

AGATHOCLES AND THE ITALIC POWERS AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 3RD CENTURY B.C.

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Rezumat: *O primă țintă a campaniilor militare derulate de Agathokles în aria italică, începând cu 304 a.Chr., ar putea fi Kleonymos, care venise în anul 303 a.Chr. cu intenția de a-și crea un domeniu în regiunile ocupate de helleni în Occident. A doua campanie italică a tiranului, inițiată în 295 a.Chr., a dus la ocuparea cetăților Krotona și Hipponion. Această expediție completează o viziune politică lucidă și coerentă a lui Agathokles, în ceea ce privește Italia de sud. Într-o primă fază, stăpânul de la Syrakusa s-a opus planurilor agresive nutrite de Kleonymos, apoi, după anul 300 a.Chr., a încercat să refacă zona tradițională de influență a Syrakusei în Bruttium.*

Intervențiile sale militare în sudul peninsulei reprezentau o imixtiune într-o zonă unde Tarentum avea, de asemenea, interese majore. Agathokles a fost văzut probabil, la începutul secolului 3 a.Chr., ca un factor redutabil în măsură să oprească progresele romane spre sud. Tiranul pare să fi fost receptiv față de solicitările coloniei doriene. La nivelul anului 295 a.Chr., Diodor menționează că el a încheiat alianțe cu peucetii și iapygii, implicându-se într-o zonă unde Roma avea obiective încă de la finalul secolului 4 a.Chr.

Reacția Republicii Romane în fața noilor raporturi de forță din aria meridională a peninsulei poate fi doar presupusă. În anul 298 a.Chr., Roma a renegociat alianța cu Liga Lucaniană având în vedere, în primul rând, redeschiderea ostilităților împotriva samniților. Dacă Agathokles urmărea să treacă însă de granițele regiunii bruttiene, el se anunța ca posibil adversar și nu este lipsit de sens să presupunem că alianța romano-lucaniană din 298 a.Chr. a cuprins, de asemenea, stipulații pentru a bloca avansul tiranului.

Semnarea alianțelor cu iapygii și peucetii în 295 a.Chr. de către Agathokles a indicat din nou Romei o posibilă intersectare a zonelor de control cu un adversar din sud. În anul 291 a.Chr., Roma a instalat o colonie latină la Venusia. Pe lângă funcția sa de avanpost împotriva adversarilor italici, noua colonie devenea un punct excelent pentru a ține Tarentum sub observație. Agathokles se pare că a fost și el vizat prin trimiterea grupului de coloniști la Venusia: noua colonie îi arăta tiranului unde trebuiau să se oprească ambițiile sale italice și îi indica limitele colaborării între Syrakusa și Tarentum.

The end of the 4th century B.C. of the Sicilian history was marked by the authoritative rule of Agathocles, the tyrant of Syracuse. The first years of his impetuous career were wasted in fights against Carthage¹. In 306 B.C., faced with the opposition of some Greek cities in Sicily, Agathocles concluded an acceptable peace with the traditional enemy of Syracuse, which gave him the control over the Sicilian territories from the east of the Halycus river². After 305 B.C., when he managed to defeat the rebel cities of his domain³, the tyrant became free to strengthen his position or to expand his possessions.

In the Western part of Sicily, any political or military interference was likely to reopen the war against Carthage. After his defeat in the conflict from the years 312-306 B.C., Agathocles did not lose the thought of revenge until his last breath. In 289 B.C., the army and the fleet were ready for a new campaign, but the tyrant died in the same year, leaving unfulfilled his anti-Carthaginian plans⁴. But Syracuse needed to rebuild its forces after the peace from 306 B.C. and Agathocles did not take the risk to start a new conflict with the African state. The need to find the necessary resources for a revival and a different operation field, other than Sicily, urged the tyrant to look beyond the shores of the island, towards the Italic coasts.

The Syracusan interference in the affairs of South Italy is not peculiar only to the age of Agathocles. At the peak of its power, Syracuse showed a special interest towards the Greek colonies from Magna Graecia. Dionysius I led his troops several times to Southern Italy, at the beginning of the 4th century B.C., obtaining significant results. Through war or through diplomatic channels, many of the Italiote cities were brought under the control of the Syracusan tyrant and became an appendix of his Sicilian domain. After Dionysius' death, his descendants failed to stop the break-up of the Syracusan domination, but the tyrant's interest for the regions of the Southern part of Italy opened a new direction in the foreign policy of the great Sicilian city⁵.

Agathocles started his political and military career in the Southern area of Italy. By 324 B.C., he participated, together with his brother, in a military expedition organized by Syracuse in order to support Croton against the

¹ The African expedition: ALLCROFT 1890, 150 *sqq.*; FREEMAN 1894, 400-465; TILLYARD 1908, 103 *sqq.*; CARY 1927, 624 *sqq.*; GSELL 1928, 21 *sqq.*; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 382-392; BERVE 1953, 52 *sqq.*; MEISTER 1984, 393 *sqq.*

² DIODORUS 20.79.5; JUSTIN 22.8.15; see ALLCROFT 1890, 162; NIESE 1894a, 754; FREEMAN 1894, 465; TILLYARD 1908, 188-190; GSELL 1928, 62; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 393; VAN COMPERNOLLE 1954, 395 *sqq.*; WILL 1966, 99; MEISTER 1984, 404.

³ DIODORUS 20.89-20.90.2; JUSTIN 23.1.1; ALLCROFT 1890, 162-163; FREEMAN 1894, 466-468; MEISTER 1984, 404-405.

⁴ DIODORUS 21.16.

⁵ The Syracusan expansion in South Italy under Dionysius I: ALLCROFT 1890, 104-108; FREEMAN 1894, 176-192; BURY 1933, 127-131; HAMMOND 1959, 478-479; CAVEN 1990, 124-146; LEWIS 1994, 144-147; CARLIER 1998, 168-170; Syracuse after the death of Dionysius: ALLCROFT 1890, 111-125; FREEMAN 1894, 239-285, 290-293; HACKFORTH 1933, 272-285; HAMMOND 1959, 517-520; WOODHEAD 1962, 94 *sqq.*; CAVEN 1990, 213-221; WESTLAKE 1994, 69 *sqq.*; CARLIER 1998, 174 *sqq.*

Bruttians⁶. Few years after this event, the future tyrant allied with the democrats exiled from Croton and tried to attack the city⁷. After this attempt, Agathocles continued his activity in Magna Graecia, enrolling himself as a mercenary, in the service of Tarentum⁸.

The anti-Carthaginian war from 312-306 B.C. and some events that occurred after this conflict suggest some other possible connections of the tyrant with the Italic area. Among the troops that gave the first battle against Carthage on the African territory, at Tunis in 310 B.C., there was a detachment of 3.000 soldiers, consisting of Samnites, Etruscans and Celts⁹. After 3 years, in 307 B.C., 18 Etruscan ships managed to brake the blockade made by the Carthaginian fleet in the harbour of Syracuse, thus helping Agathocles to reach once again the coast of North Africa¹⁰. Among the troops found there, there were also 6.000 Celts, Samnites and Etruscans¹¹. Around 300 B.C., during a military operation in the Southern part of Italy, 2.000 Ligurians and Etruscans were slaughtered due to a rebellion¹².

These successive Etruscan presences in the army of the Syracusan ruler show his good perception of the unstable balance of power in the Italic Peninsula. The Roman successes in the Second Samnite War worried some Etruscan cities which went to war against the Roman Republic in 311 B.C. One year later, the first Etruscan contingents in the service of Syracuse were recorded in the army of Agathocles in Africa. This episode and those highlighted above prove that some of the Etruscan cities showed a favorable attitude towards Agathocles, by sending troops to him or by allowing him to make recruitments within their territories.

The reasons for their reorientation in the foreign policy towards Agathocles, which replaced the traditional relations with Carthage¹³, are not given in the literary tradition, but the rapprochement seems to be linked to the spread of the complications of the Great Samnite War towards the center, East and South of the Italic Peninsula. The progressive extension of the conflict and the Roman successes convinced the Samnites and the Etruscans that it was necessary to spend more efforts in order to put an end to this dangerous evolution. Considering the interest of Dionysius I in the Southern part of Italy, the Samnites and the Etruscans probably hoped that Agathocles would direct the Syracusan foreign policy towards this area. In the context of the Second Samnite War, it seems that the tyrant was seen by the opponents of Rome as a possible way to create difficulties to its allies from the Southern regions of Italy. The purpose

⁶ DIODORUS 19.3.3-19.3.4; the chronology of the actions taken by Agathocles in Magna Graecia is full of uncertainties; for a chronological framework and an analysis of the first steps of Agathocles' career, see ALLCROFT 1890, 139 *sqq.*; FREEMAN 1894, 357 *sqq.*; TILLYARD 1908, 41 *sqq.*; CARY 1927, 618 *sqq.*; BERVE 1953, 21-45; MARASCO 1984, 384 *sqq.*

⁷ DIODORUS 19.4.1.

⁸ DIODORUS 19.4.1.

⁹ DIODORUS 20.11.1.

¹⁰ DIODORUS 20.61.6.

¹¹ DIODORUS 20.64.2.

¹² DIODORUS 21.3.

¹³ See ARISTOTLE, *Politics* 3.9.6; MOMMSEN 1987, 95-96; LANCEL 1995, 84-86; NEDU 2006, 761.

could only be achieved if Syracuse revived its interest for Magna Graecia, but this was hard to put into practice as long as the Carthaginian war was in progress. If that war had been settled in favor of the tyrant, that would have created the premises for him to focus on the Italic area annexed by Dionysius more than half a century ago. By investigating the contacts of Agathocles with the Italic Peninsula, we may be able to understand why the tyrant, since 311 B.C., had recruited detachments from Etruria and Samnium for his armies¹⁴.

Tarentum seemingly did not agree to the way the Etruscans and the Samnites perceived Agathocles, in respect of his involvement in the power relations from Italy. In 314 B.C., Acrotatus, a Spartan commander, was called by the exiled Syracusans to be entrusted with the war operations against Agathocles. This character first went to Tarentum, where he received 20 ships, then he sailed to Sicily, establishing his headquarters at Acragas. While his behaviour degenerated into authoritative forms, Tarentum prepared further support for the actions of Acrotatus. Becoming repugnant to those who called him, the Spartan general had to leave Sicily and the Dorian colony recalled its fleet that had already started his way towards the Sicilian coasts¹⁵. Its involvement in the troubled affairs of Sicily proves that Tarentum did not approved the efforts made by Agathocles in order to get the absolute power in Syracuse. The reasons that determined Tarentum to support Acrotatus in his outspoken attempt to set Syracuse free were probably connected to some past experiences. Dionysius I did not have strained relations with Tarentum, but the extension of his domination in the area of Magna Graecia might have generated fear and suspicions among those who governed the city¹⁶. In 314 B.C., Agathocles was aiming at the discretionary power in Syracuse by suppressing all forms of opposition. Fixing the relations with Carthage, by war or by a political arrangement, remained the main objective of Agathocles in this period. According to the traditional line of the Syracusan tyrants, it was expected that he would stimulate the foreign policy of the city, and the Southern Italy could become one of his future targets. In 314 B.C., Tarentum was very likely to feel some concern about the Syracusan expansion towards the peninsular area and it preferred to give support to Acrotatus, who promised to fight against Agathocles¹⁷.

¹⁴ Cf. NEDU 2006, 757-766.

¹⁵ DIODORUS 19.70.1-19.71.5; ALLCROFT 1890, 145; NIESE 1894b, 1207; TILLYARD 1908, 61-63; LOMAS 1993, 43.

¹⁶ BURY 1933, 130: the Italic domain of Dionysius I included Thurii, Heraclea, Metapontum and Tarentum; WOODHEAD 1962, 92: the tyrant concluded alliances with Tarentum and Locrii; CAVEN 1990, 136, 178, 196: Tarentum was situated at far distance from Dionysius' sphere of dominance in Italy and it chose to maintain its neutrality, remaining independent, both in its relations with the Italic populations and with the tyrant of Syracuse; PURCELL 1994, 387-388; CARLIER 1998, 170: the Italiote cities of Tarentum, Metapontum and Heraclea were Dionysius' allies.

¹⁷ GIANNELLI 1974, 358: the Tarentines helped Acrotatus because of their good relations with the motherland; Sparta was sensitive to the needs of its colony – in 344 B.C. it sent Archidamus to support Tarentum, since the city was making war with the neighboring populations (DIODORUS 16.61.4-16.63.1; PLUTARCH, *Agis* 3.2; NIESE 1895, 468-469; BELOCH 1922, 595; CIACERI 1932, 6-7; HACKFORTH 1933, 300; WUILLEUMIER 1939, 79-82; HAMMOND 1959, 580; DE SANCTIS 1960, 277; GIANNELLI 1969, 1-6;

The tyrant became active in the Italic area only after he ended the war with Carthage, by the peace of 306 B.C. Diodorus signals his presence in the Italic waters in 304 B.C., when he plundered the Lipari islands¹⁸. Unfortunately, his next actions are poorly documented due to the interruption of the coherent narration of the historian from Agyrium. Agathocles certainly deployed his troops in South Italy in the next decade, but the objectives and the exact chronology of his involvement in the peninsula can only be hardly traced.

Three fragments from the *Library of History* describe the military activities carried out by the tyrant in the Southern part of Italy: the first paragraph, 21.3, describes the suppression of a rebellion of the Ligurians and the Etruscans from his army, incident followed by a conflict with the Bruttians, who managed to defeat Agathocles' troops; the second paragraph, 21.4, refers to the occupation of Croton, ruled by the tyrant Menedemus, and the conclusion of an alliance with the Iapyges and the Peuceti; the third text, 21.8, records a military campaign in Bruttium ending with in the occupation of Hipponium¹⁹; the Bruttians, frightened by the fall of the city, made peace with the tyrant, but after he had left Italy, they defeated the occupation force and freed themselves from Syracusan domination.

The first military action narrated by Diodorus was carried out by 300 B.C., because Agathocles received rumors about the mercenaries' rebellion while fighting at Corcyra, against Cassander, who wished to occupy the island²⁰. The rebellion of the Ligurians and Etruscans mercenaries and the reaction of the Bruttians prove that a Syracusan army was present in the Southern area of Italy before the battle from Corcyra. Before 300 B.C., the Bruttians were probably under the command of Agathocles and the breaking off occurred shortly after the tyrant's return from Corcyra, due to the massacre of the Ligurians and Etruscans who only claimed their due payment²¹.

The second sequence of Diodorus should be related to the third paragraph. As a matter of fact, it seems to deal with only one military action carried out in Bruttium, rather than with two different operations²². As a chronological marker,

BRAUER 1986, 62-63; MOMMSEN 1987, 212; LOMAS 1993, 42; PURCELL 1994, 391); later on, between 334-330 B.C., Alexander the Molossian also fought in Italy, at Tarentum's request, and with the intention to create a personal domain in the Southern part of the peninsula (LIVY 8.3.6-7, 8.24.4-8.24.14; JUSTIN 12.2.1-12.2.14; KAERST 1894, 1410; BELOCH 1922, 596-598; CIACERI 1932, 8-14; HOFFMANN 1934, 19-20; WUILLEUMIER 1939, 82-87; HAMMOND 1959, 580-581; DE SANCTIS 1960, 278-280; PIGANIOL 1967, 159; GIANNELLI 1969, 6-22; DEROW 1970, 38-39; BRAUER 1986, 68-71; MOMMSEN 1987, 212; GREEN 1990, 228; LOMAS 1993, 42-43; PURCELL 1994, 391-392; OAKLEY 1998, 589-591, 664-674).

¹⁸ DIODORUS 20.101.1.

¹⁹ See also STRABO 6.1.5.

²⁰ DIODORUS 21.2-3.

²¹ DIODORUS 21.3; TILLYARD 1908, 212-213 was wrong when he assumed that the Ligurian and Etruscan mercenaries rebelled in Sicily; if the location proposed by Tillyard was correct, we can not explain the violent reaction of the Bruttians; see MEISTER 1984, 407, VATTUONE 1987-1988, 58-60.

²² VATTUONE 1987-1988, 66-67; for an approach of the two sequences as independent expeditions, see FREEMAN 1894, 482-483; TILLYARD 1908, 214-218; BELOCH 1925, 203-206; CIACERI 1932, 31-32; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 396; BERVE 1953, 65; DE

we have a valuable clue. Agathocles occupied Croton while he drove his daughter Lanassa in Epirus, where she was supposed to marry Pyrrhus, and we know that the first year of her marriage was 295 B.C.²³

Were these campaigns simple raids that prove only the tyrant's bent towards robbery and the lack of a coherent policy in Southern Italy? Such an interpretation was preferred in some studies that analyzed the Italic policy of Agathocles²⁴.

The seemingly incoherence of the tyrant's policy in the peninsula is due to the fragmentary condition of Diodorus' narration. In 304 B.C., we found that the Syracusan fleet landed in the Lipari islands²⁵, but the lack of information about any other activity in the area until 300 B.C. does not prove that the Italic region went out of the tyrant's interest for the next 4 years. When the Sicilian fleet defeated Cassander at Corcyra in 300 B.C., the Syracusan troops were deployed, along with the Bruttians, in the Southern part of Italy²⁶. A first target of these military actions of Agathocles in the peninsula, after plundering the Lipari islands in 304 B.C., could have been Cleonymus, who had come in 303 B.C. with the intention to create for himself a domain in the regions occupied by the Greeks in the West²⁷. Nevertheless, the Spartan commander did not achieve anything noteworthy in Italy. During his first year in the Italic area, he managed to put an end to the conflict between Lucania and Tarentum, fulfilling the major objective of his expedition²⁸. Agathocles might have seen him as an opponent in the Southern region of Italy, after the Spartan general attacked Metapontum, in collaboration with the Lucanian League²⁹. The rumours about his intention to liberate Sicily from tyranny made Agathocles to keep an eye on the events from South Italy³⁰. His attempt to have an authoritative rule for the sake of his personal interest made him undesirable to the Tarentines and Agathocles probably had been suspecting, even since 303 B.C., the plans of Cleonymus, who officially had come to help the Dorian colony. These two characters could have hardly found a solution to live peacefully, since the intentions of the Spartan commander opposed the traditional interests of Syracuse in the Southern region of Italy³¹. Thus, it seems that Agathocles tried to strengthen the Syracusan presence in the peninsula in order to prevent a possible expansion of Cleonymus.

After the relegation of the Spartan general in 302 B.C., Agathocles considered

SANCTIS 1960, 351-353; MEISTER 1984, 407.

²³ DIODORUS 21.4; see also PLUTARCH, *Pyrrhus* 9.1, APPIAN, *Samn.* 11.1.

²⁴ CARY 1927, 634; cf. also MEISTER 1984, 406; GREEN 1990, 224.

²⁵ DIODORUS 20.101.1.

²⁶ DIODORUS 21.2-3.

²⁷ About the presence of Cleonymus in Italy, see LIVY 10.2.1-10.2.15, DIODORUS 20.104.1-20.105.3; FREEMAN 1894, 473-477; TILLYARD 1908, 205-210; LENSCHAU 1921, 780-781; BELOCH 1925, 202; IDEM 1926, 434-435; CIACERI 1932, 25-28; HOFFMANN 1934, 51-53; WUILLEUMIER 1939, 94-96; MELONI 1950, 103-121; DE SANCTIS 1960, 327-330; DEROW 1970, 45-47; GIANNELLI 1974, 353-369; MOMMSEN 1987, 220; LOMAS 1993, 43; PURCELL 1994, 392; OAKLEY 2005, 49 *sqq.*

²⁸ DIODORUS 20.104.3.

²⁹ DIODORUS 20.104.3-4.

³⁰ DIODORUS 20.104.4.

³¹ VATTUONE 1987-1988, 63-64; PIGANIOL 1967, 162: Tarentum requested help from Agathocles against Cleonymus.

the alliance with the Bruttians as useless and thus, by 300 B.C., they were already in conflict. According to Diodorus, the Syracusan army was defeated in a night battle and was forced to leave Southern Italy³².

The second campaign started in 295 B.C., with a massive gathering of troops, over 30.000 soldiers, and with strong ambitions. Agathocles occupied Croton and Hipponium and the Bruttian League, frightened by the massive expedition and taken by surprise, preferred to conclude peace³³.

This expedition completes the coherent and lucid policy of Agathocles towards the Southern Italy. At first, the master of Syracuse opposed the aggressive plans of Cleonymus; then, after 300 B.C., he tried to restore the traditional area of influence of Syracuse in Bruttium, which was lost due to the concentration of all efforts to the war against Carthage during the first part of his rule. Around 295 B.C., after the occupation of Croton and Hipponium and the conclusion of the treaty with the Bruttian League, Agathocles managed to give a new shape to the Southern part of the peninsula where Syracuse had its traditional interests³⁴. It is very likely that the tyrant might have had in mind the intention to create a Hellenistic empire in the Western world, comprising islands from the Adriatic Sea, some parts of Southern Italy and the Eastern part of Sicily³⁵. The achievements of Dionysius I in the past served as the model for such a political and military enterprise, while the competing Hellenistic kings spurred Agathocles's ambition and his appetite for power³⁶.

In a plausible reconstruction, these could be the achievements of Agathocles in South Italy. His military actions in the South of the peninsula and especially his attacks against Croton and Hipponium represented an intrusion in an area where Tarentum also had major interests. The tyrant's policy in this region could not be perceived positively by those who governed the Dorian colony, but, at the same time, we must remark that the military actions of Agathocles targeted Bruttium

³²DIODORUS 21.3.

³³DIODORUS 21.4, 21.8; also see JUSTIN 23.1.3-23.2.2; the Bruttians' insurrection, described in DIODORUS 21.8 immediately after the last Italic expedition of Agathocles might have happened after his death in 289 B.C.; STRABO 6.1.5 describes the construction of a harbour by the tyrant, at Hipponium; this fact suggests that the Syracusan presence in the Southern part of Italy was longer than we might infer from Diodorus' text (GIANNELLI 1974, 379-380; MARASCO 1984, 100).

³⁴JUSTIN 23.1: Agathocles, after concluding peace with Carthage, went to the Italic peninsula following the example of Dionysius, who occupied many cities in Italy; GIANNELLI 1974, 373 *sqq.*; VATTUONE 1987-1988, 66-67; LOMAS 1993, 43; FREEMAN 1894, 471: the tyrant intended to become the champion of the freedom of the Italiotes, against the local populations; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 395-396: Agathocles tried to mediate the relations between the Italiotes and the native populations; ALLCROFT 1890, 163, MARASCO 1984, 104-105; BERVE 1953, 64-65 also analyzed the possibility that the Italiotes might have asked for support from Agathocles, offering him a reason for his intervention in the Italic peninsula.

³⁵BRINGMANN 2009, 59.

³⁶In 304/305 B.C., Agathocles declared himself king, following the line opened by the Diadochi of Alexander the Great (DIODORUS 20.54.1; POLYBIUS 15.35.4; NIESE 1894a, 755; FREEMAN 1894, 443-444; TILLYARD 1908, 202; BERVE 1953, 61-64, 67-77; MEISTER 1984, 405; GREEN 1990, 223).

without being directed towards the South-Eastern region of Italy. This orientation revealed to Tarentum that the expansion of Agathocles had some limits and the new military and political evolutions from the peninsula led to the reshaping of the Tarentine attitude toward the Syracusan ruler. In 314 B.C., the support granted to Acrotatus aimed at undermining his power. However, after the Lacinian treaty concluded with Rome in 302 B.C.³⁷ and the outbreak of the Third Samnite War, Tarentum searched allies who could give it support in case of an extension of the conflict in Southern Italy. Agathocles, led by his own Italic interests, was probably seen, at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., as a powerful factor, capable to stop the Roman progresses in the South. A paragraph of Strabo proves the tyrant's rehabilitation in the eyes of the Greeks from Tarentum. Among the commanders called by the Tarentines in Italy to protect their interests, Strabo enumerates Archidamus, Alexander the Molossian, Cleonymus, Agathocles and Pyrrhus³⁸.

The exact date when Tarentum started negotiations with the ruler of Syracuse is likely to be close to the date of the outbreak of the third war between Rome and the Samnite League. In 298 B.C., the Roman Republic renegotiated its former alliance with the Lucanian League³⁹, which was enough to prove to Tarentum that the war was to be carried out not only in central Italy. At the same time, if the Lacinian treaty is accepted as a diplomatic success of Rome, it will be beyond doubt that Tarentum considered it only a compromise and wished to revise its terms as soon as possible⁴⁰.

Agathocles seemed to be responsive to the requests of the Dorian colony. Diodorus records that, in 295 B.C., during his second Italic expedition, Agathocles concluded alliances with the Peuceti and the Iapyges⁴¹. The exact locating of the communities that signed treaties with the tyrant represents a task that can succeed only to a limited extent. According to Strabo's records, the Peuceti lived

³⁷ APPIAN, *Samn.* 7.1; cf. NEDU 2007, 23-25.

³⁸ STRABO 6.3.4; also see JUSTIN 23.1.17; cf. BELOCH 1925, 203; CIACERI, 1932, 28, DE SANCTIS 1960, 351; HOFFMANN 1934; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 396: it is possible that the tyrant might have been called by the Tarentines in Italy, against the Bruttian League; BERVE 1953, 65-66, GIANNELLI 1974, 376 accepted the possible existence of some relations between Agathocles and Tarentum; NIESE 1894a, 755; BRINGMANN 2009, 59 supposed that the tyrant interfered in the South of Italy at the demand of Tarentum, against the Bruttians and the Lucanians. Against the connections between Agathocles and Tarentum, at the end of the 4th century B.C. and the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., see MARASCO 1984, 101-102; based on DIODORUS 20.104.4, who mentions Cleonymus' intention to interfere in Sicily against Agathocles, the Italian scholar tried to prove that Tarentum developed an anti-Syracusan policy; however, we must remark that Diodorus assigns the Sicilian plan only to the Spartan general, and it is not excluded that the campaign planned against Syracuse should actually indicate how tempting was the island in his Western plan; MOMMSEN 1987, 223: Tarentum feared Agathocles' expansion in Italy; PURCELL 1994, 392 rejected any association between Agathocles and Tarentum.

³⁹ LIVY 10.11.11-10.12.3; DIONYSIUS 17.1.1-17.2.2; cf. NEDU 2008, 162-166.

⁴⁰ See NEDU 2007, 23-25.

⁴¹ DIODORUS 21.4: "Agathocles concluded an alliance with the nearby barbarians, the Iapyges and the Peuceti, and he provided them vessels for piracy, receiving in exchange a part of the prey".

in the Southern area of the Aufidus river, between the sea and Silvium⁴². Iapygia represented the Southern region of Tarentum, divided in two parts, the Sallentine territory and the Calabrian area⁴³. As long as we do not know the sources of Diodorus, as well as the exact meaning of the ethnic appellations mentioned by the Sicilian historian, the description of Strabo can only have a moderate value for the investigation of Agathocles' alliances⁴⁴. Generally speaking, his treaties with the populations from the peninsula can be located in the South-East of Italy, a region where Rome also had allies and major interests⁴⁵.

Between 299-295 B.C., Agathocles concentrated his actions in Bruttium, which was a traditional orientation for the Syracusan expansion. From this point of view, the alliances with the Peuceti and the Iapyges exceed the normal limits of the tyrant's policy and hence we have to place them in a different context. The communities allied with Agathocles in 295 B.C. were located in a region where Tarentum had been having significant interests for more than half a century. But its presence in Apulia had been considerably reduced because of the Lacinian treaty. Most likely, this treaty was concluded in 302 B.C., when Tarentum was in conflict with Cleonymus and the Roman legions entered the Sallentine region⁴⁶. Due to these circumstances, Tarentum was forced to recognize the alliances of Rome from Apulia and from the Sallentine region. In return, the Dorian colony got the pledge that the Roman ships would not sail across the Lacinian Promontory, in the Ionian Sea, and also received the exclusivity of action in Magna Graecia⁴⁷. The military actions against the communities allied with the Romans would have surely led to the outbreak of a war with the Roman Republic, a risk that Tarentum assumed only when it was too late, in 282 B.C. But Agathocles could have been pushed towards Apulia and the treaties signed in 295 B.C. prove that the political move of Tarentum was successful.

Diodorus 21.4 recorded a single clause stipulated by these alliances: Agathocles would be obliged to provide vessels for piracy but, in return, he would receive a part of the prey. If there had also been some other terms, the very brief description of the Sicilian historian prevents us from trying an accurate reconstruction. The interpretation of these treaties in terms of an anti-Roman policy should be done with caution⁴⁸. Agathocles wanted revenge against

⁴² STRABO 6.3.8.

⁴³ STRABO 6.3.1.

⁴⁴ Cf. SALMON 1982, 18-20, for the ethnical and political configuration of the South-Eastern part of the Italic peninsula.

⁴⁵ NEDU 2007, 7-25; NEDU 2009, 63-70.

⁴⁶ LIVY 10.2.1-10.2.3; DIODORUS 20.105.1-20.105.3; TILLYARD 1908, 206; BELOCH 1925, 202; Idem 1926, 435; HOFFMANN 1934, 54-56; WUILLEUMIER 1939, 94-95; THIEL 1954, 20-21; DE SANCTIS 1960, 329; GIANNELLI 1974, 363; MARASCO 1984, 98; LOMAS 1993, 50; NEDU 2007, 23-25.

⁴⁷ HOFFMANN 1934, 54; THIEL 1954, 20-21; NEDU 2007, 23-25.

⁴⁸ For this assumption, see especially BELOCH 1925, 203 *sqq.*; BELOCH 1926, 436; against this hypothesis, CIACERI 1932, 31, n. 5; HOFFMANN 1934, 57-59; BERVE 1953, 66; GIANNELLI 1974, 375; MARASCO 1984, 102-103; ALLCROFT 1890, 163: the tyrant got in conflict with the Roman troops; FREEMAN 1894, 469-471: Agathocles did not have a hostile attitude towards Rome, but he took the progresses of the Republic as a warning, since Rome could have become a serious competitor in his attempt to control the regions from

Carthage and wished to play an important role on the political stage of the Hellenistic world⁴⁹. The control over some cities of Magna Graecia and some coastal regions of the Italic peninsula probably aimed at providing him the necessary resources to accomplish the two major objectives of his career. The attempt to protect his interests and possessions in Southern Italy could have finally led to a clash with Rome. But, at the beginning of the 3rd century B.C., Agathocles did not have any reason to attempt a decisive involvement in the relations between Rome and the other Italic communities. His alliances in the South-East of Italy can be considered as anti-Roman only in a limited extent, but in accord with the Tarentine interests. Most likely, these alliances did not contain specific terms against the Roman Republic, but their conclusion signaled Agathocles' presence in Apulia and they could turn into a warning to the political leaders from Rome⁵⁰.

The reaction of Rome towards the new power relations from the Southern region of the peninsula can only be presumed. The restoration of the Syracusan domination in Bruttium after 304 B.C. and the contacts of the tyrant with Tarentum were likely to frighten the Roman Senate. In 298 B.C., Rome renegotiated its alliance with the Lucanian League, considering mainly the reopening of the hostilities against the Samnites⁵¹. The terms of the new alliance probably involved some significant differences, comparing to the old treaty, signed in 326 B.C.⁵². Due to the fussiness within the Lucanian Federation and to the peace treaty signed by the Lucanians in 303 B.C. with Tarentum⁵³, Rome's

South Italy; FREEMAN 1894, 482: the alliances Agathocles concluded with the Peuceti and the Iapyges were directed against Tarentum; NIESE 1894a, 755: in his advance in Apulia, Agathocles may have come in contact with Rome; the same supposition has been issued by GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 396; DE SANCTIS 1960, 352: the Peuceti allied with the tyrant, because they feared the extension of the Roman domination.

⁴⁹ The relations of the Syracusan tyrant with the Hellenistic kings: NIESE 1894a, 755-756; FREEMAN 1894, 481-482; GLOTZ, ROUSSEL, COHEN 1945, 394, 397; BERVE 1953, 64 *sqq.*; WILL 1966, 101-102; MARASCO 1984, 110 *sqq.*; GREEN 1990, 223-224.

⁵⁰ HOFFMANN 1934, 58-59: Agathocles knew that his alliances from Bruttium and Apulia, and the ones concluded with the Greek cities could have played a very important role in case of a war with Rome; MARASCO 1984, 107 *sqq.* has seen these alliances as being motivated mainly by economical reasons: by occupying Croton and Hipponium, Agathocles controlled the sailing along the coasts of Southern Italy; the Apulian alliances helped the nearby communities to pirate in the Adriatic Sea and introduced an indirect control of Agathocles over the commercial traffic between Greece and Italy; if this interpretation is correct, Agathocles carried on the Adriatic policy of Dionysius I (see BURY 1933, 129-131; HAMMOND 1959, 479; MOMMSEN 1987, 193; CAVEN 1990, 150-153; LEWIS 1994, 147-148; CARLIER 1998, 170-171: by the year 385 B.C., the tyrant installed colonists on the Pharus island and at Lissus, in an area reach in silver and other mineral resources, and a Syracusan naval station was settled on Issa island; from these positions, the domination of Syracuse was extended to the Eastern coasts of the Italic peninsula. At Ancona, the tyrant installed a new colony, and at Numana he settled an *emporium*; Dionysius also sent colonists to the Padus' mouths, in order to revive the old Etruscan colony Hadria).

⁵¹ LIVY 10.11.11-10.12.3; DIONYSIUS 17.1.1-17.2.2; NEDU 2008, 163.

⁵² LIVY 8.25.2-3; NEDU 2008, 155-159.

⁵³ DIODORUS 20.104.3.

confidence in the loyalty of the League was shattered. Therefore, the new treaty was strengthened by the surrender of a group of Lucanian hostages. Also, since the anti-Roman faction from Lucania had been supported by a Samnite military intervention⁵⁴, the new structure of the alliance included, unlike the one negotiated in 326 B.C., terms against the League from Samnium. In 294 B.C., Titus Livius records the presence of a Lucanian cohort in the fights against the Samnites⁵⁵. The clauses that stipulated the collaboration of the two allies against Tarentum probably remained in force, as a precaution, despite the Lacinian treaty from 302 B.C.

On the other hand, we must keep in mind that the Roman-Lucanian alliance was redebated in 298 B.C., when Agathocles was taking action in Bruttium and when he probably was in contact with Tarentum. The chronological structure of the events and the power balance in the South of the peninsula make us think that the presence of the tyrant caused the acceleration of the negotiations between Rome and the Lucanian League. If Agathocles had wanted to cross the borders of the Bruttian region, the tyrant showed himself as a threat for Rome and we are entitled to assume that the Roman-Lucanian alliance from 298 B.C. included stipulations aiming at stopping his advance⁵⁶.

The strains between Rome and Tarentum have not found a definitive solution by the agreement of 302 B.C. This treaty was imposed to the Dorian colony by the necessities of the moment, but it only masked some tensions not yet quenched. Probably, Rome also did not expect that the real attitude of Tarentum should change as a result of the Lacinian treaty. This state of distrust is proved by the negotiations that Rome carried out in 298 B.C. with the Lucanian Federation and by the fact that Apulia continued to be, during the Third Samnite War, an important battlefield for the armies of the Roman Republic. In the records of Livy, the Roman legions took action in Apulia in 297 B.C. and 294 B.C.⁵⁷. Certainly, the pulse of the Apulian expeditions was not as intense as the one from the campaigns of the Great Samnite War. This last conflict had brought many communities from the South-East region of Italy to the Roman network of alliances, and during the years of the Third Samnite War Apulia represented for Rome an area almost pacified⁵⁸.

The conclusion of the alliances with the Iapyges and the Peuceti in 295 B.C. by Agathocles indicated to Rome a possible intersection of its spheres of control with an adversary from South. This situation was likely to hurry the efforts made by Rome in order to end the Third Samnite War. The campaign from Sentinum postponed and, at the same time, prepared the end of the conflict. Between 295-291 B.C., the Roman legions, released from the pressure of the North front, pacified Samnium. In 291 B.C., according to Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Rome settled a Latin colony at Venusia⁵⁹. Strategically, this location was very important

⁵⁴ LIVY 10.11.11-12; DIONYSIUS 17/18.1.1.

⁵⁵ LIVY 10.33.1.

⁵⁶ NEDU 2008, 162-166.

⁵⁷ LIVY 10.14.1-3 (297 B.C.), 10.35.1-10.36.15 (294 B.C.).

⁵⁸ An attempt of some Apulian communities to collaborate with the Samnites is recorded by LIVY 10.14.1-3, for the year 297 B.C.

⁵⁹ DIONYSIUS 17/18.5.2; the strategic importance of the colony: SALMON 1970, 60.

since it allowed the control of the route that linked Tarentum with central Italy, at the border between the Samnite, Lucanian and Apulian territories. Undoubtedly, the colony of Venusia was installed especially to guard Samnium from South-East. It could also be used as a mean to overlook the Lucanian Federation, whose policy manifested a dangerous instability at the end of the 4th century B.C. and the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. Besides its function as an outpost against the Italic adversaries, the new colony became an excellent position to keep an eye on Tarentum. Agathocles, the Sicilian partner of the Tarentine policy, might have also been targeted by the colony of Venusia: the new settlement showed to the tyrant the boundaries of his Italic ambitions and the limits of the collaboration between Syracuse and Tarentum⁶⁰.

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⁶⁰ BELOCH 1925, 205-206; SCULLARD 1951, 118: the colony was settled against Agathocles.

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