

SYRACUSE in ANTIQUITY

History and topography

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in
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Cardiff and Pretoria
2007

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation of ancient authors follows standard convention and should be easily explicable. References to journals are abbreviated according to usage in *L'Année Philologique*. Standard volumes and texts are abbreviated by name and date of publication. The following should also be noted:

CIL *The Cambridge Ancient History* (1st or 2nd editions)

LCL *Loeb Classical Library*

MRR T.R.S Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, New York 1951–52, Volumes 1–2, Atlanta 1984, Volume 3.

OCD *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (2nd or 3rd editions)

References to the CD Rom visual material are by number, for convenience, and to avoid cluttering the footnotes in the book. However, this material is also catalogued by title and may appear so in the CD Rom when opened. Cross-referencing between the book and the CD Rom should also be easily manageable.

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PROLOGUE: ORIENTATION

I formed my first notion of this very momentary piece of topography from several walks on the spot ... to one who has got attached to the very ground of Syracuse there is a temptation to try to get a meaning out of every word of Thucydides, and to attach that meaning to some square yard or other of the soil which he has so often trod.¹

I first came to Syracuse (Siracusa) in August 1975 as a backpacking undergraduate student and, to be quite candid, cannot remember whether or not I then thought that this place had a special relationship with the world of ancient Greece or Rome. I do remember the heat, which as a twenty-year-old from Britain, I had never experienced before. When I returned to Syracuse in March 2001, more than a quarter of a century later, I was at once struck by the almost magical association of being instantly faced with Classical antiquity all around me, not least in being able to observe the people of this city living cheek by jowl with their remote past. I imagine that, by then, having taught Greek and Roman history for over two decades, it was highly unlikely that I would remain untouched in visiting what was one of the great cities of the ancient Mediterranean and of Greek and Roman civilisation. Of course, at the same time many of today's Syracusans are indifferent to and even oblivious of their city's history, yet every day they pass beside more visible signs of Greek and Roman culture than in any other European city with the exception, perhaps, of Rome; and Syracuse's visible archaeological sites predate the imperial remains of Rome often by several centuries. For nearly three hundred years Syracuse was a major military and political

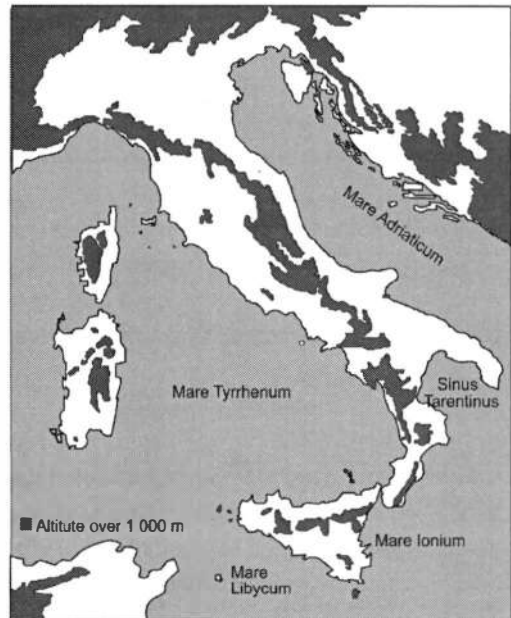


Figure 1: Sicily and Magna Graecia

¹ E.A. Freeman, *The History of Sicily*, Oxford 1892, Volume 3, 653–54, in his discussion of the exact location of the first Athenian camp near the *Olympieion*. See also here in Chapter 2. For similar affirmations of empirical study see P. Green, *Armada from Athens*, London 1970, xiv; K.J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Book 6, Oxford 1970, 466. For scepticism of Thucydides' presence in Syracuse see Chapter 4 n. 7.

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player in the Mediterranean, and for some of that time was the most significant power in the west.² For a thousand years after that Syracuse was an important provincial city in the Roman empire.

My first ever arrival in torrid summer temperatures was at the train station in the days when trains were invariably late and, this being no exception, it was the siesta when it should have been breakfast time. The station deserves a mention for it is a welcoming building of the nineteenth century, cool and inviting inside where the smell of coffee dominated; and still does today.³ My later arrivals, more or less fraught, have usually been by car in a country whose drivers all seem to aspire to Formula One fame. Syracuse, like all Italian cities, is a forbidding place for foreign drivers unused to the congestion and abundant bad tempers. For all that, evenings on the island of Ortygia can be remarkably like those in Venice: peaceful, soporific, timeless.

From the station the visitor passes through what was once the hotel quarter – then rather downmarket – now, like everywhere else here, staggering towards gentrification, to the chaotic *Piazza Mazzini*, which is easier to cross as a pedestrian than in a car. There is not much to commend this square but lying adjacent as it does to the rather seedy *Foro Siracusana* – another place where one wants to leave rather than to loiter – this is the centre of ancient Akradina. Here once stood, says Cicero (*Verr* 2.4.119), a great agora with a very fine colonnade, an attractive council building and a suitably impressive senate house, not to mention several other temples and numerous private houses beyond. Today some columns remain about two metres below ground level to remind the viewer of what is lost. The mole to Ortygia (for the land here is man-made) fulfilled the ambition of Dionysius I to provide space to house himself and his family in suitable grandeur (Diod. 14.7.1). This stretch of land leads, in six Victorian-looking apartment blocks, to the *Darsena* or channel and one of three bridges which carries traffic to and from the northern end of the island. Filled with fishing boats, boats for tourist excursions and diving schools, this channel is more substantial than it was in antiquity. The ancient city gate labelled ‘Hellenistic’ lies to the right of the newest bridge (opened April 2004) behind the restaurant (painted a startling pink) called ‘Rambla’. The height of the island is hidden behind more modern buildings, as is the temple of Apollo two blocks to the left. The oldest bridge, the *Ponte Umberto* leads via the *Piazza Pancali* directly to the temple, but the new one-way system does not allow this approach any longer except by foot. But none of the modern bridges gives a faithful entry onto ancient Ortygia. The bridge must have been closer to the Great Harbour on the extreme western side of the channel and funnelled traffic left towards the gateway.

The venerable temple of Apollo, oldest peripteral construction in Sicily, ranks among the oldest surviving Greek temples. Its age is apparent at once. Not many Greek temples visited today can boast upright monolithic columns; and Syracuse can boast

2 On the possible origin of the name Syracuse as Phoenician for eastern see Freeman: 1891, 1.357–62.

3 See CD no. 582.

two. Although just two columns stand to their capitals, there are a sufficient number of other broken columns, of various heights, and interior walls to present the viewer with a good idea of the size and extent of the original. Again the site is viewed from above and no entry to the former ground level is possible for the unaccompanied visitor. Moreover, the east side of the temple abuts closely onto homes of modern Ortygia; and so only the sides and rear of the temple can be viewed easily. The front, its steep stylobate made accessible by entry steps and the carving on the top left of the *crepidoma* proclaiming the architect or some other human involvement in the construction, can be read only by hanging over the railing.

The *Via Matteotti* rises from the *Apollonion* to the modern *Piazza Archimede* with its Fountain of Diana. The square is aptly named after one of Syracuse's most famous residents,⁴ and a short walk along the flat top of the hill brings the *Piazza del Duomo*, dominated on the left-hand side by the cathedral in which the temple of Athena is preserved, and next door the *Municipio* under which is an Ionic temple, believed to be an *Artemision* or temple to Diana. The entrance to the cathedral is at the rear of the temple. So today the sight of a missing *opisthodomos* greets those who enter while the *pronaos* at the high altar end has also disappeared, which also means that there is no longer the aspect of the rising sun. Until the present century the interior of the cathedral was lavishly decorated with the sort of baroque to be expected in churches of similar seniority. Then to reclaim something of the ancient interior the decorations were stripped away to leave the white of the local limestone, with the shallow fluted Doric columns. The exercise was misplaced, for as Cicero clearly indicates the inside of this temple – probably like most temples – was also richly decorated. The baroque would have given a better idea of the original since Greek temples did not have a Calvinistic interior. They had more in common, not less. Moreover, much of Syracuse's modern history has no doubt been lost in this transformation for the sake of spurious historicity. The square itself has become an attractive meeting place of bars and restaurants, where cars have been banned, but this is medieval Ortygia not its ancient predecessor. If any such square existed on the island it would have been laid out on the east, not the west side.

The Ionic temple next door to the cathedral is an interesting survivor for, although its existence was suspected even in the nineteenth century, it was only excavated in the 1960s. Earlier works on the topography of Syracuse are obviously ignorant of its presence and the role it played in antiquity.⁵ The mere survival of parts of the under-structure suggests that, even if unfinished (and who can say this with certainty) it was sufficiently whole to have been used for cult practices; the most plausible deity to have been honoured here would be Artemis. The island belonged to Artemis and a major cult to this deity is evident in the sources and it is not entirely satisfactory to assign to this goddess a part of the *Apollonion*

4 For a modern homage to Archimedes see the bust in the *Latomia dei Capuccini*, CD nos. 19–20.

5 See, for example, the discussion of M.P. Loicq-Berger, *Syracuse, histoire culturelle d'une cité grecque*, Brussels 1967, 80–84.

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at the northern edge of Ortygia. Far more logical is its position on the highest point of the island and within sight of the Fountain of Artheusa, one of the personifications of the goddess.⁶ A *temenos* of Artemis is said to have stood near the fountain and it is, at least, arguable that this, the statue and the temple are all related, possibly all belonging within a precinct dedicated to the deity. A precinct extending down from the temple to the shore to include the fountain means its length was about two hundred metres, which is perhaps not excessive for a patron goddess of a city the size and power of Syracuse. However, it does open up all sorts of interesting questions relating to the ancient population of the island.

It is perhaps too difficult to imagine that the main outlook on ancient Ortygia was not – as it is today – towards the Great Harbour but towards Greece across the Ionian Sea. The temples looked east and the eastern aspect linked the colonists in Syracuse with their homeland. It is also perhaps difficult to imagine the domination of the two temples at the highest point rising above the other buildings on the island, when there were many buildings; it is again perhaps difficult to imagine, as one walks through one of the narrow streets (say the *Via Carceri Vecche* – from the *Piazza del Duomo* down to the *Passeggio Adorno*) that this entire stretch could have been attached to the temple of Artemis as a garden. The Fountain of Arethusa is viewed from above and, therefore, the perspective and approach have changed completely since antiquity. Visitors to the city's Aquarium, as they exit, can appreciate more fully the size and surge of the spring since they are the only viewers at the ancient ground level.⁷ The sea wall between the spring and the shore probably fairly reflects the size and position of the ancient defences and so at least from this position some accuracy can be recaptured.⁸ The spring is six to seven metres in diameter and roughly circular. In antiquity some observers believe that Arethusa extended over a far greater area and formed a pond which came closer to the temple. The rising ground to the centre of the island precludes that possibility,⁹ but a meandering stream from the spring to a pool in an ornamental garden is an attractive idea.

Looking down from the height of the wall surrounding Arethusa, some idea of the continuous occupation can be gauged from the line of masonry and later brickwork which rises almost out of the sea. The detritus of habitation has added at least three (if not four) metres to the height of Ortygia. The original living level can also be experienced in the dungeons of the *Castello Maniace*, which must be built on something more ancient, so crucial is this spot in the defences of the island and the whole city. It commands the northern head to the Great Harbour and was surely one of the first areas to be occupied on Ortygia. It lies little more than two hundred metres (600 feet) directly south of the

6 Freeman: 1891, 1.356; D. Randall-MacIver, *Greek Cities in Italy and Sicily*, Amsterdam 1968, 140: 'At some point near the spring stood a shrine of Arethusa, who seems to have been often regarded as a local characterisation of Artemis.'

7 It seems that visitors were able to touch the waters until quite recently, L. Durrell, *Sicilian Carousel*, London 1977, 85–86. Even today it is possible – if you escape the gaze of the attendant.

8 Fortifications surrounded Ortygia at least from the fifth century BC, and were strengthened by Dionysius I and later Agathokles. The walls Cicero saw were not a late development, although Freeman: 1891, 2.354, seems to suggest this.

9 Randall-MacIver: 1968, 140: '... a large area extending towards the cathedral.'

Fountain where a temple to Hera may have been situated, opposite that of Zeus *Urios* across the Great Harbour.¹⁰ Dionysius – and probably his predecessors – had walled Ortygia, so a fort at some point here also seems a logical supposition.

Returning to the mainland by way of one of the bridges over the *Darsena* or channel, and then along the mole to the agora, it is striking that the modern nature of the urban landscape again has veiled so entirely an area which must have looked imposing in the time of Dionysius I and Agathokles. Even Charles V, in 1526, had huge battlements and defensive channels built on and into the mole. However, all these have been obliterated without so much as a trace and have left an unremarkable part of Syracuse. So too the more modern centre along the *Corso Gelone*, which consists of shops, offices and hotels. For those in search of antiquity a twenty minute stroll up the gradual incline towards Epipolai brings Neapolis, the new town of ancient Syracuse, today comprising mostly the archaeological zone.

This is where tourists, who have allowed themselves a day or two, come to see primarily the Greek Theatre and the stone quarries called *Latomia del Paradiso*, in which there is a limestone cavern named the 'Ear of Dionysius' and *Latomia dei Veneria* with its 'Tomb of Archimedes'.¹¹ From 9.00 am to 4.00 pm this is a busy place, with a number of refreshment bars and tourist stalls, and during the annual drama festival from May to June it is exceptionally hectic. The Greek theatre today seats about two thousand, but in antiquity many times that number, so the area was considerably busier when the plays of Aeschylus and the like were performed here.¹² Next door was a shrine to Apollo and the theatrical performances may be connected with this deity as well as with Dionysos. A number of temples – to Demeter and Kore and Herakles – were situated in this quarter of the city. The great Altar of Hieron II to the south of the Greek Theatre stands looking a trifle forlorn, only its enormous base remains on a five-stepped stylobate extending two hundred metres (600 feet). Up to the sixteenth century its decorative superstructure still stood before its demolition by Spanish troops. Now the altar is out of bounds, inaccessible behind a chained gate. When the celebrations to Zeus *Eleutherios* took place – the Syracusans remembered and gave thanks to the gods for delivering them from the tyrant Thrasybolos (466 BC) – hundreds of cattle were sacrificed and the whole community was fed well. A festival of this sort would have drawn many thousands. Today's crowds are paltry by comparison to the gatherings of Syracusans in Hieron's day. And if that is not enough, next door is the amphitheatre with an arena floor as big as that of Verona, and only marginally smaller than that of the Colosseum. It probably had seating for about twenty thousand. It is not well kept and hurrying tourists often miss the half-hidden gate leading there. How many hot food stalls were erected, and how numerous

¹⁰ Freeman: 1891, 2.442.

¹¹ The tomb of Archimedes in the *Latomia dei Veneria*, CD nos. 2-4.

¹² 'Syracuse was in the vanguard of theatrical design', C.W. Dearden, 'Fourth-Century Drama in Sicily' in *Greek Colonists and Native Populations*, ed. J.-P. Descoeudres, Oxford 1990, 232.

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were the hawkers selling mementos around this structure when the gladiator and beast fights were held from the first century AD, can scarcely be guessed at.¹³ The quarries close by were obviously the source (one of several in the neighbourhood) of building material for the monumental structures which adorned Neapolis. Today this is a pleasant walk through an orchard of oranges and lemons, not forgetting the sight of a house cut out of the stone against the cliff edge.¹⁴

In a straight line from the entry to the archaeological park along the *Via Teocrito* is the *Museo Archeologico Regionale – Paolo Orsi* in the centre of what was once Akradina.¹⁵ Orsi was the archaeologist responsible for much of the early excavations at Syracuse and throughout the province, towards the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The museum is a fitting tribute. Here too are more quarries and Christian catacombs. The quarry of the Capuccine church very close to the sea is believed to have been the place of incarceration of thousands of Athenians following their defeat by the Syracusans in 413 BC. It is now another charming garden, but it possibly had a more brutal history.¹⁶

Still inside Syracuse, but at its northerly limits, are the *Scala Greca*, on which today is the main road northwards to Catania. Going down it gives some idea of the extent of the fortifications of Dionysius I, and then by driving west parallel to the steep northern edge of the escarpment of Epipolai.¹⁷ Through the village of Belvedere and further along brings up the dramatic setting of the fort at Eurialos,¹⁸ and the Epipolai Gate (the western entrance) to the city now a full twelve kilometres away.¹⁹ The aspect here deserves comment, for looking out from inside the fort the city extends eastwards and below. Ortygia is plainly visible and the Great Harbour with Plemmyrion beyond is easily picked out. The Athenians came to Eurialos in the spring of 414 BC, and Lysimachia (their eventual camp) lay at the northern end of the Great Harbour, a mere two kilometres (6 000 feet) from the agora. Two hundred years later the Romans stood on Epipolai, even in the Eurialos fort, and Marcellus their commander is said to have cried in part in joy at the accomplishments of such a great enterprise and in part in sorrow for the city's ancient glory (Liv. 25.25; Plut. *Marc.* 19.1).²⁰ The view is certainly wonderful, and not much visited so there is time to wander at leisure among the fortifications and the many tunnels without feeling that pursuing hordes may appear at any moment.

13 There seems to be some doubt about the date of construction (see Chapter 6). For the first century see E. Grady, *Sicily*, London: 2003, 328; for the third century see M. Guido, *Sicily: An Archaeological Guide*, London 1967, 180, but for an incisive argument for an Augustan foundation see R.J.A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire*, Warminster 1990, 81–83.

14 CD nos. 329, 331, 513.

15 This sector of the modern city has street names of Greek literary figures cf. the *Via Demostene*, CD no 1. See also near the station the *Via Ermocrate*, CD no 581.

16 The *Latomia dei Capuccini*, CD nos. 14–22, 533–38.

17 For views of the *Scala Greca* and Epipolai see CD nos. 75, 67–68, 77–78.

18 See Chapter 5 for the Eurialos fort and CD nos. 76, 85–87, 90–93, 244–53, 257–72, 514, *Video Clip: Eurialos fort*.

19 The Epipolai Gate, CD nos. 77, 79–84, 516–20.

20 See Chapter 4.

North of Epipolai is the plain of Megara on the coast of which is the Thapsos peninsula, site of early habitation, and Megara Hyblaia beyond, one of the earliest Dorian colonies in Sicily, destroyed by Syracuse in 483 BC.²¹ Behind Epipolai rises Monte Climiti, as dramatic a bluff of rock as can be seen anywhere. Beneath the cliff and out of sight is the valley of the River Anapo. Both mountain and river had significant roles in the history of Syracuse.²² To the south lies the Hyblaeon (Ibla) mountains – the boundary of Syracusan territory – with their outposts Akrai (Palazzolo) Kasmenai (Bucheri) and Eloros. Beside the harbour stands the temple of Zeus at Polichne. The temple is almost as venerable as the *Apollonion* on Ortygia and was dedicated to Zeus *Urios*, protector of shipping and sailors. As vessels approached the entrance to the Great Harbour, guided there by the shining light of the bronze shield adorning the eastern end of Athene's temple, the first sight was the *Olympieion* within its sanctuary on the hill. And that sight promised safety. But the harbour was not always safe, of course. Numerous naval battles were fought here in the confined space, between the Syracusans and the Athenians, and after them the Carthaginians and finally the Romans. Carnage was almost a commonplace in a spot that today rather boasts holiday homes, motor boats and beaches. Again out of sight, but hidden among cultivated fields lies the Fountain of Ciane, one of several legends associated with Syracuse – another place not often visited, but one where the past is almost tangible.

History leaves a record which is most often reflected, on the one hand, by material remains, usually man-made in and around an urban area, and, on the other hand, by visible effects on the surrounding countryside. Over a long period of time (the entire epoch which is called 'antiquity') the face of Syracuse changed, sometimes drastically, as did the ambitions of its rulers and the expectations of its citizens. This history, with its emphasis on the topography, seeks to examine those features of the city and its territory which made it famous: temples, places of entertainment, fortifications and harbours. Where appropriate, comparative material to emphasise or place into perspective Syracusan achievements has been included. Moreover, where those historical monuments, whether man-made or natural, played a particular role in Syracuse's history or are mentioned in the (mostly literary) sources they become integral to understanding the events and even the motives and outcomes as they affected both rulers and the ruled.

We explored Epipolae. I am convinced that Thucydides knew the ground, and that no *μεχρὶ* is to be omitted in vii.7, and no *εἰς* to be inserted in vi.101. Everything seems perfectly plain when read on the spot.²³

21 On the foundation date of Megara see R. Leighton, *Sicily before History*, London 1999, 232–33; CD nos. 345–54.

22 See especially Chapter 4, and Mte Climiti, CD nos. 377–78, 539–40, 543–45, 631, 647, 668; the Anapo valley, CD nos. 629–30, 634–35, 541–42, *video clip: Anapo valley*.

23 W.W. Jackson, *Ingram Bywater: The Memoir of an Oxford Scholar*, Oxford 1917, 150.

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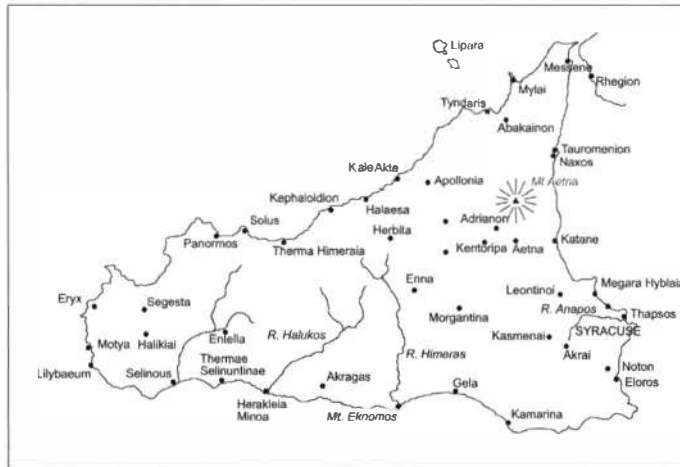


Figure 2: Hellenistic Sicily



Figure 3: Magna Graecia and Sicily

CHAPTER 1: URBAN SPACE

Introduction

Ea tanta est urbs ut ex quattuor urbibus maximis constare dicatur ...
(So vast is the city that it is said to be four of the greatest cities standing together ...)

Syracuse was the most important city of ancient Sicily. Diodorus (26.19.1) called Syracuse a τετράπολις, a description which closely mirrors Cicero's above (*Verr.* 2.4.118). This description reappears in the fourth century AD in Ausonius' *ordo urbium nobilium* (16–17) as 'quis <sileat> quadruplices Syracusas'.¹ From its foundation about 734/3 BC,² down to the Byzantine period and its sack by the Arabs in AD 878, Syracuse maintained an actual or perceived dominant role in Sicily, in the island's affairs and throughout *Magna Graecia*. Moreover, it is remarkable to note that Syracuse was almost the sole urban community in ancient Sicily to be occupied continuously from its foundation. Its Greek, Sikel or Elymian neighbours: Messene, Tauromenion, Naxos, Katane, Gela, Akragas, Selinous and Segesta, were all at one time or another destroyed and left without inhabitants. Some of these catastrophic events, such as those at Tauromenion, Messene and Katane, were brief in the overall histories of the sites, others, such as those at Gela, Kamarina and Selinous, were of long if not permanent duration. Because of its uninterrupted settlement patterns, Syracuse was unique in Sicily.

Syracuse was also, by far, the largest city in ancient Sicily.³ The circuit walls, for which the city became justly famous, enclosed a greater area than did the Aurelian Walls at Rome. The overall length of the fortifications is usually given as 180 stades, (33.2 kms/just over 20.6 miles); the northern defences alone were thirty stades in length

1 Ausonius by then ranked Catania (Katane) one ahead of Syracuse in his list of the twenty most famous cities of the Roman empire. This statement must surely only apply to the later imperial period, and may result from the devastation caused by the Franks in the late third century or could just as easily be a personal rather than an official appraisal. He follows Cicero in assigning four distinct quarters to Syracuse. Strabo, 6.2.4, however, includes Epipolai as a fifth part of the city. There were obviously two versions of the description.

2 For the foundation date see Leighton, 1999, 222–23; cf. F. de Angelis, *Megara Hyblaia and Selinous: The Development of Two Greek City-States in Archaic Sicily*, Oxford 2003, 13.

3 According to H.-P. Drögemüller, *Syrakus: Zur Topographie und Geschichte einer griechischen Stadt*, Heidelberg 1969, 53, Ortygia covers 50 hectares, while that area around the agora – the first to be colonised on the mainland – covers another 70 hectares. The later expansion of Akradina to the southern edge of Epipolai added 114 hectares and finally Akradina expanded to 135 hectares. Tyche was a further small extension of 30 hectares mainly to the north of Akradina, while Neapolis, a much larger extension, corresponding to the present archaeological zone, another 110 hectares to the west and north. Epipolai, later included within the defensive circuit walls, was a larger area than the rest of the city's suburbs added together. Epipolai, the highest point of the city reaching 150 metres (rather less than 500 feet), is about seven kilometres (4 miles) in length, and four kilometres (2.5 miles) in width above Akradina, H.-P. Stahl, *Thucydides: Man's Place in History*, Swansea 2003, 201.

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(5 kms/3½ miles).⁴ The city had fortifications from an early date and the earliest walls joined the mainland suburb of Akradina both to the agora and island of Ortygia. And when Tyche was developed this area was also fortified and thus each of the ‘cities’ came to possess its own defences. However, a consolidation process occurred during the tyranny of Dionysius I, who witnessed the vulnerability of the city when the Epipolai plateau fell into enemy hands, and decided on the construction of circuit walls enclosing all four cities and the neighbouring higher ground overlooking the city.⁵

Syracuse was the most populous city of Sicily (Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.65), with about 200 000 inhabitants when the city was at its greatest extent. And since it had a very benign climate where the sun always shone, says Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.26), this factor no doubt contributed to its attraction as a destination to settle. It was, moreover, the most affluent of the Sicilian cities (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.131–134); and there are various comments about its wealth and its renowned art and architecture.

... such great wealth has been obtained by the people of Syracuse that their name has become synonymous with those who have too many riches.⁶ (Strabo, 6.2.4)

Its civic buildings, indeed its entire urban landscape, drew admiring comments from observers in antiquity.

You will often have been told that Syracuse is the largest of the Greek cities and the most beautiful of all ... what you have been told is true. Its position is not only a strong one but also is attractive to contemplate, from whichever direction it is approached, by land or by sea. (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.117)

We know, therefore, that Syracuse’s urban space compared more than favourably with that of its Sicilian and southern Italian neighbours. However, to what extent was Syracuse the ‘jewel in the crown’ of ancient Sicily and *Magna Graecia*? Was it the yardstick by which other cities measured their own endeavours in town planning, in the construction of their public buildings, and the public ornamentation of their cities? Can any indication of Syracuse’s place in ancient Sicily be retrieved by judging its remains, and of the standard and extent of those urban monuments which were raised during the period of Hellenic domination of Sicily in particular? The following discussion concentrates on the general urban area of Syracuse, its various districts or suburbs, its hub both on the island of Ortygia and in and around the agora and the Great and Small Harbours. So significant are the places of entertainment and the places of religious cults that they are discussed here separately.⁷

4 From Eurialos to the Scala Greca is a distance of about 5 kilometres, but from there around the coast to Akradina then to the island and back up to Neapolis and Epipolai to Eurialos along the south slopes produces the overall distance.

5 See Chapter 4.

6 Cicero, *Verr.* 2.4.120–135, gives some idea of the wealth mostly of the temples, (see Chapter 3), pillaged by Verres. As it had recovered from the depredations of the Second Punic War, Diod. 26.20.1, so it did again; and when sacked in AD 878 its treasures were described as ‘fabulous’, M.I. Finley, *Ancient Sicily*, London 1979, 189.

7 See Chapter 3.

The Site of Syracuse

Arkhias ... met with certain Dorians at Zephyrium ... who had left the company of those who had founded Megara.⁸ He took these with him and with them founded Syracuse. The city flourished because of the country's fertility and its useful harbours. The citizens became great rulers while tyrants still governed them. The Syracusans dominated the other states in Sicily, and when they were freed from autocratic rule they liberated those who had been made slaves of barbarians. Sailing from Corinth, Arkhias founded Syracuse about the same time as Naxos and Megara were founded. It is claimed that when Myskellos and Arkhias went to Delphi together to consult the oracle, the god demanded to know whether they chose wealth or health. When Arkhias preferred wealth and Myskellos health, the oracle assigned Syracuse to the former to found and Kroton to the latter. (Strabo, 6.2.4; cf. Thuc. 6.3.2)

Syracuse was not the sole city on Sicily to have been originally sited on an offshore island.⁹ The Phoenician colony of Motya, south of the harbour of Eryx (Drepana), in a shallow lagoon (*stagnone*) similarly occupied an island, now the *Isola S. Pantaclea*. It was connected from the island's northern end to the Birgi sector of the town, which lay on the mainland at the northern entrance to the bay, by a narrow causeway 1.7 kilometres in length (approximately a mile). The city was partly destroyed by Dionysius I in 397 BC, retaken but then abandoned by the Carthaginians for the stronger site at Lilybaeum, now Marsala. Motya has remained largely deserted down to modern times. Because of its lack of subsequent development this site provides some illuminating evidence of the early development on Ortygia.¹⁰

There are a number of obvious similarities. Both Motya and Ortygia were island fortresses with circuit walls that hugged their respective shorelines.¹¹ The entire eastern or seaward side of Syracuse was also to be protected by walls and towers from at least the time of Dionysius. The fortifications of the Small Harbour at Syracuse may well have been based on the (admittedly) much smaller *cothon*, a fortified inner harbour or repair yard, on Motya. The *cothon* probably could not accommodate more than a dozen triremes and the entrance is also very narrow. At Syracuse the Small Harbour became a much more elaborate affair and had berthing facilities for up to sixty triremes. But both were enclosed with walls and towers and so made inaccessible to besiegers or pirates. And the concept appears Motyan or at least Phoenician/Carthaginian. The Northern Gate at Motya was a sophisticated defensive building, with a pincer effect in front to isolate and expose attackers, and this is also reflected in the construction of the Epipolai Gate, close to the

8 Megara Hyblaia, Thuc. 6.4.1. Zephyrium near Locri.

9 I exclude here from discussion the island communities on Lipara and elsewhere off the coast of Sicily.

10 For a map of Motya see Chapter 5 and the CD Rom, Chapter 5. For the main sites of interest on the island see CD nos. 687–700. For subsequent occupation of the site, see Wilson: 1990, 408, n. 53.

11 For Motya's situation and early occupation see Leighton: 1999, 229–30; H.G. Niemeyer, 'The Phoenicians in the Mediterranean: A Non-Greek Model for Expansion and Settlement in Antiquity,' in *Greek Colonists and Native Populations*, ed. J.-P. Descoeudres, Oxford 1990, 476–77, 479, 480.

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Eurialos fort at the extreme western end of Syracuse. The North Gate at Selinous and the South Gate at Megara Hyblaia also show these signs of thoughtful planning but, like the Epipolai Gate, may be a little later in date than the defences at Motya.¹² It certainly looks likely that some of the urban and defensive innovations that took place in Syracuse were influenced by contact with its Punic neighbour, which came about because of the hostilities in 397. Dionysius I is credited with many military inventions including the fortifications of Syracuse and the island and is often described as a military genius, but he could just as easily have copied the ideas from his enemies.

Ortygia

Ortygia is linked to the mainland by a bridge and boasts the spring of Arethusa, which rises in such abundance as to form a river at once and flows into the sea. (Strabo, 6.2.4)

This bridge link dates to centuries before Strabo's day, and it remains today. But originally, as at Motya, there was a mole or causeway, perhaps initially the width of a road but later enlarged into a broad mole on which extensive building occurred. The island is not as far from the shore as Motya lies from Birgi; and the earliest land link would, therefore, have been rather less than a kilometre in length. The island had certainly become linked to the mainland before Gelon's tyranny (480s) and this feature may date back to the mid-sixth century (Thuc. 6.3.2). A number of legends were (or became) associated with the island. Homer (Od. 5.123) refers to Ortygia where Artemis killed Orion although he presumably had Delos rather than the island at Syracuse in mind.¹³ Ortygia was also the island of the quail, which was another and older name for Delos, but the myths associated with this place or others in the Aegean were clearly transferred around the Mediterranean. It is, however, the almost miraculous spring at the southern end of the island which dominates the myths and closely ties Ortygia to Artemis. And it is notable that a cult statue of Artemis stood adjacent to the spring, and it is possible that the spring, the statue and the Ionic temple, mentioned in the Prologue,¹⁴ were all related to one another in a precinct from the harbour side to the highest point on the island.

Artemis received the island of Syracuse from the gods, which was named 'Ortygia' after her by both oracles and men. On this island likewise these nymphs to please Artemis caused a great spring to burst out which was given the name Arethusa. Not only in ancient times did this great fountain contain large fish in abundance, but also in our own time we still find fish there, now considered sacred and not to be touched by men. (Diod. 5.3.5–6)

12 For the North Gate at Selinous, see R.R. Holloway, *The Archaeology of Ancient Sicily*, London 1991, 146–47 (with plan) and CD no. 185, for Megara's South Gate, Grady: 2003, 350 and CD nos. 345–46; for the North Gate at Motya, B.S.J. Isserlin & J. du Plat Taylor, *Motya: A Phoenician and Carthaginian City in Sicily*, Leiden 1974, 69–80, and CD nos. 698–700. For a plan of Selinous see also Chapter 3.

13 For Delos as Ortygia, see Athenaeus, 9.392; *OCD*² 760. See also the myth of Asteria associated with Ortygia (Delos) as (Quail Island), *OCD*² 133. For a discussion of the mole and its date, Freeman: 1891, 2.139–40, 504–6.

14 See also Chapter 3 and the CD Rom Chapter 3a for a model of the temple, and CD nos. 496, 578, 616–621.

The more romantic legend appears to have been a later development using the natural phenomenon of a freshwater spring so close to the sea, and the proximity of this spring to the next, and Hellenic, coastline which was the Peloponnese and Elis in particular. Hence perhaps the emergence of the Alpheos–Arethusa legend, in part, associated with local Sicilian Greek writers as they sought to establish the ancient credentials of the island. This tale certainly captured the imagination of Greco-Roman writers, just as Sicily as a whole was to become associated with the journey and adventures of Odysseus:

Ortygia, revered place of reappearing Alpheos,
The offset of renowned Syracuse. (Pindar, *Nemean Ode*, 1.1)

Stretching against the wave beaten shore of Plemmyrion
Lies an island, in front of a Sicanian bay: it used to be called by the name Ortygia. Here,
so the tale goes, Alpheos, from distant Elis,
Forced a secret way beneath the sea, which now,
At your spring, Arethusa, mingles with your Sicilian waves. (Vergil, *Aeneid*, 3,692-696)

Cicero (*Verr.* 2.4.118), on the other hand, is (perhaps surprisingly) concerned more about topographical features than legendary beginnings. His evidence appears completely factual:

... the island ... is surrounded by two harbours. Here is the palace of Hieron where the praetors regularly stay. Here too are several temples, two of which are by far superior to the others, Diana and ... Minerva. At the end of the island is a spring of fresh water called Arethusa, incredibly large, and filled to overflowing with fish; and so situated that it would be overwhelmed by the sea if it were not for the protection of a huge stone wall.¹⁵

The island would initially have become heavily built over, but all civilians residing there were certainly evicted soon after Dionysius I took power, and even possibly before, and these remained excluded through to the later Roman empire. Although housing the ancient and important temples of Apollo, Artemis and Athena, the island largely became the barracks for a mercenary army which totalled at least 10 000. Ortygia may have sounded like a suitably romantic theme to ancient writers, but in fact in the Hellenistic period it was nothing more than an armed camp. The palaces of the rulers initially lay on the mole, not on Ortygia itself, but at some stage (probably during the peaceful conditions of much of the third century BC) the lack of any need for an army meant that the island could be redeveloped for other uses. Hence the reference by Cicero to a palace of Hieron II, and to extensive open spaces at the island's southern end beyond the Fountain of Arethusa.

¹⁵ Cicero's comment about the temples of Diana and Minerva being superior to the rest might well illustrate the continued use of the Ionic temple in his day. He may have regarded the archaic temple to Apollo as unattractive, and not worth his attention or note. For models and illustrations of these temples see Chapter 3 and the CD nos. 493, 495, 496.

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Cicero mentions (*Verr.* 2.5.30, 5.80–81) that in the summer months the governor, C. Verres, during his three-year tenure (73–71 BC), chose not to occupy the former palace of the king, which must have been situated in close proximity to the temple of Athena, but instead ordered that tents be pitched *in litore, quod est litus in Insula Syracusis post Arethusae fontem*, in other words on the shore of the island beyond the fountain. This southerly spot was close to the entrance of the Great Harbour, and was, says Cicero, very pleasant and away from prying eyes. This suggests that the area beyond the fountain had been converted into a pleasure park attached to the palace. This is a far cry from its former use, but also indicates an empty urban space within the ancient city, which could have remained deserted, and was eventually subjected to considerable alteration. Apart from the temples and the palace the island had evidently become an open space,¹⁶ for Cicero states plainly (*Verr.* 2.5.84, 2.5.98) that the citizens of Syracuse were forbidden from residing there, and that this law had been in effect since the city's capture by M. Claudius Marcellus in 212 BC, and was still in force.¹⁷

Today no Syracusan is allowed to live on the island, for it is a place easily defended by a few men. Therefore, Marcellus did not wish to entrust it to men not wholly trustworthy; and moreover it is from that part of the city that you approach by ship, and the Syracusans had often excluded our armies and on that account Marcellus thought not to commit the keys of the city to them.

This did not mean, however, that – as in the time of the tyrants – the population was totally barred from entering the island. Again Cicero (*Verr.* 2.5.95) demonstrates this fact in recounting an attack made by pirates on Syracuse during the period of Verres' governorship.

The pirates' approach was not indicated as it always used to be by a beacon from a watch-tower or high ground,¹⁸ but it was the flames of the blazing ships that announced ... the impending danger. The crowd was restrained by remembering that the situation was a serious one and the enemy nearby ... they called on one another to behave like men, armed themselves and occupied the entire market place and that large part of the city called the island.

Still, it is clear that a rather novel situation had evolved in which some parts of the city had a very high population density, while Ortygia (the original centre of the colony) was for some considerable time virtually a deserted headland, with the exception of some notable and important buildings. Ortygia began as the original colony, then it became

16 For a temple to Hera and its possible site see Chapter 3; Freeman: 1891, 2.442. Later scholars seem to ignore the possibility of a *Heraion* on Ortygia. A temple to Hera lay close by, however (Wilson: 1990, 290) on the coast near modern Modica. Athenaeus also refers to an altar on the southern end of Ortygia, its offerings being associated with shipping, 11.462. For illustrations of the *Castello Maniace* which is presumably situated where a *Heraion* or an altar once stood, see the CD nos. 298–99, 379–89.

17 See Chapter 5.

18 The high ground is the plateau of Epipolai. Cicero's evidence may indicate that this area was no longer garrisoned or possessed a night-watch.

the nucleus of a larger settlement but with the emergence of the tyrants it became the private backyard of the rulers who kept their military support and camp followers there. Soon after the outbreak of the First Punic War in 264 BC, when Syracuse became an ally of Rome against Carthage, Hieron II incorporated much of the island into the grounds of his palace.¹⁹ The mercenary army was no longer needed as the city entered into an unprecedented period of peace and prosperity. After the siege and capture of Syracuse by the Romans the citizens may have been banned from living on the island although it continued to be used for religious purposes – there was easy enough access to it. It was only in the imperial period of the Roman empire that the island began to be built on again, and finally returned to its role as the central area of the city, as Ausonius, for example, might be suggesting. Today there is no park on the island; Ortygia is a place of narrow streets and limited vistas, nor is its population anything comparable to that on the mainland. In many ways it has become what it originally was – the colony of Corinth.

The island on the eastern side facing the Ionian Sea is furthermore considerably higher than it was in antiquity. Allowing for a natural build-up in the level of habitable area on the island by as much as seven to eight metres,²⁰ there is now a steep drop to the sea accentuated by its receding level. In antiquity citizens would have walked beneath high walls through this quarter of Syracuse, which overlooked the sea while today the modern road is probably at much the same height as the ancient fortifications. On the Great Harbour side (facing west) the sea level conversely has risen to such an extent that the odeon's orchestra in the 'Roman Gymnasium' north of the main road (*Via Elorina*) and so some distance from the sea, is usually under water. The sea level at the modern *Porta Marina* on the west side of Ortygia is also now deep enough for large sea-going ships to dock, especially at the modern *Mole S. Antonio*, which has thrust out the ancient mole even further into the bay. The ancient dockyards lie underneath this mole or even under the western side of the ancient mole, which was considerably enlarged by Dionysius I. Before that time, a much more modest causeway linked Akradina to the island.²¹ Thus the dockyards and sheds used by the triremes were in shallow water – much like that to be found on the southern side of the bay, with its sandy beaches.

19 Hieron's treaty with Rome, initially for fifteen years, was honoured until the accession of his grandson Hieronymus in 215, Pol. 1.16.10.

20 Certain subterranean areas (cellars) illustrating habitation from the Greco-Roman period have been open to the general public since 2005.

21 There is some suggestion that an original causeway – mid-sixth century – joined the island to the mainland further north than the mole stands today, Freeman: 1891, 2.139–140, 504–06; cf. A. di Vita. 'Town Planning in the Greek Colonies of Sicily from the Time of the Foundations to the Punic Wars,' in *Greek Colonists and Native Populations*, ed. J.-P. Descoeudres, Oxford, 1990, 361–63; Wilson 1990, 160. It would have been very much along the same lines as the causeway at Motya.

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The Great Harbour would then have been situated directly south of the agora, where the *Mole S. Antonio* is now situated along a line of what would have been a causeway. This would also mean that during the Athenian and subsequent sieges the opposing fleets were situated further apart than is usually perceived. The Athenian stockade was nearer to the estuary of the Anapos to the south of Lysimeleia, while the Syracusans had their docks almost opposite the causeway between the agora and Ortygia. The island itself on the west would also have stood out more prominently than it does today, particularly emphasised by the fortifications of Dionysius. The Spring of Arethusa presents nearly the only place on this side of the island which remains at its original level, enclosed by high walls, but these at least give some impression of the ancient defences. The modern promenade which links the spring to the *Porta Marina* northwards is also at this level and therefore walking along it gives one some idea of the relative heights of walls to pavement levels in antiquity.

The Great and Small Harbours

On each side of the island there is an extensive harbour, and the extent of the larger one is eighty square stadia.²² (Strabo, 6.2.4)

The double harbour of Syracuse was one of the main reasons for the city's strength. Together, the harbours could contain a war fleet of about four hundred triremes, possessed by Dionysius I and Dionysius II, says Diodorus, sixty of which could be berthed in the Small Harbour (14.7.1–5), and three hundred and twenty accommodated in one hundred and sixty boat sheds built along the northern shore of the Great Harbour (14.42.5). Furthermore, in the event of the Great Harbour being partly occupied by invaders – as it was on a number of occasions – the Small Harbour was of a sufficient size to retain a powerful squadron of ships to allow for counter-attacks,²³ and to accept with little difficulty supplies for the besieged. The modern topography is different here to what it was in antiquity because of natural changes in the coastline and also because of modern constructions, such as the *Molo/Pontile S. Antonio*. Clearly, by the time Cicero visited Syracuse there was already a bridge linking the island to the mainland, which he mentions himself, as does Strabo writing a little later. But both of these writers provide misleading evidence. Strabo is obviously inaccurate in his estimation of the size of the Great Harbour, and Cicero's knowledge of the local geography was also faulty for he says:

22 Nine square miles is guesswork, since Strabo probably never visited Syracuse. Five square miles is nearer to the correct area of the Great Harbour. On the inaccuracies of Strabo, which suggest second-hand information, see R. Syme, *Anatolica: Studies in Strabo*, Oxford 1995, 16–17, 62, 222.

23 It is worth bearing in mind that during the wars with Persia – with the exception of Athens – no Greek *polis* possessed a fleet of more than forty triremes, Hdt. 8.1.

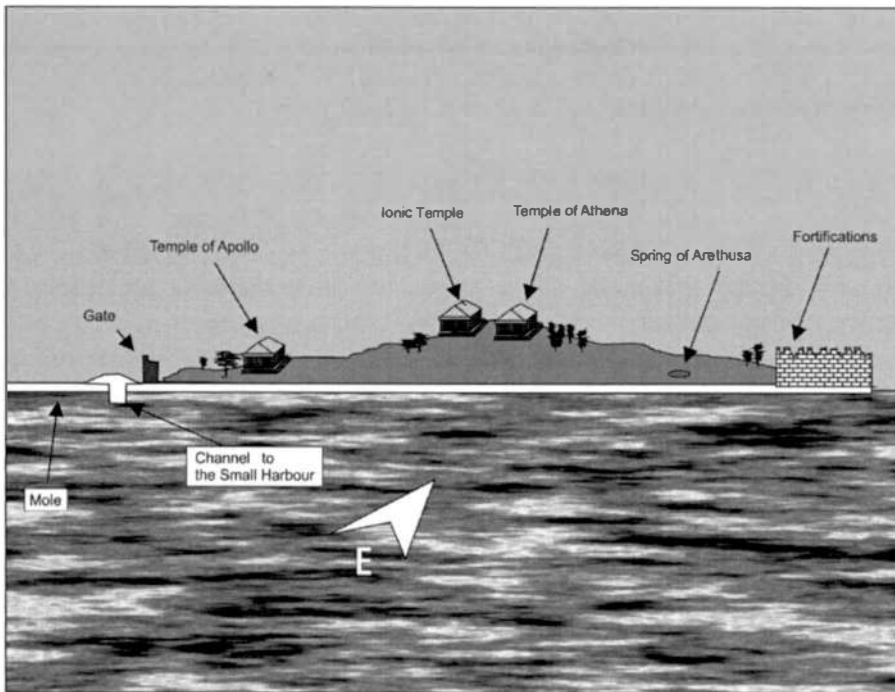


Figure 4: Ortygia from the West

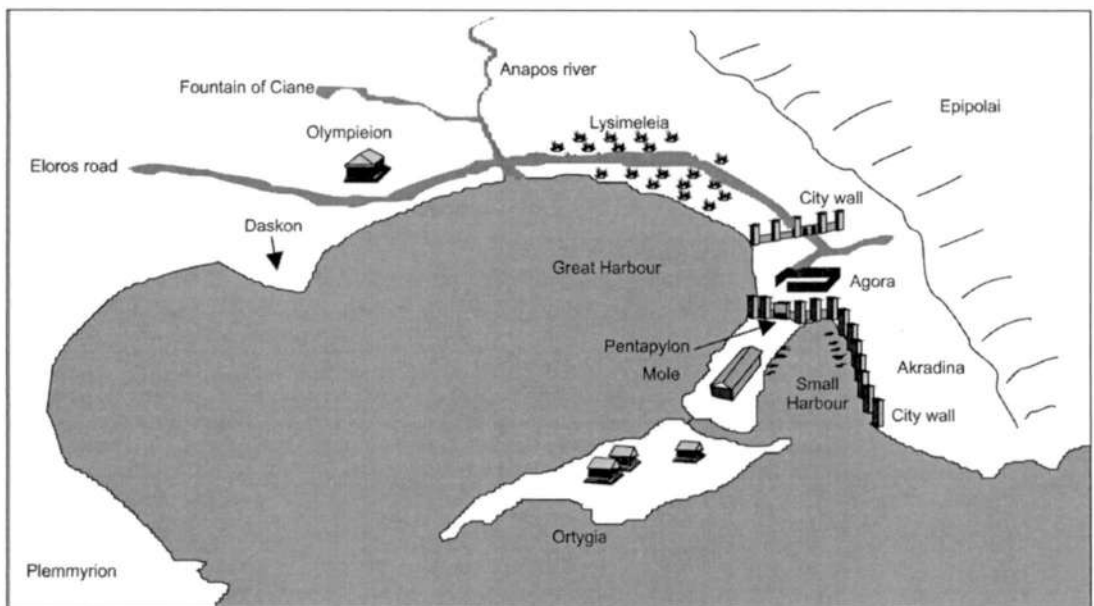


Figure 5: Ortygia and the Great Harbour from the South East

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The harbours are nearly enclosed in an embrace of the city's buildings, and while they have entrances far apart, their exits come together and are joined. At this conjunction, that part of the town which is called the Island, separated by a narrow sea, is attached and made continuous again by a bridge.²⁴ (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.117)

The Great Harbour to the south can never have been almost enclosed by buildings since the city's circuit wall reached the harbour just to the west of the modern railway station. The Bay of Daskon and further south again, the peninsula of Plemmyrion, the latter forming the southern head of the bay, always lay outside the urban area of the city, as earlier writers such as Thucydides state plainly.²⁵ Diodorus supports Cicero's picture of the Small Harbour on the northern side of Ortygia, at least from the time of the reign of Agathokles (317–289 BC). Then it is said that there were towers along the shore, but whether that means the mainland or the shore of the island as well, is left unclear (Diod. 16.83.2). The Great Harbour – the modern *Porto Grande* – was, as it is today, a much more open area and rather vulnerable to attack if both heads of the bay were not fortified. Going by the archaeological evidence, the southern head was never established and maintained as a permanent fort, suggesting that the Great Harbour was perceived as being of lesser importance.

The Small Harbour is rather smaller today than it once was. The modern *Porto Piccolo* has a central entrance between two booms of similar length, but the ancient entrance was more than likely off-centre (cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.118), since shipping in antiquity generally crept along the shoreline rather than riding the bigger swells further out at sea, as is more usual today – especially for motor-propelled vessels. It is perhaps worth noting that when Agathokles slipped out of Syracuse during the Carthaginian siege on 15 August 310 BC he headed in a northerly direction to avoid interception by the enemy fleet then stationed outside the Great Harbour.²⁶ An entrance to the Small Harbour on the northern shore will have facilitated his escape. The dockyards for the triremes (*Arsenale*) on the north side of the Small Harbour are at least a hundred metres inland from the present shoreline. Guido comments that during the tyranny of Dionysius I new dockyards were constructed 'in the Little Harbour, for the naval power of Syracuse had been greatly increased, and the entrance (then narrower before coastal erosion had taken place) was fortified'.²⁷ However, the area around the Great Harbour is actually marshy and low lying,

24 It is possible that here Cicero intends his reader to mean the channel which linked both harbours. The entrance to the Great Harbour was, of course, through the channel between Ortygia and Plemmyrion, and that of the Small Harbour close inshore at Akradina. Even if the entrance to the Small Harbour was on its southern edge closest to Ortygia, the mouths of both ports will have remained far apart. Cicero contradicts his comments at 2.4.117, and is not precise. It is almost as if he had not visited Syracuse or drew his comment from an imperfect memory. It may well be that Syracuse did not feature highly in his visit in 70, or since he was allowed just seventy days to collect incriminating evidence against Verres he had only a very short stay here. When Cicero was quaestor in Sicily he was stationed at Lilybaeum, not in Syracuse.

25 For the Syracusan *Chorē* see Chapter 2.

26 For the date and the eclipse of the sun which occurred on that day see M. Cary, 'Agathocles,' in *CAH* 7, Cambridge 1928, 625 and n.1.

27 Guido, M., *Syracuse: A Handbook to its History and Principal Monuments*, Syracuse 1958, 20.

and hence more susceptible to erosion, while Akradina is the furthest extension of the limestone escarpment of Epipolai, and is much more hardwearing.²⁸ Coastal erosion does not occur where the sea level is falling. In all probability, therefore, an ancient barrier or fortification closed off the Small Harbour from at least the time of Dionysius I, and possibly earlier than his tyranny. The Athenian besiegers made no attempt to gain an entry into the Small Harbour which further suggests that it was fortified by 415. Meanwhile, the *Portus Laccius* (Diod. 14.7.1–5), a name used in antiquity to mean a lake, pond or tank, may well signify a harbour where there was a lack of tidal influence.

The modern connection between mainland and island consists of three bridges over the *Darsena*, but none which stand on the site of the ancient bridge for it lay closer to the mouth of the Great Harbour if indeed it was, as it must surely have been more or less aligned with the Marine or 'Urban' Gate.²⁹ Neither the channel nor the bridge can have been of remarkable size or appearance, however, since in width the former would have been no more than double the breadth of a single trireme – about five metres, (Diod. 14.7.1–5) – while the latter will have been a slight, almost certainly wooden affair, probably either rising over the channel to a sufficient height to allow ships to pass beneath with sails furled or it was withdrawn as each vessel passed through with its oars being pulled. The current channel is the product of construction work ordered during the Spanish occupation but its ancient equivalent must have lain close by, although possibly silted up by then. Moreover, whatever the precise location of the bridge, it also did not join Ortygia to the mainland but rather to the ancient mole on which the tyrants had their acropolis and fortified palaces. This too has altered shape over more than two millennia. The ancient mole must have been a narrower edifice, but with nearly as much an urban landscape as it possesses now.³⁰ Yet the placement of a gate beyond the present channel indicates that a bridge existed in the vicinity and that the island began at this same point.

Today the mole is covered to an almost uniform height with apartment blocks of six to seven stories. In the Hellenistic period, and probably for some after that, this quarter of the city was guarded by high walls and towers (to prevent infiltration from the mainland) within which there were palaces and gardens.³¹ A bridge at the exit to both harbours also implies that they were connected internally, as Diodorus also suggests, but probably not before the tyranny of Dionysius since Thucydides seems unaware of a connecting channel during the Athenian siege.³² An internal connection later provided additional

28 Guido: 1958, 13.

29 CD nos. 308, 641. The foundations, consisting of a three-stepped podium, are dated to the tyranny of Dionysius I, L. Karlsson, *Fortification Towers and Masonry Techniques in the Hegemony of Syracuse '405–211 B.C.*, Göteborg 1992, 22–23.

30 For modern impressions of the mole see the CD nos. 646, 580, 532, 654.

31 Just one garden can be seen on the mole today, very close to the channel on the corner of the *Via Malta* and *Via Maieli*.

32 It is probably significant that Thucydides, on more than one occasion, notes that the squadron stationed in the Small Harbour sailed around Ortygia to join in naval engagements in the bay. This manoeuvre would have been made unnecessary had the harbours been connected.

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strength and could allow sorties to be made from the Small to the Great Harbour when there was an attack, and allow reinforcements and supplies to reach a secure berth if they arrived from the south. The interlinked double harbour was clearly the foundation for much of Syracuse's power in antiquity. The bridge connecting the mole to Ortygia outside the Marine Gate was probably a wooden construction since it would have been necessary to be raised to allow traffic between the two harbours. This is certainly implicit in Diodorus' description of the harbours during the tyranny of Dionysius, and may well have been maintained down to the Roman period since it provided additional security to the city. Of course, at a later stage the channel may have silted up and the island reverted to being a peninsula until refortifications were ordered in 1526.

Akradina

Cicero (*Verr.* 2.4.119) calls Akradina the second city of Syracuse, and is recognised as the initial phase of expansion from the original colony on the island.³³

... this contains a broad market-place, fine colonnades, an elaborately decorated town-hall, a splendid senate house, and a fine temple to the Olympian Zeus, as well as the rest of the city, filled with private buildings and divided by a single continuous street crossed by a number of others.

The single broad street running north to south was the *Hekatompedon*, thirty metres in width (100 feet), which ran down from the *Hexapylon* (six-gated entrance) on the northern circuit wall of Dionysius down to the agora. If Cicero is correct in stating that the transverse streets ran west to east then these mirrored the axis of the streets on the island.³⁴ These smaller streets appear to have often been little more than narrow passages between quite tall buildings (Diod. 19.7.1). The suburb has sometimes been divided by commentators into Upper and Lower Akradina, the latter being the area around the agora, the former being the largely residential quarter which ran along the shore in a northwards direction, and which was protected again, from the elder Dionysius' time, by a wall on the seaward side.³⁵ There is, however, no ancient evidence for such a division.

The dominating feature must have been the agora or civic centre of the city. This was the centre of one of the largest cities in antiquity, and must therefore have compared favourably with the agora at Athens. Today the agora lies underneath the *Fora Siracusana*, and is more distant and isolated from the sea which has retreated since antiquity. The mole has also been extended in a southerly direction in modern times so that the nearby harbours are not immediately visible. In common with other Greek harbour cities, the

33 Freeman, 1891, 2.447–48; Holloway: 1991, 84.

34 See Holloway: 1991, 54–55, for a plan of the streets on Ortygia and a discussion of its earliest phase; also G. Voza, in *Syracuse: The Fairest Greek City*, Roma 1989, 11; Di Vita: 1990, 362., which suggests that the earliest main road on the island ran north–south leading from a causeway more or less where the modern boom of the Porto Piccolo lies and into Akradina. Again highly reminiscent of the situation at Motya, but one which changed during the fifth century BC.

35 Freeman: 1891, 2.444–51; Randall MacIver: 1968, 146–50; cf. Loicq-Berger: 1967, 154, 'le quartier d'Achradine.'

agora of Syracuse was originally adjacent to the sea wall; and shipping could, therefore, berth alongside the markets they served (Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.96-97). While there must have been a defensive wall this did not prevent pirates gaining easy access to the agora in a night attack during Verres' governorship:

When I say that these pirates entered the harbour ... I must explain the lie of the land ... for Syracuse is not bounded by the waters of its harbour, rather the harbour is itself encircled and embraced by the city and the sea, rather than washing against the outer walls of the harbour, itself flows into the centre of the city. And here it was that ... Heracleo the pirate and his four small galleys sailed about ... right up to the forum of Syracuse and to all its quays and reached a place where the fleets of Carthage, at the height of her naval power, after numerous attempts in many wars failed to reach ... a place so situated that the Syracusans witnessed an enemy's triumphant arms within their walls, in their city, in their forum ...

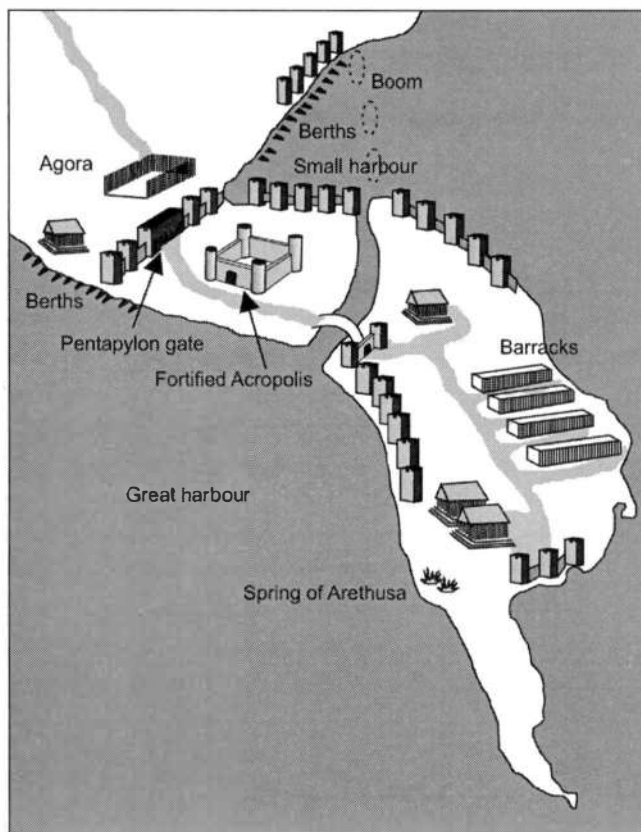


Figure 6: Ortygia and Akradina as they might have looked during the Tyranny of Dionysius I

Syracuse in antiquity

Vitruvius (1.7.1) says that where a town is situated at the coast, then its marketplace should be next to the harbour in order to receive any traffic from the sea. The agora at Syracuse certainly appears to have fully complied with this opinion, and is easily comparable to other coastal or island sites such as Delos and Thasos.³⁶ The original environment has nonetheless been altered both naturally and also by the activities of the inhabitants.

In or close to the agora must have been situated the banqueting hall 'The Hall of the Sixty Couches', the largest and grandest building in Sicily. Built during the reign of Agathokles, it was destroyed by lightning (Diod. 16.83.2). Also here (as both Cicero and Diodorus (16.832) state) was an *Olympieion*, a temple to Zeus. Cicero states that the Council chamber or *Prytanium* was particularly fine (*Verr.* 2.4.119). He also records that Verres stole from it a statue of Sappho, by the sculptor Silanion (2.4.126).

Tyche

There is a third city called Tyche from the ancient temple of Fortuna that once stood there. This has a grand gymnasium,³⁷ and several temples and is also a crowded and densely populated quarter of Syracuse. (Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.119)

Tyche lay between Akradina and Neapolis, and was probably walled between 466 and 415 BC. It is a rather vague area, and Cicero himself does not provide sufficiently accurate topographic features to pinpoint this quarter. The precise location of Tyche has not, as yet, attracted a consensus.³⁸ There seems to have been a Tyche Gate – on some maps near the sea, in others close to Epipolai. It seems likely that Tyche was originally beyond, that is outside, the walls of Akradina, at the northern edge of Epipolai and corresponds to that area today which contains the Cappucine Quarry, a large sports ground and extensive modern housing development. It reached as far as the sea on its eastern edge, and linked with Neapolis on the west. If indeed it was a small expansion of the city, as Drögemüller suggests,³⁹ and was a narrow strip, as appears on Fabricius' map, this position seems to be a reasonable conclusion to a problem that has taxed modern commentators. Tyche was not adjacent to the *Hexapylon* on the northern circuit walls, but was the first suburb reached from the north after passing through the city's original defensive circuit.⁴⁰

36 Vitruvius notes Halicarnassus as an example, 2.8.11. See also R.E. Wycherley, *How the Greeks built Cities*, London: 1949, 81 for Delos; J. Wynne-Thomas, *The Legacy of Thasos*, 1978, 39.

37 The gymnasium that is supposed to have stood here is not to be confused with the excavated complex at the southern end of Neapolis, which is a later Roman foundation. The remains of the Hellenistic establishment lie under modern development.

38 Modern Tyche extends northwards and upwards from the *Via Teocrito* to include the *Latomia dei Cappuccini* on the east. The land above the *Via Delfica* flattens out into the extension of the Epipolai Plateau and a defensive wall here would be a logical step in the city's expansion. No ancient wall can be observed here.

39 Drögemüller: 1969, 53 and note 3.

40 Maps of Syracuse have Tyche all over the place. K. Fabricius, *Das Antike Syrakus: Eine Historisch-Archäologische Untersuchung*, Aalen 1932, (end) has the suburb as a narrow strip north of Akradina, and he is followed by Guido: 1967, 159; Loicq-Berger: 1967 (end); Green: 1971, 184; Grady: 2003, 321. Cf. C.H. Oldfather:., *Diodorus of Sicily*, Volume 5, Harvard 1950, (end), who excludes Tyche altogether, and is followed by R. Warner, *The Peloponnesian War*, Harmondsworth 1954, 629; Freeman: 1891, 2.306, 546–48, notes the 'extent of the quarter' is uncertain, but then places Tyche 'west of the north-western corner of Achradina' and as far north as the defensive walls of Dionysius; Randall MacIver: 1968, 171, also has Tyche adjacent to the

Tyche is frequently mentioned in the sources, but not by Thucydides. However, Diodorus (11.68.1) has Tyche north of Akradina but it need not be at a great distance. Livy (24.21.7) has Tyche plainly south of the *Hexapylon* and towards Akradina and the agora. His evidence also suggests a high population. When Marcellus forced an entry into the city in 212 he took Epipolai and the Eurialos fort and camped (says Livy (25.25.5)) between Neapolis and Tyche but outside the populated area. This suggests that the Romans camped on the plateau between the *Hexapylon* and a wall which enclosed Tyche just to the north of Akradina, as Fabricius thought. The most celebrated feature of Tyche today, besides the museum, is the *Latomia dei Cappucini*, which provided the stone for the buildings in the city and probably for its walls. The base of the quarry is a full sixty metres below the current surface, and it is quite plain that massive amounts of stone were cut from this southern edge of Epipolai. However, the quarry may well have been much less impressive when the Athenians were incarcerated here, since the great building programmes of Dionysius, Agathokles and Hieron II occurred long after the prisoners had gone. The topography has evidently changed here too, although the atmosphere of this site has brought out the best and worst in modern commentators.⁴¹

Neapolis

There is also a fourth city which because it was built after the rest is called Neapolis. On its highest point stands the greatest theatre,⁴² besides which there are two fine temples, one to Ceres and the other to Libera, and a very tall and beautiful statue of Apollo Temenites ... (Verr. 2.4.119)

Neapolis is situated to the north west of the agora and encompasses the modern archaeological park above the *Via Paolo Orsi* and west towards the city's main cemetery. In antiquity it seems to have included a fair section of the area around the modern *Via Teocrito*. Neapolis was also heavily populated, at least in later times (Livy, 25.25), but it was its monumental buildings which made it famous. Interestingly, Cicero makes no mention of the great altar erected next to the theatre by Hieron II, and which was surely intact then and used much later.⁴³ Although Diodorus comments on its construction and dimensions (16.83.2), it obviously had no impact on Cicero who perhaps missed seeing it on this occasion. It should have been memorable. Just north lies the most famous of the *latomia*, two hundred metres (600 feet) in length according to Aelian (*VH.* 12.44),

Scala Greca; A. de Sélincourt, *The War with Hannibal*, Harmondsworth 1965, 684, places Tyche on the greater part of central Epipolai. Drögemüller: 1969, 21–31, discusses the possibilities and then follows Freeman in his placement of Tyche, 101, but a much smaller area roughly corresponding to the streets around the current *Museo Archeologico Regionale Paolo Orsi*, and immediately north and south of the *Viale Teocrito*; cf. B.D. Wescoat, *Syracuse, the Fairest Greek City: Ancient Art from the Museo Archeologico Regionale 'Paolo Orsi.'* Rome 1989, 15.

41 See, for instance, V. Cronin, *The Golden Honeycomb*, London 1959, 107–12.

42 The theatre and amphitheatre are discussed in Chapter 3 and on the CD, also CD Catalogue nos. 103–6, 110–14, 317–28, 333–39, 506–8, 510, 592–96, 658–62.

43 See Chapter 6.

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where vast holes punctuate the topography and which were put to other uses once worked out, becoming the city's prisons or places of work such as, for example, the 'Cave of the Rope-Makers'. The quarries were still used as prisons nearly four hundred years later (Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.68, 2.5.143, 2.5.160), and were plainly effective holding areas.

There was presumably a shortage of space on Ortygia near the precinct of the *Apol-lonion* as a result of the mercenary army stationed on the island. This would account for the *Temenos* or statue of Apollo being located immediately next-door to the Greek Theatre on its western side – there is also little space between the theatre and the defensive wall. Following the usual cult practices, the statue was in an enclosure with a shrine and altar.⁴⁴ This precinct along with the whole of Neapolis was only fortified after the initial Athenian attack on the city in the winter of 415/4 (Thuc. 6.75.1).⁴⁵ Temples to Demeter and Kore and Herakles were also to be found in this district, the last probably someway outside the walls of 415, perhaps close to the modern cemetery.⁴⁶ The temple of Demeter and Kore was probably below the *Temenos* of Apollo and incorporated into the city at the same time. They were certainly within the city walls when they were plundered by Himilkon in 396 (Diod. 14.63.1).⁴⁷ If Syracuse was perceived to possess a weak spot then it lay in the Neapolis/Temenites sector at the junction of the wall with the Great Harbour. This perception may account for the fact that invaders usually chose to camp in the marsh of Lysimeleia adjacent to the shore of the Great Harbour. Although this area was unhealthy, it gave rapid access into the centre of the city in the event of a breach in the walls. The Romans, on the other hand, after the unsuccessful attempt to break through the walls in Akradina where these came down to the Small Harbour, in the end simply stormed the city walls on Epipolai near the *Hexapylon* and the *Scala Greca*.

The Fortifications

From early in the rule of Dionysius I (Diod. 14.7.1) the city and the entire plateau of Epipolai was fortified.⁴⁸ Dionysius took power in 406/405, and soon after that is said to have fortified Ortygia and the harbours. However, it is difficult to understand precisely what occurred at this juncture because not only has the topography altered but the geography itself has changed. Initially Dionysius had concentrated his power base at the harbour (Diod. 13.96.2) which is either in the area to the south and west of the agora, or south east – depending on whether the Great or Small Harbour is meant. Dionysius must have possessed a house here but it does seem clear that, from the start, he had his eye on the island.

44 Cf Freeman: 1891, 2.42, who thought that a temple must be situated here, although none is attested, but who did not know of the existence of a third temple on Ortygia.

45 Freeman: 1892, 3.656–59.

46 For the Syracusan recapture of the *Herakleion* see Thuc. 7.73.2. This temple was probably included in the city by the Dionysian walls.

47 Himilkon seized Akradina, says Diodorus, and robbed the temples, intimating a close proximity. See also Chapter 4.

48 Diodorus seems to suggest from 404 BC, following the peace with the Carthaginians, 14.7.1.

Ortygia, for example, must already have been surrounded by walls long before the Athenian expedition arrived in 414, but to Dionysius is credited a wall with towers (Diod. 14.7.2) which blocked off Ortygia from Akradina. This statement implies that the link between mainland and island was already more than simply a causeway and had already become the mole that is seen today. Diodorus also states that a fortified acropolis was constructed on the island which contained the dockyards and was connected to the Small Harbour (14.7.3). Whether the Small Harbour was the location of dockyards sufficient for sixty triremes and an entrance through which only a single ship could pass at any one time – hence a channel between the two harbours – or whether this is a reference to a pen for the triremes (rather similar to what was devised by the Athenians in Lysimeleia in 414) is unclear. It could mean either. In a subsequent passage (14.42.5) Diodorus further recounts that 160 ship sheds were built in the Great Harbour for triremes then under construction for the campaign against Motya.⁴⁹ This mention should further indicate that the Small Harbour, a *lacus* or *lacuna*, was by then a landlocked lake.

On the landward side of his wall Dionysius was also responsible for the construction of an impressive agora, presumably where the agora is still situated. The acropolis mentioned by Diodorus ought, as its name implies, to be situated on the highest part of the island, namely in the vicinity of the temples of Athena and Artemis, rather than down by the present *Castello Maniace* as some modern commentators have argued. The walls themselves have certainly exercised the imagination of modern scholars, some of whom appear to believe that a double wall ringed Ortygia and divided the mole from Akradina, although there is neither evidence for nor any sense in this assumption. The Epipolai wall from the sea to Eurialos was built in twenty days, thirty stades in length, with towers at regular intervals, and along this wall (probably near to the present *Scala Greca*) was the *Hexapylon* (Diod. 14.18.2-8), which was either a simple gate with three entrances and three exits, or conceivably a system of three double gates. It seems incredible that *Hexapylon* has been interpreted as a complex consisting of six successive gates. Had such a gateway existed, traffic in and out of the city would have been at a constant standstill. It was at the time of the fortification of the mole and the Small Harbour that the civilian population appears to have been expelled from Ortygia (Diod. 14.7.5) – if indeed there was by that time a substantial number of private homes there. The quarter of Akradina may have already become a more attractive place to live. Probably a little later than this came the construction of a fortified palace – a second acropolis – on the mole, although since Diodorus seems to refer to this only after Timoleon's victory in 344/343 BC (16.70.4) this complex may date to quite late in Dionysius' rule. A palatial dwelling close to the mole's fortifications, to the harbours and to the *Pentapylon* would

⁴⁹ Vitruvius, 5.12.7, suggests that boat sheds should be built facing north. The sheds in the Great Harbour presumably faced south or south west, and in the Small Harbour east or south east. Sheds facing south had the benefit of sunshine for drying out the triremes, of course.

appear to make sound sense of the use of the defences of Ortygia, and control over the harbours made the island almost impregnable. During the reign of Dionysius II the island and mole could be held by a garrison when the city itself had fallen to opposing factions. Entry to the mole was by way of the *Pentapylon*. The *Pentapylon* was either a gateway with five entrances (compare the *Tripylon* at Eurialos which was converted, probably during the Roman siege, to a simple gate of two entrances), or was just conceivably a *tripylon* followed by a *bipylon*. It is inconceivable, given the limited space on the mole, that this gateway was a complex consisting of five successive gates. This would have to be negotiated before reaching the fortified acropolis of Dionysius – all in a space of barely a kilometre. There is simply insufficient room on the mole for such a complicated access which would also have given onto the adjacent port areas. A more elaborate version of the Epipolai Gate may be preferred but, of course, remains a conjecture.

Timoleon is credited with the destruction of the fortifications of Ortygia and the two *acropoleis*, one on the mole and the other on the island (Diod. 16.70.4; Plut. *Tim.* 22).⁵⁰ Close to the *agora* a building named the *Timoleonteion* was constructed – either courts of law or a gymnasium – but whether this was situated on the site of Dionysius' palace on the mole is unclear. Cicero seems to refer to it in the context of the civic buildings in Akradina and around the *agora* (Verr. 2.4.119).⁵¹ Diodorus (19.6.4) also mentions this building as the place where Agathokles initiated his coup d'état in 317, a spot close to the *agora* would appear to be most likely.⁵² Furthermore, it is likely that some restoration work on the Eurialos fort took place during Timoleon's rule,⁵³ which may have been merely the result of general dilapidation caused by the incessant civil strife of the 350s when Dionysius II lost control of the city, during Dion's brief rule and that of his successors, such as Hiketas, until Timoleon gained control in 344.

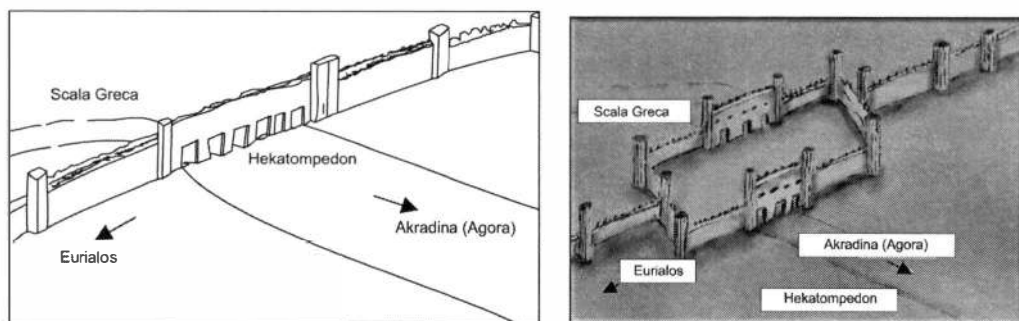


Figure 7: Possible Appearance of the *Hexapylon*

⁵⁰ Diodorus does not state that one acropolis was on the mole and the other on the island, and may in fact be using the word loosely for the entire area of fortifications. Cf. Diod. 16.70.1, where the singular alone is used to describe Dionysius II's power base.

⁵¹ Freeman: 1894, 4.374 also places the *Timoleonteion* 'round the lower ground of Achradina'.

⁵² R.M. Geer, *Diodorus of Sicily*, Harvard 1947, 9.243, n.1, suggests that the *Timoleonteion* was a 'gymnasium built about the tomb of Timoleon'; cf. Plut. *Tim.* 39.4.

⁵³ R.J.A. Talbert, *Timoleon and the Revival of Greek Sicily, 344–317 B.C.*, Cambridge 1974, 147 and n. 2. See also Chapter 4.

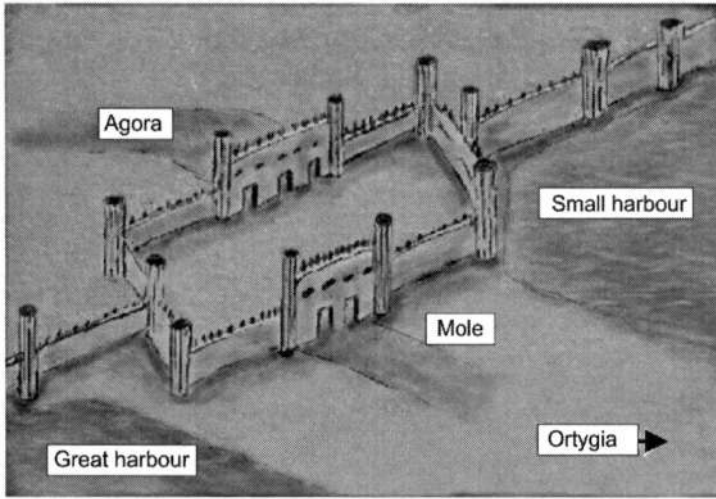


Figure 8: Possible Reconstruction of the *Pentapylon*

Conclusion

The urban topography of ancient Syracuse underwent a continual process of change which was especially radical during the fifth and fourth centuries BC, and again later under Roman rule. There were sometimes drastic and very rapid alterations to the city's appearance, in accordance with the needs or desires of Syracuse's citizens or rulers. In more recent times these in turn have been compounded by the natural changes in geography brought about by changes in sea level and by earthquakes. Looking at the *Porto Piccolo* today is hard to imagine that this area, with Akradina to the north and Ortygia to the south, was ringed with high walls and even higher towers. But Diodorus is quite explicit in his description and on more than one occasion notes these aspects. From Polybius and Livy we happen to know that in Akradina the walls came down to the sea, but again no trace of these have remained. However, the comments of ancient writers have allowed some recreation of this sector of the city, as noted above. This survey of topographical features shows just how much has been lost of ancient Syracuse and how much was lost already during antiquity. Cicero was impressed but he did not see Syracuse in its hey-day. That time was during the rule of the tyrants – Dionysius, Agathokles and Hieron II – when Syracusans were justified in believing that their tetrapolis, indeed their τετράπολις, exceeded all others in fame and riches.

Syracuse in antiquity

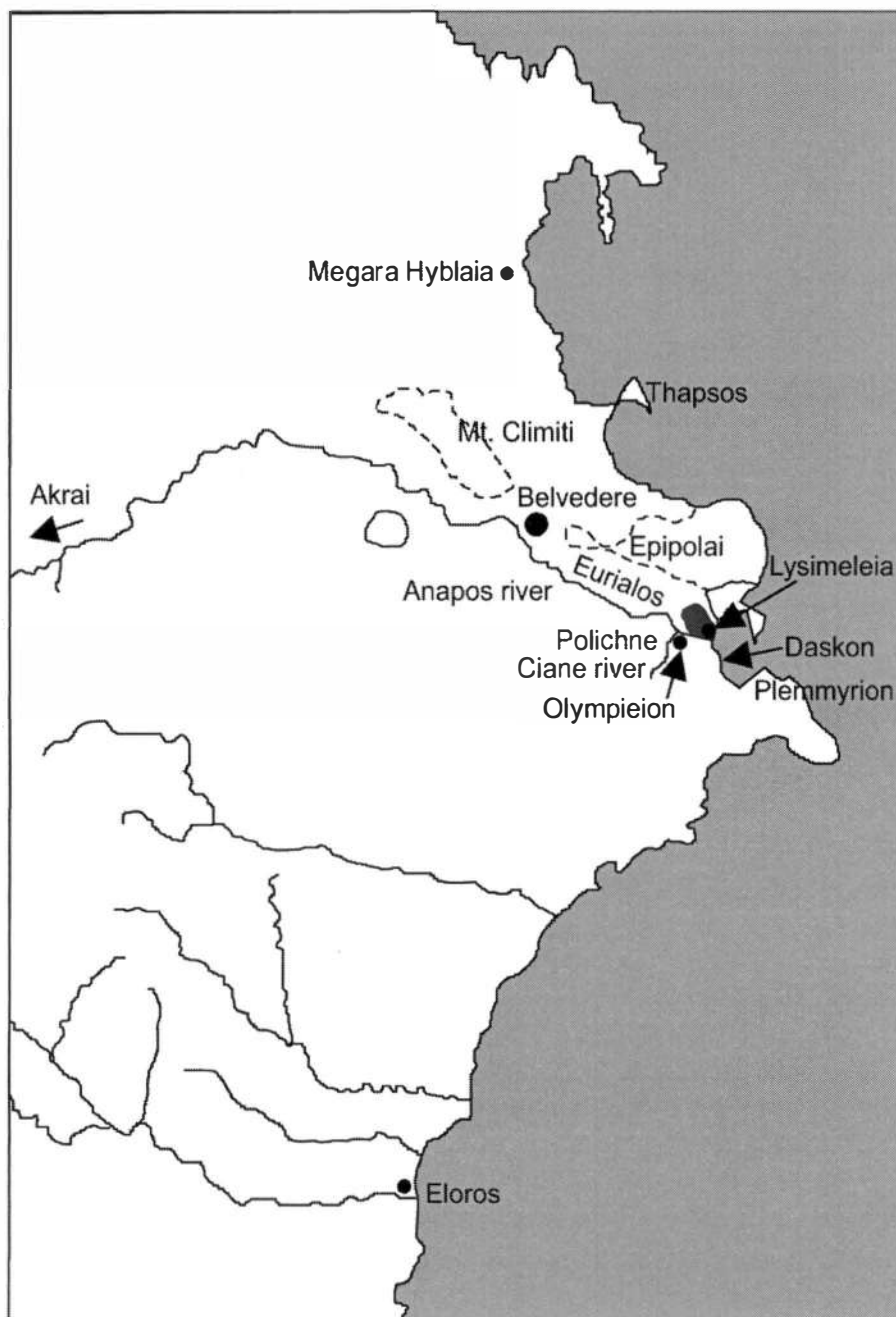


Figure 9: Map of Syracuse

CHAPTER 2: *Chorē*

Introduction

Surprisingly, the citizens of Syracuse were not a regular sea-going crowd prior to the Athenian siege of 415–413 BC;¹ and even after that, although the city came to possess one of the strongest war fleets in the Mediterranean, trade by sea was never a primary occupation of its citizens (Thuc. 7.21.3). Instead agricultural production, based on the great fertility for which Sicily was famous (thanks to volcanic soils) was clearly the focus of local endeavour (Diod. 16.83.1). Sicilian cities, of which Syracuse was the leader, are supposed to have become very wealthy through selling foodstuffs to merchants who then transported these goods to mainland Greece, probably to the Peloponnese, specifically to Corinth. The Syracusans themselves seem not to have operated merchant shipping to any great degree. Their wealth – in common with most ancient *poleis* – was, therefore, founded on the land; and, since a *polis* was never simply an urban area, its *chorē* – its hinterland or territory – was absolutely integral to its prosperity and its political/military muscle. The *chorē* of Syracuse, which forms the subject of discussion in this chapter, was (by ancient Hellenic standards) a large one,² and extended, certainly by the time of Gelon, from the plain of Megara in the north to, at least, Notum and Eloros in the south and some way up the valley of the Anapos and its tributaries into the Ibla mountains.³ In the north, Syracusan land was bounded by the *poleis* of Leontinoi and Katane (also for some of the time tributary), to the south and west by Gela (normally independent), and Kamarina (also for a time dominated by Syracuse).⁴

Certain specific areas of the *chorē* can easily be identified, and are discussed below. Less straightforward is determining where agricultural produce may have been centred, and what particular crops could have comprised the mainstay of the local economy. Perhaps the most distinctive geographical features of Syracuse, and certainly its most

1 Thuc. 7.7.4: 'manning a fleet and training crews' suggests a novel exercise which had not occurred for some time. However, Hieron I had intervened outside Sicily during his regime, but clearly even his famous sea victory over the Etruscans at Kyme in 474 and the brief colonisation of Ischia had not left a lasting impression. The colony on Ischia may well have been withdrawn not because of its unhealthy climate, Freeman: 1891, 2.251–52, but because the Syracusans saw no advantage in holding the island. It was another two decades before the Syracusans intervened militarily in this region, and again it was a transient feature of the city's foreign policy, F.R. S. Ridgeway, 'Etruscans, Greeks, Carthaginians: The Sanctuary at Pyrgi,' in *Greek Colonists and Native Populations*, ed. P.-J. Descoeudres, Oxford 1990, 525; P.J. Stylianou, *A Historical Commentary on Diodorus Siculus Book 15*, Oxford 1998, 198. In 425 Syracuse possessed a modest fleet of about thirty ships, Thuc. 3.115.2, 4.25.1, but this was probably not maintained in battle-readiness nor enlarged. See also Chapter 4.

2 See Freeman: 1891, 2.28 for a comparison between Athens and Attica.

3 Akrai (founded in 664) and Kasmenai (founded about 20 years later) were outposts of Syracuse, but before the reign of Hieron II may have been little more than military outposts marking the western extremity of the Syracusan *chorē*. Eloros was founded in the seventh century, while Notum (originally Sikeli) also became a Syracusan sub-colony early in the city's history.

4 For further discussion see Chapter 5.

famous, are firstly the island of Ortygia and, secondly, the abundance of fresh surface and spring water, of which the Fountains of Arethusa and Ciane are the best known. However, across the countryside as a whole the rivers are mostly seasonal, becoming torrents following heavy rains in winter, and dry beds through the summer. Dams and irrigation would have been necessary for any crops to be produced in the quantities required for profitable export. The coastal plain is also obviously narrow. To the south the Ibla mountains encroach almost to the coast, while the plain broadens only around Syracuse. The plain of Megara in the north is also relatively narrow, with the mountains along the entire region rising steeply out of the plain, which is itself heavily indented with the beds of streams and rivers. This is not typical land for growing grain compared, for example, to the land in the *chorē* of Metapontion, famous for wheat production. Today's landscape in S.E. Sicily can hardly have changed that dramatically since antiquity. Grain in its various forms – whether barley or wheat – was grown on the higher land of the Sicilian interior where the land is less disturbed with undulating hillsides, the temperatures less extreme in summer, and where there is higher rainfall.

In and around Polichne, on the southern slopes of Epipolai, and on Plemmyrion there is high-density market gardening, fruit orchards and viticulture. Much of this produce is for the local market in the city – on Ortygia the market is a daily feature of the streets immediately to the north of the temple of Apollo. It is very likely that for a city that for some of its history in antiquity was more populated than it is today, the immediate vicinity provided food only for daily needs. And quite clearly this produce was not exported nor is there sufficient room for grain production on a scale needed for export and for creating Syracuse's prosperity. Therefore, if the community was not composed of farmers, where did its wealth emanate from?⁵

If Syracuse was plainly not an agricultural producer of any substance, it must rather have been the exit point for grain and other foodstuffs brought down to the harbour from the interior beyond its own *chorē*. And was also the entrance point for goods, which could be purchased in return for grain and which headed inland. The Anapos valley was the most accessible route from the hills to Syracuse. Merchandise would come overland directly via Kasmenai and Akrai then down to Syracuse – a distance of no more than forty kilometres (25 miles). The Syracusans presumably exacted a tithe for entry to their territory and for use of the direct route down to the city, where they could also tax any transactions between merchants and farmers in the agora and at the port side. Moreover, grain cannot be transported in bulk loose, and so sacking must have been manufactured in the city for merchants and farmers alike, as must vast quantities of amphora for the movement of olive oil and wine.⁶

5 It is interesting nonetheless that Hieron II (265–216) wrote a treatise on agriculture, Pliny, NH. 18.23, and a wine named 'Pollios' was famous, Aelian, VH. 12.31.

6 While I am not suggesting that Syracuse possessed industrial enterprises on a modern scale, a very substantial banausic element is attested in the sources for the mid fourth century BC. Since they were evidently quite distinct from the *nautikos ochlos*, they must have been employed in other concerns such as those noted here. For these discrete (and potentially destabilising) elements at Syracuse, see A. Fuks, 'Redistribution of Land and Houses in Syracuse in 356 B.C. and its Ideological Aspects', CQ 18, 1968,

The farmers would (for the most part) have been Sikels, while the beneficiaries of Sicilian agricultural resources were the Greeks of Syracuse and their cousins from the Peloponnese. Diodorus notes (16.83.1) that

... having established peace throughout Sicily, Timoleon caused the cities to experience a great growth in their prosperity ... new colonists poured into the land in large numbers and since there was a lengthy period of peace the fields were reclaimed for cultivation and produced abundant crops of all sorts ... the Sikels sold these to merchants at good prices and rapidly increased their wealth.

Whenever there was a universal peace, conditions existed in Sicily for the generation of great wealth. The Syracusans (by occupying a unique place on the Ionian Sea) benefitted, in particular, from trade that filtered out of the interior. The *entrepôt* facilities at Syracuse were almost as famous as the city's wealth, but it is worth bearing in mind that prosperity was not solely derived from trade passing through the harbours. Those were also used to accommodate triremes which policed and plundered the coasts of Sicily and *Magna Graecia*. Great wealth was also obtained in equal measure, or even more so, from territorial ambitions.⁷

Plemmyrion

Plemmyrion is the southern head of the entrance to the Great Harbour. The peninsula is a further outcrop of the limestone escarpment⁸ which dominates the entire region and is balanced on the northern side of the bay by Epipolai. Plemmyrion is not as prominent as Epipolai, however, and is also arid (Thuc. 7.4.4), at least in the summer months, and in antiquity was obviously mostly uncultivated and treeless. Yet, there are indications of very early settlement in this area, with finds dating to the Mycenaean period.⁹ Today Plemmyrion is mostly suburban rather than rural, with extensive market gardening and

214–18. Although Fuks calls these 'the urban proletariat' and 'poorer artisans, skilled and semi-skilled workers in workshops', which cannot really apply to conditions in antiquity, his underlying thesis is not without value. The banausic crowd, men involved in handicrafts such as Syracuse's famous leather goods, Luc. 468 (Warmington), or as artisans, will rather have been the owners of small workshops using slave labour and there would have many of these, perhaps hundreds of workshops in and around the harbour and agora which had the primary function of producing those materials required by shippers and farmers to facilitate the movement of food. Lysias, a metic at Athens (who made his wealth from the manufacture of armour) was born in (and presumably a citizen of) Syracuse. For the significance of amphora in trade in the Roman period, see R.J.A. Wilson, 'Trade and Industry in Sicily during the Roman Empire', ANRW 11.1, 1988, 263–75, and for industry and trade more generally in Sicily in later antiquity, in which Syracuse naturally features prominently, R.J.A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire*, Warminster 1990, 237–76.

7 See Chapter 5 for a discussion of Syracusan imperialism. It is clear that the contents of the treasury had to be supplemented on more than one occasion by acts of piracy. Syracuse was notable for its basic 'pork and cheese', Hennippos, *Phormophoroi* (ca. 424 BC – a time when the Athenians were scrutinising affairs in Sicily), *OCD*³ 692; A. Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth*, Oxford 1911, 376. But it is difficult to believe that such items could be the basis of an economy.

8 Described by Freeman: 1891, 1.347, as a 'a low isthmus of a peninsula which itself grows into a hill, rocky, but of no great height ... it forms the southern horn or pillar of the entrance of the Great Harbour'. Green's description, 1971, 224, is altogether more dramatic: 'a desolate sandstone wilderness, eroded into grottoes, pocked with Neolithic rock-tombs and cave dwellings ...' CD Catalogue nos. 100, 390, 564, 574, 622–25.

9 Holloway: 1991, 33–34; E. Sjöqvist, *Sicily and the Greeks*, Michigan 1973, 14; Freeman: 1892, 3.250.

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holiday homes. The entrance to the Great Harbour is a little more than a thousand metres (300 feet) wide.¹⁰ The northern head must always have been the more prominent, and today certainly is since it is endowed with the *Castello Maniace*, named after the eleventh century Byzantine general, George Maniakes, but was actually built by Frederick II (Hohenstaufen) in the 1230s. The entrance to the bay may be relatively narrow, but the waters in the Great Harbour can become choppy due to prevailing currents, and this would have caused problems in manoeuvring triremes and other oared vessels when battles occurred in these conditions.

The strategic value of Plemmyrion was evidently not fully appreciated by the Syracusans before it was garrisoned by the Athenians in 413 (Thuc. 7.4.4).¹¹

Nikias also decided to fortify the spot known as Plemmyrion, which is the headland directly opposite the city that juts out into the sea and makes the entrance into the Great Harbour a narrow one. Therefore, he sent over the fleet and a force of hoplites to Plemmyrion and constructed three forts. Most of the Athenian equipment was stored there and the larger merchant vessels and triremes made this their base.¹²

Thucydides goes on to describe the nature of the place, and adds that it proved difficult to bring in supplies from the surrounding land, especially since the Syracusans stationed cavalry units at Polichne to prevent the Athenians from roaming far from their forts.¹³ Once the Syracusans, led by Gylippos, had taken the Athenian forts and captured Plemmyrion they retained control (Thuc. 7.23.1–3); and the Athenians made no attempt whatsoever to regain it, even though their access to the open sea was now made more difficult.¹⁴ Thucydides further notes (7.24.1) that the Syracusans demolished one of the forts and retained the other two for use.

This capture of Plemmyrion was indeed the greatest and principal reason for the deterioration of the Athenians. Ships with supplies were from now on in danger even at the entrance of the harbour for the Syracusans had triremes ready to intercept them, and it became necessary to fight if supplies were to be brought in at all.

This statement requires some attention since the Syracusans were always in a position to intercept incoming Athenian sea supplies, even when they did not hold Plemmyrion.

¹⁰ Dover: 1970, 467, 'the distance is 1,040 m'.

¹¹ The point is also made by Freeman: 1892: 3.249; cf. Green: 1971, 224–25.

¹² The Athenian equipment had previously been stored at the fort (on the northern edge of Epipolai) called Labdalon, which had been captured by the Syracusans, Thuc. 7.3.4, as the defenders successfully prevented the encirclement of the city by an Athenian wall through their own counter wall, which was constructed westwards from Neapolis towards Eurialos, Diod. 13.8.2. After this setback almost the entire Athenian force was concentrated at the camp in Lysimeleia, with the exception of a garrison in the circular fort on the southern edge of Epipolai, which was withdrawn just prior to the final battle in the harbour, Thuc. 7.60.2.

¹³ The Athenians had 650 cavalry, Thuc. 6.98.1, and 30 mounted archers, Thuc. 6.94.4, even before their initial assault on Epipolai in 414, and reinforcements were surely added later, Thuc. 7.42.1. These could have been deployed to safeguard the occupants of the forts on Plemmyrion, but were not. See also Chapter 5.

¹⁴ Diodorus gives a similar if less precise account of this action, 13.9.3–6, but fails to mention Plemmyrion or how the Syracusans were able to move troops into that vicinity.

Thucydides omits a crucial point here. When the Syracusans held only the northern head the Athenian triremes entered the Great Harbour near the southern head and so avoided the city's main fortifications and the enemy's ships. When the Athenians lost Plemmyrion their own supply ships now had to enter in the center of the gap, perhaps not in range of missiles launched from the land but in open sea and vulnerable to warships. Thucydides is correct in his assessment of the increasingly critical situation the Athenians faced, however. Finally, although the barrier of ships constructed across the entrance was a very late tactic to be employed against the Athenians, it was the inevitable conclusion once both Ortygia and Plemmyrion were in Syracusan hands. This barrier linked both heads of the bay for a brief spell. It was not a strategy ever repeated; and the Syracusans evidently abandoned the two forts soon after their victory – a weakness to be exploited by the Carthaginians and the Romans. After the final defeat of the Athenian fleet in the Great Harbour, the dead of the invaders lay unburied in the bay. Some of these may have been interred on Plemmyrion in more ancient tombs.¹⁵ The headland therefore became both a cemetery and a memorial to foiled Athenian imperialism.

At the beginning of the Carthaginian siege in 396, Himilkon had three forts built: one on Plemmyrion, the others at Daskon and Polichne (Diod. 14.63.3).¹⁶ This was a sound tactical move to avoid allowing the Syracusans to block his fleet inside the Great Harbour, an error the Athenians had made to their cost. Nonetheless, the neglect of Plemmyrion does provide an interesting insight into the psychology of the Syracusans in that they could be caught off guard repeatedly, and appear to have lived in a state of unpreparedness, only galvanising themselves into action when a threat was actually at their front door. Indeed, on this occasion Dionysius personally led an outflanking manoeuvre against the enemy, moving troops overnight around to Polichne, perhaps via Eurialos, and attacking the Carthaginians from the south and west. Diodorus does not relate the recapture of Plemmyrion, but does state that the Syracusans took all three forts from their enemy (14.72.4).

Daskon (*Akron*)

Daskon – *Bushy Point* or *Heights* – is really neither a point nor a height in geographical terms and not today a place of thick woodland or scrub. It is actually a rocky outcrop of no particular altitude which bulges into the bay of the Great Harbour about two-thirds down its length, causing a subsidiary bay at the southern end. Very nearly a shelf, it is elevated above the sandy beaches on either side and hence a useful beaching place for ancient shipping.¹⁷ It is hardly noticeable from the other side of the harbour, but its

¹⁵ Nineteenth-century excavation work had suggested this to Freeman: 1892, 3.364–65 and n. 1, although no recent work appears to have confirmed Orsi's suggestions; cf. Green: 1971, 318.

¹⁶ Freeman: 1894, 4.127, 4.510.

¹⁷ CD nos. 101, 283, 584–85, 589.

strategic value is made clear on a number of occasions by our sources. Entirely suburban today and a place for weekend holidaymakers, its ancient isolation has been totally altered. The Athenians first built a fort here when they attacked the Great Harbour towards the end of 415 (Thuc. 6.63–72). The purpose of this assault was to gain a very rapid victory by a set piece battle outside the city or, more likely as it turned out, to test Syracusan readiness and their defensive works. The Athenians were advised to land their forces, having first (amazingly enough) lured the Syracusan cavalry all the way to Katane, at a place where the cavalry would not hamper their activities. Some Syracusan exiles with the Athenians advised a landing in the Great Harbour in front of the *Olympieion* (Thuc. 6.64.1). Overnight the full Athenian force sailed south along the coast from Katane – surely an exceptional event, though Thucydides makes nothing of it – and by daybreak the invaders were ashore at the beach a little north of Daskon.¹⁸ The locality was a good one for defence from cavalry (Thuc. 6.66.1–2) since the Athenians found ample trees to cut down to use as a stockade for their ships, and they were protected by the natural lie of the land since there were

... on one side, walls, houses, trees and marshy land and, on the other side, a steep hillside (at) Daskon, which was the point most vulnerable to attack from the enemy, they hurriedly built a fort with stones which were lying around and timber.

This was probably the first fort constructed at Daskon, and shows that without cavalry the Athenians recognised the dangers from the more open nature of the land.¹⁹ The Syracusans eventually offered battle and were defeated, but since it was winter and it was clear that a single engagement would not bring the war to an end, the Athenians withdrew from the Great Harbour and returned to Katane by ship.

The next we hear of Daskon is at the climax of the naval engagement between the Athenians and the Syracusans towards the end of September 413, just prior to the final sea battle between the besieged and the besiegers, though by then the roles had become reversed. Not only had the Syracusans retaken Epipolai, but they had also encircled the Athenians from the south, holding Polichne and Plemmyrion and, in between the two, Daskon. The Athenians were hemmed in on all sides, with at that stage only the entrance to the Great Harbour still open for an orderly retreat. During (or soon after) the delay in the withdrawal from Sicily imposed on the Athenians by Nikias (on the advice of his

18 Freeman: 1892, 3.116, considered that the fleet anchored or beached south of Daskon, in the area sometimes called 'Daskon Bay', but there is no reason why they should have chosen this spot further from the Athenian camp. Freeman also noted that 'the sea has plainly encroached here' and that as a result the beach is not as wide as it was in antiquity. The water level has obviously risen on the north side of the bay where there is now no beach, while at the southern end the beach is fairly narrow but the water shallow and suitable (even today) for berthing oared vessels. However, it should be assumed that some of the Athenian triremes merely anchored in shallows protected by a stockade, which was constructed out into those waters. Dover: 1970, 480–81, draws attention to a certain ambiguity in the name or term 'Daskon'. Green: 1971, 302, notes 'the melancholy Daskon sea dunes', whatever that may mean!

19 Freeman: 1892, 3.167, also noted that Daskon Point 'commands a view of the whole range of Syracuse in the widest sense ... It is a view which ... outdoes the outlook from the Olympieion itself'.

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soothsayers in response to the eclipse of the moon which began at 8.00 pm on 27 August 413 (Thuc. 7.50.4))²⁰ the Syracusans tried to tempt their enemy into action. A minor tussle occurred outside the Athenian camp in which the Syracusans were successful and some Athenian hoplites were killed and horses lost. On the next day the Syracusans launched a fleet of seventy-six ships into the bay to entice the Athenian triremes out from behind their stockade (Thuc. 7.52.1). This resulted in the battle in which Eurymedon, one of the most experienced Athenian commanders, was killed.

The Athenians launched eighty-six ships against them and went into action at close quarters. Eurymedon commanded the Athenian right wing and headed off from the main body more in the direction of the land intent on outflanking the enemy. But the Syracusans and their allies first defeated the Athenian centre and then caught up with Eurymedon in that part of the harbour in which there is a shallow bay. Eurymedon was killed and the ship under his command destroyed. Then the entire Athenian fleet was driven back and forced onto the shore.

Thucydides indicates that Eurymedon was on the offensive wing facing east, while the Syracusan fleet took up position with Ortygia behind them. He seems to have set off towards Plemmyrion in order to come around the rear of the Syracusans. Unfortunately for him, the Athenian centre seems to have given way, allowing the Syracusans to come after Eurymedon and forcing him to land at Daskon where he was killed by enemy troops waiting there above the beach. Thucydides supplies none of these details, which are found in Diodorus' account (13.13.3–8).

... Eurymedon tried to outflank the opposing wing, but when he became detached from the Athenian line the Syracusans (no longer having to concern themselves with the centre) turned to face him and cut his escape off and forced him into a bay called Daskon, which was held by the Syracusans. He was boxed into a tight spot and forced to run ashore, where someone wounded him so severely that he died; and seven of his ships were destroyed in this place.

This engagement, in which the Athenians lost eighteen triremes in total, and, says Diodorus, about 2 000 men, more or less sealed the fate of the expedition for the Syracusans now began their blockade of the Great Harbour – a trap from which it would be even more difficult and perilous to escape. Once the Athenians chose to beat a retreat by land, Daskon no longer became relevant to the issue of that adventure.

The site and maintenance of a fort in the south of the Great Harbour could play a crucial part in the outcome of hostilities around Syracuse. A fort at Daskon is next mentioned by Diodorus during the first Carthaginian siege in 396 (14.63.3), nearly two decades after the Athenians had been defeated. Daskon again became the site for dramatic events in the struggle between the Syracusans and the Carthaginian invaders. Himilkon's

20 The eclipse was total between 9.41 and 10.30 pm, D. Kagan, *The Peace of Nikias and the Sicilian Expedition*, Ithaca, 1981, 323.

fleet had entered the Great Harbour while his land forces must have marched down the main road from Katane around Eurialos and met up at the *Olympieion* (14.62.3). He seems to have used the temple as his headquarters and the Carthaginian camp was nearby, perhaps exactly where the first Athenian camp had been.²¹ This is certainly implicit in Diodorus' description, especially when the main camp was walled with stone taken from demolished tombs, including that of Gelon and his wife Demarete. These probably stood along the main road between Polichne and the city walls. Diodorus also says that three forts were built, perhaps rebuilt would have been a better description since they are said to have been 'at Plemmyrion, in the middle of the bay (Daskon), and near the temple of Zeus'. The fort at Daskon is likely to have been on the ruins of the former Athenian construction, a spot that had a good view of the Great Harbour northwards, the smaller bay of Daskon to the south, and Plemmyrion beyond.

When the fortunes of the Carthaginians declined as a result of sickness (Diod. 14.71.1–4), Dionysius launched a strong counterattack under cover of darkness and threw the enemy into total confusion. He sent the Syracusan fleet into the bay to attack the besiegers' camp from the beach, and simultaneously attacked the enemy with land forces directed from Polichne.²² Dionysius stormed the fort at Polichne, which must have been very close to where Himilkon had his own base, but was not necessarily one and the same. Diodorus states that all three forts of the enemy were captured, but it was in the conflict at Daskon that the most dramatic events occurred. The Syracusan cavalry attacked the Daskon fort while triremes operated from the shore, perhaps landing hoplites on the beach. Meanwhile Dionysius, having secured the Polichne fort, arrived with further troops (Diod. 14.73.2):

Finding forty fifty-oared ships there, drawn up on the beach, and nearby some merchant ships and triremes anchored, the Syracusans set them on fire. The flames quickly leapt upwards into the sky and spread out over a large area, catching the other ships so that none of the merchants or owners was able to bring any help because of the violent blaze.

Chaos ensued when a strong wind blew up in the Great Harbour, since the anchor cables were burned and ships then collided in the (by now) rough seas, with the result that these were sunk by collisions or fire. The scene, says Diodorus,

... was like that at the theatre to the inhabitants of the city and the destruction of the barbarians looked like that of men struck by lightning sent from heaven for their impious behaviour. For from a distance the sight resembled a battle with the gods, so many were ships that went up in flames, which leapt above the sails, while the Greeks cheered every

21 Himilkon tried to entice the Syracusans into battle, 14.62.4, by leading his whole army up to the walls and sending his fleet around the harbours. Freeman: 1894, 4.125, believed that the Carthaginian fleet entered the Small Harbour but that seems highly unlikely. The Athenians had certainly not attempted that feat nor did any other besiegers – including the Romans in 214–212.

22 Diod. 14.72.3, a place very close to Himilkon's own headquarters, which is said to have been within the precinct of the *Olympieion*, Diod. 14.62.3.

success with great shouts, and the barbarians in their dismay at this catastrophe raised a huge uproar with their confused cries.

The Syracusans watched this episode from their walls (Diod. 14.74.2) at the harbour-side; and, as they had done before, they joined in the plunder of the wreckage as the enemy fled from the battle.²³

Polichne and the *Olympieion*

Polichne is a flat-topped steep-side rise, not really a hill and not elevated enough to be termed a 'plateau', it is more like a shelf approximately fifteen to twenty metres (45–60 feet) above the coastal plain and situated about eight hundred metres (2 500 feet) south of the present triple estuary of the Anapo-Mammiabica-Ciane riverine complex.²⁴ The plain has become heavily industrialised close to the city but at Polichne uncultivated land predominates and is perhaps not substantially different in appearance to what it was in antiquity. The main road runs close by the sea roughly two hundred metres (600 feet) from the *Olympieion*. An older road, not much more than a dirt track, deeply undercuts Polichne at the temple's eastern side, and possibly indicates that the sea has withdrawn at this point. Polichne was also a village, perhaps even a lesser or sub *polis*, initially even an outlying fort. It is also possible that Polichne and Ortygia were the earliest Greek settlements here, and the former diminished in importance since it was not as easily defensible.²⁵ A fort is certainly mentioned at Polichne on numerous occasions in the ancient sources. Polichne is also called *Olympieion* because of its close geographical association with the temple of Zeus *Urios*, which occupied a substantial part of the hill. At Polichne there is also a reference to a shrine (perhaps a small temple) to Ciane near the spring of the same name. The spring is about two kilometres (about a mile) west of the *Olympieion*, in low-lying and what must have been marshy land, although this has now been reclaimed for agricultural use.

Dramatic events took place repeatedly at Polichne. In his war against Syracuse in 492 Hippokrates, tyrant of Gela, says Herodotus (7.154), defeated the Syracusans at a river near Eloros – either the Tellaro or Assinaro perhaps – as the Geloans marched from the southwest towards their goal of conquest.²⁶ From there the invaders marched

23 Diodorus, 14.73.1, describes how the young and oldest men went out in small boats to collect the plunder from the sinking and sunken vessels of the enemy.

24 CD nos. 94–96, 392, 626. For an illustration of the triple estuary see the CD nos. 566–70. Dover: 1970, 479, notes that the Mammiabica and Ciane estuaries are relatively modern construction designed to drain this southerly section of Lysimeleia, and that the Ciane, until then, joined the Anapo '5 km from the sea'.

25 Postulated by Freeman: 1891, 1.360–62. The legend associated with Ciane and the temple or shrine close to Polichne does suggest an early occupation and perhaps even an independent beginning before Ortygia and then Akradina were preferred.

26 Freeman: 1891, 2.116, calls this river the Heloros, and the battle site where it is crossed by the main road from Gela to Syracuse. The problem with this identification is that no Heloros river is now marked on maps, and in the Barrington's *Atlas* this is plainly the Tellaro. The change of river names proves a major difficulty in examining the region, as a number of scholars have noted. Vibius Sequester mentions various rivers in Sicily but not alterations to names. He does note the Fountain of Arethusa (4) as a river, the Anapos (16) and that it flowed underground for two miles (4–5 kms), the Fountain of Ciane (186) as a pool, a river Helorus (79) in the *chorē* of Syracuse.

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to Polichne where Hippokrates, to be emulated by later would-be conquerors, made his camp next door to the temple precinct (Diod. 10.28.1–2), but it was not pillaged. Greeks of the Classical period were reluctant to plunder religious sites, but no such qualms seem to have bothered Greek or non-Greek leaders of the Hellenistic period. Nikias too occupied Polichne in the first Athenian expedition against Syracuse at the end of 415. He too was religiously scrupulous and refrained from profanation of a deity which took care of seafarers – a god of some importance to the Athenians. Himilkon followed in the wake of earlier invaders when he pitched his camp here in 396. We are not told of the fate of the temple treasures at this time and they may have been removed on the order of Dionysius prior to the arrival of the Carthaginians. There is, however, an anecdote about Dionysius robbing the *Olympieion* (Diod. 14.67.4), and the removal of temple wealth to preserve it from the approaching enemy may just have given the tyrant of Syracuse the opportunity to appropriate gold for the payment of mercenaries. It is significant that he was away from Syracuse soon after the arrival of the Carthaginians, successfully whipping up support for his cause. The gold of Zeus may have helped grease palms. Himilkon is credited with sacking other temples and elaborate tombs along the main road. The temple shrine to Zeus would not have been safe at this time, nor are we told how the temple shrine of Ciane fared during all this destruction.

The hill at Polichne was ideal as a headquarters for invading armies since it commands a complete view of the entire bay, the city, Ortygia and Epipolai. The Syracusans eventually realised the strategic importance of this higher ground and it is interesting to note that in the Athenian siege, and in the later Carthaginian siege of 396 BC, a Syracusan garrison was maintained at Polichne, which was never dislodged by the invading forces. This presence must surely have hampered any enemy's room for action, and access to supplies brought in overland. Polichne also commanded the main south road, which explains the need to have a permanent Syracusan presence here. Polichne could almost be described as Syracuse's Dekeleia.²⁷

Lysimeleia

This was the ancient marshland lying between the River Anapos and the main western fortifications of the city, which came down from Epipolai to the harbour beside the agora. The marsh extends for about 2.6 kilometres (a little more than 1½ miles), and its width here, slightly wider at the coast, cannot have changed much from antiquity since the area is hedged about by rivers and urban areas.²⁸ Lysimeleia extended inland right up to the

27 The land around Polichne is not extensive yet at times two opposing forces were stationed here and surely within sight of one another. No ancient source seems to have found this at all interesting since it draws comment nowhere.

28 Freeman, 1892, 3.329, was less sanguine, believing that 'the sea has most likely encroached on the land'. and thought that a considerable beach or firmer land lay between the sea and the marsh. Such a strip, even a mole, would have allowed for the fight between the Syracusans and Etruscans, as described, Thuc. 7.53.1–2. Dover: 1970, 484, suggests that Lysimeleia was a lake between the Anapos and the Athenian camp (see the map facing p. 481) but this leaves too little space for the entire Athenian force and shipping north of a lake up to the walls of the city. A marsh could easily be described as a 'lake'. Green: 1971, 199

southern edge of Epipolai, and even now in Neapolis, close to the Greek Theatre, marshy ground is still visible along the main road – the *Via Paolo Orsi* next to the Tennis Club. Today there is a heavy concentration of industrial and commercial buildings on what was once marsh, but a good idea of its former boggy nature (the land is probably slightly below sea level in places) can be gauged from the existence of three large drainage channels conveying surface water into the bay, even at the height of summer.

This marshy terrain should have provided additional strength to Syracuse's western walls although most invaders seem to have had little trouble in traversing this ground, or at least exercised some ingenuity in getting across what appears to have been a great deal of surface water and mud.

... at dawn the army came down from Epipolai into the plain and made its way over the marsh by laying down doors and planks of wood over the parts where the mud was deepest and the ground firmest. (Thuc. 6.101.3)

In the summer of 414 BC the Syracusans were trying to throw up a cross wall to prevent the complete circumvallation of the city. The Athenian siege wall was being constructed on Epipolai and, from there, down towards the harbour. The Syracusans planned to prevent this by building a wall west from the city through the marsh. The Athenians responded by attacking from Epipolai, but first had to get across the marshy ground. This they did, and the Syracusans retired before them – some to the city and some towards the river and the fort at Polichne. The Athenians thought that they could cut off the Syracusan retreat to Polichne if they gained the bridge over the Anapos first. Lamachos, Nikias' colleague, led three hundred hoplites at the run, but the opposition's cavalry proved too strong.

After crossing over a ditch, Lamachos and a few others who had gone with him were left isolated and he with five or six of his men was killed. (Thuc. 6.101.6)

There are some puzzling points here, not least the ability of the Syracusan cavalry to negotiate this marsh, which perhaps points to a fight actually having taken place along the road and not in open country.²⁹ But then how could the Athenian *strategos* have been so isolated from the bulk of his forces? There were clearly meadows or cultivated fields in the vicinity and these seem to have encompassed sufficient space for the entire Syracusan army to muster, and for the enemy to assemble as well:

The Syracusans drew up the whole of their line of hoplites 16 men deep. This line included the entire Syracusan army, together with their allies who had come to lend support. Most

describes Lysimeleia as 'a low-lying area with frequent patches of bog and standing water' and added that when the Syracusans attempted to build a cross-wall in 414, 'they squelched through the black, stinking slime ...' CD nos. 670–72.

²⁹ The Syracusans must have been expert cavalrymen. Time and time again the sources refer to the Syracusan horse, yet the country is not suitable for great cavalry movements. However, it was the cavalry that hampered the Athenian withdrawal and attacked the enemy in steep-sided river valleys, or attacked forts (in and around the Great Harbour) constructed in rocky and hilly terrain.

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of these were from Selinous; the next important force being the cavalry from Gela which numbered 200 ... The cavalry was at least 1 200 strong ... As the Athenians were going to attack first, Nikias went along the lines encouraging the whole army ...³⁰ (Thuc. 6.67.2)

In the winter of 415, during the rainy season, two opposing armies were drawn up for a set piece battle in full view of one another, no more than five hundred metres apart, but in that area which is supposedly marsh because they were not standing immediately below the walls. This is plain since the Syracusan left wing, closest to the city, was broken by the Argives and fled, and the centre (presumably Syracusan hoplites) was pushed back by the Athenians. However, no mention is made about easy access to the city (Thuc. 6.70.2–3).³¹ Later in the spring of 414 Thucydides (6.96.3) notes that while the Athenians were launching their first attack on Epipolai, the Syracusans ‘went down at dawn in full force to the fields along the Anapos river and held a review of the hoplites’.

Yet this is Lysimeleia, and there cannot be field and bog in equal measure, unless this review of the troops was conducted further west and higher up the Anapos valley, closer to the way up to Eurialos. If indeed this was the case it would explain why the Athenian army was able to land at Leon and, from there, march unseen up to Eurialos, and only when the troops arrived at this highest point on Epipolai were they spotted by the Syracusans, who hurriedly launched an uphill offensive, but with too few men and in too disorganised a fashion. However, this fight, which resulted in three hundred Syracusans being killed, did allow the main army to retreat in good order into the city.³²

The marsh itself was an unhealthy place for an encampment, as the Athenians and subsequently the Carthaginians and Romans discovered to their cost.³³ Of course, this was Lysimeleia’s greatest contribution to Syracuse’s defence. The Athenians – from being in a dominating position on Epipolai – were gradually confined to the depths of Lysimeleia. The command’s evident belief that naval and ground forces should be kept closely together and that lines of communication should be kept short account for the increasing concentration of Athenian forces in the marsh. In the hot summer, however, disease began to take its toll and by the time the Athenians began their withdrawal by land, many of those who marched out from Lysimeleia were sick. That sickness was no doubt a combination of incipient malaria, typhoid and cholera, coupled with a lack of supplies and hygiene, which would have brought on dysentery and other forms of gastroenteritis.³⁴

30 It is curious that Selinous appears here allied with Syracuse. Selinous was in conflict with Segesta, which had received some aid from Athens. But Selinous’ founding city of Megara Hyblaia had been destroyed by the Syracusans.

31 Thucydides says only that the Athenians did not pursue the enemy far, primarily because the Syracusan cavalry remained unbeaten.

32 However, Thucydides, 6.97.3, has the Syracusan commander Diomilos and the 600 troops used to attack the Athenians at Eurialos in meadows ‘nearly three miles’ away. This cannot be in the valley immediately below Eurialos, which is less than a mile way, but right back in Lysimeleia beside the walls near the agora.

33 During the Roman siege another outbreak of illness occurred, but the Romans appeared less affected than the Carthaginians (Liv. 25.26). See also Chapter 5.

34 It is easy with hindsight to see that the Athenians should have maintained their fleet at Thapsos or Megara and directed their attack on the city from Epipolai and the north, as the Romans were to do two hundred years later.

Two decades later the Carthaginians fell into the same trap. A huge army, says Diodorus (14.62.3), needed to be encamped where it, and the war fleet of 250 triremes, could be supplied from merchant vessels numbering up to a thousand. The Great Harbour must have become very congested.³⁵ The summer was also exceptionally hot (Diod. 14.70.4), and disease was rampant within a short time.³⁶ As a result, notwithstanding some sound tactics, Dionysius won a surprisingly easy victory over this vast host, debilitated by the sicknesses lurking in the marsh, Syracuse's permanent ally.³⁷

Epipolai

The ground is high and slopes down to the city so that it is all within sight from inside. It is called Epipolai or 'the Heights' by the Syracusans because it lies above the level of the rest.³⁸ (Thuc. 6.96.1)

The northern side of Epipolai rises steeply out of the plain of Megara,³⁹ the southern and eastern slopes fall gently towards the Great Harbour and Ortygia respectively, and the lower land which surrounds the bay. On the eastern side the plateau narrows appreciably at Eurialos, and then continues to rise towards Belvedere before dipping away again to form the pass that divides Epipolai from the steep-sided plateau of Mount Climiti, which rises still higher (to 406 metres/1 200 feet) inland. Epipolai is the dominating geological and physical presence in Syracuse. Although its altitude is not great, its relative height means that, on the one side, the city, Ortygia and the harbours are clearly in view, and, on the other, any approach from the north. The direct route from the north first involves a steep rise, via the *Scala Greca*, into the city and from there down again to Akradina. All other routes involve either bypassing the plateau altogether, as the main road (SS115) does today, or by an ascent to Eurialos, which after about 400 BC was incorporated into the city defences and provided with a gate which became the western entrance to Syracuse – the Epipolai Gate.

35 Diodorus' account here (14.62.2) is jumbled with different totals for the merchant shipping. Two hundred and fifty triremes probably needed at least the same number of support vessels carrying supplies. Himilkon's army was probably less than the 300 000 noted by Diodorus, but would still have required an enormous fleet of ships to bring in sufficient supplies.

36 Diodorus (14.71.1–4) does not describe the symptoms of malaria but rather a collection of symptoms applicable to a number of diseases prevalent in such circumstances, including typhoid and cholera that could easily be contracted during a prolonged stay in marshland in the heat of summer. The madness described here is as likely to have been panic as much as anything physical. However, for arguments that it was malaria, see R. Salares, *Malaria and Rome*, Oxford 2002, 38; cf. R.J. Littman, 'The Plague at Syracuse 396 B.C.', *Mnemosyne* 37, 1984, 110–16 for smallpox.

37 In 310 Hamilkar besieged Syracuse during the absence of Agathokles, see Chapter 4. Diodorus, 20.16.1–2, does not specify the placement of the Carthaginian camp, nor where an attempt to scale the walls was made, Diod. 20.16.7–9, but it is assumed that it was from the south, Lysimeleia, and not from the north. For a discussion see Freeman: 1894, 4.416.

38 Thucydides' description appears accurate, though elsewhere – 6.97.3, 6.101.6, 7.43.2–4 – he is sufficiently casual with detailed information to indicate that he probably never visited the city and relied on eyewitness accounts for his narrative. For Dover's discussion of this issue, see 1970, 466–69. CD nos. 82–83, 256, 515–19, 250–51, 260, 272.

39 Green: 1971, 183: 'These heights (sometimes known as the Syracuse Terrace) are a natural outcrop of calcareous limestone, some three miles long from east to west, and just under two miles wide at their broadest point, narrowing sharply as they approach their western extremity. Here at the "waist" of the plateau, is the easiest approach to the summit, a gently sloping col known in antiquity as Euryalus.'

Syracuse in antiquity

Epipolai's crucial importance to both sides was quickly exposed in the initial Athenian assault on the city. The army was landed at Leon (Thuc. 6.97.1), which was the stretch of beach between Thapsos and the *Scala Greca*.⁴⁰ Then the army marched west under the escarpment to reach Eurialos (close to Belvedere) probably in a matter of hours, and unnoticed by the Syracusans until too late. The Syracusans who came up to Eurialos were thrown back with heavy casualties. Soon after this the Athenians built a fort at Labdalon, which Thucydides says was 'on the edge of the cliffs of Epipolai and looking out towards Megara'.⁴¹ The Athenians then moved east to invest the city more closely and were as careless as the Syracusans in keeping a watch at Eurialos, for in the summer Gylippos arrived from Sparta via Himera and the interior.

Gylippos first captured a fort of the Sikels on the way called Ietas,⁴² then formed up his army in order of battle and advanced to Epipolai. He made his way up along the same road which the Athenians had used before, by Eurialos and then, with the Syracusans, moved forward against the Athenian fortifications. (Thuc. 7.2.3–4)

The Athenians were taken completely by surprise, and on the next day since Nikias refused to do battle on Epipolai, Gylippos took the fort at Labdalon (Thuc. 7.3.4), and the process of pushing the enemy down to the Great Harbour began. When Demosthenes arrived with reinforcements in the next summer, by which time the Athenians were already under severe pressure in Lysimeleia, he recognised the necessity of retaking Epipolai.

By day it seemed impossible to approach, so he ... set out for Epipolai about midnight with Eurymedon and Menander and the whole army. They came to Epipolai via Eurialos – the same route by which the first army had ascended previously and unobserved by the enemy lookouts reached the fort which the Syracusans had there and captured it, killing some of the garrison.⁴³ (Thuc. 7.43.2–4)

The night assault was a disaster, although many of the Athenians (including their generals) escaped back to the marsh. The reason for what eventually became a chaotic shambles lay in the timing. The attack began too early in the night and resulted in troops being deployed around an area many did not know, and which was too large to become familiar in so brief a time and in darkness. Epipolai is an awkward place to cross even in daylight as it is covered with boulders and irregular rocky outcrops. At night this place was almost as dangerous as the marsh below. Finally, night attacks were risky ventures and prone to disaster.⁴⁴

40 Not really identified. Cf. Stahl: 2003, 204.

41 Labdalon cannot be identified, but a number of locations on the western end of Epipolai 'would do very well', says Freeman: 1892, 3. 661–62. It was probably very close to the current Eurialos fort or the Epipolai Gate, both out of sight from the city. A good position is likely to have been reused.

42 Ietas is closer to Segesta than to Syracuse. Thucydides has conflated a forced march into a single terse statement. For Ietas see the CD nos. 194–95 and *Video clip: ietas*.

43 Thucydides lacks precision here, since the army led by Demosthenes came up to Epipolai from Lysimeleia and from there to Eurialos from the south. Only the end of the route was the same as that followed by Lamachos and Nikias the year before. He also seems to suggest that there was by now a fort at Eurialos, and also mentioned another three forts on Epipolai. The first may be the one situated at Labdalon, seeing that this one had already been constructed, and seems a logical primary objective of the Athenians.

44 Compare the night attack of Dionysius on Tauromenion in Chapter 4. Thucydides, 7.44.1, notes that this was the sole night battle of the Peloponnesian War, and that even with moonlight visibility was limited, but does not comment on the lie of the land.

Thucydides suggests that the Athenians mostly tried to retreat by a single narrow passage down from Epipolai, but this is unlikely to have been at Eurialos which is the long way around to Lysimeleia. It is more likely that the Athenians went down by as direct a route as they could find close to the walls of the city.

While the Carthaginian Himilkon avoided Epipolai altogether in 396, nearly a century later his compatriot Hamilkar also came to grief attempting to force an entry into Syracuse through the fort at Eurialos.⁴⁵ The account in Diodorus is both brief and vague, but involves another night attack. Hamilkar had first set up camp at the *Olympieion* (Diod. 20.29.3), but only for a brief spell before launching an attack on Epipolai. The Syracusans had strongly garrisoned the Eurialos fort because they had been warned of the Carthaginians' intentions.

... the Carthaginians advanced by night thinking that by doing so they would go undetected by their enemy. Hamilkar was in the vanguard with his usual bodyguard ... the roads were narrow and rough, the baggage column and some of the camp followers jostled each other as they competed for the right of way. Since the crowd was confined to a narrow space, many of them became involved in arguments ... great confusion and noise possessed the army.

The men became easy targets for the defenders holding the high ground. The Syracusans also seem to have organised sorties (20.29.9) and blocked the narrow tracks up to Eurialos, forcing the attackers back over the cliffs. The Carthaginians had no idea of the strength of their opponents, did not know the lie of the land, and in the darkness they panicked. Hamilkar was captured as his main forces were routed.⁴⁶

The Roman siege, which finally brought about the conquest of Syracuse in 212, was not concluded by an attack through Eurialos where the fort, so heavily invested with the latest military technology,⁴⁷ was abandoned without a fight, but through the Dionsyian walls near the *Scala Greca*. The Syracusans were celebrating a festival of Artemis and the northern walls had been left patchily guarded. The Romans scaled the walls of northern Epipolai and then opened the gates of the *Hexapylon*, which allowed the besiegers easy access to the agora via the *Hekatompedon*, the main north road.⁴⁸ Thereafter, Epipolai remained within the walled area of the city, although it was relatively sparsely populated. It does not feature in any later military events affecting Syracuse.

45 For Hamilkar's two sieges of Syracuse in 310 and 309 and the lengthy naval blockade of the city see Chapter 5. Neither Dion in 357 nor Timoleon in 344 entered Syracuse by way of Epipolai. Dion may have been expected at Eurialos, but instead bypassed the stronghold with his army, on another night march, down the Anapos valley from Akrai to enter the city near the agora, Plut. *Dion* 37–38. Timoleon camped in Lysimeleia and entered Syracuse through the western defensive walls, Plut. *Tim.* 20.

46 The Carthaginians regrouped, Diod. 20.30.2, 31.1–2 (probably back in Lysimeleia) and maintained their blockade, but the danger to the city had been averted.

47 See Chapter 4. Although Livy says that M. Claudius Marcellus, the Roman commander, stood on Epipolai and gazed over the city, Eurialos was clearly not the entry point for the besiegers. Marcellus may have visited the fort later. Equally he cannot have looked out from the *Hexapylon* over the city since Akradina and Ortygia are not visible from that point. For the Eurialos fort see CD nos. 76, 85–87, 90–93, 244–49, 251–53, 257–72, 514.

48 The Romans were delayed by the internal walls of Akradina and only completed their capture of the city by gaining entry to Ortygia through a postern gate near the Fountain of Arethusa, see Chapter 4.

From Thapsos to Megara Hyblaia

Immediately to the north of Epipolai lies the fractured limestone countryside that is the Plain of Megara. Megara Hyblaia was the fourth Greek colony founded in Sicily, preceding its Dorian neighbour Syracuse by nearly two decades.⁴⁹ The peninsula of Thapsos possessed a much earlier settlement, dating as far back as approximately 1400 BC, probably a Sikel community, but one which had trading contacts with Greece.⁵⁰ Thapsos was clearly not inhabited by the Classical period, while Megara's *chorē* was too limited for much chance of sustained growth because Leontinoi lay to the north and Syracuse to the south. Megara was destroyed in 483 by Gelon and although repopulated in the fourth century BC, was never to be a major centre.⁵¹ Early in the Athenian expedition against Syracuse, Lamachos, one of the three *strategoi* had recognised the strategic value of Megara as a base simply because of its proximity to Syracuse (Thuc. 6.49).⁵² However, the Athenians only sailed past Megara by night, eluding the watchmen, on their way into the Great Harbour in the winter of 415 (Thuc. 6.65.2).⁵³ That Megara was cleared of a civilian population in 414 is clearly noted by Thucydides (6.94.1 cf. 6.4.1–2):

In the following year, right at the start of spring, the Athenians in Sicily set out from Katane and sailed along the coast to Sicilian Megara. The Megarians ... were expelled from their polis by the Syracusans during Gelon's tyranny and they still hold this land. The Athenians landed at this point and devastated the countryside and after they made an unsuccessful attack on the Syracusan fort, they went further along the coast with both army and triremes to the Terias river.⁵⁴

Later in the same summer the full Athenian force, army and navy bypassed Megara again to land at Leon intent on the assault of Epipolai. Having landed the army from their transport vessels, the navy then retired to Thapsos

which is a peninsula with a narrow isthmus that juts out into the sea and is not far from Syracuse by any route. The Athenians from the triremes built a stockade across the isthmus and remained in reserve at Thapsos. (Thuc. 6.97.1–2)⁵⁵

49 Sjöqvist: 1973, 16–18. For early Megara, see Holloway: 1991, 49–54. For the chief Greek Sicilian cities see Appendix 1. For Megara see CD nos. 345–54; Naxos, 393–97, 443–45, 451–52; Akragas, 200–27; Tauromenion, 409–20; Selinous, 146–185; Segesta, 124–145; Leontinoi, 362–373; Akrai, 31–45, 375; Gela, 52–62.

50 Mycenaean pottery has been excavated at Thapsos, Sjöqvist: 1973, 13. For tentative occupation dates, see Holloway: 1991, 33–35.

51 The earliest walls constructed in the 480s, when under threat from Syracuse, enclosed an area just 1 000 metres in width. For the recolonisation of Megara, see Talbert: 1974, 149. For its subsequent and final destruction in 214 see Guido: 1967, 200. Megara did, however, send out colonists to found Selinous, which became a substantial power in the west until its own destruction in 409.

52 Lamachos was also the advocate of the attack on Epipolai via Eurialos, and had clearly received sound information. On Lamachos see Freeman: 1892, 3.144–145, 3.210.

53 If a garrison was posted throughout the winter months when normally no military activity would take place, it does seem incredible that a fleet of about 130 triremes plus support vessels could sail at night along the coast without raising some suspicions.

54 Some part of the town may have been maintained as a fort, its position above the beach would have made it ideal as a military outpost guarding the road to Syracuse. Freeman: 1892, 3.210 considered this likely.

55 For the Thapsos peninsula see CD nos. 65–74, 343–44.

Again it is odd that the Syracusans were unaware of these facts unless there was no guard stationed at Megara. It is also remarkable that the Athenians did not maintain a permanent base either at Thapsos or Megara throughout the siege – a major tactical error, unless the Syracusans had installed a sufficiently strong garrison here as they had done at the *Olympieion*. Significantly, the garrison at Polichne was never dislodged. Yet the point must also have occurred to Thucydides (6.99.4) who notes:

The Athenian ships had not yet sailed round from Thapsos into the Great Harbour, and so the Syracusans still controlled that coastline while the Athenians brought in their supplies overland from Thapsos.

The implication being that it was easier to seize the Great Harbour, but putting all their eggs in one basket did not bring permanent security, as the Athenians found later to their cost. Megara and Thapsos were important elements in the Syracusan *chorē* and once there the Athenians should not have relinquished their occupation.⁵⁶

No mention is made of this area in either of the Carthaginian sieges, nor indeed in the campaigns of Dion and Timoleon. Himilkon in 396 BC must have marched south (passing Megara and Thapsos to his left) before taking the pass between Belvedere and Mount Climiti and swinging left again into the Anapos valley and then down to Lysimeleia and Polichne. The Romans, however, with surer instincts or closer attention to military manuals did indeed occupy the north coast. Polybius (37.1–3) clearly knew about the exceptional fortifications of Syracuse, but also (8.3–7) plainly indicates that the Romans were not about to copy the mistakes of their predecessors (cf. Liv. 24.33).

These commanders (Claudius Pulcher and Claudius Marcellus) ... decided to launch an assault with the army on the part known as the *Hexapylon* while the fleet was to attack ... Akradina just where the city wall extends to the harbour's edge.

Attacks on this sort of scale and from this quarter had not been attempted before; and although the sea-borne assault failed, and the siege settled down to a blockade, it was eventually the *Hexapylon* which fell to the Romans. The walls, so neatly coursed, were easily counted from a distance, says Polybius, and the height accurately measured so that Romans then built scaling ladders without having to come close. Livy (25.23) gives much the same account.

A Spartan named Damippos was captured by Roman ships while on a mission from Syracuse to King Philip (V). Epikydes was very anxious to ransom him at any cost ... Representatives were sent to discuss the ransom and they decided to meet at the Troigili harbour near the

⁵⁶ Thucydides (6.96.3–97.2) suggests that the Syracusan review of the hoplites took place in the fields near Lysimeleia, and the movement of the Athenian army from Katane to Leon was concluded at the same time. It is simply impossible that the whole Athenian force (eight to ten thousand) men could have been moved into place to attack Epipolai in the space of a single morning. It may well be that an advance guard of hoplites was landed at Leon, secured Eurialos, fought off the Syracusan attack, and then waited for the main force to follow. The oarsmen of the 130 war triremes numbered about 20 000 and hence the greater part of the expedition, but seemed to have played no role in this episode. There must also, therefore, have been a significant number of troop transports.

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tower known as Galeagra as being a half-way point and most convenient for both parties. They came here a number of times and on one occasion a member of the Roman delegation had a closer look at the wall, counted the courses in it and estimated the height of the stone slabs which composed them and arrived by reasonable calculations at the total height of the walls. Since it turned out to be much lower than he or anyone else had supposed and consequently scaleable, in his opinion by ladders of quite moderate length, he reported his discovery to Marcellus.

The walls were scaled and a postern gate in the *Hexapylon* was broken in and then the Romans began to pour inside. Yet again it was a night attack but this time with precision planning – and helped a great deal, it must be added, by very careless Syracusan guards. Once the Romans were inside the city's fate was sealed.⁵⁷ Fortunately for the Syracusans only their property was looted – the city survived to recover its fortunes.

⁵⁷ See also Chapter 4. For Epipolai see CD nos. 75, 77–78. The wall lay along the lip of the ridge which rises steeply out of the plain, Stahl: 2003, 202, 'the rim of the plateau falls off steeply in altitude for about 10 to 15 metres.' The Romans may have had scaling ladders to the correct height but had to bring these up cliff-like terrain before they could attack the walls. The story may therefore be fanciful and the real entry point for the attackers was a postern gate opened by a traitor, as occurred later on Ortygia.

CHAPTER 3: TEMPLES & THEATRES

Introduction

Status is the main theme here. As the richest and most powerful city of Sicily and, for certainly a number of years, in *Magna Graecia*, Syracuse ought to have possessed public monuments commensurate with its political and military position. However, before the reign of Hieron II was that the case at all? As the following comparative discussion will reveal, Syracuse had a modest series of temples, notwithstanding that fact, its late Hellenistic theatre and an altar to Zeus *Eleutherios* were indeed civic giants meant to proclaim, through their size and sophistication, Syracuse's pre-eminent place in Sicily. However, not as the leading city-state in *Magna Graecia*, but as the faithful ally of Rome. The majestic building projects of the earlier tyrants, Gelon's family tomb, Dionysius' acropolis, Agathokles' harbour towers were all lost even in antiquity.¹ Syracusan community pride was rebuilt by Hieron II, but for a new world in which there was a foreign dominant power. Prior to Hieron's rule the buildings of the city and its immediate surroundings although perhaps not as grandiose as those found, for example, at Selinous or Akragas (or in quite as dramatic natural settings as, for instance, the temple and theatre at Segesta, or the Tauromenion theatre) they nonetheless dominated the urban (and to a lesser extent) the rural landscape. As a result, their very presence affected the daily routine and thoughts of the people since their lives, in virtually all respects, revolved around their civic buildings to a far greater degree than is the case today. Both the sacred and the profane were celebrated together – or at least the one was constantly in gear with the other. Hence the subject of this chapter, for the temples and the theatres were inextricably related to cult practices and celebrations which brought the community together.

Temples

In and around its urban area, Syracuse today boasts the remains of three great Doric temples, two on Ortygia and one at Polichne, near the point of Daskon in the Great Harbour, and the remains of one of only three Ionic temples ever to be built in Sicily or throughout *Magna Graecia*.² We know from Cicero, among other ancient writers, that several other notable temples were to be seen particularly on the mainland section of the city. Their exact situation remains a point of conjecture, for they are buried beneath the modern suburbs of Neapolis, Akradina

1 A series of painting depicting Agathokles in military situations was preserved in the temple of Athena down to the late 70s when they were expropriated by Verres, Cic. *Verr.* 2.55.122. See also Chapter 5.

2 The other Ionic temples were at Locri and Hipponion while the temple of Athena at Poseidonia had interior Ionic columns.

and Tyche.³ The purpose here is to discuss and illustrate the temples of Syracuse, but also to compare these structures with those found elsewhere in Sicily, notably at Segesta, Selinous and Akragas, and in southern Italy. Syracuse was the most powerful and wealthiest city in Sicily during the Classical and Hellenistic periods and later, but were its temples an indication of its dominating position?

The temple of Apollo is the oldest Hellenic temple of the peripteral type in Sicily to have survived, and dates to the last years of the seventh century BC or the early part of the sixth, therefore about a hundred and twenty years after Syracuse's foundation.⁴ The temple was built of local stone, most probably quarried from Epipolai, and has a striking whiteness, compared to the more honey-coloured stone of Akragas and some, but not all, of the temples of Selinous.⁵ The stone is of better quality than that found at, for instance, Poseidonia. The height of the monolithic columns was just about eight metres (27 feet), just two of which stand to the height of the capitals. The temple is archaic in appearance, but is the prototype for later such hexastyle structures. The columns, seventeen along the length, stand on a steep four-stepped *crepidoma*, and the eastern end has a double colonnade and the additional feature of a stairway. The interior *cella* is narrow but contains an entrance porch, a *pronaos*, and a rear *adyton* or treasury. The *stylobate* is twenty-six metres (73 feet) wide and sixty metres (180 feet) long. The overall effect would have been one of length rather than width and the temple, though of a reasonable height, with teracotta tiles, would have been less conspicuous than its near neighbours higher up the hill on Ortygia.

The *Apollonion* has been considered jointly dedicated to Apollo and Artemis, but there is no ancient evidence for this assumption. Cicero mentions a temple to Diana (Verr. 2.53.118), but this reference may well be to the Ionic temple. On the eastern side of the *crepidoma* may be seen an inscription perhaps erected by the architect or his

3 We know from Cicero, among other ancient writers, that several other notable temples were to be seen, particularly on the mainland section of the city. Among those attested in the sources are a temple to Herakles, which lay outside the walls close to Lysimeleia, one or two temples to Demeter and Kore in Neapolis near the *Temenos* of Apollo, a temple to Ciane, with a cult statue of a woman, Aelian, *VH* 2.33, and a temple to Asklepios. Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.184, refers to a temple of Liber and Libera, but there may have been a sole temple to 'Demeter and the Kore', Freeman 1891, 2.213, 2.524. A shrine to the Anapos river may have been located in Lysimeleia, Aelian, *VH* 2.33. A Hellenistic temple to Zeus in the agora has also completely disappeared, and a temple to Hera on Ortygia may lie beneath the *Castello Maniace*. For a temple to Hera and a statue to Gelon perhaps having been located here, see Aelian, *VH* 6.11; Athenaeus, 11.462; Randall-MacIver: 1968, 164–165. The wealth contained in these temples had, on occasion, been plundered. For example, Dionysius I had stolen from the *Olympieion* at Polichne and the temple of Asklepios, Aelian, *VH* 1.20; Freeman: 1894, 4.197. Temple robbing became a common occurrence from the Hellenistic period but, if Cicero's evidence is to be trusted, Verres, governor of Sicily between 73 and 71 BC through his misappropriation of temple treasures attained new heights of avarice.

4 The dates vary: ca. 565 BC, Dinsmoor: 1951, 75–78; Guido: 1967, 176; Barletta: 1983, 72; 'around 600 BC' Holloway: 1991, 68; between 600 and 550 BC, Drögemüller: 1969: 41. CD Catalogue nos. 234–36, 493–94, 529, 651–53, 663.

5 While light does play a part in the colouration of the temple columns, local sandstone at Selinous was used for the *Heraion* and Temple F, but a whiter stone was used for the *Olympieion* (Temple G) and obtained from the now *Cave di Cusa*. At *Poseidonia* (Paestum) the 'poor-looking local stone' was covered with a 'layer of white stucco', Randall-MacIver: 1968, 15. The stone used at Segesta is also white, CD no. 127.

patron (*epistates*), a certain Kleomenes.⁶ The cult of Apollo was an important element in Syracuse, the lack of space for expansion of the precinct here may have led to the construction of a further precinct in which was erected a statue of Apollo in Neapolis. This may also be seen as a development of the cult away from the island which, by the Classical period, was largely inaccessible to the ordinary citizens of Syracuse.

The temple to Zeus *Urios* (*Olympieion*) at Polichne is about five kilometres (2–3 miles) from Ortygia, approximately three kilometres (9 000 feet) outside the city walls and south of the Anapos river. The temple faces the entrance to the Great Harbour; and its situation must be directly related to the fact that Zeus *Urios* was the protector of seafarers, and would have been the first sight to shipping as it entered the bay. Syracuse's main harbour lay to the right of the entrance and hence the temple would be on any ship's left-hand side as it came to anchor. The sailors would see the white of the six columns and the bright colours of the temple's entablature on its eastern end as they came to the safety of the harbour. The overall height of the temple would have been about twenty-five metres (75 feet), but this would have been enhanced by the hill on which the temple is situated.

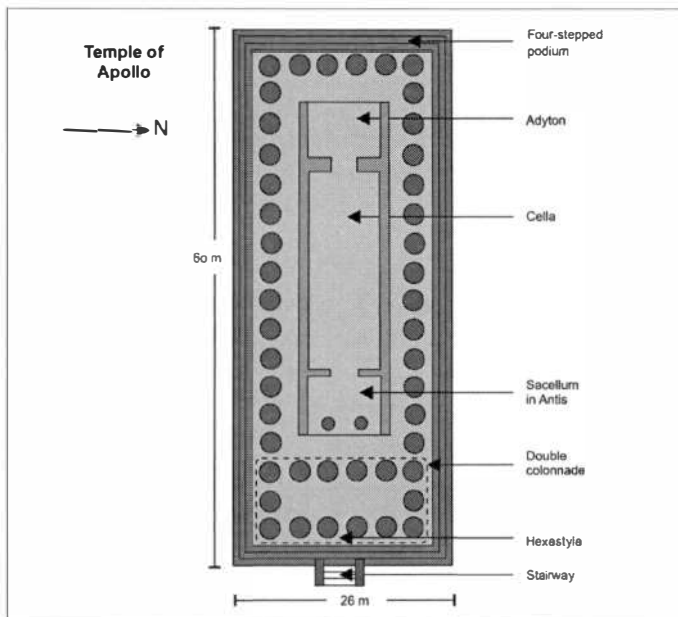


Figure 10: The Temple of Apollo on Ortygia

⁶ On the inscription and the variant readings see Holloway: 1991, 73, following M. Guarducci: 'Kleomenes the son of Knidieides made it for Apollo. And he included columns. They are fine works.' CD no. 651. Guido: 1958, 43; Guido: 1967, 178; Freeman: 1891, 2.443, are more cautious in their assessment of the text.

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The *Olympieion* is generally considered to be roughly contemporary with the Temple of Apollo, but constructed slightly later.⁷ This contention is based on the fact that the two standing columns, rising to a height of about seven metres (22 feet), are both monolithic. The temple was evidently completed before column drums became commonly employed; the columns of the peristyle at least were made of single pieces of stone. The columns themselves are the second left at the east end, and the corner of the west end. The *Olympieion* was a Doric peripteral hexastyle structure with seventeen columns along the length, with a double colonnade at the front, closely modeled on the *Apollonion*. Again, the fluting, like that on the columns of the temple of Apollo, is shallow. The three-stepped stylobate is high and an entry stairway may well have been an added feature here. The overall stylobate is seventy-one by twenty-seven metres (124 feet by 80 feet), which would have given emphasis to the length. The interior *cella* would also have been comparatively narrow. Any trace of the *cella* is lost since the interior of the temple has completely disappeared beneath the foundation level. The temple was richly decorated in antiquity when the cult statue was decorated with a cloak of woven gold (Aelian, *V.H.* 1.20). It was vulnerable to attack, as occurred on a number of occasions, but does not appear to have sustained massive pillaging. However, a fort was established at Polichne to protect both the approach to the city from the south and the temple. The *Olympieion* had its own precinct which occupied a large part of the hill at Polichne, while the main south road from the city ran in a deep cutting just below the temple's eastern end.⁸

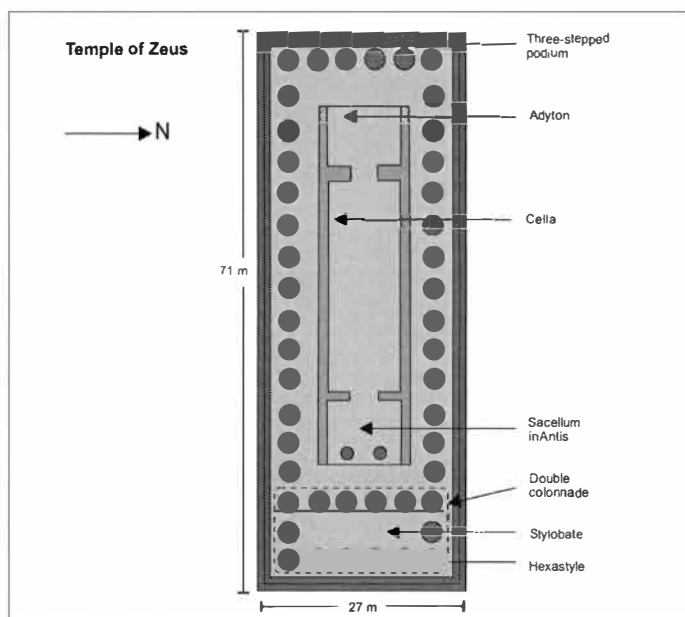


Figure 11: The Temple of Zeus Urios at Polichne

⁷ Drögemüller: 1969, 51; 'end of the seventh century', Holloway: 1991, 60; CD. No. 719.

⁸ CD. nos. 716, 97, 286–96, 300, 627–28.

The Ionic temple (Temple of Artemis), situated beneath the present-day *Municipio*, and north of the temple of Athena, was excavated only in 1963–64. It dates to the last quarter of the sixth century BC, and so is somewhat younger than the *Apollonion* and *Olympieion*. It was perhaps not entirely finished when Gelon began construction of the adjacent temple dedicated to Athena in 480.⁹ The temple's stylobate, although now mostly destroyed, can be detected with its three steps, and other remains – some of which are quite substantial – indicate a hexastyle temple with fourteen columns along the length, but without a colonnade at the east end. The fluting on the columns is also much deeper, and of a higher quality, than that of the temples to Apollo or Zeus *Urios*, indicative of a particular school or workshop of craftsmen, possibly even sculptors employed from elsewhere. Cicero refers to a temple of Diana (Artemis), and this may illustrate that this structure, even if unfinished, was actually in use in his day. Temples were clearly used in an unfinished state (compare the *Olympieion* at Selinous) and a lack of completion does not necessarily imply that a derelict building occupied this space.¹⁰ Unlike modern houses or commercial buildings, ancient temples took many years to build and evidently were often incomplete, but were in daily use nonetheless.¹¹ The columns of Ionic temples were usually much taller than those of the Doric order, hence this temple was almost certainly the highest building on Ortygia.¹²

Since Ortygia belonged to Artemis, it is safe to assume that this deity held a senior place in the cult practices of the island, at least. The spring of Arethusa nearby and a *temenos* of the goddess in that area all point to an important religious institution here. A nocturnal festival to Artemis – presumably celebrated on Ortygia within the temple precinct – was clearly an important annual event. However, it cost the city dearly in 212 BC, when a widespread drunken stupor caused by the over-consumption of wine without food, since food supplies had become scarce, allowed the Romans to occupy the walls near the *Hexapylon*, and a little while afterwards they entered and sacked the entire city.¹³

The tyrant Gelon ordered the construction of a new temple to Athena, just to the south of the Ionic temple, and the agreed date is said to coincide with the great Greek victory over the Carthaginians at Himera in 480 BC.¹⁴ An earlier temple was either

9 For the temple's date, lack of completion and remains, Barletta: 1983, 86–90; Holloway: 1991, 72. See also the CD nos. 496, 578, 616–21.

10 See the CD nos. 167–168, 174, 177–180 for this temple and the excavations.

11 A useful modern comparison would be with the still unfinished church, Antoni Gaudí's *La Sagrada Família* in Barcelona. Begun in 1882, halted at the death of Gaudí in 1926, restarted in the 1950s, its incomplete state does not preclude its use as a place of worship.

12 On the height of this temple, see Holloway: 1991, 72.

13 This was not the only time that a drunken festival is mentioned in the sources. According to Thucydides (7.73.2), following their famous sea victory over the Athenians in the Great Harbour, Nikias ordered a withdrawal of all troops from Epipolai down to the camp along the beach at Lysimeleia. Since this coincided with a feast day to Herakles, and the Syracusans may have retaken the precinct of a temple to this deity situated outside the city walls west of Apollo Temenites as a result of the movement of enemy troops, they held a drunken festival in celebration; and the Athenians could have escaped had they not delayed a further two days, misled by reports fed to them by Hermokrates and other Syracusan leaders.

14 On the date and its predecessor, see Guido: 1958, 36; Holloway: 1991, 69, 72.

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dismantled or had been destroyed.¹⁵ The *Athenaion* was classical Doric peripteral and hexastyle on a stylobate of three steps, and fourteen columns, with shallow fluting, along the length. The temple had been converted into a church by the middle of the seventh century AD, and subsequently became the cathedral. As a result the temple of Athena has been well preserved,¹⁶ and it is possible to make out much of the peristyle within the cathedral. However, the axis of the church is different to that of the temple so that the east end is lost in the high altar area, while the main entrance now comes from the rear or west. Outside the cathedral, in the *Via Minerva*, the northern side of the temple is easily identified, as is the north eastern corner on the three-stepped *crepidoma* (see the illustration). The southern columns of the temple have become interior supports because a number of small chapels have been added to that side. The columns of the *cella* now form the nave, or central section, of the cathedral. The baroque facade of the cathedral probably fairly reflects the original height of the temple, and since the former can be seen as the highest building on the island's skyline, the latter, with the Ionic temple next door, must have produced a similar effect.

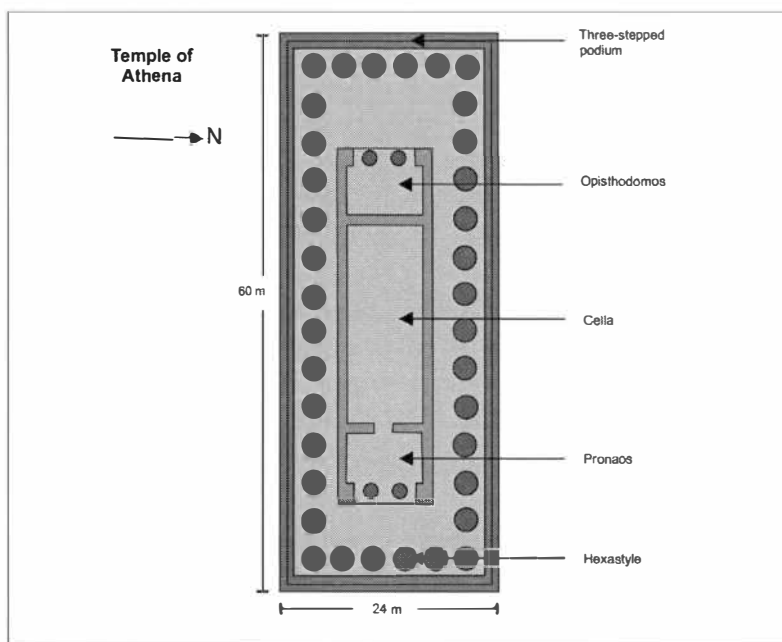


Figure 12: The Temple of Athena at Syracuse

¹⁵ Freeman: 1891, 2.14–15, recounts the story, told by Diodorus (8.11.1–2) of the architect Agathokles being fined for embezzling stones from the temple then under construction, but whether or not this is Gelon's building or a previous one is uncertain.

¹⁶ CD nos. 718, 25, 240–43, 309–10, 620–21. Not as well preserved as the Temple of Concord at Akragas or the *Hephaisteion* at Athens, however. CD nos. 200–206, 208, 212.

The Temple of Athena was lavishly decorated inside with inspiring portraits of various rulers, and by a portrayal of a battle scene in which Agathokles had participated on horseback. The temple doors – Cicero uses the word *valvae*, implying that these folded back – were made or rather gilded with gold and ivory (*Verr.* 2.4.124). On the east side, facing out to the Ionian Sea, a large shield of bronze was fixed – probably the apex of the *tympanum*.¹⁷ The rising sun would have caught the burnished surface and acted as a landmark for shipping. According to Cicero, some or all of these decorations were removed by Verres (*Verr.* 2.4.122).

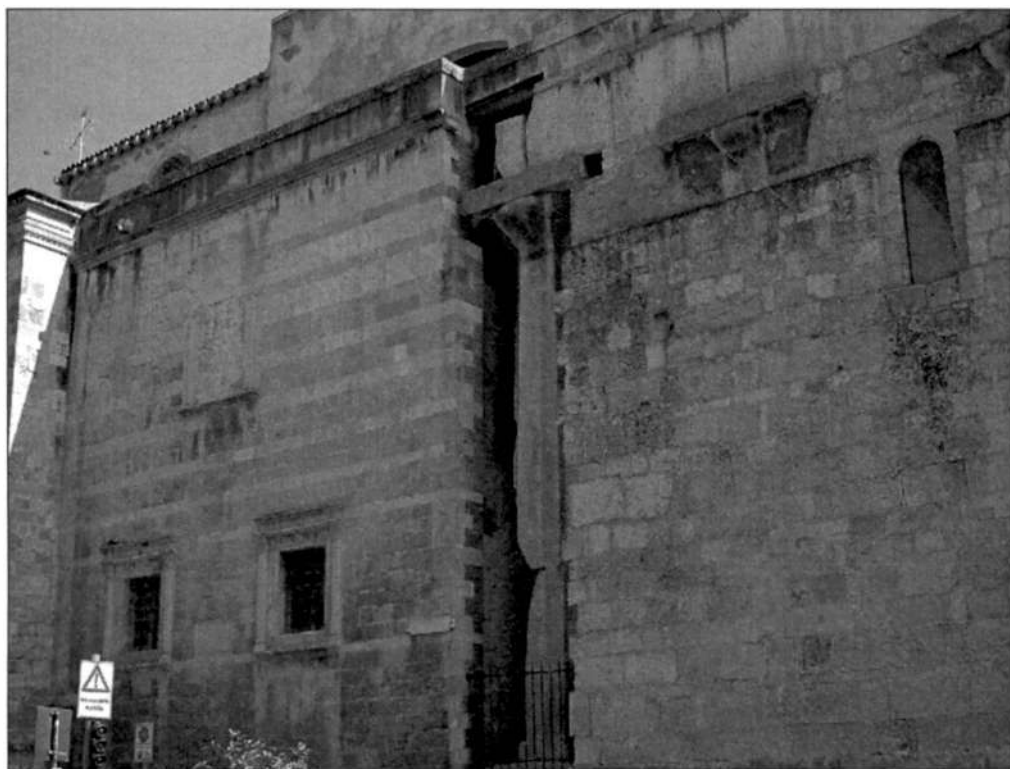


Figure 13: North-East end of the Athenaion

The unfinished temple at Segesta (Egesta) is probably the best known and remembered of all such sites in the entire Mediterranean.¹⁸ The perfect natural backdrop is either a reflection of the architect's genius or, on a more mundane level, an indication of a lack of

¹⁷ Models of the temple show simply a shield, CD no. 495, but some modern commentators believe a statue stood on the cornice, Freeman: 1891, 2.40; Guido: 1958, 39, although such decoration is not attested to elsewhere.

¹⁸ Some might well argue for the temple of Apollo at Bassai, Poseidon at Sounion, Juno Lacinia outside Kroton, Zeus at Kyme, or Apollo at Delphi. For the most detailed and recent plans of the temple, see D. Mertens, *Der Tempel von Segesta und die dorishe Templebaukunst des griechischen Westens in klassischer Zeit*, Mainz, 1984. CD nos. 124, 127, 129–132, 144–145.

space in the town across a narrow valley. The temple is sited beneath Mount Bernardo, from which it is separated by a spectacular gorge or ravine of the river (Pispisa) *Skamandros*, while the front or eastern side of the temple looks across a valley to the secular sector of the city beneath Mount Varvaro. The temple as it stands today is, therefore, viewed in splendid isolation. The eastern end faces the secular community on the acropolis of Mount Varvaro, not an entirely common feature for the Parthenon at Athens faces away from the Agora and the Pnyx. The western end overlooks the gorge, which was surely an integral part of the city's defences.¹⁹ The scene as a whole allows an interesting insight into construction techniques and practices in that a peristyle could be erected in its entirety over an unfinished stylobate up to and including the architrave and the cornice.

The temple is Doric peripteral, and hexastyle with fourteen columns along the length, nine metres high (27 feet) and two metres (over 6 feet) wide at the base, the stylobate is fifty-eight by twenty-three metres (174 x 70 feet). Given the context of its partial construction, it was perhaps intended to be dedicated to Athena, although two generations younger than its counterpart at Syracuse. The temple is clearly incomplete since none of the columns were fluted, and this suggests that there was never any intention of completing it. At Selinous, temple G (*Olympieion*) for example (another unfinished structure) there are clearly both fluted and unfluted columns. The fluting process was presumably started as soon as the columns were erected, and the exterior columns were fluted before the interior columns of the porch or the *cella*. There is no sign of a *cella* or *sekos*, but one was probably planned initially.²⁰ Furthermore, the lifting bosses on many of the blocks of the stylobate have not been chiseled away.²¹ This also indicates that they had only recently been laid when the work was halted and that haste was the order of the day, also that the main shell of a temple was thrown up rapidly even if there were great logistical problems in transporting the raw materials to a rather inaccessible site.

If construction is indeed associated with the arrival of ambassadors from Athens during the Peloponnesian War, and this has certainly found general acceptance, then Segesta's temple is one of the latest examples of the Doric style in Sicily, even throughout *Magna Graecia*. The date could then be pinpointed to between 427 and 415 BC, allowing a little more than a decade for the peristyle to be built or, more dramatically, to just 416/15, and the reawakening of Athenian interest in Sicilian affairs and the arrival of a major expeditionary force against Syracuse.²² The existence of the lifting bosses

19 Into this ravine, CD no. 133, were pitched eight thousand or eighty percent of the population of Segesta after the city was taken by Agathokles in 307. Diodorus relates the disaster (20.71.1–5), simply noting that the poorer citizens were massacred beside the *Skamandros*, the river running through the gorge. Since it would have been virtually impossible to move these people to the river, they were presumably thrown down.

20 For evidence of a *cella* see Holloway: 1991, 120. Note also Mertens: 1984, *Beilage* 27, where a clear *cella* is assumed on the plan.

21 For further discussion of the temple see Holloway: 1991, 119–120 and the suggestion that a *cella* was intended for the interior of the peristyle; Randall-MacIver: 1986, 220–221. For the existence of two other Doric temples here see *OCD*² 970.

22 On Athenian–Segestan relations, see Thuc. 6.6.2–3, 6.8.1, Dover: 1970, 220–222, Finley: 1979, 67–68. Its date of construction coincides with that of the temple of Apollo at Bassai.

and the absence of any fluting whatsoever might well support the argument for a very hurried construction, followed by a precipitate halt in the process. However, a note of caution should also be sounded, for Thucydides (6.6–8, 6.46.1–5), who gives a detailed account of the attempts of the Segestans to enlist Athenian help against Selinous, makes no mention of a building, which surely must have acquired a certain notoriety at the time, especially if, as some believe, the architect was Athenian. If the temple's construction was associated with the appearance of Athenian diplomats associated with the arrival of an invasion force from Athens, the remains, albeit unfinished, would surely have drawn comment then or later.²³

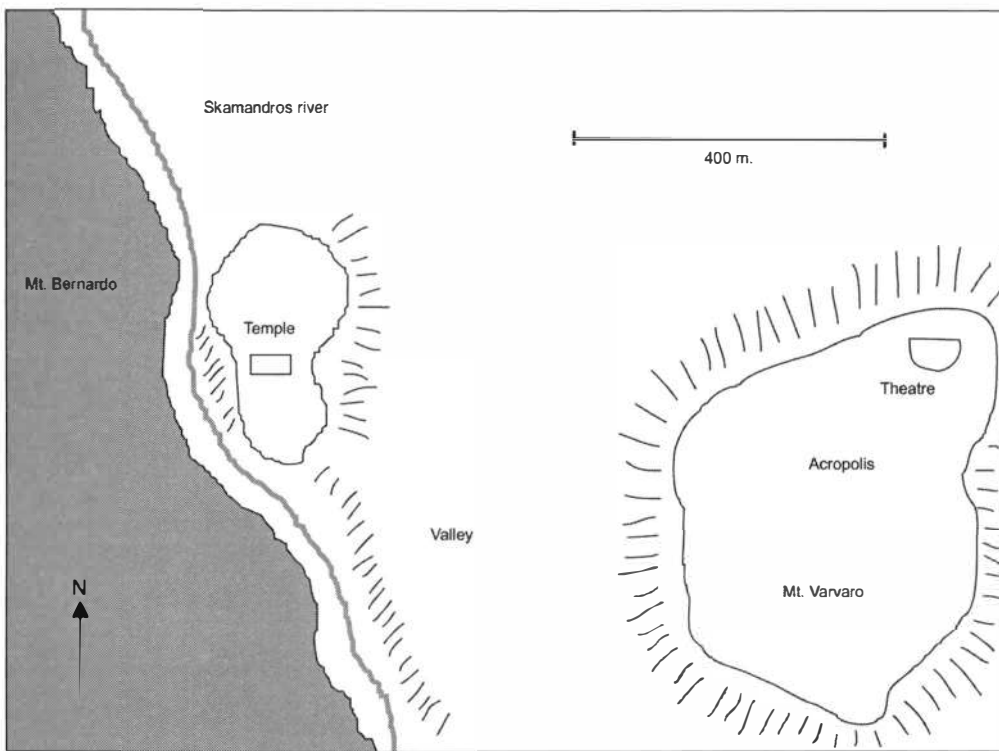


Figure 14: Map of Segesta

²³ See Guido: 1967, 70 (for a discussion of possible dates) who suggests the period 426–415. The lack of ancient comment is a possible puzzle, although it is worth noting that, for example, the Parthenon draws few comments in antiquity, and may point to an altogether different reason for construction and cessation. Unfinished temples were clearly a fairly common sight. There were unfinished cult centres in Syracuse, Akragas and Selinous and certainly elsewhere. The temple at Segesta could just as easily be associated with the battle at Himera in 480 or another event, and then building stopped because of (as in other cities) a shortage of funds. The intention may have been to restart, but that never happened.

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Segesta may have flourished as a city during much of antiquity, but it was never a wealthy place; and once this building programme had been interrupted it did not recommence. The unfinished temple graced the hillside while the Segestans became citizens of the Roman empire (Tac. *Ann.* 4.43), and remained intact even following the destruction of the city by Agathokles in 307 BC and the Saracens in AD 734, and numerous earthquakes then and since. The temple was not used as a place of Christian worship, as was the Temple of Concord at Akragas or the Temple of Athena at Syracuse. So its isolation rather than its continued use helped to preserve it. The temple at Segesta is slightly smaller than the much earlier temples now preserved at Syracuse. It is unlikely that a double line of columns forming a porch (as seen in the temple of Apollo) was ever contemplated and therefore it was probably intended to have much the same appearance as the temple of Athena at Syracuse – a possible further pointer to its proposed resident deity. The architect of this temple may also have been influenced in his designs by the temple at Himera further along the north coast, erected after the great Greek victory there over Carthage in 480 BC.²⁴

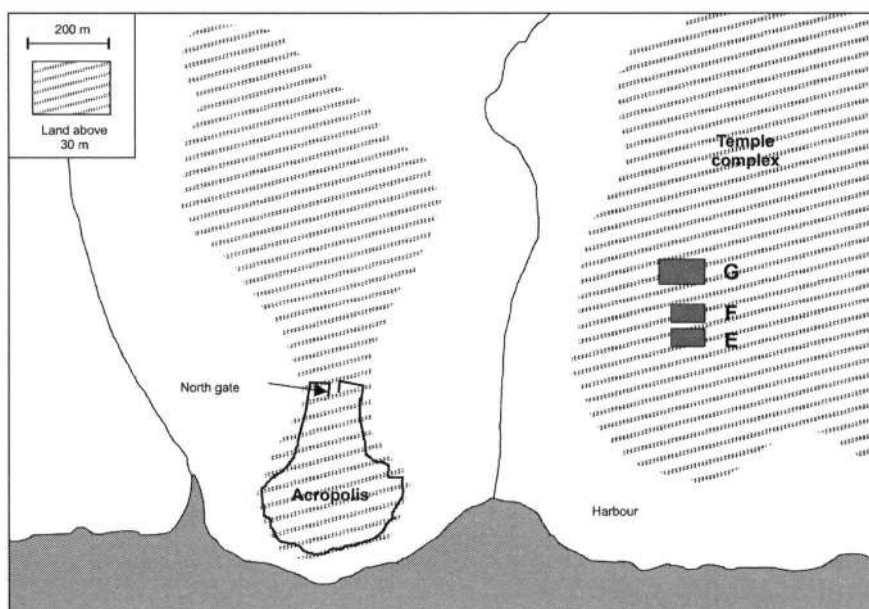


Figure 15: Plan of Selinous

²⁴ The temple of Athena at Syracuse, erected on the order of Gelon, the temple at Himera perhaps also to Athena by Theron of Akragas, where the temple of Hera dates to the same time and may well have been occasioned by the same event. These temples were all of more or less the same size and appearance, Holloway: 1991, 112–13. The temple of Athena at Himera may have been destroyed in 409 BC in retribution for the Carthaginian defeat in 480. Places of cult practices were not usually obliterated, however, and compare the fate, or rather survival, of the temples (or at least the structures) at Selinous at the same time.

The temple complex on Marinella hill, east of the main civic centre of Selinous,²⁵ consists of three temples known as temples E, F and G respectively, which is a sequential rather than a chronological order.²⁶ Temple F is the oldest of the trio. The deities worshipped in these buildings are not attested to, but temple E is usually known as the *Heraion*, while temple G, on account of its gigantic size, as an *Olympieion*, temple F may have been dedicated to Apollo, Athena, Artemis or even Dionysus.²⁷ All three temples are Doric, with temple F the smallest of the three. Temple E was evidently completed in the twenty years following the battle at Himera, while temple G (its close associate in age) was left incomplete either when Temple E was begun in about 480 BC or, more likely, seventy years later when the city was destroyed during a Carthaginian invasion. The stone quarries of Selinous (now *Cave di Cusa*), about eighteen kilometres (12 miles) west of the city, have a large number of drums in situ, while others are plainly in a state of readiness for transportation.²⁸ The drums, three by two metres (9 x 6 feet), were obviously intended for the interior of the *Olympieion* – the exterior columns all appear to have been in place. A sudden interruption in the excavation seems evident and suggests that work terminated here at the same time as the city fell to the army of the Carthaginian Hannibal. Although Selinous was evidently re-occupied and survived down to the First Punic War, it never regained its prosperity, and the urban area was confined to the acropolis hill, while the temple complex was probably abandoned.²⁹ The population was moved out to Lilybaeum in about 250 BC, during the height of the war between Rome and Carthage.

The *Heraion*, partly restored in 1958, and the *Olympieion* are the focus of discussion here. Temple F is a jumbled ruin, although fluted columns may be observed which indicate that it was completed and used in the fifth century. The Selinuntine *Heraion* (67.7 x 25.3 metres, 203 x 76 feet) is a peripteral hexastyle temple, larger than the Parthenon, with fifteen columns along its length. Unlike the temple at Segesta, the temple has a central stairway at the front similar to the temple of Apollo at Syracuse, although in other respects it has more affinity with Gelon's temple to Athena, to which it is closely related in age. Like the temple of Athena and the temple at Himera this *Heraion* may well have been dedicated in the aftermath of the victory over Carthage in 480 BC.

25 On the acropolis of Selinous stand a further five temples (A, B, C, D & O) dating from between ca. 600 to 480 BC. Temple C, built soon after 600 BC, was also dedicated to Apollo. See CD no. 164. A lack of space on the acropolis of Selinous is noted by Freeman: 1891, 1,427–28.

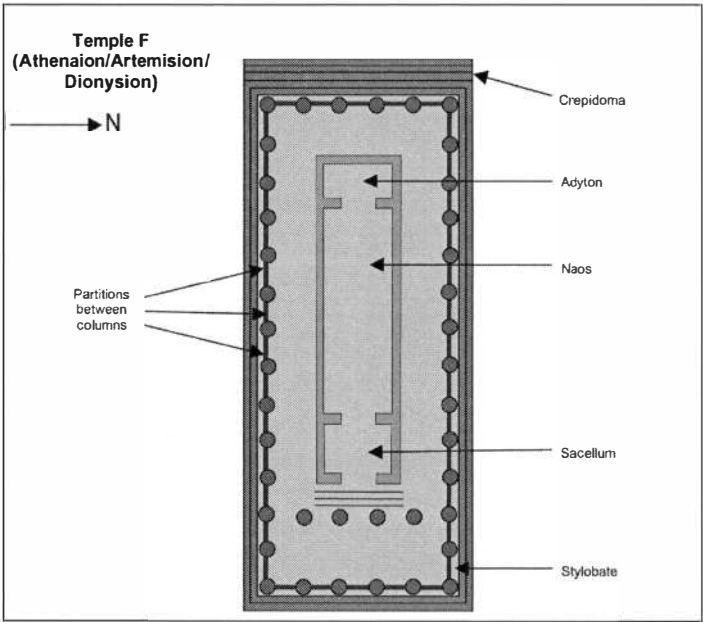
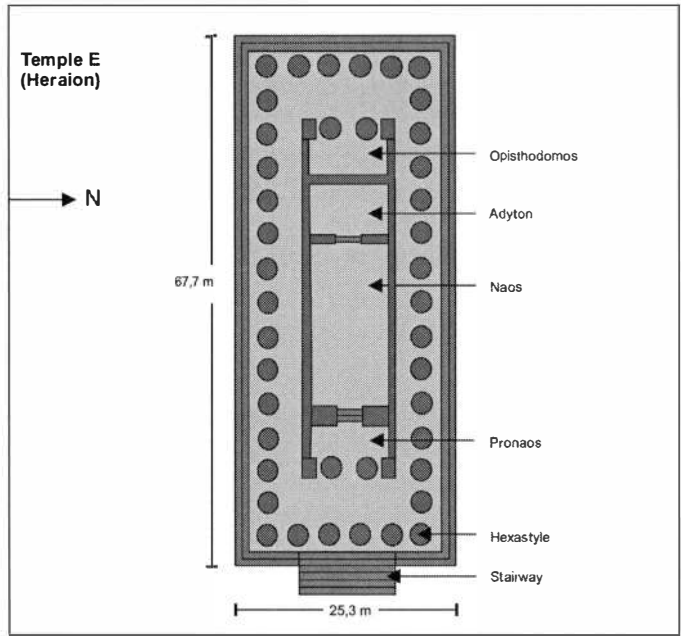
26 CD no. 184.

27 Temple E (*Heraion*), CD nos. 154–157, 159–63, 165–66, 169, 171, 175–76, 181–82; Temple F, CD nos. 158, 170, 173; Temple G (*Olympieion*) CD nos. 167–68, 174, 177–180.

28 See CD nos. 146–153; especially *Video clip: Selinous quarry*, CD no 150.

29 For further discussion of the fortifications see Chapter 5, and for illustrative material on the defences, see CD nos. 183, 185–186.

Syracuse in antiquity



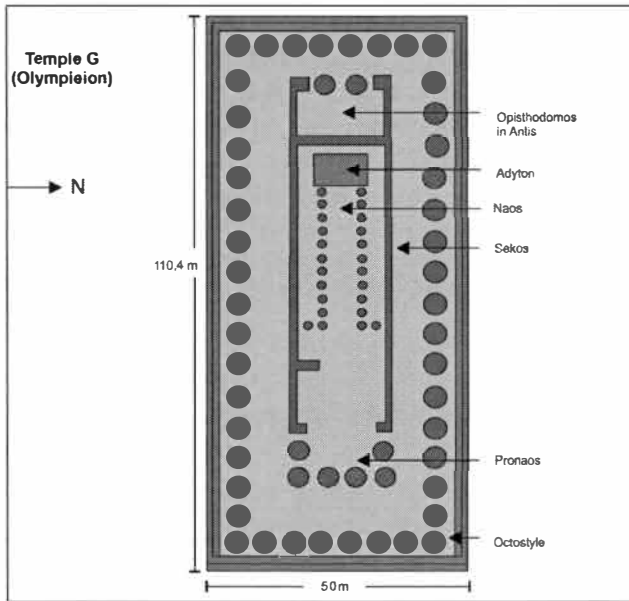


Figure 16: The Selinous Temples

The *Heraion* is larger than the temples of Apollo, Artemis and Athena on Ortygia, and only marginally smaller than the temple of Zeus at Polichne. The restoration of the temple allows an appreciation of the tapered fluted columns, with the topmost drum and *echinus* being a single unit, conforming to normal types of the Classical period. The columns are rather better preserved, or are of a better quality stone, than those to be seen at the Syracusan *Athenaion*. The interior *cella* is also unusually elevated and is reached by interior steps which add to the overall splendour of the building.³⁰ The temple had bronze roof tiles which would have created an imposing and dazzling sight for any shipping coming to Selinous harbour nearby. Its link with the activities of the harbour and agora could explain its prominent position.³¹

The cult celebrated in Temple F is unknown,³² but its highly unusual enclosure of the peristyle suggests rites which were not to be observed by the general population. Punic influences may also be present here. Until the columns were enclosed, the temple had all the usual features of an archaic Doric temple – much the same as the temple of Apollo at Syracuse with double frontal colonnade – although the columns are not monolithic. The entire structure is dated to the last decades of the sixth century and, therefore, at least fifty years younger than the Syracusan *Apollonion*. The temple (61.8

³⁰ Some idea of the size of the uppermost columns may be seen on the CD nos. 160, 165–66, *Video clip: Selinous Heraion*.

³¹ See R. Leighton, *Tarquinia: An Etruscan City*, London 2004, 130, for the cult of Hera and its association with *emporion*.

³² For opinions about the cult and date of construction, see Holloway: 1991, 71; De Angelis: 2003, 137–138.

by 24.4 metres, 184 x 75 feet) is peripteral hexastyle with fifteen columns along the length, which also results in an uncommonly elongated *naos*.

At first sight, the *Olympieion* (Temple G) is a pile of impenetrable masonry, but the main features can be gleaned of this giant whose base measures rather more than a hundred and ten by fifty metres (335 x 150 feet).³³ It was a Doric octostyle temple with seventeen columns on the length, and thus identical with the peristyle of Parthenon, but there the comparison ends. Unlike the Parthenon, in the Selinuntine *Olympieion*, the gap between the peristyle and the *cella* was probably open to the sky because the dimensions were too large to roof. However, there was evidently an architrave and perhaps entablature since huge horizontal blocks abound that were clearly set on the top of columns, which at the eastern end have separate *echinus* and drums, while those at the western end have single topmost units. Some of the columns of the temple were clearly monolithic, such as the sole standing interior column which also has no fluting, although its close neighbour (still partly standing but slightly shaken out of the perpendicular by the earthquake which destroyed the temple) is in drums and possesses fluting. The temple was begun before 500 BC, which accounts for the archaic aspects, and it is seems clear that construction began at the front and progressed towards the rear, and only then was the work on the *cella* started; and as fashions changed so did the styles and building material. Both archaic and classical styles are represented here within the Doric framework, since in its earlier stages it was contemporary with the initial construction of the Ionic temple (*Artemision*) at Syracuse, while in its later stages it belongs to the same period as the Segestan temple. Thus on the eastern end *echinus* and *abacus* are separate and fixed to monolithic columns. A stranded *abacus* lies at some distance from the front of the temple where it was flung in the catastrophic earthquake. At the west end *echinus* and *abacus* are fused in usual classical Doric on column drums. Such ongoing construction and decoration suggests constant use, even if in entirety it remained unfinished. Temple G is the second largest temple in Sicily after the *Olympieion* at Akragas, and considerably larger than any religious building at Syracuse. The columns rose to a height of approximately sixteen metres (50 feet) with an entablature of fourteen metres (42 feet) above that: the total height was over thirty metres (over 90 feet). Whether or not it was abandoned after 409, or some time later during the reoccupation of the city, is currently still subject to debate.³⁴

For all its fame in antiquity (Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.22, 2.2.15; Vergil, *Aen.* 5.718), the temple of Aphrodite at Eryx/Erukina (modern Erice) has completely disappeared. Desertion of the site appears to have been early (Strabo, 6.2.6) and its ruin was not arrested once the temple had fallen into disrepair. This was the subject of debate in the Roman

33 Cf. De Angelis: 2003, 138: '50.7 m. by 110.12 m.' and the 'sekos measures 85 m. by 25 m.' and Video clip: *Selinous Olympieion*.

34 De Angelis: 2003, 138.

senate resulting in financial aid from the emperor, according to Tacitus (Ann. 4.43),³⁵ but evidently not enough to prevent a terminal decline.³⁶ Nothing more is heard of the temple's fortunes.

Eryx, where a precipice rose to an extraordinary height and the narrow space where Aphrodite's temple was situated, made it necessary to build it on the sheer tip of the rock. He (Daedalus) constructed a wall upon the very edge and by this means extended, in an astonishing manner, the overhanging ledge of the cliff. He (Eryx) founded a notable city, which was named after him, and it was situated on a high hill, and on the highest point within the city he set up a shrine to his mother, which he decorated not only with a beautifully built temple but also with many of his dedications. (Diod. 4.78.4–5, 4.83.1)

Although Eryx was evidently an independent community for some period of its history, the temple and presumably the town had come under Segestan management by the first century AD.³⁷ In contrast to sites such as Segesta and Selinous, the problem of the temple's survival was compounded by a strategic situation that dominates the surrounding countryside, and was relatively safe from attack. In later times it was occupied as a fort, and with the passing of the pagan cults the temple precinct would not have been safe from pillage. The present castle is medieval on previous Saracen fortifications. It is also apparent from the complete absence of Greco-Roman material that whatever building was there in the Classical and Hellenistic periods it cannot have been substantial either, for the space is simply insufficient for anything particularly noteworthy.³⁸ The cult and the hill draw comments but no details of the actual temple.³⁹

The wealth of Akragas was based on the land, rearing of sheep and horses and viticulture figure prominently in the sources. The land here is more suitable for agriculture than at Syracuse which needed also a thriving port. Although Akragas challenged Syracuse for supremacy in Sicily, except for short spells (often during *staseis* in its opponent's city) it had either to acquiesce to the other's dominance or responded to it by hostile neutrality. Akragas occupied an exceptional position above the south coast, and some astute town planning is evident in later urban developments.⁴⁰ And because the ancient religious sector lay outside the main ancient (and subsequent modern) residen-

35 Tacitus seems quite clear about the temple ownership which he ascribes to Segesta, and also describes the temple as an ancient ruin.

36 Claudius also sent financial aid to Eryx for the 'ruined temple of Venus', Suet. *Claud.* 25.5, and certainly suggests that this cult was in severe and by then constant financial difficulties.

37 Diodorus, 14.48.1, 55.4, certainly indicates an independent city in 397/6 BC.

38 One or two bits of fluted column drums may be seen on the site but their provenance must be doubtful, and almost certainly not the temple of Aphrodite as described by Diodorus who, however, may never have visited Eryx. For aspects of the site, see the CD nos. 187–193.

39 Durrell: 1977, 167, writes evocatively of the site: '... the most famous and most privileged temple to Aphrodite in the whole of the Mediterranean has vanished without trace. The one late head of Aphrodite is nothing to write home about. The holy shrine of Eryx has been blown out like a light, yet as at Delphi, one can still smell the sulphur in the air. You feel it in the burning sun like a cold touch on the back of the neck.'

40 On the site of Akragas see de Waele, J.A., *Akragas Graeca: Die historische Topographie des griechischen Akragas auf Sizilien*, 's-Gravenhage 1971, 3–9; Freeman: 1891, 1.431–432. On urban development see Guido: 1967, 114.

Syracuse in antiquity

tial areas, following the practice noted at Selinous, there are today a substantial number of easily accessible temple sites. From east to west along the main southerly ridge, the temples are: a *Heraion*, a temple traditionally known as the temple of Concord, a temple to Herakles, and another enormous *Olympieion*.

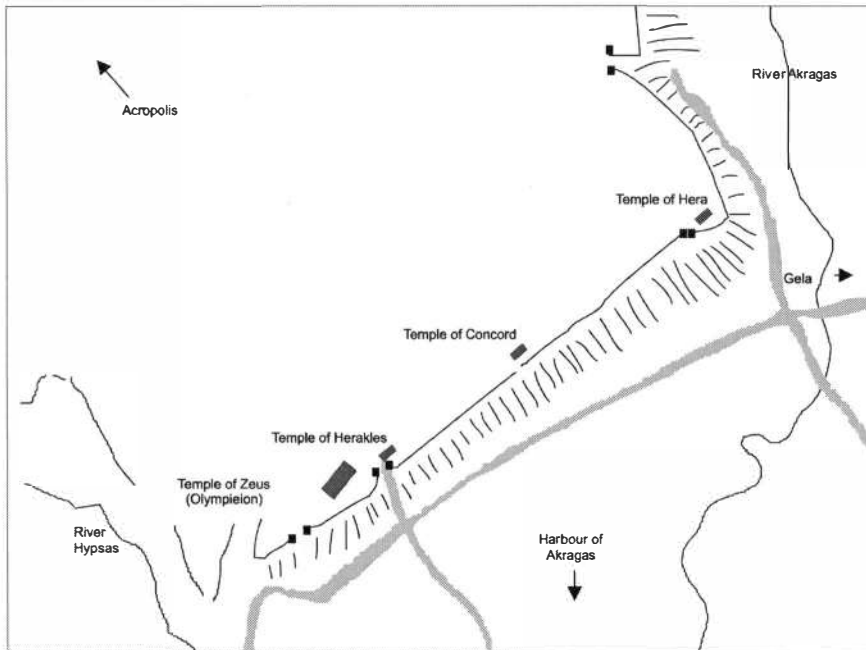


Figure 17: Map of the Main Temples at Akragas

The Temple to Hera stands on a high bluff on the one side overlooking the coast, and on the other across the valley to the city and its acropolis. The temple's construction dates to about 450 BC, and was built in classical Doric, peripteral hexastyle with thirteen columns along the length, *pronaos*, *naos* and an *opisthodomos distyle in antis*.⁴¹ This building is almost identical in size and design to the next major temple along the ridge, the Temple of Concord, one of the best preserved of all Greek temples. Like the *Hephaisteion* in Athens it was for long a centre of Christian worship, which involved some structural alterations, but for all that the essential architectural features have been preserved.⁴² Like the temple of Hera, on which it is closely modelled in design, in size it is modest being less than forty metres (120 feet) in length and rather more than sixteen

⁴¹ CD nos. 207–208, 226.

⁴² CD nos. 200–206, 208, 212, 227.

metres (50 feet) in width. It is again classical Doric, constructed in about 430 BC, hence roughly the same age as the Segesta temple, hexastyle with thirteen columns along the length. The entire architrave has survived together with the entablature at either end, while the cornice is intact as far as the *sema*.⁴³ The temple of Herakles, dating to about 480 BC, a direct contemporary of the *Athenaion* at Syracuse, stands on a high point at the other end of the ridge. It also has a steep-sided stylobate with a front stairway. In size it is similar to the temples on Ortygia, but in common with its neighbours here the temple of Herakles has interior stairs from the *pronaos* to the roof. The purpose of these stairs is uncertain.⁴⁴

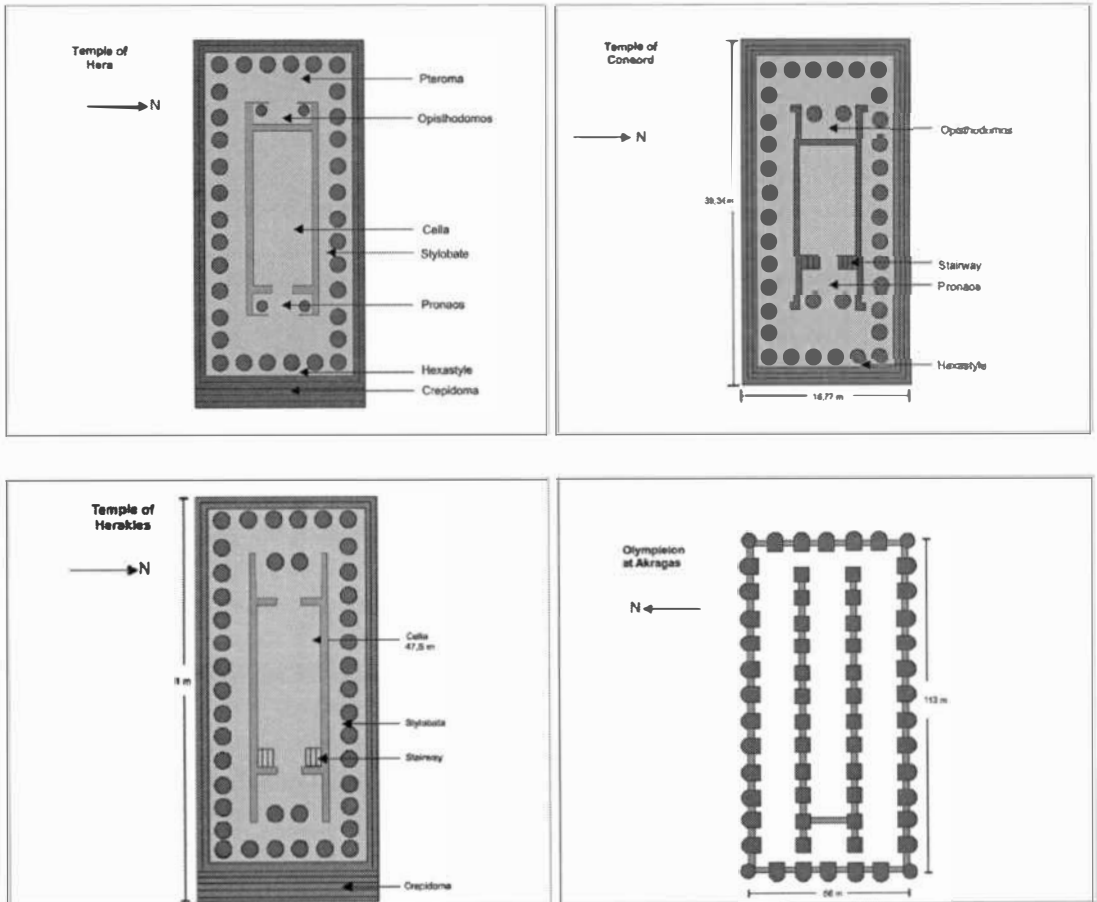


Figure 18: The Temples at Akragas

⁴³ Guido: 1967, 118–120; Holloway: 1991, 116–117.

⁴⁴ CD nos. 213, 217, 225.

The temple of Zeus is one of the largest ever to be built by the Greeks, either in Ionia, Greece or in *Magna Graecia* and is, moreover, one of the most innovative constructions in this genre of cult buildings. Greek temples are remarkably uniform in ground plan and external appearance. Styles were also slow to change. However, the architect at Akragas (experimenting within the general conventions) aspired to something quite novel. Unlike the other temples on the ridge at Akragas, however, the Akragantine *Olympieion* is utterly ruined and a jumble of blocks and columns, although it is possible to walk around the interior of the stylobate. The size is impressive: 113 metres along the length (340 feet) and 56 metres in width (170 feet). Although the temple has a peripteral octostyle appearance, its columns were actually just half drums, fourteen along the length; the intervals between these semi-drums were filled by a partition wall. This innovation had been used at Selinous and the architect here presumably knew and used this example, but then went one step further. Unlike the partitions at the Selinous Temple F, those of the *Olympieion* at Akragas were filled in to the architrave by the use of telamons of Zeus, standing Atlas-like supporting the roof.⁴⁵ The peristyle was probably roofed but the *sekos* was left open to the sky – another innovation. It is dated to the period immediately following the battle of Himera, in which the Akragantines participated on the winning side. It was probably meant to be symbolic of the new confidence won from victory. However, the temple may never have been completed. The expense for such an enterprise must have been huge. And significantly, the exercise was not repeated anywhere else.

Poseidonia, originally a colony of Sybaris, was founded in about 600, and after the destruction of its mother city in about 510 it came under the influence of local Italic tribes, notably the Lucanians and Samnites.⁴⁶ However, Poseidonia (later Roman Paestum) retained most of its outward Hellenism, and probably had links with Syracuse at times during the Classical period, for how else could Hieron I and Dionysius I have penetrated so far north with their fleets without friendly harbours? In the Gulf of Salerno Poseidonia was the main urban centre,⁴⁷ and an obvious beaching place for shipping moving along the Italian coast. It is not as a harbour that Poseidonia is remembered, however, but for its wealth in temple survivals. Poseidonia deserves to be included here because its three Doric temples are among the best preserved.

The temple of Hera (known also as the *Basilica*) has an unusual width with nine columns at each end, and eighteen along the length; with a height of just six and a half metres (less than 20 feet) it appears oddly squat, hence the theory that there was no roof and that it was designed as a colonnade.⁴⁸ However, this was a Doric peripteral

45 CD nos. 218–19, 224 (telamons), 214–216, 220, 222–23.

46 On the history of Poseidonia see, for example Freeman: 1891, 2.164–165.

47 For details of Poseidonia's history, see Strabo, 5.4.13. Elea, closest town to Poseidonia, lies south and looks more to the Gulf of Policastro, Strabo, 6.1.1. For Elea, see further below.

48 Cipriani & Avagliano: 2000, 18–24, with reconstruction; Randall-MacIver: 1968, 19–20, who also suggests Demeter and Kore as the cult practiced here. CD nos. 422–24, 429–36.

temple on a three-stepped *crepidoma*, with columns which have noticeably shallow fluting (twenty flutes to each column).⁴⁹ Excavation work has revealed the foundations of the interior *cella*. It is the oldest of the temples here, with construction estimated to belong to the mid-sixth century BC.⁵⁰ The temple of Athena (or perhaps Ceres) is Doric, hexastyle, and a modest size (13½ metres in width, 31½ in length, 41 x 95 feet) with thirteen columns along the length, dated to after 550 BC.⁵¹ The columns rise to six metres (27 feet), and are tapered (1¼ metres at the base, 0.84 metres at the top). The columns of the *cella* are unusually Ionic but since this section of the building was completed last, it shows a sudden interest in new forms, as also occurred at almost precisely the same time in Syracuse, Hipponion and Locri. The Temple of Poseidon (Neptune or possibly Zeus or Hera) has columns with shallow fluting (twenty-four on each column), which rise to a suitably imposing height of nine metres, on a three-stepped stylobate, with surviving architrave, frieze and cornice. It is a classical Doric peripteral hexastyle structure, built between 500 and 450 BC, with thirteen columns along the length. The *cella* is also well preserved, and a ramp was added at the entrance during the Roman period. This is one of the finest of the surviving Greek temples.⁵²

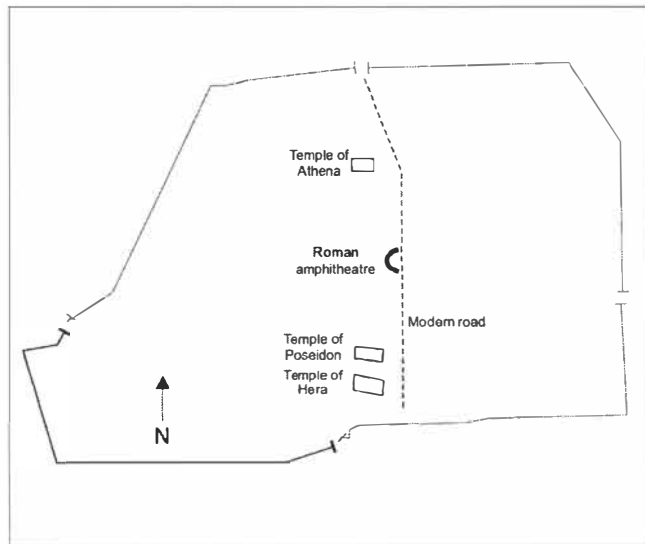


Figure 19: Poseidonia

49 The shallow fluting on each of the three temples probably points to poor quality stone which was covered in white stucco, Randall-MacIver: 1968, 15.

50 For the date and cult deity see D. Mertens, *Der alte Heratempel in Paestum und die archaische Baukunst in Unteritalien*, Mainz 1993, xviii and for excellent maps and diagrams (*end*).

51 CD nos. 426, 431, 462–69.

52 CD nos. 421, 425, 429–30, 432, 435, 437.

Syracuse in antiquity

Kyme (Cumae), the earliest Greek settlement in Italy, was one of the more powerful cities in *Magna Graecia* by about 600 BC. It began a long decline when it came into conflict with the Etruscans who were, however, defeated in 474 BC with aid sent by Hieron.⁵³ Its harbour, more beach than port, was superseded in importance by Roman Puteoli; thereafter Kyme retained its fame only as the seat of the Sybil. Two temples dominate the high acropolis of Kyme: at the summit stood an *Olympieion*, but the remains are notably Roman brickwork of a much later church rather than Greek columns. The temple occupied the highest point overlooking the harbour, and dominated the ancient skyline. It must have been as dramatic a sight for seafarers as the temple of Poseidon at Sounion. However, the extent of the shattered stylobate indicates a temple of modest proportions. Of similar size was the temple of Apollo, now mostly Roman brickwork on its stylobate, halfway down the hill and a little set back from sight of the west coast, but still with a good view of Cape Misenum and the island of Ischia.⁵⁴

The harbour of Argylla, later Pyrgi, was attacked by Dionysius I in 384 BC.⁵⁵ A complex consisting of two temples – one dedicated to Eilythia (cf. Strabo 5.2.8 for Leucothea), the other to Apollo – was ransacked and, if not destroyed certainly contributed to a terminal decline.⁵⁶ Temple A (Eilythia) possessed a stylobate of just twenty-four by thirty-four metres (72x112 feet) built in the mid-fifth century, but was not peripteral. A partial colonnade was constructed at the east end, a central *cella* with two adjoining rooms each side all fully enclosed by external walls. This is reminiscent of Temple F at Selinous but on a modest scale, perhaps rather more like the archaic *Heraion* on Samos. Greek influence is clear in the decoration but local preferences may have dictated the overall design.⁵⁷ Its slight scale concealed great wealth. Temple B was peripteral in form, with initial construction believed to be late sixth century. It was small in comparison to those temples of the Greeks further south, with a stylobate of twenty by thirty metres (60 x 90 feet), six columns along the length and four at the ends. The double colonnade at the east end models the Greek form in miniature. The columns were probably Doric but of plastered tufa, not stone.⁵⁸ The Etruscans were in constant contact, if not always amicable, with the Greeks of *Magna Graecia* and probably Sicily before the expansion of Roman power. Such an early *Apollonion* certainly suggests an early link with Syracuse.⁵⁹ The harbour for Caere, like those for Tarquinia (Gravisca) and Vulci (Regisvilla), would, therefore, have possessed noticeable Hellenic influences in temple construction.⁶⁰

53 See further discussion in Chapter 4.

54 For Kyme's situation, see CD nos. 480, 486–87; temple of Zeus, CD nos. 476–82; temple of Apollo, CD nos. 483–85.

55 See Chapter 4. For Argylla/Pyrgi see CD nos. 603–606; *Video Clip: pyrgi. The castello at S. Severa*, CD nos. 600–602, 607.

56 The temples seem to have been abandoned early in the second century BC, Ridgeway: 1990, 511–12.

57 See Ridgeway: 1990, 525–26, for discussion and plan.

58 Ridgeway: 1990, 517, also a plan, 515–16.

59 For links, see Leighton: 2004, 131.

60 For Hellenic influences on Gravisca, the port of Tarquinia, and by implication other Etruscan harbours, see Leighton: 2004, 128–31.

The temple sacked by the Syracusans was probably a familiar structure well known to the attackers and not a building of some unknown cult. Etruscan aid to the Athenians in the siege between 415 and 413 was of minor importance, but may be taken as an illustration of deep mistrust of repeated Syracusan intervention in middle Italy. On the other hand, Etruscan involvement in the Athenian siege may have provided Dionysius with justification for an attack thirty years later.

Theatres

Syracuse's finest archaeological treasure is its theatre. A theatre was first constructed on the hill at Neapolis in about 475 BC, and the remains of a steep-sided linear structure slightly to the south may be either this building or a predecessor.⁶¹ The theatre must have been well received by the citizen body since festivals, which included plays, were evidently in great demand and attracted the best playwrights. Aeschylus, whose tragedies *Women of Etna*, *Persai* and *Prometheus Bound* were all performed here, died in nearby Gela. As we know from Plutarch (*Nic.* 29.2), Euripides was a particular favourite of the discerning Syracusan theatre-going public at the end of the fifth century. In the course of the next six hundred years numerous alterations and renovations were undertaken but, for the most part, the *cavea* which is viewed today is late Hellenistic, dating to the second half of Hieron II's reign (about 230 BC).⁶² It is argued that the Timoleonic theatre – mid-fourth century – extended as far back as the current sixth row above the ambulatory or *diazoma* which was probably an innovation of Hieron II. At that sixth row a drainage channel may be observed which probably marks the rear of the older *cavea*, of a little more than thirty rows. The restructuring of the auditorium in the third century BC, therefore, doubled capacity. There was now seating for 15 000 spectators in fifty-nine rows, of which forty can still be made out clearly.⁶³ The rows themselves were divided into nine wedges above and below the *diazoma*, with connecting stairways. Along the ambulatory several dedicatory inscriptions may still be seen. The central section was dedicated to the Olympian Zeus, while other wedges were dedicated to Hieron, and various members of his family. The *cavea* is one hundred and thirty-eight metres (415 feet) in diameter.

The orchestra, thirty-five metres in diameter (105 feet), today is horse-shoe shaped rather than semi-circular,⁶⁴ while a trapezoidal form can be seen cut into the bedrock around the orchestra. This is regarded as a Roman addition for a *kolymbetra* or ornamental garden complete with fish pool, giving a touch of realism to the stage. Unlike the theatre at Tauromenion where gladiator contests were obviously staged after the removal

61 See CD nos. 115–117.

62 For a comprehensive history of the theatre see Guido: 1957, 65–71.

63 Today the theatre seats an audience very much smaller than its original capacity, and smaller audiences than the theatres at Epidaurus and Athens. CD nos. 103–106, 317–28, 506–508, 510, 592–96, 658–62.

64 Semi-circular orchestras are rare. One such may be seen at Akrai, a late construction, CD nos. 31–35.

Syracuse in antiquity

of the first nine rows, no such innovation appears to have occurred at the Syracusan theatre. However, alterations in the seating are very noticeable. The first twelve rows have been re-cut, which may have enlarged the orchestra somewhat. Row thirteen is therefore slightly raised above the lower tiers. It is possible that when gladiator fights were staged here (and there does seem to be general agreement about such entertainment here) then the audience sat above the twelfth row, out of danger – the same principle as was applied at Tauromenion. It is also possible that an arena occupied the area between the rocky outcrops; holes and ditches cut into the bedrock in the orchestra may have been used to erect a protecting screen. The orchestra is also raised above the lowest tiers, which may point to a use other than dramatic acting. Row seventeen has been entirely removed, perhaps creating a secondary ambulatory, which may just indicate that rows thirteen to sixteen were for the honoured guests, when tiers one to twelve were not in use. A *VIP* box seems to have been excavated out of wedges five and six just below the *diazoma*, with access via one of the stairways. Whereas in other theatres – see Pompeii for example – special guests were seated in boxes above the *paradoi* or entrance ways, this practice was not initially adopted here.⁶⁵ If the amphitheatre at Syracuse can be correctly dated to the early first century AD, and not later as some suggest, it may well be that the original role of the theatre was not overly altered, and that renovations seen here were simply changes in taste and alterations to suit individual productions.⁶⁶

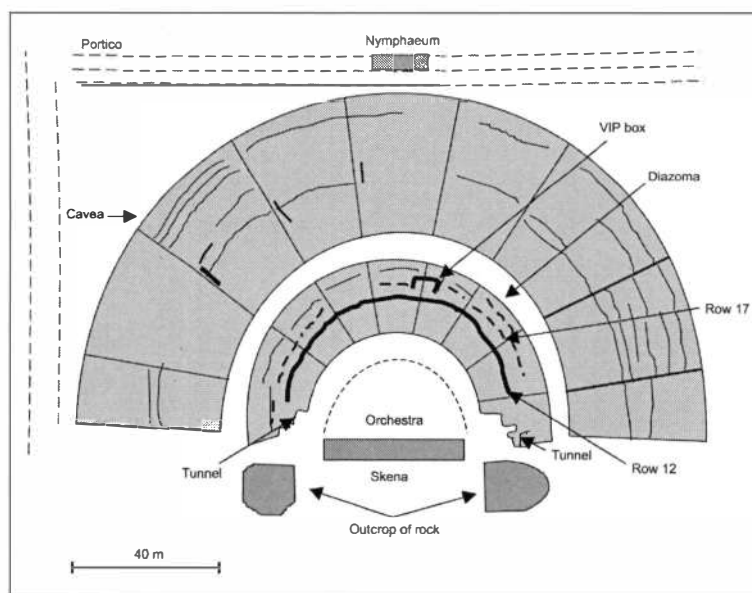


Figure 20: The Theatre at Syracuse

⁶⁵ However, see CD nos. 317–18, 320, 323, 592–93, 595, for the *paradoi*, and what is certainly seating above these entrances.

⁶⁶ For the amphitheatre, see Chapter 6.

Today, from the highest tiers, the view extends over the Great Harbour, and is one of those memorable moments in a visit to Syracuse.⁶⁷ In antiquity this view was largely concealed by an elaborate proscenium and *scena* which, if it was anything like the surviving structure at Tauromenion, rose to a considerable height.⁶⁸ This was an original and perhaps innovative part of the theatre of Hieron II, which over time (and especially during the Roman period) underwent considerable embellishment and decoration.

The theatre formed part of a complicated collection of buildings, all of which have disappeared. From about row forty the tiers of the theatre were no longer carved out of the rock but built up, which means that the highest tiers rose perhaps as much as two storeys above the level land at the top of the hill. The appearance standing here would have been rather like standing outside the Colosseum or Theatre of Marcellus at Rome, but the rear of the theatre adjoined two porticoes – one to the north, the other to the west. This would have been the place to shelter from rain or heat, and also where street sellers had stalls, and where dedicatory inscriptions to ancestors were placed in niches in the rock wall at the top of the hill. The festivals in the theatre may have connected with the precinct of Apollo, which was also situated just behind the western portico. The performances, the social gatherings, and the inscriptions are clearly all inter-related. Directly behind the central wedge of the theatre and carved in the highest part of the hillside which gives onto Epipolai lies the Nymphaeum – an ornamental fountain, again an integral part of this complex of buildings. It is fed from the Galermi aqueduct which originates near Pantalica, which brings water supplies across Epipolai a distance of thirty-three kilometres (a little more than 20 miles) into the city.⁶⁹

The sole surviving theatre in Sicily to match the grandeur of Syracuse is that found at Tauromenion (modern Taormina).⁷⁰ Tauromenion was originally a Sikel community but was refounded with Greek citizenry in 358 BC. Timoleon received aid from Andromachos, tyrant of Tauromenion, and the town was therefore spared any involvement in the instability of the 340s. The town was added to the kingdom of Hieron II, but became an independent *civitas* in the Roman province of Sicily after 212 BC. The town continued to be favoured, especially by Augustus under whom it acquired colonial status, and it remained an important centre in the Roman Sicily.⁷¹

The theatre at Tauromenion is a contemporary of that at Syracuse; and Hieron II was presumably the benefactor. The rear of the theatre, again as at Syracuse, had a portico although here the backdrop was the spectacular north-eastern coast of Sicily. Unlike at Syracuse, the *scena* has survived to an imposing height, mostly Roman brickwork with

67 See also the CD nos. 322–323.

68 The actual height can only be guessed at. Guido: 1958, 70, believes that the *proscenium* was two storeys high, the *scena* several storeys high. For the possible appearance of the *scena*, see Holloway: 1991, 153–54.

69 See CD nos. 102, 509 (nymphaeum), 5–6 (aqueducts).

70 CD nos. 409–411, 417–420, *Video clip: Tauromenion*. Diodorus, 16.83.3, claimed that the theatre of Agyrion, his home town, was nearly as large as that at Syracuse.

71 It was notably the last Sicilian town to fall to the Arabs in AD 963, nearly a century after Syracuse had been captured. With its fall came the end of Greco-Roman civilisation in Sicily.

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niches for statuary. Restoration work from the 1860s which involved a random erection of Corinthian columns at the back of the *proscenium* betrays more an enthusiastic endeavour than any real desire for authenticity, but the effect has been to recapture something of the ancient atmosphere. This is, of course, much enhanced by the natural setting: to the east the Ionian Sea and the bay of Naxos at the base of the steep hillside, to the south and west the dramatic heights of Mount Etna. From below in Naxos it is possible to make out the theatre in a dip of the hills which make up Mount Tauro. The *cavea* itself was excavated out of a south-facing slope on this hill, the lower rows were carved out of the rock, and the seating was arranged in nine wedges – again the same as at Syracuse.

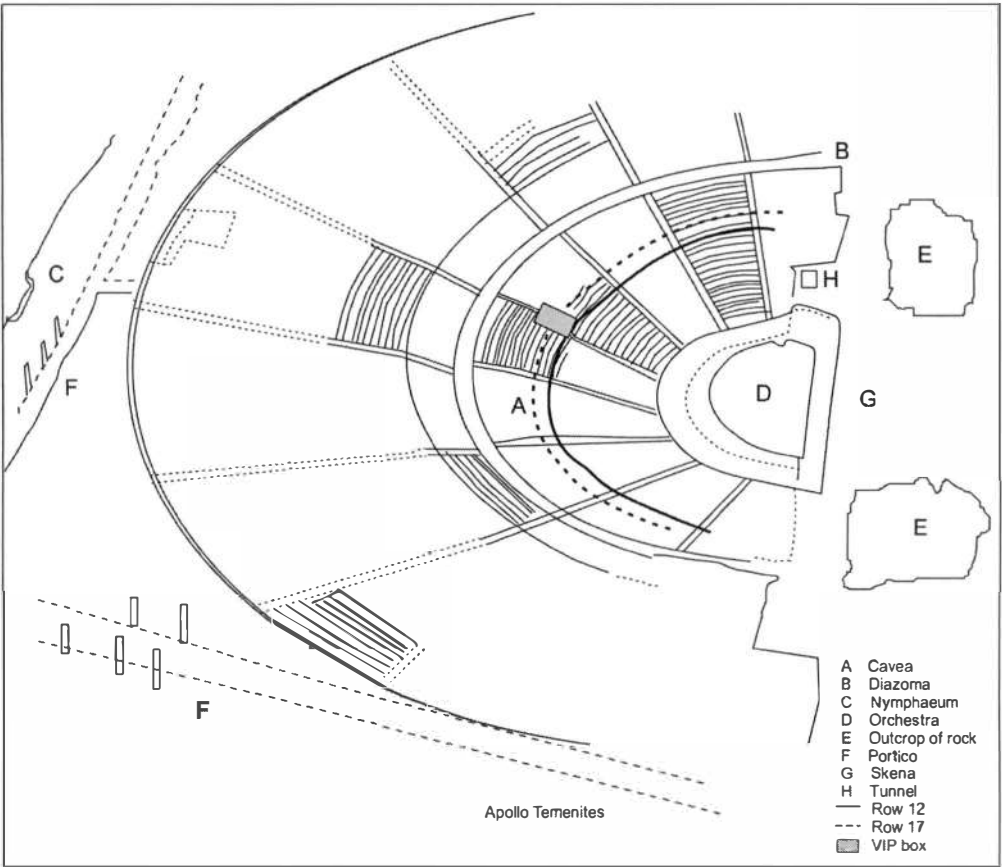


Figure 21: Plan of the Theatre Complex at Syracuse

With a diameter of one hundred and nine metres (327 feet), the auditorium could probably accommodate between five and six thousand, although as a result of renovations during the first or second century AD, that total was reduced when the first nine rows of the *cavea* were removed. The removal was the result of a lack of space on the hill on which the town is situated (and perhaps a lack of sufficient funds for a completely new building project). But the audience was then able to enjoy gladiator fights and beast hunts without being in danger. A central rectangular well in the roughly semi-circular arena floor – thirty-five metres (105 feet) in diameter – allowed wild animals to be brought up from the cellar holding area by a pulley system, and a covered way under the lowest rows of seating provided refuge for gladiators, their trainers and slaves.⁷²

The theatre, located just over the summit of Mount Varvaro, the acropolis of Segesta, is a much more modest affair, with seating capacity for an audience of about seven hundred and fifty. What it lacks in proportion, however, is more than compensated for by its good state of preservation, although some restoration work has recently been carried out here,⁷³ and its view, which is unusually to the north. The original theatre was Hellenistic (perhaps dating to that period of calm and prosperity in the mid-fourth century BC, brought about by Timoleon's rule and political settlement in Syracuse) and made more elaborate in the third century.⁷⁴ The Segestans at that time obviously had sufficient funds to complete this latest project, which was less demanding than the ambitious plans for a temple. The *cavea* is sixty-three metres in diameter (189 feet), and the seating is arranged in seven wedges, the lower tiers being carved from the rock, the uppermost tiers probably an extension above the level of the hill with blocks of stone. During the Roman empire a *proscenium* was added, the foundations of which can easily be viewed.⁷⁵ Similar in size and date is the theatre at Akrai. Initially this site had been an outpost for Syracuse, but it prospered during the rule of Hieron II who may have indulged here too in a show of *euregetism* by providing the funds for this structure. Although the town's fortunes declined in the Roman empire, clear evidence shows a long settlement.⁷⁶

The theatres of *Magna Graecia* are, for the most part, unexceptional. Lupiae and Elea possess modest establishments,⁷⁷ while if one existed at Poseidonia it has yet to be discovered. I have included Ostia here which was, of course, not a Greek town at all, but its Greek-style theatre and the proximity of this structure to its associated temple allows

72 'However blasé one is, however much one has prepared for the aerial splendours of the little town, its freshness is perennial, it rises in one like sap, it beguiles and charms as the eye turns in its astonishment to take in crags and clouds and mountains and the blue coastline,' Durrell: 1977, 208.

73 Compare the illustrations in Holloway: 1991, 154; Kos & Angeli: 1999, 92–96, with those taken more recently and which appear on the CD nos. 134, 136–142.

74 For the date of the theatre see Guido: 1967: 72 'in the III or early II'; Grady: 2003: 184: 'mid-3C BC or possibly earlier.'

75 No theatre has been excavated at Selinous or Akragas. Messene presumably had a theatre, now lost. For the theatres at Katane, Akrai, Heraclea Minoa, Morgantina, Ietas and Tyndaris see Holloway: 1991, 151–154.

76 For the theatre, see *Video clip: Segesta Theatre*.

77 For Lupiae's amphitheatre see Chapter 6. For Elea see CD nos. 439–42.

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for a greater understanding of the Odeon and its temple at Syracuse.⁷⁸ Moreover, the spatial connection of temples and theatres, and the link between religious observances and dramatic performances is often overlooked. At Ostia and Syracuse that relationship can be seen more clearly than at many other sites where the theatres may have survived, but where the cult buildings have been demolished. The theatre complex at Pompeii stands adjacent to the old agora of the town in which there was a temple of Herakles and a number of shrines. The larger of the two theatres dates from the mid-third century BC, and so is another contemporary of the theatre of Hieron II.⁷⁹ Roman control of Italy had become permanent from 275 BC, but Greek culture was evidently dominant in Oscan Pompeii. The theatre could seat about 5 000 spectators, and the nineteen rows were arranged in five wedges. An elaborate *proscenium* was added in the first century AD, but it is worth noting that the original theatre of this provincial town preceded the first stone theatre at Rome by two hundred years,⁸⁰ and indicates the extent of the prosperity in southern Campania – prosperity brought about by Roman control and a Roman peace.

During the Classical period, when the city aspired to be an imperial power, the theatre of Syracuse was only of modest size. The theatre which Cicero described as ‘very great’ (Cic. Verr. 2.4.119: *theatrum maximum*) was a late addition to the urban landscape of the city. It seems to come almost as a consolation for the loss of political and military power, yet it enhanced the fame of Syracuse. The theatre of Hieron II was a true giant among its rivals, only exceeded by some of the more famous sites in mainland Greece: Argos, Epidaurus and Athens.⁸¹ The construction of a number of the larger theatres in Sicily and *Magna Graecia* at roughly the same date does beg the question of whether or not Hieron’s benevolence extended beyond the boundaries of his own kingdom. Tauromenion, Agyrion and Akrai certainly appear to have benefitted from his patronage. And it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that building programmes as far away as Segesta, or even Pompeii, if not directly financed from Syracuse, took their inspiration from the activities there.⁸²

The temples of Ortygia and Polichne, in keeping with their early foundation, are also significant in the overall history of Hellenic Sicily, hence they must have achieved exceptional status as cult centres as a result. The temple of Apollo was a pioneering and highly successful effort, and became a prototype for many of those structures which came later in, for example, Selinous. However, in comparison with many of these subsequent cult buildings it was of modest proportions. The *Olympieion* was a greater venture, more

78 For the theatre and its construction, see R. Meiggs, *Roman Ostia*, Oxford 1997, 42–43, 420–425. Dating from the time of Augustus, the theatre with seating for about 3 000 is small but larger than some of the Sicilian sites. See CD nos. 681–86. For a reconstruction of the theatre and its suburb see Carpićeci: 1991, 75–77. Its foundation date coincides with that of the amphitheatre at Syracuse. See also Chapter 6.

79 CD no. 673.

80 The theatre of Pompey built only in the 50s BC.

81 Rome at a later date was to have greater venues of entertainment, but even then provincial towns such as Syracuse, Verona, Capua and Puteoli could boast sizable amphitheatres.

82 Hieron’s influence was extensive. His relations with Ptolemaic Egypt were cordial. His lavish gift of a merchant ship to Ptolemy II illustrates the sort of wealth at his disposal.

lavishly endowed both in its construction and in its contents. It was certainly famous throughout the Greek world. Its strategic position just outside the city in a spot highly desirable as a base for enemies wishing to capture Syracuse, makes the temple of Zeus *Urios* probably the most mentioned of any Greek temple in the ancient literature.⁸³ Still, it does not compare favourably in size to the *Olympieion* at either Selinous or Akragas, or even to the Selinuntine *Heraion*. The temples of Athena and Artemis on Ortygia were plainly very important cult centres, and dominated both the island's topography and the city's everyday life. The temples of Syracuse may not, therefore, have been extraordinary, but some did possess great antiquity and hence seniority. The Ionic temple should have attracted more ancient comment for it was almost a unique building in Sicily. It is surprising that the Syracusans did not make more of it. Other cities, it is true, possessed great temples – especially Selinous and Akragas – but were they as famed or as venerated as the temples on Ortygia or at Polichne? The ancient evidence seems to grant only Eryx a special position, and the cult of Aphrodite was not copied anywhere else in Sicily to the same extent. The cults venerated in Syracuse were present in most *poleis*. In temple treasures, however, Syracuse certainly exceeded all its rivals in Sicily and *Magna Graecia*; and this is where the question of status can be answered. Syracuse's territorial ambitions, and military role in Sicily (and beyond) brought with it far greater wealth than that possessed by any of its neighbours or competitors. Its temples may have been rather understated – they did not have bronze but terracotta tiles for example – but their treasures contributed to making Syracuse the first city of Sicily.

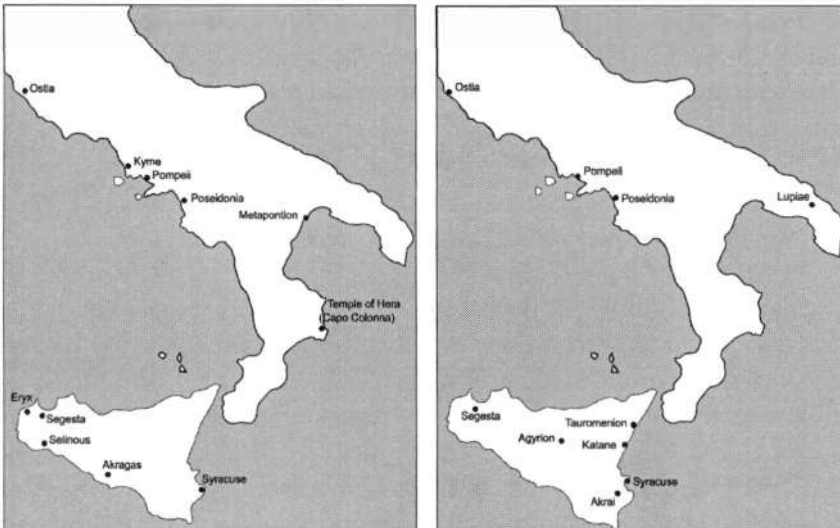


Figure 22: The Main Temples and Theatres of Sicily and *Magna Graecia*

⁸³ With the possible exception of the later temple to Jupiter *Optimus et Maximus* on the Capitoline Hill at Rome.

CHAPTER 4: THE FOUR GREAT SIEGES OF SYRACUSE

If Syracuse falls, all Sicily falls as well and Italy immediately afterwards. (Thucydides, 6.91)

When the overall history of Syracuse is recalled there may be a tendency to dwell at length on one of its most famous episodes, namely the siege of the city by the Athenians between spring 414 and early autumn 413 BC. There were, however, four great sieges of the city, and only the last of these resulted in a defeat for the Syracusans. The siege by the Athenians proved to be a turning point in the history of both cities, for Athens the beginning of decline, for Syracuse from the brink of disaster to a place of sustained domination in Greek-Sicilian affairs. The Athenians were foiled by flawed strategies and an imprecise knowledge of the land, and paid an appalling price in casualties in what became for them a catastrophe. Meanwhile, Syracuse emerged victorious, yet that newly won pre-eminence was almost immediately challenged by an invasion and a siege by a Carthaginian army in 396, which probably came closer to succeeding in its aims than had the Athenians two decades beforehand. Brilliant tactical moves, coupled with timely bribes, enabled the Syracusans to emerge stronger than ever before. Once removed, this external threat did not reappear for over eighty years, although in the interim internecine strife in the 350s and 340s, made the city a domestic battleground. The second Carthaginian siege of between 310 and 307 was the longest continuous blockade of the city, probably of any urban area in antiquity, and was again thwarted by, on the one hand, diversionary tactics in Carthage's own backyard and, on the other, by the invaders' severe miscalculations of the land around the city. Finally, the Romans may have been initially baffled by the ingenuity of the besieged, helped especially by Archimedes for nearly two years, but they forced an entry into Syracuse and sacked the city in 212 BC.

The topography of a place can be both affected by events and can also influence how particular events unfold. In the case of Syracuse, it is arguable that the situation of the city and its surrounding hinterland contributed significantly to its success as a military power. However, modern misconceptions about the local topography and often a failure to appreciate the logistical problems regarding the movement of armed forces overland and naval squadrons around the city have resulted in considerable confusion about crucial events in the history of Syracuse. The aim here is to illustrate how, on a number of crucial occasions, the topography of Syracuse played a vital role in the outcome of four great sieges. To attain that objective, not only are the ancient sources of information naturally explored (primarily Thucydides, Diodorus, Polybius, Livy and Plutarch) but their accounts are supplemented and enhanced by reference

to relevant maps and visual material.¹ The landscape and its salient features have, in some instances, changed dramatically since antiquity, but the general contours of the land and the difficulties or ease of moving across it have probably remained constant. Recent and digital-quality photographic evidence can, therefore, help resolve a number of outstanding problems which have adversely affected our understanding of these four historical events at Syracuse.

Athenian interest in Sicilian affairs dates back to at least 427 BC, when twenty ships under the command of Laches were dispatched to bring aid to Leontinoi, then at war with Syracuse (Thuc. 3.86.1).² Since insufficient Athenian land forces had been voted for this expedition it became confined to raiding the islands (Lipara) and the coast (Kamarina to Megara, Himera and Messene) before was finally withdrawn, following a naval engagement in the Straits (Thuc. 4.24.1–25.4), and the Sicilian cities reached a general agreement for a return to peaceful conditions.³ Diodorus (12.54.1) plainly states that a more ambitious ending to this venture had been anticipated.

For a long time the Athenians had wanted to conquer Sicily because of the fertility of the island and ... they voted to send an allied force to Leontinoi, offering as their excuse the need and request of their kin, although in fact they were eager to possess the island.

Although Sicilian affairs remained on the periphery of the main theatre of war, the trade between Syracuse and Corinth, particularly, would have been a source of grave concern to the Athenians. If that link could be severed then the Peloponnese would be deprived of vital imports, and the balance of power would swing back to Athens following the stalemate peace of 422. This and the fear of Syracusan imperialism (Thuc. 5.4.5) explains why a second and much better equipped expedition left Athens bound for Sicily in the summer of 415. However, the siege itself began only in May 414 and lasted until either September or October of the following year, in all between seventeen and eighteen months.⁴

Towards the end of summer the Athenians, just before the recall of Alkibiades, explored (with a force of sixty triremes) the east coast as far south as Syracuse, where they sailed unchallenged into the Great Harbour (Thuc. 6.50.3). Later, at the start of winter (probably some time in November), an initial Athenian attack was launched at the Great Harbour. This mission was more than a reconnaissance since the Syracusan army had been lured away to Katane. Thucydides states (6.65.3–66.2):

1 See CD Chapter 4.

2 The Athenians responded to the request of the Leontinoi, led by Gorgias, A.W. Gomme, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Oxford 1956, 2.387.

3 The Athenian *strategoi* Pythodoros and Sophokles were exiled for bribery and a third, Eurymedon, was fined, Thuc. 4.65.3, when they returned home, Gomme: 1956, 3.524.

4 May seems a reasonable starting point, although Thucydides says only that the Athenians captured Euryalos in 'summer', 6.96.1. The end of the siege depends on whether or not Thucydides was correct in stating that the Athenians did not budge from their camp for twenty-seven days following the lunar eclipse of August 27th. Conflicting information exists in the sources. See further below.

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When day came the Athenians landed near the *Olympieion* to occupy the ground for their camp ... the Athenians had plenty of time to dispose their forces in an excellent position where they could begin a general engagement whenever they chose and where the Syracusan cavalry would have little chance of doing them damage either during a battle or before it, because on one side there were walls, houses, trees and a marsh in the way, and on the other there were steep slopes.

The Temple of Zeus lies less than a kilometre (roughly 3 000 feet) from the beach on a shelf of higher land, while the road to Eloros and Kameranina passed close to the east end of the temple as it does today.⁵ The intention was presumably to cut communications with the south; and by doing so also to allow an occupation of the southern end of the bay, including Plemmyrion, thereby imposing a blockade on the city.

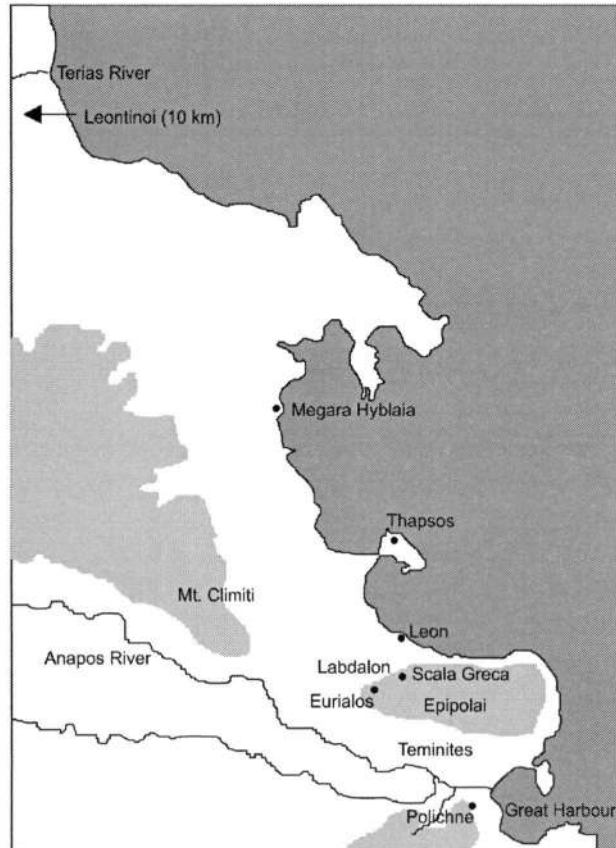


Figure 23: The Northern Extent of Syracuse

⁵ CD nos. 293, 392, 96 (Polichne looking north).

Thucydides implies that a set-piece battle was envisaged, but one where the Syracusan cavalry could not be employed to its full advantage. The land below the *Olympieion* descends in the north to the adjacent mouths of the Anapos, Mammiabica and Ciane rivers, and from there to what was the marshy ground of Lysimeleia, the northern limit of which is within a hundred metres or so of the agora. The area is not large, and Thucydides suggests that at least from the Anapos to Polichne the land was under cultivation and that there were farmsteads in the vicinity. This sort of peri-urban situation did not lend itself to good use by cavalry. The Athenian strategy seems sound and competent:

They also cut down trees in the vicinity and carried these down to the beach where they built a stockade beside their ships. At Daskon Heights, which was most vulnerable to attack by the enemy they quickly constructed a fort with stones that they picked up and with timber. They also broke down the bridge over the Anapos river. (Thuc. 6.66.2)

The ships needed to be protected from attack, especially from fire ships, and the construction of a stockade was a daily practice when a fleet was on campaign. Daskon *akron* is really a continuation of the higher ground from Polichne across to the Great Harbour;⁶ and Thucydides is suggesting that the Syracusan cavalry or even heavily armed infantry could be brought, by quite a circuitous route, around to the south west of the harbour to attack the Athenians from the south. The most immediate route into the city lay across the Anapos, half a kilometre (1 500 feet) north of the temple of Zeus *Urios*, the destruction of the main road bridge was to take care of all possible movements from the rear by the Syracusan army.

When the Syracusans returned from outside Katane they marched up to the Athenian camp and when no response occurred, crossed back over the Eloros road, and pitched camp (Thuc. 6.66.3). This suggests that the Syracusan camp lay closer to Polichne and the *Olympieion* rather than just outside the city walls, yet near enough to account for what happened next. On the following morning some of the Syracusan troops slipped away into the city while the army was drawn up in battle formation (Thuc. 6.67.2), and so were taken by surprise when Nikias drew up the Athenian army and advanced at once (Thuc. 6.69.1). In the middle of a thunder shower, the Athenian right wing and centre forced the Syracusan left and centre back.

The Syracusan army was now cut into two and retreated in confusion. The Athenians did not chase them far, however, since this was prevented by a large number of as yet undefeated Syracusan cavalry who charged and drove back any of the hoplites they saw pressing the pursuit in advance of the others. The Syracusans rallied again at the Eloros road and formed up as best they could under the circumstances; and they even sent a garrison of their own citizens to the *Olympieion*, because they were afraid the Athenians would plunder it. The rest returned to the city. The Athenians did not come up to the temple, and instead collected their dead, put them on a pyre and camped for the night. Next day they gave back the Syracusan dead under a truce. Then they sailed back to Katane. They did this because it was now winter and considered that they were not yet in a position to wage the war from their base outside Syracuse. (Thuc. 6.70.2–71.1)

6 CD no. 101 (Daskon from the south).

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The scale of the movement of the conflicting forces cannot have been that great since the Anapos river is separated from the city only by the marshy ground of Lysimeleia. There was also clearly a secondary route to Polichne by which the Syracusans could place a garrison at the *Olympieion*, although how it was to protect the temple from attack by the nearby full Athenian force is left unsaid. The very next day the Athenians departed, preferring to make their winter quarters at Katane rather than in the Great Harbour. This was precisely the season when this area was most hospitable to an invading force. It is possible that the command considered the problem of communications and obtaining supplies too daunting in the winter, yet in the following year this is exactly where we find the Athenians in their siege. A lull in hostilities was immediate, but can the Syracusans have believed that the Athenians would not return? In the new year it should have become apparent that the Athenians were intent on testing the northern defences of the city, and in the process collecting supplies while denying these to Syracuse.

At the very start of next year's spring, the Athenians in Sicily sailed from Katane along the coast to Sicilian Megara. Here they landed and devastated the countryside, and after they made an unsuccessful attack on a Syracusan fort, they returned along the coast with both army and navy to the river Terias. Here they moved across the plain, destroying everything as they went and burning the wheat. They engaged a small force of Syracusans and killed some of them. After putting up a trophy they went back to their ships. Next day they returned to Katane for supplies, and the whole army then went on to Kentoripa, a Sicel town. After they had received its surrender the Athenians advanced and burned the crops of the people of Inessa and Hybla. (Thuc. 6.94.1–3)

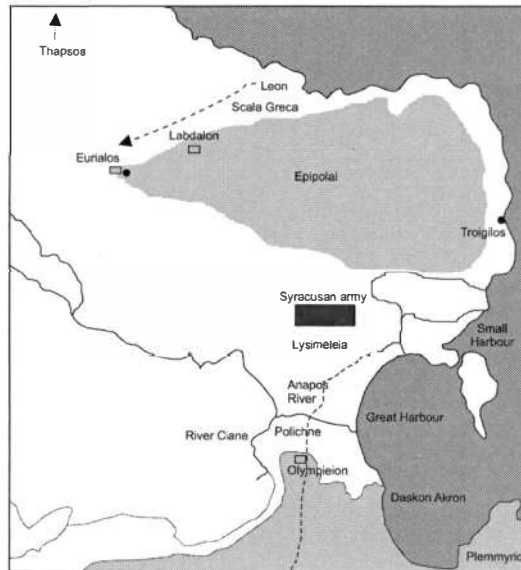


Figure 24: The Initial Athenian Assault on Syracuse in 414 BC

Megara Hyblaia had remained unoccupied since its destruction by Gelon in 483, but the site (or rather its acropolis) may have been reoccupied by the Syracusans shortly before the Athenians put in here, if this is the fort mentioned by Thucydides. Another alternative would have been a fort placed on the peninsula on which the town of Augusta now lies. A fleet sailing along the coast in a southerly direction would have been easily spotted from this point and the city alerted. The Athenians then moved north to the main lowland area which separates Syracuse from Katane. The purpose of this scorched earth policy may have been to deprive Syracuse of supplies, although this land lay closer to Athenian allies than enemies. However, since a small Syracusan force was engaged and defeated while this crop burning was taking place it suggests that the land in question was in the Megarian plain and very much closer to the city – the burning would have, therefore, been visible from Epipolai. Intimidation is the likely purpose of this mission, but it did not bring any message of negotiation from Syracuse.

The same summer the Syracusans heard that the Athenians had received their cavalry and were about to attack them. They thought that, unless the Athenians could control Epipolai – the high ground that lies directly above the city – they would find it difficult, even if they were victorious in battle, to construct a wall to cut off the city. They decided therefore to guard the approaches to Epipolai. (Thuc. 6.96.1–2)

In the event the Syracusans, although they assigned a brigade to the task, were taken by surprise – such was the speed of the Athenian offensive.

They had left Katane and landed their whole force near the spot called Leon between six and seven stades (1.08–1.29 kms/3600–4200 feet) from Epipolai.⁷ When the army had been disembarked the fleet anchored at Thapsos, which is a peninsula with a narrow isthmus jutting out into the sea, and is not far from Syracuse either by land or sea. The Athenian men of the navy built a stockade across the isthmus and remained at Thapsos.⁸ The army meanwhile made straight for Epipolai and ascended via Eurialos before the Syracusans realised what was happening. (Thuc. 6.97.1–2)

Leon was, to judge from Thucydides' claim, a beach close to the eastern edge of Epipolai and hence nearly adjacent to the Scala Greca where the main road rises steeply out of the coastal plain before beginning a more gradual descent down into Akradina. Epipolai was not garrisoned by the Syracusans at this stage, and so the Athenians were able not only to make an uncontested landing but also a very rapid march under the northern rim of the ridge, all the way to Eurialos at the western extremity. At the same time, the fleet withdrew from its vulnerable position on an open beach south of the

7 It is difficult to reconcile Livy's, 24.39.13 'five miles from the Hexapylon', which is more applicable to Thapsos or even Megara. See also Dover, 1970, 468. Note also the inaccuracy by R. Warner: in *Thucydides: The Peloponnesian War*, Harmondsworth 1954, 472: 'rather more than half a mile from Epipolai.'

8 CD nos. 65–66, 74, 343 (Thapsos from the mainland); 62, 67–68, 344 (view south from Thapsos); 72–73 (north shore of the peninsula).

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peninsula of Thapsos. Instead the sailors built a stockade to protect their ships on the northern edge of the Thapsos peninsula. The Athenian triremes should have still been clearly in sight from Epipolai, but since no Syracusan seems to have been on duty anywhere in the neighbourhood on that morning, the movement of fleet and infantry went completely unreported.

When the Syracusans did at last learn what was happening, a force of about six hundred, led by Diomilos, rushed up to Epipolai in a disorganised fashion to tackle this threat, but was scattered and half were killed. It is interesting to note that, although Thucydides is quite clear (6.96.3) in stating that the entire Syracusan army was gathered for manoeuvres or a review outside the city, on the level ground near Lysimeleia, it did not take part in this engagement. The Syracusan command probably did not want to risk everything on a single fight seeing that the enemy had already occupied the plateau, and given that they had been defeated in battle six months before. It is interesting that Thucydides has the review of Syracusan hoplites take place simultaneously with the Athenian landing at Leon. On the face of it this juxtaposition of events was impossible, assuming that the Athenian army numbered between eight and ten thousand hoplites, light-armed infantry and cavalry, and their supplies. Thucydides explicitly states that the Athenians took a short time to occupy Eurialos, but for so large a force this would have taken several hours – probably more than a single day. Therefore, it is much more likely that an advance guard of perhaps as few as a thousand hoplites actually made the quick ascent, saw off the Syracusans led by Diomilos and secured the heights for the main force which followed. On the next day the Athenians marched down to the city but when no one came out to meet them they went away again and built a fort at Labdalon on the northern edge of Epipolai looking towards Megara Hyblaia.⁹ This fort was intended as a supply depot and a store for equipment and money whenever they went out either to give battle or to work on the encircling wall that they proposed to build.

Today there is no trace whatsoever of the famous circular fort (Thuc. 6.99.3) which became the temporary command headquarters somewhere in the centre of Epipolai, the Athenian encircling wall and the various Syracusan counter walls.¹⁰ The arrival of Gylippos and Corinthian reinforcements began to tip the balance in favour of the defenders, especially when they started to man a fleet to challenge Athenian supremacy at sea. The Athenian forts that were erected on Plemmyrion made sound strategic sense for a blockade, but once these were lost in the early summer of 413 the besiegers could have been seen off, had not Athenian reinforcements led by Demosthenes arrived. Epipolai had already been lost and Demosthenes realised the need for retaking the higher ground. The night attack on Epipolai failed and from then on the Athenians were in an ever-worsening state. The final battle in the bay now calls for some detailed examination.

⁹ Since the Athenians never took Megara it made sound sense to have a fort looking towards the north to check against any Syracusan movement in that area and also to safeguard supplies coming down overland from Katane. CD no. 77 (looking towards Leon from northern edge of Epipolai); 78 (Thapsos from Epipolai); 82, 515–19 (area of Labdalon near the Epipolai Gate and Eurialos fort and out of sight of the city).

¹⁰ Dover: 1970, 473, suggests 'well to the south of the crest of the plateau'. For the walls and counter walls see 475–78 and map. Moreover, note 466–67 and Dover's arguments against Thucydides ever having visited the area.

The final naval battle was the culmination of a number of crises and engagements. At the start of the siege the Syracusans do not appear to have possessed a significant fleet of warships, but at the prompting of Gylippos, who realised that naval power must combat naval power to break the deadlock, triremes were built and those available were manned (Thuc. 7.7.4, 21.2).¹¹ The first battle in the Great Harbour may have been lost by the Syracusans, but whereas there was defeat at sea, there was victory on land when the army led by Gylippos repossessed Plemmyrion (Thuc. 7.24.1), which had been taken earlier in the year and garrisoned by the Athenians (Thuc. 7.4.4–5). The Athenians thereafter were reluctant to fight and indeed in the next naval engagement they lost a squadron of seven triremes and its commander, Eurymedon, one of the *stratego*i (Thuc. 7.52.2). This loss caused the Athenians to lose all confidence in winning the siege, and it was decided to attempt to break out from the Great Harbour, which by then had been virtually sealed by a barrier of ships (Thuc. 7.59.3).¹²

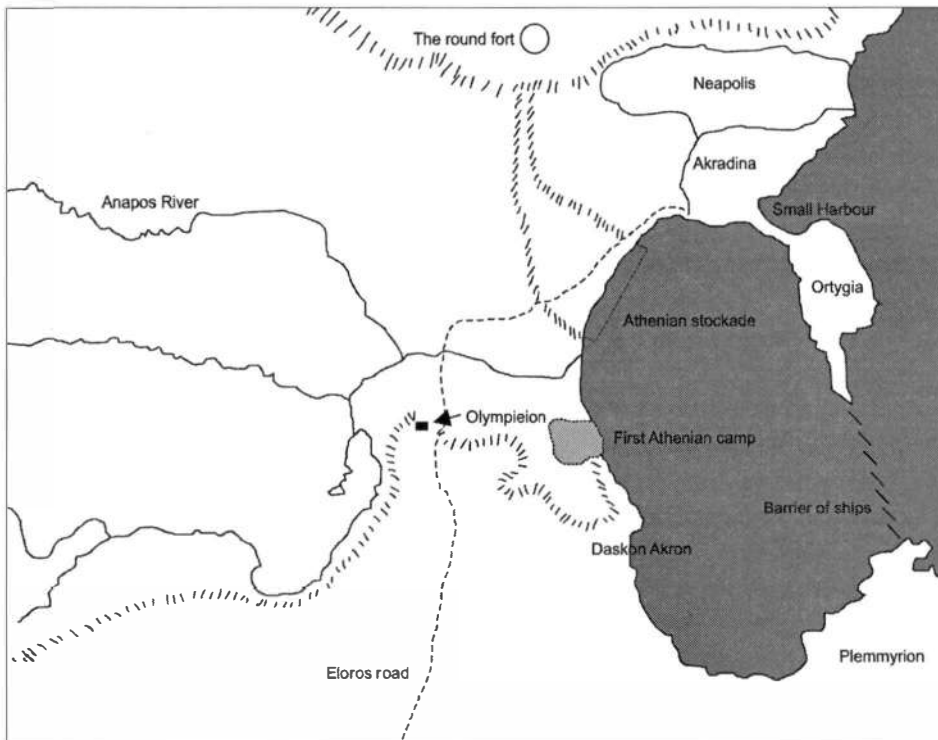


Figure 25: Last Stages of the Athenian Siege of Syracuse

11 Syracuse had a fleet of thirty triremes in 425, Thuc. 4.25.1, but by the summer of 413 there was a squadron of thirty-five ships in the Great Harbour and forty-five in the Small Harbour, which had shipbuilding facilities, Thuc. 7.22.1.

12 For the Great Harbour from Ortygia, CD nos. 583–91; for the Great Harbour from Epipolai, CD nos. 88–89, 254–55, and the Harbour from Daskon, CD no. 99.

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Since the entrance to the bay is roughly a thousand metres in width (3 000 feet), and the length of a single trireme rather more than thirty-five (105 feet), forty triremes, leaving a reasonably small gap, would have been more than ample to form the boom.¹³ That it, therefore, took only three days is really not that remarkable (Diod. 13.14.2). After their original construction triremes deteriorated with age; initially used as warships they fairly soon became troop transports and then merchant ships carrying livestock or various goods and supplies. There was indeed really hardly any need to build anything other than triremes. So the Syracusans must have brought out their old ships (perhaps even the fleet they had possessed a decade earlier) and either rowed or towed them into place. Where did the ships come from? The southern side of the causeway or the fortified smaller harbour are suitable origins – it was probably the latter. These ships were then clamped with chains end to end (Thuc. 7.59.3 – broadside on) forming a simple but effective trap. Merchant ships and other craft lying at anchor perhaps lay close by on the seaward side of the barrier.

The Athenians, if they chose to leave by this route, had to overcome the Syracusan fleet massed in the Great Harbour and take the ships forming the barrier. It was not a question of smashing their way out. Instead there was a double objective: to reach the barrier and overwhelm its garrison. There was also the gap, which had to be taken and held to allow the other ships to pass through. This was presumably the reason why every available soldier was packed into the Athenian triremes when the fleet put out from the stockade. About one hundred and ten ships are credited to the Athenians (Thuc. 7.60.4; cf. Diod. 13.14.4, for 115 ships) with an unusually large number of archers and javelin-throwers on board each trireme, precisely to tackle the barrier's garrison. Thucydides also makes it clear that the plan was to break through the barrier and depart, leaving a substantial Athenian force in the stockade with the wounded and supplies. Nikias was to remain in the camp where he posted infantry along the beach to help any sailors or ships coming inshore. These tactics also suggest that a full-scale retreat was never contemplated. Demosthenes and his colleagues were meant to return and the siege was to continue.¹⁴ The final sea battle was not meant to be an escape, and a decision for a full withdrawal was to be made only in the event of a defeat at sea. This suggestion does not run contrary to Thucydides' account (7.60.1, 7.71.2–3).

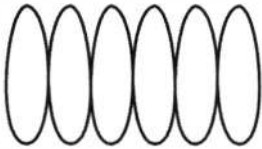
13 CD nos. 571–73, 615. The gap for admission and exit of shipping probably lay closer to the Ortygia island end than towards the middle, for obvious security reasons.

14 Cf. for example, P.B. Kern, 'The Turning Point in the Sicilian Expedition,' *CB* 65, 1989, 82: 'The Athenian goal was no longer victory but escape.'

1) Triremes broadside on at the entrance to Syracuse's Great Harbour (413 BC):



2) Xerxes' ships beam to beam across the Hellespont (480 BC):



When the Athenians saw the harbour being closed and realised what the enemy's plan was, they called a war council. They decided to abandon the upper walls, to construct a cross wall close to the ships to enclose the smallest possible area that would be sufficient for the stores and wounded, and to leave a detachment as a garrison ... if they were victorious they would go to Katane and if not they would burn their ships and retreat overland in order of battle to the closest friendly place.

For the Athenians everything depended on their navy, and their fears for the future were like nothing they had experienced before; and, as the course of the battle changed, so it was inevitable that their impressions changed as they watched from the shore. The battle was close in front of them and, as they were not all looking in the same direction at once, some saw that at one point their own side was winning, and took courage from the sight and began to call on the gods not to deprive them of their safety, others meanwhile, looking towards a point where their fellow citizens were being defeated, cried out in desperation, and were more broken in spirit by the sight of what was being done than were the soldiers actually engaged in the fighting.

The Athenian commanders, Demosthenes, Menander and Euthydemos, do not appear to have had any plan other than to storm that part of the barrier where the gap lay (Thuc. 7.69.4). This was not necessarily at the centre of the entrance to the bay and, if Diodorus' account of crowds watching the hand-to-hand fighting near the island is more than simply a dramatic reconstruction (13.15.5, 13.16.7), it was perhaps was more likely close by Ortygia. It is possible that some of the Athenian triremes managed to break through the barrier (Diod. 13.15.3) but they were intercepted on the open sea by the Syracusan fleet operating from the Small Harbour. Whatever happened, and the sources here are vague, fighting certainly took place on the barrier (Thuc. 7.70.2) but they also had to contend with an attack of the Syracusans launched on their rear. The Athenian triremes were forced back to face the entire Great Harbour Syracusan fleet in battle formation, and in the set-piece battle that followed the Athenians lost between fifty and sixty ships, while

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the Syracusans lost only eight, with sixteen damaged. The casualties on the Athenian side must have been heavy, with possibly as many as ten thousand killed. Once again it was the encircling manoeuvre which caused the havoc and the ultimate defeat of the Athenian fleet caught on both sides by the enemy. The crews refused to sail again (Thuc. 7.72.4–5), and the only way out now lay overland.

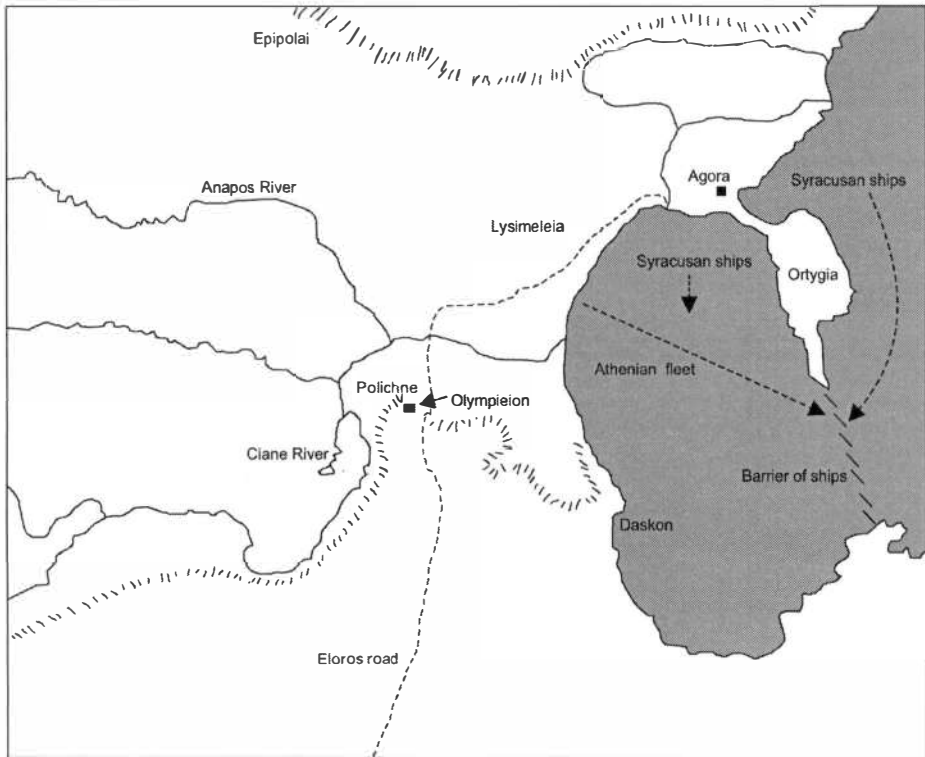


Figure 26: The Final Battle in the Great Harbour

Prior to the battle in the Great Harbour, on August 27th an eclipse of the moon occurred and Nikias, on his own initiative (Plut. Nic. 23.6) or after consulting seers (Thuc. 7.50.4), refused to engage in any activity for the next lunar cycle even though (says Plutarch) three days was considered sufficient religious observance for such an event. Although Thucydides is the contemporary account his evidence is generally discounted in preference for a shorter delay mentioned by Diodorus (13.12), who states that the Athenians indeed delayed any activity for precisely the three days usually recommended for celestial phenomena. The length of the delay, and the events that apparently occurred either during or after it, are crucial for establishing the date of the final sea battle and the subsequent

Athenian departure.¹⁵ The date of the battle must be allocated to either September 7th or September 29th, the evacuation to September 9th or October 1st 413 BC.¹⁶ The sequence of events immediately before and after the eclipse, up to the full-scale evacuation, are:

Defeat of Demosthenes' forces on Epipolai (Thuc. 7.42–46) – second half of August
The August 27th eclipse of the moon began at 8.00 pm just when a withdrawal by sea was about to be implemented (7.50.4).

The delay (7.50.2) – three or twenty-seven days.

The Syracusan fleet in training 'for the right number of days' followed by an overland attack on the Athenian camp (7.51.2) – during or after the delay.

Next day seventy-six Syracusan ships dispatched against the Athenian stockade, the Athenians launched eighty-six ships. Loss of Eurymedon and his squadron of seven at Daskon (7.52.2). Defeat of Syracusan land forces in Lysimeleia. Twenty-five Athenian ships lost altogether.

Three days in which the entrance to the Great Harbour was sealed (Diod. 13.14.2).

Next day the final battle in the Great Harbour.

Two full days' delay (cf. Pol. 9.19.1–4) before the evacuation of the camp

TOTAL: either August 27th +3+1+1+3+1+2 = 11 days to evacuation = September 9th
or August 27th + 27+1+1+3+1+2 = 35 days to evacuation = October 1st

If Thucydides' evidence, backed by Plutarch, is to be accepted as preferable to that of Diodorus, then Nikias and Demosthenes led their troops out of Syracuse on October 1st (September 9th). The Athenian army departed their camp in Lysimeleia, marched west and crossed the Anapos river probably near *Capocorso*, and proceeded in the direction of the modern village of Floridia,¹⁷ about eight kilometres (5 miles). Floridia lies on higher land above the Anapos valley. Since Floridia is just fourteen kilometres (9 miles)

15 See Freeman, 3. 690–693: 'they did stay, though not twenty-seven days, yet more than three ... nor is it one of great moment.' Either they stayed for three or twenty-seven or somewhere in between, but if not twenty-seven then Thucydides' evidence is discarded. *Contra* Freeman it was important since autumn was imminent. Polybius' evidence might have been useful here, but there is a clear error (9.19.1–4) when he states that the Athenians delayed three days, but is referring to their departure from the camp after the defeat in the last naval battle. The two sets of delays have clearly caused confusion among writers after Thucydides. According to Thucydides the final departure of the Athenian army occurred on the second morning following the final naval reverse, 'on the third day from the defeat' (7.75.1) – an example of the ancient habit of inclusive counting.

16 The earlier dates assume a delay of less than a lunar cycle. Cf. Green: 1970, 318, who prefers the earlier dates but has the Athenian withdrawal from September 11th, his naval battle on September 9th, 306, and the construction of the barrier between September 6th and 8th, 304. The later dates proposed here assume a full month's delay. Some of the military activities which followed the eclipse appear to take place during the period of the delay, but would that have been sanctioned by the soothsayers? A point perhaps not easily recovered today. Still, Thucydides seems to make a great deal of delays that contributed to the destruction of the Athenian navy and army. A further point in favour of his evidence is that the current climate is usually dry until November, when the winter rains start. Thunder showers and rivers with flowing water possibly point to an autumn withdrawal.

17 Thus following Green: 1970, 321.

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from Syracuse, the Athenian army probably did not reach this place.¹⁸ On October 2nd (September 10th) the Athenians descended from east of modern Florida to 'some level ground' (Thuc. 7.78.4) in the valley of the Anapos, a distance of about three to four kilometres (2–3 miles). On October 3rd and 4th (September 11th and 12th) the Athenians attempted to force their way through the 'Akraion' or 'Bare Heights' beneath Mount Climiti (Thuc. 7.78.6). On October 5th (September 13th) the Athenians marched 'five or six stades' (1 000–1 200 metres/3 030–3 636 feet) up the escarpment between Mount Climiti and what is now the village of Belvedere. Beaten by the Syracusan cavalry, they returned to their previous camp and rested and departed after dark, marching overnight to the Kakyparis river (roughly eighteen kilometres or about 12 miles). On October 6th (September 14th) the Athenians crossed the Kakyparis river, and Nikias marched his column up to the Erineos river fifty stades south (ten kms/about 6 miles), crossed and made a camp on the other side (Thuc. 7.81.3). Demosthenes, meanwhile, was caught south of the Kakyparis at the estate of Polyzalos mentioned by Plutarch (*Nic.* 27.1) and surrendered in the late afternoon. On October 7th (September 15th) the Syracusans caught up with Nikias in the morning when a truce was arranged for the Athenians to check that the report of Demosthenes' surrender was true and when Nikias made a last appeal to Gylippos. On October 8th (September 16th) the Athenians struck camp in the morning and marched south to the Assinaros before their destruction on the banks of this river some time in the afternoon.¹⁹

From the mouth of the Anapos river, or indeed at any point within the area of Lysimeleia, a straight line points towards Belvedere with its notable pinnacle of rock and the easterly buttress of Mount Climiti; and is the obvious and most easily accessible way out overland from the territory of the Syracusans.²⁰ Diodorus (13.18.6) is explicit in naming Katane as the intended refuge for the Athenian army, but is discounted for the more obscure information provided by Thucydides (7.80.2). Katane had been the forward base of Athenian operations and remained friendly to Athens after the disaster.²¹ Today the main road to Catania lies between Belvedere and Mount Climiti, but the Athenians initially avoided this most obvious route, probably because the Syracusans had now garrisoned Eurialos, and could employ their cavalry on the wide escarpment leading to the Megarian plain beyond. Instead, it looks as if the Athenians chose to aim initially for an inland site such as Leontinoi, even Akrai, and after that Katane. Thucydides suggests that the objective was Gela or Kamarina, although both of these cities were hostile (6.67.2). Still, the plan was sensible and the march would have led them

18 Dover: 1970, 455, places Florida 10 kilometres west of Syracuse, but the distance is incorrect. Even if the distance were ten kilometres, not 14 kilometres, this was well beyond what the Athenians could have marched in a single day.

19 Cf. Plut., *Nic.* 28.1–2: '26th of the month Carneius which the Athenians call Metageitnion,' which would fix the date in late September rather than early October.

20 CD no. 569.

21 Like Leontinoi and Naxos, Katane paid the supreme price for this alliance. After Dionysius became tyrant of Syracuse revenge was exacted on each of these three cities. Naxos was razed to the ground, while the people of Katane and Leontinoi were either sold as slaves or incorporated into the citizenry at Syracuse (Diod. 14.15.1–4).

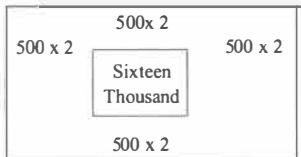
via the entrance to the valley of the Anapos, along its right-hand side and an ascent of Mount Climiti, onto its broad plateau, and then a straightforward march to the territory of Leontinoi. This is the route of the modern road.²² However, the planned retreat was to be thwarted. The army was divided into vanguard and rearguard – each of approximately twenty thousand – although the physical state of the latter, commanded by Demosthenes, was far inferior to the former, led by Nikias (Thuc. 7.80.4). The movement of an army mostly on foot – there were roughly 1 500 cavalry with their mounts – is not one easily or rapidly accomplished. An armed column accompanied by pack animals may be able to progress at a rate of twenty-five to thirty kilometres (15–20 miles) per day, but the use of a hollow square formation, while explicable because of the anticipated flank attacks by Syracusan cavalry units, necessarily inhibited a march at the double.²³ Movement of a hollow square across a flat plain would be reasonably straightforward albeit slow, but the land from the Great Harbour up the Anapos valley does not lend itself to this tactic and the difficulties were compounded by the movement of forty thousand men, many in full armour and carrying their belongings at the end of the summer when the heat is still intense, and when there was little fresh water available in rivers or streams. It is easy to believe that the harrying Syracusan detachments were able to pick off many stragglers from both sections of the retreating army. The unarmed or lightly armed interior of the square was covered by hoplites perhaps two deep, which is considerably less than the normal eight for the phalanx, as Thucydides indicates (5.68, 6.67.1).²⁴ A hollow square with about five hundred hoplites per line on the outside edges means that each was up to a kilometre long, allowing about two metres for each of the four thousand armed men. Inside the square were the sixteen thousand walking wounded, non-combatants, rowers from the triremes and the high command, and the horses and other pack animals.²⁵ It is, therefore, quite understandable, although overlooked, that this formation at the march could accomplish just forty stades (eight kilometres/5 miles) on the first day, as Thucydides says. This is under half the distance to the town of Florida where Dover places the Athenians at the end of the first day.²⁶ However, the slow movement was necessary

22 See Chapter 4 on the CD. CD nos. 541–42; *Video Clip: Anapo Valley*.

23 See also, Xen. *Anab.* 1.8.9, 3.2.36, 3.4.19; Arrian, 4.5, for a similar hollow square, a formation presumably reserved for retreats.

24 The Syracusan hoplites (on that occasion) were drawn up sixteen deep, and perhaps later too, Thuc. 7.79.1–2.

25 A hollow square is perhaps too simplistic a description. It was, in effect, a guarded, condoned-off area made up of heavily armed troops on the circuit moving in one direction.



26 Dover: 1970, 455, and so discounts Thucydides' evidence, which he again later, in the account of the fighting, 456, considers a 'characteristic lack of precision'.

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because of the number of men who were not hoplites, which also meant that stragglers might be easily picked off. The square would inevitably have broken apart whenever a natural obstacle emerged – the land is one of ditches, hills and indented dry stream beds – and the formation would have to be reformed before proceeding further. Nikias was obviously intent on leaving as few behind as he possibly could, but whether this apparently charitable action arose from concern about (or fear of) the *nautikos ochlos* is not specified by Thucydides. The fact that it was this unruly Thetic mass, which broke ranks at the Assinaros and is so censured by Thucydides (7.84.2), suggests that Nikias was afraid of being prosecuted for the loss of precisely these Athenians, should he arrive safely home.

The Athenians left their camp (which lay north of the Anapos in the three kilometres from the river to the city gate) and again crossed Lysimeleia moving west northwest. Thucydides states (7.78.3) that the Athenians crossed the river, which meanders across the coastal plain at this point and scattered a detachment of Syracusans who were guarding the ford, although the river may have been dry at this time. The Athenians bivouacked for the night on high ground near to where the modern village of Floridia is now situated.²⁷ Floridia lies above the Anapos valley on its left or western side. The valley and the river had to be crossed to ascend Mount Climiti. The next day the Athenians advanced a further ‘twenty stades’ (four kms/2½ miles) before ‘descending into a place in the plain’, and made camp.

The Syracusans went on and fortified the pass in front where there was a steep hill with a rocky ravine on each side of it, called the ‘Bare Heights’ (Thuc. 7.78.6: ἀκράϊον λεπας).

The location of this pass has certainly exercised the minds of scholars, although it is less of a problem if the logistics of moving a hollow square across the land is taken into account.²⁸ Generally speaking, the ‘Akraian Heights’ have been taken to indicate either a spot close to Akrai (some 25 kilometres inland) or in the direction of that settlement. Hence the quest for a suitable pass either higher up the Anapos valley or in the Cava Spampinato, even further way in a westerly direction.²⁹ Green, however, proposed an obvious cleft in Mount Climiti as an alternative to the consensus, but this cannot have been the route chosen by Nikias because it is simply too steep for forty thousand men to ascend with all their supplies and pack animals,³⁰ especially since the road to Leontinoi is just a few kilometres further north. Following Green, I suggest that Thucydides’ ‘Bare Heights’

27 CD nos. 629–30 (the Anapo below Floridia).

28 Therefore the ‘bare heights’ have been situated much further away from Syracuse than they need be, Freeman: 1892, 3.704, for the location in the *Cava Spampinato* above Floridia. Green: 1970, 324–27, is more accurate in his location but sees the cliff as the high cleft in the rock of Mount Climiti, but this is an impossible route for forty thousand men, many of whom were not hoplites. The gully below this much better suits the evidence.

29 *Cava Spampinato*, CD nos. 26–30.

30 See the CD Chapter 4 and CD nos. 539–40, 543–45.

has nothing whatsoever to do with Akrai, and cannot be far from Syracuse because the Athenians were not marching in a column, hence could not cover large distances.³¹

And indeed locating this natural feature is relatively straightforward, although missed by Green and others. It lies more or less where Thucydides says it was: roughly twelve kilometres west of the Great Harbour at the base of Mount Climiti, but not on the mountain itself. The Anapos is heavily indented in the coastal plain and in summer it is usually dry, receiving its water from a tributary shortly before its estuary at the Great Harbour. At twelve kilometres (6–7 miles) from the coast the river also passes through a noticeable defile with steep sides and flat hilltops either side before it skirts the limestone massif that is Mount Climiti. The Athenians presumably aimed to pass through this ravine and continue their march up the Anapos valley about another five kilometres (3 miles) before ascending to the top of Mount Climiti, nineteen kilometres (11 miles) from the city, as the road does today, before passing onto Leontinoi or another destination. To prevent the escape the Syracusans meant to defend this gap. The Athenians retired for the night and the next morning

... forced their way towards the hill which had been fortified and here they found before them the enemy's infantry drawn up many shields deep to defend the fortification, the pass being narrow. The Athenians attacked the barricade but were received with a volley of javelins from the high ground that found their mark with great accuracy on account of the height above the attackers. (Thuc. 7.79.1–3)

The Athenians retreated out of the pass and when they failed to make any progress the next day, especially since the Syracusans tried to block them inside the gully, they decided to try the direct route out between Belvedere and Mount Climiti. Today the road rises gently up a broad incline before it drops away again in the north into the Megarian plain.³² The way up would not have been arduous for an army in any formation, but it is naturally disposed to attacks by cavalry units, as the Athenian commanders were no doubt fully aware.

Next day they went on again, and the Syracusans came around them and attacked on all sides wounding many of them, and gave way whenever the Athenians charged and resumed their sorties as soon as they retired. They attacked the rearguard in particular, hoping that if they could rout some regiments separately this would cause a widespread panic in the army. For a long time the Athenians held out and fought in this way, but finally they halted in the plain to rest, having advanced five or six stades (1 000 – 1 200 metres/3 030 – 3 636 feet) and the Syracusans departed and returned to their own camp. (Thuc. 7.79.5–6)

That night the decision was made to turn about and march south instead. The route was much longer, but in some ways much less perilous if the Athenians could give the Syra-

31 For the 'Bare Heights', see CD nos. 552–555; 632 (entrance from Syracuse), 663 (exit up the Anapo towards Florida); and Chapter 4 on the CD. For the 'Bare Heights' at Akrai, see CD nos. 375–76.

32 CD nos. 377, 631.

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cusans the slip. The Syracusans had dug themselves in on Eurialos and in the Anapos valley because these were the obvious ways of escape. If the Athenians moved quickly and far enough they could move beyond the *chorē* of Syracuse, where their attackers might feel less inclined to pursue them. Marching inland from one of the river valleys further south would also eventually bring them to Akrai and then to Leontinoi, and these were far enough away for them to have been left unguarded by the Syracusans.³³ The Athenians perhaps did not expect the Syracusans to pursue them in such strength as they moved beyond Syracusan territory, and unfortunately the Athenian command seriously underestimated the extent which the Syracusans were prepared to go, to ensure the complete destruction of their enemy. The disaster played itself out as the Athenian troops broke in disorder on the eighth day and were slaughtered by the jubilant Syracusans. The prisoners were led back into captivity in the quarries in Tyche.

The Syracusans collected all the prisoners they could find, and hung the captured arms on the finest and tallest trees along the banks of the river, and then they crowned themselves with wreaths and decorated their own horses in a splendid fashion while they cropped the manes and tails of their enemies' mounts, and so marched back to the city. They had brought to a successful conclusion the most brilliant struggle ever waged between Greeks, and had won the most comprehensive of victories by their enormous display of daring and enthusiasm. (Plut. *Nic.* 27.6)

Thucydides (7.75.5) explicitly states that forty thousand men left the Athenian camp. The majority of those who set out hoping to escape from Syracuse were rowers and non-combatants; and it is evident that the cavalry – perhaps over a thousand men – and another thousand hoplites escaped to Katane from Nikias' vanguard (Lysias, *pro Polystrato*, 24–25). Six thousand prisoners were taken from the rearguard, commanded by Demosthenes, and perhaps as few as a thousand were officially taken prisoner in the chaos of the final battle. Where were the huge numbers of Athenian dead buried, if they were indeed ever buried at all? During the siege and in previous hostilities the end of each engagement was followed by the usual truce in which the dead were collected and bodies buried, and trophies were set up by whichever side considered itself to be victorious. In the final naval battle in the Great Harbour the Syracusans collected their dead but the Athenians were too dejected by the defeat to bother. It is surprising that Nikias, notorious for his religious scruples, could not command the recovery of the Athenian dead, which perhaps illustrates a complete breakdown in the command structure following this beating and shows how rudimentary this control by the leadership actually was.³⁴ Green has noted the possibility that the Syracusans collected the dead and buried them out on Plemmyrion.³⁵ Would they have concerned themselves? Certainly the Macedonians collected the Athenian dead after

33 The inland route west of Notum, CD nos. 46–51.

34 H. Van Wees, *Greek Warfare: Myths and Realities*, London 2004, 108–113, on the nature of the Greek military command structure and its amateur character.

35 CD nos. 100, 390, 564, 574, 622–25.

Chaeronea in 338, but Philip II had an ulterior motive for doing so. In 413 it is probably unlikely that, given the circumstances, the besieged would have fulfilled religious niceties ignored by their enemies. The sea rapidly removes human remains and the entrance to the bay – once open again – would have cleaned out the area quickly. In the final massacre at the river, where thousands of Athenians were apparently cut down, the question of where the burial of the dead occurred is again posed by Green in support of his contention that the modern Tellaro is the ancient Assinaros, and by DeVoto who prefers the modern Assinaro.³⁶ It is possible that a makeshift cemetery along the modern Tellaro at S. Paolo may be the Athenian dead of Nikias' vanguard (or some of them), but in battles defeated enemies are not often afforded burial rites. The question of where rather more than thirty thousand Athenians and their allies disappeared in a matter of eight days may not be solved until comprehensive excavation work is undertaken in the area. Given the number of casualties also suffered by the Athenian forces in the last stages of the siege: seven ships taken and the crews killed or taken as prisoners of war (Thuc. 7.41.4), the loss of Eurymedon's squadron of seven ships at Daskon, and those crews presumably also killed (Thuc. 7.52.2, Diod. 13.13.4), eighteen ships lost and the crews killed (Thuc. 7.53.3), fifty-five ships lost in the battle in the harbour (7.72.3), the 'not less than forty thousand' noted by Thucydides (7.75.5) who evacuated Lysimeleia may be an overestimate, but he alone of the sources was in a position to know the truth.

The victory over Athens did not bring stability to either Syracuse or Sicily. A Carthaginian invasion in 409 resulted in the sacking of Selinous and the destruction of Himera. This success spurred on Carthaginian ambitions of territorial expansion into eastern Sicily. In 406 a further attack was launched with Akragas the main objective (it was abandoned by its population after an eight-month siege).³⁷ The crisis allowed Dionysius to come to power (Diod. 13.94.5) and, although he was unable to

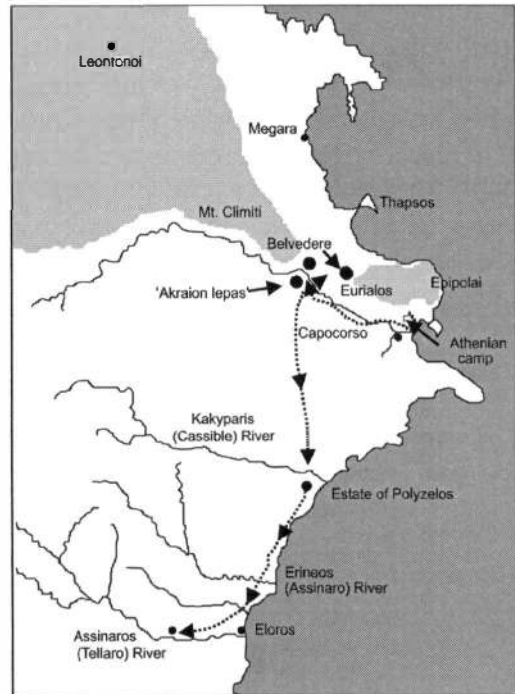


Figure 27: Route of the Athenian Retreat

36 Green: 1970, 330–36; J.G. De Voto, 'The Athenian Retreat from Syracuse', *AHB* 16, 2002, 61–69. See Appendix 4 for further discussion. CD nos. 637–38 (Assinaro); 546–51, 639–40 (Tellaro).

37 Diodorus, 13.91.1, says that the Carthaginians took the city just before December 21st – the winter solstice – in 406 BC.

prevent the loss of Gela and Kamarina (Diod. 13.111.2–3), he survived a counter-coup (Diod. 13.112–113). Meanwhile, plague or some other form of contagious disease forced the withdrawal of the Carthaginians. Dionysius concluded a peace favourable to Carthage, but his ambitions lay in territorial expansion or plunder from the west, partly in reply to the Carthaginian incursions but also to bolster his own position. Dionysius was a real warrior lord, personally leading his troops into battle and constantly on the front line. The sacking of Motya in late summer 397 by Dionysius and his coalition of Sicilian Greek states met with a swift response from Carthage (Diod. 14.59–76). Himilkon, the Carthaginian general, had been unable to lift the siege of Motya (14.50.4), finding the forces of Dionysius superior in number and firepower and as a result ‘was unable to achieve his objective and sailed back to Libya because he believed that a battle at sea would achieve nothing since the enemy had double his number of ships’. Motya was garrisoned by Syracusan allies, while the main Syracusan fleet of one hundred and twenty ships, commanded by Leptines, was also stationed here to watch for any Carthaginian counterattack.³⁸

That offensive occurred in the following summer with a huge army, if Diodorus’ figures are at all credible.³⁹ The transport ships, sailing to Panormos, were intercepted by Leptines and fifty were sunk (five thousand men and two hundred chariots). The warships (triremes) arrived unscathed. Himilkon, again in command, made rapid progress taking Eryx and then Motya, while Dionysius (in the process of besieging Segesta) retreated to Syracuse. Himilkon then made for Messene since its harbour had the capacity to hold his fleet. Messene, caught unprepared, put up a brief defence before the city was sacked and destroyed. After Himilkon had shown his animosity towards the Greeks by the brutality with which he treated Messene (but little different to Syracusan treatment of the Motyans) he sent his admiral Magon with the fleet to the mountain known as Tauros (14.59.10). In the meantime, Dionysius had gathered his own forces: thirty thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry and one hundred and eighty ships,⁴⁰ and led them about twenty kilometres north of the city – the text states – to a place called Tauros, which is probably that hilly coastal area to the north of the present town of Augusta (today called Mount Tauro). This position would allow Dionysius to block the coast road and keep watch on any movement south by enemy shipping.

38 For the siege of Motya, see Chapter 5 and on the CD.

39 300 000 infantry, 4 000 cavalry, 400 chariots, 600 ships according to Ephorus, according to Timaeus 130 000 infantry including Sicilians, Diod. 14.54.5.

40 The text of Diodorus, 14.58.2, is surely corrupt here, stating that only a few of the Syracusan ships were triremes, which must be the opposite since any war fleet consisted primarily of triremes. Later Dionysius was able to dock over three hundred triremes in the two harbours of the city, while his son had four hundred at his disposal. Dionysius is also credited with building ships larger than triremes.

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- 49: M. Porcius Cato (pr. 54)²⁸
- 48: A. Allienus (pr. 49)
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- 46: M. Acilius Caninus (pr. 47)
- 45: T.? Furfanius Postumus (pr. 46)
- 44: A. Pompeius Bithynicus (pr. 45?)
- 43: A. Pompeius Bithynicus/M. Cusinius (pr. 44)
- 42: A. Pompeius Bithynicus
- 41–36: Sex. Pompeius Magnus²⁹

²⁷ For the date and appointment see *MRR* 2.210.

²⁸ For the order of the appointments see *MRR* 2.262–263. T.? Furfanius Postumus had served as quaestor in Sicily between 51 and 50, part of that time perhaps as *pro praetore* for his superior officer.

²⁹ Pompeius Bithynicus at first allied himself with Sex. Pompey who had him killed, *MRR* 2.329, in 42. M. Cusinius named governor of Sicily at the end of 44, for 43, Cic. *Phil.* 3.26, presumably never took up this post.

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- 104: P. Licinius Nerva (pr. 105/4)
- 103: L. Licinius Lucullus (pr. 104)
- 102: C. Servilius (pr. 103/2)
- 101: M'. Aquillius (cos. 101)
- 100: M'. Aquillius (command prorogued)
- 99: M. Aquillius (command prorogued)¹⁷
- 98/97: L. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 94)¹⁸
- 96: L. (Sempronius) Asellio¹⁹
- 95: C. Claudius Pulcher (cos. 92)
- 88: C. Norbanus (cos. 83)
- 87: C. Norbanus (command extended)
- 82: M. Perperna (pr. 83/2)²⁰
- 81: C. Memmius²¹
- 80: M. Aemilius Lepidus (co.s 78)
- 79: M. Claudius Marcellus (pr. 80)
- 77: L. Cornelius Sisenna (pr. 78)²²
- 76: Sex. Peducaeus (pr. 77)
- 75: Sex. Peducaeus²³
- 74: C. Licinius Sacerdos (pr. 75)
- 73: C. Verres (pr. 74)
- 72: C. Verres
- 71: C. Verres²⁴
- 70: L. Caecilius Metellus (cos. 68)
- 61: C. Vergilius Balbus (pr. 62)²⁵
- 60: C. Vergilius Balbus
- 59: C. Vergilius Balbus
- 58: C. Vergilius Balbus²⁶

17 Aquillius returned to Rome – probably by mid-summer – his task completed. His quaestor would have stayed on to govern in his absence until the arrival of the new proconsul.

18 This was perhaps a two-year appointment following the defeat of the slaves, *MRR* 2.7 and n.2.

19 For his identification and possible date see *MRR* 2.9 and n. 3; Diod. 37.8.1–4.

20 Perperna was expelled from his province by Pompey and joined the rebel Sertorius in Spain. He later joined the revolt of Lepidus in Sardinia and after the latter's death took the surviving troops to Sertorius in Spain, Evans: 2003, 39–40, 50.

21 For this appointment, see *MRR* 2.78 and n. 6.

22 The historian Sisenna was later a supporter of Verres, Cic. *Verr.* 2.2.110.

23 His command extended. Cicero was his quaestor at Lilybaeum.

24 His governorship was extended because of the Spartacus revolt. His successor for 71 Arrius was diverted to take command of the war against the slaves. His presence in Syracuse for three years is confirmed by Cicero, *div. in Caec.* 11; *Verr.* 2.2.140. His quaestors in 73 were T. Vettius (Syracuse) and M. Postumius (Lilybaeum), in 72 P. Caesetius (Syracuse) and Q. Caecilius Niger (Lilybaeum). The identities of the quaestors for Verres' final year are unknown. Given the uncertainty in Italy at the time, it is conceivable that the senate extended the terms of Caesetius and Caecilius Niger.

25 He had been quaestor in Sicily, perhaps in 69, *MRR* 2.133, 2.155: 'after Verres.'

26 A four-year term as governor appears unprecedented and unusual before the Principate. Cicero appears to confirm the tenure, but not the reasons why he was so long at Syracuse, *Planc.* 95–96; Q.fr. 1.2.7; cf. *MRR* 2.198 with no explanation.

- 185: [not recorded]⁸
- 184: C. Sempronius Blaesus
- 183: Sp. Postumius Albinus Paullulus (cos. 174)
- 182: L. Caecilius Denter
- 181: Ti. Claudius Nero
- 180: P. Cornelius Mammula
- 179: Q. Mucius Scaevola (cos. 174)
- 178: P. Cluvius Saxula (pr. 173)⁹
- 177: C. Numisius
- 176: L. Aquillius Gallus
- 175: [not recorded]¹⁰
- 174: L. Claudius
- 173: M. Furius Crassipes (pr. 187)
- 172: C. Memmius
- 171: C. Caninius Rebilus
- 170: [not recorded]¹¹
- 169: Ser. Cornelius Lentulus
- 168: M. Aebutius Helva
- 167: Ti. Claudius Nero¹²
- 166: P. Quintilius Varus (?)¹³
- 149: Q. Fabius Maximus Aemilianus (cos. 145)
- 139: L. Plautius Hypsaesus¹⁴
- 138: L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi (cos. 133)
- 137: L./Cn. Cornelius Lentulus (cos. 130?)
- 136: (A.) Manlius (Torquatus)
- 135: P. Popillius Laenas (cos. 132)
- 134: C. Fulvius Flaccus (cos. 134)
- 133: M. Perperna (cos. 130)
- 132: P. Rupilius (cos. 132)
- 126: T. Quinctius Flaminius¹⁵
- 117: C. Porcius Cato (cos. 114)¹⁶

8 Although provinces were allocated by sortition, it would have been interesting to know whether or not M. Claudius Marcellus (pr. 185) was governor of Sicily since his family had built up strong ties of patronage since the sack of Syracuse and the Second Punic War.

9 *MRR* 1.395.

10 Perhaps a prorogation of Gallus' term or one of those noted as praetors in this year, *MRR* 1.402–403.

11 On the praetorian college in 170 see *MRR* 1.420.

12 Perhaps a son of the praetor of 181?

13 For this politician see *MRR* 1.437.

14 I have followed *MRR* 1.483, in the chronological order here after Flor. 2.7.7, but precise dating is not possible.

15 For the date see *MRR* 1.508 and n. 1.

16 Cic. *Verr.* 2.4.22; Badian: 1993, 203–210.

APPENDIX 5: THE PROCONSULS OF SICILY (210–36 BC)¹

211: M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 212), his command prorogued.

210: L. Cincius Alimentus

209: L. Cincius Alimentus²

208: Sex Iulius Caesar

207: C. Mamilius (Atellus)

206: C. Servilius (Geminus) (cos. 203)

205: L. Aemilius Papus³

204: M. Pomponius Matho⁴

203: P. Villius Tappulus (cos. 199)

202: Cn. Tremellius Flaccus

201: P. Aelius Tubero

200: Q. Fulvius Gillo

199: L. Valerius Flaccus (cos. 195)⁵

198: M. Claudius Marcellus (cos. 196)⁶

197: L. Manlius Vulso

196: C. Laelius (cos. 190)

195: Cn. Manlius Vulso (cos. 189)

194: Cn. Cornelius Blasio

193: L. Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus (cos. 190)

192: L. Valerius Tappo

191: M. Aemilius Lepidus (cos. 187, 175)⁷

190: C. Atinius Labeo

189: M. Sempronius Tuditanus (cos. 185)

188: Q. Marcius Philippus (cos. 186, 169)

187: L. Terentius Massiliota

186: P. Cornelius Sulla

1 For a consolidated list of proconsuls of Sicily during the Principate, though many fewer are attested, see G. Manganaro, 'La Sicilia da Sesto Pompeo a Diocleziano,' *ANRW* 11.1, 1988, 86–88. Of the thirty-four names listed just four are known to have progressed to the consulship: A. Didius Gallus (cos. suff. 39), T. Iunius Montanus (cos. suff. 81), Senecio Memmius Afer (cos. suff. 99), M. Pompeius Macrinus Neos Theophanes (cos. suff. 115). L. Septimius Severus, later emperor (193–211) also served as governor here. For the governors of Sicily in this same period see also, B.E. Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidium I*, Göteborg 1984, col. 1–6; G. Barbieri, 'Sui governatori della Sicilia in Età imperiale e sugli ultimi rinvenimenti epigrafici,' *Kokalos*, 14–15, 1968–69, 188.

2 Presumably the historian of the same name.

3 C. Octavius, an ancestor of Augustus, served under Aemilius Papus in Sicily (Syracuse?) as military tribune, Suet. *Aug.* 2.2; *MRR* 1.303.

4 Aided in the invasion of North Africa, Liv. 29.24.8–9, 25.6, 26.7; *MRR* 1.306.

5 The consular colleague of the elder Cato.

6 Son of Marcellus, see 211 BC.

7 Selected as *Princeps senatus* on six occasions, 179–154 BC.

A Banqueting Hall on Ortygia
Refortification of Ortygia and the *Portus Laccius*
Decoration of the interior of the *Athenaion*
Re-foundation of Segesta as Dikaiopolis

Hieron II Palace on Ortygia
The Theatre at Neapolis
Altar of Zeus *Eleutherios* renovated
Olympieion in the agora

Hieronymous Refinement of fortifications at Eurialos

APPENDIX 4: DATING THE MONUMENTS OF SYRACUSAN IMPERIALISM

Archaic Period	<i>Apollonion</i> and <i>Artemision</i> on Ortygia <i>Zeus Urios</i> at Polichne
Gelon	Work starts on the temple of Athena (485-480) Temples to Demeter and Kore, and Demeter at Aetna (Katane) Tombs of the Deinomenids on the road to Polichne Ornamental Pool at Akragas, statuary at Hipponion
Hieron I	Theatre at Neapolis
(after) 466 450-415 415	An altar to Zeus <i>Eleutherios</i> <i>Temenos</i> of Apollo at Neapolis Fortification of Neapolis and Temenites Garden at Syracuse
Dionysius I	Fortification of the Mole and Small Harbour Construction of <i>acropoleis</i> on Ortygia and the Mole Embellishment of the agora Completion of the northern wall on Epipolai, the <i>Hexapylon</i> and <i>Pentapylon</i> Foundation of Tyndaris Destruction of the tombs of Gelon and Demarete Completion of the circuit walls of the city
Dionysius II	Re-foundation of Rhegion as Phoebeia Two colonies founded in Apulia Destruction of the <i>acropoleis</i> and fortifications of the Mole and Ortygia
Timoleon	Construction of the <i>Timoleonteion</i> Re-foundation of Gela, Akragas and Megara Hyblaia Gymnasium and Tomb of Timoleon near the agora
Agathokles	Fortifications of Gela A harbour at Hipponion The Eurialos Fort

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.³

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.

3 Dover: 1970, 458, also sees the logic of this argument.

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.¹ 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 Assinaros 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 breathe 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.² 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

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

² Dover: 1970, 456–57.

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 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

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: THE CHIEF CITIES OF SICILY IN ANTIQUITY

	Foundation Date	Destruction/ Occupation	Founding City
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 st 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 th century	late 3 rd century BC	Syracuse
Gela	689/88	1 st 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 st century BC	Syracuse
Akragas	ca. 581	Agrigentum	Gela
Morgantina	ca. 550	1 st century BC	
Herakleia Minoa	ca. 550	1 st century BC	Akragas
Aetna	465/461	Inessa	
Halaesa	403	1 st century AD	
Lilybaeum	397/96	Marsala	
Kephaloidion	396	Cefalú	
Tyndaris	396	Byzantine period	
Tauromenion	358	Taormina	
Solunto II	347	after AD 200	
Drepana	3 rd century	Trapani	
Thermae Selinuntinae	6 th century	Sciacca	
Mylai	394/93	Milazzo	
Castrum Hennae	5 th century	Enna	

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.⁴¹ 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.⁴² 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 Ortygia, 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.

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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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.⁴⁰ 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

38 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, Aldershot, 1998, 219–220; and more generally P. Magdalino, 'The Medieval Empire', in *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. C. Mango, Oxford 2002, 171.

39 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.

40 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.

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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.³⁴ 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.³⁵ 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.³⁶ 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.³⁷

34 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.

35 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 under-structures 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.

36 Wilson: 1988, 114–115.

37 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.

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.²⁹ 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.³⁰ 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.³¹ 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.³² 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,³³ 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 edificio 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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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.²⁵

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.²⁶ (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.²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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.

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.²⁰ 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.²¹ The Spartacus revolt caused a delay in his appointment – if indeed he ever reached his province.²² Spartacus and his followers attempted to reach Sicily from across the Straits, happily for Verres they failed (Plut. *Crass.* 10.3).²³ P. Clodius was quaestor to the proconsul here in 61 (Cic. *Att.* 1.16.9).²⁴ 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

20 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.

21 For Arrius' unsuccessful candidacy in 59, ten years after his propraetorian 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', *AClass* 34, 1991, 122, 135. For his praetorship in 73, see *MRR* 3.25.

22 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.

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

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

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 71.¹⁵ 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)).¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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*).¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ 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.

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.¹⁰ 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,¹¹ 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).¹² 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴ An economic slump caused by rampant piracy in the 70s

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

¹¹ 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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 Hieronymus and Adranodoros, Liv. 24.25.1–10.

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.³ Still it is probably fair to say that the role of Syracuse was unobtrusive in the next century,⁴ 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.⁵

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).⁶ 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 Hypsaesus (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),⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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.

CHAPTER 6: A CITY IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

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-Hieronian 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'.¹ However, this picture is misleading, and conflicts with the information that can be obtained from reading the topography of the city during this period.² 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*² 1030: 'Syracuse became ... the governmental centre, retaining both its beauty and a comparative importance.'

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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.⁶⁰ Driven by a constant need for funds, a lack of direction or focus once again characterised Syracusan imperialism. With Agathokles' murder in 289,⁶¹ and with no succession planned, internal discord returned to the city. It was not quite anarchy,⁶² 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 Kamarina 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.⁶³ 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,⁶⁴ 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 340,⁶⁵ 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 Hekatas 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.

Minoa, Himera, Kephallion 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.

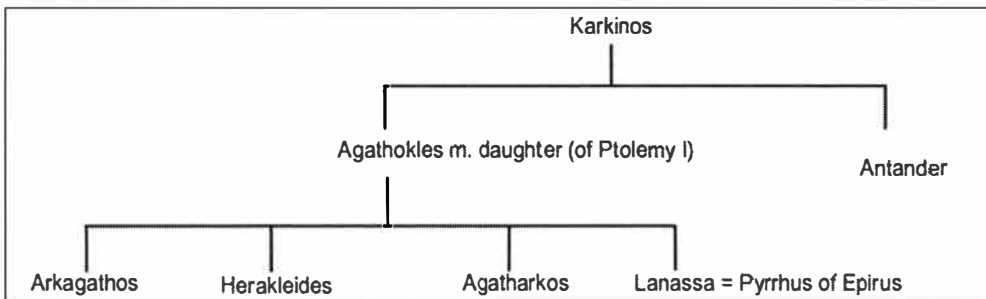


Figure 32: The Family of Agathokles

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.⁵⁹ 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

⁵⁹ CD nos. 473–74, 674, 678.

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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.⁵⁸ 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, Hadrumentum 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 Hippu 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

⁵⁸ Diodorus calls the place 'Latomia', 20.6.3, which is reminiscent of Syracuse's own 'quarries', and which became a sort of home from home.

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.⁵⁶ 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.⁵⁷ 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. 19.65.1–4) 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 Eknomos. 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):

⁵⁶ 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.

⁵⁷ 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.

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... 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)

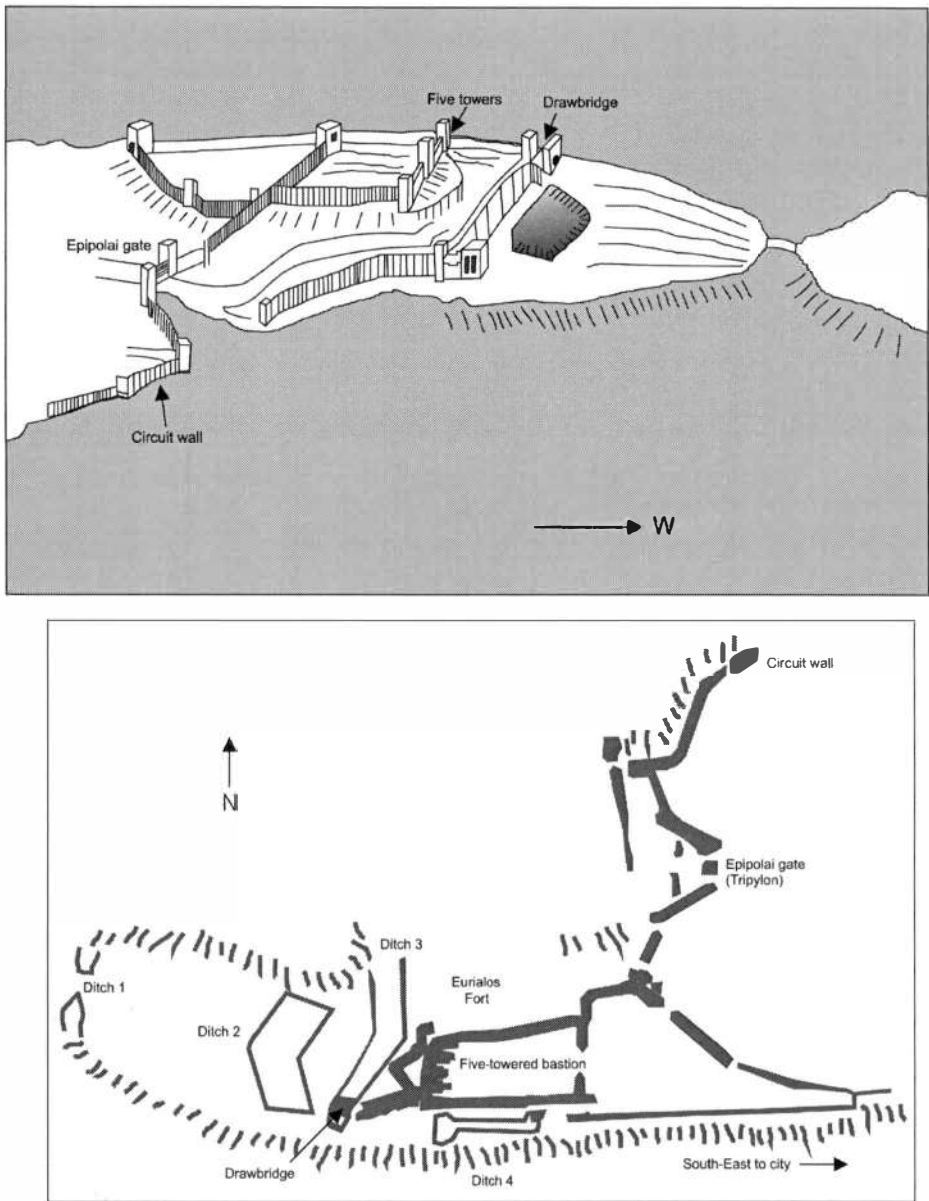


Figure 31: The Fort at Eurialos

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.⁵⁴ 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 Eknomos above the Himeras 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.⁵⁵

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-Maclver: 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.

⁵⁴ 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.'

⁵⁵ See also Chapter 4.

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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.⁴⁹

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.⁵⁰ 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),⁵¹ 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).⁵² 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,⁵³ 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

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),⁴⁷ intended as 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.⁴⁸ 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.

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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).⁴⁶

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.

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.⁴⁴ 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).⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ 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.

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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 Seluntine 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). Ortygia 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 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)

Dionysius 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.⁴² Dionysius II clearly maintained close ties with Locri, the home of his mother,⁴³ 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 Phrax, 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.

42 In the interim between Dionysius II's expulsion and his return, Syracuse was also ruled briefly by Hipparinos and Nisaïos, his half-brothers, the sons of Andromache. Kalippos 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.

43 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.

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.³⁸ 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.³⁹ 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,⁴⁰ 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).⁴¹ 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

38 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.

39 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.

40 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.

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

Nonetheless, the siege became protracted since the Rhegians 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 Rhegion 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.³⁴

Following the capture of Rhegion, 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).³⁵ 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.³⁶

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 gymnasia and temples.³⁷

34 Rhegion 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.

35 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.

36 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 Seluntine 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.

37 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.

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.³² (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.³³ 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)

32 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.

33 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*.

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.³⁰

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.³¹ However, Dionysius did not transport his army across the narrowest passage from Messina to Rhegion, but rather from Messina 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.

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)²⁴

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.

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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.²⁵

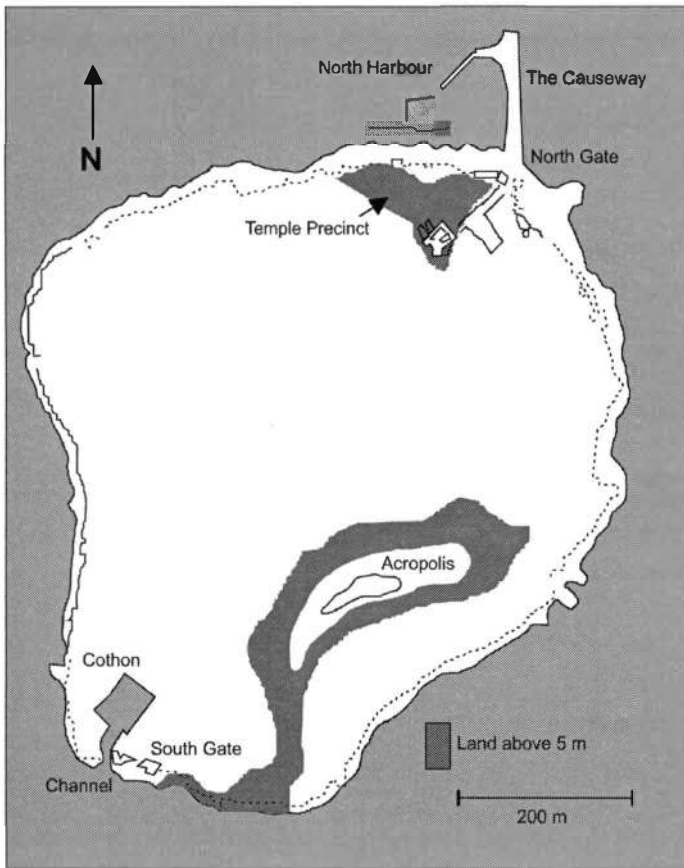


Figure 30: The Island of Motya

²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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).²⁷ 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, Kephallion, 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 Rhegians 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 Rhegians 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).²⁸ 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.²⁹ 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 Agrigento. 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 Rhegian territory. (Diod. 14.100.1–5)

Kroton came to the aid of the Rhegians 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

²⁹ 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.

native Sikel 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).²¹ 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 Rhegians 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 Rhegians 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 Rhegians, 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.²² 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.²³ 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 Kamarina, 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.

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)¹⁹

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.²⁰ Moreover, it is clear from a number of sources that while Ortygia 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-MacIver: 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.

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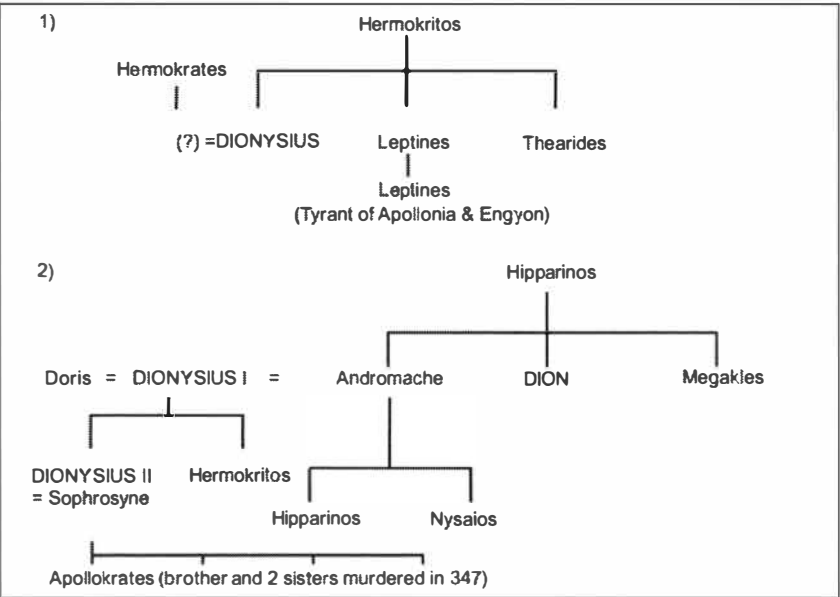


Figure 29: The Family of Dionysius I

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.¹⁸ 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

18 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.

Dionysius I

Syracuse recovered in a very short time from the protracted Athenian siege,¹³ 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,¹⁴ and the capture of Akragas, Gela and Kamarina 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ 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.

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

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

15 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.

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

17 The agora lay just to the north of the mole's fortifications.

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),¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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 in 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.¹² 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: 1992³, 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.

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).⁶ 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,⁷ 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.⁸ 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.⁹ 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

6 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.

7 D. Asheri, ‘Sicily, 478–431 B.C.’, *CAH* 5 1992², 152.

8 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.

9 Asheri: 1992², 151.

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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.³ 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.⁴

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,⁵ 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, 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.

CHAPTER 5: IMPERIAL DESIGNS

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.¹ 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.² 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.

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at Eurialos had added considerable strength to the city, and even with a naval blockade supplies to Syracuse could still be brought in.

Was it, therefore, simply a series of blunders in which the besiegers were outmanoeuvred by the besieged (a series of misadventures from which the Romans learned a good lesson) and realised that any successful attack must come from the north and not the south? The Romans also camped in Lysimeleia and suffered from the disease there, but they also held the Megarian plain and were able to exert greater pressure on the city as a result. The Eurialos fort could not save Syracuse in the end. Indeed it did not feature in the last assault by the Romans. Finally, it was a strike to the very heart of the city that brought its end as an independent community. In at least one sense Thucydides was, therefore, prophetic for with the fall of Syracuse in 212 BC, Sicily in its entirety was absorbed into the Roman empire and southern Italy, *Magna Graecia*, as a separate Hellenic entity also ceased to exist.

for example, makes it clear that supplies were delivered to the Athenians overland and, given the nature of Syracuse's hinterland, it was relatively straightforward to send out foraging parties and import food by road. A camp on Epipolai would not have been a disadvantage because it was further from the accompanying fleet. Communications too could be conducted by land since the Athenians certainly possessed cavalry units, and the Carthaginian high command and elite troops were usually equestrian.

Occupation of Lysimeleia and Polichne was probably attractive because it allowed control of the road south to Eloros, and before construction of the channel linking the two harbours, also placed pressure on the city in the vicinity of the agora, which although adjacent to both harbours presumably took its main imports from the south. Possession of the Great Harbour was clearly viewed as a sound strategy to force a siege to a successful conclusion, hence, also the occupation of Plemmyrion, the southern head of the bay. Furthermore, the fortifications of the city in the Neapolis sector – especially where the walls came down to the beach – may have been regarded as a weak spot where a concerted attack could lead to a breach. But these considerations all presume a brief siege, which in these instances simply did not take place.

Green has argued very plausibly for command mismanagement of the Athenian siege and has stated that Nikias was convinced a Syracusan surrender would come, the longer the invaders remained outside the city. Not only did Nikias have connections inside Syracuse but he was obviously aware that a prolonged campaign would become a massive financial drain on the treasury of the city which could only pay for its defence while it had reserves. Without settled conditions the treasury was not replenished and hence a lack of funds for mercenaries would force a capitulation long before starvation set in. However, does this explanation also fit the situation in 396 and 309 BC?

It is claimed between 415 and 413 the Syracusans depended heavily on the support they received from Sparta and Corinth, and there were indeed Spartans and Corinthians fighting alongside the local citizens. However, for the most part the Syracusans had a strong citizen army that seems to have excelled in the cavalry units, which they possessed in superior numbers to the Athenians. There were also mercenary units, but who were these? Again for the most part they appear to have been drawn from allies within Sicily. Similarly, although there were some ships from mainland Greece the Syracusan fleet was predominantly recruited from its citizen body. Syracusan reserves of manpower were clearly equal to those enjoyed by Athens, even though the city at this time cannot have held the 200 000 later credited to it. The city of Dionysius I and Hieron II was a far greater metropolis than it had been in the fifth century BC. The later Carthaginian armies relied heavily on mercenary troops who were not always of the highest calibre. The Carthaginian command equally had no scruples about leaving their mercenaries in the lurch, as occurred in 396. In 309 it was simply command incompetence which caused the failure of Hamilkar's campaign. By that time too it is clearly evident that the fort

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Marcellus offered terms which the Syracusans rejected, and, at this point there was definitely a pause in operations since a Carthaginian relief fleet arrived in the Great Harbour. The northern suburbs of Syracuse may have fallen but Akradina and the island were still protected by their internal walls and held out (Plut. *Marc.* 18.4). The Carthaginians pitched their camp – perhaps at Daskon. Livy does not give details other than that an attack was launched against the Roman camp, which was presumably still near the *Olympieion* (Liv. 25.26.4). This was repulsed and a stalemate ensued during which disease again broke out in the opposing camps, although the Carthaginians appear to have fared much worse than the Romans (Liv. 25.26.7–15). They sensibly transferred their troops from Lysimeleia up onto the higher ground, while the remnants of the Carthaginian forces retreated south (Liv. 25.27.1) perhaps in the direction of Eloros.⁶⁴ Another Carthaginian fleet reached Cape Pachynos but was prevented from reaching Syracuse by easterly winds. Epikydes left the city to join this fleet and urged an engagement with the Romans. The Carthaginian commander Bomilkar made off without a fight while Epikydes left for Akragas. Akradina and Ortygia were left garrisoned by mercenaries and their commanders. One of these offered to betray his allocated area of responsibility on the island (Liv. 25.30.2–6). And it was this offer followed by a night infiltration via Ortygia at another postern gate (this time beside the Arethusa fountain), and treachery by Iberian mercenaries which finally caused the city's fall.⁶⁵ For the first time in its long history Syracuse fell to a besieging army.

... to Moericus himself fell the section from the Fountain of Arethusa round to the mouth of the Great Harbour. He was careful to let the Romans know of this. Therefore, that night Marcellus ordered a merchant ship with troops aboard to be towed by a quadrireme to Ortygia, where the troops were to be landed near the gate by the Fountain of Arethusa. This was accomplished in the hours before sunrise and when the men had been landed and Moericus had admitted them according to the plan, Marcellus at dawn made a general assault on the defences of Akradina ... (Liv. 25.30.7–9)

The city was sacked of its moveable treasures, but the fabric of Syracuse and its infrastructure was preserved for its new role as a Roman city. Livy claims (25.31.11) that the plunder taken in this sack was scarcely less than would have been taken from Carthage, had that city fallen to Rome at this time.⁶⁶

Why did the Athenians, and later the Carthaginians, choose to site their camps in Lysimeleia, an area of marshy and hence unhealthy land when a situation to the north of the city would have been more hospitable? Reliance on their fleets for communications and supplies would seem the obvious answer to this question. However, Thucydides,

64 Livy states that the Carthaginians retreated to two towns three and fifteen miles south of Syracuse. Wherever these were precisely, in any event they played no further role in subsequent events.

65 For the wall at the Fountain of Arethusa, see CD nos. 559–60.

66 Plutarch, *Marc.* 19.3, compares what was actually plundered from Syracuse at this time with that looted from Carthage in 146 BC.

Again the topographical details are illuminating. Although the blockade was maintained, Syracuse was regarded as impregnable while supplies could still be brought in by sea from Carthage. A pro-Roman coup failed, but while negotiations near the *Portus Trogilorum* were taking place about a ransom for the return to Syracuse of a captured Spartan ambassador (25.23.8–10; Plut. *Marc.* 18.1), estimation of the height of the city's walls at Epipolai was accomplished. Polybius was surely the source of this episode.⁶⁰

A few days later a deserter reported that for three days the Syracusans had been celebrating throughout the city a festival of Artemis, and that they had eaten little bread because it was in short supply but had drunk plenty of wine ... and Marcellus now remembered his estimate of the wall's height at its lowest point and thought that it was very likely that the men would be drunk because of their consumption of wine and the lack of real food, [so he] decided to take a chance.⁶¹ (Pol. 8.37.1–13)

The walls were scaled by ladders at night. About a thousand soldiers were able to secure a position unnoticed, and they spread out along the apparently undefended walls since the Syracusans had assembled in several of the towers for the sacrifices and they were mostly drunk and asleep. Those few sentries on duty were killed and a postern gate was opened to admit more Roman troops as the assault began in earnest with heavy fighting in the vicinity of the *Scala Greca*. By dawn the *Haxapylon* was secured and opened to admit Marcellus and the rest of his army. The Syracusans, even at this late stage, seemed unaware of the seriousness of their situation and that Epipolai had been taken by the enemy.⁶² The Eurialos fort was not as yet in Roman hands but was soon surrendered by its commander (25.25.2–9) in return for safe passage down to Akradina.⁶³ This formerly impregnable fortress was lost through Syracusan carelessness; the Romans held all the higher ground and pitched a camp between Neapolis and Tyche, both of which they controlled and sacked.

When Marcellus entered the walls and from the higher ground saw with his own eyes one of the most beautiful of all cities at that time, he is said to have wept, in part for joy in the accomplishment of so great a campaign, in part for the city's ancient glory. He remembered the sinking, long ago, of the Athenian fleets, and two huge armies wiped out with their two famous commanders, and so many wars waged at such great risk with Carthage, so many wealthy tyrants and kings, above all Hieron – a king who was still vivid in the thoughts of men, and made glorious for his generosity to the Roman people before everything which his own valour and success had achieved. All these memories raced through his mind, and the thought occurred to him that within an hour all he saw might be in flames and reduced to ashes ... (Livy, 25.24.11–15; cf. Plut. *Marc.* 19.1)

60 Pol. 8.37.1–13: 'He (Marcellus) counted the courses since the masonry of the tower was even so that it was easy to reckon the distance of the battlements from the ground.'

61 Cf. Diod. 26.18.1: 'Now when Syracuse was ... suddenly betrayed to Marcellus ... while the citizens were celebrating a nocturnal festival of Artemis ...' Livy provides the additional information that the pro-Punic leader Epikydes provided the wine for this feast, 25.23.14.

62 Cf. Pol. 8.7: 'None of the citizens knew what was happening on account of the distance, the city being great in size. The Romans gained great confidence as a result of their capture of Epipolai.'

63 The towers at the Eurialos fort, CD nos. 76, 252, 258–59.

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an extended covered ladder made of wood and protected by a roof which was lifted up against the walls by the crews of the ships. The sambuca proved to be useless against the defensive machinery created by Archimedes, Syracuse's most famous resident at that time, which included catapults designed to prevent the enemy approaching close to the walls and grappling devices that were capable of picking up ships by their prows and, when released, dropping them back into the water.⁵⁸ Diodorus, again probably accessing Polybius, offers much the same material (26.18.1):

During the time when Marcellus, general of the Romans, was attacking Syracuse by land and by sea, Archimedes first hauled up out of the water some of the enemy ships by using a mechanical device, and after raising them to the walls of the city sent ships and men tumbling down again into the sea.⁵⁹

From all accounts it would appear that the Small Harbour was still ringed with walls and towers, as it had been during the rule of Agathokles a century earlier. The army encountered similar difficulties in its assault on Epipolai. The massive circuit walls may have been in a state of some disrepair as a result of fifty years of peace under Hieron II, but proved to be still formidable.

The strength of Syracuse's defences lies in the fact that the city's fortifications extend in a circle along the high ground, with steeply overhanging crags that are very difficult to climb (except at certain points), even then only if the approach is not contested. (Pol. 8.7)

For an attack on the plateau the Romans must have secured a secondary encampment to the north of the city, besides possession of beaching facilities in the Great Harbour. Both sea-borne and land assaults failed, however, due to Archimedes' ingenuity (Liv. 24.34.1–15). The failure to breach the fortifications resulted in the almost inevitable blockade, and a frontal assault was delayed for another two years.

... in view of the city's large population, the best way to reduce it was by starvation and the Romans therefore cut off supplies from the sea by a naval blockade, and by land through deployment of the army and placed their hopes on this solution. (Pol. 8.7; cf. Plut. *Marc.* 17.3)

In fact, as Livy indicates

... the siege of Syracuse came to an end, aided not only by the vigour and excellence of the general (Marcellus) and his army, but also by internal treachery. (Liv. 25.23.1)

Moreover, it is notable that the occupation of the city did not occur as the result of a single incursion, but was a gradual process over a period of several days, if not weeks, and that the conclusion was therefore more drawn out than Livy's description might initially suggest.

⁵⁸ Plutarch, *Marc.* 14.3, describes a Roman naval ballista.

⁵⁹ See also Plutarch's elaborate account, *Marc.* 15. This was the occasion of Archimedes' famous bath-cry 'Eureka', Vitruvius, 9, *pref.* 9–12.

event, mercenary troops seem to be still stationed there and on the island. Events in the city were unstable where pro and anti-Roman factions struggled to gain control. Negotiations about the renewal of the treaty with Rome were still underway when news of a Carthaginian fleet near Cape Pachynos gave the pro-Punic leaders, Hippokrates and Epikydes, sufficient incentive to conspire for power. A Roman fleet commanded by Ap. Claudius Pulcher was also anchored off the Great Harbour as an encouragement for the pro-Roman party.⁵⁵ A request from Leontinoi to quell internal civil disturbances played into the hands of the pro-Punic leadership, which used Syracusan troops to infringe on the Roman *provincia*. The consul M. Claudius Marcellus responded by taking Leontinoi, but this action too was put to good use by Hippokrates and Epikydes, who returned to Syracuse (24.32.4). At the *Hexapylon* they demanded admission with troops loyal to their cause.

By this time one of the gates of the *Hexapylon* had been opened, and by it they had begun to be admitted ... and the gates were being forced with no less violence from inside as from outside and when all had been broken open the column of troops was admitted through the entire *Hexapylon*. (Livy, 24.32.5–7)

Although some scholars have argued for a succession of six gates, this seems altogether unlikely for it is not a form of fortification seen elsewhere.⁵⁶ More plausible is a system of entries and exits which, if opened altogether, meant a very rapid influx, in this case, of troops. The Syracusans loyal to Rome were killed and the pro-Punic faction took power. A Roman ambassadorial party narrowly escaped capture ‘in the channel of the port’ (*fauces portus*), presumably either at the entrance to the Great Harbour or the fortified entry to the Small Harbour (Liv. 24.33.2–3). Soon afterwards a Roman army encamped in the usual place for besiegers, by the *Olympieion* (Liv. 24.33.3). When further negotiations proved fruitless, Marcellus launched assaults by land on the *Hexapylon* and by sea against the walls of Akradina. Polybius was probably Livy’s source:

The Romans ... appointed Ap. Claudius Pulcher as *propraetor* to command the army and M. Claudius Marcellus to command the fleet. These commanders then took up positions not far from the city and decided to launch an assault with the army on the section known as the *Hexapylon* while the fleet was to attack at a spot known as the *Stoa* of Skytike in Akradina, just where the wall of the city extends to the harbour’s edge.⁵⁷ (Pol. 8.3)

The Roman fleet intended to employ a piece of siege equipment called a *sambuca* against the ‘city’s towers’, says Polybius, who gives a detailed description of what was essentially

55 This fleet of 100 ships had, says Livy, 24.27.5, been stationed at Murgantia. Morgantina is inland near Enna. The editor (*LCL*) postulates an unknown harbour called Murgantia. A place large enough for such a fleet would presumably not be unknown. Megara Hyblaia is probably meant, or even conceivably Messene; and this item should be treated as a clerical error that has crept into the text.

56 See the discussion in Chapter 1.

57 Note that Polybius and Livy provide variant details of the duties assigned to Pulcher and Marcellus, T.R.S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, New York 1951–52, 1.259–60, 262 n. 6, suggests that Ap. Claudius Pulcher (pr. 215) was the provincial governor until M. Claudius Marcellus arrived to take overall command of the campaign against Syracuse. Plutarch, *Marc.* 14.3, also has Pulcher in charge of the army and Marcellus the fleet.

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At this point the Syracusans who occupied Eurialos saw that the enemy was advancing in a confused fashion while they were in a higher position and charged down on the Carthaginians. (Diod. 20.29.8)

Not only had the defenders plenty of warning to organise their defence and attack the enemy from above, but also the enemy did not only have to scale the heights of Epipolai, a difficult enough objective in the dark, but also faced the prospect of (once reaching the higher ground) scaling a six-metre wall, strong towers, and at the western end of Epipolai, by now, the almost impregnable Eurialos fort. It is not surprising that an outnumbered garrison could easily rout the superior numbers of Carthaginians and capture their general, who was publicly executed in the city on the next day. With their leadership in disarray the Carthaginian siege faltered again, and although new commanders were chosen the immediate threat was removed, and a naval blockade of the city resumed. In effect the danger to the city had passed, and although naval pressure was kept up for some time, and at least one battle was fought outside the harbour, terms were agreed between the warring parties in 306.⁵⁴

... he (Agathokles) sent envoys to the Carthaginians and made peace with them on the following terms: the Carthaginians should regain all the cities which had previously belonged to them, and in return for these Agathokles received gold to the value of three hundred talents of silver and 200 000 *medimnoi* of wheat. (Diod. 20.79.5)

The good times under Hieron II (see Chapter 6) came to an abrupt end with his death, and the succession of his inexperienced grandson Hieronymous, who was murdered at Leontinoi, was followed by a coup by pro-Carthaginian politicians (Plut. *Marc.* 13.1). Syracuse's treaty with Rome, so long advantageous, was thrown aside, but Carthaginian promises brought no benefits while a swift Roman military intervention was aimed at reducing the city. The final great siege of the city occurred over a period of three years.

The fullest account is that of Livy (25.23–32) and it is interesting to note the abundant evidence of a topographical nature contained in his and other accounts. For example, before the Roman siege began, during the uncertainty following the murder of Hieronymous, the people gathered at the *curia* in Akradina (Liv. 24.22.1), which was presumably in the agora where an Altar to Concord was used as a platform for public speeches. Moreover, it is clear that, however benign had been Hieron II's rule, Ortygia and the mole were still separated from Akradina by a wall and gate – the *Pentapylon* (24.22.12). This gate complex was possibly usually open if the closure of the gate has any significance (24.25.3). In any

⁵⁴ Agathokles returned to Sicily in 307 and campaigned against exiles supported by Akragas, Diod. 20.55.5–57.2, and when he learned that his son, Arkagathos, had suffered a defeat in North Africa he planned to return. It is at this point, Diod. 20.61.5, that it becomes clear that a Carthaginian squadron of thirty ships was blockading the harbour while Agathokles possessed just seventeen triremes inside. Luckily for Agathokles eighteen Etruscan ships arrived unobserved at night, and on the next day the Syracusans broke out. The Carthaginians pursued them but became trapped between the Greeks and the Etruscans and they lost five of their ships. Agathokles made it to North Africa. And again this break-out presumably came from the Small Harbour.

Hamilkar was very distressed at this and withdrew his army from Syracuse and sent a relief column to Carthage of five thousand men. (Diod. 20.16.9)

Why such a small reverse should have caused this sudden Carthaginian withdrawal remains unexplained, as does Hamilkar's neglect of his siege engines. It is possible that a much heavier engagement took place in 310, probably along a stretch of the city walls near the agora, but that once this incursion had failed Hamilkar felt duty bound to send military aid back to his home city. However, the Carthaginians cannot have retreated much further than Gela or Akragas, and an enemy naval presence may have been maintained near Syracuse. Hamilkar returned in the following year with a formidable army.

Hamilkar ... gained possession of the remaining outposts and advanced with his army against Syracuse, intent on storming the city. He prevented the import of wheat since he had controlled the sea for some time, and after he destroyed the crops on the land now undertook the capture of the area around the Olympieion. (Diod. 20.29.2–3)

What happened next, if it were not for its tragic climax, has all the elements of a farce. Hamilkar had been told that he would dine in Syracuse on the next day and so decided to launch an immediate attack.⁵¹ However, instead of a daytime assault on the walls closest to his intended camp in Lysimeleia he chose to lead an attack at night on Eurialos.⁵² The Syracusans learned of this intention and heavily garrisoned, with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry, the western end of the circuit wall. And then Diodorus describes (20.29.5–11) how the victor of the battle at the Himeras river proceeded – rather like a circus act – up from the marsh, army and camp followers all in confusion and noise, guided by Syracusan exiles, along a similar path followed by Demosthenes in 413.⁵³

The main body of the infantry was divided into two phalanxes, one made up of barbarians, the other Greek allies. Outside the ranks a mixed crowd of rabble also followed for the sake of obtaining plunder, men who are totally useless to an army but are the source of noise and irrational confusion, from which the most dangerous situations arise. And indeed on this occasion because the roads were narrow and rough, the baggage train and some of the camp followers kept pushing one another as they competed for the right of way. And since the crowd was pressed into narrow spaces and on this account became involved in arguments and many became involved on either side, great confusion and noise predominated in the army. (Diod. 20.29.7)

The Carthaginians presumably skirted the southern edge of Epipolai more or less along today's main road, before turning up towards Eurialos again following a route which can still be followed on the road towards Belvedere.

51 Cf. Livy's account of Maharbal's promise to Hannibal immediately after the battle of Cannae, 22.51.

52 The most likely route of Hamilkar's forces, CD nos. 253–255; 90, 272 (Eurialos facing west).

53 Freeman: 1894, 4.425–29, considers that the Carthaginian camp cannot have been completed, which was why the entire army had then to proceed to Epipolai.

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(perhaps fifty-oared galleys or pentekonteres) had sailed into the Great Harbour at Syracuse, caused some damage and sailed away unscathed.⁴⁸ In 311 Agathokles marched against the Carthaginians who were camped at Cape Eknomos. There the Carthaginians were victorious, and in an episode highly reminiscent of Dionysius' retreat from Katane in 396, the Syracusans retreated first to Gela and then to their own city.⁴⁹

Agathokles, who had been defeated at the Himeras river and had lost the greatest and strongest part of his army, took refuge in Syracuse. (Diod. 20.3.1)

The Carthaginians meanwhile advanced at a leisurely pace, and Hamilkar won over numerous cities including Kamarina, Leontinoi, Katane and Tauromenion (Diod. 19.110.3), by his generous behaviour; and Syracuse was isolated once again. A Carthaginian fleet was already blockading the city when Agathokles decided on a masterful diversion. He would attack Carthage. In order to break out he waited for the arrival of some merchant ships bringing in wheat, and when the Carthaginians went to intercept these he launched what appeared to be an attack to save these threatened vessels. The Carthaginians, thinking that battle would be offered, turned away from the ships carrying badly needed supplies to face the Syracusans. Agathokles ordered his ships to row at full speed past the Carthaginians and with evening at hand the supply ships made it to the harbour while Agathokles eluded his enemies (Diod. 20.5.1–5). He was pursued for six days until he reached the coast of North Africa, probably Cape Bon, where he managed to get his forces safely ashore.⁵⁰ Diodorus does not stipulate from which harbour Agathokles escaped, but it seems likely that the break-out occurred from the northern end of Ortygia and it is perhaps significant that the Syracusans are credited with sixty triremes, the maximum number which could be accommodated in the fortified smaller port. Initially, Hamilkar offered terms to the Syracusans (Diod. 20.16.1), but these were rejected and a siege of the city commenced. The information is vague and details are not provided. Hamilkar was close to the city and had been constructing siege engines (Diod. 20.16.2) when two ships arrived from Agathokles with news of recent victories over the Carthaginians. When the people went down to the harbour to receive the news Hamilkar ordered the walls to be scaled by ladders (Diod. 20.16.7) and a short stretch was taken between two towers, but this advance party was discovered by the guard and in a fight were killed or thrown back.

48 Diodorus, 19.103.4, describes the Carthaginian ships as 'light vessels', perhaps pentekonteres or similar, but offers no clue as to how or why these were not intercepted by Syracusan triremes. These ought to have been (or were once) stationed there, and why were there just two Athenian traders at the port? The Carthaginians were later killed or captured in southern Italy, 19.103.5; Freeman: 1894, 4.386.

49 Diodorus, 19.109.5, claims seven thousand Greek casualties.

50 The course of Agathokles' African campaign does not concern me here, but see Chapter 4, Diod. 20.6–18, 20.33–34, 20.38–44, 20.54–69; Freeman: 1894, 4.400–423. Diodorus claims that in the victory over the Carthaginians, 20.11.1, Agathokles possessed an army of 13 500. This indicates that his forces consisted of the entire complement of the sixty triremes. The ships were burned, 20.7.5, which also points to a raiding party of rowers-cum-fighters, a relatively rare departure in military forces in that the *nautikos ochlos* were not simply the means by which armed forces were transported. These men were probably mercenaries who could row, but also carried sufficient arms to be a highly effective force once on land.

The victory was all but complete. Plundering of the sinking and damaged enemy ships took place and, although the fighting ceased with the arrival of darkness, Dionysius kept up the pressure by making his own camp near the *Olympieion*. Himilkon had presumably been expelled from this area as well and had retreated into the main camp on the beach.

The epilogue to this affair is interesting. The Carthaginians offered Dionysius three hundred talents to allow them to escape. Dionysius was always, it seems, susceptible to bribery and, claims Diodorus (14.75.3), was aware that the continued threat of Carthaginian attack would strengthen his own position, and agreed that the citizens of Carthage would be allowed to go unmolested on the fourth night after the negotiations. The rest, mainly mercenaries and Sikeli, would be left to their fate. Himilkon and the Carthaginians slipped out of the Great Harbour in forty triremes, but how they could have managed this unobserved is not explained. Although pursued by some enthusiastic Corinthian ships which sank some of the enemy ships – perhaps with the connivance of Dionysius who was also not averse to double dealing – the Sikeli for the most part seem to have managed to escape ‘almost to a man’ (Diod. 14.75.6). The mercenaries were captured but some, especially a group of Iberians, were re-enlisted in Dionysius’ own army. A description of the remarkable scenes of devastation brought on by a turnabout in fortune concludes Diodorus’ coverage of this siege:

They who broke down Syracusan tombs looked on 150 000 dead heaped up and unburied because of disease, and they who had plundered the Syracusan territory now in their own turn witnessed their own fleet suddenly go up in flames. (Diod. 14.76.2)⁴⁶

Although in duration not as long as the Athenian siege, the Carthaginian attack in the summer months of 396 is an important episode in the history of Syracuse, not least because its denouement was to be another landmark victory for the besieged. The triumph over Carthage became further proof of Syracuse’s supreme status in Sicily, further boosted the confidence of its people and confirmed the position of Dionysius as tyrant.

In 317 BC Agathokles took sole power in Syracuse through a violent coup. Like the Syracusan tyrants before him, his rule was strikingly characterised by military campaigns in which, like Gelon, Dionysius (father and son) was an eager and prominent participant.⁴⁷ His vigorous policy of Syracusan expansion brought an inevitable conflict with Carthage. An invasion force led by Hamilkar was despatched to Sicily (Diod. 19.106.2). Thereafter, in a sequence of events that recall the military situation in 406 and 397, which Dionysius had been able to exploit to further his own career, Agathokles almost came to disaster. Hostilities were already evident in 312 when a Carthaginian fleet of light vessels

⁴⁶ Himilkon subsequently committed suicide.

⁴⁷ Dionysius and Agathokles were regarded in antiquity as ‘men of action’, Pol. 15.35.6; Freeman: 1894, 4.384, who also notes Polybius’ comment that although Agathokles’ rise to power was violent, his rule afterwards was less so. Diodorus’ evidence, 20.71.1–5, of such episodes as the massacre at Segesta, seems at odds with this ancient opinion.

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of eighty triremes (14.72.1) attacked the enemy stockade in the Great Harbour (14.72.4). Some ships were clearly not beached since these were rammed athwart or broadsides by the Syracusans. The Syracusan ships came rapidly inshore from the east, ramming the sides of the Carthaginian ships and then reversed back into the bay only to move forward again. This was a deadly if difficult exercise for so many triremes making the intricate manoeuvre alongside one another.⁴⁵

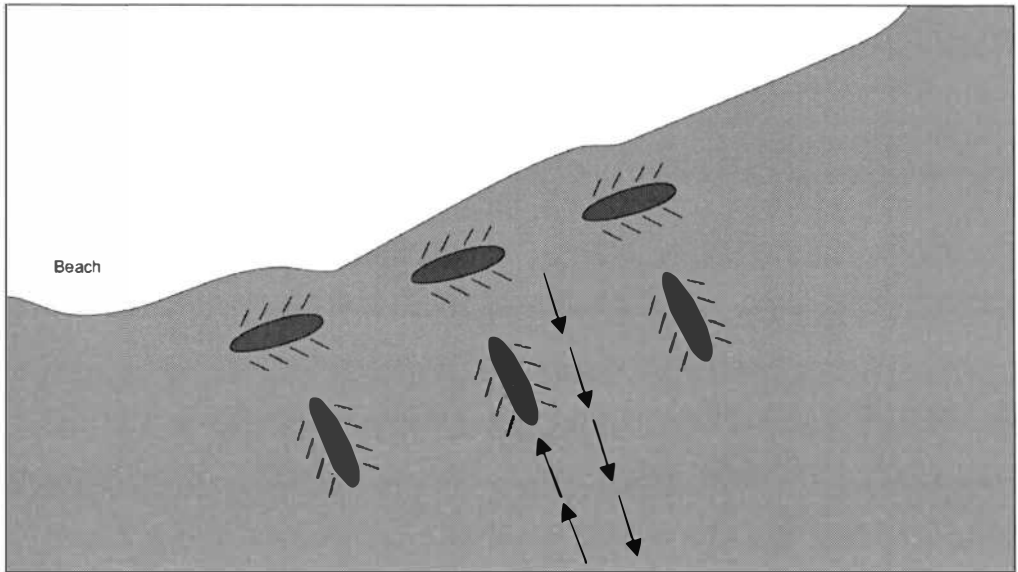


Figure 28: The Ramming Manoeuvre

While this was taking place at the camp of the besiegers, Dionysius led another detachment probably to the southern end of Daskon, beyond the fort which had been captured, where there were forty fifty-oared ships beached, and some merchant ships and triremes at anchor (14.73.2). The ships on the beach were all fired and since a strong wind had blown up, the fire spread to the ships at anchor. The crews jumped into the choppy waters, while the ships – many of whose anchor cables had burned through – struck others in the chaos, which Diodorus (14.73.5) describes vividly:

Immediately, as the flames swept up through the sails of the merchantmen and enveloped the yard-arms the sight was like a scene from the theatre to the citizens of Syracuse, and the destruction of the barbarians looked like that of men struck by lightning from the heavens for their sacrilegious behaviour.

⁴⁵ The Great Harbour at Lysimeleia, CD nos. 532, 557, 654; *Video Clip: Great Harbour*.

began to turn against the attackers. Dionysius launched counter strikes at night to confuse and agitate his enemy, but the greatest threat came from the marsh of Lysimeleia.

After the Carthaginians had seized the *proasteion*, and pillaged the temple of Demeter and Kore, a plague struck the army. (14.70.4)⁴⁴

Besides the anger of the gods Diodorus notes (14.70.4) that

... thousands of people were gathered together, that it was the time of the year which is most conducive to infections, and that that particular summer had brought unusually hot temperatures. It also appears as if the place itself was responsible for the great extent of the disaster, because once before the Athenians who had also made their camp here had died in great numbers from the disease since the ground is marshy and in a depression. First before the sun rises because of the cold from the breezes over the water the body is struck with chills, but by the middle of the day the heat is stifling, as must be the case when so many people are gathered together in so narrow a space.

Malaria was, until fairly recently, the prevalent disease of any low-lying land in southern Italy or Sicily, and with a ten-day to a fortnight incubation period in a siege, which certainly occupied at the least two months in midsummer, it would begin to account for a number of deaths. Besides the malarial mosquitoes which lived in the marsh, the unhealthy nature of the land, and the numbers involved (although probably considerably fewer than that claimed by Diodorus) would have produced cholera and typhoid – both major and rapid killers when sanitation standards are low. The following is therefore hardly surprising:

At first they buried their dead, but later on both because of the huge number of dead bodies and because those tending the sick came down with the disease, nobody dared to come near the sick. In fact the disease struck down all those who watched the sick, and thus the condition of those with the illness was miserable since no one was willing to nurse the unfortunate. (14.71.1–4)

In such circumstances the outcome could hardly have been in doubt; Dionysius took full advantage of the situation in the Carthaginian camp. He cannot, however, have acted as Diodorus claims (14.72.1) only when he heard of the raging epidemic, but must have waited for the disease or rather various diseases to take their course to a point where the morale and fitness of the enemy was at a low point. Then the counter attack was launched with great vigour. Syracusan land forces were moved overnight when there was no moon, which suggests some planning, and passed the temple of Ciane (cf. Diod. 5.4.1–2) and stationed on the landward side of the Carthaginian camp, along the bend on the north bank of the Anapos river. At daybreak he attacked the camp and the forts around the bay, taking those at Polichne and Daskon – which indicates that some of his divisions had crossed the Anapos. While this action was taking place a Syracusan fleet

⁴⁴ Akradina is presumably the suburb meant here, the centre of the city being the acropolis on Ortygia.

Diodorus is more concerned with the declining fortunes of Himilkon than he is with the more important information contained in this passage. How was Himilkon able to enter and apparently hold a large section of the city, which probably included the area around the agora directly in front of the mole to Ortygia? Diodorus has missed some vital episodes in this account, for we are not told about the Carthaginian siege machines which would have been needed to effect an entry through the walls at the Great Harbour. This was presumably where Himilkon's troops managed to break through, but without siege machinery the only way in was by treachery. However, Diodorus' reference to cutting down trees (14.62.5) perhaps indicates the construction of scaling ladders, palisades and other paraphernalia for launching an attack.

Dionysius had been responsible for replacing much of the city's fortification system only recently, and it is possible that, as with Messene a short time before, the walls were not in a good state (14.56.4) or had yet to be completed.⁴³ A weak point along this lower section of the walls would have made Akradina vulnerable, especially as it seems to have been the case that Dionysius had concentrated on fortifying Ortygia, to the neglect of the landward side of the city. Still, Diodorus missed the opportunity to relate a dramatic event, which must have involved either a high mortality rate among the Syracusans or a mass and hurried evacuation into the acropolis. Instead, the historian relates the capture of a Carthaginian ship by the Syracusans while Dionysius was absent from the city. The Carthaginians responded by putting forty ships to sea but, of these, twenty-five were destroyed or captured. This unexpected victory caused the Syracusans to debate the restoration of the democracy, but this came to nothing since Dionysius arrived back, and was supported not only by his mercenaries but also by the Spartan Pharakidas, who had recently sailed from the Peloponnese bringing thirty triremes (14.64.1–70). The lengthy speech of the Syracusan Theodoros in support of a democracy (14.65–70) disrupts the account of the siege and leaves much to conjecture.

Himilkon had walled his camp (14.63.3) and while it is not unlikely that sufficient remains of the Athenian stockade remained to be reused or at least supplemented, the emphasis here is on the use of stone. The stone came from tombs, which must have lined the road to Eloros just outside the city walls (and these included the tombs of Gelon and Demarete). Like the robbery of the temples in Akradina, this is presumably meant to illustrate the impiety of the Carthaginian whom the gods then punished with failure. It seems that these had been left untouched by the Athenians, who of course were led by the superstitious and religious Nikias, although his piety had not saved his expedition. However, Himilkon's tactics were far from unrealistic with forts constructed at Polichne, Daskon and Plemmyrion to strengthen his hold on the harbour and the transportation of supplies to his camp by sea. Nonetheless, once the anger of the gods had been invoked – although there is no suggestion that the *Olympieion* was a target of plunder – everything

⁴³ The walls of Dionysius above Akradina, CD nos. 648–50.

The Carthaginian forces moved south as far as the harbour at Naxos,⁴¹ but because of a recent eruption by Etna that had brought lava as far as the coast (14.59.3), the direct land route to Katane was no longer available. Himilkon's infantry was forced to go inland around the volcano, while the fleet continued its move south. When Dionysius realised that the invaders had been obliged to divide their forces he quickly moved up-country with a view to engaging the Carthaginians at sea. By stationing his own infantry along the shore he hoped to intimidate his enemy and put them at a disadvantage by having no safe place of refuge. Leptines led a squadron of thirty ships against the Carthaginians with initial success, but the sheer number of enemy triremes eventually overwhelmed the entire Syracusan fleet, which was scattered with the loss of about a hundred vessels (Diod. 14.60.5). The infantry on the foreshore looked on as the survivors were picked off by Carthaginians in smaller boats, which had been placed between the main battle area and the beach. Twenty thousand Sicilian Greeks were killed in what appears to have been a well-made trap, and the way to Katane lay open as Dionysius pulled his army back to Syracuse. The Carthaginian army arrived in Katane two days later.

Dionysius cast around for allies and mercenaries but it seems that within a matter of days Himilkon led his fleet into the Great Harbour, while the army seems to have skirted Epipolai to join the ships at their anchorage. Although Diodorus' text is corrupt here (14.62.2) it looks probable that the Carthaginian army was larger than the Athenian force of 415. But would the Carthaginians fall into the same trap as the Athenians? The simple answer seems to be yes!

Himilkon, the commander of the army, set up his camp in the precinct of the temple of Zeus while the rest of the army camped in the vicinity, about twelve stades from the city. (14.62.3)

The position of the *Olympieion* on the higher ground at Polichne is ideal as a headquarters for a besieging force outside Syracuse, since it not only commands the road to Eloros but also provides a good view over the entire bay and the island.⁴² The temple of Zeus is also a mere three kilometres from the city's agora (the primary objective of the Carthaginian army, which had encamped in the marsh of Lysimeleia, between the estuary of the Anapos and the city walls). In this area Diodorus claims that over 300 000 men were accommodated. And this was the height of the summer.

Since the Syracusans, understandably, did not leave the city to face their opponents in battle, the enemy plundered and devastated the neighbourhood for a full month. Diodorus then states the following:

Himilkon seized the quarter of Akradina and robbed the temples (one or two cf. 14.70.4) of Demeter and Kore and for these impious acts against the gods he soon suffered a suitable penalty. (14.63.1)

⁴¹ The harbour at Naxos, CD nos. 451–52.

⁴² View from Polichne, CD nos. 293–295, 300.