

344 BCE

Timoleon arrives in Syracuse

Syracuse was a colony founded in Sicily in 733/2 BCE by the Corinthian Heraklid, Archias (Fisher-Hansen, Nielsen, Ampolo 2004:172;225). Unlike elsewhere, tyranny remained a major characteristic of Sicilian poleis in the classical period (Fisher-Hansen, Nielsen, Ampolo 2004:175), such as when Gelon ruled from Syracuse (Hdt.7.156). Sicily often had hegemonies that were ruled by dynastic tyrannies whose influence spread outside their polis of origin, for example Dionysius I of Syracuse, who ruled all of Greek Sicily and had interests abroad (Fisher-Hansen, Nielsen, Ampolo 2004:175-6).

After Dionysius I's death, his son, Dionysius II came to power (Plut.Dio.6). After failing to reform Dionysius II through education, Dion, an advisor to both Dionysii, was exiled to Greece before returning and deposing Dionysius' tyranny (Plut.Dio.11;3-4;22-30). From then until 344 BCE, there were several short-reigning tyrants (Fisher-Hansen, Nielsen, Ampolo 2004:227).

When Dionysius II returned from his ten-year exile, Syracusans in Tauromenium requested aid from Corinth to depose Dionysius (Plut.Tim.1-2). The Corinthians agreed to assist the Syracusans and Timoleon's name was suggested as commander (Plut.Tim.3).

Timoleon was born in Corinth to distinguished parents and described as patriotic and gentle, excepting his hatred of tyrants and corrupt men (Plut.Tim.3). Talbert (1974:1-5), incorrectly, suggests that Plutarch presented Timoleon as a man who could do no wrong. Based on evidence from the Timoleon/Aemilius comparison, Plutarch believed that Timoleon's character was excessively soft-natured and had no room to be powerful (Plut.Comp.Tim.Aem.2.12).

Timoleon's brother, Timophanes, was placed in charge of Corinth's mercenary troops, which he used to take over the city, execute leading citizens and declare himself tyrant (Plut.Tim.4). After reasoning failed, Timoleon ensured Timophanes' death then abandoned public life for twenty years (Plut.Tim.4).

While preparing for the journey, there were auspicious omens suggesting the gods' blessed Timoleon's journey, considerably boosting morale (Plut.Tim.8).

Timoleon led 10 ships along the coast of Italy but was stopped by Carthaginian ships at Rhegium (Plut.Tim.8-9). Aided by the Rhegians, Timoleon tricked the Carthaginians by pretending to agree to their terms then sneaking passed them during a distraction to land at Tauromenium (Plut.Tim.10).

Bibliography

Fisher-Hansen, T. and Nielsen, T.H. and Ampolo, C. (2004) 'Sikelia', in Hansen, M.H. and Nielsen, T.H. (ed.) *An inventory of archaic and classical poleis*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Herodotus, with an English translation by A. D. Godley. Cambridge. Harvard University Press. 1920.

Plutarch. *Lives, Volume VI: Dion and Brutus. Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*. Translated by Bernadotte Perrin. Loeb Classical Library 98. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1918.

Talbert, R.J.A. (1974) *Timoleon and the revival of Greek Sicily*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.