

# CHAPTER 5: IMPERIAL DESIGNS

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## Introduction

As the title suggests, the focus here is Syracusan imperialism during the fifth and fourth centuries BC. However, rather than simply delivering a chronological account, the discussion is also concerned with the physical remains of the historical period in question. Furthermore, are these monuments indicators of collective civic or individual ruler pride in conquest? The tangible remains of imperialism through the ages are seen everywhere – often in civic structures, often in an urban context. They are usually the monuments of individuals or political elites, whenever these persons have sought to create memories of their triumphs. Many of the memorials from antiquity are today in ruins as time has taken its toll, but also because many were destroyed – sometimes soon after their construction – as rulers changed, or where a state and its citizens changed allegiances. Then there are the tangible remains of destruction where an aggressor leaves as a memorial of his success the obliteration (or nearly so) of a city or town. Imperialist ambitions impacted on the ancient topography in both positive and negative ways.

Much of the history at Syracuse of this time is characterised by a belligerent foreign policy: initially, aggressive expansion in southeastern Sicily, and later (sometimes impulsive) intervention throughout *Magna Graecia*. However, at the same time the internal history of Syracuse was punctuated, to an inordinate degree, by violent civil unrest which is not mirrored (at least not to the same extent) in the *poleis* of either mainland Greece or in those around the Aegean.<sup>1</sup> Yet, conflict at home did not weaken the state for, in external affairs, the Syracusans displayed a purposeful energy in engaging in a string of military adventures in which they were often successful, and which made the city a powerhouse of western Hellenism. It is another paradox that when Syracuse was ruled by tyrants or monarchs it was more powerful and active in regional affairs than when a democracy was installed.<sup>2</sup> The contrast between Syracuse and Athens could not be more extreme.

1 S. Berger, *Revolution and Society in Greek Sicily and Southern Italy*, Stuttgart 1992, 34–53, lists twenty-seven reported instances of *stasis* between 650 and 269 BC, while noting that Syracuse is the ‘best documented city in our sources’, still more civil unrest probably occurred here than in any other state in his analysis. Between 510 and 338 BC Athens experienced just two periods of violent internal upheaval, while at Syracuse there were no less than eighteen. Syracuse was, however, not unique in antiquity and so also note the ‘notorious Alexandrian mob’, M. Siani-Davies, *Cicero’s Speech Pro Rabirio Postumo*, Oxford 2001, 15, although this was more than three centuries later: Strabo, Dio, 39.58.1–2: ‘... the Alexandrians are always ready to assume a bold front everywhere and to speak out on all subjects, but for war and its consequences they are utterly unsuited. This is true even though in serious civil disturbances, of which there are numerous, they always become involved in killings and set little value on life compared with transient rivalries.’

2 Syracuse had a democratic form of government following the expulsion of Thrasybulos in 466 until Dionysius I took control in 406/5, and again after Timoleon retired in 338 until the coup of Agathokles in 317. During both these spells of collective rule Syracuse was far less effective in its foreign policy.

The empire of Syracuse was relatively short lived, although perhaps forgotten or overlooked it outlasted that of either Athens or Sparta. Possibly the most notable aspect of Syracusan imperialism is the extent to which it fluctuated according to the abilities and inclinations of its rulers; arguably more so than any other state in antiquity. In fact, influence or even commercial contact rather than a permanent physical presence may better describe Syracusan imperialism in, for example, the Adriatic Sea and Etruria.<sup>3</sup> Notwithstanding its shortcomings, the remains of Syracusan ambitions are present either as surviving monuments or in various destruction layers, in the city itself, in Sicily and on the Italian peninsula. These sources, together with the literature (especially the history of Diodorus) allow a reasonably sound reconstruction of Syracuse's imperial ambitions and how these were displayed.

### The Deinomenids

Gelon is the first in that series of despots whose exploits and oppressions compose the principal web of Syracusan history down to the time of the Roman conquest.<sup>4</sup>

Syracusan history and indeed its ambitious drive towards building an empire began with Gelon, who became tyrant of Syracuse in 485 BC. It was largely because of him that Syracuse acquired a pre-eminent position in southeastern Sicily and a city-state to rival even Athens. Gelon transferred to Syracuse the population of Kamarina, which he destroyed in 485, and during his brief rule half the population of Gela and citizens of other towns, notably Megara Hyblaia (destroyed in 483) and Likodia Euboea,<sup>5</sup> were also obliged to become Syracusans. Such population transfers, which are really enforced synoicisms, become a common feature of Syracuse's history in the fifth and fourth centuries. The additional population, often non-Greek, added to the cosmopolitanism of the city and probably contributed to the volatile nature of the citizen body. This repopulation was probably also intended to bolster Gelon's power, implying that citizenship of Syracuse was to be regarded as more attractive than that of other cities, but moreover that these new citizens became the clients of the tyrant. Syracuse also grew rapidly in size to become the largest city in Sicily and with this went commensurate resources. And it was while Gelon ruled that the city began to take on its later familiar appearance consisting of the original settlement on Ortygia and the mainland extension of Akradina. Although each suburb originally possessed its own fortifications, the construction of an agora beside the harbour with many new civic buildings caused the city's walls to be extended. Numerous

3 A.G. Woodhead, 'The "Adriatic empire" of Dionysius I of Syracuse,' *Klio* 52, 1970, 1970, 512, argues that Syracusan interest in the Adriatic area was transient and limited to between 387 and 383, and that to suggest more risks 'the construction of an historical edifice which the available evidence is totally inadequate to support'. However, he fails to take into account later Syracusan activity in Apulia. Early and sustained contact between Syracuse and the Etruscans is well attested, H. Hencken, 'Syracuse, Etruria and the North: Some Comparisons', *AJA* 62, 1958, 259.

4 Randall-MacIver: 1968, 88.

5 A colony of Leontinoi, R. Hackforth, 'Carthage and Sicily', in *CAH* 4 1939, 373.

temples such as those to Athena on Ortygia, Demeter and Kore (Diod. 11.26.7) and a temple to Demeter at Aetna (Katane) were built at this time (Diod. 11.26.7). Gelon was equally active outside the city. His most famous military success was in the battle of Himera in August/September 480 when he defeated an invading Carthaginian army. This victory was celebrated as just as significant an event as the defeat of Persia at Plataea (Diod. 11.23.1–3: ‘All those who came to Sicily were lost’; cf. Hdt. 7.166 for the earlier date).<sup>6</sup> Gelon died soon afterwards. As a memory to his mostly benign rule (Aelian, VH 13.37) an ornate tomb was constructed for him and his wife Demarete along the Eloros road close to the Olympieion at Polichne. It survived down to the Carthaginian invasion of 396 when the invaders tore it down (Diod. 11.38.4, 14.63.3).

His brother Hieron I succeeded and pursued a vigorous foreign policy in and outside Sicily, which foreshadowed the more grandiose ambitions of later Syracusan tyrants. Diodorus (11.49.1) states that the inhabitants of Katane and Naxos were forcibly resettled in Leontinoi and that Katane was renamed Aetna and its population replaced by citizens more loyal to Syracuse. Naxos was simply abandoned. These resettlements look very much like a deliberate policy adopted against the former Chalkidian colonies of Naxos, Katane and Leontinoi, and this extraordinary movement of people from one community to another is seen as an early example of ethnic cleansing,<sup>7</sup> reflecting tensions between the Dorian and Ionian communities. It is a peculiarly Syracusan-inspired policy not seen on such a scale in mainland Greece. During Hieron’s rule Gela remained a dependency of Syracuse, as Himera was of Akragas, but Hieron also defeated the Akragantines in 472, and so ensured Syracusan supremacy in the entire region. The construction of the temple of Athena on Ortygia, started in 480, and a theatre on the hillside at Neapolis (begun in the 470s) are obviously expressions of the confidence and optimism of the age, not to mention the wealth obtained from Syracusan victories.<sup>8</sup> Further afield, in 477/6, Hieron is said (Diod. 11.48.4) to have responded to a call for aid from Sybaris (Thurion), which had been attacked by Kroton. He is also said to have exerted pressure on the Rhegians to desist from attacking Locri, an early and longtime ally of Syracuse.<sup>9</sup> At the same time, Hieron married a woman of Rhegion, and so cemented relations with one of the most powerful Greek states on the Italian side of the Straits of Messina. However, we are not told of the Syracusan response to the war between the Tarentines and Iapygians in about 473 (Diod. 11.52.1) when the Rhegians went to help, but were beaten and seem to have

<sup>6</sup> Gelon’s popularity outside Syracuse may be judged from the ornamental pool built in his honour at Akragas where his brother-in-law Theron ruled, Diod. 11.25; Athenaeus, 12.541. And Gelon himself is credited with the construction of the ‘Horn of Amaltheia’ in an ornamental garden in the southern Italian city of Hipponion, Athenaeus, 12.542. This ‘horn of plenty’ was probably a tableau in stone relief or statuary but, more importantly, indicates the influence of this tyrant outside Sicily. Hieron is supposed to have built a garden ‘for conservation’ in Syracuse.

<sup>7</sup> D. Asheri, ‘Sicily, 478–431 B.C.,’ *CAH* 5 1992<sup>2</sup>, 152.

<sup>8</sup> Hieron’s fame or notoriety is certainly well attested to in the ancient sources, for example, Xenophon’s philosophical dialogue between Hieron and Simonides, the *Hieron*, noted also by Athenaeus, 3.121.

<sup>9</sup> Asheri: 1992<sup>2</sup>, 151.

lost their city. An Iapygian raiding party – even if it stormed into Rhegion – must have been repulsed, perhaps with Syracusan aid. Hieron's Italian connections became ever closer, with an intervention on behalf of Kyme against the Etruscans in 474, whom he defeated in a sea battle (Diod. 11.51.1–2),<sup>10</sup> which resulted in the founding of a Syracusan colony, albeit temporarily, on Ischia (Strabo, 5.4.9).

It is certainly feasible that, even at this early stage, Syracuse already controlled some towns and harbours along the Italian coast as far north as Kyme, but if so these territorial acquisitions did not last.<sup>11</sup> With the death of Hieron, sole rule by his family survived only for a brief spell before his brother Thrasybulos was thrown out and went into exile to Locri (Diod. 11.68.4). The expulsion of the Deinomenids brought about an abrupt change in Syracusan foreign relations. The city continued to prosper, benefitting from Hieron's patronage of the arts (Aeschylus had been there in 472 and produced the *Persai* in the theatre), but territorial supremacy was surrendered. Diodorus (11.86.3–5) also suggests frequent *stasis* in these years. And it is probably no coincidence that by 461, and perhaps before, Naxos and Katane were refounded when their exiled communities were allowed to leave Leontinoi, while citizens of Kamarina who had been settled in Syracuse also returned home. The newer settlers in Aetna/Katane were driven out and they founded a new Aetna at Inessa. Even the former Geloans were sent back to their original homes after an absence of nearly twenty years. Elements that may have been perceived as disruptive were evidently encouraged to leave or expelled. This reversal Gelon's and Hieron's policies after 466 may indicate a more benevolent or disinterested government, or that the newly instituted democracy had insufficient power over the many different communities congregated within the walls of Syracuse. For all that, Syracuse remained the chief city of Sicily and its wealth and power were clearly the reasons for the Athenian attacks in 427 and 415 BC. Also worth noting here is the apparent relative lack of influence of a *nautikos ochlos* – an element fundamental to the maritime empire of the Athenians – and which may, therefore, indicate a more extensive use of mercenaries by Syracuse. Syracusan intervention in southern Italy or further north would not have been possible without a strong war fleet. Yet following the fall of Thrasybulos and for nearly fifty years, with the exception of a single notable episode, the Syracusans seem disinclined to patrol the seas; and the seamen – whoever they were – must therefore have found employment elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> When the Athenians arrived before the walls of Syracuse in 414 the inhabitants of rowing age appear to have forgotten how to operate their warships. Once they had relearned these skills the Syracusan mariners used them well over the next century.

10 The magnitude of the Syracusan victory may be judged from the Etruscan helmets dedicated at Delphi by Hieron, for an illustration, see Finley: 1979, facing 113. For the coast at Misenum and Ischia, see CD nos. 478, 480, 486–87.

11 Asheri: 1992<sup>2</sup>, 154. Movement of fleets along the coast required friendly or subject harbours. Syracusan treaties with Rhegion and Locri certainly imply that others existed. H.B. Mattingly, 'The Demareteion Controversy – a New Approach', *Chiron* 22, 1992, 2 and n. 6, suggests a longer occupation, perhaps extending over two or more decades.

12 Diodorus, 11.88.4–5, mentions a raid against pirates operating out of Elbe and Corsica in 454/3 with a fleet of sixty triremes. By 425 Syracuse possessed just thirty triremes, Thuc. 4.25.1, and some of these may have belonged to allies such as Locri.

## Dionysius I

Syracuse recovered in a very short time from the protracted Athenian siege,<sup>13</sup> but Sicily did not enjoy peace for long. The Carthaginians led by Hannibal invaded Sicily in 409, perhaps hoping to take advantage of Sicilian weakness following the war with Athens or seeking to outdo the mainland Greeks. At first the Carthaginians had spectacular successes with the destruction of Selinous and Himera,<sup>14</sup> and the capture of Akragas, Gela and Kamerina which left Syracuse, the main power of eastern Sicily, unconquered but not in a position to roll back the Punic tide. Dionysius I, previously a follower of Hermokrates, came to power in the uncertain days of the Carthaginian threat.<sup>15</sup> Syracuse remained nominally a democracy, but all effective power was placed in the hands of Dionysius through his election as *strategos autokrator* (Diod. 13.95.1–3), and through his possession of a bodyguard, which in time became a formidable army of mercenaries. During his rule not only did Syracusan imperialism scale new heights, but so did its palpable rewards. Soon after obtaining supreme power Dionysius made the island of Ortygia and the causeway linking it to the mainland a strongly fortified acropolis for himself, his family, closest allies and mercenaries who were employed as a protection against the citizens of Syracuse.<sup>16</sup> Diodorus describes what happened:

After Dionysius had concluded a peace with the Carthaginians he planned to occupy himself more with strengthening his own position, because he assumed that now the Syracusans were relieved of the war they would also have plenty of time to seek to recover their liberty. He recognised that the island was the strongest part of the city and could easily be defended, so he isolated it by an expensive wall in which he set high towers at close intervals, while in front of it he built places of business and *stoas* capable of accommodating a great crowd of the citizen body.<sup>17</sup> He also constructed on the island at great expense a fortified acropolis as a place of refuge in case of immediate need, and within its walls he enclosed the dockyards, which are connected with the small harbour that is known as *Laccium* (*Portus Laccius*). The dockyards could accommodate sixty triremes and had an entrance that was closed off, through which just one ship at a time could enter. (Diod. 14.7.1–5)

Diodorus is not precise, but this statement seems to indicate that the island was divided from the mole by a channel at this date.

<sup>13</sup> See Chapter 4. The siege lasted from April 414 to September 413, altogether about eighteen months.

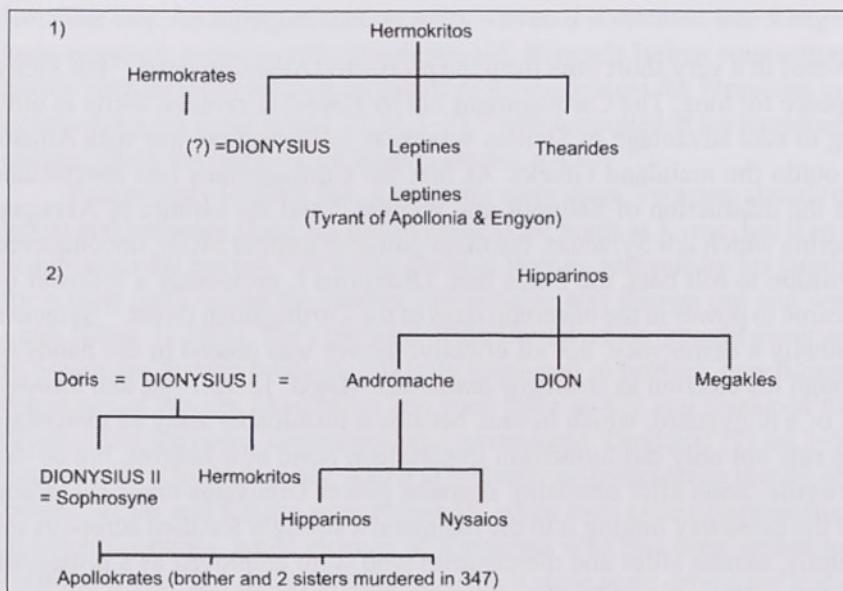
<sup>14</sup> Himera was desolated and not rebuilt, but Selinous revived through several crises down to about 250 BC before its final evacuation by the Carthaginians.

<sup>15</sup> Hermokrates was killed in a failed coup in 408, his daughter who had married Dionysius was killed in civil unrest in 406. Hermokrates was prominent among the Syracusan leadership in the war against Athens, and was inclined towards oligarchic government, and is given a speech by Thucydides at Kamarina in 415, 6.76–80.

<sup>16</sup> Unusually for a Greek city the acropolis was at the lowest, not highest point, Freeman: 1891, 1.352–53.

<sup>17</sup> The agora lay just to the north of the mole's fortifications.

## Syracuse in antiquity



**Figure 29: The Family of Dionysius I**

Today these sophisticated defensive structures are gone, and even by the first century BC the topography of the island of Dionysius' time had been altered beyond all recognition.<sup>18</sup> Although Cicero mentions a palace of Hieron II, which had become the Roman governor's residence, the Dionysian *acropoleis* (two are mentioned), one on the island and one which straddled the mole had been obliterated, demolished on the orders of Timoleon, who succeeded to power in the city after the exile of the younger Dionysius in 344 BC. The material remains of Syracuse's domination could also be of brief duration, when its people at times took particular delight in removing the symbols of autocratic rule in their city. Invading armies and the citizen body itself could wreak equal destruction on the monuments of Syracusan glory or oppression.

Outside Ortygia, Dionysius was busy fortifying the plateau of Epipolai, as Diodorus describes in some detail.

And realising that in the war with the Athenians the city had been blocked off by a wall from the sea to the sea, Dionysius took care that he should never, where caught at a similar disadvantage, be cut off from contact with the country; for he saw that the site of Epipolai, as it is called, naturally commanded Syracuse. Therefore, he sent for his master-builders, and in accordance with their advice he decided that he must fortify Epipolai at the point where

<sup>18</sup> In a wonderful repetition of history, Freeman: 1891, 2.47, n.1, 2.506; cf. 1894, 4.12, describes the Spanish fortifications of Charles V, another tyrant, being dismantled by the local people in 1889 and 1890.

there now stands the Wall with the Six Gates; for this spot, facing north, is entirely steep and so precipitous that hardly any access could be obtained from outside. He wanted to complete the construction as quickly as possible so gathered the peasants and from these he chose about sixty thousand capable men and parcelled out to them the space to be walled. For each stade (606 feet/two hundred metres) he appointed a master-builder and for each *plethron* a mason, and labourers from the peasants assigned to the task numbered two hundred for each *plethron* (100 feet/thirty metres). Besides these, a huge number of other workers quarried out the rough stone, and six thousand yoke of oxen brought it to the appointed place. And the united labour of so many workers struck the watchers with astonishment, since all were keen to complete the task assigned them; for Dionysius, in order to excite the enthusiasm of the labourers, offered valuable gifts to those who finished first, special ones for the master-builders, and still others for the masons and in turn the peasants ... so that, contrary to all expectations, the wall was completed in twenty days. It was thirty stades in length and of an appropriate height, and the added strength of the wall made it impregnable to attack; for there were high towers at frequent intervals and it was constructed of stones four feet long and carefully joined. (Diod. 14.18.2–8)<sup>19</sup>

An enemy holding Epipolai posed a great danger to the city, as was well illustrated during the Athenian siege a decade before. This situation could not to be allowed to recur, and so a wall was constructed along the northern slope of Epipolai. This was plainly in response to the Athenian attack of April 414 when Nikias' troops had been able to take Eurialos without being noticed by the Syracusans. In order to finish the work in just three weeks, Diodorus claims a workforce of 60 000. Thirty stades (about three and a half miles) was finished initially but the entire circuit wall for the city took perhaps as many as five years to complete. The number of labourers needed for such a task could well have totalled that given by Diodorus. The main entrance to the city in the northern wall was from then the *Hexapylon* but, between this gate and the Eurialos fort were eight small gates, seven of which allowed only pedestrian traffic. The wall probably rose to a height of about six metres, hugging the edge of the plateau to its western extremity until turning east and linking with the Great Harbour south of the suburb of Neapolis and the complex, which contains the Theatre.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is clear from a number of sources that while Ortigia was separated from the rest of the city by elaborate fortifications, Syracuse's main districts – Akradina, Tyche and Neapolis – were also enclosed and fortified with their own set of walls. This internal arrangement presumably gave rise to the idea that Syracuse was four cities in one (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.118).

When he had established himself at home, Dionysius cast his eyes on his immediate borders and on his neighbours; on the one hand, the city states of Naxos, Katane and Leontinoi, already the victims of earlier Syracusan imperialism and, on the other, the

19 CD nos. 77, 82–83, 515–16, the northern walls at Epipolai.

20 Since the Carthaginians gained relatively easy access to Akradina from the south in 397, Diod. 14.63.1, the final section of the circuit wall was probably still incomplete during this latest siege, Randall-Macliver: 1968, 167. And the walls failed to prevent Pyrrhus' easy occupation in 278, Plut. *Pyrrh.* 22.1. The southern walls on Epipolai, CD nos. 648–50.

native Sikeli communities inland. He quickly captured the town of Aetna, but failed in his attempt at Leontinoi, Enna and Herbita. Katane and Naxos fell by treachery, many of the poorer inhabitants of these towns were sold as slaves and the prosperous citizens and their wealth were removed to Syracuse. A little later Leontinoi surrendered to Dionysius and its people were also resettled in Syracuse as free citizens (*Diod.* 14.14.1–15.4).<sup>21</sup> The inhabitants of Rhegion must have watched these developments with alarm. Like Naxos and Katane they were colonists from Ionian Chalcis and so shared blood ties and feared a similar fate (*Diod.* 14.40.1). The Reginians opted for preemptive action by sending an army across the Straits to attack Syracuse, hoping that other Sicilian cities would join them. For a brief time Messene became involved in the campaign, but withdrew its forces before hostilities took place. The Reginians were stranded, outnumbered, and withdrew, coming to terms with Dionysius (14.40.7).

Peace did not last. In the very next year Dionysius was on the move again with his sights firmly set on Messene and Rhegion (*Diod.* 14. 44.3). Diodorus seems to think that Dionysius foresaw the possibility that these states could ally themselves with the Carthaginians and hence pose a real threat to his security. Therefore, he won over the Messenians with territorial concessions, and tried to make a marriage alliance with the Reginians, though they, unwisely as it turned out, rejected his proposal. Dionysius then approached the Locrians for a wife and in this year or in the next married both Doris of Locri and Andromache of Syracuse.<sup>22</sup> Shortly after the double wedding, Dionysius proposed a campaign against the Carthaginians, whom he claimed were weakened because of a plague (*Diod.* 14.45.3, cf. 14.41.1). Carthaginian property in Syracuse – presumably belonging to a resident merchant community (reminiscent of later Venetian and Genoan communities in various Mediterranean cities) was seized and an ultimatum delivered to Carthage demanding the freedom of all Greek cities in Sicily.

Preparations for this war had apparently begun in 399 with the construction of siege machines and warships. According to Diodorus (14.42.5) enough wood was collected for building more than two hundred ships, and refitting one hundred and ten triremes already in the Syracusan war fleet.<sup>23</sup> In the Great Harbour one hundred and sixty boatsheds for repairing ships were erected, which, says Diodorus, could accommodate two ships at a time. When this costly exercise was completed, and with additional forces from Kamaria, Gela, Akragas, and survivors from Himera and Selinous, Dionysius made first for Eryx, which joined him, and then Motya, his ultimate goal. This apparent long-term

21 The city of Halaesa was founded at this time by colonists from Herbita, *Diod.* 14.16.4. For Leontinoi, see CD nos. 362–373.

22 Significantly, Doris was regarded as the senior wife and mother of Dionysius II. This situation was clearly aimed at honouring the Locrians and maintaining the alliance. Andromache was the sister of Dion.

23 Where did the timber come from? The interior of Sicily must, at some stage, have had forested land, but a great deal was farmed by then. The alpine forests of Calabria should perhaps be identified as the source but then there was the logistical problem of transporting such huge amounts of wood to the boatyards. Rhegion would not have been the port of exit for the commodity to Syracuse given the frosty relations between the two states, but Locri was well placed to fulfill this role and may explain the long-term and mutually beneficial alliance between them.

planning suggests, or at least suggested to ancient writers, that Dionysius had a foreign policy of territorial expansion aimed at the conquest of the western half of Sicily and southern Italy from the early days of his rule. As we shall see, however, Dionysius either lacked the determination or the manpower to always bring his objectives to a rapid and permanent conclusion. In some instances Dionysius was obliged to compromise or even forfeit gains to acquire a return to peaceful conditions. At the same time Dionysius needed successful military campaigns to maintain a consistent flow of wealth into the city to pay his mercenaries and keep the citizen body tranquil. On Sicily this could only mean war with Carthage or its allies in the western sector of the island or with the Sikel communities in the interior – a situation that colours much of Dionysius' time as ruler.

Motya was situated on an island lying six stades (1104 metres or 3642 feet) off Sicily and was artistically decorated to a high degree with numerous fine houses because of the prosperity of its citizens. It also had a narrow artificial causeway extending to the shore, which the Motyans breached at this time so that the enemy should have no approach against them. After he had carried out a reconnaissance, together with his engineers, Dionysius began to construct a mole leading to Motya and, as the mole was extended advanced his engines of war little by little towards the walls. After Dionysius had finished the mole by employing a large force of labourers, he brought war engines of every kind against the walls and kept hammering the towers with his battering rams, while with catapults he kept down the fighters on the battlements; and he also advanced against the walls his wheeled towers, which were six stories high that had been built to equal the height of the houses. The people of Motya, even though the danger was very real and they had at that moment no allies at hand, were not dismayed by the power of Dionysius. They outdid the besiegers in their desire for glory, and in the first place raised up men in crows' nests resting on yard arms suspended from the highest possible masts, and from these lofty points threw down burning torches and burning wool covered in pitch on the enemies' siege machines. The wood quickly caught alight, but the Greeks dashed to the rescue and extinguished the flames, and in the meantime the frequent blows of the battering rams broke down a section of the wall. (Diod. 14.48.2–3, 49.3, 51.1–53.6)<sup>24</sup>

The Greeks rushed in and fierce fighting took place in the narrow streets where each of the high-storied buildings was used by the defenders as a new wall, but the Greeks brought in their wheeled towers and used them against these buildings. Each time the defenders fell back.

Flight from the city was, of course, impossible since it was surrounded on all sides by the sea, which was controlled by the Greeks. Most appalling for the Carthaginians and the greatest cause for despair was the thought of how cruelly they had treated Greek captives and the realisation that they would suffer a similar fate. There was nothing left for them but to fight bravely and either to conquer or die. (Diod. 14.52.2)

24 For Motya, see CD nos. 687–700.

## Syracuse in antiquity

Finally, one evening the Greeks forced their way into the centre of the city, probably the acropolis where today the Villa Whitaker and museum now stand, and most of the inhabitants were massacred. The city is supposed to have yielded great riches in plunder, which was perhaps more important to Dionysius than territorial gain. However, the existing physical remains, the archaeological evidence, and the small size of the island do not suggest a site of great wealth nor of a great concentration of people; and it is certainly possible that the immensity of the achievement was enhanced by Dionysius' propaganda. A garrison was left on Motya, which was clearly not demolished at this stage and was retaken by the Carthaginians in the following year. However, they soon abandoned the site for the stronger situation at Lilybaeum at the southern entrance to the lagoon.<sup>25</sup>

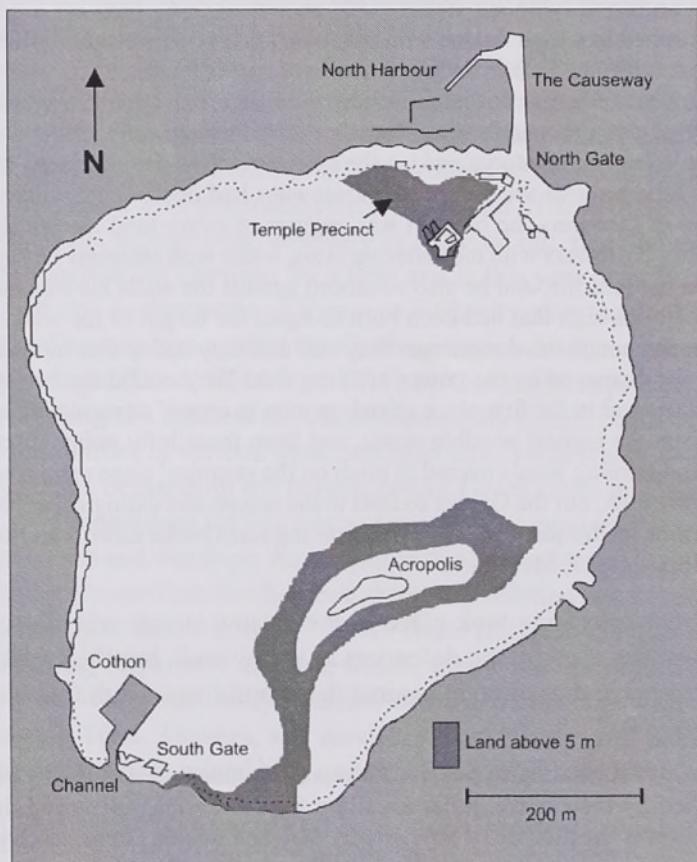


Figure 30: The Island of Motya

<sup>25</sup> Providing the Carthaginians could maintain supremacy at sea. Lilybaeum was an impregnable fortress and could withstand many years of siege both by Dionysius in the early 360s and later by the Romans in the First Punic War (264–241 BC).

Dionysius' plans for expansion were terminated almost immediately by a powerful Carthaginian counterattack, but once the enemy had been bought off, he again cast around for further conquests. Recovery from the siege in 396 was swift, showing something of the city's resources both in financial terms and in manpower.<sup>26</sup> Rhegion was the most obvious focus of his attentions since while already in control of Messene, occupation of the Italian side of the straits could clearly bring both immense economic and political profits. However, he was initially frustrated in his ambitious plans. Interestingly enough, Messene, which had been destroyed by Himilkon, was re-founded by Dionysius with colonists from Locri and Medma (Diod. 14.78.4–5).<sup>27</sup> In this way, Dionysius now controlled the Sicilian side of the straits without further conflict. Six hundred Messenian exiles from the Peloponnese, originally assigned to Messene, were also subsequently transferred to the new town of Tyndaris on the north Sicilian coast. Syracusan armies also triumphed against the Sikels where the towns of Menainon, Morgantina, Kephallodion, Solus and Enna fell to Dionysius; and other communities such as Agyrion, Kentoripa and Erbessos came to terms. Surprisingly perhaps, the Syracusan grip on eastern Sicily became much tighter as a result of the recent failure of the Carthaginian invasion and siege. In the meantime, these events did not pass unnoticed in Rhegion (Diod. 14.87) whose inhabitants believed that any Syracusan presence in Messene must mean a new campaign against them. The Reginians responded by founding their own colony at Mylai consisting of exiles from Naxos and Katane, who could be counted on to be hostile towards any Syracusan militarism. The Reginians also appointed Heloris, a Syracusan exile, to lead an army against Messene but he failed in his attack. The result was that Mylai was also lost to Dionysius who now was more determined than ever to launch his own attack on Rhegion, but first he had a problem with the Sikels who held Tauromenion (Diod. 14.87.5).

Therefore, he decided that it would be to his advantage to attack them first, and led his forces against them pitching camp on the side towards Naxos, and pursued the siege through the winter believing that the inhabitants would desert the hill since they had not been dwelling there for long. (Diod. 14. 87.4–88.5)

The Sikels did not oblige by withdrawing, however, and Dionysius was forced into making an assault on one of Sicily's most daunting fortresses.

... on a moonless and stormy night he moved his troops against the highest sections (of the acropolis).<sup>28</sup> After many difficulties both because of the steep and craggy nature of the terrain and because of the great depth of the snow he managed to occupy one of the peaks, although Dionysius' face was frost-bitten and his vision impaired by the cold. After this he broke through to the other side and led his forces into the city. However, the Sikeli came up in

26 See Chapter 4.

27 Tyndaris was founded with 4 000 settlers from Medma, which suggests that this town was abandoned by this time. For Messene's harbour see CD nos. 454, 456, 459, 598–99.

28 Was this the source of E.G. Bulwer Lytton's 'It was a dark and stormy night', *Paul Clifford* (1830)?

## Syracuse in antiquity

force and the invaders were pushed out, Dionysius himself was struck in the chest as he was running away, and was sent scrambling down, barely escaping capture. Since the defenders pressed down from the higher ground more than six hundred Syracusans were killed and those who escaped, including Dionysius, threw away their armour. (Diod. 14.88.3)

As a result of this madcap episode Dionysius lost Akragas and Messene.<sup>29</sup> He was simply not in a position to maintain his superiority following even a relatively minor defeat. Such events illustrate only too well the highly unstable nature of the political and military alignments in Sicily at this time. Before Dionysius could again turn his attention to Rhegion he was faced with the (almost predictable) arrival of a new Carthaginian army in Sicily, this time commanded by Magon. These he defeated near Abakainon and then launched a naval attack at night against Rhegion where he was beaten back, and he concluded a treaty after first causing havoc in the countryside in the vicinity of the city. Diodorus says (14.90.4) that this attack came directly from Syracuse though it is perhaps more likely that Locri was used as the forward naval base. The attack did cause the Greek Italian cities not yet under Dionysius' control to form a council for their mutual defence (14.91.1) – a clear sign that they felt intimidated.

Magon was again active in Sicily in 392 with an army said to have numbered eighty thousand men (Diod. 14.95.1), while Dionysius came to meet him with an army of about twenty thousand, supported financially and militarily by the tyrant of Agyrion. An engagement never took place, and although the Carthaginians were harassed, both sides concluded a treaty advantageous to Syracuse, which retained control of the interior of the island. And soon afterwards Dionysius took control of Tauromenion, this time more probably by deception than by another assault.

In Sicily Dionysius, the tyrant of Syracuse, intending to annex the Greeks of Italy as well to the domination he held on the island, postponed the general war against them to another time. He judged instead that it was good policy to first attack Rhegion because it was the bastion of the Italian Greeks, and so advanced from Syracuse with an army. He had twenty thousand infantry, a thousand cavalry and one hundred and twenty warships. He crossed with his troops to the border of Locri, and from here made his way inland, cutting down trees and destroying the Reginian territory. (Diod. 14.100.1–5)

Kroton came to the aid of the Reginians by despatching sixty ships, but Dionysius intercepted these with fifty ships under his command. As was often the case in the ancient world the battle took place on the shore as the Krotoniates fled to safety pursued by Dionysius' fleet. It seems that he attempted to haul off the beached ships and was only prevented from doing so by the timely intervention of troops from Rhegion. In the end Dionysius lost seven ships, and 1 500 men of whom many were captured since a storm

<sup>29</sup> This was not the only occasion that Dionysius found himself in trouble. Aelian, *VH* 12.46, relates an episode when the tyrant fell from his horse. Dionysius was plainly a ruler who believed in leading from the front even if it did not always enhance his reputation. For the site of Tauromenion, see CD nos. 412–16, 446–50.

and a heavy gale blew up; and the tyrant after some adventures on the high seas made it into the harbour at Messene at about midnight. With the winter approaching Dionysius broke off hostilities, returning to Syracuse after making an alliance with the native Italian tribe the Lucanians.

The Lucanians, perhaps as a result of this treaty, attacked the Greek colony of Thurion whose inhabitants appealed for help from their compatriots. The Thurians, overconfident, did not wait for this aid and set off in pursuit of the enemy, who made a tactical withdrawal into the mountains. There the Greeks, after some small successes, were ambushed on their way to besiege Laos (formerly a colony of Sybaris but by then under Lucanian control), and in a battle where they were outnumbered by the Lucanians, who possessed an army of nearly 35 000 men, lost 10 000 men or two-thirds of their army. The survivors were picked up along the shore by Syracusan vessels under the command of Dionysius' brother Leptines. The Thurians were ransomed and the Greeks and Lucanians agreed to a peace, much to Dionysius' annoyance since he had hoped to divide and rule. Leptines lost his position as admiral of the fleet (*Diod. 14.101.1–3*). The episode may appear insignificant, but the point to bear in mind here is that, although Syracuse was not officially involved in the dispute between the Lucanians and Thurians, there was a Syracusan squadron cruising along the coast as far north as Laos. We are not told from which direction Leptines came – if from the north then it would indicate that Dionysius' influence already extended to the Bay of Naples, or at least as far as Poseidonia, if from the south that Dionysius already controlled through his trusted ally Locri, naval bases such as Temesa and Terina.<sup>30</sup>

It was also in this year that Dionysius revealed his plans to attack Italy, setting out from Syracuse with a major force. On his arrival at Messene after five days the troops were rested in the city and then transported to Caulonia. Dionysius started a siege and brought up siege engines, making frequent assaults.<sup>31</sup> However, Dionysius did not transport his army across the narrowest passage from Messana to Rhegion, but rather from Messana to Locri, a considerable distance and which must have involved a formidable fleet of transports. And given the distance between Syracuse and Messene (182 kilometres, 110 miles) it seems likely that he transported his army by ship up the coast of Sicily. The cavalry may have travelled by road, but that way via Katane had been blocked by an eruption of Etna in 396 and may still have been closed.

When the Greeks of Italy learned that the army of Dionysius was starting to cross the straits which separated them, they in turn mustered their forces. Since Kroton was the largest city and had the most exiles from Syracuse, they gave them command of the war and the citizens gathered troops from everywhere possible and chose as general Heloris the Syracusan. (*Diod. 14.103.3–106.3*)

30 In the Gulf of S. Eufemia, CD no. 475.

31 See also Chapter 4.

## Syracuse in antiquity

Heloris advanced with the entire army – twenty-five thousand infantry and two hundred cavalry – to the Eleporos river north of Caulonia, where the Italian Greeks were heavily defeated, and their general was killed. Dionysius released ten thousand survivors unharmed – a calculated gesture that did much to earn him a good reputation and so win over several of the Greek cities of southern Italy. These, presumably including Kroton, came to terms. The defeat left Rhegion isolated, and when Dionysius immediately marched against this city, its citizens bought peace by submitting as requested three hundred talents, its entire fleet of seventy ships, and a hundred hostages. The Syracusans then returned to complete the sack of Caulonia, whose inhabitants were transferred to Syracuse and whose territory was assigned to Locri, the closest ally of Dionysius.

Dionysius, the ruler of Syracuse, led his army to Hipponion, removed its inhabitants to his own city, razed the city to the ground and gave its territory to the Locrians. He did this because he was constantly intent on giving the Locrians favours for the marriage they had agreed to, on the other hand, he plotted revenge on the Rhegians for their act of contempt when they had been offered a similar proposal. For at the time when he sent ambassadors to ask the Rhegians to grant him a marriage to a woman of their city, they had responded by indicating to the ambassadors that the only woman they would agree to Dionysius' marrying would be the daughter of their public executioner.<sup>32</sup> (Diod. 14.107.2)

Dionysius was bent on the destruction of Rhegion, which was increasingly isolated following the defeat of Kroton, and its possible destruction or evacuation (Livy, 23.30.6, 24.3.8). The destruction of Caulonia and Hipponion was a calculated strategy to increase the power of Locri at the expense of its neighbours.<sup>33</sup> The Rhegians had bought peace in 389 but in doing so had weakened themselves immeasurably by the loss of their sea power. The Syracusan army, according to Diodorus (14.108.1), came close to Rhegion apparently intent on embarking for Messene. While encamped Dionysius requested supplies for which he promised payment, and these were granted for several days. However, when Dionysius kept extending his stay, the Rhegians realised the ploy and withheld further assistance, at which point the Syracusans began to blockade the city – the last independent city-state in south western Italy.

Dionysius ... returned the hostages to the Rhegians, began to besiege the city and launched daily assaults against it. He also constructed a great multitude of siege weapons of unbelievable size by which he rocked the walls so determined was he to take the city by storm. (Diod. 14.108.3)

<sup>32</sup> Hieron I had married a Rhegian woman and Dionysius I was evidently keen to renew this *inter-polis* alliance. Refusal by the Rhegians was therefore clearly based on personal antagonisms or perhaps on Dionysius' past record.

<sup>33</sup> Note that Dionysius had intended a campaign against Rhegion in 394 but had been diverted to Tauromenion, Diod. 14.87.4–5. Subjugation of Rhegion was clearly a long-term policy, probably so that the Straits could be easily controlled. For the Straits, see CD nos. 453–55, 457, 460, 499–504; *Video Clip: straits*.

Nonetheless, the siege became protracted since the Reginians under the leadership of Phyton counterattacked on numerous occasions, burned the siege engines of the Syracusans and even wounded Dionysius in battle. After eleven months, with any relief cut off and the besieged in extreme distress, the city surrendered to Dionysius. Phyton was executed and 6 000 citizens were sold as slaves in Syracuse, but the Reginion itself was maintained as a tributary city within Dionysius' empire, which by now encompassed most of Sicily and all the Greek cities of southern Italy west of Metapontion.<sup>34</sup>

Following the capture of Reginion, Diodorus suggests (15.6.1) that Dionysius was able to enjoy the fruits of his empire building. A period of peace and prosperity followed in which the court of the Syracusan tyrant became a place of culture, entertaining poets such as Philoxenos of Kythera, who was incarcerated for a time in the *latomia* on Epipolai where he composed his poem *Cyclops* (Aelian, *VH* 12.44), and where the philosopher Plato (387/6 BC) was initially welcomed (Plut. *Dion.* 4.2–5.3).<sup>35</sup> The tyrant may also have indulged in writing poetry and drama, however, it was during this time that Dionysius appears to have become involved in affairs in the Adriatic, with the foundation of colonies at Ancona and Adria on the Italian side (Diod. 15.13.4) and Lissus on the island of Pharos off the Illyrian coast.<sup>36</sup>

Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse decided to found colonies on the Adriatic Sea (385 BC). His idea in doing so was to gain control of the Ionian passage in order to make the route to Epirus safe and to have harbours for his ships. He intended to make a surprise attack on Epirus and to sack the temple at Delphi, which contained great wealth. The Parians ... sent out a colony to the Adriatic, founding it on the island of Pharos ... in cooperation with the tyrant Dionysius. (Diod. 15.13.1)

Some years before, Dionysius had founded Lissus on the same island, and when the Parians on Pharos – was it the same settlement? – were attacked by Illyrians the commander in Lissus was able to come to their aid, and defeat the invaders. Moreover, Dionysius appears to have been busy (in this period of his rule) reconstructing Syracuse's dockyards, and increasing the amenities of the city by building gymnasiums and temples.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Reginion may actually have been deprived of its civilian population since it was re-founded in 360. See further below. There is also a suggestion that Dionysius intended to erect a wall and ditch across the Isthmus of Sybaris as an illustration of the frontier of his empire. The scheme was probably not realised – the land is quite hilly and would have been difficult to wall. No archaeological evidence appears to confirm such a project.

<sup>35</sup> For the luxury of Dionysius' court, see Athenaeus, 12.541. For the idea that Plato used elements of his memories of Syracuse for his Atlantis, see R. Castleden, *Atlantis Destroyed*, London 1998, 155–160.

<sup>36</sup> Neither Metapontion nor Taras seems to have been either at odds or under the influence of Syracuse at this time, and were presumably powerful enough to maintain their independence. The fact that Dionysius planted naval bases on the Selentine peninsula, probably including Hydros (Otranto) and Kallipolis (Gallipoli), suggests that he needed these for his campaigns in the Adriatic, Illyria and the planned attack, never fulfilled, on Epirus or Delphi.

<sup>37</sup> Finley: 1979, 86, ignores the evidence entirely: 'It is curious that Dionysius, unlike earlier tyrants, did not care to go down in history as a builder of monuments.' The extant monuments of Dionysius may not be that many in number – the fortifications at Tyndaris and on Epipolai – but in Syracuse many of his buildings were destroyed in antiquity.

Hipponion was re-established in 378/7 BC during the course of a brief invasion of southern Italy by the Carthaginians; some exiles were restored here, but probably not for long, however, seeing that Dionysius was soon active again in the region. This episode does illustrate Carthaginian interest in the area and that they were certainly neither averse nor constrained by any treaty with Rome to intervene here when it suited them.<sup>38</sup> Peaceful conditions did not last for long at Syracuse and, within a short time, the sources indicate that Dionysius was again involved in military ventures. Some of these were certainly in response to external threats, such as when his Adriatic colonies came under attack from Illyrians. But good old-fashioned piratical measures were clearly also needed to fund his continued supremacy at Syracuse and another war with Carthage. This must explain the launch of an attack on Etruscan Pyrgi (*Diod.* 15.14.3), the port for Agylla (Caere), and the sack of the temple of Eileithyia (*Strabo*, 5.2.8) (goddess of childbirth), and the removal of a thousand talents of temple treasures as plunder (384 BC), and a further five hundred talents were raised from sales in the slave market.<sup>39</sup> Dionysius was evidently in a position to lead a force of sixty triremes up the coast, probably using the now subdued Rhegion as a base and then putting in at various friendly harbours along the coast: the former Locrian colonies of Hipponion, Terina and Temesa,<sup>40</sup> the former Sybarite colonies of Laos and Skydros, and the ex-Sybarite colony at Poseidonia. Elea, a former colony of Rhegion (also known for its sheltered bay (*App. BC.* 5.98)) probably also came under Syracusan control, while the coast of Campania and Latium may also have been friendly. Dionysius' network of control along the coast was probably extensive and well policed by his fleet. *Strabo* (5.2.8) says that Dionysius was on his way to Corsica when he attacked Pyrgi, and obviously had no fear of military involvement with Carthage, and may have had hopes of lucrative returns from plundering Punic harbours on that island.

Not much came of this campaign, but it may have been the reason behind a new war with Carthaginian Sicily, which began in the following year (383 BC).<sup>41</sup> Dionysius was again victorious at a place called Kabala (*Diod.* 15.15.3), but was then defeated at Kronion. The Carthaginians continued to hold Panormos and Dionysius was obliged to yield Selinous, the territory of Akragas up to the River Halykos, and pay a thousand talents as war indemnity. The war was brief and costly for Syracuse, yet did not damage Dionysius' personal dominance. Ten years later in the middle of another bout of plague at Carthage, Dionysius launched an attack against the western half of Sicily, hoping

<sup>38</sup> The intervention was brief because another plague seems to have occurred in Carthage, bringing the war to an abrupt conclusion, *Dio.* 15.24.1. Hipponion was re-founded by the Romans in 192 as the Latin colony Vibo Valentia, the name by which this town is known today. See CD nos. 403–408. For the early treaties between Roman and Carthage see Polybius, 3.22.1–26.1.

<sup>39</sup> Diodorus, 15.14.4, says that this episode was preparatory move to making war on Carthage. Pyrgi, modern Santa Severa, was the port of Agylla/Caere, modern Cerveteri. See CD nos. 600–602, 607 (S. Severa), 608–14 (Caere) and Chapter 3.

<sup>40</sup> Terina was destroyed by Hannibal, *Strabo*, 6.1.4. There was also the harbour of Medma, modern Bagnara, and Skylla on the Straits, a naval station of Rhegion, *Strabo*, 6.1.5.

<sup>41</sup> A Syracusan attack on Corsica would have been sufficient reason for a new Carthaginian intervention in Sicily.

to capitalise on his enemy's weakness. While he easily obtained Selinous, Entella and Eryx, he was unable to maintain a siege of Lilybaeum.

Having heard that the Carthaginian dockyards had been burned and believing their whole fleet destroyed, and being contemptuous of them, he sent out only 130 of his best triremes to the harbour of Eryx (Drepana) and sent the rest (170) back to Syracuse. However, the Carthaginians unexpectedly manned 200 ships, sailed against Dionysius' fleet in the harbour of Eryx and, since the attack was not anticipated, most of the Syracusan ships were captured. (Diod. 15.73.3–4)

After this setback, with winter setting in, the two sides again made peace, but Dionysius died shortly afterwards. Uncharacteristically for a tyrant, and unlike most members of his family, Dionysius died in his bed. Diodorus is scathing in his obituary:

Dionysius the tyrant of Syracuse, although the most fortunate of such rulers, was the object of incessant conspiracies during his lifetime, and was forced through fear to wear an iron breastplate under his tunic. Since his death, he has bequeathed his own life as an outstanding example to all ages of the blasphemy of men. (Diod. 14.2.2)

## Dionyius II & Dion

Although we possess a very reasonable record of the reign of Dionysius' son and the short spell of power of Dion in Plutarch's *Lives* of Dion and Timoleon, it is apparent that, during the two decades following the death of Dionysius I the topography of Syracuse, and other cities under Syracusan rule remained largely unchanged.<sup>42</sup> Dionysius II clearly maintained close ties with Locri, the home of his mother,<sup>43</sup> and employed mercenaries from as far afield in Italy as Neapolis in Campania. Mention is made of another Neapolis near Akragas, the future Roman town of Licata, held in the 350s by a Spartan mercenary named Pharax, loyal to Dionysius II (Plut. *Dion*, 48–49). Inactivity is supposed to have characterised the rule of Dionysius II. Such were the regular *topoi* about tyrants and their immediate descendants, that if Dionysius I was bad then his eldest son could only be far worse. A peace was concluded with Carthage soon after the succession, although some hostilities with the Lucanians seem to have taken place (Plut. *Dion*, 16.3). A treaty with this Italian tribe is also attested (Strabo, 6.1.4). However, contrary to the comments of Diodorus (16.6.1), it is clear that significant colonial foundations continued to occur in Apulia, indicating that the elder Dionysius' acquisitions and sphere of influence were being firmly held by his son and successor.

<sup>42</sup> In the interim between Dionysius II's expulsion and his return, Syracuse was also ruled briefly by Hipparinos and Nisaios, his half-brothers, the sons of Andromache. Kalippus was an Athenian and formerly a supporter of Dion. Dionysius II was expelled from Syracuse in 356 and regained power in the city in 347 and was then confined to Ortigia only to be exiled permanently by Timoleon in 344.

<sup>43</sup> The city to which he withdrew in 356, and where he remained until 347. Dionysius II became hated by the Locrians, who killed his family after he had left them behind to return to Syracuse, Plut. *Tim.* 1, 13.

## Syracuse in antiquity

In Apulia he founded two cities because he wished to make safe for navigators the passage across the Ionian sea; for barbarians who lived along the coast were used to putting out in numerous pirate ships and causing the whole shore along the Adriatic Sea to be unsafe for merchants. (Diod. 16.5.3)

Kallipolis (modern Gallipoli) and Hydros (Otranto) are possibly meant, although the reference to the Adriatic coastline could also point to the harbour of Lecce (Lupiae), or to a town further north such as Ignatia (Egnazia). Kallipolis, according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus (19.3), was a foundation of the Tarantines. Ancona had already been founded by the elder Dionysius (Strabo, 5.4.2). Wherever the precise location of these colonies, they were plainly aimed at reducing the power of Taras and Metapontion in the Selentine peninsula, in the Bay of Tarentum and in the Ionian Passage as much as reducing piracy in the surrounding sea. Moreover, Rhegion was re-founded as Phoebia in 360 and is a clear indication that Dionysius II meant to maintain control of the Straits (Strabo, 6.1.6). On the whole ancient writers were less interested in the foreign affairs of Syracuse under Dionysius II than in relating his increasingly autocratic regime and his overthrow by Dion. This is a loss since the younger Dionysius was evidently intent (and was largely successful, at first) on maintaining close control over his father's acquisitions.

Dion, described in antiquity as the 'most distinguished of Syracusans' (Diod. 16.6.1), was a generation older than Dionysius II by whom he was exiled sometime between 367 (Plato, *Ep.*, 7,327; Aelian, *VH* 12.47) and 358/7. Dion's chances of ousting Dionysius II seemed slim, as Diodorus noted:

Who would have believed that, putting ashore with two merchantmen, Dion could actually have overcome the tyrant who had at his command four hundred warships, nearly 100 000 infantry, 10 000 cavalry and as great a store of arms, food and money as one in all probability possessed who had to maintain lavishly these forces and, apart from all we have mentioned, had a city which was the largest of all the Greeks and harbours and docks and fortified citadels that were impregnable and besides all that a great number of powerful allies. (Diod. 16.9.2; cf. Aelian, *VH* 6.12)

Dion actually landed at Herakleia Minoa and marched overland to Syracuse, receiving contingents from Akragas, Gela, Kamarina and Messene. A popular and widespread uprising occurred against Dionysius' rule, significantly perhaps while the tyrant was on campaign in his Italian possessions, either on the Adriatic coast (Diod. 16.10.2) or at Caulonia (Diod. 16.11.3; Nepos, *Dion*, 5.4; Plut. *Dion*, 26.1). Ortigia was, however, well defended and remained in the hands of the tyrant's supporters. Dionysius was not overcome easily; he may not have been popular but he was well equipped and he was thrown out only after he had lost Philistos, his best commander (Diod. 16.16.3). According to Diodorus (16.5.4) he lost Syracuse to Dion as much because he was a coward as by the enthusiastic support given to Dion by the general population, suggesting that the latter's victory was not a foregone conclusion. Dionysius withdrew from Syracuse and went

to Locri, but it is apparent that he considered this move merely a temporary reversal, especially since his army remained in control of the island and, besides Locri, he still held Rhegion, which was only regained by the Syracusans during the rule of Kalippos (Diod. 16.45.9) in about 353. Moreover, Dionysius was clearly in possession of huge financial resources (Diod. 16.57 2–3) if he could afford to send statues made of gold and ivory as offerings to Delphi in about 347, just prior to his return to Sicily. When it came, his resumption of power was not a success and brief. The Syracusans had had a taste for democracy after two generations of autocracy and appealed to Corinth, their founding city, for a man who could rid them of their tyrant and restore their freedom. The Corinthians chose Timoleon. Dionysius, on the other hand, is best remembered for his long exile in Corinth and the anecdotes associated with this time (Aelian, *VH*. 6.12, 6.98), but actions during his twenty years as ruler of an empire are generally in keeping with a military figure just like his father. Success in some ventures, failure in others; in the case of the younger Dionysius his failures came at the end, and so ensured that his overall career and any achievements he may have had, were diminished.

## Timoleon

It is not the purpose here to retell the rather romantic life and career of Timoleon.<sup>44</sup> In the years following the expulsion of Dionysius II in 355, a number of short-lived rulers – some from his own family – had dominated Syracuse but the instability created by the failure of any of these to establish themselves for long seems to have resulted in a loss of control over much of the island. Several towns came under the rule of petty tyrants, often garrisoned by Campanian mercenaries, while Carthaginian influence also increased in the west, perhaps as far as Entella by 344 (Diod. 16.66.3). In southern Italy warfare between Taras and the Lucanians indicates further unrest (Diod. 16.63.2), while Locri dramatically threw off its alliance with Syracuse and the family of Dionysius; and made it irrevocable by the assassination of the tyrant's remaining family members (Aelian, *VH*. 6.12, 9.8).<sup>45</sup> Timoleon crossed from Corinth putting in at Metapontion, which appears to have maintained a strictly independent pose throughout much of this period (Diod. 16.66.5) – at least we hear little of this important city in the fourth century BC – then at Rhegion (Plut. *Tim.* 9–10). Then he sailed down the coast to Tauromenion where he received aid from that city's ruler Andromachos, father of the historian Timaeus (Diod. 16.7.1). Andromachos had refounded this hilltop town just before Dion's return from exile in 355/4.

<sup>44</sup> For the life and career of Timoleon prior to his arrival in Sicily see Talbert: 1974, 1–43, and ancient sources, B. Smarczyk, *Timoleon und die Neugründung von Syrakus*, Göttingen, 2003, 18–32.

<sup>45</sup> A cousin, Leptines, tyrant of Apollonia and Engyon for a short time and expelled by Timoleon, may have joined Dionysius in exile, Diod. 16.72.5.

## Syracuse in antiquity

And as the city made rapid progress the citizens collected great wealth and the city, which had won much reputation finally in our lifetime, after Caesar (Octavian) had expelled the inhabitants, received a colony of Roman citizens. (Diod. 16.7.1)

This event could be considered a signal for the beginning of the end of Syracusan ascendancy, especially since the new citizens were former Naxians (Diod. 16.7.1); and because they gave aid to Timoleon on his arrival there (Plut. *Tim.* 10). From this vantage point Timoleon was evidently able to pursue a very rapid campaign, liberating those cities nearby (including Adranon) while Tyndaris in the north is mentioned particularly as one of the most enthusiastic of his supporters. Leontinoi was able to rid itself of Hiketas who then took Akradina and Neapolis, while Dionysius still held out on Ortygia, and Timoleon was established in Tyche and on Epipolai, and a Carthaginian fleet anchored in the Great Harbour (Diod. 16.68.3). The Carthaginians withdrew when Katane sent in reinforcements to Timoleon and Dionysius was persuaded to leave Syracuse (343/2) while Hiketas was finally captured and executed in about 339. Having secured the eastern part of Sicily (Diod. 16.7.22–25) under Syracusan hegemony under the guise of democracy and freedom, Timoleon, evidently in need of money, raided the west and won back Entella from Carthage. A new Carthaginian assault (340/339) was stalled by a pre-emptive strike into the territory of Akragas – we are not told whether Akragas had also thrown off its former allegiance but it seems likely – and caught the enemy at the River Kremisos where the Carthaginians, including a crack regiment of their own citizens numbering 2 500 men, were slaughtered (Diod. 16.80.4). As Diodorus adds (16.81.1):

The battle yielded a great store of wealth also, because the Carthaginians had with them a large number of silver and gold drinking cups. Timoleon allowed his soldiers to keep these as well as the rest of the personal property, which was very substantial because of the Carthaginians' wealth, as rewards for their bravery.

Everywhere peaceful conditions were re-imposed. Etruscan piracy was subdued (Diod. 16.82.3) and a treaty between Carthage and Syracuse was made, assigning the River Halykos as the border between them. Campanian mercenaries at Aetna were wiped out. The tyrants of Kentoripa and Agyrion were removed. Forced resettlements occurred again, however, as the citizens of Agyrion were given Syracusan citizenship, while ten thousand new colonists from Greece were settled there. The citizens of Leontinoi were moved to Syracuse while new colonists were sent to Kamarina (Diod. 16.82.4–5).<sup>46</sup>

Under the rule of Timoleon a new building programme commenced, while older and some hated structures were levelled. A *stoa* named the *Timoleonteion* was constructed at one end of the agora and was still in use in the first century BC when Cicero visited the city (*in Verr.* 2.4.119 – perhaps the *pulcherrima porticus* or the *ornatissimum prytanium*).

46 Smarczyk: 2001, 122. For Kamarina's site see CD nos. 63–64.

When Timoleon had taken the acropolis he did not repeat Dion's mistake of sparing the buildings because of the beauty of the architecture or the money it had cost to build them. He was determined not to arouse the suspicion that had brought discredit and finally disaster to his predecessor (Dion), and so it was proclaimed that any citizen who wished could come with some tool and help break down that bastion of tyranny. At once the entire population went up to the fortress and taking that day and its proclamation to mark a truly secure foundation of their freedom tore down and demolished not only the acropolis but also the palaces and tombs of tyrants. Timoleon immediately had the site levelled and had built the courts of justice over the ruins and thus delighted the people by displaying the supremacy of the rule of the people over tyranny. (Plut. *Tim.* 22)

But when he captured the whole city, Timoleon apparently found the citizen body seriously depleted. Many had died in the various wars and disorders while others had escaped from the tyranny by going into exile. The population had declined so rapidly that the city's *agora* is supposed to have become so overgrown that horses grazed in its centre. Timoleon and the Syracusans decided to write to the Corinthians and urged them to send settlers from Greece (Plut. *Tim.* 22). Syracuse, in the early part of the fourth century had a population almost equal to that of Athens, between 100 000 and 200 000 inhabitants. Unlike Athens and most other states in Greece, Syracuse was turbulent and unstable. Loss of life on a large scale was incurred on numerous occasions both by external military campaigns and by internal disorders. It is frequently recorded that Syracuse had to be repopulated, but such were the attractions of this city's amenities that it was usually accomplished. Again under Timoleon, it is reported that no less than 60 000 new colonists poured in from Greece and southern Italy (Plut. *Tim.* 23), of whom 40 000 were resettled in Syracuse (Diod. 16.82.5) bringing the city's population back to its optimal number. Under Timoleon's rule (344–336 BC) Gela and Akragas were also re-founded (Plut. *Tim.* 35),<sup>47</sup> intended as a Greek strongholds against further Carthaginian encroachments from the west, although this policy did not last for long. By the time Agathokles became ruler of Syracuse, Gela, at least, had reverted to its former Carthaginian alliance. However during the Timoleonic period the city was enlarged and realigned along the ridge, now *Capo Soprano*, above the sea to include new fortifications in the western sector.<sup>48</sup> These defensive walls, some of the best preserved in Sicily or indeed elsewhere from the Hellenistic world, were later increased in height by Agathokles, who also added stairways, a parapet walk and other features intended to strengthen these fortifications – to no avail, however, since within a few years the city was destroyed again by the Mamertines (282 BC). Diodorus (16.83.1) sums up Timoleon's achievements by saying:

Having established peaceful conditions everywhere throughout Sicily, he enabled the cities to experience a vast growth of prosperity. For many years, because of domestic troubles and border wars, and still more because of the number of tyrants who constantly kept

47 Talbert: 1974, 153–55 (Gela), 158–59 (Akragas). CD nos. 52, 54 (Gela), 210, 221 (Akragas).

48 For the description see Guido: 1967, 146–47; Holloway: 1991, 144–45.

appearing, the cities had become destitute of citizens and the open country had become fallow. However, now new settlers poured into the land in great numbers, and as a long period of peace set in, the fields were reclaimed for cultivation and produced surplus crops of all sorts. The Sicilian Greeks sold these to traders at good prices and rapidly increased their wealth.<sup>49</sup>

## Agathokles

During the twenty years following the retirement and death of Timoleon (336–317), Syracusan expansionism, in a very similar fashion to that period of democracy which followed Deinomenid rule, seems to have lain rather dormant.<sup>50</sup> There is, however, a hint of hostilities with Akragas in the 320s (Diod. 19.3.1), and of an intervention in southern Italy to aid Kroton against the Bruttians (Diod. 19.3.3),<sup>51</sup> and of some conflict with Rhegion (19.4.2). A full renaissance in the power and ambitions of the city was however only concomitant with the rise of Agathokles. Diodorus recounts this man's successful bid for power in a bloody coup (Diod. 19.1.5–9.7), and considered that his displays of cruelty plumbed new depths (Diod. 20. 71.2–72.5).<sup>52</sup> Yet, Agathokles is also credited with the construction of a huge banqueting hall on Ortygia (Diod. 16.83.2), which invoked the envy of the gods, it was said, so that they destroyed it with lightning. The city's temples, especially that of Athene, were decorated with spoils of war (Diod. 19.104.4), although these could also be stripped in an emergency (20.4.5). The towers along the shore of the Small Harbour were apparently decorated with dazzling mosaics naming Agathokles as their architect (Diod. 16.83.2). The great fortifications around Ortygia had either been rebuilt by the new tyrant or had not been fully demolished by Timoleon, as claimed by Plutarch (Tim. 22). Agathokles was clearly also concerned about the other fortifications of the city, especially at the far western end of the encircling wall.

The fort at Eurialos, which defends the city from an attack from the west, and exhibits all the sophistication of military defence systems available to the Greeks of the Hellenistic period,<sup>53</sup> was probably not constructed at the same time as the Dionysian

49 Unstable conditions remained in southern Italy, however, with Diodorus reporting further warfare between Taras and the Lucanians, 16.88.3.

50 A lack of sources also accounts for the silence on Syracusan affairs. Diodorus was naturally keener to relate the reign of Alexander the Great in this period, although he states that he did cover these years in Book 18. However none of this material survives, Diod. 19.3.3.

51 It has been suggested that Kroton was destroyed by Dionysius I in the 380s, Liv. 24.3.8, subdued perhaps, but not obliterated like some other cities in the region.

52 The destruction of Segesta and its inhabitants, and subsequent refoundation.

53 Randall-Macliver: 1968: 156: '... the most remarkable and the most perfectly preserved of any military works which have survived to us from antiquity. Placed in a position of great strategical value, the fort covers a surface of 15 000 square metres and is constructed with extraordinary skill' (CD nos. 87, 90, 257; *Video clip: Eurialos Fort*). The main approach to the fort, from the west (see map and diagram), had three protective ditches. The first and probably oldest was narrow and has recently been covered and filled to make entrance to the site easier. The second ditch lies eighty metres or so from the first and is hexagonal in shape (CD nos. 92–93, 272), and remains of a outlying buttress lie between this and the third ditch. This last ditch was probably

circuit wall. Only much later was it inserted into the most westerly section of the wall at its furthest point from the city's centre. Significantly, it is not mentioned by Diodorus at the point where he describes the building of the wall, although he must have known and have seen the fortress. It was presumably not designed as an integral part of the defensive system inspired by Dionysius.<sup>54</sup> If the fort dates to some time after the Carthaginian attack in 396, the reason for its construction was surely as a response to an external threat. Yet after 396 such a threat is difficult to ascertain, at least for some generations. The city was certainly attacked by both Dion and Timoleon during and following the fall of the younger Dionysius, but these can hardly be construed as large-scale sieges, nor did they enter the city via Eurialos. By far the most serious attack on Syracuse after 396 came in 310, and Diodorus is quite explicit about the enormity of the Carthaginian assault (19.107.1). At first Agathokles chose to hold a line at Gela where the fortifications were strengthened, then marched against the Carthaginians who were at Cape Eknemos above the Himera River. Here the Sicilian Greeks were defeated, and Agathokles withdrew to Gela where he was besieged for a short time before being allowed to escape to Syracuse. At this point Diodorus mentions (19.110.5) the rebuilding of sections of the wall; and surely this was when the Eurialos fort was constructed to face the expected investment of the city by Hamilkar's army.

Most of what can be seen today dates to this time or later in the third century BC, to Pyrrhus' brief rule of Syracuse (278–276 BC), to the reign of Hieron II; and especially to the defence of the city against the Roman assault in the Second Punic War. Indeed, it is perhaps worth noting that, whereas Diodorus' account fails at this point, his contemporary Livy mentions the Eurialos fort in his description of the Roman siege as being:<sup>55</sup>

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the latest in construction and never completed, the ditch at the bridge or southern end, for which three supports remain simply comes to a stop, while at the northern it peters out (CD nos. 91, 244–49, 270). This ditch is served with several tunnels, presumably constructed so that the defenders could keep the ditch clear from any attempt to fill it in by the enemy (CD nos. 245, 247, 263–65, 269). An elaborate stairway links this ditch to the outlying buttress and may have been intended as launch pad for sallies (CD nos. 85, 266–67). A fourth ditch on the southern side of the hill was probably intended to complete the defence works on this side, again left unfinished but allows some idea of the overall concept of interconnection through the tunnel system (CD nos. 253, 261–62), and genius of its architect, possibly Archimedes during the Roman siege (see Chapter 4). The fort itself is divided into two parts, that to the west of earlier date and possessing five great towers (CD nos. 76, 86, 252, 258–59, 268, 271, 514). Guido: 1967, 187: '... the western limit of the fortress stands a massive wall with five huge buttressed towers built for firing heavy ballistas (Dionysius I is credited by Diodorus with invention of the catapult and their use at Motya clearly shows how valuable they were regarded, though their regular use dates to later in the third century). Behind these towers is an inner keep now separated from its eastern part by a later wall – perhaps, like the small partitions on the south, of Byzantine date.' Randall-MacIver: 1968, 156: 'The fort itself, which is strengthened by these exterior defences, consists of two essential parts, viz. a keep of trapezoidal form and an irregular polygonal enclosure to the east of this, between the keep and the girdle wall of Epipolai. On the western, or shorter, side of the keep there still stand five massive towers. The polygonal enclosure is cleverly dovetailed into the girdle-wall of Epipolai by quite an intricate scheme. A little north of it is a gate through the girdle-wall, protected by towers, and beyond this again is a separate tower connected by a passage with the fort.' For the Epipolai Gate on the northern side of the fort see CD nos. 80–84, 256, 515–520.

<sup>54</sup> F.E. Winter, 'The Chronology of the Eurialos Fort,' *AJA* 67, 1963, 366: 'It is doubtful indeed whether the Dionysian defenses ever included a real fort, independent of the remainder of the circuit and very heavily guarded.'

<sup>55</sup> See also Chapter 4.

## Syracuse in antiquity

... a hill on the extreme edge of the city's territory, facing away from the sea, dominating the road which leads to the countryside and the hinterland of the island, and is admirably well situated for receiving supplies. (Livy, 25.25.2)

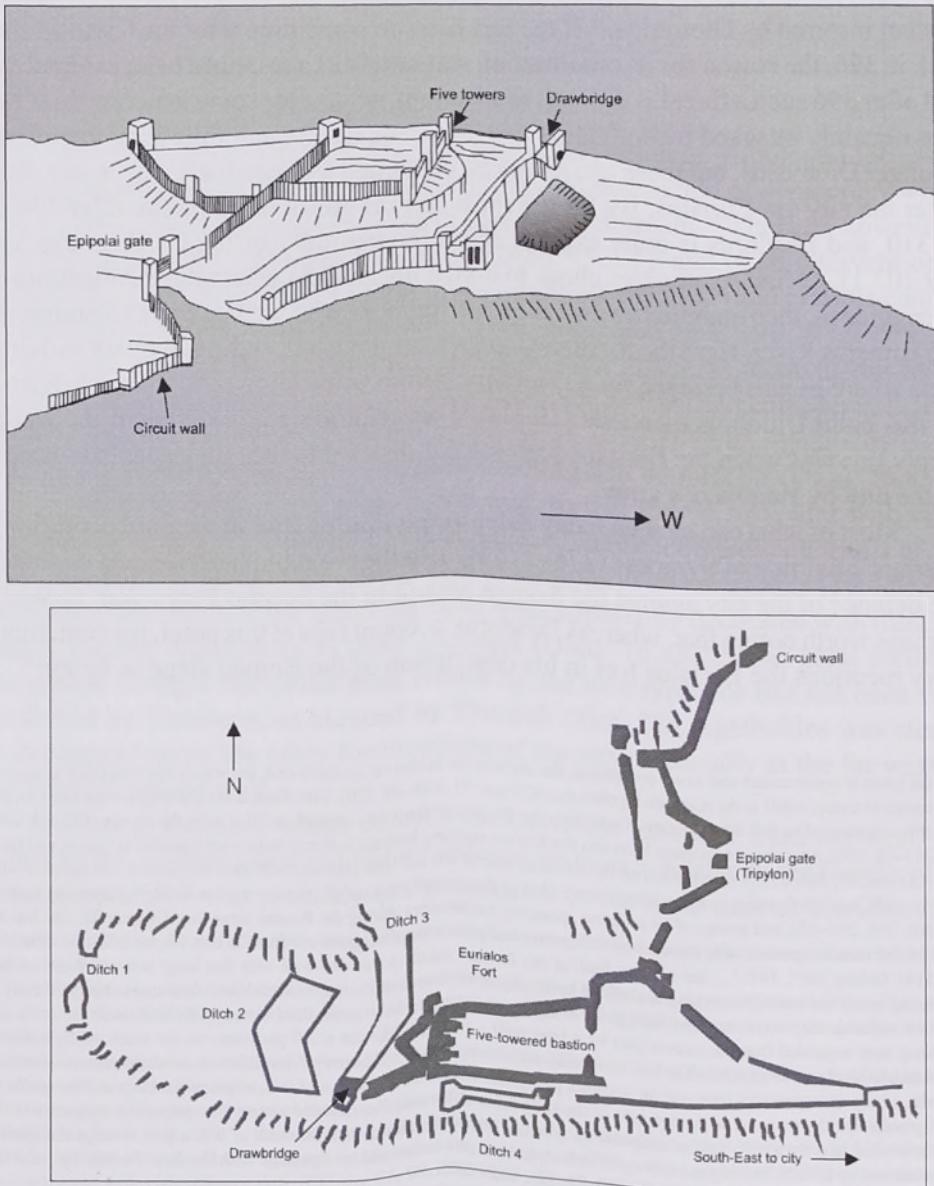


Figure 31: The Fort at Eurialos

From the Dionysian fortifications, according to Winter, all that remains are parts of the north and south walls, while the western section has been entirely rebuilt.<sup>56</sup> Modifications to the far end of the circuit wall can therefore be attributed to the reign of Agathokles, though he himself may have been absent in North Africa. The Carthaginian siege of Syracuse lasted three years (310–308 BC), and Diodorus refers to an assault on the Eurialos fort (20.29.8) that failed to achieve its objective.<sup>57</sup> The exterior ditches – designed to keep besiegers away from the walls and at a disadvantage in terms of height – may well date to the Roman siege of 214–212 BC. The gateway itself of a ‘pincer’ form may belong to the time of Timoleon or Agathokles, while final alterations may have been undertaken by Pyrrhus or occurred during the Roman siege. Some see the guiding hand of Archimedes in the final construction of this fort – which never fell to the Romans but was abandoned. In fact, the fort itself appears unfinished, suggesting that the Romans arrived before the besieged could complete their work. It may well be a fine example of military engineering, and its intention was to prevent an enemy gaining access to the ridge on Epipolai from the vulnerable western edge. However, access to the city seems to have been easier from either the north or the south as the Roman attack exhibited. They eventually made the Eurialos fort a redundant feature; and as with many such glorious military constructions appearances counted for more than effectiveness.

Agathokles was certainly active in southern Italy and is credited with the construction of Hipponion’s harbour – modern Bivona – (Strabo, 6,1,5), which must also illustrate that the city itself had been re-peopled (perhaps during the time of Timoleon when so many other sites were reoccupied). Agathokles also strengthened the fortifications at Gela probably after it had been taken in 317 (Diod. 19.4.4–7) when it had been a base for one of the tyrant’s competitors for power. Messene remained independent of Syracuse (Diod. 19.651–4) but Agathokles captured Mylai and had an alliance with Abakainon, showing how quickly Syracuse imperialism reasserted itself. By 314 Syracuse’s hegemony over its neighbours on the eastern half of the island was recognised again (Diod. 19.71.7), although this indirect control was soon superseded by a tighter administration (Diod. 19.72.1), while only Messene maintained a tenuous independence (Diod. 19.102.1), which ended in about 312. Agathokles was preparing another war against Carthage, and raided the west, while the enemy replied by landing at Cape Eknemos. The Syracusan army held Gela (Diod. 19.107.4), and when Agathokles was defeated in a fierce battle at the River Himeras (Diod. 19.109.5), Gela bore the brunt of the Carthaginian offensive. In the meantime, following similar military reversals in the past, many of the Sicilian cities went over to the enemy: Kamarina, Leontinoi, Katane, Tauromenion, Messene and Abakainon. According to Diodorus (19.10.5):

<sup>56</sup> Winter: 1963, 363–387. Note also Karlsson: 1992, 106–13, for a date during the early part of Agathokles’ rule for the five towers in the Eurialos fort designed to bear the weight of ballistas. The restoration of the walls of Gela at Capo Soprano took place slightly later. CD nos. 55–62.

<sup>57</sup> The description of this engagement, which took place at night, was more probably outside the limits of the city’s walls, and perhaps also to be located in the gulch of the Anapos river – the ‘Akraion Heights’, between the southern edge of Syracuse and the enemy encampment at Polichne. See Chapter 4.

## Syracuse in antiquity

Agathokles led the survivors of his army to Syracuse, repaired the ruined sections of the walls and carried in the grain from the countryside intending to leave an adequate garrison for the city ...

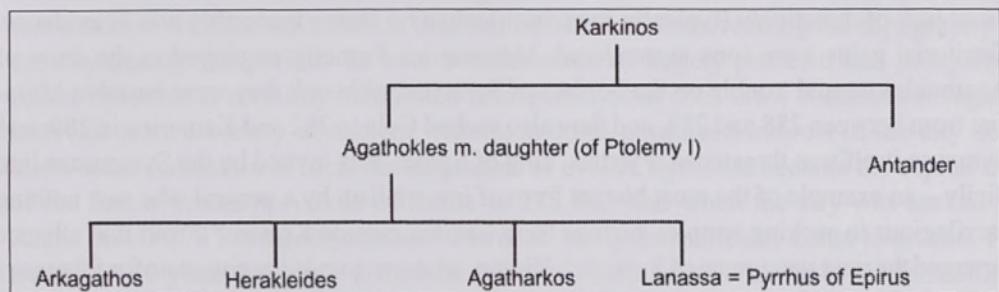
And the scene was set for one of the most audacious and daring strategies to be undertaken in antiquity, namely the African expedition of Agathokles. The Carthaginian forces commanded most of Sicily and were at the gates of Syracuse. By a diversionary tactic Agathokles hoped to force the invaders home to save their own city, which had never been besieged. The invading force was not large, and Diodorus mentions sixty ships and so; perhaps not more than twelve thousand troops (20.11.1), a comparable force with that which Dionysius I had commanded to sack Pyrgi in 384, which managed to break out of the Small Harbour. This force avoided contact with the numerically superior Carthaginian fleet by sailing north around the island before heading west and, though pursued, landing near Cape Bon.<sup>58</sup> Initially this tactic had a dramatic effect, following the capture of a number of towns, of throwing the Carthaginian population into a panic. An army was rapidly deployed against the Greek invaders and beaten. Diodorus comments on this affair.

Now Agathokles surprisingly defeated the Carthaginians and held them shut up behind their walls, but fortune, alternating victories with defeats, humbled the victors equally with the defeated. In Sicily the Carthaginians who had beaten Agathokles in a great battle were besieging Syracuse, but in North Africa Agathokles gained the upper hand in battle and brought Carthage under siege. What was most amazing about all this, on the island the tyrant – though his arms were intact – had proved inferior to the invaders, but in Africa with just a portion of his recently defeated army he had got the better of those who had been victors. (Diod. 20.13.4)

Although the Greeks appear to have taken Tunis, Hadrumetum and Thapsos (Diod. 20.17.2–5), a stalemate ensued. The Carthaginians were unable to capture Syracuse, the Greeks Carthage. A night attack launched by the Carthaginians proved to be a fiasco leading to the capture of their general Hamilkar. The Carthaginian attack faltered as forces of Akragas began liberating cities outside Syracusan territory including Gela, Enna, Erbessos, Eketla, Leontinoi and Kamarina (20.31.4–32.2). Outside Carthage Agathokles involved Ophellas (the Ptolemaic governor of Kyrene) in his plans, promising to hand over North Africa in return for aid. This might suggest that the Syracusan had no long-term ambitions for territorial gain in the region. However, the murder of Ophellas (instigated by Agathokles) might indicate the contrary (20.42.4–5). Amidst all this Agathokles proclaimed himself king (Diod. 20.54.1), captured Utica and Hippo Akra; and after four years' campaigning returned to Syracuse (20.55.5). The army of Akragas was routed by an army out of Syracuse, while Agathokles made a triumphal return to Sicily, quickly taking Selinous and Herakleia

<sup>58</sup> Diodorus calls the place ‘Latomiae’, 20.6.3, which is reminiscent of Syracuse’s own ‘quarries’, and which became a sort of home from home.

Minoa, Himera, Kephaloidion and Apollonia. The Carthaginian army remained around the Great Harbour (20.61.5–6) though less of a threat it seems especially after a reversal at sea (20.62.1). In North Africa the Greeks ran out of steam; and defeats occurred which caused Agathokles to rush back but whether it was to salvage his strategy is debatable from the events that transpired. He appears to have arrived at the beginning of the summer of 307 and a short campaign followed (Justin, 22.8.4–15) in which the Greeks were defeated. With insufficient strength Agathokles decided to withdraw and abandon his soldiers, many of whom were found employment as mercenary troops in the armies of their former opponents (Diod. 20.69.3). Africa was destined never to become an overseas province of Syracuse.



**Figure 32: The Family of Agathokles**

In one of those curious historical doublets, which suggest dubious veracity, Agathokles, like Dionysius I, also appears to have become a pirate when his treasury was empty. Diodorus relates the elaborate tale of extortion (20.101.1–3) undertaken by Agathokles against the Liparians who were ordered to provide the king with fifty silver talents.<sup>59</sup> Temple offerings were evidently among the confiscated goods, and the gods – to show their anger – caused a gale which sank the eleven ships carrying the silver. Like Dionysius, who forfeited his Etruscan talents to the Carthaginians as war indemnity, Agathokles lost his ill-gained plunder to the gods. The episode may simply be anecdotal, but illustrates a useful point; that the finances of even wealthy Syracuse were at best tenuous and reliant on successful military adventures.

Agathokles' campaigns took him further afield than any of his predecessors. Dionysius I may have contemplated looting Delphi but nothing came of that idea. His son actually sent gilded statues for safekeeping to Delphi, though these were stolen. About ten years after the African disaster Agathokles came to the aid of Korkyra, which was besieged by Kassander (Diod. 21.2.2), and defeated the Macedonians. No mention is made of any gains Agathokles may have made from this intervention, whether financial or territorial, although Plutarch states that Korkyra became a dependency of Syracuse at this time (*Pyrrh.* 9). Some

<sup>59</sup> CD nos. 473–74, 674, 678.

## Syracuse in antiquity

years after (Diod. 21.4.1) Kroton too was once again besieged and sacked by Agathokles; again the motive seems to have been both plunder and a participation in local piracy....

Agathokles and his army ... rushed into the city (Kroton), plundered the houses, and killed all the men. Agathokles made an agreement with the local barbarian tribes, the Iapygians and the Peucetians, and supplied them with ships for piracy in return for a share of the plunder. Then he sailed back to Syracuse leaving Kroton garrisoned. (Diod. 21.4.1)

If Agathokles had more grandiose plans, they were simply that and they came to nothing.<sup>60</sup> Driven by a constant need for funds, a lack of direction or focus once again characterised Syracusan imperialism. With Agathokles' murder in 289,<sup>61</sup> and with no succession planned, internal discord returned to the city. It was not quite anarchy,<sup>62</sup> but the state reverted to its usual lack of direction (typically Syracusan) when no strong leadership was in evidence. Territorial gains were soon surrendered. Mercenaries formerly employed in the army of Agathokles caused trouble on the borders of Syracuse, although they were based in Messene from between 288 and 283, and they also sacked Gela in 282 and Kamerina in 280; and Syracuse itself was threatened. Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, was invited by the Syracusans into Sicily – an example of the most blatant form of imperialism by a general who saw nothing sacrilegious in sacking temples such as Hera Lacinia outside Kroton.<sup>63</sup> From that alliance emerged the next strongman of Syracuse, Hieron, who was to rule the city-state for fifty years and make himself Syracuse's second king,<sup>64</sup> a feat not achieved nor perhaps contemplated by Dionysius I. The Hellenistic Age ushered in by the successors of Alexander the Great had made kingship both attractive and necessary. But Roman intervention in Sicily in 264 brought the imperial designs of Syracuse to an end. Hieron preferred to be a trusted ally of Rome and preserve his status and that of his city, rather than to risk losing everything he had achieved. During his lifetime Syracuse flourished. Initially, however, Hieron's territory was confined to little more than the traditional *chorē* of Syracuse, from Kamarina and Eloros in the south, Kasmenai and Akrai to the west and Leontinoi in the north. This was much the same area as Gelon had possessed two hundred and twenty years earlier. Within his own petty kingdom, to which was later added about a quarter of Sicily (including Agyrion and Tauromenion) Hieron made Syracuse one of the wealthiest and grandest cities of the Mediterranean. Moreover, Kamarina, Akrai and Megara Hyblaia, the last re-founded by Timoleon in 340,<sup>65</sup> all had a period of resurgence in their fortunes. Hieron too made his mark on the city's topography, but these edifices were the product of the *pax Romana* and not of Syracusan imperial designs.

60 Diodorus, 21.16.1, claims that Agathokles intended a new invasion of Africa shortly before his death. The Romans a century later could compare his exploits to those of Alexander the Great, Plaut. *Most.* 775–777. For an example of Agathokles' idiosyncratic behaviour see Aelian, *VH* 11.4, possibly a *topos* of the 'tyrant' based on Suet. *Jul.* 45.

61 It has been observed that the tyrants of Syracuse all lived to reach old age, both Dionysius I and his son, while Agathokles died in his early 70s, and Hieron II in his 90s, Finley: 1979, 112.

62 Hiketas seems to have held power for much of this decade down to the invasion of Pyrrhus.

63 Note Dion. Hal. 20.9.1–10.2 for Pyrrhus as a despoiler of temples.

64 Following his defeat of the Mamertines in 269.

65 Megara Hyblaia was finally destroyed by the Romans in 214, Liv. 24.35.2.

## CHAPTER 6: A CITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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You have often heard that Syracuse is the greatest city of the Greeks and the most beautiful of all. Jury members, this is quite correct. (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.117)

Some modern commentators have been rather dismissive about the status of post-Hieronic Syracuse, judging it of little account in the overall history of the city. For example, Guido: ‘generally speaking, the Roman period in Sicily was far from glorious’ and ‘Syracuse ... remained the capital of the island ... but the town dwindled in size and prosperity. Culturally too it was relatively undistinguished’.<sup>1</sup> However, this picture is misleading, and conflicts with the information that can be obtained from reading the topography of the city during this period.<sup>2</sup> In over a millennium of largely peaceful and prosperous times, Syracuse is certainly mentioned infrequently, but does draw comment at regular intervals from a variety of ancient writers; and this continued interest in the city does allow some indication of local developments or events. Syracuse became the capital city of the first overseas *provincia* of Rome in 212 BC, and when the city was sacked by Arabs in AD 878 Roman/Byzantine control of Sicily had virtually come to an end. For nearly 1 100 years Syracuse witnessed relatively little turbulence in its internal affairs or warfare through external instability in stark contrast to its earlier history, certainly from the time of Gelon’s tyranny down to its capture by the Romans.

The Roman sack dealt a serious blow to the wealth and influence of Syracuse, and it was evidently some considerable time before the city recovered from the depredations of the siege and its aftermath. According to Diodorus (26.20.1) the city was plundered of its moveable wealth, but its citizens were spared from being enslaved or slaughtered. However:

Being unable to buy food after the capture because of their poverty, the Syracusans agreed to become slaves, so that when they were sold they would receive from their purchasers. Fortune, therefore, imposed on the defeated Syracusans beyond their other losses a calamity so unpleasant that in place of the offer of peace they chose voluntarily slavery in its place.

While this statement may be anecdotal rather than historical fact, it possibly does reflect something of the desperate circumstances that the people of Syracuse, as with any city, faced immediately after their conquest; and at a time when food supplies were severely

1 Guido: 1967, 168; Guido: 1958, 28–29: ‘... the great city fell. It seems gradually to lose its position from that time, dwindling in size and wealth. Never again does it play a great part, and in future its history is patchy and relatively unimportant’; Holloway: 1991, 167, ‘During the Roman Empire, town life in the interior of the island declined to a low ebb, but Sicilian grain and Sicilian pasture were as important as ever ...’

2 Thus see R.J.A. Wilson, ‘Towns of Sicily during the Roman Empire’, *ANRW* 1.1, 1988, 113: ‘... it (Syracuse) was still a notable place ...’ and there is no reason to doubt that it continued to be one of the principal cities and the chief administrative centre of the province during the Roman Empire; Woodhead, *OCD*<sup>2</sup>1030: ‘Syracuse became ... the governmental centre, retaining both its beauty and a comparative importance.’

disrupted around the entire region because of the ongoing warfare with Hannibal. Nonetheless, recovery after Hannibal's eventual defeat was probably fairly swift because Syracuse became the seat of the Roman governor.<sup>3</sup> Still it is probably fair to say that the role of Syracuse was unobtrusive in the next century,<sup>4</sup> compared to its earlier history. The remaining years of the Second Punic War and the Third War against Carthage surely had an enormous impact, given Syracuse's proximity to the main theatre of war. Syracuse will have been involved in the Roman invasions of North Africa, although Lilybaeum's geographical situation would have made it the first choice as a base for military operations. And indeed from Livy's account it is easy to see that one of the roles of the governors in the period down to 201 BC was to lend aid first against Hannibal in southern Italy and then in the invasion of North Africa. Syracuse may have been a defeated city, but it was surely abuzz with activity in the last decade of the third century BC.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, the slave rebellions between 139 and 132, and 104 to 100 BC threatened the economy of Syracuse and its security, a siege of the city by a certain Eunus was, however, unsuccessful (Diod. 34–35.2.9).<sup>6</sup> The governors of these troubled times (Florus, 2.7.7; Diod. 34/35.2.1–48,36. 3.2–11.3): L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (pr. 138/7, cos. 133), L. Plautius Hypsaeus (pr. 138?), M. Popillius Laenas (pr. 137/5, cos. 132), L. Cornelius Lentulus (pr. 137/6, cos. des. 131), C. Fulvius Flaccus (cos. 134), P. Rupilius (cos. 132),<sup>7</sup> P. Licinius Nerva (p. 105/4), L. Licinius Lucullus (pr. 104/3), C. Servilius (p. 102), M'. Aquillius (cos. 101) must all have been resident in the city for some of their tenure.<sup>8</sup> Given the prominence among the senatorial order of these politicians it is clear that Syracuse in the second century BC was far from being either a cultural or a political backwater.<sup>9</sup> Civil disturbances brought senior Roman figures to Sicily, but even when the region was at peace its senior officials were influential and well connected. Furthermore, if Lucilius' *iter Sicilium* (*Sat.* Book 3) is any indication, wealthy *equites* already possessed estates in Sicily, and were in the habit of visiting, and by the early principate wealthy freedmen emulated them (Pet. *Sat.* 48.3). Although Lucilius' work is a satirical account of a journey from Rome to Sicily, it is the encounters along the way which are the subject of ridicule, not the trip itself, while Petronius' comments amount to

3 Note Diodorus' comments, 34/35.2.1, for Sicilian prosperity between 200 and 140 BC.

4 Loicq-Berger: 1967, 258.

5 The governors of the period 210 to 167 are noted by Livy in his annual report of elected praetors and their allotted provinces. These and some salient points regarding their functions are noted in Appendix 5.

6 For a discussion of the first servile revolt and its chronology, see P. Green, 'The First Sicilian War', *P&P* 20, 1961, 10–29. Enna the slave stronghold fell to the Romans in 132, *MRR* 1.498.

7 On the date of the Roman governors in the 130s see *MRR* 3.159; Green: 1961, 17–18, 28–29. During Rupilius' proconsulship a *decemviral* commission drew up a *corpus* of civil law for the *provincia*, *Cic. Verr.* 2.2.32.

8 The usual standing of the Sicilian governor/proconsul was an ex-praetor, the seriousness of the slave rebellions on two occasions forced the appointment by the senate of consular governors assigned with the specific task of quelling the troubles. Once completed the Sicilian governorship reverted to praetorian status. For Nerva, Lucullus and Servilius see R.J. Evans, *Gaius Marius: A Political Biography*, Pretoria 1994, 84 n. 107. Lucullus and Servilius were both convicted of mismanagement of their commands although not, it seems, of extortion.

9 C. Porcius Cato, cos. 114, may have served as praetorian governor of Sicily in 117, E. Badian, 'The Legend of the Legate who lost his Luggage', *Historia* 42, 1993, 203–210; Evans: 1994, 208.

evidence of the construction of *latifundia* by the *nouveau riche*. And to visit Sicily surely also meant visiting Syracuse. The city may actually have benefited from the destruction of Carthage after 146 and would again have been an important staging post during the Jugurthine War towards the end of the century. The juxtaposition of the end of this war in late 105 and a second Sicilian slave rebellion starting in 104 suggests a causal connection. The Sicilian estates may have been hard pressed to supply the Roman armies fighting in Africa; and a link between success over Jugurtha and civil disturbances on the island shortly after that certainly looks plausible. Sicily remained unstable for nearly five years and M'. Aquillius, proconsular governor of Sicily from 101, returned to Rome only in 99 when he celebrated an *ovatio* for concluding the slave revolt. During the Social War between 91 and 89, Sicily had been the constant source of supplies (*Cic. Verr.* 2.2.5) without which Rome may have been in dire straits, all organised by unnamed officials resident in Syracuse.<sup>10</sup> Sicily as a whole did not, however, escape the ravages of civil war at the end of the 80s. Sulla's general, a very young Pompey, arrested Cn. Papirius Carbo (cos. 82) in Sicily in 81, and he was then executed,<sup>11</sup> while M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 78) who was governor at Syracuse in 80, appears to have been every bit as bad as Verres (*Cic. Verr.* 2.2.8).<sup>12</sup> A good governorship is attested for M. Claudius Marcellus in the mid-70s, descendant of the Marcellus who took Syracuse in 212 (*Verr.* 2.2.8), but M. Antonius' roving command (74–71) against the pirates brought further hardships, and not the expected eradication of attacks on merchant shipping.<sup>13</sup> Syracuse's harbours may have been hectic with military activity, but they were clearly not a safe haven for commercial shipping; and, economically, this decade would have witnessed a down-turn in production and profits in the manufacturing of goods in the city.

Cicero was in Syracuse in 75 during his quaestorship (*Tusc.* 5.66; *Verr* 2.5.35) and, although assigned to Lilybaeum, he had at some point cause to visit the city. While there he searched for and discovered the tomb of Archimedes which, it appears, had been forgotten. His evidence might be taken as a sign of widespread neglect of former famous citizens, although local indifference to an event which had become ancient history might also be argued.<sup>14</sup> An economic slump caused by rampant piracy in the 70s

<sup>10</sup> C. Norbanus was governor between 88 and 87, the officials between 91 and 88 are not attested, see Appendix 5.

<sup>11</sup> Details of this campaign are patchy, but Carbo must have been aiming to reach Syracuse from Africa intending to join the governor Perperna. Pompey must also have been a visitor, and the presence of Sicilians with the name 'Pompeius', *Cic. Verr.* 2.2.23, 2.2.102, 2.4.25, suggests that Roman citizenship was awarded by the successful general. For Pompey in Sicily see R.J. Evans, *Questioning Reputations: Essays on Nine Roman Republican Politicians*, Pretoria 2003, 38 n. 3. Pompey's father Strabo, cos. 89, had served in Sardinia as quaestor in 104, *MRR* 1.560, but could have been praetorian governor at Syracuse in 93/92.

<sup>12</sup> It was easy to speak negatively of one who had rebelled against the state and had died an exile. For the revolt of Lepidus, see Evans: 2003, 38–44.

<sup>13</sup> For Antonius' appointment and terms of command, *MRR* 2.101: '*imperium infinitum ... pro consule*'; and Verres' involvement see H.B. Mattingly, 'M. Antonius, C. Verres and the Sack of Delos by the Pirates', *Miscellanea in onore di Eugenio Manni*, Rome 1979, 1499 and n. 28, 1503–1504. Antonius arrived in Syracuse during the summer of 74 when C. Licinius Sacerdos was governor and departed in early 73 just prior to the arrival of C. Verres.

<sup>14</sup> It should also be remembered that the Syracusans were not in the habit of retaining their own historical monuments for long. The tomb of Gelon had long disappeared, while the tomb of Dionysius had been destroyed in the 340s, the tombs of Hieron's family had also been sacked in 215, after the murders of Hieronymous and Adranodoros, *Liv.* 24.25.1–10.

may also have resulted in fewer resources for the upkeep of public monuments. Today the condition of a state's economy vitally affects all constituent parts of a community's wellbeing, but the role of a healthy or a weakened economy in antiquity perhaps remains obscure to us since the literary sources certainly have less to say on the subject than commentators on modern socio-political or economic affairs. Cicero returned to Syracuse for a brief visit in 70 (*Verr.* 2.4.136), collecting evidence for the prosecution of its former rapacious governor of three years, between 73 and 71.<sup>15</sup> However, his later references to Syracuse, although generally favourable, should be treated rather cautiously, since he may well have been rather lukewarm to its inhabitants (seeing that they had been less unenthusiastic about Verres than other Sicilian communities (*Verr.* 2.2.15 cf. 2.4.136)).<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, his comments are clearly based on memories of his visit to the 'wealthy and ancient province' (*Verr.* 2.4.1) and its chief and well-populated city (*Verr.* 2.5.65) and should be considered reasonably accurate.<sup>17</sup> For example, he refers to the legend and the Fountain of Ciane (*Verr.* 2.4.107), a *palaestra* or gymnasium (*Verr.* 2.4.139), and the continued use of the stone quarries as prisons (*Verr.* 2.1.14, 2.5.68), and that even Roman citizens had been illegally incarcerated and killed there on the orders of Verres (*Verr.* 2.5.143–148). He mentions that Hieron's palace on Ortygia had been turned into a factory where Verres had stolen silver remade into ornamentation for gold vessels which were manufactured there (*Verr.* 2.4.56). This may be one reason why Verres and his entourage preferred to pitch a camp in the summer months south of the place near where the *Castello Maniace* is now situated. In Cicero's day this was parkland (*Verr.* 2.5.30, 63, 80–81), and exclusively for the use of the governor (*Verr.* 2.5.84: *hodie ... Syracusanum in ea parte habitare non licet*).<sup>18</sup> Although the city as a whole remained fortified (*Verr.* 2.5.95), at least the southern end of the island appears not to have possessed walls at this stage (*Verr.* 2.5.96), which may mean that the fortifications on Ortygia were dismantled entirely or in part after 212.

However, the great *temenos* of Apollo still stood close to the theatre in Neapolis (*Verr.* 2.4.119), and may have done so until the banning of pagan cults at the end of the fourth century AD.<sup>19</sup> A bronze statue of M. Claudius Marcellus stood inside the Senate House (*bouleuterion*) (*Verr.* 2.2.50). Statues of Verres stood inside the same building and outside in the agora (*Verr.* 2.2.145) where an arch, graced with a statue of his son and an equestrian one of himself (*Verr.* 2.2.154), was also erected, although these did

15 Just one of the six speeches was delivered in court, the rest (probably already composed) were edited and published later. Verres bowed to public opinion by going into exile.

16 Note Cicero's blunt comment that 'a few could hold the island', *Verr.* 2.5.84, and that, in the past, the Syracusans had refused entry to Roman armies or naval forces and that therefore the acropolis should be denied to them, *Verr.* 2.5.98. Yet the Syracusans could gain access in an emergency, *Verr.* 2.5.95.

17 See also Chapter 1 for topographical details. Here only additions made during the Roman period are discussed. For illustrative material relevant to this chapter see the CD Rom – Chapter 6.

18 For a temple to the Sicilian Hera located on this narrow peninsula opposite the *Olympieion* across the Great Harbour, see Freeman: 1891, 2.442.

19 For the area and foundations of the Apollo *Temenos* see CD nos. 118, 325–26.

not long survive his governorship (*Verr.* 2.2.160–161). A reference to a temple of Diana (*Verr.* 2.4.118) may indicate the survival and continued use of the unfinished Ionic temple. Comments about the pillaging of the temple of Athena by Verres (*Verr.* 2.4.122, 2.5.184) indicate that it was during this time that paintings portraying Agathokles were stolen and another twenty-seven pictures of earlier rulers, the main doors decorated in ivory and gold were removed, a gorgon's head and gold knobs were also taken. A statue of Sappho by Silanion in the city hall (*Prytanion*) was removed (*Verr.* 2.4.126–127), a particularly fine piece of art. A statue of Apollo from the temple of Asklepios (*Verr.* 2.4.127), a painting from the temple of Dionysos, a painting of Zeus *Urios*, presumably from the *Olympieion* at Polichne (*Verr.* 2.5.184), and a bust from the temple of Demeter were all taken away. The city was denuded of all its famous treasures (*Verr.* 2.4.132), causing great distress to its citizens (*Verr.* 2.4.138).

The proconsulship of Verres puts the spotlight for a brief moment on affairs in Sicily at the end of the 70s. Verres was probably not as monstrous as Cicero claimed (*Verr.* 2.2.9), but he probably was guilty of the extortion of which he was accused. He was probably not that exceptional in his activities, or those done on his behalf, although the extent of his misconduct seems to have given him instant notoriety – if Cicero's evidence is believable.<sup>20</sup> After the Verres trial, Sicily and Syracuse were not without their distinguished visitors. Pompey may have visited during his command against the pirates in 67. Q. Arrius (pr. 73) was supposed to succeed Verres (*Verr.* 2.2.37) – not a famous name perhaps but, nonetheless, a candidate for the consulship, so not without influence.<sup>21</sup> The Spartacus revolt caused a delay in his appointment – if indeed he ever reached his province.<sup>22</sup> Spartacus and his followers attempted to reach Sicily from across the Straits, happily for Verres they failed (Plut. *Crass.* 10.3).<sup>23</sup> P. Clodius was quaestor to the proconsul here in 61 (Cic. *Att.* 1.16.9).<sup>24</sup> The younger Cato was also appointed governor of Sicily at the start of the civil war between Caesar and Pompey. His evacuation of the island, to prevent war and destruction, can only have taken place from Messene or Syracuse. For the most part the fighting took place in other parts of the empire – Greece, North Africa and Spain – although Caesar's campaigns in North Africa against Cato and Metellus Pius Scipio, which ended at Thapsos in 47, would have been supplied from harbours in Sicily. After Caesar's murder the second round of civil war

<sup>20</sup> Verres was proscribed for his wealth in 43, after twenty-seven years in exile, R. Syme, *The Roman Revolution*, Oxford 1939, 195; Pliny, *NH.* 7.134, 34.6. He may have been living in Massilia, a favourite spot for the exiled; cf. T. Annius Milo in 52. Clearly he had been able to take much of his wealth with him in 70.

<sup>21</sup> For Arrius' unsuccessful candidacy in 59, ten years after his praetorian command, see T.R.S. Broughton, *Candidates Defeated in Roman Elections: Some Ancient Roman 'Also-Rans'*, Philadelphia 1991, 23; R.J. Evans, 'Candidates and Competition in Consular Elections at Rome between 218 and 49 BC', *AClas* 34, 1991, 122, 135. For his praetorship in 73, see *MRR* 3.25.

<sup>22</sup> See Mattingly: 1979, 1508 n. 62 for the difficulties with dating Arrius' career. He seems to have taken command of forces against the slaves and did not arrive in Sicily, Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.42. *Contra Mattingly*, he must still have been alive in 59.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of this slave rebellion, see, for example, B. Baldwin, 'Two Aspects of the Spartacus Slave Revolt', *CJ* 62, 1967, 289–294.

<sup>24</sup> Clodius served under the governor C. Vergilius Balbus, so presumably at Syracuse, *MRR* 2.181; Evans: 2003, 168, n. 19.

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affected Sicily more acutely. The island came under the control of Pompey's surviving and younger son Sextus, between 43 and 36 until retaken by Octavian.<sup>25</sup>

After Sextus Pompeius had destroyed Syracuse in the same way as he had done to other cities, Augustus Caesar recently sent a colony there and, to a great extent, restored the city to its former importance, for in ancient times it consisted of five towns enclosed by a wall of 180 stadia. But since there was no great need that it should fill this extensive area, Augustus thought it suitable to fortify in a better way the densely populated section situated next to the island of Ortygia, the circuit of which by itself equals that of an important city.<sup>26</sup> (Strabo, 6.2.4)

Syracuse remained the governor's headquarters and chief city of the island, and entered into a long period of calm and – if its public buildings are any indication – prosperity as well.

The Altar of Hieron II was renovated during the Augustan principate, some 200 years after its original construction, and which may coincide with Augustus' stay here in 22–21 BC on his way to the eastern provinces. The altar is surprisingly not mentioned by Cicero as one of the sights of Syracuse, yet it was surely in use in his day, and must have been one of the most imposing structures in Neapolis. Diodorus says (16.83.2) that the altar was a stade (606 feet) in length, and various modern commentators translate this as 198 to 200 metres or 200 yards, with the width variously to between 22.6 and eight metres. The dais, carved from the bedrock like so many of the structures on this edge of Epipolai, is raised on a five-stepped *crepidoma*, on which the building itself is estimated to have stood to at least twelve metres, with a cornice above.<sup>27</sup> The annual sacrifice to Zeus *Eleutherios* to mark the expulsion of Thrasybulos in 466, is said to have consisted of between 100 (Holloway) and 450 (Guido, Randall-McIver) cattle. A portico was probably added (during the Augustan principate) on the south-west side, with an ornamental basin at its centre.<sup>28</sup> The entire monument stood until the sixteenth century when it was demolished along with substantial sections of the amphitheatre and theatre.

The Neapolis amphitheatre must have been as impressive as any of the buildings in Syracuse. Together with the porticoes of the theatre behind it on Epipolai, the amphitheatre would have dominated the skyline in this part of the city. Like its neighbour the theatre, the natural bedrock was employed for the lower tiers on the northern side, with only the higher tiers being built up above the hillside. This is precisely the same plan used in the third century BC extension of the Greek theatre; and there may have been

25 Pompey had been murdered near Alexandria in late 48, his eldest son Gnaeus died at the battle of Munda in 45.

26 180 stades = 36 360 yards = 20½ miles (roughly) or 33.5 kms, is rather more than the modern measurements of 17 miles (approx. 27 kms). Moore: 1966, 6.506, who also notes that the Syracusan walls were 4½ or 7 kms longer than the Aurelian Walls at Rome, and 5½ miles or roughly 9kms longer than the walls of Alexandria. Strabo seems to be indicating that from the time of Augustus the Dionysian walls fell into disuse, but evidence from the Eurialos fort, at least, points to occupation down to the Byzantine period. For the five towns of Strabo as opposed to the four cities of Cicero see Chapter 1, n.1 above.

27 Guido: 1967, 182; Randall-McIver: 1968, 152; Holloway: 1991, 161–162: 'The Altar fronted on a garden surrounded on its three sides by porticoes. There was a fountain in its center, and trees were planted in pits set out in rows across the open space.' See also CD nos. 314–16, 512, 655.

28 See Wilson: 1988, 115, for a plan of the embellished area around the altar.

some deliberate copying of the work of Hieron by the architect employed here. On the southern side of the arena the seating was constructed entirely from blocks; and this highlights further similarities with, for example, the amphitheatre at Tarraco, gubernatorial seat of Hispania Tarraconensis. There the hillside is sufficiently steep for the entire west side to be cut from the rock while for the east side of the arena the seating rises above the brickwork. At Syracuse the incline of the hill is less steep, necessitating the construction of more tiers, and the local limestone naturally predominates. Today the later pillaging of the amphitheatre is accentuated by signs of neglect especially and a lack of good preservation techniques.<sup>29</sup> The date of construction of the amphitheatre probably belongs to the principate of Augustus and is, therefore, considerably earlier than structures such as that at Tarraco, which dates to a time of an amphitheatrical building boom, particularly in Spain and southern Gaul. Some uncertainty exists about the exact date of the construction, but arguments for the third century are not convincing, and inscriptions of this date recording the ownership of seats found on marble blocks on the parapet are more likely connected with some restoration work.<sup>30</sup> Work may also have been carried out here associated with the visit of Hadrian in the 120s. The overall size is impressive, although with seating for an audience of about 20 000 it is not one of the largest.<sup>31</sup> The external diameter is about a 140 x 119m (420 x 360 feet), and the arena floor about 70 x 40m (210 x 120 feet), the same as the arena at Verona and only slightly smaller than that of the Colosseum in Rome.<sup>32</sup> The tunnel above the lower section of seating connected both this area and that which rose above it with the entrances and exits (*vomitoria*). This was not a holding area for wild beasts or gladiators waiting to fight,<sup>33</sup> these were accommodated outside the south-western, or main, entry to the arena. Unlike the Colosseum or the amphitheatre at Puteoli, there is no *hypogeum* or subterranean room or passage in this amphitheatre.

29 Earlier photographic evidence, L. Pareti *et al.*, *La Sicilia antica*, Genova 1959, 219, shows a much better preserved and presented amphitheatre. See CD nos. 110–14, 333–39.

30 Guido: 1967, 180; cf. Wilson: 1988, 113–114, suggesting an initial structure excavated out of the rock during the principate of Augustus, and perhaps related to his visit there; Wilson, 1990, 82, for a cogent argument on early building here. However, for the most part amphitheatres are a later phenomenon in cities around the Roman empire. For the third century inscriptions see also Grady: 2003, 328.

31 The Syracusan amphitheatre in size is on a par with those at Nice, Frejús, Arles, Nîmes and Tarraco, while it is dwarfed by the enormous Colosseum with seating for 50 000, and even the amphitheatres at Capua, Puteoli and Verona are larger. The amphitheatre at Pompeii, built about 80 BC, is one of the earliest and most complete surviving examples with seating for roughly the same number of spectators as that at Syracuse. The Pompeii dimensions are also similar – 135 x 104 metres. See also Chapter 3 and on the CD no. 675.

32 Cf. O. Belvedere, 'Opere pubbliche ed edifice per lo spettacolo nella Sicilia di età imperiale,' *ANRW* 11.1, 1988, 355. For a detailed map see Belvedere: 1988, 354. The dimensions of the Colosseum are: overall size, 145 x 115 metres (440 x 345 feet), the arena, 69.80 x 39.70 metres (210 x 120 feet).

33 See CD nos. 112, 334.

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The centre of the arena contains an ornamental pool or cistern with culverts either for supply or dispersal in the south and east quadrants.<sup>34</sup> It has been suggested that this is associated with *naumachia* or mock sea battles when an arena floor was flooded to allow boats and their crews to fight it out. *Naumachia* may capture the imagination of modern readers but these events were comparatively rare, and usually held in specially constructed pools, or when, as at the Colosseum, while the main construction was still underway.<sup>35</sup> It seems unlikely that any such spectacle featured since the arena floor is not set down from its entrances. It is more plausible to suggest that the pond was in some way a visual link with the cult of Artemis on Ortygia and the Fountain of Arethusa. It may also indicate that the games held here were associated with Artemis, just as the dramatic performances were connected to Apollo. A triumphal arch was erected at the eastern end of the amphitheatre either before or during its construction, again possibly in celebration of Augustus' visit. It also may have a connection with the colonial status of the city and dedicated by its newest settlers, Augustan army veterans. A small triangular forum with a portico at its western end to the north of the Agora in what is now the *Piazza Adda* also dates from the first century AD.<sup>36</sup> Here, as elsewhere around the empire, the games or *munera* had become favourite leisure-time pursuits, and the Syracusans clearly had the resources for lavish productions. In AD 58 the senate debated and approved a request from the city to exhibit more than the usual number of gladiators in the arena (*Tac. Ann.* 13.48). Syracuse may have been a provincial capital but it still had clout and connections.

Situated either just inside the walls of Akradina or just outside, about a half kilometre west of the agora on the main south road, and about two hundred metres (600 feet) from the harbour-side, there are the remains of an *odeion* and a four-sided portico. Today just the orchestra and the lowest tiers remain of the auditorium. It was perhaps roofed with seating for between one and two hundred. It was closely associated with a cult building on the east side and, therefore, bears a close similarity with the situation of the theatre and temple at Ostia. These constructions may be of similar age. The theatre and temple here are dated to the first century AD. Usually referred to as a 'gymnasium', the entire complex was possibly dedicated to the cult of Isis and Serapis. The area has not yet been fully excavated.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> A reservoir or *piscina* lies beneath the church of S. Nicola adjacent to the *Latomia dei Veneria* and is higher than the arena, allowing water to flow into the central pool. This reservoir was fed by the aqueducts which ran across Epipolai. See CD nos. 119–20.

<sup>35</sup> The Colosseum was constructed above an artificial lake which was filled in as the superstructure rose. Any naval combats here took place during the early stages of building and not once the *hypogeum* of the Colosseum was finished, since its understructures are too complex for flooding. At times, Rome possessed more than one venue for *naumachia*, the *stagnum* built by Augustus across the Tiber close to the Janiculum, *Suet. Aug.* 42.1, but also, temporary structures in the *Campus Martius*, *Tac. Ann.* 15.37, and another built by Domitian, *Suet. Dom.* 4.2, 5.1. No other city could match this extravagance. For *naumachia* and their staging in Rome see K.M. Coleman, 'Launching into History: Aquatic Displays in the Early Empire,' *JRS* 83, 1993, 50–55.

<sup>36</sup> Wilson: 1988, 114–115.

<sup>37</sup> For plans see Guido: 1958, 82; Wilson, 1988, 118, who also suggests, 119, Atargatis as the cult deity since drama festivals were associated with the worship of this particular goddess. See CD nos. 303–05.

Interestingly enough, one major fact never mentioned by any ancient source or modern writer on the history of Syracuse is what must have been the gradual reoccupation of Ortygia as a civilian settlement. This presumably began at some point during the early Principate, possibly coinciding with the re-colonisation of the city by Augustus, and this process should have been completed well before the city fell to Arab invaders in the ninth century AD.<sup>38</sup> Yet it should be noted that when Constans II was murdered in a Syracusan baths house in 668 it was situated in Akradina, beside the *Portus Laccius*, and not on Ortygia. If these baths were part of the emperor's residence, this suggests that the former palatial residence on the island was not considered sufficiently regal or that it was in disrepair. And this could, therefore, be interpreted as an indication of a continued lack of population on the island or that Ortygia had become a poorer quarter of the city.<sup>39</sup> This would also mean that at the harbour there was a significant building able to accommodate the emperor and his entourage, and which is no longer visible except for some scant remains in the Arsenale area.

Finally, Syracuse the Roman city may not have had the power it possessed when the seat of tyrants, but it was probably more imposing than it had been in the fourth century BC. Hieron II had indulged in a more expansive building programme than Gelon, Dionysius I or Agathokles, and constructions dating to the mid- to late third century continued to dominate Syracuse's topography for at least two hundred years. The city described by Cicero would have been easily recognisable to Hieron. However, during the Roman imperial period, probably as a result of personal interest by rulers such as Augustus and Hadrian, further buildings were added to the city's skyline while at the same time extensive renovations occurred on others.<sup>40</sup> For much of the time, Syracuse attracted high calibre officials – several of its governors became distinguished public figures and statesmen: M. Aemilius Lepidus, long-serving *princeps senatus* in the second century BC, Lucius Scipio brother of Scipio Africanus, Cicero, the younger Cato, to name just a few. Syracuse was an attractive overseas posting for Roman politicians of the republic – close to Italy, usually peaceful, and more highly cultured and sophisticated than even mainland Greece. In the empire, emperors came and went – Augustus, Hadrian, Septimius Severus – while the enduring level of culture may go some way to explaining why literary

<sup>38</sup> Wilson: 1988, 120, considers it 'doubtful ... if there was a lasting decline in Syracuse's fortunes, even if the size of the city did contract slightly at this time (Roman empire),' but he ignores possible developments on Ortygia. For the impact of the loss of Syracuse to the Byzantine empire see, for example, J. Shepard, 'Byzantine Relations with the Outside World', in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive*, ed. L. Brubaker, Aldershot 1998, 171. For the Arabs in Sicily see E.M. Moreno, 'Byzantium and Al-Andalus' in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive*, ed L. Brubaker, Aldersot, 1998, 219–220; and more generally P. Magdalino, 'The Medieval Empire', in *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. C. Mango, Oxford 2002, 171.

<sup>39</sup> For the death of Constans see, for example, J.J. Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries*, Harmondsworth 1988, 322, and the likelihood that the imperial court's presence in the city actually brought it close to financial ruin, and J. Haldon, *Byzantium: A History*, Stroud 200, 30, for the reasons why Syracuse became the Byzantine capital.

<sup>40</sup> For plans and illustrations of the various quarters see Chapters 1 and 6 of the CD Rom. For a plan of Neapolis in the Principate see also Belvedere: 1988, 348–349.

## Syracuse in antiquity

figures continue to pop up in the city. It was not culture that brought the apostle Paul to Syracuse en route to Rome (*Acts*, 28.12), but his visit may have provided an impetus for Christianity here. In and around Syracuse rock-cut tombs and catacombs are plentiful.<sup>41</sup> The historian Procopius visited in 533, not solely for cultural purposes but on an intelligence gathering mission for Belisarius, who was then based at Katane in readiness for an attack on Vandal Africa.<sup>42</sup> Politically and militarily Syracuse surrendered its Sicilian primacy to a greater overlord but in the Roman empire and beyond its beauty, its antiquity and its own glorious ancient history more than made up for that loss.

41 For Paul in Syracuse see Wilson: 1990, 301. For the rock-cut tombs at Syracuse' *Latomia dei Veneria* see CD nos. 2–4, *Latomia dei Cappucini*, CD no. 22. For the rock-cut tombs at Akrai see CD nos. 36–45. Artemis/Arethusa transformed into S. Lucia became the patron saint of Syracuse who continues to be celebrated in December each year in Akradina and on Ortigia, see. CD nos. 11–13, 25.

42 Norwich: 1988, 208; A. Cameron, *Procopius*, London 1985, 176, who refers to Belisarius' triumphal entry into Syracuse following his capture of Carthage, Procop. *Buildings*, 1.10.16.

## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX 1: THE CHIEF CITIES OF SICILY IN ANTIQUITY

	<b>Foundation Date</b>	<b>Destruction/ Occupation</b>	<b>Founding City</b>
Naxos	ca. 757 BC	403 BC	Chalcis
Megara Hyblaia	ca. 750 BC	483 & 214 BC	Ionian Megara
Syracuse	ca. 733	Siracusa	Corinth
Zancle	ca. 730	Messene/Messina	Chalcis/Samos/Rhegion
Leontinoi	ca. 728	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	Naxos
Katane	ca. 725	Catania	Naxos
Solus (Solunto I)	700/600	397 BC	Carthage
Motya	ca. 700	397 BC	Carthage
Panormos	ca. 700	Palermo	Carthage
Eloros	7 <sup>th</sup> century	late 3 <sup>rd</sup> century BC	Syracuse
Gela	689/88	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	Crete/Rhodes
Akrai	664	Palazzolo	Syracuse
Selinous	650/28	250 BC	Megara Hyblaia
Himera	649/48	409 BC	
Eryx	ca. 600	Erice	
Segesta	ca. 600	AD 450	
Scornavacche	ca. 600	405 & 280 BC	
Kamarina	ca. 590	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	Syracuse
Akragas	ca. 581	Agrigentum	Gela
Morgantina	ca. 550	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	
Herakleia Minoa	ca. 550	1 <sup>st</sup> century BC	Akrugas
Aetna	465/461	Inessa	
Halaesa	403	1 <sup>st</sup> century AD	
Lilybaeum	397/96	Marsala	
Kephaloidion	396	Cefalú	
Tyndaris	396	Byzantine period	
Tauromenion	358	Taormina	
Solunto II	347	after AD 200	
Drepana	3 <sup>rd</sup> century	Trapani	
Thermae Selinuntinae	6 <sup>th</sup> century	Sciacca	
Mylai	394/93	Milazzo	
Castrum Hennae	5 <sup>th</sup> century	Enna	

**APPENDIX 2: THE SIZE OF THE ATHENIAN CAMP**

The Great Harbour has a length of roughly eight kilometres (five miles) from the southern tip of Ortygia to the southern head of the bay at Plemmyrion. The Athenian camp is usually shown as lying between the Anapos river to the south, the south-west walls of Syracuse to the north, the marsh of Lysimeleia to the west north-west, a distance no more than ten stades, or less than two kilometres (a little more than a mile). The village of Polichne and the Olympieion are situated south of the Anapos, a further three stades or about half a kilometre (1 800 feet). Assuming from Thucydides' account (7.53.1–2) that at least five hundred metres separated the Athenian camp from the Syracusan fortifications, this would leave a stretch of one and a half kilometres (4 500 feet) north of the Anapos river along which the fleet was beached, protected by its stockade of stakes driven into the sand probably about waist-height in the water of the bay. Does this assumption bear scrutiny? The initial expedition (Thuc. 6.43–44) consisted of 134 triremes (and two fifty-oared Rhodian galleys) and thirty transports (plus about a hundred smaller craft). The reinforcements led by Demosthenes consisted of seventy-three assorted vessels (7.42.1). In the final battle in the Great Harbour the Athenians launched at least a hundred and ten triremes (one hundred and fifteen, according to Diodorus, 13.14.4), but there were other triremes which could not be used because of a shortage of oars.

A single trireme was five and a half metres (16–17 feet) wide at its broadest point and to be carried, or dragged, up onto a beach by the oarsmen required a further two metres (6 feet) space on either side. Each trireme required about ten metres (30 feet) breadth for parking out of the water. One hundred triremes would need one kilometre to beach; and to be available at short notice for re-launching, they could not have been berthed in rows. Even taking account of the number of losses incurred by the besiegers in the last stages of the campaign there were clearly many more than a hundred ships on the beach. As many as double that number of ships may in fact have been beached in the Great Harbour, while still others lay at anchor. This would mean that the Athenian stockade must have extended south of the Anapos river, and probably included some of the area at Daskon, which had been used as a camp in the initial campaign late in 415 (Thuc. 6.66.2). The stockade itself is described by Thucydides (7.38.3):

Nikias ... had a line of merchant ships anchored outside the stockade, which had been fixed in the sea in front of the ships to serve as an enclosed harbour. The merchant ships were placed at intervals of about 200 feet, so that it was possible for any ship in trouble to retreat safely and sail out again in its own time.

Both Dover and Green have looked at this description and have concluded that each entrance was eighteen to twenty-three metres wide (60–75 feet) at thirty to thirty-two metre intervals (180–210 feet). Each trireme needed double its width to clear a channel when the oars were in full use. Hence the entrances to the stockade need only have been

at most eleven metres (33 feet) in width, set perhaps approximately sixty metres (180 feet) apart. Green believes that the stockade along the beach was four to five hundred metres in length (1 200–1 500 feet) and that there were three to four entrances. Since it seems likely that the stockade was much larger and closer to two kilometres in length (i.e. 6 000 feet) there were perhaps as many as ten entrances/exits. Meanwhile, inside the camp there were 40 000 men fit enough to depart after the battle in the Great Harbour, several thousand may have been left behind who were unable to march. Perhaps a total of between 15 000 and 20 000 had been killed in the defeat on the night attack on Epipolai (*Thuc.* 7.45.2); on Plemmyrion (*Thuc.* 7.24.1), and in the various naval defeats. It is also highly likely that some, if not a large number, of the non-combatants had also slipped away prior to the final departure, which would indicate that when Demosthenes' army arrived at Syracuse in the summer of 413 the Athenian camp certainly contained in excess of 60 000 personnel, possibly even over 100 000 persons altogether. The camp also contained the cavalry units besides workshops and tented barracks. The Syracusans held the high land around the Olympieion and later Plemmyrion, but the area from the beach at Daskon, south of the Anapos river to within sight of the city walls and from the beachside up to the edge of Epipolai, when the plateau was evacuated, including the entire marsh must all have formed this gigantic Athenian encampment.

## APPENDIX 3: THE TELLARO OR THE ASSINARO?

Green is convinced that Nikias' last battle took place at the river Tellaro near the modern village of S. Paolo, south of Noto (Notum), since the distances match those given by Thucydides. De Voto, on the other hand, is equally convinced that the final defeat of the Athenians occurred on the river Assinaro on the plain between Noto and the sea, and that Thucydides' figures are incorrect.<sup>1</sup> Between these two rivers is the Gioi, which enters the sea beside the site of Eloros. There is no dispute that the Athenians reached the Kakyparis (*Cassibile*) river after an overnight march of about eighteen kilometres (12 miles), and that the initial intention was to turn inland again from this point. After scattering a Syracusan garrison on the Kakyparis, but perhaps realising that the gorge of the Kakyparis inland was not suitable for so large a force marching in defensive formation or possibly also misled by their guides, Nikias (with the vanguard) pressed on to another river called the Erineos (Thuc. 7.80.7). The rearguard, following up slowly, must have been caught by the Syracusans a little south of the Kakyparis, by which time Nikias' division was fifty stades in front (5–6 miles, ten kilometres, Thuc. 7.81.3) and later the same day arrived and crossed the Erineos (7.82.3). Two days later, the 'Athenians made for the Assinaro driven on by the attacks made on them from all sides by numerous cavalry and the huge number of other missiles and in the belief that they would breath more freely once across the river, and also impelled by their exhaustion and thirst' (Thuc. 7.84.2).

There are a number of interesting points in Thucydides' account, which can perhaps act as an aid to understanding the intentions of the Athenians and where the vanguard met its end. First of all, why would the Athenians have marched all night for the Kakyparis river (Thuc. 7.80.5)? This is possibly because the land south of this river was no longer within the *chorē* of Syracuse. It is noticeable that the Syracusans had set a garrison at the ford on the Kakyparis river, but not further south. Although this was clearly aimed at preventing any of the enemy from slipping away, it may also indicate the traditional terminus of the *polis*, a point which today lies roughly twenty kilometres south of the city. By withdrawing out of the territory of the *polis* the Athenians may have believed that they would no longer be perceived as a threat and allowed to escape. This proved to be another misconception on their part. The Erineos river was approximately fifty stades further than the point where Demosthenes surrendered, and Dover has argued that this should be identified as the *Cava Mammaledi* at Avola.<sup>2</sup> This is presumably the *Fiume d'Avola* preferred by De Voto, but is only seven kilometres from the *Cassibile*, and so Thucydides' evidence is again discarded. Nikias of course crossed this stream and pressed on, and Thucydides certainly implies that the Athenians had moved forward quickly and a good distance. 'Nikias marched his men rapidly thinking that, given the

<sup>1</sup> Green: 1971, 330–36, S. Paolo is certainly highly evocative of an ancient battle; cf. De Voto: 2002, 61–69.

<sup>2</sup> Dover: 1970, 456–57.

circumstances, safety lay not in standing firm and fighting of their own free will, but in retreating as quickly as possible and fighting only if forced to do so' (Thuc. 7.81.3).

The present-day Assinaro is about thirteen kilometres south of the river *Cassibile* (Kakyparis) at Noto, and its valley offered a viable alternative route into the mountains, but like the valleys of the Kakyparis and Anapos, it has steep-sided gorges. Furthermore, why would the Athenians have breathed more freely after crossing the Assinaros river? It may well be that this line was the farthest extent of Syracusan territory, or that of its satellite community at Eloros, and that line would fall at the present Tellaro river. The small town of Eloros is just south of the mouth of the now Gioi river, less than four kilometres south of the modern Assinaro, the present Tellaro lies another seven kilometres south of Noto by the main road. The attraction of the Tellaro is that its valley is broad and the land fairly even for the Athenians to have marched, harried by Syracusan cavalry. Against identification of the Tellaro, however, is the fact that today it is mostly dry while the Erineos (*Assinaro*) does have a strong flow in summer. Finally, this direction leads ultimately to Kamarina and Gela, described by Thucydides as possible destinations (7.80.2) for the retreating Athenians, objectives chosen once Leontinoi and Katane were denied to them.<sup>3</sup>

In the end, there is really not much to choose between the two rivers. The main point in favour of the modern Tellaro is that the land is more level but the river is sufficiently indented to imagine twenty thousand men scattering to the water and the Syracusan cavalry cutting them down. Thucydides also gives the impression that large distances were involved in the frustrated attempt to escape, whereas the rearguard by contrast is shown as moving much more painstakingly and in considerable disorder. In 2004 the Assinaro river had more water, and while an attractive place for an army to halt it is also much more deeply embedded in its course at the crossing of the main road. Again it is easy to visualise the breakdown of discipline and the charge down to the river although the Syracusan horsemen may have had less room to attack in such a devastating fashion as described by the historian.

<sup>3</sup> Dover: 1970, 458, also sees the logic of this argument.