanced by

[328] Thuc. 7.50-53; Diod. Sic. 13.13; Kagan 2004: 310-2.
[329] Thuc. 7.56.2-3, 59-70; Diod. Sic. 13.14-16.
[330] Thuc. 7.73-87; Diod. Sic. 13.18.2-19.2; Kagan 2004: 315-21.
[331] Kagan 2004: 321.
[332] Caven 1990: 21.
[333] Diod. Sic. 13.34.4; Caven 1990: 24.
[334] Berger 1989: 306-7; Berger 1992: 18-9. Cf. Hornblower 1983: 53.

Hermocrates.[335] Judging from this action, it seems likely that Diocles was an old opponent of Hermocrates who had either typically represented the *demos* against the aristocrats or had decided to champion their cause in the aftermath of the war. With his aristocratic opponent gone and with the support of the victorious *demos*, Diocles was able to introduce the Athenian practice of choosing magistrates by sortition and to push through a measure to create a board of lawgivers (*nomothetes*) to revise the laws of the city.[336] Naturally, he was one of ones selected to sit on this board. What these new laws were and what else he did are unfortunately lost, since Diodorus Siculus understandably shifts his focus from Syracusan politics to the Carthaginian invasion of Sicily.[337]

**War with Carthage**

Although the city of Syracuse, with its Spartan allies, had defeated the Athenian invasion, it seems both had forgotten the original *casus belli* which had led to the conflict in the first place. The people of Segesta, however, had not and were now afraid that Syracuse and Selinus would come for them next. To prevent this, they appealed to Carthage in 410.[338] Carthage by this time controlled the other Phoenician colonies of Sicily, which lay close to Segesta and with whom the Segastans likely had commercial and diplomatic ties. Thus, it seemed likely to the people of Segesta that the Carthaginians would be willing to aid them, especially as nearby Selinus was an isolated Greek settlement in an area which was largely Phoenician and Sicel and which Carthage may have seen as part of its territory on Sicily.

[335] Diod. Sic. 13.19.4, 33.1.
[336] Diod. Sic. 13.34.6, 35.1; Arist. *Pol*. 5.1304a.
[337] Berger 1989: 307.
[338] Diod. Sic. 13.43.1-3.

The Carthaginians, for their part, were initially hesitant, desiring another outpost in Sicily but fearing the ascendant Syracuse. Eventually, however, Hannibal, whom Diodorus Siculus described as "their foremost citizen" (πρωτεύοντος) put his weight behind the faction which wanted to aid Segesta. In addition to being the leading citizen, Hannibal was also the grandson of Hamilcar, whom Gelon had defeated and killed at Himera. Perhaps it was also this family shame which compelled him to advocate for war against Syracuse and accept the generalship when his people offered it to him.[339]

Hamilcar's first attack on the island was a great success. Selinus fell to the Carthaginians before its allies could muster their armies, and Hannibal marched unopposed to Himera, where he was met by the Syracusan army under Diocles.[340] A rumor soon spread, however, that Hannibal planned to sail around the army and attack Syracuse, just as the Athenians had done earlier. Unwilling to risk his own city to defend Himera, Diocles withdrew his forces and evacuated the city.[341] Hannibal then plundered and razed Himera unopposed, dispersed his allies, and returned to Carthage to great acclaim.[342]

The Carthaginians did not return in force to the island until 407, but they did not spend the intervening time idle. Hannibal and his cousin Himilco, who had been appointed to aid the aging general, had assembled a massive force of mercenaries from all corners of the Carthaginian empire and beyond.[343] The exact size of this force is unknown, with Ephorus providing a total of three hundred thousand men and Timaeus one hundred and twenty thousand, both of which figures are far too large to be

[339] Diod. Sic. 13.43.5-6.
[340] Diod. Sic. 13.44, 54-56.
[341] Diod. Sic. 13.61.
[342] Diod. Sic. 13.62.
[343] Diod. Sic. 13.80.1-5.

realistic.[344] It was likely, however, a substantial force, given its performance. Hannibal and his assistant had also covered the diplomatic angles by sending ambassadors to Athens to ensure that it would continue its war with Sparta and its allies, lest the Carthaginians find themselves fighting mainland Greeks as well.[345] The two-year hiatus and the preparation of such a large force gave the Syracusans time to react, however, and the advance fleet of forty triremes was met by an equally large Syracusan fleet and turned away.[346]

The Carthaginian absence had also occasioned great change in Syracuse. Sometime between 412 and 409, the Syracusans had passed a decree of exile against Hermocrates and his fellow generals in their absence and sent replacements.[347] Hermocrates refused to accept this fate, however, and turned to the Persian satrap Pharnabazus, whom he had befriended while in Asia Minor. Pharnabazus gifted him enough money to return to Messene, build five triremes, and hire a thousand mercenaries. With this force and another thousand exiles from Himera, he tried to return to Syracuse. When this plan failed, he set up camp in the ruins of Selinus and began harassing the Phoenician cites of Motya and Panormus with great success.[348] Indeed, some have argued that it was his actions which brought the Carthaginians back to Sicily, although this is impossible to prove.[349]

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[344] Caven 1990: 46. Diodorus Siculus (13.80.5) presents both figures without comment.
[345] Caven 1990: 45. It seems no promises were exchanged until 406, but it is likely that that talks were already in progress before the actual invasion.
[346] Diod. Sic. 13.80.6.
[347] The ancient historians disagree on when and where this took place. Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.1.27-32) writes that the exile happening while the fleet was still in Miletus, while Diodorus Siculus (13.63.1) states that Hemocrates received word while in the Peloponnesus upon the fleet's return.
[348] Diod Sic. 13.63.3-5.
[349] Caven 1990: 39.

One thing Hermocrates' actions did accomplish was to cause his supporters in Syracuse to talk of recalling him. He further encouraged such plans by collecting the remains of the Syracusan dead from Himera and sending them to the city at great personal expense in 408. This action, and by implication the neglect of the dead by Diocles, succeeded in convincing the Syracusan people to exile the latter, who then disappears from history.[350] Nonetheless, the Syracusans feared that Hermocrates was trying to set up a tyranny and declined to recall him.[351] Later, Hermocrates tried to enter the city by force but died in the attempt. Many of his surviving supporters were tried and exiled, while others, including a young clerk named Dionysius, convinced their families to report them as dead when they were only injured.[352]

Thus, despite having time to prepare and scoring an early victory, the Syracusans had to face the Carthaginians without their leading statesman and their most successful general. The first city to face the renewed Carthaginian offensive was wealthy Acragas. The Acragans were not caught unawares and were defended by their own sizable citizen army, a mercenary force from Gela under the command of Dexippus the Spartan, and a separate company of Campanian mercenaries who had formerly been employed by Hannibal.[353] The Syracusans likewise gathered their allies and marched to Acragas under their general Daphnaeus with a combined force of over thirty thousand men, five thousand cavalry, and thirty ships.[354] This force scored an initial victory against the plague-weakened Carthaginian army at the Himera River, but the generals would not let

[350] Diod. Sic. 13.75.2-5. Diodorus Siculus (13.33.2-3) records a rather strange incident in which Diocles kills himself for violating one his own laws. The historian may have confused this Diocles with another Syracusan lawgiver. See Caven 1990: 25, 31.
[351] Diod. Sic. 13.75.5.
[352] Diod. Sic. 13.75.8-9.
[353] Diod. Sic. 13.85.3-4.
[354] Diod. Sic. 13.86.4-5.

their men pursue the Carthaginians and the latter were able to retreat in good order to their camps.[355] The soldiers saw this refusal as a sign of neglect and/or bribery and stoned four of the five Acragan generals and abused Dexippus as well.[356] Having addressed this perceived injustice, the Greeks next settled down to starve out the Carthaginians, a plan which succeeded until Himilco was able to capture a Greek grain shipment for himself and his men.[357] Thus the tables turned and Acragas was abandoned to the depredations of the Carthaginians when its own grain supply ran low.[358]

**Dionysius the General**

The failure of Syracuse and its allies to defend Acragas lead to widespread criticism from its own citizens, the refuges from the cities sacked by the Carthaginians, and other Greek colonies who feared they would be next.[359] Among the Syracusans, one of the most vocal opponents was young Dionysius, who urged immediate judgment and punishment of the generals, as well as of many of the other leading men of the city for being oligarchs. He was assisted in his harangue by Philistus, a wealthy Syracusan of some standing, who paid the fines the younger man accrued by speaking out of turn in the assembly.[360] Eventually, Dionysius was able to persuade the people to remove some of the generals and appoint new ones, himself included.[361] If Diodorus Siculus is to be believed, he also immediately began to undermine his fellow generals in hopes of getting them dismissed as well.[362]

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[355] Diod. Sic. 13.86.2-3, 87.12-3.
[356] Diod. Sic. 13.87.4-5.
[357] Diod. Sic. 13.88.4-5. Hannibal had died of plague before the battle, leaving Himilco in charge of the Carthaginian force.
[358] Diod. Sic. 13.87.8-90.3.
[359] Diod. Sic. 13.91.2-3.
[360] Diod. Sic. 13. 91.3-5.
[361] Diod. Sic. 13.92.1
[362] Diod. Sic. 13.92.2. Cf. Caven 1990: 50.

Dionysius' first action as general was to advise the Syracusans to recall their exiles and enroll them in the army.[363] The most recent exiles would have been the followers of Hermocrates, and presumably it was these men whom Dionysius wanted returned, although, as Diodorus Siculus noted long ago, he was probably hoping to appeal to exiles of all stripes by promising them revenge and the return of their property.[364]

Soon after taking office, Dionysius was sent to the city of Gela, the citizens of whom, fearing they were the next target of the Carthaginians, had requested Syracusan aid. Upon arriving, he found a city torn by *stasis*, which he quickly turned to his advantage. He had the wealthiest men of the city condemned and their property confiscated. With these funds, he paid the wages of the mercenaries under Dexippus who had been watching the city for Syracuse and promised his own citizen troops double pay once he returned to Syracuse. By doing so, he earned the loyalty of his own troops, those of Dexippus, and the people of Gela.[365]

Dionysius then returned to Syracuse, where he was able to convince the people to dismiss at least some of the other generals and appoint him as general with full powers (στρατηγὸς αὐτοκράτωρ).[366] Aware that his new powers could be taken away from him as easily as they were given, Dionysius secured his position in a traditional manner by tricking the Syracusans into voting him a bodyguard. He accomplished this by ordering a large part of the Syracusan army to march to Leontini, where he ordered them to encamp. During the night, he faked an assassination attempt on himself, and the next morning the assembled soldiers voted him a bodyguard of six hundred soldiers of his own selection.

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[363] Diod. Sic. 13.92.4-7.
[364] Diod. Sic. 13.92.7; Caven 1990: 54.
[365] Diod. Sic. 13.93.1-4.
[366] It is unclear from Diodorus Siculus (13.94-95.1) whether he was the sole general. Caven (1990: 56) made a brief but convincing case that there were other generals elected to serve with him.

Diodorus next mentions that he equipped one thousand men of daring but low means with fine weapons when he returned to Syracuse.[367] It was at this point, according to Diodorus Siculus, that Dionysius the general became Dionysius I, the tyrant.[368]

**Postmortem on Democracy in Syracuse**

Before moving on to the reign of Dionysius I, it is worth taking a moment to perform a postmortem on democracy in Syracuse. This brief period of popular self-rule has traditionally been considered an aberration in a city that generally defaulted to tyranny, just as the whole island is usually seen as a place where the *polis* failed to take root.[369] It is important to note, however, that Syracuse had remained a democracy for almost sixty years, the last of which were difficult ones. The democratic government of Syracuse had handled well both the uprising of Ducetius and the much more difficult invasion of the Athenians and weathered two bad years of Carthaginian campaigning. War always placed a strain on Greek democracies and caused stress and changes, assuming it did not break it. Both Syracuse and Athens transitioned to more radical forms of democracy after their great victories over the Athenians and Persians respectively, and the Athenian democracy stumbled under the weight of losing the Peloponnesian War in much the same way that Syracuse did under the repeated losses to Carthage. The main difference seems to be that there was no Syracusan equivalent to Thrasybulus and his exiles to restore the democracy in that city, but rather in the absence of Diocles and Hermocrates, there was only Dionysius to pick up the pieces.

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[367] Diod. Sic. 13.96.1. This body will be discussed in further detail below.
[368] Diod. Sic. 13.95.2-6; Polyaenus, *Strat*. 5.2; Phillips 1971: 99-100.
[369] See, for example, Woodhead 1962: 120; Berger 1992: 60, 107; Caven 1990: 181. Cf. De Angelis 2003: 206; Hornblower 1983: 51.

Additionally, the evidence suggests that the Syracusans were discerning when it came to men who would become tyrants. Hermocrates' attempt at a tyranny has already been discussed, but his was not the first. Sometime in the 450s, when Syracuse was still trying to put itself back together after the expulsion of the Deinomenids and their mercenaries, a man named Tyndarides assembled a bodyguard of armed poor people to attempt a tyranny.[370] He was quickly arrested and sentenced to death, but his followers attempted to rescue him. The aristocrats of the city armed themselves and killed both Tyndarides and his followers.[371]

Such attempts, or at least some kind of political disturbances, were apparently so common that the Syracusan *demos* decided to introduce the practice of *petalism* to discourage them.[372] *Petalism* was similar to the Athenian practice of ostracism, with the main difference being that the names were written on olive leaves instead of *ostrica* and the term of exile was only five years. The results were also rather different than in Athens: so many men were sent into exile that the aristocrats refused to participate in politics at all. Their absence led to more problems than it prevented, and the practice was quickly repealed.[373]

Likewise, one should note how carefully Dionysius accumulated his power and how it was the circumstances of the war with Carthage which allowed him to do so in the first place. Had Syracuse been better led, either politically or militarily, he likely would not have been elevated to a position that made his tyranny possible.[374] As it was, he had

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[370] Diod. Sic. 11.86.3-4. The chronology of this event is particularly confused. The consuls listed for the year in Diodorus Siculus (11.86.1) would place the events in 459, while Cimon's treaty with the Spartans would place it closer to 450. Berger (1989: 304) opted for 454/3, which seems reasonable.
[371] Diod. Sic. 11.86.5; Berger 1989: 304-5.
[372] Diod. Sic. 11.86.5.
[373] Diod. Sic. 11.87; Berger 1989: 305-6.
[374] Caven 1990: 53.

to channel the general frustration and outrage of the Syracusans and their allies into indictments against the generals while presenting himself as a viable candidate for the office. Once there, he worked to build a base of support among exiles, mercenaries, and citizens while undermining his colleagues. Even once he gained the special powers he desired, he was aware that they could be easily removed and thus resorted to trickery to gain the bodyguard which had historically allowed tyrants to gain and keep their positions. Even then, however, Diodorus Siculus is careful to note that the aristocrats of the city were aware of Dionysius' goal from the beginning, and that even some of the common people realized what they had done after they had elected to give Dionysius supreme power, when it was too late, at least according to the historian.[375]

Thus, it seems that democracy in Syracuse was not as fragile as often argued and that the Syracusans were quite capable of seeing a potential tyrant in their midst. Unfortunately, they were also just as capable of savaging their leading men as the Athenians, and it seems the aristocrats of Syracuse were less willing to play the political game than their Athenian counterparts. The recent loss of both the oligarch Hermocrates and the democrat Diocles as well as the disgrace of Daphnaeus, whose politics are unknown, meant that an ambitious man like Dionysius was able to portray himself as the leader the city needed.

**The Wars of Dionysius the Tyrant**

At the age of twenty-four, Dionysius became the newest tyrant of Syracuse.[376] Despite the proclamations of later historians, it is unlikely that the shift in 405 was dramatic. It may very well be that the people of Syracuse were aware what had

[375] Diod. Sic. 13.92.3, 95.2.
[376] Caven 1990: 53.

happened, especially if they were as politically astute as the evidence suggests. Nonetheless, they may have felt that having a dynamic, if young, leader who had demonstrated bravery and political acumen was preferable to being leaderless in the face of the heretofore unstoppable Carthaginian offensive. It may also be that the people of Syracuse thought they could get rid of Dionysius once the present danger had passed and that his tyranny was only a temporary, if painful, necessity. On the other hand, it is also possible that the *demos* had no problems with Dionysius at all, since he only held the military powers voted to him in a time of war.[377]

In any event, Dionysius quickly set about securing his position. He married the daughter of Hermocrates and give his own sister Theste in marriage to the latter's brother-in-law, Polyxenus. He also had the general Daphnaeus and the otherwise unknown Demarchus tried and executed.[378] In addition to securing himself to a good family, he also dismissed Dexippus, hired his mercenaries directly, and filled all the military posts in Syracuse with his followers. Lastly, he moved into the naval station, which was located on the mainland adjacent to the Small Harbor.[379]

Dionysius did not have long to get comfortable, however, for as soon as Himilco finished the destruction of Acragas in 405, he marched on Gela. The people of Gela put up a spirited defense, trusting that Dionysius would come to their aid as promised. True to his word, Dionysius gathered his allies, called up the militia of Syracuse, and even enrolled his own mercenaries into the army. The result was a force of thirty to fifty thousand men and one to four thousand cavalry which likely arrived at the besieged city

[377] Caven 1990: 58.
[378] Diod. Sic. 13.96.3; Caven 1990: 58.
[379] Diod. Sic. 13.96.1-2; Caven 1990: 58.

sometime around midsummer of 405.[380] Knowing both that a decisive battle was required and that his position would likely depend on its outcome, Dionysius devised a multi-pronged attack on the Carthaginian forces surrounding Gela.[381] His plan was overly complex, however, and relied on careful timing and coordination between the various Syracusan, allied, and mercenary contingents of his army that could not be maintained in field conditions. The attempt to dislodge the Carthaginians thus failed, although not disastrously.[382] Nonetheless, with winter approaching and a massive army and large city to supply, Dionysius, like the generals before him, declared the city indefensible and ordered the population to evacuate to Syracuse. With its defenders gone, Gela fell to the Carthaginians.[383]

Having accomplished exactly as little as the generals whom he had deposed, Dionysius naturally fell under the same suspicion that his predecessors had. Instead of taking bribes, however, his detractors accused Dionysius of purposely failing to defeat the Carthaginians so that he could use their threat to become lord of all Sicily, an accusation that would follow him throughout his life and well beyond.[384] The Italian Greeks left his army, and the aristocratic knights of Syracuse looked for an occasion to end his reign. Unable to assassinate him due to the loyalty of his mercenaries, these would-be revolutionaries raided the naval station in his absence, plundering it and raping his wife. Dionysius discovered or guessed at their plan, and quickly followed them with

[380] Diod. Sic. 13.108.8-109.2. Once again, the ancient sources disagree. According to Diodorus Siculus, an unknown source, perhaps Philistus, recorded a total of 50,000 soldiers, while Timaeus credited him with 30,000 infantry and only 1,000 cavalry. Such a small cavalry force seems unlikely, given the cavalry forces elsewhere sent by Syracuse, not to mention the presence of various allies known to favor horsemen. See Caven 1990: 62 for a discussion of the figures.
[381] Diod. Sic. 13.109.4-5; Caven 1990: 63-72.
[382] Diod. Sic. 13.110.7; Caven 1990: 72.
[383] Diod. Sic. 13.111.1-3
[384] Diod. Sic. 13.112.1.

a small force of his own.[385] Breaking into the city, he took vengeance on his enemies and killed and exiled many. The surviving knights of the city fled to Aetna, while the citizens of Gela joined the refugees of Himera and Selinus at Leontini.[386]

Having defeated his domestic enemies, opportunity soon presented itself for Dionysius to be rid of his foreign one, at least for a time. For reasons that are unclear due to an unfortunate lacuna in Diodorus Siculus' account, Himilco extended an offer of peace to Dionysius.[387] According to its terms, Carthage would retain both the Phoenician colonies on the island and the territories acquired through its recent campaigns, Dionysius would be master of Syracuse, and the remaining Greek colonies would retain their independence. Dionysius accepted the offer of peace and the Carthaginians sailed back to their home, taking a plague with them.[388]

Peace, however, presented Dionysius with a new difficulty: he had worked himself out of his position, as there was no longer any need for a general with special powers. He thus heavily fortified the island of Ortygia, cutting it off from the mainland with gates, and built a new palace there. He then settled his friends and mercenaries on the island, having turned it into a safe headquarters for himself and a place of refuge should the Syracusans rise against him again.[389] Diodorus Siculus also records that Dionysius redistributed the land of Syracuse amongst his friends and supporters, enrolling many new citizens as well.[390] This action would have further secured his place,

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[385] Diod. Sic. 13.112.3-113.1. The nature of this body will be discussed below.
[386] Diod. Sic. 13.113.2-4.
[387] Diod. Sic. 13.114.1-2. This has traditionally been credited to a plague that struck the Carthaginian army, but see Caven 1990: 74-5.
[388] Diod. Sic. 13.114.2.
[389] Diod. Sic. 14.7.1-3, 5.
[390] Diod. Sic. 14.7.4-5. This was not likely a full-scale redistribution in the manner of the Archaic tyrants, but rather the gifting of land left vacant by the exiled and slain knights. See Caven 1990: 78-9.

since these new and newly wealthy citizens would presumably be personally loyal to him rather than to the city of Syracuse.

Once he felt secure, Dionysius set his sights on subduing the Sicels. Diodorus Siculus reasons that he did this because he wanted to bring all the peoples of Sicily under his control, and because of their previous support of the Carthaginians.[391] While the latter cause would be a reasonable one, it is not necessary to credit the campaign to some tyrannical ambition on Dionysius' part. Expansion into the interior of Sicily had long been a goal of the Greek colonies on the island, and the Syracusans had continued this project during their democratic phase. Dionysius' desire to control the Sicels, especially those who still lived within Syracusan territory or who lay in the path of future expansion, should instead be viewed as merely the newest phase in this ongoing venture.

Whatever its purpose, this campaign went poorly for Dionysius, as the citizen soldiers of Syracuse began once again questioning the continued appointment of their supreme general. Dionysius fled back to Syracuse when mutinying soldiers killed one of their commanders. The ranks of his enemies quickly swelled with the addition of the former Syracusan cavalry from Aetne and eighty triremes from Messene and Rhegium.[392] Both of these cities had been targets of previous Syracusan tyrants and likely feared future meddling from the newest one. Properly reinforced, this force seized the Epipolae and prepared to take the city.

After some initial panic, Dionysius turned to mercenaries for his salvation. More specifically, he offered to pay the twelve hundred Campanian mercenaries whom Himilco had hired to watch over Sicily in his absence any price to aid him. These hired soldiers

[391] Diod. Sic. 14.7.5.
[392] Diod. Sic. 14.8.1-3.

quickly rode to Syracuse and took the tyrant's enemies by surprise. The Syracusan citizens, expecting that Dionysius was preparing to abandon the city, had sent the cavalry back to Aetna and much of their remaining number was dispersed across the countryside. The Campanians were thus able to cut through them and make their way to Dionysius, who had received another three hundred mercenaries by ship from an unspecified source. With these forces, he was able to rout his enemies, although many of them escaped to join the previous exiles at Aetne. Not trusting his newest hirelings, Dionysius paid the Campanians an unknown price and sent them on their way. This was a wise decision, as they seized the city of Entella by force and deceit, making it their new home.[393]

After a successful campaign against his enemies at Aetne and against Catane and Naxos, Dionysius began preparing for a new war against the Carthaginians.[394] His first step was to fortify the Epipolae highlands, which had been seized by invading armies in the past and was thus a danger to city should the Carthaginians return. In one of the few complementary passages about the tyrant that remain in any ancient source, Diodorus Siculus says that inspired by the personal example of Dionysius and the generous prizes he offered to those who finished their sections first, the people of Syracuse were able to finish the thirty *stades* of wall (roughly 3.75 miles) in twenty days.[395] Whether or not that figure is accurate, it nonetheless illustrates that Dionysius was able to gain the enthusiastic support of the Syracusans for the project.

Having secured his base of operations, Dionysius next began to stockpile the weapons he would need to drive the Carthaginians off Sicily. The result, according to Diodorus Siculus, was the production of one hundred forty thousand shields, daggers, and

[393] Diod. Sic. 14.8.4-9.
[394] Caven 1990: 132; Dio. Sic. 14.14-5.
[395] Diod. Sic. 14.18.

helmets, as well as fourteen thousand corselets of varying designs.[396] The arms and armor thus produced were intended for distribution both to his citizens forces and his mercenaries. This production and distribution of personal military equipment was unusual in the ancient world, as most soldiers, mercenaries included, were expected to provide their own.[397] Thus it seems that Dionysius was planning on expanding his army beyond those with the financial means to equip themselves. This too was an unusual policy to pursue in the ancient Greek world, but one that makes sense given Dionysius' unique position. He needed large numbers of soldiers for both the defense of Syracuse, and of his own power, and for the formation of an offensive field army. He also had the financial means with which to equip them, as well as the unusual problem of having an unarmed citizen body that, at this time at least, could not be fully trusted.[398]

Having dealt with the material aspects of the upcoming war, he lastly sought to place himself on a firmer political footing by placating his enemies among the Greeks and especially the Syracusans. He made peace with the city of Messene by giving them land and attempted to form a marriage alliance with Rhegium, where he was rebuffed. Undeterred, he took a wife from both Italian Locri and Syracuse, marrying both in a joint ceremony.[399] He next announced that he would treat the Syracusans more fairly and held public dinners and other displays of largess. Having appeased his citizens in this manner, he then announced his plans to make war on the Carthaginians. The Syracusans eagerly anticipated the coming conflict, although Diodorus Siculus editorializes that their

[396] Diod. Sic. 14.41, 43.
[397] Mercenary equipment supplied by mercenaries: McKechnie 1989: 83; Whitehead 1991. Cf. McKechnie 1989: 80-85, 1994.
[398] Diod. Sic. 14.10.4.
[399] His first wife, the daughter of Hermocrates, had died years previously, either as a result of her rough handling by the revolting knights or perhaps by her own hands in the aftermath.

enthusiasm was partially because they planned on overthrowing him once they had their weapons back.[400]

Finally, in the summer of 398 or 397, Dionysius sent an ultimatum to the Carthaginians as his last act before declaring war.[401] Although concerned about going to war so soon after the plague had struck their city, the Carthaginians determined to fight, readying their navy and sending recruiters to Europe (presumably Spain) to hire mercenaries.[402] Dionysius struck first, attacking Motya, whose defenders were determined to hold out, trusting in their walls and in aid from Carthage. While besieging that city, Dionysius also attacked Segesta, Entella, Halicyae, Soluntum, and Panormus, the only five cities on Sicily which remained loyal to the Carthaginians. Despite naval attacks on both Syracuse and the Greek forces at Motya, the Carthaginians were unable to save the city and it was violently sacked by Dionysius' army.[403] Having accomplished this great victory, Dionysius returned to Syracuse for the winter.

The next summer he set out again, although with less fortune than before. The Segestans managed to sneak a force out of their city at night and set fire to the tents of the Syracusan army, interrupting the siege of their city. Meanwhile in Carthage, Himilco was again given supreme power by the people to prosecute the war, and he was determined to meet force with force, assembling an army which Timaeus claimed contained one hundred thousand Carthaginian soldiers and another thirty thousand Siceliots.[404] With this force, Himilco was able to take the city of Messene, which he razed so that Dionysius

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[400] Diod. Sic. 14.44.3-45.
[401] 398 is the traditional date ascribed by historians, but Diodorus Siculus (14.44.1, 46.5) and Caven (1990: 96) favor the later date.
[402] Diod. Sic. 14.47.1-3; Caven 1990:
[403] Diod. Sic. 14.49-53.
[404] As transmitted by Diodorus Siculus (14.54). The historian also provides Ephorus' even more unlikely estimate of 300,000 infantry, 4,400 cavalry, and 400 chariots.

would not be able to use it to hold the straits against him.[405] This victory was followed by a decisive sea battle off of Catane, in which Himilco and his admirals managed to defeat Leptines, Dionysius' brother and chief naval commander, and sink or capture most of the Syracusan fleet.[406] Following these reversals, the Greek allies of Dionysius urged him to face Himilco in a decisive battle, but Dionysius once again chose to protect his own city. This caused most of the Greek soldiers to abandon him and return to their own cities or fortified spots nearby.[407]

Advancing from victory to victory, Himilco next moved to attack Syracuse itself, pulling his fleet into the Great Harbor and ravaging the countryside with his army. Dionysius responded by sending out envoys to obtain more allies and mercenaries.[408] Despite being hard-pressed, Dionysius and the Syracusans were able to give a good account of themselves. After an unauthorized Syracusan sortie defeated a fleet of forty Carthaginian triremes and stole one of their supply ships in 395, the people of the city observed that they seemed more victorious without Dionysius than with him as their general. This feeling quickly turned into talk of rebellion at an assembly that Dionysius had called to encourage his people. Once again, Dionysius was saved by his Spartan allies and his mercenaries, who closed ranks with him. After this assembly, Dionysius was apparently able to smooth things over through diplomacy, although Diodorus Siculus provides only sparse details.[409]

Once again, fate and geography came to the aid of Syracuse. The Carthaginians had apparently camped in the same area as the Athenians before them and a large part of

[405] Diod. Sic. 14.56-7.
[406] Diod. Sic. 14.58.3, 59-60.
[407] Diod. Sic. 14.51.3.
[408] Diod. Sic. 14.62.
[409] Diod. Sic. 14.64-70.3.

their army contracted plague. Seeing their weakness, Dionysius at last took decisive action in the summer of 395, sending his fleet to attack the ships while he maneuvered his army around the Carthaginian camp by night. He also took the opportunity to rid himself of a thousand troublesome mercenary infantry by ordering them to launch the initial assault on the Carthaginian camp and then withdrawing the Syracusan cavalry who were supporting them. The rest of the army was able to take the camp by storm, and the Syracusan fleet and infantry attacked the Carthaginian ships both in the harbor and on the beach.[410]

Appalled by the loses, Himilco began secret negations with Dionysius. According to Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius, afraid that he would be pulled from power without an enemy upon which to keep the Syracusans focused, agreed to allow the Carthaginian citizens to escape if they left the mercenaries and a payment of three hundred talents behind. This story reads like a later addition, since it was unlikely that Dionysius feared for his power in that manner at this late date. After all, the Syracusans seemed happy to fight the Carthaginians, and it is unlikely that they would attempt a third armed revolt, especially now that Dionysius had had ten years to turn Ortygia into even more of a fortress. Caven, nonetheless, made a reasonable argument that the settlement was real, although the reasons for it were later warped by the hostile tradition. Instead, he argued, the departure of the Carthaginians would have been seen as a victory for Dionysius and the Syracusans, and the money would have helped Dionysius defray some of the great costs.[411] Whatever the reasons, four days later, Himilco and the citizens of Carthage left by ship at night. Most of the Sicel mercenaries and allies were able to

[410] Diod. Sic. 14.70.4-74.
[411] Caven 1990: 118-21.

escape the pursing Syracusan army, while most of the other hired soldiers surrendered and were enslaved. The sole exception was a group of Iberian mercenaries who impressed Dionysius enough with their good order that he hired them.[412]

This victory did have its costs for Dionysius. He had apparently fallen behind in paying the wages of at least some of his Greek mercenaries and they began to talk of righting this wrong. Reacting quickly, he had their commander, the Spartan Aristotle, arrested. When his mercenaries complained and demanded their pay, he claimed that he was sending Aristotle back to the Spartans to face trial and offered all ten thousand of them the territory of Leontini for their own.[413] The mercenaries accepted the land and Dionysius hired new ones who were more loyal. He then resettled some of the destroyed cities, perhaps with other mercenaries, and launched a new, successful campaign against some of the Sicel cities on the island.[414]

One of the sites that he resettled was Messene, which naturally concerned the people of Rhegium across the straits, whose relationship with the tyrant was already strained. To prevent whatever they felt Dionysius was planning, they sent an army against the city in 394, which was defeated by the new Messenians and mercenaries of Dionysius. Dionysius decided then to attack Rhegium, but first had to take Tauromenium, which had been settled with Sicels by the Carthaginians during the previous war.[415] After a daring night attack on the acropolis failed and he was almost

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[412] Diod. Sic. 14.75.
[413] Polyaenus (*Strat*. 5.2.1) tells a more embellished tale in which the mercenaries planned to kill Dionysius but were deflected by a show of humility. He then has them slaughtered at Leontini. This could be a distortion of the same event or a different one. Phillips (1970: 99) implied that Polyaenus is describing the same incident from a different source.
[414] Diod. Sic. 14.78.
[415] Diod. Sic. 14.87. Settlement of Tauromenium: Diod. Sic. 14.59.1-2.

taken prisoner, Dionysius withdrew his forces. This loss encouraged the cities of Acragas and Messene to evict the partisans of Dionysius and rescind their alliances.[416]

Also watching Dionysius' falling fortunes was the Carthaginian leader Mago, who had been on Sicily putting together a new alliance against the tyrant. Emboldened by the tyrant's defeat, he launched an attack on Messene in 393, but was repulsed nearby by Dionysius and his army. In response, Dionysius attacked Rhegium with a large force but was defeated, signing a one-year truce with the city before returning to Syracuse.[417] The other Greek cities of Italy, fearing that Dionysius had designs upon them as well, set up a council to defend themselves against both the tyrant and the native Italian Lucanians, who were moving toward them from further north.[418]

Mago returned in 392 with a relatively small army of eighty thousand, perhaps reflecting Carthage's financial difficulties following the previous loss to Syracuse and the revolt in Libya that it occasioned.[419] His first target was Sicel Agyrium, which was ruled by the tyrant Agyris. This man was apparently a powerful king who possessed the strongest army in Sicily besides Syracuse and who was a nominal friend of Dionysius. Dionysius, upon his arrival, persuaded his fellow tyrant to side with him fully and the two launched an effective guerrilla campaign against the invaders. The Syracusan citizens did not like this kind of fighting, however, which went against the hoplite ethos. When Dionysius refused their demands for pitched battle, they deserted him and returned to Syracuse. Even without them, however, the attacks wore down the Carthaginian army enough that Mago sued for terms which left both the Sicels and the city of Tauromenium

[416] Diod. Sic. 14.88.
[417] Diod. Sic. 14.90; Caven 1990: 127-9.
[418] Diod. Sic. 14.91.1.
[419] Diod. Sic. 14.95.1; Caven 1990: 129.

under Dionysius. After Mago left with his forces, Dionysius evicted the Sicels from Tauromenium and settled some of his mercenaries there.[420]

With this diversion over, Dionysius turned his attention once more to his goal of controlling southern Italy. Late in the summer of 390, he landed a force of twenty thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry at Locri and from there began to harry the territory of Rhegium. A naval battle between the Syracusan fleet and that of Rhegium and its allies ended in a defeat for the tyrant, and he returned to Syracuse for the winter. Before he left however, he made an alliance with the Lucanians. This alliance soon paid off, as the next year, the Lucanians severely mauled the army of the Greek city of Thurii, killing over ten thousand of their soldiers. The Syracusan fleet arrived at the scene of the battle and Leptines was able to save and ransom another thousand Thurians. He next exceeded his brother's order by negotiating a peace between the Italian cities and the Lucanians that gave no advantage to Dionysius.[421] This naturally angered the tyrant and Leptines was replaced with his other brother Thearides, and this incident was likely a contributing factor to the former's eventual exile in 386.[422]

Dionysius, either in 390 or 389, decided to follow up on the destruction of Thurii by leading another campaign in southern Italy.[423] This time, he transported his army of twenty thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry to Messene and from there besieged the city of Caulonia.[424] An Italian army of twenty-five thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry was mustered at Croton in response, led by Heloris, a Syracusan exile and personal enemy of Dionysius. Heloris chose to ride in front of his army with only

[420] Dio. Sic. 14.95-96.
[421] Diod. Sic. 14.100-102.
[422] Diod. Sic. 14.102.3; Caven 1990: 134-5, 170.
[423] Diodorus Siculus (14.103.1) and Caven (1990: 135) place the second invasion in the same year as the Lucanian victory over Thurii, while others place it in the following year.
[424] Diod. Sic. 14.103.1-3.

five hundred soldiers, who may also have been exiled cavalrymen from Syracuse. Dionysius, learning the disposition of Heloris and his army, was able to kill Heloris and his companions in a surprise dawn attack and cut down much of the Italian army as it arrived piecemeal and leaderless. Eventually the rest of the Italians managed to reform on a waterless hill near the river Eleporus where Dionysius held them for almost two days before they offered unconditional surrender. Unexpectedly, Dionysius released all the men without ransom or condition and made unilateral treaties with most of the league cities. Many of those cities which had opposed him now praised him and voted him gold crowns because of his mercy.[425]

Fresh from this victory, Dionysius once again turned to the city of Rhegium. Bereft of the support of the Italian league and without an army large enough to face Dionysius on its own, the city sued him for terms. Upon taking delivery of what was due him from the treaty, Dionysius continued his campaign into the next year until he controlled, either directly or through his allies, all the toe of Italy except for Rhegium. This too fell to him at last after he provoked them into breaking the treaty and besieged the city for eleven months.[426] He executed the general Phyton who had resisted him for so long before sending the rest of the population to Syracuse, where those who could not be ransomed were sold as slaves.[427]

Having achieved his ambitions in Italy and with Sicily being at peace, Dionysius was next drawn into the affairs of the Greek mainland. In the wake of their victory in the Peloponnesian War, Sparta began to repeat the same mistakes as Athens by lording over

[425] Diod. Sic. 14.103-5; Caven 1990: 135-9.
[426] Diod. Sic. 14.106-8, 111. Polyaenus (*Strat*, 5.10) records Dionysius using the same Tactic at Himera, while Frontius (Str. 3.3-4) mentions both cities.
[427] Diod. Sic. 114.111.4-112.

the other cities of Greece. This treatment eventually led Thebes, Athens, Argos, and Corinth to revolt against Spartan domination in the Corinthian War (395-387). Both sides appealed to Dionysius for aid, Corinth based on its status as the Syracusan metropole and Sparta as one of the tyrant's most constant allies. Dionysius sided with Sparta and sent twenty warships under his brother-in-law Polyxenus in 387 to aid them. These ships made it to the Aegean in time to join the Spartan blockade of the Hellespont, which threatened to cut off Athens' vital grain supply. This threat of starvation, along with Persian support of Sparta, led the Athenians to sue for peace. The resulting treaty, known as the King's Peace, restored Spartan hegemony over Greece and Persian domination over the Greek cities of Ionia.[428] This peace was naturally not popular in Athens, and thinkers there added Dionysius to the list of enemies of Greek freedom, along with his ally Sparta and its ally (for the moment) Persia.[429] This perception of him, perhaps more than any of the deeds mentioned so far, helped ensure that he would not be remembered well by many of his contemporaries, and their opinions did much to shape those of later generations.[430]

Dionysius spent the next few years planting colonies and making alliances among the native peoples of the Adriatic Sea, perhaps seeking to build an overseas empire to counterbalance that of Carthage.[431] Unfortunately, at this point, the narrative of Diodorus Siculus becomes unusually concise, and a reconstruction of the events that happened between his intervention in the Corinthian War and his death in 367 is rather difficult to

[428] Xen. *Hell*. 5.1.25-34; Caven 1990: 146-8.
[429] Caven 1990: 148.
[430] This theme will be developed more in the following chapter.
[431] Caven 1990: 148-53.

make. Scholars differ over the reasons for the sketchiness of the historian's account, but that debate need not detain us here.[432]

This lacuna means that the details of Dionysius' last great war with Carthage are largely lost, save what can be gathered from the brief account of Diodorus Siculus and fragments of other, much later historians, such as Justin and Polyaenus. Based on this evidence, Caven has pieced together an account of the war which should be sufficient for our purposes. According to Caven and Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius kicked off his planned campaign against Carthage by undertaking a raid against the Etruscan city of Agylla and a particularly rich temple there. Although seen as a sign of his impiety in the ancient tradition, his choice of target made economic, military, and political sense: the Etruscans had been an enemy of Sicilian tyrants in the past, and may have supported both the Carthaginians and the Athenians in their campaigns against Syracuse, and it is likely Dionysius wanted to send them a strong message concerning their past interference.[433] The raid was successful, and Dionysius was able to make his point as well as take home fifteen hundred talents for his use.[434] With money in hand to prosecute the war, Dionysius then began his preparations.

As presented in Diodorus Siculus, Dionysius' third war against Carthage lasted only one year. This seems unlikely, however, given how much occurred during that time, not to mention how slowly Carthage usually gathered its armies and the period of alliance building on both sides before the fighting began. During this period of preparation, Dionysius was able to convince many of the cities under Carthaginian rule to join him in

[432] Caven (1990: 186-88) provided an overview of the theories and posited one of his own.
[433] Dionysius' reputation for impiety: Caven 1990: 164; Diod. Sic. 15.13.1.
[434] Diod. Sic. 15.14.3-4; Caven 1990: 190-2. Polyaenus. *Strat*. 5.21 and Arist. *Oec*. 2.1349b -1350a may both be recollections of this raid, perhaps from a common source. See Phillips 1971: 106 and 217n34.

either 383 or 382. In response, the Carthaginians sent an envoy to the tyrant asking him to return the cities, which he naturally declined. The Carthaginians then created their own alliance, consisting primarily of the Italian Greek cities who were actively at war with Dionysius.[435] Indeed, Dionysius was investing the city of Croton when the Carthaginians landed in the area in 379 and tried unsuccessfully to dislodge the tyrant.

Closely following their defeat in Italy, another round of plague struck the Carthaginians, inspiring both the Libyans and the Sardinians to revolt. It took two years for the Carthaginians to put down this revolt and gather a new mercenary army, meaning it was 377 when they finally made landfall on Sicily. In the interim, Dionysius had taken Croton and was able to meet the Carthaginians at an unknown place named Cabala and win a great victory there. What happened next is unclear from the sources, but it appears that by some means the Carthaginians were able to escape from the clutches of the tyrant and make their way to the coast and their waiting fleet.[436]

The next major battle took place at the Sicel city of Cronium, where the Syracusans were winning until Leptines, who had been recalled at some point during the conflict, was killed, causing his wing of the army to collapse. Instead of pursuing their enemy and turning the defeat into a rout, the Carthaginians instead retired to Panormus, from whence they sent an ambassador to Dionysius to make an end to the war.[437] The terms were that each should hold what they had before the war, with Carthage gaining Selinus, part of the territory of Acragas, and a one thousand talent indemnity from Dionysius. Despite seeming to favor the Carthaginians, this treaty left Dionysius in

[435] Diod. Sic. 15.15.1-2. For the chronology of the war, see Caven 1990: 189-90.
[436] Diod. Sic. 15.15.3-16.1; Caven 1990: 196-8.
[437] Diod. Sic. 15.16.2-17.

command of more than half of Sicily and, perhaps for the first time, recognized that he was the legitimate ruler of both the Greeks and Sicels on his portion of the island.[438]

Almost as soon as peace been established within his own realm, Dionysius was dragged back into the affairs of the Greek mainland by his alliance with Sparta. This time the enemy was Thebes, which had thrown off the Spartan garrison installed in their city in 379 and was turning into a military juggernaut under its leaders Epaminondas and Pelopidas. His first attempt to aid the Spartans at Corcyra failed when the Athenians, at this time allied with Thebes, captured nine of the ten or eleven Syracusan ships that he had dispatched.[439] Undeterred, Dionysius sent a force of twenty warships and two thousand Celtic and Iberian mercenaries to the mainland in 369. These mercenaries acquitted themselves well in the fighting around Corinth and in the later raid on Sicyon, and the catapults sent along with them also made an impression on the Spartans.[440] In thanks for this service, the Athenians, now allied with Sparta against Thebes, voted a gold crown to Dionysius.[441] A similar force dispatched the next year performed equally well, helping the Spartans win the Tearless Battle against the Arcadians in the latter's own territory.[442]

In 368, at sixty years old, Dionysius made one last attempt to conquer all of Sicily for himself and drive the Carthaginians off it for good. The odds seemed in his favor this time, for Carthage was internally divided by politics, plague, and another revolt of their Libyan allies while he was at the peak of his power. To this end, the he gathered a force of thirty thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry, and three hundred ships. He quickly

[438] The actual boundary line seems to have run from Solus in the north to the Halycus (modern Platani) river in the south. Diod. Sic. 15.17.5; Caven 1990: 200-1.
[439] Diod. Sic. 15.46.1-3, 47.7; Xen. *Hell*. 6.2.4; Caven 1990: 203.
[440] Xen. *Hell*. 7.1.20-22; Diod. Sic. 15.70.1; Plut. *Mor*. 191e.
[441] Caven 1990: 205.
[442] Xen. *Hell*. 7.1.28-31; Diod. Sic. 15.72.3; Plut. *Ages*. 33.3; Caven 1990: 205-6.

took Selinus, Entella, and Eryx, but was unable to take the Carthaginian city of Lilybaeum, which had been built on the Sicilian mainland near the site of destroyed Motya. This new city was stoutly defended by its strong walls and a Carthaginian fleet which bested the tyrant's own at Eryx.[443] Once again, the conflict ended with a treaty, the details of which are unknown. If he was allowed to keep his gains, Dionysius was now master of almost all of Sicily, with only the cities of Panormus, Solus, Lilybaeum, and Segesta remaining under Carthaginian control.

In the same year, Dionysius achieved his greatest political victory: rapprochement and alliance with Athens. Although Athens was no longer the power it had been in the fifth century, it was rebuilding its maritime empire and remained the cultural capital of Greece, and so its recognition of Dionysius as *archon* of Sicily would have carried significant weight. Moreover, it gave Dionysius a position of influence within mainland Greece that he could exploit for his own ends. Unfortunately, Dionysius was not able to enjoy the fruits of his new recognition, as he died before the treaty was ratified. His son and successor Dionysius II was not interested in the alliance and proved to be incapable of holding on to his father's empire in any case.[444]

**The Mercenaries of Dionysius I**

As even the most cursory glance at the preceding narrative will reveal, Dionysius heavily recruited and relied on mercenaries both to project his power abroad and to defend his position at home. In this regard, he seems to most closely resemble Gelon than any of the other previous Sicilian tyrants whom we have considered. Despite these seeming similarities, however, we must be careful not to make an unfair comparison due

[443] Diod. Sic. 15.73.
[444] Diod. Sic. 16.5; Caven 1990: 210-1.

to the nature of the evidence we have for each. The evidence for Gelon is sparse, although greater perhaps than for any other first-generation tyrant. More importantly, his mercenaries only become truly visible in the aftermath of his dynasty's collapse. Dionysius, on the other hand, holds a central place in Diodorus Siculus' account of Sicily, and we are thus much more well-informed about his use of mercenaries. Indeed, it seems his use of hired soldiers made a strong impression on his contemporaries, and, as will be argued in the following chapter, their views on this predilection carry through to the modern era.

The comparison between Dionysius and Gelon is not a fair one for another reason. Gelon, if he truly did hire and enfranchise at least ten thousand mercenaries during his thirteen-year reign, was a man before his time, since mercenary recruitment on that scale by a Greek leader or *polis* is otherwise unknown until the fourth century. Dionysius, on the other hand, even though he came to power only seventy years after Gelon, ruled in a Greek world that was very different from that of his predecessor, especially when it came to the way in which wars were fought.

That the Greek way of warfare as outlined in the introduction of this work, that is, a single battle between two essentially equally-equipped citizen hoplite militias, underwent major changes between the Archaic Age and the fourth century is largely beyond dispute in academic circles, although the details about why and when that transformation took place are not.[445] One can say with certainty, however that mercenaries became increasingly common during and after the Peloponnesian War. During their invasion of Syracuse, for example, the Athenians hired Campanian cavalry

[445] See, for example, Vidal-Naquet 1986: 87-93 and Hanson 1995: 331-4.

to make up their deficiency in that area.[446] At some point before that conflict, Athens also began paying its citizen soldiers a daily wage for their services on campaign.[447] Such payments were also being made in the earliest days of Dionysius' term as general, and it seems most likely they were put in place by the democratic government of Syracuse, perhaps as part of the reforms of Diocles. For the Athenians, these payments were almost certainly an outgrowth of empire and may have been intended as a counterbalance to the wages being offered for civilian service in the *dikasteria* and certain magistracies, although the evidence does not allow for certainly.[448] Syracuse did not have an overseas empire, nor did it likely receive a revenue from its inland territory equal to the "donations" which Athens received from the members of the Delian League. Thus, it makes sense to see the introduction of military pay for citizens as part of an attempt to be more like Athens.

It was in the fifth century and the whole of the fourth that the use of mercenaries truly began in earnest. Both Athens and Sparta used contingents of light-armed and even hoplite mercenaries in battles far from the mainland during the Peloponnesian War, but most contests on the mainland were still decided by citizen militias. After that war, thousands of Greeks took up mercenary service with the Persian Empire, where they served as bodyguards to the satraps, garrison soldiers, and many other roles. The most famous of these mercenaries were the Ten Thousand hired as part of the army raised by the Persian Cyrus the Younger to contest the throne with his brother, Artaxerxes II. The mercenaries performed well, despite the death of their patron at Cunaxa in 401 and were able to extricate themselves from the Persian army and march from the province of

[446] Diod. Sic. 13.44.1.
[447] Loomis 1998: 36-44, 256.
[448] Prichett, *GSW* 1.13. Cf. Loomis 1998: 36n18.

Babylon to the Black Sea over the course of two years. Their performance apparently only increased their value in the eyes of the Persians, who began hiring even more Greeks to fill out their armies. At the same time, the Greeks began to increasingly rely on mercenary *psiloi* and *peltasts* during their own wars. During the Corinthian War, both Athens and Sparta began deploying large, standing forces of light-armed mercenaries, most notably the Athenian "foreign corps" (τö ξενικον) led by Iphicrates. The face of war was changing, and after the middle of the fourth century, even Athens began using mercenary hoplites instead of its citizen militia, although with admittedly poor results.[449] Given these changes, it seems unfair to judge Dionysius by the standards of the fifth century, since he was operating in a world where mercenaries where swiftly becoming *de rigueur*.

Having established the military context for Dionysius, it remains to examine how he used his mercenaries and how much he truly relied on them to prop up his reign. Here we are confronted immediately with a problem already discussed, but worth repeating at this juncture, namely that Diodorus Siculus often doesn't differentiate mercenaries from citizen soldiers unless the former did something notable, or more often, ignoble. This could be either a deliberate choice of the historian or a necessity enforced upon him by his own sources. Either way, it makes our task more difficult since mercenaries often disappear into Dionysius' army, even when they should logically be present and/or reappear later.

Like many of his predecessors, Dionysius achieved his power through demagoguery, that is, by denigrating the current leaders of the city while presenting himself as a better option. Thus, it was the Syracusans who put him into power, not

[449] Aeschines 2.71; Diod. Sic. 16.38; Parke 1933: 144-6, 154.

mercenaries. The situation quickly becomes more complex, however, when we consider his bodyguard. Diodorus Siculus does not provide any details about the initial body of six hundred men that the army voted to him. It is possible that there was a mercenary contingent present in the army assembly at Leontini, although the only hired soldiers we know of in Syracusan employ at this time were those led by Dexippus, who were presumably still at Gela. Furthermore, if the people of Syracuse were as politically savvy as I have argued, it would have been bad optics for Dionysius to fill his new bodyguard immediately with mercenaries, especially in front of a large group of armed Syracusan citizens. Thus, it is most probable that his initial bodyguard consisted of six hundred trusted individuals from among the assembled soldiery of Syracuse.

Further complicating matters is that Dionysius hired and equipped a thousand poorer citizens with arms and armor when he returned to Syracuse. Were these men the same as the previous bodyguard, reinforced by Dionysius or by an error in Diodorus Siculus or his sources, an addition to the original six hundred men, or was this an entirely separate force? In other words, did he reinforce his bodyguard with another four hundred men, another thousand men, or were these soldiers for some other purpose entirely? This force never again reappears in Diodorus Siculus, so any conclusions must be speculative. Caven argued that the two forces were the same, although he admitted that the passage was difficult to understand, while Parke argued for two separate forces.[450] A force of six hundred infantry appears in the revolts of 405, and it is likely this was the same bodyguard voted to him, especially given how little time passed between the events. If so, that would mean the thousand men were raised for some other purpose. Aristotle may provide a clue, for he notes that when Dionysius asked for his

[450] Caven 1990: 57; Parke 1933: 65.

bodyguard, he was advised to set aside an equal force to protect the people of Syracuse.[451] If Aristotle is correct, that would mean that this second citizen force was raised and equipped by Dionysius to help allay some of the suspicion stemming from his actions. Choosing poorer men of proven bravery but equipping them out of his own funds would seem a good compromise is such were the case. The people of Syracuse would not have trusted mercenaries to be loyal to them but would have expected more from men raised from their own ranks. The gifts of arms and armor, on the other hand, especially if it included expensive hoplite panoplies, would have endeared these men to Dionysius. That this force never appears again may also be an argument for this purpose, since it would have either been assigned to guard duty in Syracuse or accompanied the Syracusan contingent of the army into the field. Or it may have simply fallen victim to an historians' neglect.

The first mercenaries whom Dionysius clearly hired were those from Gela, whom he brought to Syracuse and placed under his own command. If, as is likely, these men were originally hired by the Syracusan people, they would naturally have fallen under his command as general with special powers, and his actions would have been legal and not extraordinary. Along with these mercenaries, Dionysius also recalled to Syracuse exiles "from all quarters" (παντaχόθεν) and the "impious" (ἀσεβεῖς).[452] Assuming that Dionysius was calling men who had been exiled from cities across Sicily for any reason and that the impious were those who had been exiled specifically for religious crimes, then it seems he was collecting a rough group of outcasts. These sorts of people were the perfect material for mercenary service, and perhaps they were not mercenaries yet, but

[451] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1286b.
[452] Diod. Sic. 13.96.1-2.

were drawn to the city by promises of such service.[453] On the other hand, it is equally possible that Dionysius sent out a general call for mercenaries and/or allies, and that Diodorus Siculus or his sources chose to highlight the less savory elements who answered it.

In any event, Diodorus Siculus next states that the city contained enough mercenaries to keep the Syracusans from revolting.[454] Once again, it seems the historian is attributing the worst possible motives to Dionysius. While he might have been using the mercenaries for intimidation, it is equally probable, if not more so, that he was gathering an army for the war with Carthage. The Syracusan army had not been enough to stop the Carthaginians over the past two years and had likely lost much of its Sicilian and Italian support by its repeated failures to stand up to the invaders. Hiring mercenaries would have thus made good military sense, as well as showing Syracuse's allies that its new general was taking the Carthaginians seriously and would get different results.

Skipping ahead, when Dionysius divided his forces at Gela in 405, he chose to remain with his mercenaries rather than the Sicilian Greek infantry or the cavalry. The mercenaries suffered the fewest casualties, and the Greeks accused Dionysius of sacrificing them to spare his hired soldiers.[455] One wonders if once again we are being misled by our sources, since it would seem that the middle of a battle would be a good place for Dionysius' citizen bodyguard to be guarding him. It could be that they had been replaced by mercenaries at some previous point or loaned out to the army in general, but there is no evidence of either of these scenarios, and it seems unlikely that the hostile

[453] McKechnie 1989: 79-100.
[454] Diod. Sic. 13.96.2.
[455] Diod. Sic. 13.112.2.

historical tradition would have allowed the former to go unnoticed if it had occurred. Indeed, their reappearance afterward would suggest that they were in fact on the job during the battle but were left out of the accounts. In any event, Dionysius placed himself in the center of the Greek "line," which although an unusual choice in Greek warfare, was sensible given the plan he had developed.[456] Being in the center, which placed him in the city of Gela, and thus on the high ground, would have allowed him to have a better view of the action and help with communications. As for why he chose the mercenaries, Caven argued that these were the best of his troops and would thus make the best quick reaction force should he see part of his line being overrun.[457] For these reasons, it seems that despite later judgments, Dionysius made a sound military decision in staying with his mercenaries at Gela.

During the attempted coup by his cavalry following the defeat at Gela, it is unclear whom Dionysius brought with him on his flight back to the city. Diodorus Siculus writes that he picked the most trustworthy of his forces and returned with six hundred infantry and one hundred cavalry. One would be safe to assume that the infantry was his civilian bodyguard, perhaps even the same men originally voted to him, while the cavalry almost certainly would have been mercenary, given the role of the Syracusan cavalry in the revolt and the fact that the Italian Greeks had already departed with their horsemen.[458] If so, that would mean that Dionysius still felt he could trust at least some of the Syracusans to protect him, and that he was not relying on mercenaries for the maintenance of his regime. The literary evidence, however, complicates the logic, as

[456] In a typical phalanx, the general and the best troops were stationed on the right flank because those soldiers were only half-protected by shields.
[457] Caven 1990: 69.
[458] Diod. Sic. 13.112.3-113.1; Caven 1990: 74.

Diodorus Siculus claims that it was mercenaries who surrounded the revolting aristocrats in the agora and killed them at range.[459] It is possible that Dionysius had dismounted his cavalry and that they were using bows or javelins, but it would seem that his infantry would have been better suited to the task.[460] Thus it seems that either Dionysius had chosen a mercenary infantry force over his bodyguard, or that Diodorus Siculus, or his sources, could not bring themselves to ascribe such a deed to Greek citizens and instead blamed it on mercenaries. Given how unlikely it is that Dionysius would have happened to pick the same number of mercenaries as he had civilian guards to rush with him into the city, the latter possibility seems more likely. At any rate, when Dionysius moved to more secure quarters on the island of Ortygia, it was his friends and mercenaries who joined him there, according to Diodorus Siculus. This does not exclude the possibility that he still had his civilian bodyguard, as they might have been counted among his friends or simply omitted again.[461]

It is far clearer that mercenaries saved Dionysius' tyranny in 404 during the second revolt that he faced. Not all of his hired spears, however were as loyal, since some of them also abandoned him to take up the offer of Syracusan citizenship. How many deserted him is not specified, but it was enough to cause him to despair, so it is reasonable to assume it was a large number.[462] These were temporarily replaced with the twelve hundred Campanian mercenaries whom he hired to save his tyranny. These soldiers may very well have been the same Campanian mercenaries who had been in the

[459] Diod. Sic. 13.113.2.
[460] This conclusion assumes that mounted cavalry were unsuitable for urban warfare in Syracuse, which may or may not have been the case, given our limited knowledge of the layout of the city at this time.
[461] Diod. Sic. 14.7.5.
[462] Diod. Sic. 14.8.3-4; Caven 1990: 81.

employ of the Acragantini before defecting to Himilco during the battle over that city.[463] If so, this would explain why Dionysius sent them away as soon as he had regained his position, knowing that they were untrustworthy in the long term.

In the buildup to his second war with the Carthaginians, Dionysius once again sent out a call for mercenaries, this time taking the unusual step of supplying them with weapons and armor. Diodorus Siculus also says that he had planned on hiring mercenaries to form his bodyguard.[464] It is unfortunately unclear what happened to his previous citizen bodyguard. It may be that after two popular revolts, Dionysius simply did not trust anyone but mercenaries, or he may have been expanding his bodyguard into a larger combat unit. The evidence as it stands, however, suggests that Dionysius was choosing to entrust his security to mercenaries rather than citizens. Once again, though, we cannot discount the possibility that Dionysius initial citizen bodyguard still existed but was ignored by the surviving sources.

We are equally uninformed about the total number of mercenaries in the army he raised for this conflict, although one historian has attempted to make an estimate. Out of Dionysius' total force of eighty thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, Parke estimated that a quarter to a third of these were mercenaries.[465] If these estimates are correct, and assuming that the total number is accurate as preserved, Dionysius was able to raise an impressive twenty to twenty-seven thousand mercenaries, placing his recruitment on par with that of the Eastern monarchies of the time and well out of the range of most Greek *poleis*.[466] As impressive as his mercenary recruitment was, what is

[463] Diod. Sic. 13.88.5, 14.8.5; Caven 1990: 82.
[464] Diod. Sic. 14.43.3.
[465] Diod. Sic. 14.47.7; Parke 1933: 67-8.
[466] The actual range is 20,750- 27,400.

perhaps more so is that so much of his army was not hired. Although Dionysius kept his citizens unarmed except in times of war, it is obvious he still could count upon them when fighting a mutual enemy. Also of interest is that although he does not provide us with the number of Dionysius' mercenaries, Diodorus Siculus does record the places from which many of them hailed. A large number came from the Peloponnese, where Dionysius had an arrangement with the Spartans, as well as from Italy and Sicily itself.[467] Most surprisingly, Dionysius was also able to hire many Iberians and Ligurians, whom had traditionally taken service with Carthage.[468]

Although Diodorus Siculus divides Dionysius' army into Syracusan, mercenary, and allied contingents upon its departure from Syracuse, after that, the mercenaries as a body disappear, with one exception. At Motya, Dionysius was able to take the city when a man named Archylus of Thurii and the "chosen [troops]" (οἱ ἐπίλεκτοι) were able to climb the walls and establish a beachhead.[469] The city of Thurii would later be an enemy of Dionysius, and it is doubtful they were allies even at this early stage, unless they feared Carthage more than Dionysius. Thus it is likely that Archylus was a mercenary, and the "chosen troops" appear later in Diodorus Siculus in a context which Parke took to indicate that they were Dionysius' bodyguard, and also mercenaries.[470] The passage, however, merely states that at Cronium, Dionysius was with the chosen troops in the wing opposite Leptines, and need not be taken as proof that the οἱ ἐπίλεκτοι were Dionysius' bodyguard as well as his crack soldiers. Indeed, as at Gela, Dionysius may

[467] Diod. Sic. 14.44.2.
[468] Parke 1933: 67-8.
[469] Diod. Sic. 14.52.5.
[470] Diod. Sic. 15.17.2; Parke 1933: 70n6.

have chosen to stay with his mercenaries, perhaps even for the same reasons, with his bodyguard simply unmentioned.

Mercenaries aren't mentioned specifically in the narrative again until the next summer, where they once again rally around Dionysius when the Syracusan assembly ponders stripping the tyrant of his power upon the suggestion of the politician Theodorus.[471] Not all of his mercenaries were as happy with him, however, and in the next engagement with the Carthaginian army, Dionysius deliberately abandoned one thousand of them to be killed by his enemies.[472] Diodorus Siculus is unfortunately silent on what occasioned their hostility, other than that they engaged in *stasis* and disorder.[473] Based on this description, these mercenaries may have been causing (or simply increasing) tension between Dionysius' hired soldiers and the citizens of Syracuse, which was a common problem with mercenaries. Or they may have been doing the same amongst differing groups of mercenaries, which, if left unchecked, could have undermined one of Dionysius' most important assets. Either way, Dionysius dealt with them in the most efficient and effective manner available to him. The murdered mercenaries were quickly replaced by the Iberian company whom Dionysius recruited in the aftermath of his victory.

The deaths of these mercenaries did not solve all his problems, and he faced a revolt of his Greek mercenaries after the conclusion of this second Carthaginian war.[474] The nature of their complaint this time is made explicit: they had not been paid for their

[471] Diod. Sic. 14.70.1-3.
[472] Cf. Roisman 2017: 246-7.
[473] Dio. Sic. 14.72.2.
[474] Diod. Sic. 14.78.1-3. Identity of mercenaries: Caven 1990: 121.

service.[475] Apparently lacking in ready money, Dionysius instead offered them the other commodity which he had in abundance: land. This seems to have pleased the Greek mercenaries, which Parke took to mean that these soldiers were among those who had taken up the occupation because of a lack of suitable land.[476] That is one possibility, the other being that they preferred the richer land around Leontini to whatever they had left behind in the Peloponnese. In either event, these mercenaries were also replaced shortly.

Mercenaries play less of a visible role in the rest of Dionysius' campaigns, and Parke concluded this may have been because Dionysius' waning finances prohibited him from hiring such large forces again.[477] Another possibility is the increasing scantiness of Diodorus Siculus' account has merely obscured their presence, as the historian frequently did not keep track of mercenaries even in his more detailed sections. In either case, the only place mercenaries appear in Dionysius' campaigns in Italy is at the very beginning, when they and the citizens of Messene hold off an attack from Rhegium. Likewise, mercenaries only appear in the narrative of his third Carthaginian war at the outset, when he recruits them, and at the end, when he settles the "most suitable" of them at Tauromenium.[478] Parke argued that this might have been a euphemism for the most rebellious mercenaries and that this was a part of his habit of routinely turning over his hirelings.[479] The last part of this statement certainly seems accurate, but the grant of land could have also been a reward for mercenaries who had performed particularly well, or perhaps ones whose terms of service had come to end through time, age, or injury.

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[475] Caven 1990: 121; Parke 1933: 71.
[476] Parke 1933: 71.
[477] Parke 1933: 71-2.
[478] Diod. Sic. 14.96.4.
[479] Parke 1933: 71.

In the unfortunately briefer and often sketchier account of Dionysius' final years, mercenaries are largely left out. The forces Dionysius sent to aid his ally Sparta in its war against Thebes were made up exclusively of mercenaries, and that makes sense if one sees their loan as Dionysius settling a personal debt with Sparta rather than aiding them as an affair of the city of Syracuse. Likewise, it seems reasonable to assume that much of the money made from the raid on Agylla went to pay mercenaries for his final war with Carthage, although no mention is made of them in any of the accounts.

The next time the forces of Syracuse are discussed by Diodorus Siculus is following the tyrant's death, when the historian states that Dionysius II had at his disposal one hundred thousand infantry and ten thousand horse.[480] This figure hardly seems accurate, especially since the historian had previously portrayed the young tyrant as indolent and uninterested in warfare or maintaining the army he inherited from his father.[481] In all likelihood he did maintain a force of mercenaries, but the numbers given were likely an effort to enhance the achievements of Dion, who, according to the philosophical tradition, defeated the tyrant against the odds because of his greater nobility.[482]

**Conclusion**

What then can we conclude about Dionysius and his mercenaries? It would not be unfair to say that he relied upon them to keep his rule at home, especially in the revolts of 404 and 395, where it was his mercenaries who either stood with him or rescued him from his domestic enemies. Despite their importance to him and the care he likely lavished on them, Dionysius was not immune to the usual problems faced by those who

[480] Diod. Sic. 16.9.2.
[481] Diod. Sic. 16.5.
[482] Diod. Sic. 16.9.3.

employed mercenaries and had to deal with his fair share of them. Nor does it seem Dionysius had any real flair for using his mercenaries in new or innovative ways, or indeed for military operations in general, with the exceptions of his frequent use of night attacks and movements and his ruthlessness in dealing with troublesome mercenaries.[483] He was not particularly bold in his military campaigns either, although this also meant he did not act rashly and throw away advantages when he had them.[484] One reason for this seeming timidity might be his concern for making sure Syracuse, and thus the base of his power, was secure. It is also possible, however, that his victories were downplayed, and his deficiencies exaggerated in the historical record and that he was a better general than a reading of Diodorus Siculus and the other remaining sources would suggest. As for his concern about Syracuse, this worry seems primarily limited to the early days of his tyranny, particularly his first war with Carthage.

One must also examine Dionysius' relationship with the citizen soldiers of Syracuse. Once again, it is important to look past the historiographical baggage that follows Dionysius and remember that these men made up the bulk of his armies, not mercenaries. It may very well be that he disarmed the Syracusans except during times of war, but Dionysius was frequently at war and thus his people were often in possession of their weapons. It would be reasonable to assume that Dionysius had the best mercenaries he could buy, but they would have not been enough to save him if the Syracusans revolted in the field.[485] Indeed, it is interesting to note that they missed a good opportunity to do so in 392, when the Syracusan contingent of his army left Dionysius

[483] Cf. Parke 1933: 63-4; Roisman 2017: 230, 272-3.
[484] Caven 1990: 93; Roisman 2017: 261.
[485] Revolting against him while he was ensconced in his fortress at Ortygia would have been a totally different matter.

and Aygris to fight Mago on their own. It is unlikely that Dionysius collected their weapons in the field, so one would assume that they marched back to Syracuse fully armed.[486] Yet there is no mention of them plotting or doing any mischief while Dionysius was away. It is possible that Dionysius had left enough loyal supporters in the city to secure it in his absence, but it is hard to imagine that he would have left enough soldiers behind to counter a determined Syracusan populace when he faced an army the size of Mago's. It seems more likely that the people of Syracuse and Dionysius had reached some sort of arrangement after 395 that allowed the former to be armed without immediately thinking of revolt and the latter to be confident enough in his position to allow it.[487] One must also remember that Dionysius kept a civilian bodyguard for at least the first year of his reign, if not longer. Thus it would seem that there were those in the city whom he felt he could trust. Also of note is that when he needed to rid himself of the troublesome mercenaries at Syracuse, it was the Syracusan cavalry Dionysius relied on to leave them stranded. Taken together, this evidence suggests that there was far more to the relationship between the three groups (Dionysius, his mercenaries, and the Syracusans) than just Dionysius and his mercenaries against the Syracusans.

In the end, it seems, Dionysius was a product of his times rather than of the failure of the *polis* on Sicily. He came to power at a time when the city of Syracuse had had to weather in close order a struggle for its existence and a challenge to its position as the premier city of Sicily. Although it had been victorious in the first, political infighting in the aftermath had rendered it too weak to fully deal with the latter. In these troubled times, Dionysius was able to cast enough doubt on the leadership of the city to be able to

[486] See Polyaenus, *Strat*. 2.14.
[487] See Caven (1990: 157-66) for a possible arrangement between Dionysius and the Syracusans.

assume a supreme military role. From there, he was able to seize the tyranny in a manner familiar from the Archaic Age tyrants of both Sicily and the mainland. He did use mercenaries extensively both to secure his place and fight the enemies of Syracuse, but he also kept a citizen bodyguard for an unknown period of time and used Syracusan soldiers extensively in his armies. Furthermore, his use of mercenaries, while not in accordance with the hoplite ethos, was nonetheless not an aberration nor a sign of tyranny. Rather, he was keeping up with the trends in Greek warfare, and his recruitment only differed by the numbers of mercenaries he was able to hire with the resources at his disposal. Nor does he seem to have been a particularly cruel or power-hungry tyrant, ruling by naked power alone. He did meet force with force during the first two revolts against his reign, but after that, as in the events of 395, he seems to have preferred to employ diplomacy to keep his position. This is quite the opposite portrait of the tyrant than that which emerges from the ancient sources, and in the following chapter, we will look at how and why that image was created.

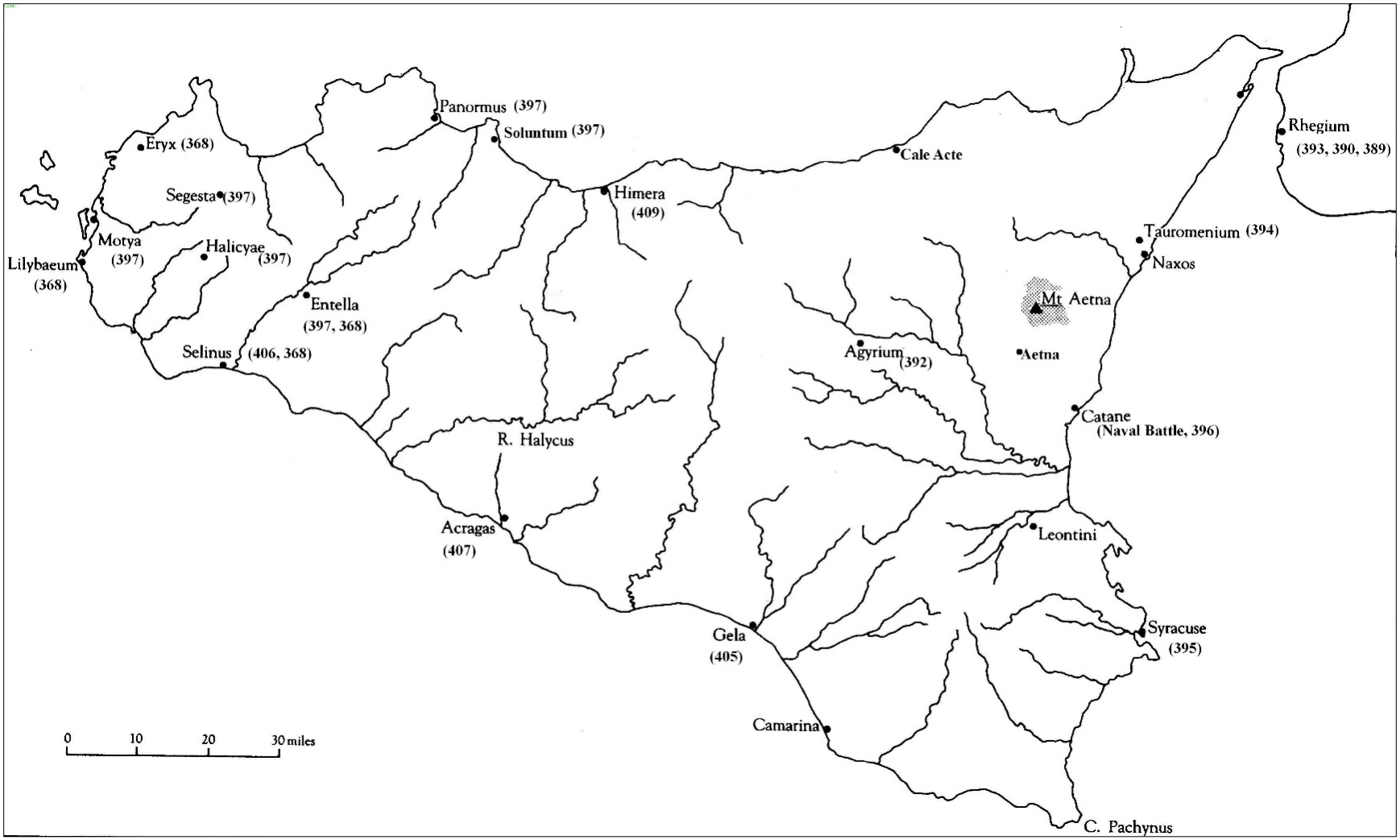


Figure 3. Major Battle Sites, 409-368
(Adapted from Caven 1990: Map C)

## Chapter 4: Memory and Malice

Now that we have examined Dionysius and his mercenaries at length, it is time to evaluate his legacy. Because he was a tyrant in an age when some Greeks were beginning to question the merits of the *polis* system and because he ruled over the second-largest Greek city in the Mediterranean, he was naturally a subject of interest to his fellow Greeks, not the least of whom were historians and political thinkers. Many of these men did not think well of him, however, and it is important to examine their contributions to his legacy. In this section, we will analyze our main source, Diodorus Siculus, and the earlier historians upon whose work he drew. Following that, we will next review the other accounts about Dionysius that were circulating in his own lifetime and beyond to see how those influenced the surviving historical record. During the course of this examination, I aim to show that the portrait of Dionysius which survived to the time of Diodorus Siculus was heavily influenced by his enemies and thus depicted him poorly. His use of mercenaries was part and parcel of this negative tradition, and as Dionysius became the archetype of the tyrant, so too did mercenaries become a part of the stereotype as well.

### The Historical Tradition before Diodorus Siculus

The primary source for the narrative thus far has been Diodorus Siculus, and it is with him that any historiography on Dionysius I must begin. Diodorus wrote his universal history sometime between 60 and 30, almost four hundred years after Dionysius

lived.[488] Thus he had to rely on the work of previous historians. He mentions two of these by name, Ephorus of Kyme and Timaeus of Tauromenium, and scholars have adduced two other possibilities: Philistus, the friend and adviser of Dionysius I, and Silenus of Cale Acte, the historian of Hannibal.[489] Most, but not all, scholars now agree that Diodorus Siculus used Ephorus as his main source when writing about the Greek mainland and switched to Timaeus when writing about the West.[490]

Unfortunately, all four of these historians now only survive in fragmentary form, and it is thus almost impossible to know what Diodorus Siculus took from each source, if anything, and how he may have used or abused them. Despite this handicap, scholars have tried to find echoes of, if not actual quotes from, these authors in passages of Diodorus Siculus by comparing them to known fragments and even similarities of thought.[491] This extreme version of *Quellenforschung* hinged upon the idea that Diodorus Siculus was little more than a "cut and paste historian," lifting whole passages from earlier, better historians and blithely putting them in a rough order without thought to how they worked together.[492] Such was often the attitude evinced toward the historian by previous scholars, but that opinion has changed greatly over time.[493] Instead, many now acknowledge that Diodorus Siculus conducted extensive research prior to writing and chose his sources and topics based on what supported his theme of using history for

[488] Rubincam 1987: 324.
[489] Philstus will be discussed in detail below. For Silenus and his possible connection to Diodorus Siculus, see Walbank 1968-9: 486ff.
[490] Sanders 1987: 110-1; Schepens 1994: 250; Caven 1990: 2; Parker 2004: 29, 50; Pearson 1984: 19. Caven (1990: 3-4) argued that Diodorus Siculus kept following Ephorus for events during Dionysius' reign while Sanders (1987: 141ff) believed that he drew directly on Philistus for the tyrant.
[491] For a relevant example of this, see Pearson 1987: 157-208.
[492] This view still persists. See, for example, Parker 2004: 49-50.
[493] Sanders 1987: 111-3; 1981: 398. See Gray 1987: 74-89 for an example of criticism of Diodorus Siculus.

moral instruction and even made original contributions to historiography.[494] Regardless of what one thinks of the process of *Quellenforschung* as conducted by previous generations of scholars, it is necessary to examine the sources which the historian used in order to understand how the image of Dionysius the tyrant was created and transmitted in the ancient world.

The first of these sources is Timaeus of Tauromenium. His exact dates are uncertain, although most scholars place him c.350-260. According to tradition, his father was Andromachos, a Sicilian Greek who refounded the city of Tauromenium in 358 and was a supporter of the Corinthian adventurer Timoleon, who was also a tyrant of Syracuse between 343 and c.337. Timaeus did not spend long in the city his father built, however, but instead lived for fifty years in Athens.[495] Which fifty years is a matter of debate among historians, with some important implications to how one understands Timaeus' writing. Brown argued that he voluntarily came to Athens between 339 and 329 BC to finish his education, while Baron and Pearson countered that he likely did not leave until 315, when Agathocles, yet another tyrant of Syracuse, took control of Tauromenium and may have forced him out, perhaps fearing that he shared his father's political leanings.[496] Even if he was not formally exiled until Agathocles became tyrant in 317, it is possible that Timaeus chose to leave Sicily earlier and was unable to return until after the tyrant's death in 289, assuming that he desired to do so. If he came to the city young, as Brown argued, he would have had an essentially Athenian upbringing and might have even considered himself more Athenian than Sicilian. Even if this were the case, even Brown admitted that Timaeus purposely focused his works on the Greeks of

[494] Drews 1962: 383-5; Sanders 1987: 114-6; Pownall 2004: 117-8; Sacks 1990: 4-5.
[495] *BNJ* 566 T 4b.
[496] Brown 1958: 6-7; Pearson 1987: 37; Baron 2013: 18-20.

the Western Mediterranean, perhaps in an effort to draw the attention of his adopted city away from their own orbit.[497]

Not much survives of Timaeus' work, and very little of that directly concerns Dionysius I. Those few fragments which have endured, however, do not paint a flattering picture. Timaeus placed the ascension of Dionysius I on the same day as the death of Euripides, stating that Fate took an imitator of tragic events and gave in his place a man who acted them.[498] He also related a divine omen in which an old woman of Himera had a vision of Dionysius bound on Mount Olympus as the "scourge of Sicily and Italy." According to the historian, when Dionysius discovered this omen, he had the woman quietly killed.[499] Timaeus likewise accused Dionysius of having a feminine interest in textiles and being obsessed with luxury.[500] Although exactly what one would expect to be said of a tyrant, hedonism was one of the few vices generally not attributed to Dionysius in the ancient world.[501] Lastly, he recorded that the doctors attending Dionysius upon his deathbed poisoned him rather than let Dion, one of his closest advisers, convince him to favor his Syracusan children rather than Dionysius II, his son by his Locrian wife.[502]

These four fragments are all that can be certainly attributed to Timaeus, and they alone would seem to argue that he did not care for the tyrant at all. Some scholars also argue that the long harangue against Dionysius I by a Syracusan named Theodorus recorded by Diodorus Siculus was written by Timaeus and inserted into his account to

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[497] Brown 1958: 6, 14, 75; Baron 2013: 218.
[498] *BNJ* 566 F 105.
[499] *BNJ* 566 F 29.
[500] *BNJ* 566 F 111.
[501] Nep. *De. Reg*. 2.2; Cic. *Tusc*. 5.57; Caven 1990: 233; Walbank 1957: 380.
[502] *BNJ* 566 F 109.

express his personal views on the tyrant.[503] Indeed Pearson claimed that many of the vicissitudes and revolts faced by Dionysius in Diodorus Siculus' account, as well as many of the former's unsavory deeds, may have actually been invented by Timaeus and then recorded as fact by the later historian.[504] Caven, while not going quite as far as Pearson, argued that the passages in Diodorus Siculus which are hostile to the tyrant come from Timaeus, and that this hostility colored the account of the later historian.[505] Brown concluded more specifically that Timaeus did not like Dionysius I because he was a despot, and perhaps also because he failed to prepare a suitable heir to rule after his death, leading to the chaos that allowed a mercenary leader like Agathocles to become ruler of Sicily.[506]

Moving from Dionysius I in particular to tyranny in general, Timaeus has traditionally been accounted an opponent of the system altogether, based on his vicious attacks on Agathocles, whom he had personal reasons to dislike.[507] Indeed his attacks on the Syracusan tyrant earned him censure from generations of future historians and writers, including some modern ones.[508] Others, however, were less certain that Timaeus hated tyranny in general and argued instead that he may have had other reasons for disdaining Dionysius I.[509] For instance, Timaeus spoke well of Gelon of Gela and was even accused in antiquity of being a sycophant for Timoleon.[510] Based on this evidence, Brown argued that Timaeus may not have rejected tyranny and the place of great men

[503] Pearson 1987: 178-81. Schepens (1994: 269 and n83) makes the same claim less forcefully, Cf. Sanders 1987: 134-6; Caven 1990: 5.
[504] Pearson 1987: 173, 182-3, 190-1.
[505] Caven 1990: 2.
[506] Brown 1958: 58, 75.
[507] Sanders 1987: 79-80; Walbank 2002: 172; Pearson 1987: 129.
[508] Diod. Sic.21.17.1-3; *Pol*ybius 8.10.12; Sanders 1987:78-80, 88-9.
[509] Baron 2013: 258.
[510] Gelon: Pearson 1987: 129; Baron 2013: 258. Timoleon: *BNJ* 566 T 13, F 119a, 199c.

altogether but believed in a more enlightened form of autocratic rule than that practiced by Dionysius I.[511]

Not only tyrants suffered at the pen of Timaeus, but he was equally harsh with previous historians, especially Philistus, and he earned the nickname "Censurer" (ἐπιτίμαιος) from his liberal application of criticism.[512] Vatuone argued that this disdain for previous historians may have been because he was attempting to rewrite Sicilian history, which to this point had had been largely complimentary to, or at least neutral on, Dionysius I.[513] This claim is impossible to prove based on the remaining fragments of previous historians, but is plausible for reasons which will be discussed below. Whatever the cause for Timaeus' hostility, later historians returned the favor, with numerous criticisms of him and his work surviving, perhaps the most impressive being the twelfth book of Polybius (c.200-118), the majority of which is taken up with scathing and detailed explanations of the many faults he found in the earlier historian's work.[514] Polemon of Illion (alive c.176) likewise wrote an entire treatise entitled *Criticisms against Timaeus* in at least six books, of which only fragments survive.[515]

As the number of ancient references to his work attest, Timaeus was widely read in the Hellenistic Age.[516] Indeed, Sanders argued that it was precisely his (perceived) negative view on tyranny which made him popular in the Roman Republic, although others credit his early recognition of the rising power of Rome instead.[517] Assuming that the fragments above are representative of his overall view of Dionysius I, it is possible

[511] Brown 1958: 58, 75.
[512] Diod. Sic. 5.1.3, 13.90.6; *Suda*, s.v. Timaios; *BNJ* 566 T 16, 23a, 27.
[513] Vatuone 2007: 197. This does not include the philosophical tradition, which will be discussed below.
[514] *Pol*ybius 12.3-28.
[515] *BNJ* 566 T 26, F 24a-b.
[516] Brown 1958: 92; Baron 2013: 57.
[517] Sanders 1987: 50-1; Sanders 2008: 144.

that many of these readers may have also absorbed his negative opinion of the tyrant.[518] Indeed Sanders and Pearson both pointed to Timaeus as the historian most responsible for the transmission and preservation of the negative stereotype of Dionysius as tyrant, if not its actual invention.[519]

Timaeus was not, however, the first historian to write about Sicily and Dionysius I. The next link in the chain is Ephorus of Kyme (an Aeolian city in Ionia), a largely mysterious figure. It is assumed, based on his writings, that he was alive at the beginning of the reign of Alexander the Great, for he mentions events that occurred at that time.[520] On the other hand, these deeds may have been recorded by his son Demophilus, who finished the last book of his father's work after the latter's death.[521] According to an oft-repeated ancient tradition, Ephorus was a student of the Athenian orator Isocrates, which would roughly date him to 400-330.[522] He wrote multiple works, including a history of his native city, a book on inventions, a book on style, and most importantly for the present purpose, a history of the Greeks. This latter consisted of thirty books, the exact arrangement of which is uncertain.

Drews concluded that Ephorus wrote three books on Dionysius I, although he cited no evidence for this claim.[523] Whatever the historian did write about the tyrant, nothing of it survives in clearly attributable form, and it is thus impossible to reconstruct his views with any certainty, although scholars have tried. We do know that where Timaeus savaged Philistus, Ephorus apparently praised him, and Sanders assumed that he

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[518] Sanders 1987: 85, 1991: 394; cf. Caven 1990: 231.
[519] Sanders 1987: 85; 1981: 394; Pearson 1987: 190-1.
[520] *BNJ* 70 T 6, F 217.
[521] Drews (1963: 253-4) posited that Ephorus only wrote about events up to 356 or 340.
[522] Biographical information from *BNJ* commentary. References to Ephorus as student of Isocrates: *BNJ* 70 T 2a, 3a-c, 4, 5, 8, 27, 28a-b.
[523] Drews 1963: 51.

shared Philistus' good opinion of the Dionysii.[524] Moreover, taking for granted that the ancient writers were correct about the relationship between Isocrates and Ephorus, Sanders further elaborated that Isocrates was a supporter of Dionysius I and that Ephorus would have shared his teacher's political views as well.[525] This is a tenuous foundation upon which to build, especially given that the central relationship is not fully accepted in the academic community.[526] Even those scholars who conclude that Ephorus was a student of Isocrates do not universally agree that the two shared the same political outlook, or even agree that Isocrates was truly a believer in monarchy.[527] In attempting to reconstruct the beliefs of Ephorus, Pownall and Schepens both agreed that the historian valued obedience to laws and civic harmony, with Pownall adding that he argued that those who used acquired and used power unjustly would not prosper.[528] If this was truly the standard by which Ephorus judged historical actors, one could make a case for both his support and denouncement of Dionysius and the method by which he attained power, and the remaining evidence makes it impossible to know for sure which path he took.

Ephorus was widely commented upon in the ancient world, and Brown called him the most popular historian of the fourth century.[529] Whether or not that was the case, many other ancient writers praised the historian after his death, and his accuracy, insight, and exactness were admired by figures as diverse as Polybius, Strabo, and Josephus.[530] He had his critics however, and many disliked his style of writing, although Cicero

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[524] Plut. *Dion*, 36.1; Sanders 1981: 400, 1987: 75, 2008: 75; cf. Caven 1990: 3.
[525] Sanders 2008: 72-5. Brown (1958: 17) agreed that Isocrates saw benefits to strong leaders and tyrants.
[526] See, for example, the commentary on *BNJ* 70 T 2a. See also Wickersham 1994: 135-6; Sacks 1990: 25-6; Pownall 2004: 27-8.
[527] Pownall 2004: 24, 28, 142; Wickersham 1994: 144-5.
[528] Pownall 2004: 132, 178; Schepens 1977: 117.
[529] Brown 1958: 17.
[530] Polybius 6.45.1, 12.28.10; Joseph. *Ap*. 1.67; Strabo 9.3.11-12; cf. Sen. *Q. Nat*. 7.16.2; Strabo 10.3.3; Diod. Sic. 1.39.13.

praised him for it.[531] Despite this criticism, his reputation meant that he was frequently cited in ancient works, and most scholars believe that he formed the central framework around which Diodorus Siculus built his own universal history.[532]

A contemporary of Ephorus, and a likely source for him, was Philistus of Syracuse, whom we have meet before. Philistus was one of the earliest supporters of Dionysius, as well as one of his closest advisers and the officer in charge of the tyrant's citadel at Ortygia. He served ably in that capacity until c.384 when he was exiled by the tyrant.[533] Why, where, and for how long he was exiled remain undecided issues. We do know that shortly before his exile, he married the daughter of Leptines, who was also exiled around the same time. It may be that Dionysius feared the two were plotting behind his back, especially as both were openly critical of his treatment of the Greek cities of Italy.[534]

As for when Philistus returned, the ancient sources provide differing accounts. The first tradition, transmitted by Diodorus Siculus from an unknown source or sources, claims that Philistus was recalled shortly after his exile with Leptines, while the other, recorded by Plutarch (AD 46-120) and the Roman biographer Cornelius Nepos (c.110-25), states that he was not recalled until the reign of Dionysius II.[535] Both traditions have their rhetorical uses, but the evidence seems to favor the version of Plutarch and Nepos, since there is no further mention of Philistus even in Diodorus Siculus until the reign of Dionysius II.[536] Plutarch and Diodorus Siculus also disagree on where Philistus spent his

[531] *BNJ* 70 T 22, 25; Cic. *Orat*. 191.
[532] Sanders 1987: 110-1; Parker 2004: 29, Schepens 1977: 102; Caven 1990: 2.
[533] Dio. Sic. 15.7.3.
[534] Caven 1990: 169-73.
[535] Diod. Sic. 15.7.4; Plut. *Dion*. 11.4-7 Nep. *Dion*, 3.1; Pearson 1987: 20-21. The circumstances of his recall will be discussed below.
[536] Pearson 1987: 21.

exile. Diodorus Siculus states that both Leptines and Philistus spent their exile in the city of Thurii, while Plutarch has him spending his time among friends in the Adriatic writing his history.[537] Once again, the evidence slightly favors Plutarch, with Pliny noting the existence of a Philistian canal in the city of Adria, traditionally considered to have been one of the cities colonized by Dionysius I during his attempt to create an overseas empire.[538]

Where Timaeus has been criticized for his unfair treatment of tyrants, Philistus suffered the opposite fate and has been accused by scholars ancient and modern of being an unashamed apologist for tyrants and tyranny, if not an outright sycophant.[539] Like Ephorus, however, most of what Philistus actually wrote about Dionysius I is lost, and the majority of the remaining fragments have to do with place names and etymologies. The only fragments which do mention Dionysius are two favorable omens which the historian say indicated his destiny while he was yet unborn and shortly before his ascension.[540] Thus scholars are largely reliant on the opinions of other ancient writers to reconstruct how he perceived his benefactor and friend. Based on this slim evidence, and his service to the Dionysii, modern scholars have traditionally assumed that Philistus was uniformly positive in his portrayal of Dionysius the Elder and Younger and of tyranny in general.

Once again, however, in recent years scholars have begun to moderate their views on the author. As one scholar has noted, just because Philistus wrote well of Dionysius I

[537] Diod. Sic. 15.7.4; Plut. *Dion*, 11.6.
[538] *BNJ* 556 T 8.
[539] Plut. *Dion*, 11.4, 36.3; Nep. *Dion*, 3.2; *BNJ* 556 T 13a-b. Cf. Morgan 2013: 104.
[540] *BNJ* 556 F 57a, 58.

does not mean that he was supporter of tyranny in general.[541] His actions, at least those recorded by Diodorus Siculus, indicate that he was a genuine supporter of Dionysius I and his son, although it is possible he may have oversold the tyrant in his writing to justify his own actions. Such might also have been the case if he wrote his histories in exile as a means to return to the good graces of the Dionysii and effect his own recall. On the other hand, Sanders argued for a far less self-serving Philistus who was a dispassionate observer of power politics and who studied Dionysius I because his power rested on the oligarchy, of which the historian was a member. This version of Philistus was also strong enough in his beliefs and personality to include unflattering details about Dionysius I when required.[542] Vatuone has similarly argued that although Philistus defended tyranny, he did so in a manner that was realistic and perhaps even cynical, aware of its limitations.[543] Others have argued that Philistus' support of even Dionysius I may have lessened over time, especially during his exile.[544] To whichever of these views one might wish to subscribe, a case can be made that Philistus was more than just an apologist for the Dionysii, even if he did have a personal stake in the events he portrayed.

Philistus' history, because perhaps of his reputation as a supporter of tyranny, which was still a raw subject during and even after the Hellenistic Age, was often passed over for that of Timaeus. Indeed, it was only in the first century, as the Roman Republic underwent its transformation to a disguised monarchy, that interest in Philistus increased, and much of the commentary upon his work, good and bad, originated during that

[541] Commentary on *BNJ* 556 T 16b.
[542] Sanders 1987: 53, 59, 90-1, 1981: 398.
[543] Vatuone 2007: 194.
[544] Morgan 2013: 104; Brown 158: 16.

time.[545] Despite this disadvantage, he still had his admirers even in the years immediately following his death. Alexander the Great famously requested a copy of his history while on campaign, perhaps looking for a suitable model of kingship.[546] Another admirer, and perhaps the man most responsible for the renewed interest in his work in the first century, was the Roman politician and orator Cicero. Cicero wrote well of the historian, praising his style and his subject matter, calling him a careful and learned man, and comparing him favorably to Thucydides, whom he argued he was trying to emulate.[547] Others also made this comparison, leading Sanders to speculate that he may have also covered the same main topics as Thucydides: warfare and politics.[548] Given the nature of Dionysius' rule and his frequent conflicts, this seems a fairly safe assumption, since even if he were not consciously emulating Thucydides, Philistus would have still written about the same subjects. This subject matter would also explain the interest of both Alexander the Great, the conquering warrior king, and Cicero, the astute politician, in his work. Others, however, were less kind, and Philistus was frequently criticized for his (lack of) style and for following Thucydides so closely that he was accused of lifting the entirety of his account of the Athenian expedition from him.[549]

Like much else about the author, scholars disagree about what from Philistus survives in the later sources. As mentioned above, most scholars think that Diodorus Siculus based most of the Sicilian portions of his work on Timaeus, but there is room for him to have used Philistus directly as well.[550] Secondary transfer is also possible from Timaeus, although anything from Philistus found in Timaeus would likely have been

[545] Sanders 1987: 48-51, 86-8; 1986: 14; Morgan 2013: 103.
[546] Plut. *Alex*. 8.3; commentary on *BNJ* 556 T 22; Sanders 1987: 48.
[547] *BNJ* 556 T 17a-b, 24;
[548] Sanders 1987: 48, 89; 1986: 13.
[549] *BNJ* 556 T 14, 15b-c, 16a, 19.
[550] Sanders 1986: 8.

reworked or included for the purpose of ridicule and correction, given the harshness with which he treated the earlier historian.

Having passed through so many different hands, one would expect the historical tradition about Dionysius I to have changed over time, especially given the likely divergent viewpoints and goals of the historians involved. Such historiographical problems exist with any ancient text, but here the troubles are greatly compounded by the lack of remaining evidence against which to check the account of Diodorus Siculus. Because of this, it may very well be that the "historical" Dionysius is in fact the creation of a hostile Timaeus or, if biases and motives are left out of the equation, at best a centuries-long game of Chinese whispers. If the life and legacy of one of the most famous tyrants of Sicily is so questionable, then one must also question those of his predecessors, about whom we are even more in the dark. Thus it may be that the arguments concerning the connection between tyrants and mercenaries on the island of Sicily have been built on a far shakier foundation than previously thought.

**Alternative Traditions**

The above problems are only the start of the difficulties surrounding the legacy of Dionysius I. Alongside what one might call the "formal" history of the tyrant, transmitted in various ways from Philistus to Ephorus to Timaeus to Diodorus Siculus, there existed a wide range of other material in circulation from which historians and others could draw when developing their image of the man. Some of these stories and anecdotes have their basis in propaganda deliberately spread by Dionysius and/or the poets and philosophers of his court.[551] Indeed, Lewis noted that there was a certain theatricality to the reign of Dionysius in that he was always performing, particularly by

[551] Sanders 1987: 2-4.

trying to emulate the previous tyrants, especially Gelon, who was fondly remembered by Greeks everywhere.[552] Naturally, much of this performance would have been aimed at the Syracusans and the other peoples of his empire with whom he often had a rocky relationship. Much like the Archaic tyrants he copied, however, Dionysius recognized that it was important to have friends and allies abroad. One of the main places he likely directed his propaganda was Athens.[553]

The reason why Dionysius would be interested in presenting a flattering portrait of himself and his reign to the Athenians should be briefly touched upon. Although it had lost the Peloponnesian War and its empire, Athens remained the cultural center of Greece in the fourth century. The way in which the war had been waged, and eventually lost, by the city was a frequent topic of conversation. Many, such as Aristotle, blamed the "mob rule" of the *demos* as a significant factor in Athens' failure, and Plato and others constructed elaborate utopias where literate elites (much like the philosophers themselves) would be able to control the excesses of such people and do a better job of guiding the city.[554] Others, such as Isocrates, saw the possibility of Greece taking its rightful place in world affairs if united by strong leaders such as Philip II of Macedon, Jason of Pharae, and even Dionysius I himself.[555] Long-held Greek notions did not change quickly, however, and many Athenians still saw monarchy and tyranny as the enemies of freedom. Such conversations would have naturally interested Dionysius, and he would have made efforts to be kept abreast of these political winds as well as to influence them to his benefit.

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[552] Sanders 1987: 2-5; Lewis 2000: 98-9, 105.
[553] Sanders 1987: 4.
[554] See, for example, Arist. *Pol*. 7.1323a-1337a.
[555] Isocrates, *Letter* 1; Speusippus, *Letter to Philip II*, 13; Wickersham 1994: 136-7.

Dionysius, however, faced an uphill battle gaining acceptance in Athens. The Sicilian Campaign was hardly a distant memory in Athens when Dionysius became tyrant, and the Athenians had not likely forgotten the treatment meted out to those captured by the Syracusans. Dionysius himself did nothing to improve relations by his allegiance to Sparta, Athens' main rival and frequent opponent in war. Even if he had reached out, many Athenians, particularly those in the Platonic camp, were suspicious of him simply because he was a tyrant, and not an enlightened one by their standards.[556] An early attempt at rapprochement was made in 393, when the Athenians passed a decree honoring Dionysius and his brothers and sent the admiral Conon with a delegation to try and woo Dionysius away from Sparta.[557] This attempt failed, and Dionysius remained an ally of Sparta, and thus an enemy of Athens.

Even this failed attempt at rapprochement elicited a strong reaction from those who opposed Dionysius I, and these elements worked to disparage him in order to forestall any future attempts at an alliance.[558] Sanders argued for the existence of a coherent anti-Dionysian faction in Athens, perhaps led by Lysias, but it is possible that there was no unified front against the tyrant, but only individuals and groups reacting in their own ways.[559] Whichever was the case, the results were the same, and unflattering stories about the tyrant began to circulate in that city and beyond.

The comic poets of Athens seemed to have taken the lead in this effort. Whether or not it was his intent, Philoxenus of Cythera's play *Cyclops*, first produced in 388, is usually considered the opening salvo in the campaign against Dionysius. In it, according

[556] The relationship between Plato, the Academy, and the Dionysii is a complicated one and will be discussed below.
[557] Sanders 1987: 10; Lys. 19.19.
[558] Sanders 1987: 11-15.
[559] Sanders 1987: 9

to a popular tradition, Philoxenus of Cythera projected himself onto the character of Odysseus, while assimilating Dionysius to the dim, monstrous Polyphemus.[560] Philoxenus had been one of the literati of Dionysius' court until he was exiled for either trying to seduce one of Dionysius' mistresses or for refusing to praise the tyrant's poetry.[561] Both of these reasons sound suspiciously like rote charges one might make against a tyrant, although Sanders made a spirited argument for how these seemingly minor crimes might have been perceived as treason by Dionysius.[562] Even if the play was not written as a satire against Dionysius, it was already viewed that way by the time of the philosopher Phaines (c.300), and other plays soon followed which offered more explicit condemnation of the tyrant.[563] Euboulos' *Dionysius,* written perhaps in 370s, mocked the tyrant because he ignored courtiers and listened only to flatterers, and may also have condemned his literary pretensions.[564] Similarly, a character in the *Homoioi* of Ephippos wished that his worst enemy might be forced to learn the plays of Dionysius.[565] In the end, these men created an image of Dionysius I as jealous, gluttonous oaf who wrote bad poetry and could stand no criticism.[566]

Perhaps the most damaging assault against Dionysius, however, was that of Plato and his students. Sanders and Caven have both argued that the negative descriptions of tyrants and tyranny in Plato's *Republic* are based on Dionysius and Syracuse, even if neither are named as such since the play is set before he became tyrant.[567] More direct attacks against the tyrant can be found in the stories concerning the philosopher's visits to

[560] Sanders 1987: 15-17; Morgan 2013: 103.
[561] Sanders 1987: 15-16; Caven 1990: 223.
[562] Sanders 1987: 16-19.
[563] Ath. 1.11; Horden 1999: 446-8; Webster 1970: 21; Hunter 1983: 116.
[564] Webster 1970: 28-9.
[565] Webster 1970: 29.
[566] Sanders 1987: 19-21.
[567] Sanders 1987: 21-25; Caven 1990: 167.

the court of the Dionysii. The fullest accounts of these are, for the most part, laid out in the Platonic *Epistles*, letters which claim to be written by the philosopher himself to various recipients, including Dionysius II. Of particular interest to the present discussion is the *Seventh Epistle*, which was the first of these to be written and generally believed by scholars to be authentic.[568] As Sanders reminded his readers, however, genuine authorship does not guarantee veracity, nor does it prove that it was written in 353 or 354, when it claims it was.[569]

Plato's first alleged visit to Sicily occurred in 388/7, when he was in self-imposed exile from Athens following the execution of Socrates.[570] This first visit is given only the briefest mention in the *Seventh Epistle,* but later authors, namely Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, and Diogenes Laertius, spin out a more elaborate tale.[571] Each of the sources gives a different reason for Plato's visit: Plutarch attributes it to fate, Diodorus says Dionysius I invited Plato to Syracuse, and Diogenes Laertius claims that Plato was on a geological tour of the island.[572] All three agree that Plato meet Dionysius I and angered the tyrant with his speeches on freedom, tyrants, and tyranny. In his wrath, Dionysius handed the philosopher over to Pollis, a Spartan emissary, to either kill or sale into slavery.[573] Pollis sold Plato on the island of Aigina on his way back with the twenty ships Dionysius had given him to aid the Spartans in the Corinthian War.[574] Fortunately for Plato, he was recognized in the slave markets and ransomed.[575]

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[568] Sanders 2008: 1. See especially n.1, where he lists the relevant scholarship.
[569] Sanders 2008: 4.
[570] DeVoto 2006: 17.
[571] Pl. *Epistles*, 7.327b.
[572] Plut. *Dion*, 5.4; Diod. Sic. 15.7.1; Diog. Laer. 3.18.
[573] Plut. *Dion*, 5.5-6; Diog. Laer. 3.19. Dioodrus Siculus (15.7) elides events and has Dionysius sell him in Syracuse.
[574] Plut. *Dion*, 5.7; Diog. Laer. 3.19.
[575] Diog. Laer. 3.20.

It is difficult to know what to make of this tradition. The ancient writers certainly believed the stories, judging by its survival in three separate genres of writing, and it was likely popular because it made the blustering Dionysius the aggressor and the wise Plato his innocent victim. As DeVoto and Caven have argued, however, it is likely that this meeting of Plato and Dionysius I is either entirely fictitious or heavily distorted.[576] As DeVoto noted, during the time in which Plato is said to have visited Syracuse, Dionysius was in Italy campaigning against Rhegium. During one of the battles that often broke out during the siege of the city, Dionysius was stabbed in the groin by a spear and had to spend several months recuperating.[577] DeVoto further stated that it is likely that Dionysius stayed in the neighborhood of Rhegium rather than returning to Syracuse.[578] While he does not offer any arguments or proof for this statement, it is a reasonable one. Dionysius' claim to power was based on his command of the army, and it is unlikely he would have let such an important operation continue without his presence, especially against so tenacious a foe. Even if he had wished to delegate his authority, the unpopularity of his war against the Italian Greeks would likely have made it difficult to find someone to whom to entrust it, especially since even such stalwart supporters as Leptines and Philistus had expressed displeasure with it. Finally, depending on how well he had repaired relationships with the Syracusans by this point in his reign, he may not have wished to appear in his capital in a weakened state.

If Dionysius was not present in Syracuse when Plato visited the city, assuming that he did at all, what really happened? DeVoto argued that Plato did receive a warm

[576] That meeting Dionysius is not mentioned in the *Epistles* should itself be a warning against its historicity, as Caven (1990: 168) noted.
[577] DeVoto 2006:18; Diod. Sic. 14.108.6.
[578] DeVoto 2006: 19.

welcome in Syracuse, perhaps due to the efforts of Dion, a trusted adviser of both Dionysii.[579] Eventually, however, his attacks on tyranny and Dionysius I caused him to wear out his welcome and he was sent with Pollis by Philistus, who was in charge of Ortygia in the tyrant's absence.[580] Caven was likewise skeptical that Dionysius and Plato ever met, and doubted that Plato was interested in understanding the man in any event. Instead, he argued that Plato was looking for evidence to confirm his own ideas about tyranny, which he received from the impressionable young Dion.[581] Caven was less certain about the story of Pollis and Plato, but agreed that if the story had any basis in truth, it would have been Philistus who sent the philosopher away from Syracuse out of fear of possible intrigues between him and Dion.[582] Thus it seems that the tradition of Plato's first visit to Sicily, or at least his meeting with Dionysius I, is a spurious later invention. The only reason to concoct such a story would have been to portray Dionysius poorly, and paint Plato as yet another victim of the tyrant's anger. Why someone would wish to do so will be explored below.

Dion remained a follower of Plato after the latter's eviction, and it was thanks to him that the philosopher found himself a part of Syracusan affairs again after the death of the elder Dionysius. According to the *Epistles,* hoping to turn the young tyrant into a philosopher, Dion persuaded Dionysius II to invite Plato to his court.[583] Concerned by this development and the influence that Dion and Plato were gaining over their king, the courtier's opponents convinced Dionysius II to recall Philistus from exile.[584] If Philistus was truly the architect of Plato's misfortune during his previous visit, then his recall

[579] DeVoto 2006: 20.
[580] DeVoto 2006: 20
[581] Caven 1990: 169.
[582] Caven 1990: 226-7.
[583] Pl. *Epistles*, 8.327c-d, 3.315d-e; DeVoto 2006: 21.
[584] Plut. *Dion*, 11.4-5; Pl. *Epistles*, 3.315e.

would have been a clear signal to the philosopher and his disciple that they were not trusted. Even if he was not, the return of such a long-serving and important adviser would have provided a counterbalance to the influence of Dion. As events unfolded, it was Dion who was sent away this time, when a letter he allegedly sent to the Carthaginians fell into the hands of Philistus.[585] Plato remained on Ortygia until 365.[586]

Plato returned in 361, perhaps in an effort to secure Dion's restoration, although the stated reason was that Dionysius II was eager to learn more about philosophy.[587] The philosopher was at once caught up in conspiracies (real or imagined) between the exiled Dion and his supporters in Syracuse and was placed under mild house arrest on Ortygia. After an unrelated attempted coup by Dion's fellow exile Heracleides was put down by Dionysius II, Plato was moved into the barracks of the tyrant's mercenaries and all of Dion's considerable estates and possessions, the proceeds of which up to then he had been allowed to enjoy, were confiscated and sold by Dionysius.[588] Plato was allowed to leave in 360, when one of his supporters, Archytas of Taras, formally complained about his imprisonment.[589]

Although Plato's direct intervention in Syracusan affairs was over, his name and reputation would be tangled up in the subsequent actions of his disciple. In 357, Dion staged an armed revolt against Dionysius which gained the disgraced courtier control of the city but stopped short of dislodging Dionysius II from Ortygia. His failure to properly govern the city eventually led to his deposition by the people of Syracuse and another civil war with Heracleides, his former admiral. Dion eventually won back his

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[585] Plut. *Dion*, 14.4-7.
[586] Pl. *Epistles*, 3.317a, 7.338a; Plut. *Dion*. 16; DeVoto 2006: 23-24.
[587] Pl. *Epistles*, 7.338b-c.
[588] Pl. *Epistles*, 7.345c, 347e, 349e-350a
[589] Pl. *Epistles*, 7.350a-b.

position in the city, but at the cost of losing much of his already waning popularity when he had Heracleides executed. He was shortly thereafter assassinated by his associate Calippus, who then seized the tyranny for himself. Syracuse would continue to be ruled by a series of petty dictators until Dionysius II retook the city in 346. After only three years, he left quietly for another comfortable exile at Corinth when Timoleon took over the city. After Timoleon's death in 337, the city once again fell into factional strife until it was taken over by Agathocles, an experienced mercenary captain, in 317. After his death in 289, the city returned to factional strife and even foreign domination until Hiero II became king of the city in 270 and ushered in a period of peace and prosperity before the city was sacked by the Romans in 212.

As even the brief sketch above shows, the actions of Dion led directly to multiple civil wars and much bloodshed in Syracuse. It also opened up Plato and his Academy to attack, as critics could easily point to the failures of Plato to convert Dionysius II and the grief brought about Dion's actions. Indeed, there may have even been in circulation rumors to the effect that despite his enlightened philosophy and grand talk of restoring the democracy of Syracuse, Dion was only interested in seizing the tyranny for himself.[590] The only way to counteract this bad press would have been for the Academy and other supporters to create their own version of events, which would naturally portray Dion's and Plato's actions in the best possible light. The *Epistles* would have been perhaps the most elaborate attempt, but Caven argued that there would have been other, smaller vignettes and stories placed into circulation as well. In the process of elevating Dion and Plato, these stories also denigrated the Dionysii, as well as the people of

[590] Sanders 2008: 95-100.

Syracuse in general. Unfortunately, aside from the *Epistles*, none of this other material is directly preserved, although it may live on uncited in the works of later historians.[591]

Some of this material likely made its way into the "official" histories of the later historians. How this may have occurred is largely opaque thanks to the fragmentary nature of both the Platonic material and the historians in question, but there is one testimony which may be indicative of the process. In one of his speeches, Aeschines defends himself against his opponent Demosthenes, who had compared him to Dionysius I and mentioned a dream about a woman from Himera. The *scholia* on this passage helpfully provides the full account of the dream from Timaeus, recounted above.[592] The fact that Aeschines mentions this story before Timaeus wrote his histories indicates that it was in circulation before the latter recorded it and thus did not originate with him. Furthermore, Lewis and Pearson both argued that the story might have had its origin in a positive version written by Philistus that had already been reworked, perhaps in Athens, by the enemies of the tyrant.[593] This is only a single example preserved by chance, but Caven postulated that if more Platonic material had survived, we might find most of the negative stories that were later spread by historians about the tyrant.[594]

**Diodorus and Dionysius**

Now that we've examined the historical traditions surrounding Dionysius I, it is time to return our main source, Diodorus Siculus. As the majority of the narrative offered in this work thus far has come from that historian, it is not necessary to go over in detail what he said about Dionysius I. Scholarly opinion, however, is divided on what

[591] Caven (1990: 222ff) argued that the Platonic material gave Dionysius I his poor reputation and not the work of the Attic comedians.
[592] Aischines 2.10; *BNJ* 566 F 29.
[593] *BNJ* 556 F 57a; Lewis 2000: 100-1; Pearson 1987: 165-6.
[594] Caven 1990: 232.

exactly the historian thought about the tyrant, making it worth discussion. Traditionally, scholars assumed that Diodorus Siculus simply absorbed the negative opinions of Timaeus concerning the tyrant and that his own portrayal was thus an overall negative one, if not perhaps as vitriolic as that of his source. Sanders, however, argued that Diodorus Siculus was able to detect the hostility of his sources and chose them in such a way as to make his portrait of Dionysius I largely neutral.[595] Caven similarly contended that Diodorus Siculus was trying to create a balanced portrait of the tyrant, something that did not yet exist. Thus he included laudatory passages from Philistus to help balance out the hostile accounts of previous historians.[596]

There are problems with both of these arguments. While Diodorus Siculus may have been able to pick up on the hostility of Timaeus, that does not mean that he could recognize what, if anything, Timaeus may have added to the narrative to disparage the Dionysii. We know that he used Ephorus occasionally in his books on Sicily, but that does not mean that he rigorously compared the two accounts, or that if he had, he would have chosen to follow Ephorus in the event of a discrepancy. There is no evidence that he used Philistus directly, but also no evidence that he did not. Thus even if he had wished to create a balanced portrait of Dionysius I, he still may have been beholden to a historical tradition that had already rendered judgment, as Caven argued.[597]

On the other hand, the historian does not seem overly harsh in his treatment of Dionysius I. His version of the tyrant lacks many of the worst excesses attributed to him by others and is capable of winning the approval of both the Syracusans and even former enemies through acts of mercy and diplomacy. Nor does he seem to suffer from any

[595] Sanders 1987: 110-121; 1981: 395-407.
[596] Caven 1990: 3-5.
[597] Caven 1990: 5.

major reversals or problems that were not common to tyrants in general, namely a restive population wanting to reassert its sovereignty and troublesome mercenaries. In the end, with no one with whom to compare the majority of his account, we must accept the account of Dionysius except where it does disagree with other sources. We must also remember that his Dionysius I, along with that of Aristotle discussed below, is the one which has been carried down through the ages and colored much of the modern discussion about the tyrant.

The image of Dionysius I as tyrant has important implications beyond him as an individual. As mentioned in the opening of this chapter, the time in which he lived was an important one in the development of political philosophy, as thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, and others began to ponder the different ways in which a city or people might be managed. Tyranny and monarchy naturally came up often in these discussions. For monarchy, these philosophers needed to look no further than Persia and the other kingdoms of the Near East, which had been objects of both fascination and ridicule for the Greeks for centuries by this time. For tyranny, however, the Greeks had to look harder, since the last tyrants there had been forcibly removed in the previous age. Thus, I argue, they turned to Sicily and Dionysius I to use as their example of single-man rule gone wrong.

**The Philosophers' Tyrant**

Had their probing only affected the reputation of Dionysius I and his son, that would have been merely unfortunate. What instead happened, however, was that the perceived dependence of Dionysius I on his mercenaries became part and parcel of the nature of tyranny. A brief overview of the description of the tyrant as found in Plato

should make this assimilation apparent.[598] In the *Republic*, Plato notes that the tyrant is one who makes himself a friend to the *demos* against the rich, but when the latter target him for assassination, asks for a bodyguard against their threats.[599] Once the tyrant has power and has taken care of his domestic enemies, he must then stir up wars and other problems to make himself useful and keep the people from turning against him.[600] Even then, he is a lonely soul who must dispose of anyone, friend or foe, who has any kind of excellence and might become a threat to him and his rule.[601] This naturally leaves him with no supporters, and he must thus turn to lazy (κηφῆνες) foreigners, whom Plato argues will naturally flock to him in return for wages.[602] These mercenaries, for that is clearly what Plato is implying, will help the tyrant rid himself of his former associates and then take the latter's place on the citizenship rolls.[603] In order to pay these new "friends" the tyrant will have to rob sacred treasuries and confiscate the property of those whom he has killed or driven off.[604]

Although not a perfect fit to Dionysius, the Platonic tyrant does resemble the portrait someone taking a wholly negative view of the man might paint. Dionysius did secure his power by asking for a bodyguard, and he was certainly blamed for extending the war with Carthage on multiple occasions, although it is difficult to know if this was an accusation made at the time or added by later historians. The removal of former allies and their replacement with hirelings does remind one of the exiles of Leptines and Philistus, although Dionysius' use of mercenaries began long before 384, and there is no

[598] Sanders (1987: 25-7) makes the same claim without going into the details.
[599] Pl. *Resp*. 8.566a-b.
[600] Pl. *Resp*. 8.566e, 567a
[601] Pl. *Resp*. 8.567b-c.
[602] Pl. *Resp*. 8.567d-e.
[603] Pl. *Resp*. 8.568a.
[604] Pl. *Resp*. 8.568d.

record of him having foreign or mercenary advisers, aside from the occasional Spartan general. Dionysius did enfranchise some of his mercenaries, but not, it seems, as a matter of regular practice, and usually not in Syracuse itself. Lastly, the financial arrangements of Syracuse and its tyrants are matters of conjecture but borrowing money from sacred treasuries and taking land and property from those who no longer needed it were hardly novel measures, and one can find more traditional *poleis* raising funds by the same means.[605]

Aristotle, who has perhaps impacted the modern view of tyrants and tyranny the most of any of the ancient commentators, had views similar to those of his teacher. Aristotle views tyranny as the worst of the six kinds of government in his schema, defining it as a system of autocratic rule in which the individual in charge seeks his own good, not that of the state, making it a terrible perversion of proper monarchy.[606] He agrees with Plato that tyrants were chosen by the *demos* to protect themselves from the oligarchs, but that their true aim was pleasure and riches and not representing the people.[607] Likewise, Aristotle argues that tyrants must make war against all the notable people of their cities, in order to preserve their own power.[608] Lastly, he agrees with his teacher that the tyrant must make constant war against a common enemy to keep his people distracted from his own deeds.[609]

Unlike Plato, Aristotle does not condemn a bodyguard as the mark of a tyrant, noting that even legitimate kings need to have some force at their disposal that is equal to the task of handling one or more of his enemies, but not strong enough to be a threat to

[605] Caven 1990: 163-6.
[606] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1279b; 4.1289a-b, 1295a.
[607] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1310b, 1311a.
[608] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1311a, 1313b, 1314a.
[609] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1313b.

the *demos* as a whole. He notes that when the Syracusans gave Dionysius a bodyguard, it was recommended that he only be given such a number.[610] He did, however, emphasize that a proper monarch has a bodyguard of citizens, while a tyrant has one of mercenaries.[611] He also goes deeper into the way in which tyrants maintain power. According to him, there were two ways: the traditionally oppressive regime in which the tyrant must carefully control all the citizens and kill any rivals, and the better way in which the tyrant rules like a proper monarch should (according, at least, to Aristotle).[612] These tyrants carefully maintain their own power, but otherwise act like a proper magistrate by giving account of the funds they are entrusted with, enriching their cities with monuments, showing true reverence to the gods, making themselves respectable in actions and appearance while not becoming an object of fear, and carefully and gradually removing from power those whom have fallen from favor.[613]

Aristotle also departs from Plato in that he is willing to talk about Dionysius by name. He names the tyrant in his list of those who had seized the tyranny by being both a general and a demagogue, lumping him in with the Archaic Age tyrants, while noting that most of his own age were different.[614] He firmly placed Dionysius in the first of the above categories of tyrants, mentioning that he taxed his subjects to such a degree that he owned all their property within five years.[615] This story is recorded nowhere else in the surviving literature and is likely an invention of either Aristotle or his sources.[616] Dionysius II also gets a few brief mentions, as when Aristotle praises the resolve of Dion

[610] Arist. *Pol*. 3.1286b.
[611] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1311b.
[612] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1313a-1315a.
[613] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1314a-1315a.
[614] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1310a.
[615] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1313b.
[616] See Caven (1990: 160-1) for one possible explanation of the origin of this story.

to go after the tyrant with a small force and being content to die if that death was linked to the honorable task of killing a tyrant. Similarly, Dionysius is used as an example of the contempt a tyrant inspires in his closest friends because he has to trust such a small number of people.[617]

Despite Aristotle's own categorization, Dionysius actually falls somewhere between the two kinds of tyrants the philosopher describes. As mentioned earlier, Dionysius is one of the few tyrants to escape from antiquity without a reputation for luxury and drunkenness. Nor does it seem that he was particularly interested in wealth for its own sake, although it is likely that he had significant personal expenses, particularly for the upkeep of his mercenaries. If Caven was correct in his assessment of the tyrant, what Dionysius desired above all was military glory and honor, which according to Aristotle, was one of the signs of a true monarch and not a tyrant.[618] Also, as I have argued previously, Dionysius may have possessed a civilian bodyguard, another prerogative of the true monarch, well into his reign, if not all the way through.

Similarly, Aristotle notes that the controlling tyrant must prevent his citizens from forming any kind of bonds with each other such as meals or educational assemblies, keep them from gaining courage or confidence in themselves, and forbid any other kinds of meetings.[619] The better class of tyrant can allow these things because they have the faith and trust of the people rather than just their fear and contempt. There is no evidence that Dionysius interfered that greatly in the private life of the people of Syracuse, and it is likely that if he had, his detractors would have gleefully preserved evidence of it.[620] The

[617] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1312a.
[618] Caven 1990: 239; Arist. *Pol*. 5.1311a.
[619] Arist. *Pol*. 5.1313a.
[620] Caven 1990: 156-60.

people of Syracuse went with him on his campaigns, and played an active and even enthusiastic part in the building of the wall on the Epipolae and the stockpiling of weapons in preparation for his second war on Carthage, as well in the defense of the city when Himilco and his army besieged it. All these deeds would have inspired confidence in the Syracusans, and in the instance of the attempted rebellion the followed the Syracusan victory in the Great Harbor in 395, explicitly did so. Literary meetings were one of the things which Aristotle specified the overbearing tyrant had to squelch, yet Dionysius established a respectable court with its own literati and tried to influence debates on politics and government with them rather than prevent the conversations from happening.

**Conclusion**

Despite these contradictions, Aristotle's portrayal of both tyranny in general and of Dionysius I in particular have had a great influence on how later scholars and historians have viewed both. According to Plato and Aristotle, the tyrant was one who seized power by playing off the common people of a city against their social betters, while being truly concerned only for his own advancement. Once in power, he had to constantly guard against both his friends and enemies, thus leading him to trust only those whose loyalty he could purchase, i.e., mercenaries. This description, based in part on a determinedly negative portrait of Dionysius I painted by the Platonic school and others in Athens, was amplified by Aristotle and then applied back to him by that same philosopher and others. Thus Dionysius I, the lonely soul who had to rely on mercenaries to hold onto power and wage his pointless wars, became the archetype of the tyrant. This

image was picked by later historians and transmitted to the modern day, where it only began to be truly questioned in the previous century.

The predecessors of Dionysius, the previous tyrants of Syracuse and other Sicilian cities, were likewise painted with the same overly-broad brush. Just as Dionysius I (supposedly) relied on mercenaries for the establishment and maintenance of his power, so to must have those dimly remembered tyrants of the Archaic Age. Modern scholars, looking at the Greek, and usually Athenian, accounts of their western cousins, picked up on this supposed fact, and perhaps persuaded by the Classical authors who had largely forgotten or rewritten their own experiences with tyranny, decided that tyrants and mercenaries must be linked.

## Conclusion: Memory, Mercenaries, and Monarchy

Having considered the history of Sicily from the time of the first Greek colonists to the interventions of Plato in Syracuse and having taken a fresh look at the life and career of Dionysius I, it is time to pull all of the threads together and consider some of the remaining questions. I have hopefully shown by now that the experiences of the Sicilian Greeks were not as unique as previously argued and that events on the island progressed at roughly the same pace as on the mainland, except where their environment necessitated adaptation and change. Let us begin with a summary of the arguments presented so far.

The warfare for which Sicily became famous in antiquity was not present from the beginning of the Greek colonization of the island, despite what the later historians claimed. Instead, the archaeological evidence suggests that there were peaceful relations and even cohabitation between Greeks and Sicels for at least a century, and in many places longer than that. The erection of fortification walls at most, if not all, of the first-generation colonies in the late seventh and early sixth centuries indicates that this peace was broken around that time. As this period also coincides with the expansion of many of the Greek colonies into the interior of the island, it is likely that the Greeks feared that these efforts would incur a backlash from the Sicels on whose land they were encroaching, or perhaps even from other Greek cities claiming the same territory. Unless there was an entire generation of tyrants lost to history, it seems this activity cannot be blamed on them, as it predates the reign of any known Sicilian Greek autocrats.

When tyrants do appear on Sicily at the beginning of the sixth century, they were well behind their mainland counterparts. Aside from their late start and extended stay into the Classical Age, the tyrants of Sicily were very similar to their contemporaries on the Greek mainland. Between 600 and 461, there were fourteen tyrants who arose on Sicily and whose careers can be sufficiently reconstructed from the extant evidence, and twelve on the mainland. Quantitatively speaking, then, there was very little difference in the experience of tyranny in both regions. The similarities continue when one compares how these tyrants came to power. Out of both groups, eleven tyrants inherited their position from a family member, with this method being more common by one on Sicily than the mainland. Four of the mainland tyrants became autocrats from another high office, typically that of general. Another four tyrants, split equally between Sicily and the mainland, acquired bodyguards of citizens and used those to kill or drive off their rivals. Lastly, mercenaries were employed only four times by potential tyrants, split evenly between Sicily and the mainland. Thus the use of mercenaries to gain and secure tyranny was no more common on Sicily than on the mainland, and surprisingly rare across the Greek cities of the Mediterranean.

These similarities do not change that fact that tyranny did endure past the dawn of the Classical Age on Sicily before finally succumbing to the desire for self-rule in the 460s. Unlike the mainland, however, tyranny returned to Sicily later in the century in the form of Dionysius I. Dionysius took advantage of the political turmoil caused by the Athenian expeditions against Syracuse and the more successful Carthaginian invasions to have himself appointed sole general with special power. He then parlayed this position into a tyranny by surrounding himself with a bodyguard and refusing to step down once

he had secured the city from the immediate threat. After ensuring his personal safety and that of his position, he spent the majority of his thirty-eight-year reign campaigning to expand his reach across all of Sicily and parts of Italy. Although his mercenary armies were a vital component of this effort, the people of Syracuse also accompanied him on his campaigns as well and could be enthusiastic supporters of his endeavors at times.

One place that Dionysius could not win acceptance was Athens, the intelligentsia of which can largely be blamed for his poor reputation. Despite his attempts at rapprochement, most of the literati of the city rejected him and the autocratic form of government he represented and made every effort to portray him as someone unworthy to hold such power. This effort may have begun with the poets and playwrights of the city, but the most enduring criticisms came from the philosophers, particularly Plato's Academy and Aristotle. Plato based his "hypothetical" tyranny in the *Republic* on Dionysius' Syracuse, and he and his students had to protect their reputations from the criticisms caused by Dion's attempted overthrow of Dionysius II and the forty years of civil war it occasioned. Aristotle picked up the torch and directly called out Dionysius as being the worst kind of man at the head of the worst kind of government. The accumulated anecdotes and false traditions eventually made their way into the historical record, likely through the efforts of Timaeus, who spend much of his life, and presumably wrote his histories, in Athens. From there, this portrait of Dionysius I was written into the work of Diodorus Siculus and thus passed on to modern historians.

As Dionysius I became the archetype of the tyrant thanks to Plato and Aristotle, so too did mercenary service and tyranny become linked. This link came despite the fact that mercenaries were becoming increasingly common in the aftermath of the

Peloponnesian War and would become a staple of Greek warfare in the fourth century and beyond. Nonetheless, the ideal of the free citizen fighting beside and for his family and neighbors remained strong in the mind of the Greeks even as the reality changed. Thus it was easier to look at tyrants like Dionysius I and claim they had to rely on mercenaries because of their inability to trust their own citizens than to acknowledge the changing face of warfare. If Dionysius represented only the most recent face of Sicilian tyranny, as Aristotle stated, then it was only logical that his predecessors had relied on mercenaries as well.

That history has treated Dionysius I poorly is hardly a controversial statement, and Stroheker, Sanders, and to a lesser degree Caven, have all questioned his legacy and tried to understand how it was constructed. What has not yet been addressed, however, was how that tradition affected the image of Dionysius' predecessors. Apart from the Deinomenids, who were effective propagandists and managed to secure for themselves a positive reputation through their presentation of their founder's victory over the Carthaginians at Himera, we know little about these tyrants. It is entirely possible that the Classical Age historians who recorded their deeds were as much in the dark as we are. Certainly what can be reconstructed from the remaining evidence argues against the idea that Archaic Age Sicily was overrun with tyrant-led mercenaries. Classical Age Sicily, under the later Deinomenids and the Dionysii and their successors, is a different story, but once again, one must place their deeds in the wider context of the military changes being felt across the Greek world. Sicily was not perhaps as much of an aberration in the Greek way of life as originally thought, but at worse may have been slightly ahead of the curve when it came to the use of mercenaries.

Some important questions still remain to be answered. Chief among these is why did tyranny persist on Sicily so long after falling into disfavor on the mainland. Did the *polis* system fail to take root, as many have claimed, or were there other factors involved? I have endeavored to show that the *polis* system on Sicily was as healthy as it could be, given the circumstances in which the Greek colonists found themselves. The remaining evidence indicates that the Sicilian colonies which became tyrannies did so from oligarchies, which follows the general pattern on the mainland as well. Since tyranny did not begin on the island until c. 600, that means that most of the original colonies had a century to almost a century and a half of oligarchical rule, assuming that the colonies were founded as aristocratic ventures, as I have argued. Given the rapid growth of most of these colonies and the wealth which they enjoyed, one would assume that their governments were relatively stable and enjoyed at least some measure of popular support.

Even when tyranny became prevalent on the island in the first half of the fifth century, it was still not a particularly enduring institution when viewed on a city-by-city basis. With the admittedly notable exceptions of Syracuse and Gela under the Deinomenids, and Rhegium under Anaxilas and his successors, most Sicilian cities did not endure more than two tyrants in succession. This too echoes the experience of tyranny on mainland, where only the Orthagorids were able to maintain a dynasty past two members. Even the Deinomenids could only hold their cities for three generations, or five, if one wishes to include the brothers Cleander and Hippocrates from whom Gelon seized Gela. In either case, the people of Gela only endured thirty-nine years of tyranny from the ascension of Cleander to the death of Hieron I, and Syracuse only nineteen.

Once again, it seems, the reputation of Archaic Age Sicily as a place amenable to tyranny has been greatly exaggerated.

Tyranny as an institution was far more durable upon its return to Sicily, although once again, one must consider the particular circumstances of fifth-century Sicily, especially those of Syracuse. The city had only survived the Athenian invasion with Spartan aid and leadership, and most of the Syracusan architects of that victory were lost to subsequent political intrigues. The successful Carthaginian invasions placed even more pressure on the already weakened political system, which opened the way for Dionysius I take power. One should not forget that he was at least the third to attempt to seize power in the city, after Tyndarides and Hermocrates, and that the Syracusans were not long fooled about his true motives. Thus, it seems that his rise to power had more to do with the immediate circumstances of Syracuse then with any kind of systemic failure of the *polis* in Sicily.

Indeed, the only weaknesses shown by the *poleis* of Sicily is one that was inherent to the system itself. Despite the advantages of self-rule for creating strong bonds among citizens and promoting independence of thought, oligarchies and democracies especially were poor at dealing with sustained external threats. With its frequently-replaced magistrates and competing interests, ancient Greek democracy was prone to factionalism and extreme fluctuations in policy and temperament. In times of severe, but brief, crisis like the Persian invasions of Greece, a democracy like that of Athens could perform very well by creating a united front against an obvious enemy. In prolonged conflicts, like the Peloponnesian War, however, factionalism and individual pursuit of glory could rear

their heads, leading to poorly-conceived and hasty actions like the Sicilian campaign and the execution of the victorious generals after the Battle of Arginusae.

It was precisely this latter kind of conflict, or at least the ever-present threat of it, in which the Sicilian Greeks found themselves. I have argued that the Sicels and Greeks got along much better than the Greek tradition allows, and I maintain that view here at the end. Nonetheless, the Greeks likely recognized that their continual encroachment upon Sicel land and their subjugation of that people might eventually lead to revolts or even open warfare. This was a different threat than most Greek cities faced, since with the exception of the helots of Sparta, the slave populations of most Greek cities were so mixed and isolated that desertion was a much greater threat than violent uprising. That only one such uprising, that of Ducetius, occurred is surprising, but there may have been some facet of Greek-Sicel relations that is lost to modern scholars that could explain the seeming complacency of the native people of Sicily. Nonetheless, it is not hard to imagine that the Greeks were always aware, at some level, that they lived in a land of people to whom they had given good cause for enmity.

The other major threat to the Greeks was Carthage. One could say that it served the same role to the Greeks of Sicily that Persia did to the mainland Greeks, but that comparison misses the mark in a few important ways. First, Carthage was much closer to the Sicilian Greeks than Susa was to Athens or Sparta, and its leaders capable of mobilizing an invading force much quicker than the Persians could. Secondly, there were Carthaginian cities, or at least Phoenician cities under Carthaginian rule, on Sicily which were a vital part of the economic, political, and military life of the island and thus in constant contact with the Greeks of the island. Lastly, and perhaps more importantly, the

Carthaginians could find support in many groups of Sicels, thus making them a much more present threat. Through these proxies, Carthage was able to exert a great pressure, be it real or merely psychological, on the Greeks of Sicily even when their armies and fleets were not on the island.

These are not new observations, and M. I. Finley noted the same pressures in 1979, and many others have taken views similar and identical to his in the intervening years.[621] Where these scholars and I differ, however, is in the point of failure. To Finley, the tyrants were the main cause of political breakdown, especially as they hired and settled mercenaries and moved large parts of the population around Sicily, destroying the sense of community on which the *polis* depended. He too blamed the presence of outsiders for the disturbances which made the rise of tyrants possible. As I have demonstrated, the first generation of tyrants do not seem to have risen out of any unique circumstances to Sicily, but as part of the same processes that were disrupting the aristocratic governments of Greek *poleis* (or proto-*poleis*) across the Greek world at roughly the same time. Indeed, it is important to remember the Carthaginians were not a true threat until after the fall of Tyre in 550 and were thus not a deciding factor for the rise of tyrants on the island. As for the deleterious effects of the first tyrants, while Gelon and his successors did shuffle populations and enfranchise mercenaries, one of the first acts of the newly-freed Syracusans was to violently expel these new citizens from their city, and it is likely that they helped others do the same. As argued above, the new democracy in Syracuse was stable enough until the final decade of the fifth century, so it seems that the Syracusans, and perhaps the other Greek populations of the island, were

[621] Finley 1979: 41, 72-3.

able to create an effective corporate identity for themselves out of the chaos left by the first-generation tyrants.

As for Finley's claim that the Carthaginians were a threat of the Sicilian Greek's own making, I must respectfully disagree.[622] While it is true, if Herodotus' account can be trusted, that it was of Theron of Acragas' deposition of Terillus of Himera which first brought the Carthaginians to Sicily in 480, that can hardly be blamed on the Greeks. The creation of alliances with foreign powers and individuals was part of being a Greek aristocrat, and one could hardly expect the tyrants of Sicily to do otherwise. Nor was it the intent of Theron to cause a war with Carthage. The renewed aggression of Carthage at the end of the fifth century also came about as a result of conflicts between cities, this time Sicel Segesta and Greek Selinus, neither of which was ruled by tyrants at the time. It is traditional to blame Dionysius I for extending his wars with Carthage to hold on to his power, and whatever one wishes to make of that accusation, it is certainly true that his determination to drive the Phoenicians off Sicily led to armed conflict with Carthage. That is not to say, however, that the Carthaginians did not pose a threat to the Greeks of the island or would have left them alone had Dionysius not provoked them. Indeed, the Carthaginians showed themselves willing to frequently intervene in Sicilian affairs when it benefited them or created new allies, and it is likely that even if Dionysius had not provoked them, they would have been drawn into conflict with him by at least one of his enemies. Failing even that, the presence of such a powerful Greek tyrant so close to them would have likely have led the Carthaginians to act against him eventually, if only to protect their trade interests.

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[622] Finley 1979: 41.

Given these circumstances, one should see mercenaries and tyranny as a dual response to these threats, and not as dependent upon each other. As argued above, the pressures of foreign peoples were too much for the democratic government of Syracuse, and likely other *poleis* as well, to handle. Tyrants represented the kind of strong military leaders needed to face these threats, and the solo nature of their rule meant that they were capable of taking the kind of decisive actions necessary to deal with their cities' enemies or potential enemies. Even a well-led army, however, is only as good as its soldiers, and mercenaries provided an answer to that problem. As formidable as a hoplite phalanx was, it consisted of amateur soldiers, and more importantly, was truly effective only under a specific set of circumstances. By supplementing their armies with light-armed mercenary infantry and cavalry from Sicily and Italy, the tyrants were capable of fielding far more versatile forces. It is also important to remember that hoplite warfare was designed for conflict between Greek cities in confrontations of heavy infantry vs heavy infantry. While there were conflicts between the Greek colonies of Sicily and those of Italy, it was against the Carthaginians and their mixed armies of citizens, mercenaries, and Sicels that the tyrants employed their largest forces. Depriving themselves of hired soldiers against a foe who employed them so liberally would have been self-defeating, and thus the tyrants were essentially forced by circumstances to use mercenaries. Lastly, it is important to remember that the Greek cities of Sicily continued to hire mercenaries even when under democratic rule, especially when fighting against the Carthaginians.

This reading of events on Sicily has important implications for the study of Greek warfare across the Mediterranean. Sicily has long been seen as an aberration in the Greek way of war because of the extensive use of mercenaries, *psiloi*, and cavalry alongside

hoplites in the armies of the *poleis* there. Tyranny was the traditional answer given for why Siceliot armies were different from their mainland Greek counterparts, but, as I have argued here, that reason is not sufficient, given that the Archaic Age tyrants of the island did not rely on mercenaries for their rule and thus could have fielded citizen hoplite armies without fear for their power. Instead, it seems, mercenaries were employed largely out of necessity.

Even in the renewal of tyranny in the Classical Age, the actions of the Syracusans in electing Dionysius show a Greek democracy acting as expected in the circumstances. Once again, relying on an Athenian example, this action is similar to the continual election of Pericles as general during their golden age and the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. One could argue that Pericles held power in accordance to the constitution of Athens without subverting the established order, but, as we lack any definitive evidence on the nature of the Syracusan constitution, it is possible that it allowed for a *strategos autokrator* much like Rome allowed for a dictator and that Dionysius' appointment, while unusual, was not in any way unconstitutional. In any case, the removal of Hermocrates for political reasons and the later removal of Diocles are certainly actions that would have been familiar to observers of the Athenian democracy. For that matter, who is to say that Athens, faced with the constant kind of pressure that the Sicilian colonies were, would have held up any better.

Even under Dionysius I and his successors, one can still see that the Syracusans kept up a lively civil life. The two major revolts under Dionysius show that the desire for self-rule was still strong among the people of his city, and even his long reign did not quench that urge. Although we know little about political life in Syracuse under that

tyrant, Caven has argued for a continuation of self-rule, with the exception that Dionysius naturally controlled the military and foreign policy.[623] Whether or not Caven is correct, the lack of recorded revolts after the first few years of his reign would seem to indicate that Dionysius and the Syracusans reached some kind of arrangement, and it is likely that it would have had to have included a strong measure of freedom for the Syracusan people. When Dion marched to overthrow Dionysius II, he found support in the city from Syracusans who had grown weary of the young ruler.[624] Likewise, when the people grew tired of their supposed liberator, it was they who hired a mercenary army and asked Dion's former admiral Heracleides to lead them.[625] Lastly, it was the people of Syracuse who appealed to Corinth against Dionysius II during his second reign, a call which brought Timoleon to the island.[626] Thus, the evidence shows that the Greeks of Sicily, or at least those of Syracuse, were willing and active participants in their own government, even under the tyrants.

Thus it seems unfair and harsh to say the *polis* system failed on Sicily. It did suffer some setbacks but showed no weakness that was not inherent to the *polis* as an institution. The constant pressure of the Sicel other and the interference of Carthage did stress the system to a point where it made sense to hand over power to autocrats for a time, but the peoples of Sicily, if Syracuse can be taken as an example, never fully gave up the idea that they should control their own destinies. Whenever a tyrant showed sufficient weakness, or even bad rule, they were ready to reassert their rights, or at least

[623] Caven 1990: 154-185.
[624] Diod. Sic. 16.9-12; Finley 1979: 89-91.
[625] Finley 1979: 90.
[626] Diod. Sic. 16.65.

fight for them. They did not always succeed, but their continuing efforts should caution us against writing off self-rule on Sicily as a failed experiment.

Likewise, even if my readers are not convinced concerning my reconstruction of tyranny on Sicily, I hope that they will at least take away a sense of skepticism about what the Classical Age authors had to say about it. Furthermore, perhaps we should begin questioning the legacies of more Sicilian figures. Was Phalaris of Acragas as cruel and depraved as remembered, or were there other aspects of his character that have been forgotten? The same questions should be asked of Dionysius II, who was slandered in antiquity as much as his father and for the same reasons. Perhaps it is time for him to be considered in his own right as well, instead of as the woefully inadequate successor to his father or the tyrannical competitor of Dion.

Similarly, the topic of democracy, or even self-rule, in Sicily has largely been neglected, aside from the work of Robinson, Rutter, and, to a lesser degree, S. Berger. Even those who have written about democracy in Syracuse, myself included, have done so by invariably comparing it to that of Athens. In some ways, such comparisons are unavoidable, since Athens is the model of ancient democracy and the one about which we are most informed. Perhaps, though, it is time for Sicilian democracy to be considered on its own merits to see how and if the Greeks of Sicily were able to adapt it to something more suitable to their home.

Lastly, we are sadly uninformed about the kinds of people who undertook mercenary service on Sicily. We know a little about where these people came from, but nothing about what their experience was like, how much they were paid, and what they

sought to gain from hiring their sword arms. Perhaps we cannot know given the evidence at our disposal, but, I believe, an attempt should be made.

Finally it is perhaps time to return the Sicilian Greeks to the Hellenic fold instead of keeping them at arm's length. As I have argued over the course of this dissertation, the Greek experience on Sicily was not as different from that of the mainland as those living on the latter have led us to belief. The Greek settlers there were able to establish their colonies on solid foundations and rapidly grow them into *poleis*. These cities did fall into tyranny, but they did so at roughly the same rate as those of the mainland. Furthermore, although tyrants did stay longer on the island than on the mainland, it is important to remember that they got a later start there. The same can be said of the return of autocracy at very end of the fifth century. Although it was a worrisome and unwelcome development to the Athenian thinkers of the time, it was merely a precursor to what would happen to the rest of the Greeks in the coming years. Thus, Sicily, and perhaps the rest of the Western Mediterranean world as well, should be seen as fully a part of the Greek world, just one where changes preceded at a different pace than on the mainland or in Ionia.

The use of the word "forging" in the title of this dissertation was a deliberate choice, as it can convey two separate meanings. The first is of a dedicated blacksmith carefully using heat and percussion to coax raw metal into a form that is useful for society, be it a sword, plowshare, or other tool. The other is of skilled rouge using his knowledge and steady hand to create a false signature or document for his own purposes, be they personal enrichment or political intrigue.

The image of ancient Sicily as a rough and unsettled land where tyrants used their mercenaries to protect themselves from their own people and expand their holdings across the whole island was, I believe, the product of both kinds of forging. Ancient historians such as Philistus, Ephorus, Timaeus and Diodorus Siculus spent years carefully crafting their versions of what happened on the island, albeit for their own purposes and their own audiences. Much of the raw material with which they had to work, however, was the product of a different kind of forging. These stories and anecdotes were deliberately designed to portray Dionysius and the Sicilians poorly in order to advance the ideas of the Athenian intelligentsia or to protect the battered reputation of Plato's Academy. It is unfortunate that modern scholars have largely aided and abetted this deception, and I hope that this dissertation will be just the first of many reevaluations of the role of mercenaries and tyrants in the ancient Greek world.

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