

Efrem Zambon

# Tradition and Innovation

Sicily between Hellenism and Rome

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Efrem Zambon  
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Hellenism and Rome

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Efrem Zambon

# Tradition and Innovation: Sicily between Hellenism and Rome



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## PREFACE



### *Introduction and acknowledgements*

In the preface to his *A History of Sicily. Ancient Sicily to the Arab Conquest*, Moses Finley stated that in the history of the island one can always find some evidence of very important subjects, that can be referred to political, cultural or even demographic topics. At any rate, Sicilian history is an independent subject, above all because Sicily was always and forcefully involved with the history of Greece, of Carthage and Rome, perhaps in a way that was exclusive if compared with the other countries of the Mediterranean basin. I believe that this assertion is correct, and furthermore that it can be usefully applied to the historical period in which these three political entities stood against each other.

This historical period is the basic object of the investigation in this book. It is not so extended, if considered under a simple chronological point of view, given that it covers just some fifty years of Sicilian memoirs (289–241 BC). Nevertheless, it was one of the most significant ages considering the political evolution in the chief city-states of the island. The two mentioned dates speak by themselves: 289 BC is the year of the murder of Agathocles, who had been the king of Syracuse and was acknowledged as a ruler by a great number of the Greek communities of eastern Sicily; 241 BC is the date of the Roman naval victory in the battle of the Aegates islands, which put an end to the first Punic war and marked the ultimate banishment of the Carthaginians from Sicily, fated to be the first official Roman *provincia* only some years afterwards.

When Agathocles ruled in Syracuse and tried to go up against the Carthaginian attacks toward the eastern part of Sicily, the world outside the island deeply changed: the new Hellenistic monarchies grew up in the eastern Mediterranean basin, after the break down of the empire of Alexander the Great; neither Greece, nor Italy and even Sicily could ignore the power and the ambitions of the kings of Macedonia and Epirus (and even those of the Egyptian Ptolemies). Agathocles tried to follow the main suggestions of this transformation, giving to his own career new traits, if compared with the old tradition concerning the history of the Sicilian tyrannies. Nevertheless, even if the history of Sicily seems to overlap the history of Syracuse, one can only imagine what happened in the multifaceted universe of the Sicilian city-states and if Agathocles' decisions were always accepted or rejected. The main question should be: did the Sicilian *poleis* follow the political choices of Agathocles, his Hellenistic way of thinking, his modernization of Sicilian history? Or did they follow the customary habits and the traditions which marked their past?

I have decided to start my investigation from the detailed study of the few extant sources concerning the last months of Agathocles' reign and his last political decisions, mainly for one reason. In spite of all the attempts made by the king of Syracuse to preserve his power, Agathocles kingdom collapsed; in that moment, one can try to restore the variety of reactions of several city-states, who preferred the traditional option of the tyranny. Anyway, the new tyrants did not behave as

conventional lords: they did not forget the example of Agathocles, and sometimes they decided to be called king.

From that moment onwards, going through a number of crucial political happenings (the Sicilian venture of Pyrrhus; the different stages of the reign of Hiero in Syracuse; the uninterrupted struggles of the Greek communities against the Carthaginians; last but not least, the coming of the Romans), the history of Sicilian *poleis* seem to be a incessant association of conservative alternatives and traits of political innovations. The main aim of this book is to state and enlighten most of the evidence and bring the readers into the task of its evaluation, and to follow the steps of the political evolution of Sicily in the first half of the III century BC, when the island became the first Hellenistic kingdom of the western Mediterranean, and after fifty years turned to be the first Roman *provincia*.

This work is the revised and expanded version of a D.Phil. thesis which focused on the western expeditions of Pyrrhus, with particular reference to Sicily: the original topic of my PhD course was suggested to me by Lorenzo Braccesi (University of Padua). To treat the several topics faced during my investigation, I drew on different historiographical approaches: analysis of the literary sources and of the political language used by ancient authors; close attention to the propaganda items, stemming from the examination of both epigraphic and numismatic evidence; re-evaluation of some archaeological data, always compared – when possible – with the historical accounts. I deeply wanted to use an inter-disciplinary approach, trying to stress the significance of each witness, since I attempted to make the material available to classicists and historians as well.

During the elaboration of the work, I incurred in many debts, and it is for me a pleasure to list some of them; I want really to express all my gratitude, and this of course does not mean agreement or responsibility for any mistake remaining in the text.

I have to express my gratefulness to a number of persons and friends who gave me some of their time and their precious suggestions while I was both conceiving the thesis and writing it; they all encouraged me throughout the process. I am glad to thank Giovannella Cresci Marrone (University of Venice “Ca’ Foscari”), for comments and assistance on every chapter, but especially for all the remarks concerning the Roman attitude towards the natives and the Greeks, and the Roman point of view about the relationships with both Pyrrhus and the Carthaginians. As well, I am grateful to Cinzia Bearzot (University “Cattolica” of Milan) for backing and unconditional scientific assistance, particularly on the value of the political language used by Plutarch in the *Life of Pyrrhus*.

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While working, I took great advantage from the advices of John Kenyon Davies (University of Liverpool): in addition to his friendship, he has offered me a masterly scholarship, giving many suggestions on a number of methodological traits, and I have learned from him to appraise the economic matters in ancient history, as well as to focus the attention on the different ethnical identities of Hellenistic Sicily. His kindness and his encouraging behaviour have supported me the whole time of my investigation. I would like to thank warmly Emmanuele Curti (Birkbeck College, London; Università della Basilicata), who helped me early on, reading the whole chapters of the thesis and giving me precious ideas, especially about some social aspects of Hellenistic Syracuse; and Kathryn Lomas (University College, London), who reviewed the early version of the text when she was in Newcastle and cheated about the main topics with me enduringly (even by E-Mail). I owe her particular thanks, since she gave me the chance to join some international conferences in the United Kingdom, where I met many other scholars who shared with me their opinions about my work.

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I have finally to thank prof. Kai Brodersen (formerly University of Mannheim, now University of Erfurt) for the suggestions concerning the publication of the book and the editorial process; but first of all I owe him my gratitude for his tolerance in regards to my delays and hesitations.

This book could not have been conceived and written without the loving support and the devoted encouragement of both my parents, my wife Paola and my sons Jacopo and Elisabetta (not always sensibly understood by me): I owe them my supreme gratitude.



## CHAPTER ONE

### POLITICAL EVOLUTION AND HISTORICAL EVENTS IN THE GREEK CITY-STATES OF SICILY FROM AGATHOCLES' DEATH TO PYRRHUS' ARRIVAL (289–278 BC)





*1.1. "The king is dead": civil struggles  
and institutional changes in Syracuse, between a new democracy  
and further autocratic desires (289–287 BC)*

The whole Sicily, which during the two previous decades (310–290 BC) had been powerfully attracted from the sphere of the Syracusan empire re-created by Agathocles, and had found in the cohesion the real remedy against the always pressing interferences of the Carthaginians, fell heavily in a serious condition of anarchy in consequence of the death of the Syracusan ruler<sup>1</sup>. In that moment all the traditional problems, that had always been the fundamental, distinctive features of the politics in the Greek Sicily, emerged once again overbearingly: a yearning after autonomy from every single city-state; internal dissensions that habitually, starting from a naturally political ambit, transformed themselves in bloody civil struggles; a growing pressure from the Punic armies, made to extend the Carthaginians' dominions toward the eastern part of the Island. To all these peculiarities, another matter must be added, which fits specifically with this historical moment; that is, the presence and the new role of the many mercenaries who had served in Agathocles' army.

The events in Syracuse were symbolic in comparison with all these elements, and they can be taken as an example of what happened in many Sicilian city-states after the breaking up of the Agathoclean empire. Very little is known about the other towns, owing to the deficiency of the historical evidence; indeed, though taking for granted the lacunas of our sources, it is possible to reconstruct the events that shook the political life of Syracuse after 289 BC; those affairs deeply struck root in the circumstances that immediately preceded Agathocles' death.

As a matter of fact, the shattering of Syracuse's dominions began in the months that were dedicated to the restless preparations of the war against Carthage, in the same year 289 BC, when the Syracusan commander had a fast bodily decline; owing to this decrease, he was in need to settle the dynastic succession to the throne, to preserve unharmed his previously conquered territories and clearly to legitimize for his heir the fight against the Carthaginians. According to the fragmentary narrative of Diodorus Siculus, the king Agathocles, very aged by that time, entrusted Archagathus – who was the son of the homonymous Syracusan commanding officer, died in the first mission to North Africa – with the control of his armies.

1 The bibliography about Agathocles and his government over Sicily and Syracuse is plentiful. There are some works indeed that are worth to be mentioned; see SCHUBERT 1887; TILLYARD 1908; DE SANCTIS 1895, 289–331 (= DE SANCTIS 1909, 141–206 = DE SANCTIS 1966, 205–248); BERVE 1953; MEISTER 1967; MOSSÉ 1969, 167–177; CONSOLO LANGHER 1980, II 1, 289–342; VATTUONE 1983; MEISTER 1984, 384–411 (with bibliography at 574–577); BRACCESI 1998, 101–110. A great number of papers concerning the age of Agathocles have been produced by an Italian scholar, Sebastiana Consolo Langher; the outcome of her research has been collected in a monographic volume, which includes the most recent bibliographic survey about Agathocles: see CONSOLO LANGHER 2000.

Therefore, this Archagathus was the king's nephew on his father's side. There is not actually any doubt about the ability and the skilfulness of the new general; indeed, Diodorus portrays him twice as a top-quality man, better than his contemporaries on account of bravery and boldness; he was still young when he received his task from Agathocles<sup>2</sup>.

In the meanwhile, the king of Syracuse, after devoting himself to transfer the *στρατηγία* – to say, all the tasks concerning the military sphere – in the hands of a deserving recipient, had to choose who had to be the trustee of his kingship. He designated his homonymous son, Agathocles junior, as his heir on Syracuse's throne, and made him acknowledged as his successor into the presence of the Syracusan people; this detail, which comes as usual from the summary of Diodorus' book 21, is very important to stress the support that the people of Syracuse gave to Agathocles' rule for the whole of its extent. I do not mean that the decision was ratified by the popular assembly, of course; after all, it was a king's choice, and it needed not to be strengthened by any other political office in the city<sup>3</sup>.

Then, Agathocles sent his son to the neighbourhood of mount Etna, where Archagathus was encamped with a part of the army, and committed him a letter where he ordered to his commander to hand over his son the authority on the armies and the fleet. It seems clear to me, in this case, that Agathocles wanted to concentrate once again in the hands of a single person – to say, Agathocles junior – the offices of *στρατηγός* and *βασιλεύς*, as if he intended to avoid a dangerous division of the powers and the institutes that, till that moment, had joined together Syracuse and a lot of Sicily. Archagathus was evidently surprised at this decision, and when he understood that the reign would concern another but himself, he plotted a plan to eliminate both the king and his son. And Archagathus' astonishment must not be ascribed – as it has been<sup>4</sup> – to a supposed betrayal of the aged Agathocles, as if the king, granting him the *στρατηγία*, had even appointed him implicitly to the succession in the kingship. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that the two offices, which anyway have been held before by one person alone, had a juridical basis and institutes which were thoroughly separate. It is quite obvious that Archagathus, after

2 In general, see NIESE 1895, col. 432. The historical evidence is Diod. 21, 16, 2–3 (= *excerpta Hoescheliana* 491 W.) (military duty of Archagathus and description of his character). Diod. 21, 16, 7 (= *excerpta Constantiniana* 2, 254) has a different reading of the name, that is Agatharchus.

3 A brief biography of Agathocles' son is in NIESE 1893, col. 757. Agathocles junior was born from the marriage of his father with Alkia, and therefore was the brother of Lanassa, who became at first the wife of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, and then married Demetrius the Besieger. The account of his appointment to the succession is provided by Diod. 21, 16, 3. According to LA BUA 1968, 122, the choice of Agathocles was approved even by Demetrius the Besieger when Agathocles junior was sent to him as an official ambassador (a different opinion in CONSOLO LANGHER 1980, II 1, 320; Agathocles' choice should follow the diplomatic mission of his son); but I am confident that we could not take for support the detail that Demetrius received Agathocles junior with royal honours, since we have to bear in mind that Demetrius was an Hellenistic king, and paid royal honours to the son of another king; therefore, he simply respected the traditional custom of the new monarchies.

4 LA BUA 1968, 122–123.

receiving the army’s command, looked forward to be designated as heir to the throne of Agathocles; but this was not the king’s project, as Diodorus clearly shows. For this reason, the στρατηγός was not afraid of planning a conspiracy, just because a portion of the army supported him, as we shall soon see.

In the vicissitudes of the monarchy, a new character came into play at the right moment; that is Menon. Diodorus Siculus provides some news about him. Menon was born in Segesta. When Agathocles destroyed his town in 307 BC, he was captured as prisoner of war, but thanks to his incredible beauty he became one of the king’s personal slaves, and what’s more he was numbered in the group of the favourites and the king’s φίλοι. It has been said properly that, just thanks to this official qualification of “Friend”, Menon must have retained some peculiar political duties, because he had a share in the restricted council of the Syracusan monarchy. Nevertheless he was delighted of this duty for a while; really, he nourished feelings of hatred towards his protector Agathocles – this is a point of view on which Diodorus particularly focuses his attention – and meditated plans of revenge, especially on account of the devastation suffered by Segesta and owing to the fact that Agathocles sexually violated him<sup>5</sup>.

Archagathus got in touch exactly with Menon, and he committed him the task of slaughtering the king, while he kept for himself the murder of the appointed heir. Whilst he was celebrating an offering to the gods in an island that cannot be ascertained with certainty (but it may be supposed that it lays offshore the eastern coast of Sicily), Archagathus invited to the ceremony Agathocles junior, who was sailing towards the army’s encampment near Etna; he made him drunk and he murdered him at night. Roughly at the same time, even the old Agathocles was poisoned in Syracuse by Menon: the tooth-pick, that the king used habitually after dinner, had been dipped by the favourite φίλος in a powerful, efficacious poison, which caused to the king a creeping gangrene. The death came soon after<sup>6</sup>.

- 5 KROLL 1931, col. 927, gives a short summary of Menon’s life. The account of Diod. 21, 16, 2 is particularly evocative with reference to the motivations that drove Menon to act against Agathocles. The Greek city-state of Segesta, in the Elymian area of Sicily, was conquered by Agathocles at the beginning of 307 BC; some time later the town was destroyed and the citizens were ferociously punished for their resistance; see the account of the events of Diod. 20, 71, 1–5 and the critical evaluation of the passage in CONSOLO LANGHER 1980, II 1, 310–311 and 337, note 115 (Diodorus’ account should derive from a local, native Segestan source, and maybe from the oral account of some fugitives); furthermore, see CONSOLO LANGHER 1997B, 381–399. ΜΑΦΟΔΔΑ 1979, 201 gives a proper explanation of the role played usually by a φίλος and the political meaning of the office held by Menon. PARETI 1959, 243–244 links too strongly the ethnic origin of Menon with his desire to see the destruction of Syracuse and the death of Agathocles; I am confident to show that the aspiration of Menon was connected with the absolute power – perhaps with the kingship – and this has nothing to do with his Segestan origin.
- 6 HUTTL 1929, 133–134; PARETI 1959, 239–240; LA BUA 1968, 123–124; CONSOLO LANGHER 1980, II 1, 320. The historical account is provided by Diod. 21, 16, 3 (murder of Agathocles junior) and 4 (Menon’s poisoning of king Agathocles). There is even another historical tradition concerning the death of Agathocles; according to it, the death came for natural reasons, and was due to a disease that began while he was waging a military campaign against the Bruttians; the account is provided by Just. 23, 2, 3–5. For a useful comparative analysis of the two historical traditions, see CONSOLO LANGHER 1990A, 157–162. The correct setting of Agathocles’ junior

As I said before, Diodorus' narrative is very scrappy and even if it allows an easy reconstruction of the events, it does not explain with enough usefulness every aspect of the succession to Agathocles. Therefore, I think that some matters deserve a more profound scrutiny.

First of all, I am persuaded that it is necessary to find out why Archagathus was at the foot of mount Etna, together with a portion of the Syracusan army and fleet. It has been conjectured that those were the troops that the old Agathocles had gathered considering a new military expedition in North Africa, and that the fleet riding at anchor offshore was the one appointed to the infantry's transport towards the Carthaginian territory. Some other scholars thought that Archagathus' army consisted entirely of mercenary troops. Nevertheless, I prefer to turn the attention again to Diodorus' *excerpta*; in book 21 (16, 1), it seems that the massive Syracusan fleet (quadriremes and *hexeres*, fully manned; in all, two hundred ships) had to be parted in two squadrons. In fact, the task of Agathocles' fleet was twofold; on the one hand, the navy had to carry out the transfer of the army in Africa; on the other hand, it had to prevent the Carthaginians from being able to supply themselves with grain, importing it from Sardinia and Sicily<sup>7</sup>. A question not of minor irrelevance derives again from the diodorean account, as far as it concerns the precise commission of Archagathus; actually, if one base himself on Diodorus' information (21, 16, 2), it seems that Archagathus had the command only of the troops that were drawn up in the open field, i.e. of the infantry and maybe cavalry (this seems to me the literal meaning of the diodorean saying τὰς ὑπαίθρους δυνάμεις); indeed, if one goes along with the data given by the *excerpta* in the following paragraph (21, 16, 3), it is possible to infer that Archagathus was even the commander in chief of the fleet (ναύαρχος), since he was ordered by the king to hand over to his son both πεζικὰς καὶ ναυτικὰς δυνάμεις<sup>8</sup>.

Stirring among many conjectures, I believe that one fact remains indisputable; that the military forces at the disposal of Archagathus could not be the same troops and ships made ready for Africa by Agathocles. It should be minded that Diodorus – making reference to the king's planning – writes absolutely of great preparations of ναυτικῶν δυνάμεις, but never of an army: clearly, Agathocles' purpose was to displace *simultaneously* the war both in the Mediterranean sea and in Africa. I guess it is more logical to see in the fleet sailing offshore the eastern coasts of Sicily a squadron that had the assignment of patrolling the commercial route which went

assassination is unknown; anyway, I want to point out the suggestion made by PARETI 1959, 239, in whose opinion the correct location should be the modern *Isola dei Ciclopi*, on the eastern coast of Sicily, in front of the seashores of Aci Trezza.

7 It may be worth quoting the Greek text of Diod. 21, 16, 1: διεννοεῖτο (i.e. Agathocles) γὰρ πάλιν εἰς τὴν Λιβύην διαβιβάζειν στρατόπεδα, καὶ ταῖς ναυσὶν εἶργειν τοὺς Φοίνικας τῶν ἀπὸ τῶν Σαρδῶν καὶ Σικελῶν σιτοπομπῶν.

8 A correct translation of the Greek adjective ὑπαίθρος is problematic (see LIDDELL-SCOTT, *ad locum*), but the meaning seems to be very clear; the ὑπαίθροι δυνάμεις of Diod. 21, 16, 2 are the encamped troops, and for that reason they can be only infantry troops; this does not mean that they were quite exclusively mercenary troops (as supposed by LA BUA 1968, 127 and MAFFONDA 1979, 200, note 16).

northwards, through the Strait of Messina, to the Tyrrhenian sea: one of the most travelled grain trade routes in the West!

One should not be astonished for the muddle which distinguishes the diodorean text as it concerns Archagathus' military offices before they were officially appointed to Agathocles junior. As I said, before the heritage in the βασιλεία and in the στρατηγία was assigned by Agathocles to his son, the στρατηγός was legitimately Archagathus: therefore, it is evident that even the navy had, for any reason, to refer to him, as if the office of *strategos* included the duties of the ναύαρχος. One matter remains to be established, that is, who were the troops encamped at the foot of mount Etna and what were their duties: I will attempt to answer these questions in my work later.

A following riddle necessarily involves the relationship between Archagathus and Menon, because in the depiction of Diodorus Siculus it is not enlightened, nay it strikes for its immediate simplicity. Why Archagathus made use of the complicity of the young boy from Segesta to get rid of Agathocles? Clearly, the enlightenment must be sought in some previous relationships between the two plotters, and Archagathus could blindly trust to his colleague only in one instance; he had to know very well how much Menon had strictly personal relations with the king and how much intensely he had a mortal hatred of him. I have already observed how much Diodorus insists on Menon's detestation of Agathocles, both for the devastation of his motherland Segesta, and for the sexual brutalities he suffered from the king. The swift resolution of Archagathus, that is to come to an agreement with Menon for the manslaughter of the king, persuades obviously to conjecture previous relationships between the two of them. On the other hand, there is no surviving evidence of earlier concurrences turned to the formulation of a palace plot<sup>9</sup>.

There is indeed another very ticklish question, which has been surprisingly overlooked by the scholars; that's why I believe it is worth to be investigated in details.

Diodorus Siculus is not at all the only source of information on what happened during the last year of Agathocles' life. Indeed, we own the data coming from the epitome of the lost historical work written by Pompeius Trogus, the *Historiae Philippicae*, made by Justin; particularly, one has to take care of the book 23, chapter 2. Unfortunately, this section has been considered merely for the final news, which concern the counter-offensive of the Carthaginians in Sicily in the days of Agathocles' death.

Justin says that "*dum haec aguntur Karthaginienses, cognitis quae in Sicilia agebantur, occasionem totius insulae occupandae datam sibi extimantes, magnis viribus eo traiciunt multasque civitates subigunt*". This datum has not been accepted unquestionably; some scholars have made a close connection between the movements of Carthaginian troops and the military preparations ordered by Agathocles in the months immediately previous to his death. Others thought that this la-

9 The question has been rightly pointed out by LA BUA 1968, 123: I believe he went too far when he suggested that king Agathocles quickly appointed his son as successor in the kingship because he had news concerning a conspiracy plotted against him by Archagathus and Menon together.

conic mention of Justin was an author's effort to join Agathocles' death with the Sicilian expedition of Pyrrhus, so that the Punic offensive at issue should be the one broken out in 278 BC. The most recent attitude of the commentators seems to encourage a positive reevaluation of Justin's remark, taking for granted its very problematical placement within the historical context. I cannot help assenting this previous consideration; it seems to me plain that a lessening in the chronology is not at all advantageous, therefore the statement of Justin must not be dated to 278 BC. In the same way, it is patent that several months of evolution of the military operations in Sicily must have been shortened in Pompeius Trogus' succinct account; really, there are no news relating to towns conquered again by the Carthaginians before the death of Agathocles, whereas we know that a large amount of Punic troops was in Sicily *after* Agathocles' demise, when – as we shall see – they rushed to the help of Menon. As far as we know, the towns were recaptured by the Carthaginian army while pushing eastwards in Sicily and only after the decease of the Syracusan king<sup>10</sup>.

But this is not the crucial point of the subject. The whole paragraph of Justin's epitome provides very important details exactly about the succession to Agathocles' throne. Justin portrays Agathocles as seriously ill, compelled to give up his military operations against the Bruttians and to come back to Sicily. More specifically, at 23, 2, 5, it is said: *ex qua desperatione bellum inter filium nepotemque eius regnum iam quasi mortui vindicantibus oritur; occiso filio regnum nepos occupavit.*

The information, which is very embarrassing to take into consideration, makes available some elements that are not existing in Diodorus Siculus' narrative. In both the ancient sources we have news concerning a war between Agathocles junior and Archagathus; but only here, as it seems to me, we learn that the struggle broke out independently from the hereditary wills of the king of Syracuse. So far as Justin describes it, I suppose that Agathocles, while he was sick, did not choose anyone of the two contenders as heir to his βασιλεία, because even Agathocles junior tried to seize upon the kingdom – whereas, according to Diodorus' report, the sovereignty had already to be his own. What's more, we come to know that after Agathocles junior's decease – which, I assume, happened during a battle, and not for a wicked, premeditated murder – Archagathus took possession of the kingship, clearly depriving of power even the dying Agathocles. Therefore, in Justin's account there is no trace either of Menon or of a violent death of the king of Syracuse. In the following paragraph (23, 2, 6), Trogus tells that Agathocles, when he gave up

10 The historical value of Just. 23, 2, 13 has not been accepted without any doubt by all the modern scholars; for a critical survey see NIESE 1893, 487, note 3 (the information has to be connected with the military preparations made by Agathocles before his death); BELOCH 1927<sup>2</sup>, IV 1, 542, note 1 (he dated the news to 278 BC, and thought that the passage was a sign of the great efforts made by Justin to link in his epitome the death of Agathocles and the Sicilian venture of Pyrrhus); VALLONE 1955, 28–29 and 31 (she believed in the reliability of Justin's text, but she did not compromise with the chronology); LÉVÊQUE 1957, 453 (supports Beloch's conjecture); PARETI 1959, 244 (the passage includes a summary of many years of Sicilian historical events); LA BUA 1968, 129, note 46 (encouraged a re-evaluation of Justin's account). More recently, GALLI 1982, 151–169 emphasized the historical significance of Pompeius Trogus' work for the history of Agathocles.

hope to save himself (undoubtedly, this happened after his nephew took the power), let his wife Theoxena and the two children run away to Egypt, being frightened of the chance that they found an enemy in Archagathus (*timens ne praedonem regni sui hostem paterentur*)<sup>11</sup>.

But there is something more. From the *prologus* of the book 23 it is possible to gain another piece of evidence, concerning a detail which was clearly described in the lost work of Trogus and has been skipped by Justin in his summary. The *prologus* states: *Omnibus subactis rex seditione filii exheredati ac nepotis oppressus interiit*.

Once again one can see here a different report, though it is not mismatched with the previous passage of Justin's epitome: anyway, the completely new information concerns the position of Agathocles junior. Indeed, it must be supposed that at first he had been chosen to succeed his father, but then Agathocles came back to his decisions and deprived his son of the inheritance, which was the kingdom. As for the nephew Archagathus, his role was fully matching with the news provided by the accounts of Diodorus Siculus and Justin's abstract of Pompeius Trogus. Nonetheless, the two Trogian evidences can be joined together. It is more than believable that, on account of the king's new decision, a struggle broke out between the two "rebels", Agathocles junior and Archagathus. The piece of information that Pompeius Trogus – to be more exact, Trogus' source – does not make clear, and that it seems to me correct to inquire about, is the following: who was Agathocles' designated heir? Unfortunately, this is a question that has to be left unsolved. However, even if at first sight the two pieces of evidence are different for their contents and structures – even owing to the fragmentary character of the text of Diodorus, and to the summary of Trogus' one – I assume they are fit for a useful comparison.

Archagathus' rebellion – the one which is mentioned in the *prologus* to Pompeius Trogus' book 23 – is easily recognizable even in Diodorus Siculus' book 21 (16, 3); it was a natural consequence of a decline in prestige and a lack of power, produced by Agathocles' choice to transfer to his son the offices of a military kind. Apparently, the allusion of Trogus to an open war between Agathocles junior and his competitor may seem less understandable; actually, Diodorus does not speak of

11 To all intents and purposes, it is impossible to say without doubt who was Theoxena. The marriage with Agathocles has been mentioned by Just. 23, 2, 6. It has been suggested that she was the daughter born from the marriage between Ptolemy I *Soter* and Euridike, i.e. the daughter of Antipater of Macedonia (BELOCH 1927<sup>2</sup>, IV 1, 201; BELOCH 1927<sup>2</sup>, IV 2, 179). Other scholars thought she was the daughter of Ptolemy I *Soter* and his wife Berenike (BOUCHÉ-LECLERQ 1903, I, 42, note 3; 87 and 90; GEYER 1934, coll. 2255–2256). The first hypothesis has been supported by NENCI 1953, 122–123, in whose opinion the date for the marriage between Agathocles and Theoxena should be set in the period 310–307 BC (BERVE 1953, 67 shared this chronological point of view), and the wedding should be interpreted in the light of the great anti-Punic political plans that were common to the Ptolemies of Egypt and to Agathocles (*contra* LÉVÊQUE 1956, 83–90). The second conjecture has been once again proposed – with more convincing arguments, I believe – by WILL 1964, 324–326, note 1 (= WILL 1998, 344–345, note 24), who proposed a date around 300 BC and was followed in this by SEIBERT 1967, 73 and 104. For a lower chronology, approximately 295 BC, see HUSS 1979, 127, note 32. The most recent survey of the argument in MANNI 1984, 480–483 (= MANNI 1990, 289–294).



a warfare, but one must admit that even in his narrative there is an unfriendly connection between the two challengers to the kingship, and it took place in an unknown little island facing the eastern coast of Sicily. So, the wrestle between Agathocles junior and Archagathus is absolutely unquestionable, because the aimed role of βασιλεύς was at stake. It is not fully verifiable if there was a fight, or not; but the very piece of evidence – provided by Diodorus (21, 16, 3) – bearing out that Archagathus was in command of troops drawn up near mount Etna, may suggest that he was ready for any occasion. It is yet undeniable that on the other side of the background – that is the fight between Agathocles junior and his cousin – one has most of all to enlighten the struggle between two political factions, who were both linked to the sphere of the king's φίλοι. One party, who related with the στρατηγός and included even the slave Menon – without any doubt, if we trust on the diodoroean account –, believed in the legitimacy of Archagathus' claims concerning the βασιλεία, and evidently was supported unconditionally by the greatest part of the army. The other party was formed by all the pro-agathoclean men, who remained trustworthy to the king's choices and, far from judging the designated heir as an inexperienced boy, chewed over Archagathus' ambiguous plans with great worries<sup>12</sup>.

The discrepancies between the narratives of Diodorus and Justin are nonetheless the minority; in short, they can be reduced to the fickle relationship between Agathocles and his son, who was a rumoured mutineer (he was designated heir to the throne in Diodorus' account; he was disinherited by his father in Justin's epitome – but clearly after he had been officially appointed as the kingdom's successor); and to the reason of the death of the old Syracusan king (who died for the consequences of a terrible and powerful disease, according to Justin; on the other side, he had been poisoned by his favourite Menon, in the narrative of Diodorus). The matter, which cannot be worked out in a strictly historical prospect, finds a more than conceivable solution if one thinks about the different historical sources that Diodorus and Pompeius Trogus employed in their works concerning Agathocles; that, according to the scholars, were Duris of Samos and Timaeus of Tauromenium<sup>13</sup>.

12 MAFODDA 1979, 199–200, has pointed out the existence in Agathocles' entourage of some political factions, but he then indicated only one party, which should have been favourable to Archagathus and opposite to Agathocles junior. CONSOLO LANGHER 1980, II 1, 314–315, quoting Polyæn. *Stratagemata* 5, 15, has rightly emphasized the role of Agathocles' φίλοι as a sort of *concilium principis* already from 316 BC. For a different opinion about Agathocles' kingship, see LÉVÊQUE 1957, 462; LÉVÊQUE 1968–1969, 148.

13 For some different positions of the modern historians about the historical sources of Diodorus and Pompeius Trogus on the history of Agathocles' age, see SCHWARTZ 1905A, coll. 1853–1856 (the historical work of Duris was the source of information of Diodorus); DE SANCTIS 1958, 99–102 (Diodorus' books 19 and 20 based on Duris' histories); CARY 1928, 617–637 (Timaeus as source for Diodorus' account); MANNI 1957–1958, 81–88 (= MANNI 1990, 599–605); MANNI 1960, 167–173 (= MANNI 1990, 525–531); MANNI 1970, 74–78 (= MANNI 1990, 609–612); DOLCE 1960, 124–166 (Diodorus' narrative based upon the comparative reading of Duris' and Timaeus' works, made by Silenus: conjecture rightly rejected by MEISTER 1970A, 84–91); ORLANDI 1964, 216–226; LA BUA 1966, 195–198 (properly stressing Schwartz's hy-

Agathocles junior, in that case, was killed or murdered by Archagathus. His body, after being thrown in the sea, was driven by the streams as far as Syracuse's shores, where it was fished out and identified<sup>14</sup>. Even his father who, owing to Diodorus' account, should already have been a prey to the atrocious pangs of the long anguish following the poisoning (or produced by a sickness, in Justin's summary), became acquainted of the felony. His reaction was severe and, at any rate, really unforeseeable, as we learn from Diodorus (21, 16, 4), who reports that when Agathocles was on the brink of death, he summoned the ἐκκλησία, reported the impious deed of Archagathus and induced the crowd to take revenge on him; most of all, he said that he wanted to give the democracy to the people.

Almost always, the scholars wanted to regard the sudden decision of Agathocles as a rough oversight in the assessment of the political events, more or less brought about by his old age and the hurtful, lengthy anguish of the king's body. No doubt, that pronouncement led to massive outcomes, not only in the Syracusan πόλις; a renewed eagerness distinguished, in the months following the king's death, the struggles between the democratic party of Syracuse and the faction of Menon, and I guess it was only a pattern of what happened in the towns of the former Agathoclean empire, who then had become independent. Indeed, it is plain that the choice of giving back the democracy to the Syracusans meant, in one sense, even the formal grant of independence to all the other city-states that once were under Agathocles' control. It is of course reasonable and very fitting to acknowledge that, in order to allow the βασιλεία to endure over the slaughter of his own natural descent, Agathocles had necessarily to give his preference to the plotter, Archagathus; but the king clearly did not want to abandon his kingdom's destiny in a slayer's hands. The choice of Agathocles has to be considered just from this point of view: it has been said that "Agathocles restores the republican and democratic freedom to the citizens of Syracuse, because he understood that the kingship could not survive anymore as a political institution". This statement of Helmut Berve, which is surely a little bit forced, seems to me to hit the mark; Agathocles favoured the δῆμος of Syracuse against his nephew Archagathus in the succession; nay, he wanted the people to decide if they could trust in Archagathus as a good heir, or if the restoration of the democracy was a better alternative. Obviously, Agathocles knew very well what would have been the people's preference, because the lifetime of the kingship in Syracuse came to an end, as the events of those days clearly showed. This is the reason why Agathocles' last provision seems not to be a meaningless pronouncement, rather the outgrowth of an ultimate, sharp calculation in politics; it

pothesis); CONSOLO LANGHER 1990A, 43–133; CONSOLO LANGHER 1990A, 157–162; SACKS 1994, 213–232. The last valuable work about the topic is CONSOLO LANGHER 1999B, giving even a wide bibliography. As regards a general view of Timaeus, his age and his works, see usefully BROWN 1958, particularly 71–90; PEARSON 1987; VATTUONE 1991; WALBANK 1992, 5–24; VATTUONE 2002, 177–232. For a general survey about Duris, see FERRERO 1963, 68–100; KEBRIC 1977; PÉDECH 1989; LANDUCCI GATTINONI 1997 (giving a detailed bibliography).

14 See Diod. 21, 16, 3, a pathetic account, based no doubt on Duris' description of the event.

seems much more the end result of a skilful estimation of the events, than of the thirst of revenge against a murderer<sup>15</sup>.

Few days after the democracy had been re-established, Agathocles died; according to Diodorus Siculus' narrative (21, 16, 5), he was still alive, but already unconscious, when the representative of king Demetrius the Besieger, named Oxythemis<sup>16</sup>, made the king's body be placed on the funeral pile and be burnt. In the meantime, a quick constitutional transformation took place in Syracuse, and the democratic faction strengthened his position to power; the people's reaction to the news of the death of the old king – who since ever had been regarded by the Syracusans more as a tyrant than as a βασιλεύς – was vehement; clearly, the king's option to restore the democracy could not itself change the citizens' attitude towards the monarchy. And so, as if they wanted to make good their previous losses, the greatest part of the Syracusans demanded the requisition of Agathocles' properties; probably, this was the first legislative measure to indicate that the Syracusan ἐκκλησία, who delivered the confiscation's decree, had completely regained her autonomy. As for the rest, on the account of the solitary support given by Diodorus (21, 16, 6), many violent actions took place in the town and a resentful *damnatio memoriae*, mainly with the demolition of all the king's statues and portraits.

A further confirmation of the constitutional change is provided by the coinage: some bronze coins, of the same kind of those minted by the Syracusan mint during Agathocles' reign, have been appropriately dated to the period which followed the king's death, as it is illustrated by the figurative typologies and the plain legend, which commemorate *Zeus Eleutherios*<sup>17</sup> and *Artemis Soteira*; moreover, contrary to the bronze coins previously issued, they all display the legend ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ, that gives even more reasons for their democratic connotation. There are particularly four issues that have been quite univocally attributed to this period by the scholars<sup>18</sup>:

- 15 Some different opinions have been expressed about the restoration of the democracy made by Agathocles; see DE SANCTIS 1895, 329–331 (= DE SANCTIS 1909, 204–206 and DE SANCTIS 1966, I, 246–248; a wrong decision, but humanly understandable); PARETI 1959, 240; MANNI 1966, 161 (a sound choice, since Agathocles could not accept a new government based upon the murder of his son); LA BUA 1968, 124–125 (a heavy mistake and a meaningless pronouncement).
- 16 According to Diod. 21, 15, 1, this Oxythemis was appointed by Demetrius the Besieger to take back home in Syracuse Agathocles junior, after he signed a formal treaty of alliance and friendship with the king, but nonetheless his real duty was to watch over the development of events in Sicily. See in general LENSCHAU 1942, coll. 2046–2047; Athen. *Deipn.* 6, 253a; 14, 614c. In 304 BC, after Athens had been freed by the Besieger, Oxythemis was appointed with the honorary citizenship by the Athenians; *Syll.*<sup>3</sup> nr. 343.
- 17 The portrait of Zeus coupled with the title of *Eleutherios* no doubt ever had a connotation clearly unfavourable to tyrannies; see GIELOW 1940–1941, 103–114; GARRAFFO 1976–1977, 9–50; CASTRIZIO 2002, 151–168. On the names of the “saving-Gods”, like the case of Artemis, see usefully MANGANARO 1965A, 174–178.
- 18 See POOLE 1876, 200; HOLM 1906, 194; HEAD 1911<sup>2</sup>, 182; GABRICI 1927, 81–82; HOLLOWAY 1962, 12–17.

- Obv. Head of Artemis; inscription ΣΩΤΕΙΡΑ. Rev. Winged thunderbolt; inscription ΔΙΟΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟΥ.
- Obv. Head of Zeus; inscription ΔΙΟΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟΥ. Rev. Winged thunderbolt; inscription ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ.
- Obv. Head of Artemis; inscription ΣΩΤΕΙΡΑ. Rev. Winged thunderbolt; inscription ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ.
- Obv. Head of Zeus. Rev. Winged thunderbolt; inscription ΔΙΟΣ ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΟΥ.

Some other scholars have ascribed to the same period of restored democracy other three coins, perhaps emphasizing some aspects both of their devices and of their inscriptions that could be referred to a “democratic” happening (particularly the suddenly disappeared sign of the king, and the contemporary appearance of the mark ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ)<sup>19</sup>.

Even if we do not have any evidence, it is reasonable to imagine that, ensuing from the democracy’s reinstatement and the following formation of a republican government in Syracuse, took place some banishments – or voluntary exiles – of the representatives of the other political factions. It is worth while to remember that in Syracuse there were not only a democratic party and a political faction of pro-agathoclean men; as I have previously highlighted, quite before Agathocles’ death, his friends divided themselves at least in two different groups. Consequently, it is very feasible that all the former Agathocles’ φίλοι had been expelled from Syracuse; one could not give other reasons for the departure from the town of Menon, who had been an outstanding exponent of the party challenging Agathocles, but at the same time he even belonged to the restricted entourage of the king’s favourites – and most of all, if one accepts the literary tradition of Duris, that has been used by Diodorus Siculus, he had been the real author of the king’s poisoning: an action which had to inspire the approbation of all the democrats towards him.

As a matter of fact, we know thanks to Diodorus (21, 16, 6) that Menon, immediately after the government’s revolution in Syracuse, was beside his associate Archagathus in the encampment at the foot of mount Etna, where he arrived sailing from Syracuse’s harbour. As I mentioned before, this information clearly shows that all the supporters of the party defending the monarchy run away from Syracuse, both the friends who were devoted to Agathocles and those who were against him: but I suspect that the diodorean news keep secret on some details<sup>20</sup>.

19 The most famous among the three issues has on the obv. the head of Heracles and a shortened inscription ΣΥΡ, with a lion on the reverse; for the undecided chronology, see GABRICI 1927, 81–82; CONSOLO LANGHER 1964, 320, nr. 598 (between 289 and 287 BC); HOLM 1906, 191 (310–306 BC); GIESECKE 1923, 103; NASTER 1959, 124, nr. 688 (279 BC); FORRER 1922, plate 65, nr. 1689 (age of Pyrrhus in Sicily); HOLLOWAY 1979, 92 (last period of Agathocles’ life). It may be worth mentioning that JENKINS 1968, 153–154 has stated that the group D of the electrum coinage minted at Syracuse – bearing the devices of Apollo and Artemis – was issued in the “*interregnum*” between the death of Agathocles and the autocratic government of Hicetas. A useful survey of the Syracusan issues of this period is made by RUTTER 1997, 174–176.

20 For the banishment of the citizens who at an early stage supported Agathocles, see VALLONE 1955, 30; LA BUA 1968, 126; MAFODDA 1979, 199.

Why did Menon flee from Syracuse? I assume it is patent the unfeasibility to declare that his hasty departure was an immediate outcome of Agathocles' poisoning, because as we have already seen this action drew on him even the approval of the democratic party; on the other hand, it is more than reasonable that his escape took place at the same time with the flee of the other promoters of the monarchic faction. Hence, I think it is necessary to postulate a convincing reason that drove the democrats to banish Menon, "the tyrannicide". In this case, the mysteriousness of Diodorus, that is owed to the fragmentary character of his surviving text, is anyway revealing a precious detail. At 21, 16, 6 he wrote that Μένων [...] πεφρονηματισμένος δὲ ἐπὶ τῷ δοκεῖν καταλελυκέναι τὴν βασιλείαν, τὸν μὲν Ἀρχάγαθον ἐδολοφόνησε ("Menon, who grew proud, because it seemed that he himself had overthrown the kingdom, treacherously killed Archagathus").

As it has been previously remarked, the diodorean slight indication makes understanding that the real undertaking of Menon – which was somewhat of a secret, but not too much – was taking the place of Agathocles in the role of Syracuse's βασιλεύς. Therefore, he must have performed some actions that made the Syracusan people able to grasp his authentic objectives, unmask him and compel him to escape; regrettably, even in this case our sources keep silent and leave open space to unpretentious suppositions. If following the democracy's restoration – as it is very reasonable – in Syracuse were immediately held elections according to the regulations, it maybe occurred the case of corruption, which happened (as we know) unquestionably in an electoral session that followed, two years after; or, alternatively, Menon tried to find a remedy for the electoral defeat using the strength. If the hypothesis of the elections is acceptable, it is not necessary to believe that many months elapsed from the death of Agathocles to the expulsion of the royalists and Menon<sup>21</sup>.

Nonetheless, the yearning after the βασιλεία had not been a distinctive feature of Menon alone; it had been even for Archagathus a compelling motivation to rise up against the old Agathocles, and a spur to slay his uncle Agathocles junior, at the end of a fratricidal fight. With his two relatives slaughtered, Archagathus had to believe that every single impediment in his way towards the coveted kingship had been removed, and now that he was very strong thanks to the backing of the various troops, who were in his service; but he had to bring to account even Menon, who certainly laid a claim to a sharing of the power. At this moment, the struggle that made them partners in crime, had to convert them in adversaries, as a matter of fact. After his arrival in the military camp at the foots of mount Etna, Menon deceitfully

21 See VALLONE 1955, 30; LA BUA 1968, 126 (who suggested that some information provided by Diodorus were lost due to the summary of his historical source, probably made by Silenus; compare LA BUA 1966, 188 and 199–201); MAFODDA 1979, 200 (Menon conceived the project to seize the power in Syracuse, establishing his own tyranny, only after the arrival in Archagathus' camp). The suggestion of PARETI 1959, 243–244, that Menon wanted the complete destruction of Syracuse, needs to be absolutely rejected, as much as the chronology conjectured by VALLONE 1955, 31, in whose opinion we must assume an interval of some months between the death of Agathocles and the flight of Menon, which probably happened in 288 BC; I assume, on the contrary, that it happened in the same 289 BC.

killed his former collaborator and became the only central character of Syracuse's political scene, together with the democratic party. Diodorus Siculus, who is the only ancient author to give a brief report of the new manslaughter (21, 16, 6), does not provide any justification about it. If one trusts the diodorean information, thus one ignores not only the motivation that brought about Menon's crime, but even the procedure of the felony itself; yet, as I said before, the reason could not be any but the will to get rid of the last, dangerous competitor for the administration of power and the succession to the βασιλεία. As far as it concerns the procedure, even if we face a complete lack of evidence, it is possible to make some suggestions. Indubitably, Menon alone could do very little against Archagathus who, in his position of skilful and dexterous στρατηγός, enjoyed the complete assistance of his troops. For that reason, it is right to deduce that Menon had some companions who were powerful even to the army; these friends could have been the former Agathocles' "Friends", who fled from Syracuse all together with him and took shelter in Archagathus' encampment. I guess that Diodorus' text provides a corroboration in this sense, as it may be understood from the completion of the above-mentioned passage (21, 16, 6). After the murder of Archagathus, Menon took possession of the military camp, and after having gained the mass' good opinion thanks to his fine words, he decided to declare war upon Syracuse and to claim for himself the absolute power.

So, according to Diodorus Siculus, there was a plainly definite sequence in the happening of the events. First of all, Menon slaughtered Archagathus, and only as a consequence to this assassination he could become the new master of the troops which were encamped near mount Etna. Thus, the presence of some partners who helped him to put in practice his challenging plot seems to me to have been absolutely indispensable; indeed, in all likelihood the abettors could not have already been in the military camp, where there was only Archagathus' army. Some modern historians wanted to recognize in the words used by Diodorus – to say, στρατόπεδον and πλήθη – a plain reference to the presence of some military staff and civilians in Archagathus' encampment. Nevertheless, I assume that the citizens of Syracuse who took refuge with Agathocles' grandson had to be very few; the first Syracusans who arrived in the camp must have been just those who ran away from the town at once with Menon<sup>22</sup>.

Once Archagathus died, Menon had to face the army's reaction; somehow, talking skilfully, he succeeded in appeasing the soldiers and in drawing them by his side. His last resolution was to march on Syracuse and claim for himself the town's dominion. Even in this case, the political vocabulary which is used in Diodorus' passage allows to understand that Menon's real target was to overthrow once again the newborn political system of Syracuse, ousting from the leading position the democratic party – to say, the Συρακοσίοι of Diodorus' passage – and almost certainly establishing a tyranny – to say, the diodorean δυναστεία. Simultaneously

22 The presence of both civilians and soldiers in the camp of Archagathus is emphasized by VAL-  
LONE 1955, 30 and MAFODDA 1979, 199, note 12 (incredibly stressing that the Greek words  
στρατόπεδον and πλήθη would stand for citizens and mercenaries).