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HPAH4005-Cauldron of Democracy and Tragedy: Classical Greek History and Literature

Timeline Addition for 350-340 B.C – Representations of the Corinthian general, Timoleon, in the works of Plutarch and Diodorus.

The differences between the two accounts of Timoleon's life and command by Diodorus and Plutarch are numerous¹. This leads to thinking that the two authors, both Plutarch and Diodorus, lent on certain details to suit their purposes, added shine to what stressed their point of view or their desired outcome required, and, perhaps omitted what did not.

Plutarch (c.45-50 A.D – c.120 A.D.), a native of Chaeronea (Boeotia, Greece), travelled to Rome and upon returning home to Chaeronea served as archon and is also said to have held the position of priest of Apollo at Delphi². Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* is a collection of biographies of men of importance. Plutarch takes leaders, lawmakers, generals and soldiers both Greek and Roman and makes comparisons between the two selected (one Greek, one Roman) who had acted in similar ways or suffered similar fates, the actual order of the finished work is uncertain³. The biographies talk of bravery and fortitude in war and office, including victories and failures. They generally conclude in either the subjects' elevation to heroic status, or, ultimately their downfall and demise. The biographies are moralistic tales of the good and bad of men in high positions their acts and the effects both politically and socially⁴. Traditionally, such works were popular with the Roman readership, Plutarch also interweaves quotes from poetry and philosophical musings into his biographies, other popular genres with his audience⁵.

Regards Plutarch's, life of Timoleon, he opens his biography in no way claiming it to be accurate portrayal but rather an assessment of Timoleon's virtue as a man⁶. Also, Plutarch, through exploring the life of Timoleon is trying to test the theory of whether the likes of Timoleon and his other subjects have a predisposition to greatness or if it is natural strength and guile, making their own fate, that leads to their success or troubles⁷.

Diodorus Siculus, born in the city of Agyrium, Sicily, it is said by St Jerome that Diodorus became 'illustrious' in 49 B.C, so it could be assumed that Diodorus' *Library of History*, or at least part of it, had become known to the elite public⁸. The *Library of History* begins with mythical origin stories, Kings of Egypt, descriptions of India to the voyage of the Argonauts and the Trojan War to 480 B.C., then, from 480 B.C to 60 B.C (Diodorus had begun with the intention of going all the way to his own day 49 B.C)⁹. Considering the span of time Diodorus

¹ Plu. Liv. Tim; Dio. Sic. 16.65-69

² Clough, 2001, p. XX

³ Clough, 2001, p. XIX

⁴ Cairns, 2014, p. 5-6

⁵ Clough, 2001, p. XIX-XXXI; Plu. Liv. Tim. VI-XV; Plu. Liv. Tim. II

⁶ Plu. Liv. Tim. 1 (235-236)?

⁷ Plu. Liv. Tim; Cairns, 2014, p. 6

⁸ Oldfather, 1933, p. VII

⁹ Oldfather, 1933, p. XV-XVI and XIX

attempts to cover it is unsurprising that the events are recorded succinctly and in summary form.

What does appear to be agreed on by these two sources is that upon Timoleon's arrival in Sicily a 3-4way power struggle for control of the island began, the aggressors being; Dionysius, Hicetas (with support of Carthaginians), Timoleon, and, of course the Syracusan natives themselves being mixed in there somewhere as well¹⁰.

What Diodorus and Plutarch both agree on is that Timoleon defeated all the obstacles in his way when it came to his capture of Syracuse and that he ruled diplomatically, justly and with great honour and virtue¹¹.

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Word count 589

¹⁰ Dio. Sic. 16. 67-69; Plu. Liv. Tim. 9-12; Talbert, 1974, p. 55-69

¹¹ Plu. Liv. Tim; Dio. Sic. 16. 65-69

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