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WARFARE IN THE SICILIAN HISTORIOGRAPHICAL TRADITION*

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Traditionally, in both antiquity and modern scholarship, the historiography of ancient Sicily has been considered apart from that of the Greek mainland,[1] and where any direct influence has been recognised, it has generally been only from east to west.[2] The almost complete loss of Sicilian historical texts prior to Diodorus Siculus (whose narrative is heavily influenced by his contemporary context in Augustan Rome) further complicates the situation.[3] Nevertheless, the complex and tumultuous history of Sicily provides a critical object lesson in the process through which the narrative of warfare became polarised in the histo-riographical tradition.[4] As dynastic autocrats branded their territorial expansion as a defence against external enemies, upon their expulsion these same campaigns were rebranded as imperialistic and tyrannical by their successors as a means of legitimising the transfer of power. A parallel polarity can be seen in the Sicilian historiographic tradition's fraught dialogue with the mainland historiographic tradition on the construction of Greek identity

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[1] The extant 'fragments' (or, more properly, citations of lost works by later writers) from the historiographic tradition of ancient Sicily can be found in Jacoby, *FGrHist*, nos. 554–77; translations and commentaries can now be found in *Brill's New Jacoby*, and I shall henceforth cite them under their *BNJ* reference.

[2] E.g., the Sicilian historian Philistus' alleged 'plagiarism' from Thucydides: *BNJ* 556 T 14 and F 51. But the fragments extant from Philistus' narrative of the Peloponnesian War reveal in fact some significant differences from Thucydides, and provide a useful comple-mentary viewpoint of the disastrous Athenian expedition from a Sicilian perspective; cf. *BNJ* 556 FF 51–6 with commentary by Pownall (2013) *ad loc*. For criticism of the compart-mentalisation of the western Mediterranean in recent studies of the Hellenistic world, see Dench (2003) and the essays in Prag–Quinn (2013); the same tendency is present also in scholarship on earlier periods of Greek history.

[3] On the impact of Diodorus' first-century Roman context on his history, see esp. Muntz (2017) and Sacks (2018).

[4] On the particularly rampant role of warfare, even by the standards of ancient Greece, in the history of Sicily, see the introduction to a recent collection of essays on this topic, Jonasch (2020) 12: 'Ancient Sicily is, in fact, ideally suited for the study of the impact of collective aggression on people and their living space since it was a popular theatre of conflict throughout large parts of its history'; cf. Funke (2006).

through warfare. On the one hand, Sicilian historians challenged the mainland narrative of wars against external foes to make the achievements of the western Greeks more impressive, but on the other hand they were also willing to dip into the repertoire of traditional historiographical *topoi* on tyrants when it suited their political and ideological agendas. The shaping of the narrative of warfare is not a phenomenon limited to modern dictators and warlords, but represents a constant since antiquity, and the ways in which the ancient Sicilian historians portrayed the role of military campaigns in the rise (and fall) of autocratic rulers offer an especially useful comparandum to recent and current events in our contemporary world, as are discussed, for example, in Stoyan Panov's contribution to this volume.

Sicily's fertile agricultural land and abundant natural resources made it an attractive target for exploitation by the mainland Greeks and the Phoenicians/Carthaginians as early as the 8th c. BCE. As the Greek cities established a presence on southern and eastern coasts and inexorably expanded their territories, the indigenous (or, perhaps more precisely, pre-Greek/pre-Punic) populations in the interior were gradually conquered and assimilated. This process of assimilation, however, did not diminish the economic and political frictions that developed between the various ethnic groups co-existing in Sicily, exacerbated by the fact that many of the Greek *poleis* were controlled by a narrow and tenacious aristocratic elite, whose opponents could exploit the simmering resentment not only of the unenfranchised masses but also of the large proportion of immigrant and non-Greek residents.[5] The ensuing outbreaks of violent civil war (*stasis*) frequently led to inter-city disputes, as individual *poleis* attempted to expand their territory at the expense of their neighbors in periods of weakness. The turbulent social and political conditions left the Greek cities in Sicily open to aggression from outside powers, both their 'sister cities' on the mainland and the aggressively expanding Carthaginians and Etruscans, to whom their geographical proximity left them vulnerable. The ever-present threat of outside invasion (whether real or perceived) offered the opportunity for ambitious individuals to exploit the ongoing tension between *demos* and elite to assert themselves at the expense of their peers and gain absolute control of their home *polis* to rule autocratically.

The emergence of these dynastic autocracies contributed greatly towards the continuing political and military instability of Sicily. Although the autocratic rulers did to some extent reach a *modus vivendi* with one another through intermarriage and the deliberate cultivation of support from their counterparts that they could tap into during times of domestic crisis, they

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[5] On the emergence of elites in archaic Sicily and the tensions this process engendered, see Shepherd (2015) esp. 370–2; cf. Asheri (1988) 753–4. Thucydides (6.38.3) puts the following statement in the mouth of the Syracusan demagogue Athenagoras: 'Our city is seldom at peace, and is subject to frequent episodes of civil strife and struggles more against ourselves than against external foes'.

also engaged in competitive rivalries in laying the foundations of their hegemonies, and consolidating and extending their power by expanding their city's territory well beyond its traditional boundaries.[6] These grandiose and openly imperialistic ambitions required drastic and sometimes even brutal measures, including the annexation of vast territories, the destruction of entire cities, and large-scale transfers of population. Ironically, although they themselves were responsible for much of the perennial warfare that pervaded ancient Sicily, the autocratic rulers simultaneously profited from the opportunity that it offered to frame their seizure of absolute power and its maintenance through aggressive military expansion as the defence of their home *polis* against either internal uprisings of subjugated elements of their populations or external threats posed by rival Greeks, the non-Greek inhabitants of Sicily, or foreign enemies. In this way, military necessity could readily be used as a pretext to justify rapid territorial expansion, and not surprisingly the malleable role of warfare in the self-promotion of successive autocratic regimes had a profound effect on the development of the nascent historiographical tradition.

Right from the very beginning, elements of the Sicilian autocrats' efforts to justify their appropriation of land, especially from non-Greek populations, can be discerned in the 'Archaeologies' extant from the historiographical tradition. The earliest Sicilian historian, Antiochus of Syracuse, situates the early history of Sicily into a western Greek axis (probably in the wake of 'pan-Sicilian' rhetoric after the conference at Gela in 424),[7] which effectively wrote out the island's non-Greek inhabitants.[8] Antiochus presented the island's earliest history as a series of migrations and expulsions (i.e., emphasising Greek foundations),[9] involving southeastern Italy in particular (*BNJ* 555 FF 8–13), a region that was the original homeland of the Sicels (*BNJ* 555 F 4) but under Gelon had largely been annexed by Syracuse.[10] It seems that Antiochus may have been following a Deinomenid agenda which denied appeals to autochthony by the pre-Greek/pre-Punic peoples of Sicily in order to justify the policy of large-scale resettlement and displacement of populations adopted by Gelon and his successors to extend their territory and consolidate their control;[11] Herodotus, on the hand, is far more critical

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[6] So Vattuone (2007) 196: 'Creating a territorial state centered upon a hegemonic *polis* was a necessity from the age of the Deinomenids all the way down to Agathocles and beyond. This necessity set the political history of the Greeks of Sicily apart from that of mainland Greece'.

[7] So Luraghi (2002) 76–7 and id. (2013) Biographical Essay; Vattuone (2007) 191.

[8] Moggi (2019) esp. 36.

[9] Cf. Pearson (1987) 12.

[10] On Gelon, see Asheri (1988) 766–80; Luraghi (1994) 273–328; Evans (2016) 19–46.

[11] Although large-scale forced migrations had been a policy of the earlier Sicilian autocrats (e.g., Thuc. 6.5.3), the Deinomenids took this policy to a whole new level: Lomas (2006).

of Gelon's policy of mass migrations, concluding that they constituted evidence of his great tyranny.[12] Antiochus does, however, seem to accept the claim of autochthony of the Sicans,[13] who were located to the west of the central plain and were therefore geographically removed from the direct control of Syracuse, and so the Deinomenids had no reason in their case to deny it.

Antiochus' successor in the Sicilian historiographical tradition, Philistus of Syracuse, who was closely associated with the court of the Dionysii,[14] reconfigured the early history of the island in order to bring it in line with Dionysius I's legitimisation of his massive territorial expansion.[15] Dionysius not only continued the successful Deinomenid policy of mass migrations to unify his subjects and extend his empire,[16] but also demonstrably (as we shall see below) engaged in a polemical relationship of rivalry with his illustrious predecessor, and reflections of his desire to surpass Gelon's achievements are reflected in the historiographical tradition. Philistus denied the autochthony of the Sicans (*BNJ* 556 F 45), which was accepted by the Deinomenids, as well as the Sicels (*BNJ* 556 F 46), claiming that both peoples were immigrants from elsewhere. This allegation serves to justify Dionysius' domestic military campaigns by alleging that he was not removing these populations from their ancestral homes, but merely occupying land that they themselves had seized from others.

Timaeus of Tauromenium, who succeeded Philistus in the Sicilian historiographical tradition, was hostile both to Philistus (possibly because of his favorable portrayal of the Dionysii) and also to the current autocratic ruler at Syracuse, Agathocles.[17] Timaeus' emphasis in his own 'Archaeology' is on the remote past, showcasing the associations of Greek gods and heroes with Sicily and the Greek West in the legendary period in order to establish a claim to these territories in the present.[18] In other words, Timaeus asserts that the non-Greek settlements in Sicily and the west were Hellenised and therefore civilised in the legendary period, an assertion that presumably arises from the blanket justification for the expansion of the Greek cities of

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[12] Hdt. 7.156.3: τοιούτῳ μὲν τρόπῳ τύραννος ἐγεγόνεε μέγας ὁ Γέλων ('in this way, Gelon had become a great tyrant').

[13] *BNJ* 555 T 3; cf. Thuc. 6.2.2 with Hornblower (2008) 267.

[14] On Philistus' Dionysian agenda, see Sordi (1990); Bearzot (2002), esp. 114–19; Pownall (2017b).

[15] On Dionysius I, see Caven (1990); Evans (2016) 152–69; Roisman (2017) 227–73.

[16] Harris (2018).

[17] On Timaeus' polemic against Philistus, see Pownall (2017a) 65; cf. Baron (2013) 258. On Timaeus' hostility to Agathocles, see Baron (2013) 18–20 and 61–2.

[18] Vattuone (2007) 197: 'Unlike Antiochus, Timaeus' 'Archaeology' was organized around a remote past when Greek heroes came into contact with the indigenous populations, creating a precedent that legitimized the appropriation of the land in the colonial phase centuries later'. Cf. Pearson (1987) 59.

Sicily into the indigenous interior (possibly reflecting the spin put on their territorial acquisitions by successive dynasties), but removes from individual rulers the specific grounds legitimising their imperialism. Thus, the appeal to the legendary past offered one avenue for the Sicilian autocrats to legitimise their territorial conquests, especially of non-Greek cities, and it was mirrored and retooled in the historiographical tradition in service to differing agendas.

As the territorial expansion of the Sicilian autocrats brought them to the borders of areas of Carthaginian influence, a new and particularly effective means of justification presented itself, namely the protection of the freedom of the Greeks against a foreign foe. Based on the widespread employment of liberation rhetoric in the later historiographical tradition, it is easy to fall into the trap of assuming that relations between the Greek cities in Sicily and Carthage had always been hostile. Nevertheless, prior to the fifth century, conflict between the Carthaginians and Greeks in Sicily appears to have been sporadic and isolated, and in fact most of the recorded military engagements involved rivalries of Greek cities, occasionally drawing in the Carthaginians as allies on one side or the other.[19] Even after the Battle of Himera in 480, when Gelon, the Deinomenid ruler of Syracuse, and Theron, the Emmenid ruler of Acragas, inflicted a decisive defeat upon Hamilcar and the Carthaginian navy, liberation rhetoric did not develop immediately. Instead, it made its first extant appearance in connection with the defeat of the Etruscans at Cumae in 474 by Gelon's brother and successor Hieron. Hieron's own military victory against a foreign foe offered him the perfect opportunity not only to outdo Gelon's victory over the Carthaginians at Himera, but to solidify his position as an appropriate successor, whose military success was equal to that of his brother.[20] In an epinician ode commissioned from Pindar (*Pyth.* 1.72–80), Hieron's defeat of the Etruscans at Cumae is telescoped into Gelon's victory over the Carthaginians at Himera, both attributed without differentiation to the ruler of the Syracusans (Συρακοσίων ἀρχῷ), effectively allowing Hieron to appropriate his brother's triumph.

The importance of Hieron's choice of epinician poetry to advertise his defeat of the Etruscans cannot be overstated. The ability of Sicilian autocrats to respond to situations that they could spin as emergencies and 'save' their fellow citizens from real or perceived threats was entirely predicated on their reputations as military leaders (or 'warlords'),[21] which they were careful to emphasise. This was a trend by no means unique to Sicily, for autocratic

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[19] Asheri (1988) 748–53; cf. Hornblower (2011) 52–3.

[20] On Hieron's appropriation of Gelon's victory, see Pownall (forthcoming); cf. Harrell (2002) and (2006); Prag (2010) 55–7.

[21] Cf. the titles of Caven's book (1990) and Rawlings' article (2018).

rulers in Archaic Greece similarly capitalised on their military accomplish-
ments to seize or maintain power,[22] and the Deinomenids were no exception
in adopting epinician poetry, which focused on agonistic success in order to
showcase the ruler's victorious nature, as the vehicle of choice for self-
promotion. But for Hieron, epinician odes offered a particularly attractive
venue for his self-fashioning as an extraordinarily successful military leader
precisely because they reached a panhellenic audience,[23] and in this way
aligned with his dedications commemorating his victory over the Etruscans
at the great panhellenic sanctuaries of Delphi and Olympia.[24]

Pindar's *First Pythian* also reveals that Hieron explicitly framed his victory
at Cumae as a panhellenic triumph over a barbarian enemy, where the
Deinomenid victories of Gelon and Hieron over the Carthaginians and
Etruscans are equated with the illustrious defeats of the Persians at Salamis
and Plataea by the mainland Greeks. Furthermore, Pindar's Hieron claims
(*Pyth.* 1.75) also to have 'rescued Hellas from oppressive slavery' (Ἑλλάδ'
ἐξέλκων βαρείας δουλίας). Hieron's positioning of himself as a liberator of the
Greeks against a threatening barbarian enemy served not just to legitimise
his rule within Sicily, but also as a means of self-promotion on the larger
Hellenic stage. By explicitly linking his victory over the Etruscans with those
of the mainland Greeks over the Persians in 480/79, Hieron attempted to
carve out a niche for the Deinomenids in the ongoing elaboration of the
narrative of Hellenic resistance to foreign invaders.[25] In other words,
Hieron's salvation of Sicily extends to the mainland, and he portrays himself
not only as the equal of the leaders of the eastern Greek *poleis* in liberating
the Greeks from the barbarians, but as in fact their superior as the one
responsible for their salvation.

Reflections of the continuing efforts of Hieron and his successors to
engage in a competitive dialogue with mainland Persian Wars discourse and
thereby to 'elbow their way into the top league of Hellenism',[26] can be
discerned in the Sicilian historiographical tradition. Although Herodotus
follows the mainland version which attributed Gelon's refusal to join in the
defence of Greece from Xerxes to his self-interest and insistence on his own
supreme command of the Greek forces in the place of the Spartans (esp.
7.163.1 and 165), he does allude to an alternative Sicilian motive (7.165),

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[22] E.g., Peisistratus of Athens (Hdt. 1.59.4) and Cypselus of Corinth (Nic. Dam. *BNJ* 90 F 57).

[23] So Mann (2013); cf. Morgan (2015) and Nicholson (2016).

[24] *SIG*³ 35 with B. 3.17–19; Osborne and Rhodes (2017) no. 101; cf. Harrell (2002).

[25] So Feeney (2007) 45: 'it is clear that the whole project of the poem is to claim that the Sicilian victories over *their* barbarians are as important and significant as the mainland Greeks' victory over *their* barbarians, part of a universal Hellenism defended by both West and East Greeks'. Cf. Harrell (2006) 130–33; Prag (2010) 58–9; Morgan (2015) esp. 133–62; Yates (2019) 105–9.

[26] So Feeney (2007) 45.

according to which a simultaneous Carthaginian invasion prevented Gelon from providing military assistance. Diodorus (11.1.4–5) elaborates upon the collusion of the Persians and Carthaginians in order to illustrate how Gelon was threatened with a foreign invasion of equal magnitude as Xerxes' invasion of Greece.[27] This is clearly a patriotic Sicilian version intended not only to exculpate Gelon for his inability to join the war effort against Xerxes, but also to highlight his defence of the Greek West from a foreign foe portrayed as no less terrifying as Xerxes and his forces. The question of Diodorus' sources remains controversial and it can no longer be assumed that for the fifth century he is copying uncritically large chunks of the fourth-century universal historian Ephorus of Cyme. Nevertheless Ephorus is generally considered to be an important source for Diodorus' narrative of the Persian Wars, particularly in his attention to events in the Greek West.[28] Ephorus (*BNJ* 70 F 186) claims that ambassadors from the Persians and Phoenicians 'ordered' (προστάσσοντας) the Carthaginians to send a massive expedition to Sicily to coincide with Xerxes' invasion of Greece. Ephorus (or, more likely, his source) expands upon the tradition of a coordinated Persian-Carthaginian expedition launched against both mainland Greece and Sicily, and creates a further parallel with the addition of an embassy to the Carthaginians to mirror that of the Greeks to Gelon. The elaboration of this tradition of a joint Persian-Carthaginian embassy in Diodorus' narrative (it does not appear in Herodotus) suggests that Ephorus is indeed his source for this detail.[29]

Herodotus' narrative does reflect, however, that the process of creating parallels between the mainland Greeks' repulsion of Xerxes' forces and the Sicilian Greeks' defeat of the Carthaginians began very early on. Herodotus observes (7.166) that Gelon and Theron of Acragas defeated the Carthaginians at Himera on the very same day as the Greek victory over Xerxes at Salamis,[30] a synchronism emanating from the Sicilian histori-ographical tradition that reinforces the Western Greeks' role as equals in the defence of Hellas from barbarian invaders. Diodorus (11.24.1) takes this synchronism one step further by stating that Gelon's victory at Himera occurred on the very same day as Leonidas' defeat at Thermopylae. This additional manipulation of the synchronism enables the Sicilian Greeks not only to rival the role of their mainland brethren in fighting off the barbarian invaders, but actually to surpass it, for the backdating of Himera to the day of Thermopylae (a loss) rather than Salamis (a victory) results in the

[27] On Diodorus' positive portrayal of Gelon, see Sulimani (2018).

[28] See, e.g., Green (2006) 24–38; Parmeggiani (2011); and Parmeggiani (2013–14). But cf. Parker (2011) Biographical Essay, Section F and Parker (2018), who adheres to the traditional orthodoxy.

[29] Cf. Prag (2010) 58–8 (with earlier bibliography).

[30] Aristotle (*Pol.* 1459a24–6) also mentions this synchronism, although he rejects the Sicilian version of events, stating that the simultaneity was merely a coincidence.

superiority of Gelon's achievement. This reworking of the original synchronism is generally attributed to Timaeus, who was notoriously fond of such temporal devices especially in contexts linking east and west,[31] but it could equally well have come from another source (such as Ephorus, who was probably dependent upon a Sicilian source), and may even derive ultimately from Hieron's own aggrandising propaganda.

Hieron's appropriation of the defeat of the Carthaginians at Himera and his retrojection of the element of panhellenic salvation onto Gelon's victory, themes that are emphasised in Pindar's *First Pythian*, can be discerned also in the Sicilian historiographical tradition. Ephorus (*BNJ* 70 F 186) states explicitly that Gelon 'fought for the freedom not just of the Sicilian Greeks, but for all of Greece' (διαμαχησάμενον μὴ μόνον τοὺς Σικελιώτας ἐλευθερῶσαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ σύμπασαν τὴν Ἑλλάδα). Significantly, the 'cover text' for this citation is a scholiast to Pindar's *First Pythian* (Σ *Pyth.* 1.146b), which suggests that Ephorus is repeating Hieron's own propaganda, especially in light of the similarity of the panhellenic motivation attributed to the Deinomenids in both passages. Ephorus' apparently gratuitous reference to Hieron as being 'very eager to fight alongside the Greeks' (τοῦ μὲν Ἱέρωνος συμμαχῆσαι τοῖς Ἕλλησι προθυμουμένου) in the context of the Greek embassy to Gelon and the simultaneous Persian/Phoenician embassy to the Carthaginians confirms the hypothesis that Ephorus' ultimate source for this statement was the Sicilian historiographical tradition, as Herodotus does not mention Hieron in this connection. Although modern commentators believe that the scholiast is simply confused in his apparently anachronistic reference to Hieron,[32] another scholiast on the same passage (Σ *Pyth.* 1.146a) also highlights Hieron's role prior to Xexes' invasion (without attributing it to Ephorus) and as we have seen Hieron himself was keen to appropriate Gelon's victory and rebrand it is a panhellenic one. Similarly, the implication that the Deinomenids surpassed the mainland *poleis* in the salvation of Greece from foreign invaders lies behind the statement of Diodorus (11.23.3) that whereas Themistocles and Pausanias met ignominious ends, Gelon by contrast 'grew old in his kingship' (ἐγγηρᾶσαι τῇ βασιλείᾳ) and continued to enjoy high esteem from his fellow citizens. Thus the Sicilian historio-graphical tradition was instrumental in transmitting Hieron's panhellenic rhetoric as proof that the Western Greeks not just equalled, but in fact surpassed the mainland Greeks in the Persian Wars narrative, the memory of which continued to resonate strongly.[33]

The Sicilian autocrats seem to have quickly realised that panhellenic rhetoric and liberation propaganda could be employed closer to home as

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[31] So, e.g., Feeney (2007) 50–1 and Baron (2013) 110–11.

[32] Parker (2011) *ad BNJ* 70 F 186; Jacoby (*ad loc.*) suggests emending Hieron's name to Gelon.

[33] See, e.g., the essays contained in Bridges–Hall–Rhodes (2007) and Yates (2019).

well. Playing on the fears of barbarian invasion offered a particularly effective method of legitimising military campaigns that might otherwise be considered at worst imperialistic and at best opportunistic, as can be seen most explicitly in the case of Dionysius I.[34] Diodorus gives a lengthy and vivid description of how Dionysius took advantage of the panic at Syracuse engendered by the Carthaginian siege and destruction of Acragas in 405 by accusing the existing generals of failing to prosecute the ongoing war against the Carthaginians with sufficient vigour, thereby gaining the trust of the *demos* and manipulating them into appointing him *stratēgos autokrator*, giving him the military backing to seize sole power (D.S. 13.91–96). Diodorus' source for Dionysius' use of liberation rhetoric to justify his coup at Syracuse is almost certainly Philistus,[35] who was personally involved in Dionysius' rise to power (*BNJ* 556 T 3) and was (as noted above) more than willing to circulate his propaganda, effectively taking over the role as court historian and spin doctor that epinician poets like Pindar and Bacchylides had played for the Deinomenids (and other contemporary autocratic rulers). Following his successful coup, Dionysius proceeded to extend his self-proclaimed role as the guardian of Greek freedom against the Carthaginian menace to justify his consolidation of Sicily. As Diodorus remarks: 'When it seemed to him that he had secured his tyranny well, he led out his forces against the Sicels, eager to get under his power all the independent peoples, and especially these people because they had previously allied with the Carthaginians'.[36] This invocation of a Carthaginian alliance to justify Dionysius' territorial expansion originates with his own propaganda, as circulated by Philistus. Notably, Philistus is our only source for the attribution of Ligurian ethnicity to the Sicels (*BNJ* 556 F 46). Because the Ligurians dwelt in what later became Etruscan territory, this claim appears to reflect propaganda intended to justify Dionysius' campaigns in Italy against the Etruscans, who enjoyed friendly relations with the Carthaginians.[37] Similarly, Philistus (*BNJ* 556 F 45) claims that the Sicans were originally Iberians (i.e., allies of the Carthaginians), which suggests the motivation to deny their own tradition of autochthony (as discussed above) was to connect them to the Carthaginians and thereby legitimise Dionysius' campaigns against them. Dionysius continued to play on the fear of the Carthaginians and his role as liberator of the Greek cities to justify the extension of his military campaigns to South Italy (D.S. 14.44.3 and 45.4), and eventually his territorial acquisitions

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[34] See the detailed treatment in Pownall (2020) of Dionysius' effective use of liberation propaganda, which ultimately served as a model for Alexander the Great.

[35] D.S. 13.91.4 and 13.103.4; cf. Sanders (1987) 110–57.

[36] D.S. 14.7.5: ἐπεὶ δὲ τὰ κατὰ τὴν τυραννίδα καλῶς ἐδόκει διῳκηκέναι, τὴν δύναμιν ἐξή-γαγεν ἐπὶ τοὺς Σικελούς, πάντας μὲν σπεύδων τοὺς αὐτονόμους ὑφ' ἑαυτὸν ποιήσασθαι, μάλιστα δὲ τούτους διὰ τὸ συμμαχῆσαι πρότερον Καρχηδονίοις.

[37] Vanotti (1993); Bearzot (2002) 104–7; Pownall (2013) *ad BNJ* 556 F 46.

overseas along the Adriatic and Tyrrhenian coasts.[38] Agathocles later employed similar kinds of panhellenic discourse in reference to his campaigns against Carthage in North Africa,[39] although in the changed political circumstances of his own day the rivalry in defeating the barbarians was directed towards the Macedonian Successors instead of the Greeks of the mainland (cf. D.S. 21.2.2).

The Sicilian historians not only brought their own war narratives in line with mainland historiography in the portrayal of campaigns against the Carthaginians and Etruscans and their allies as motivated by the desire to liberate their fellow Greeks from the barbarians, but also in their deliberate employment of the *topoi* prominent in the mainland discourse on tyranny. From the very beginning, a strong polarity can be discerned in the historiographical tradition. On the one hand, the extant historical accounts reflect the self-promotion of the autocrats themselves, for whom warfare offered the opportunity to portray their assumption of sole rule as the quashing of threats to their fellow elites from the *demos* or, more generally, as responding as military leaders to situations that they could spin as emergencies requiring them to assume extraordinary powers. On the other hand, it soon became commonplace for new dynastic autocracies to denigrate the previous rulers as stereotypical tyrants in order to legitimate their own seizure of power, a tendency that is also reflected in the historiographical tradition. In this vein, it is important to note that although modern scholarship generally refers to the autocratic rulers of ancient Sicily as 'tyrants', the application to them of this loaded term with the negative connotations of oppression, wanton cruelty, and arbitrary abuse of power that it acquired, especially in the wake of the Persian Wars,[40] is almost certainly due to the later hostile tradition. In other words, the so-called tyrants in Sicily did not use this term in reference to themselves (although they may well have done so in reference to their predecessors),[41] but instead tended to emphasise the legitimate basis of their rule and to portray

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[38] Pownall (2020) 203–4. Cf. Davies (1993) 203–7: Dionysius' flurry of apparently arbitrary imperialistic activity is motivated by his wars against Carthage, which required him to move mass populations to Syracuse in order to be able to man his massive fleet, to eliminate power centres on the northeast coast to deprive invaders of a base to attack Syracuse, to control the straits of Messina to prevent a naval attack on Syracuse, and to extend his imperial control far up the coast of Italy in order to obtain the resources to maintain his fleet.

[39] See Prag (2010) 65–6 (with earlier bibliography).

[40] On the seismic semantic shift of the term after the Persian Wars, see esp. Anderson (2005); Lewis (2009); Mitchell (2013); Luraghi (2018). Anderson's suggestion ((2005) 173–4) that the title of 'tyrant' no longer be applied to the elite rulers of Archaic Greece should be extended to the autocrats of ancient Sicily.

[41] On the negative framing of the Sicilian autocrats in the later tradition through the application of the term 'tyrant' (and all that implies), see Lévy (1996) and Bearzot (2018).

themselves as the defenders of their people (according to what can be discerned from their own self-fashioning, at least).

The tendency to discredit the rise to power of Sicilian autocrats through military prowess as can be seen as early as the negative portrayal in the subsequent historiographic tradition of Phalaris of Acragas, a shadowy figure who created the first true hegemonial power in Sicily in the first half of the sixth century.[42] According to Aristotle (*Pol.* 5, 1310b29–30), he gained autocratic power through the holding of civic offices,[43] and possibly through the appointment to an extraordinary military command as well. Aristotle (*Rh.* 2, 1393b10–2) narrates a colourful fable to illustrate how Phalaris gained control of Himera by deceiving its population into appointing him *stratēgos autokrator* and providing him with a bodyguard with which he seized power (just like the Herodotean Peisistratus at 1.159.4–6). While Phalaris may well have gained power through an extraordinary military appointment (as many autocratic rulers did), his appointment (whether deceptive or not) as *stratēgos autokrator* as well as the extension of his power to Himera are anachronistic elements, which suggests that this (hostile) tradition was appropriated from mainland discourses on tyranny and slavery and applied to Phalaris as part of a subsequent hostile tradition.[44] For what it is worth, the protagonist in another version (Conon, *BNJ* 26 F 1.42) of the same dramatic anecdote is Gelon, an identification probably first made by Philistus (cf. *BNJ* 556 F 6), as I have argued elsewhere,[45] as a way of undermining the reputation of Dionysius I's illustrious predecessor in order to reserve for him the honour of being the true saviour of the Sicilian Greeks from the Carthaginian menace.

A parallel account of Phalaris' use of a deceptive ruse to seize power occurs in Polyaenus (5.1). In this version, Phalaris hired a work crew to construct the temple of Zeus Polieus, and then under the pretense of the theft of his construction materials he gained permission to fortify the citadel. As soon as he had possession of a fortified base, he proceeded to transform his workers into a mercenary army and seized control of the city during the festival of the Thesmophoria by massacring the men and enslaving the women and children. The use of deception to secure a bodyguard is a stereotypical *topos* of tyranny (as can be seen, for example, in Herodotus' vivid narrative of Peisistratus' rise to power at 1.59–64), as is Phalaris' seizure of power under cover of a religious festival (as in, for example, the infamous

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[42] On Phalaris, see Bianchetti (1987) and Luraghi (1994) 21–49.

[43] οἱ δὲ περὶ τὴν Ἰωνίαν καὶ Φάλαρις ἐκ τῶν τιμῶν ('the Ionian tyrants and Phalaris [gained their power] through civic offices').

[44] See Pownall (forthcoming).

[45] Pownall (forthcoming); *pace* Pownall (2017b) 69–71, where I suggested that, like Aristotle, Philistus identified the protagonist as Phalaris.

case of Cylon the Athenian at Thuc. 1.26.2),[46] the disarming of the population of Acragas (Polyaen. 5.2; cf. Plat. *Rep.* 569b and Arist. *Pol.* 1311a12–13), and his legendary cruelty, best represented by the notorious bronze bull in which he is alleged to have roasted his political enemies alive.[47] These memory sanctions levied against Phalaris, which obscured the constitutional basis of his rise to power and attributed to him all the stereotypical *topoi* of tyranny, are likely due to a smear campaign wielded relentlessly by the subsequent Emmenid dynasty at Acragas, intended to justify their own usurpation of power.[48] The Emmenids reinforced the transformation of Phalaris into a boilerplate tyrant through the claim that an ancestor of Theron assassinated him and thereby 'freed' the city (perhaps invoking the memory of the tyrannicides at Athens).[49]

These kinds of tyrannical *topoi*, imported from mainland discourses on tyranny, were fluid and malleable. Although the Emmenids tapped into the stereotypical anecdote of the tyrant's rise to power through a deceptive ruse whereby an acknowledged military commander invoked the need for personal protection (the precise details of which apparently varied), they themselves eventually in the later tradition fell victim to the very same tyrannical trope that they had levied against Phalaris. Polyaenus (6.51) narrates an anecdote according to which the Emmenid Theron was granted a sum of money for the construction at Acragas of a temple to Athena, but appropriated these funds to pay a bodyguard with which he seized power. As it seems, not only could these *topoi* of tyranny be employed by new dynasties to delegitimise their predecessors' justification of autocratic power based on the military ability to protect the people from either internal or external enemies, but the very same ones could also be shifted from one dynasty to another as the need for legitimation arose.

The repertoire of prophetic dreams and omens in the mainland discourse on tyranny could also be manipulated to assimilate the autocratic rulers in Sicily to their archetypal predecessors, as Sian Lewis has convincingly demonstrated.[50] As I am arguing, the same process is at work in reverse in the application of the negative *topoi* of tyranny by the subsequent hostile tradition. These prophetic dreams and omens were generally used to signal the birth of a great military leader, who would grow up to deliver his people from the threat of a powerful enemy. It was also a tradition, however, that such omens could be read ambiguously, and it is perhaps no surprise that

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[46] On the desire of autocratic rulers to increase their panhellenic power and prestige through their 'ownership' of festivals, see Lavelle (2014), esp. 317–9.

[47] The references to Phalaris' alleged bronze bull have been collected by Schepens (1978); see also Dudziński (2013).

[48] Luraghi (1994) 36–49.

[49] On the invention of the Emmenid ancestor who killed Phalaris, see Adornato (2012) 484 with n. 18.

[50] See the excellent discussion of Lewis (2000).

their original positive meanings were manipulated to shade into additional evidence of their despotism by subsequent dynasties, who justified their own rule with the claim that they were liberating their cities from the tyranny of their predecessors. This is almost certainly the case with the prophetic dream of the woman of Himera, who had a vision of Dionysius I as a 'destructive scourge of Sicily and Italy' chained beneath the throne of Zeus. This omen was interpreted negatively by the later historiographical tradition in service to the agenda of those who, like Timoleon, claimed to be saving Sicily from tyrants,[51] and it is in this polemical context that it was narrated by Timaeus (*BNJ* 566 F 29), who was hostile both to Dionysius and his mouthpiece Philistus.[52] Nevertheless, the existence of an alternative version (Val. Max. 1.7. ext. 6) strongly suggests that the omen was originally a positive one circulated by Philistus, who is our source for the cluster of portents surrounding the birth and rise to power of Dionysius marking out his future military role as divinely ordained.[53] The original version reflected Dionysius' own claim to be an avenging spirit of Sicily from the Carthaginians, which underpinned his rule from the very beginning. As we have seen, Dionysius invoked the threat of the Carthaginians to have himself proclaimed *stratēgos autokrator* and seize autocratic power in Syracuse in 405. On the strength of his ongoing military success, Dionysius eventually assumed the title of king,[54] probably in deliberate rivalry once again with the Deinomenids.[55] Nevertheless, he too is denigrated as a tyrant in the later historiographic tradition, not just through the normal delegitimising propaganda of his successors, but also through the powerful anti-tyrant discourse at Athens, sharpened in his case by the hostility of Plato and the Academy.[56]

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[51] On Timoleon's self-proclaimed role as liberator, see D.S. 16.90.1; Plut. *Tim.* 39.5; cf. Talbert (1974) and Prag (2010) 63–5. On Timoleon as an anomaly in the historiographical tradition as a stereotypical figure representing an idealised democratic tradition, see De Vido (2019), esp. 125–6.

[52] So Sordi (1984); cf. Lewis (2000) 100–1; Prag (2010) 63; Pownall (2019).

[53] *BNJ* 556 FF 57a and 58; for discussion of the significance of these portents in terms of Dionysius' own legitimisation and self-fashioning, see Pownall (2019); cf. Lewis (2000) 101.

[54] [Lys.] 6.6; Pol. 15.35.4; with Oost (1976) 232–6. On Dionysius' royal self-fashioning, see Duncan (2012); cf. Pownall (2017a) 27–8 and (2017b) 66–8. Perhaps because such a title would be unpalatable on the mainland, the Athenians refer to him in official inscriptions as archon of Sicily: *IG* II² 18.7 (Rhodes–Osborne, no. 10); *IG* II² 103.19–20 (Rhodes–Osborne, no. 33); *IG* II² 105.8 (Rhodes–Osborne, no. 34).

[55] The Athenian representative requesting Gelon's help against Persia addresses him as 'king' (Hdt. 7.161.1: ὦ βασιλεῦ Συρηκοσίων), and Pindar refers to Hieron twice as such (*Olym.* 1.23 and *Pyth.* 3.70), as well as his son Deinomenes (*P.* 1.60); cf. Oost (1976). Both Herodotus (7.156.3) and Thucydides (6.4.2 and 6.94.1) refer in *propria persona* to Gelon as a 'tyrant' (likely adopting the hostile terminology that circulated in the aftermath of the expulsion of the Deinomenids).

[56] Cf. Sanders (1987), esp. 1–40.

The military reputation of Agathocles underwent a similar trajectory. Even in the changed political conditions in the wake of Alexander the Great's expedition and sudden death, the basis for Agathocles' power (like that of previous autocratic dynasties in Sicily) was still military (i.e., rather than hereditary or constitutional). Agathocles gained control of Syracuse by using his military reputation against foreign foes in Magna Graecia to capitalise on ongoing political tension between the *demos* and the elite, ultimately succeeding in having himself appointed *stratēgos autokrator* in 316 (D.S. 19.9.4).[57] After gaining control of Syracuse, he extended his hegemony to the rest of Sicily, and then set his sights on Africa and South Italy, imperialistic aspirations likely motivated at least in part by conscious rivalry with his predecessors, particularly Gelon and Dionysius I.[58] This desire to match the achievements of the previous dynastic autocrats in Sicily, as well as those of contemporary autocrats to the east in the regions conquered by Alexander the Great, explains why Agathocles joined the Macedonian Successors in assuming the royal title through the prestige conferred by military victory (D.S. 20.54.1–2; cf. Pol. 15.35.4).[59] Diodorus (19.2.2–3) presents a negative interpretation (probably originating in Timaeus, whose hostility to Agathocles was virulent) of prophetic dreams experienced by Agathocles' father, alongside a prediction by the Delphic oracle that his future son would be the cause of great misfortunes for the Carthaginians and Sicily. Nevertheless, Diodorus' subsequent narrative offers the standard folktale motif of the exposed child who grows up to be the savior of his people (D.S. 19.2.4–7), implying the existence of a positive version presumably emanating from Agathocles' own propaganda and circulated by his court historians, Callias (*BNJ* 564) and Antander (*BNJ* 565), who was also Agathocles' brother, justifying his seizure of power in response to the threat posed by external enemies. Once again, we find direct inspiration from the mainland discourse on tyrants, for the existence of opposed traditions on the birth of Cypselus can be discerned from Herodotus' narrative (5. 92*β–ε*) traditions which are not only very similar to Agathocles' birth narrative, but equally polyvalent.[60]

Steeped in almost continuous warfare, ancient Sicily offered fertile terrain for autocratic rulers to spin their seizure and maintenance of power as the defence of their people against internal or external enemies. Ironically, however, the efforts of even the earliest Sicilian autocrats to justify their territorial aspirations by positioning themselves as defenders of the Greeks generally served as ammunition upon their expulsion for their successors to

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[57] On the career of Agathocles, see Consolo Langher (2000) and Péré-Noguès (2019).

[58] As hinted by Péré-Noguès (2019) 85.

[59] But cf. Zambon (2006) 77–85, who argues that Agathocles' kingship was not a continuation of the previous Sicilian autocracies, but a new 'true' monarchy.

[60] Cf. Consolo Langher (2000) 14 n. 2.

legitimise their own rule by exposing their predecessors as archetypal tyrants whose warfare was motivated only by naked imperialism. Thus, one distinctive aspect of Sicilian history that is reflected in the historiographic tradition is the extent to which warfare was employed as an instrument of domestic policy, resulting in its portrayal as either necessary or imperialistic, according to the desire of individual historians to align with the self-presentation of a particular autocrat or to undermine it. Furthermore, the historians of ancient Sicily were engaged in a constant and competitive dialogue on the role of warfare not only with one another, but with the historiographic tradition of the Greek mainland as well, presenting themselves as equal (and perhaps even superior) partners in the defence of Greece during the Persian Wars and appropriating the stereotypical *topoi* of tyranny as best suited their political agendas.

As I have argued, the Sicilian historiographic tradition offers an extremely important and often overlooked model of strategies for the seizure of autocratic power and the legitimisation of territorial conquests both in Sicily and beyond, matters which took on a new urgency for the 'mainstream' Greek historiographic tradition in the wake of the campaigns of Philip and Alexander of Macedon, and their Hellenistic Successors. The success of the autocratic rulers of ancient Sicily in shaping the narrative of warfare to their own political advantage, by positioning themselves as sole defenders of their people from foreign threats (either real or manufactured), and rewriting their own local history to justify their seizure of power, finds numerous parallels in the modern world. The only real difference is one of degree, as the specific methods of controlling the narrative of warfare have now become increasingly sophisticated and elaborated. *Plus ça change …*

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