

Zeitschrift: Schweizerische numismatische Rundschau = Revue suisse de numismatique = Rivista svizzera di numismatica
Herausgeber: Schweizerische Numismatische Gesellschaft
Band: 93 (2014)

Artikel: Silver for Syracuse : the athenian defeat and the period of the "signing artists"
Autor: Canevaro, Mirko / Rutter, Keith
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-515031>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 14.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

SILVER FOR SYRACUSE:
THE ATHENIAN DEFEAT AND THE PERIOD
OF THE ‘SIGNING ARTISTS’

At some point in the later fifth century there was a significant burst of new tetradrachm coinage at Syracuse: not only was the rate of coining suddenly increased, but the types of both obverse and reverse were significantly re-figured.* On obverses the former static type of the chariot was abandoned in favour of one with more vigorous movement, while on reverses the design of the female head surrounded by dolphins was given a fresh look.¹ These changes in the design of the types were accompanied by an unprecedented efflorescence of engravers’ signatures, not only at Syracuse but at several other Sicilian mints as well, so much so that this period of coinage in Sicily is commonly known as the period of the ‘signing artists’.² In recent articles Keith Rutter has described this phenomenon and offered some explanations for it,³ and argued that the *terminus post quem* for the beginning of the period, associated with the work of the engravers Sosion and Eumenes at Syracuse, was 413.⁴ As far as the coining of tetradrachms was concerned the period was over soon after 400.

* Keith Rutter wishes to acknowledge the support of the Leverhulme Trust for his work on the forthcoming third edition of Barclay Head’s *Historia Numorum*.

¹ The changes are most obvious in the obverse chariots, but have been noted in the tone and content of the obverse heads as well. G.K. Jenkins found ‘a quite new freshness of feeling’ in them (*Ancient Greek Coins*, 2nd revised edn. (London, 1990), p. 94; C. M. KRAAY referred to ‘a notable increase in the care devoted to reproducing the waves and curls of [Arethusa’s] hair, the embroidery of her *sakkos* and the details of jewellery’ (*Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (London, 1976), p. 222).

² The standard work on this period of Syracusan coinage, in particular of its tetradrachms, is L. O. T. TUDEER, *Die Tetradrachmenprägung von Syrakus in der Periode der signierenden Künstler* (Berlin, 1913).

³ N. K. RUTTER, *Artistic identity: the case of the ‘Signing Artists’ in Sicily*, *NAC* 41 (2012), pp. 71–89.

⁴ N. K. RUTTER, *Dating the period of the «Signing Artists» of Sicilian coinage*, in D. B. COUNTS – A. S. TUCK (eds), *Koine. Mediterranean Studies in Honor of R. Ross Holloway* (Oxford and Oakville, 2009), pp. 125–30.



Fig. 1 Tetradrachm of Syracuse, 413: Obv.: Quadriga galloping l., front and back legs of horses shown in parallel formations; above, Nike flying r.; in exergue, mussel shell. Rev.: Female head l., hair bound with *ampyx*; locks of hair fluttering freely; in field, four dolphins; ΣΥΡΑΚΟΣΙΩΝ. TUDEER no. 11, obv. 5 coupled with rev.8.



Fig. 2 Tetradrachm of Kamarina, 413: Obv.: Quadriga l., driven by Athena wearing crested Attic helmet; above, Nike flying r. Rev.: Head of Heracles, bearded and wearing lion-skin; around KAMARINAION (retrograde); JENKINS – WESTERMARK no. 132.3. Reverse double-struck.

To summarise the arguments supporting a beginning date of 413, they derive both from within the coinage and from external factors. The tight die-linking within the Syracusan series studied by Tudeer suggests a relatively restricted period of minting, much shorter for example than the twenty or more years suggested by a beginning somewhere in the 420s.⁵ Externally the close stylistic relationship between the obverse types of the earliest coins of the ‘signing artists’ (*Fig. 2*) series at Syracuse (*Fig. 1*) and those of the first tetradrachms of Kamarina is particularly noteworthy. The horses are shown at a gallop, but the design is still somewhat rigid, with the horses’ rear and front legs shown parallel to each other in a fanlike formation. Three of the horses’ heads are shown at the same height while a fourth (at the left) is lowered, and the single chariot wheel is shown in profile, part of it hidden by the hindquarters of the nearest horse. The composition is completed by a Victory flying above to crown the charioteer. On the tetradrachms of Kamarina there is one striking difference: the charioteer is Athena.

⁵ For example, by U. WESTERMARK – G. K. JENKINS, *The Coinage of Kamarina* (The Royal Numismatic Society, Special Publication No. 9) (London, 1980).

In their study of the coinage of Kamarina Westermarck and Jenkins rightly noted that the close stylistic relationship between the Syracusan and Kamarinaean tetradrachms implies a nearly similar dating:⁶ their suggested date was *c.* 425, which 'would coincide with the period when Kamarina reached her strongest political position'. But ever since the foundation of Kamarina by Syracuse in 598 relations between the two cities had rarely been smooth. At the time of growing Athenian interference in Sicilian affairs in the 420s, and later when a large Athenian force laid siege to Syracuse between 415 and 413, Kamarina sat on the fence. It was only in 413 that the city finally and decisively committed itself to the Syracusan cause by sending the sizeable force of five hundred hoplites, three hundred javelin men and three hundred bowmen to assist Syracuse.⁷ 413 is thus the time of close cooperation that is required for the similar coinages of Syracuse and Kamarina and the *terminus post quem* for the 'signing artist' coinage.

Could the new impetus in Syracusan coinage have occurred slightly earlier, in late 415, say, or 414? It is highly unlikely that Syracuse, faced with attack and siege by the naval superpower of the age, would have had the time or energy to embark on such an extensive revision of the tetradrachm coinage. Furthermore there is evidence that the finances of Syracuse were severely strained while the Athenians were at the gates. Nicias is said by Thucydides to have claimed in the summer of 413 that the Syracusans 'had already spent 2,000 talents and were in debt for many more'.⁸ People in debt cannot pay, and relief came only with the defeat of the Athenians. Sicily is an island without silver resources of its own. As had happened before in 480 and was to happen later in 349 in the time of Timoleon, it was a major victory (in each case over the Carthaginians) that gave rise in one case to a major increase in, and in the other case to a revival of, coinage in precious metal. In this article we will provide further evidence for a dating of the period of the 'signing artists' starting with the Athenian defeat in 413, by discussing evidence relating to the financial gains made by the Syracusans as a direct result of their victory. We will attempt to show that the amount of silver that came to them as a result of that victory was not negligible, and can account for the start of a remarkable period of extensive coinage. It is difficult to reconcile this vigorous coinage with the financial straits faced by the Syracusans during the war, or even with their situation before the war.

At the outset it is worth providing by way of context some very rough calculations of the number of tetradrachms produced in the period of 'the signing artists', lasting to around 400. De Callataÿ derives a figure of 37 obverse dies for tetradrachms from the standard study of these coins by Tudeer.⁹ Using the statistical method developed by Warren Esty¹⁰ he calculates that the number of obverse dies surviving represents 99.6% of those that were actually produced,

⁶ WESTERMARK – JENKINS, p. 42.

⁷ Thuc. 7.33.1; see further RUTTER (note 3), p. 129.

⁸ Thuc. 7.48.5.

⁹ F. DE CALLATAÿ, Recueil quantitatif des émissions monétaires archaïques et classiques (Wetteren 2003), pp. 86–7; TUDEER (note 1).

¹⁰ W. S. ESTY, Estimating the size of a coinage, NC 144 (1984): pp. 180–3.

and it is true that hardly any new obverse dies have turned up since Tudeer's study was compiled. So we are fairly sure that we have identified most of the dies that were actually engraved. If we suppose approximately 40 dies, and postulate a lower figure of 10,000 tetradrachms per die, a higher one of 20,000 per die and a still higher one of 30,000 per die, we should be able to hypothesize outputs of tetradrachms respectively of 400,000, 800,000 and 1,200,000, with totals of between 266.5, 533.3 and 800 talents of silver. Of course, tetradrachms were not the only silver coins produced by Syracuse during this period; there were a few issues of drachms, hemidrachms, litrae and smaller denominations. On the other hand the period is divided by the advent of Dionysius I, who seized power in 406/405 and had his own methods of collecting precious metal for coining.¹¹ So we are by no means arguing that all the silver for Syracusan coins between 413 and 400 was derived from imported and captured Athenian coins. But the sheer amount of silver that can be connected with the Athenian defeat makes 413 the most likely starting point for the 'signing artist' coinage at Syracuse and elsewhere in Sicily.

Thucydides is very insistent on the amount of silver that was taken from Athens to Sicily by members of the expedition in 415 (6.31.3–5). The treasury gave a drachma a day to each seaman; the trierarchs gave a bounty to the *thranitai* and to the crews generally in addition to the pay from the treasury. Thucydides also refers to the money the state was sending out in the hands of the generals, to the money for private expenses which each man was likely to have provided for himself independently of the pay from the treasury and to money that the soldiers or traders took with them for the purpose of exchange; he summarises (31.5), 'it would have been found that many talents in all were being taken out of the city'. Thucydides and the other sources are mostly vague as to what happened to all this silver after the defeat of the Athenians, but it is possible, although by no means certain, that a portion of it could still have been in the coffers of the generals Nicias and Demosthenes at the time of the defeat, and that the Syracusans seized it.

On the other hand, we have more precise information about what happened to the private possessions of the soldiers serving under Demosthenes who surrendered to the Syracusans. Thucydides reports (7.82.1–3) that Gylippus, the Spartan general, announced that all the islanders could go free, while all the others should give up their weapons and no harm would come to them. Some of the islanders deserted, but some of them, together with the Athenians and their allies, gave themselves up, a total of around 6,000 men. They were forced to hand over all the money they had on them at that moment, with the result that four hollow shields were filled with silver. Lisa Kallet has discussed this passage in some detail.¹² We agree with her that the passage provides 'a contrast to the

¹¹ For a brief survey of the sources of revenue exploited by Dionysius, see Ch. BOEHRINGER, *Zu Finanzpolitik und Münzprägung des Dionysios von Syrakus*, in O. MØRKHOLM – N. M. WAGGONER (eds), *Greek Numismatics and Archaeology. Essays in Honor of Margaret Thompson* (Wetteren, 1979), pp. 9–32, at pp. 11–12.

¹² L. KALLET, *Money and the Corrosion of Power in Thucydides: The Sicilian Expedition and its Aftermath* (Berkeley 2001), pp. 174–6.

extravagance and expectations at 6.31', but how much money would four shields contain, and was it in fact a 'paltry amount'? Kallet has tried to calculate the amount, on the basis of shields with a diameter of 40 cm. and 10 cm. deep.¹³ There are many unknowns of course: What denominations were included? Were the coins heaped or levelled off? But choosing an arbitrary proportion of drachms and tetradrachms and by means of a 'semiellipsoidal formula', Kallet calculates that each shield was likely to have contained between 2.5 and 3 talents of silver, giving a grand total of between 10 and 12 talents. If we stick to the most conservative estimate (also to allow for some wastage of silver if it was recoined), the silver collected in this instance is enough to account for at least 15,000 tetradrachms.

Another substantial source of silver for the Syracusans must have been the captives themselves. Thucydides reports (7.82.3) that the 6,000 prisoners from Demosthenes' contingent were immediately brought to Syracuse and moves on to discuss the fate of the men serving under Nicias. We do not know exactly how many Nicias' men were. Thucydides states (7.80.4) that Demosthenes' men were a little more than half (τὸ μὲν Νικίου στράτευμα, ὥσπερ ἠγεῖτο, ξυνέμενέ τε καὶ προύλαβε πολλῶ, τὸ δὲ Δημοσθένους, τὸ ἥμισυ μάλιστα καὶ πλεόν, ἀπεσπᾶσθαι τε καὶ ἀτακτότερον ἐχώρει), but it is unclear whether this means more than half the total men left, or more than half the men under Nicias.¹⁴ Whatever their original number, their fate was much less straightforward (Thuc. 7.83): Nicias offered to pay back all the war expenses of the Syracusans, and to leave hostages as sureties of the debt of the Athenians, one per talent. This was not, as Lisa Kallet has correctly observed, a realistic agreement for ransom money. It was rather the other way around: instead of paying ransom money to retrieve prisoners, Nicias offered prisoners as security for the war reparations owed by the Athenians, and therefore tried to push the monetary value attached to each man as high as possible to limit the number of hostages/captives the Syracusans would retain.¹⁵ The Syracusans rejected this offer, and attacked Nicias and his men, slaughtering many of them, and capturing many others (Thuc. 7.84–5). Thucydides however points out that because there was in this case, unlike in that of Demosthenes, no formal surrender agreement, most of the survivors were captured by individual Syracusan soldiers, who hid them and eventually used them or sold them as slaves.

¹³ On the size of the shields, cf. H. BLYTH, *The structure of a hoplite shield in the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco*, *Bollettino. Monumenti, Musei e Gallerie pontifiche* 3 (1981), pp. 5–21.

¹⁴ Cf. A. W. GOMME, in A. W. GOMME – A. A. ANDREWES – K. J. DOVER, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, Vol. 4, Books V.25–VII (Oxford 1970), pp. 459–64. S. HORNBLLOWER, *Commentary on Thucydides: Vol. III: Books 5.25–8.109* (Oxford 2008), pp. 728, 731 does not make explicit how he interprets this expression. In either case, and whether we trust the numbers provided by Thucydides for the army that originally left the harbour of Syracuse to retreat (40,000, which is probably unreliable, cf. K. J. BELOCH, *Griechische Geschichte*. Bd. 2. *Bis auf die sophistische Bewegung und den peloponnesischen Krieg* Abt. 2 (Berlin 1916²), pp. 290–302 and recently HORNBLLOWER, pp. 1061–66), the slaughter during the retreat must have been enormous.

¹⁵ Cf. KALLET (note 12), pp. 176–81; cf. also HORNBLLOWER (note 14), p. 732.

Thus ultimately, the captives gathered by the Syracusans as prisoners of the state were not many, while Sicily on the other hand was soon filled with slaves who had been members of the Athenian expedition, although many eventually managed to escape and find refuge in Catane. It is impossible to calculate how these slaves contributed to the finances of Syracuse, and to its supply of silver, although it should not be excluded that they did indirectly, through multiple sales (they were in fact goods that could be sold abroad in exchange for silver) and taxes on these sales. Of Nicias' men, only a small number were taken prisoners of the Syracusan state.¹⁶ Whatever their original number, Thucydides states (7.87.5) that the total captives, once they were eventually imprisoned in the stone quarries of Syracuse, were not less than 7,000. Because those who surrendered with Demosthenes were 6,000, the additional captives from Nicias' contingent must have been 1,000 or a little more.

Thucydides gives an account of the terrible conditions endured by the prisoners in the quarries (7.87.1–2). They were confined in a small space, and initially were afflicted by the heat, but with the autumn and the growing cold they started to become sick; their condition deteriorated further because they were forced to do everything in the same place, with the corpses of those who died from disease or from wounds piling up in the quarries. Moreover, their food and water provisions were only one *kotyle* of water and two of grain, half the provisions that were given to the helots trapped on Sphacteria (Thuc. 4.16.1), which in turn was half that reserved for the Spartiates.¹⁷ Thucydides states explicitly that in these conditions there were many deaths (7.87.2), and it is impossible for us to know how many of the 7,000 actually died. Yet there are reasons to believe that the vast majority of the captives did make it out of the quarries alive.

First of all, after around seventy days, everyone but the Athenians and their Sicilian and Italian allies were sold into slavery (Thuc. 7.87.3: καὶ ἡμέρας μὲν ἑβδομήκοντά τινες οὕτω διητήθησαν ἀθρόοι: ἔπειτα πλὴν Ἀθηναίων καὶ εἴ τινες Σικελιωτῶν ἢ Ἰταλιωτῶν ξυνεστράτευσαν, τοὺς ἄλλους ἀπέδοντο). These must have been a significant number: considering that out of 5,100 hoplites and marines who arrived in 415 with Nicias only 2,200 were Athenians, and out of further 5,000 who arrived the next year with Demosthenes, only 1,200 were Athenians,¹⁸ we must assume that most of the survivors were also non-Athenian. If we believe that the proportion provided by the hoplites' numbers is more or less reliable, and we reproduce it among the (at least) 7,000 captives, we should assume that less than one in three survivors was Athenian (and the additional Sicilian

¹⁶ These included the 300 that escaped (Thuc. 7.83.3) and were later captured (Thuc. 7.85.3).

¹⁷ Cf. S. HORNBLOWER, *Commentary on Thucydides: Volume II: Books IV–V.24* (Oxford 1996), pp. 169–70.

¹⁸ Cf. HORNBLOWER (note 14), pp. 1061–6 for a thorough and up-to-date assessment of the numbers of the Sicilian expedition, with extensive discussion of previous bibliography. It is impossible to calculate how many Athenian *thetes* were part of the expedition, and therefore every calculation of the proportion of Athenians among the final survivors can only be tentative, and based on hoplite numbers.

and Italian allies who joined the expedition in Sicily must have further moved the balance towards the allies). So it is unlikely that the Athenians among the captives in the quarries could have been more than 2,000, and the non-Sicilian and Italian allies less than 4,000. After only seven weeks, these approximately 4,000 allies (minus those who died because of their wounds or disease, whose number cannot have escalated too much in only seven weeks) were sold into slavery. This sale must have brought Syracuse a significant income. Greek slave prices varied widely: for example, Xen., *Mem.* 2.5.2 reports prices as low as fifty drachms and as high as 1,000, with other prices (200, 250, 500 drachms). In 415 a heterogeneous group of 22 slaves, all confiscated in Athens as a result of the *Hermokopidai* scandal, were sold at an average price of 179 drachms.¹⁹ Since this was a state sale of a large number of slaves, whom the Athenian *polis* had to dispose of, this is likely to be a very low price for slaves. Sixty years later Xenophon, in proposing a scheme to revive Athenian silver mining by buying very large numbers of slaves, also assumes an average price per slave of 180 drachms (*Poroi* 4.4–16, 23).²⁰ 180 drachms for adult male slaves is likely to be too low a price, but considering that the captives sold after seven weeks were presumably sold *en masse*, and that some captives presumably had died of disease, so that the total number had dropped, such a conservative estimate should prevent us from overrating the income the Syracusans made from this sale. Such a sale is likely to have brought into the Syracusan treasury a figure in the region of 120 talents of silver, and is unlikely to have brought less than 100, the equivalent therefore of 180,000 tetradrachms, and hardly less than 150,000.

Moreover, the sale of such a significant portion of the captives must have significantly eased the overcrowding in the quarries and the hygienic issues arising from that. Thucydides in fact states at 7.87.1 that the prisoners were *initially* treated harshly (τοὺς δ' ἐν ταῖς λιθοτομίαις οἱ Συρακόσιοι χαλεπῶς τοὺς πρώτους χρόνους μετεχείρισαν). After this statement he proceeds to describe these harsh conditions at 7.87.1–2,²¹ and finally, at 7.87.3, he summarizes the section by stating that the captives were treated this way (οὕτω, as described in the last two sections) for seventy days, after which (ἔπειτα) everyone but the Athenians and their Sicilian and Italian allies were sold. So, implicitly, Thucydides shows that these dire conditions lasted only for seventy days, the captives were treated like this *initially* (τοὺς πρώτους χρόνους), and therefore they were treated more humanely after seventy days. But how much longer were they kept in the quarries? In reporting the small amount of food and water they were given, Thucydides states that they

¹⁹ K. W. PRITCHETT, *The Attic stelai. Part II*, *Hesperia* 25 (1956), pp. 178–317, p. 276.

²⁰ Cf. W. SCHEIDEL, *Real slave prices and the relative cost of slave labor in the Greco-Roman world*, *Ancient Society* 35 (2005), p. 11 for Greek slave prices. Scheidel's assessment of real slave prices has been criticized by M. H. CRAWFORD, *From Alcibiades to Diocletian: slavery and the economy in the longue durée*, in U. ROTH (ed.), *By the Sweat of your Brow: Roman Slavery in its Socio-economic Setting* (London 2010), pp. 61–73, but the evidence he collects for absolute Greek prices is reliable.

²¹ Notice the γάρ at 7.87.1 which marks the beginning of the extensive description of these harsh conditions.

were given such small amounts for eight months, but gives no further information about their fate after the eight months. The only further information about their fate, which is found in Diodorus (13.19.4, 33.1) and Plutarch (*Nic.* 29.1) – both claim that most Athenians died in the quarries – can be shown to be unreliable. Plutarch (*Nic.* 28–9) narrates that many Athenians were stolen by Syracusans and became private slaves, and some of them were freed because of their knowledge of Euripidean verse. Whatever the source of this piece of information, when Plutarch turns to the fate of the state captives he seems to follow Thucydides closely (yet in a condensed fashion): he reports that the Athenians and their Sicilian allies were cast in the quarries, while the other allies were sold into slavery. His statement that most Athenians died in the quarries is connected with the description, following Thucydides, of the inhumane conditions in the quarries, and is likely to be an extrapolation from those circumstances, rather than derive from any independent source. Diodorus (13.19.4, 33.1) claims that the Syracusans decreed that the generals should be put to death, that the allies of the Athenians be sold as booty, and that the Athenians should work in the quarries being given two *kotylai* of barley per day. Yet later, when he reports the fate of the prisoners, his account changes and he claims that the Athenians were sent to the quarries (from which some were rescued because of their education, but where most died), while both the generals and the allies were put to death. His account does not seem to have any independent source, and appears to be condensed from Thucydides and from whatever source provided Plutarch with the stories about Athenians being rescued on account of their knowledge of Euripides.²² His inaccuracy casts serious doubts on any independent information he provides. In fact, the only other source close to the events, Philistus, does not seem to have provided any further information about the Athenian captives, and confirms Thucydides' account (*FrGrH* 556 fr. 53: Φίλιστος, ὃς ἔφη Δημοσθένην μὲν σπονδὰς ποιήσασθαι τοῖς ἄλλοις πλὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ὡς ἠλίσκετο, αὐτὸν ἐπιχειρεῖν ἀποκτείνειν, Νικίαι δὲ τὴν παράδοσιν ἐθέλοντι γενέσθαι). Despite the problems provided by the evidence for these accounts, historians have often considered them reliable, and have believed that most Athenians died in the quarries.²³

There is however positive evidence that the prisoners did not for the most part die in the quarries, evidence which was collected years ago by D. H. Kelly.²⁴ First of all, one should keep in mind that the original agreement that Demosthenes

²² Similar considerations about the reliability of these passages are provided by D. H. KELLY, What happened to the Athenians captured in Sicily?, *The Classical Review* 20 (1970), pp. 127–31.

²³ Cf. e.g. G. BUSOLT, *Griechische Geschichte bis zur Schlacht bei Chaeroneia. Teil: 3, 2. Der peloponnesische Krieg* (Gotha 1885–1904), vol. 3, 2, pp. 1397–9; N. G. L. HAMMOND, *History of Greece* (Oxford 1959), p. 399. K. W. PRITCHETT, *The Greek State at War*, vol. 5 (Berkeley 1991), pp. 79, 272–3 and n. 386 also doubts all the evidence that points to the Athenian prisoners being ransomed. J. ROISSMAN, *The General Demosthenes and his Use of Military Surprise* (Stuttgart 1993), p. 69 n. 147 allows that several Athenians survived, but does not doubt the evidence of Diodorus and Plutarch.

²⁴ *Art. cit.* in note 22.

struck with Gylippus (Thuc. 7.82.1–3) guaranteed that the captives would not be put to death by violence, imprisonment or lack of sustenance (ἔπειτα δ' ὕστερον καὶ πρὸς τοὺς ἄλλους ἅπαντας τοὺς μετὰ Δημοσθένους ὁμολογία γίνεται ὥστε ὅπλα τε παραδοῦναι καὶ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν μηδὲνα μήτε βιαίως μήτε δεσμοῖς μήτε τῆς ἀναγκαιοτάτης ἐνδεία διαίτης). If the Syracusans had so blatantly broken their word, we should expect Thucydides to have pointed it out. Xen., *Hell.* 1.2.13–14 reports that in 409 the crews of four Syracusan triremes were captured and imprisoned in the quarries of the Piraeus, from which they dug their way out and escaped. Kelly rightly observes that if the Syracusans really had left thousands of Athenians to die in the quarries and hardly any of their prisoners were eventually freed, then it is very surprising that the Athenians, after only a few years, should simply put their Syracusan captives in the quarries. In retaliation, they would surely have put them to death. Confinement in the quarries seems to be retaliation for confinement in the quarries, and makes the death of most Athenian prisoners highly unlikely. Xen., *Hell.* 6.2.35–6 also reports that in 373 Iphicrates captured in Corcyra the crews of nine Syracusan triremes, and let them be ransomed, except for the admiral. Again, if the Syracusans had left thousands of Athenians to die in the quarries, such behaviour from the Athenians would be hardly believable. Moreover we learn from Lys. 20, a speech delivered c. 410,²⁵ that the son of Polystratus, who served in the cavalry in the Sicilian expedition, after the Athenian defeat went to Catane and from there carried out raids and guerrilla actions that gave him spoils of which he apportioned a *dekate* 'for the goddess' of thirty minas, which equates to a total of 5 talents. He used this money to ransom those soldiers who were in the hands of the enemy, which is evidence that already without any intervention from Athens a significant number of Athenians in the quarries (270 at one mina per head, 135 at two minas per head)²⁶ were ransomed.²⁷ The wording of Lys. 20.24 (ἐπειδὴ δὲ διεφθάρη καὶ ἀνεσώθην εἰς Κατάνην, ἐληζόμενον ὁρμώμενος ἐντεῦθεν καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους κακῶς ἐποίουν, ὥστε τῇ θεῷ τε τὰς δεκάτας ἐξαιρεθῆναι πλεον ἢ τριάκοντα μνᾶς καὶ τοῖς στρατιώταις εἰς σωτηρίαν ὅσοι ἐν τοῖς πολεμίοις ἦσαν), and in particular the expression ὅσοι ἐν τοῖς πολεμίοις ἦσαν referring to τοῖς στρατιώταις whom he brought εἰς σωτηρίαν, does not seem to imply that many of those soldiers died, but rather that most of them were rescued. It should be taken seriously since it is near-contemporary evidence of the facts.

This evidence makes it very likely that most Athenians in the quarries eventually made it out and came back to Athens. Yet even among scholars who accept this, some argue that the Athenians were in fact sold into slavery, rather

²⁵ Cf. S. C. Todd, *Lysias* (Austin, TX 2006), p. 217.

²⁶ See below for ransom prices.

²⁷ KELLY (note 21), p. 130 mentions also Andoc. 3.30 as evidence that the Athenians did not die in the quarries, but this speech is likely to be a later forgery (cf. E. M. HARRIS, 'The authenticity of Andocides *De Pace*. A subversive essay', in P. FLENSTED-JENSEN – T. NIELSEN – L. RUBINSTEIN (eds), *Polis and Politics: Studies in Ancient Greek History Presented to Mogens Herman Hansen on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Copenhagen 2000), pp. 479–506).

than ransomed.²⁸ The key piece of evidence to solve this question is an honorary decree from Athens, *IG I³ 125*. This decree honoured in 405/4 (archon Alexias) Epicerdes of Cyrene for having donated a talent of silver to Athens, and records also his previous benefaction: ἐπ[ι]ανέσαι Ἐπ[ικ]έρδει τῷ Κυρηναίῳ ὡς ὄντι ἀνδρ[ι] ἀγαθῷ καὶ μάλα αἰτ[ι]ῶν γεγεννημένῳ τὸς ἀλόντας πολί[τ]ας τὸς ἐξ Σικελ[ί]ας τὸ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ· αὐ[τὸς γὰρ μνᾶς ἑκατὸν] ἐθελοντῆς ἐς σω[τη]ρίαν11....]ωσιν Ἀθηναῖοι[.6... ἀτελείας δε]δομένης ὑπὸ τοῦ δήμο[...].²⁹ The identity of Epicerdes is unknown, except for his origin (he was from Cyrene).³⁰ We know that at some point after the Athenian expedition he donated 100 minas ἐς σωτηρίαν of the Athenian prisoners and because of this he was the main reason for which the prisoners from Sicily did not die in that war (μάλα αἰτ[ι]ῶν γεγεννημένῳ τὸς ἀλόντας πολί[τ]ας τὸς ἐξ Σικελ[ί]ας τὸ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ). A few considerations can be extrapolated from the text of the inscription alone, which is remarkably close in time to the events. First, the decree states unequivocally (as we can reconstruct from Dem. 20.42) that Epicerdes is the main reason for which τὸς ἀλόντας πολί[τ]ας τὸς ἐξ Σικελ[ί]ας τὸ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν. The implication is that the citizens who were taken prisoners in Sicily, at least for the most part, did not die, otherwise such an expression would have sounded outrageous to the Athenians. Second, as noted by Bielman, the prisoners are referred to as τὸς ἐξ Σικελ[ί]ας, and not as τὸς ἐν Σικελίᾳ.³¹ This means that the prisoners whom Epicerdes helped made it back to Athens. This evidence is enough to show that the prisoners did not all die in the quarries, nor were they sold into slavery at the end of the eight months. They returned to Athens.

How were they rescued? Lys. 20.24 already suggested that some of them were ransomed in exchange for money. The inscription seems to suggest the same: the expression ἐς σωτηρίαν (which also appears at Lys. 20.24) often refers in inscriptions to ransom, and the most straightforward way to interpret it is as such.³² This is in fact how most scholars have understood the inscription, as referring

²⁸ Cf. e.g. T. ARNOLD, *The History of the Peloponnesian War by Thucydides*, vol. 3 (Oxford 1842), p. 257. P. DUCREY, *Le traitement des prisonniers de guerre dans la Grèce antique des origines à la conquête romaine. Nouvelle édition revue et augmentée* (Paris 1999), at pp. 78–80 (which reproduce the original text of the 1968 edition), also claims that they were probably sold into slavery. But in the introduction to the new 1999 edition, at pp. XV–XVI, taking into account A. BIELMAN, *Retour à la liberté. Libération et sauvetage de prisonniers en Grèce ancienne. Recueil d'inscriptions honorant des sauveteurs et analyse critique (Études épigraphiques 1)* (Paris 1994), pp. 3–7, he seems to accept that most prisoners were eventually ransomed. E. A. FREEMAN, *The History of Sicily from the Earliest Times*, Vol. 3 (Oxford 1892), pp. 407–11 claims that after eight months the prisoners were put to work in a prison building, but there is no evidence for this.

²⁹ I follow here the edition that BIELMAN (note 28) provides at pp. 3–4, who also uses the text provided by Dem. 20.41–3, which is very consistent with the text of the inscription.

³⁰ Cf. C. KREMMYDAS, *A commentary on Demosthenes' Against Leptines* (Oxford 2012), pp. 265–6.

³¹ Cf. BIELMAN (note 28), pp. 6–7.

³² Cf. BIELMAN (note 28), pp. 251–3 for evidence and a discussion of the use of this phrase.

to 100 minas provided by Epicerdes for ransoming the Athenian prisoners.³³ Yet Pritchett, with arguments based on the account at Dem. 20.41–6, has doubted that the inscription can refer to a ransom, and Kremmydas has recently followed his lead and argued that it is more likely that Epicerdes spent the 100 minas in order to provide food to the Athenians prisoners (in this interpretation he was a trader).³⁴

Dem. 20.41–3 is at first sight important evidence about the benefaction of Epicerdes, whose actions are discussed in the context of a trial (355/4) aimed at repealing a law of Leptines which cancelled all *ateleiai*. Demosthenes names Epicerdes as his second example of benefactor who deserves his grant.³⁵ His aim is to show how unjust it would be to deprive such an honourable man of his *dorea*, given the context in which he chose to help the city, when its fortunes were at their lowest. The passage discusses Epicerdes' benefactions, summarizes the honorary decree (Dem. 20.42) and eventually has it read out (Dem. 20.44; although the relevant document is missing from the text). The summary (Dem. 20.42) follows closely the wording of the inscription, yet supplements it in two respects, which seem to support Pritchett's and Kremmydas' thesis that Epicerdes' donation was not meant to be ransom money. It is worth quoting the text in full:

οὗτος γὰρ ἀνὴρ, ὥς τὸ ψήφισμα τοῦτο δηλοῖ τὸ τότε αὐτῷ γραφέν, τοῖς ἄλοῦσι τότε ἐν Σικελίᾳ τῶν πολιτῶν, ἐν τοιαύτῃ συμφορᾷ καθεστηκόσιν, ἔδωκε μνᾶς ἑκατὸν καὶ τοῦ μὴ τῷ λιμῷ πάντας αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν αἰτιώτατος ἐγένετο. καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα δοθείσης ἀτελείας αὐτῷ διὰ ταῦτα παρ' ὑμῶν, ὁρῶν ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ πρὸ τῶν τριάκοντα μικρὸν σπανίζοντα τὸν δῆμον χρημάτων, τάλαντον ἔδωκεν αὐτὸς ἐπαγγειλάμενος.

'Yet as the decree proposed on his behalf demonstrates, this man contributed a hundred minas for the citizens who were taken prisoner in Sicily during that infamous debacle there and was the person most responsible for preventing all of them from dying of hunger. And later, after having received an exemption from you for these services, he contributed a talent on his own initiative when he saw that the people were short of money during the war.'³⁶

τοῖς ἄλοῦσι τότε ἐν Σικελίᾳ τῶν πολιτῶν corresponds to the inscription's τὸς ἁλόντας πολίτ]ας τὸς ἐξ Σικελ[ίας (yet notice ἐν Σικελίᾳ, which

³³ Cf. e.g. B. MERITT, Ransom of the Athenians by Epikerdes, *Hesperia* 39 (1970), pp. 111–14; KELLY (note 21), p. 130, W. C. WEST, The decrees of Demosthenes' Against Leptines, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 107 (1995), p. 241. BIELMAN (note 28), pp. 3–7 agrees that Epicerdes' was a donation of grain, but still believes that the Athenians were ransomed.

³⁴ PRITCHETT (note 23), pp. 272–3 and KREMMYDAS (note 30), pp. 267–70. Cf. also D. M. MACDOWELL, Epikerdes of Kyrene and the Athenian privilege of Ateleia, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 150 (2004), p. 131.

³⁵ For the dating and the context of this trial see E. M. HARRIS, *Demosthenes. Speeches 20–22* (Austin, TX 2008), pp. 15–21 and KREMMYDAS (note 30), pp. 1–53.

³⁶ Text and translation from HARRIS (note 35), pp. 34–5.

significantly changes the inscription's wording). ἔδωκε μνᾶς ἑκατὸν (and later ἐπαγγειλάμενος) corresponds to the inscription's αὐ[τὸς γὰρ μνᾶς ἑκατὸν] ἐθελοντῆς ἐς σω[τηρίαν11....]ωσιν. τοῦ μὴ τῷ λιμῷ πάντας αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν αἰτιώτατος ἐγένετο corresponds to the inscription's καὶ μάλα αἰτ[ί]ωι γεγεννημέν[ωι [...] τὸ μὴ ἀποθανεῖν ἐ]ν τῷ πολέμῳ. Finally, δοθείσης ἀτελείας αὐτῷ [...] τάλαντον ἔδωκεν αὐτὸς corresponds to ἀτελείας δε]δομένης ὑπὸ τοῦ δ[ή]μο10.... τάλ[αν]τον ἀργυρίο. Pritchett and Kremmydas argue that 100 minas would have not sufficed to ransom a large number of prisoners, even if we were to set the ransom price as low as the figure provided by Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 1134b (one mina per head). One could counter that Epicerdes may have just contributed towards the ransom, yet Demosthenes states that τοῦ μὴ τῷ λιμῷ πάντας αὐτοὺς ἀποθανεῖν αἰτιώτατος ἐγένετο. πάντας, according to Pritchett and Kremmydas, implies that thanks to Epicerdes' benefactions all Athenians did not die, yet 100 minas was not enough to save them all. They argue therefore, prompted by τῷ λιμῷ, that Epicerdes' donation was one of grain (Epicerdes being allegedly a grain merchant), towards sustenance of the Athenian prisoners in the quarries, and Kremmydas goes so far as to calculate how much grain 100 minas could buy (enough to feed 800 people for a year, with a consumption of two *kotylai* of grain per person per day). Kremmydas adds that when a benefactor is responsible for ransoming prisoners, the orators usually say so explicitly (Dem. 18.268; Isae. 5.43; Lys. 12.20, 19.59).

A number of arguments militate against this interpretation. First, there is no need to read πάντας as referring to all Athenians: MacDowell correctly points out that πάντας can be read closely with μὴ to mean that 'not all the Athenians died of starvation', meaning that some of them survived thanks to Epicerdes. Second, if one looks at the 25 Athenian honorary inscriptions for trade-related services identified in Engen's inventory,³⁷ the nature of the goods involved is almost invariably expressed explicitly, in particular when the good is grain.³⁸ If Epicerdes had donated grain, why would the Athenians use such an expression as ἐς σω[τηρίαν] and express the monetary value of his donation, both features pointing to ransom, without making explicit the nature of his benefaction? Third, one should notice that both the elements in Demosthenes' text that suggest a donation of grain, πάντας and τῷ λιμῷ, are in fact absent from the inscription, and are added by Demosthenes to his paraphrase. What evidence do we have that Demosthenes had privileged information about Epicerdes' donation? In fact, we have evidence to the contrary: apart from Dem. 20.42, which follows almost verbatim the wording of the inscription (except for these two additions, and the dating of the second benefactions, which the orator could extrapolate from the archon Alexias in the prescript), Demosthenes' account is utterly vague, and some contradictions suggest that the orator did not have any other source but the inscription. At Dem. 20.41 he states, 'But there may also be someone else who brought you help when he was prosperous, but who now stands in need of the exemption that you granted him in the past. Who is this

³⁷ D. T. ENGEN, *Honor and Profit. Athenian Trade Policy and the Economy and Society of Greece 415–307 B.C.E.* (Ann Arbor, 2010).

³⁸ In 17 cases it is expressed explicitly, in 6 cases excessive lacunae prevent us from being sure, and in only two cases the good is not identified (cf. ENGEN, note 37, pp. 76–8).

person? Epicerdes of Cyrene' (trans. Harris), and then proceeds to comment on the fact that his benefaction was impressive not for the amount of money, but for the context in which it was made. Demosthenes gives the impression of being aware of personal circumstances that make the *ateleia* necessary to Epicerdes, yet it is impossible that Epicerdes, an adult man in the 410s, could be still alive in 355. In fact, at Dem. 20.44 (after the paraphrase of the decree and several moral considerations about the merits of Epicerdes' actions that do not add anything to the account), Demosthenes contradicts his previous statement by saying: 'Are you going to take away not only his award (he clearly does not even use it) but also his trust in you?'. Epicerdes is once again referred to as alive, yet this time he does not need the *ateleia*, while he seemed to need it at Dem. 20.41. And this is not the end of it. At Dem. 20.45, after the decree is read out, Demosthenes again changes his mind, and wonders: 'Are we not ashamed, men of Athens, if we are seen to forget completely about what he did and to take away his award, even though we have no complaint to make against the children of such a man?'. The implication is that the award is used now by his children, and not by Epicerdes himself. Scholars have tried to reconcile Demosthenes' contradictory statements, arguing that Epicerdes' *ateleia* was hereditary (yet the inscription does not grant hereditary *ateleia*, only *ateleia*)³⁹ and that Epicerdes and his sons were at various points metics and residents of Cyrene, which means that the *ateleia* they need is that from customs duties.⁴⁰ It is more economical to recognize that the only independent and consistent information provided by Demosthenes is that found in the inscription and the very few details he adds are his own elaborations, which are often unclear and contradictory. Accordingly, it is likely that πάντας and τῷ λιμῷ are simply small additions to the account of the inscription, added for dramatic effect (he prevented all Athenians from dying of starvation!) relying on common knowledge of the inhumane conditions the Athenians prisoners were subjected to in the Syracusan quarries.⁴¹

If we accept that Demosthenes' account does not provide trustworthy independent information about the nature of Epicerdes' contribution, and rely on the inscription alone, then the most obvious interpretation of its wording and of the expression ἐς σωτηρίαν is that Epicerdes contributed 100 minas towards the ransom of the Athenians, which we can add to the four and a half talents collected by the son of Polystratus (Lys. 20.24). This, together with the evidence listed previously, strongly suggests that most Athenian prisoners survived the quarries and eventually were ransomed.⁴² We mentioned before that it is likely that the Athenians in the quarries were around 2,000, to which we should add an indefinite number of Sicilian and Italian allies (the other allies were sold into slavery after seventy days). Because it is impossible to know how many of these

³⁹ Cf. MACDOWELL (note 34), pp. 132–3.

⁴⁰ Cf. MACDOWELL (note 34) and KREMMYDAS (note 30), pp. 265–75.

⁴¹ Note that λιμῷ is the same word used in the famous description at Thuc. 7.87.1–2.

⁴² On private and state ransom, and their relative frequency (collective ransom was less usual) cf. PRITCHETT (note 23), pp. 284–90 and BIELMAN (note 28), pp. 233–4, 277–309. The way the Athenians were ransomed is immaterial here.

died (yet we have shown that the evidence does not support the assumption that most of them did), it is safer here to ignore the Sicilians and Italians, and stick to very conservative ransom figures per head. Ransom prices in Greece varied widely, but tended to be lower when the number of captives was higher. Arist., *Eth. Nic.* 1134b mentions one mina per head as the typical ransom price, and this price is confirmed for Sicily by Diod. 14.111.4 in 387 BCE (cf. also in Sicily *SEG* 24.254 from 264/3 BC: 120 drachms). Herodotus gives higher prices of two minas for the earlier fifth century (6.79) and we have evidence of ransoms (although of individuals or small groups) much higher: e.g. 500 drachms (Diod. 20.84.6; Liv. 34.50.6) and even more than three talents per head (Thuc. 3.70.1).⁴³ Kremmydas uses Nicias' proposal to leave prisoners as surety of one talent of war reparations each (Thuc. 7.83) as evidence that the ransom money must have been much higher, but Nicias' was a preposterous proposal, and the figure was not intended to be a ransom price.⁴⁴ For our purpose it is not important to determine the average ransom price, and in fact it is prudent to stick to the most conservative estimate of one mina per head (and exclude Italian and Sicilian prisoners for good measure). Even with such a low estimate, it is hard to see how, out of around 2,000 Athenians who initially ended up in the quarries, and many Italians and Sicilians, the Syracusans could have gained less than 30–35 talents (2,000 minas), providing silver for at least another 45,000 tetradrachms. This estimate should be added to the other very conservative estimates of 150,000 tetradrachms out of the sale of the allies as slaves after 70 days in the quarries, and a further 15,000 tetradrachms out of the contents of the four shields replenished with silver following Demosthenes' surrender. It is clear therefore that however tentative these figures are, the direct income that the Syracusans derived from the Athenians' surrender can hardly be reckoned to be unremarkable (and these figures do not take into account other sources of income for Syracuse). They show that the Athenian defeat provided the Syracusans with a solid base for their remarkable coinage in the following years, and therefore strongly support a dating of the period of the 'signing artists' that starts in 413 BC.

⁴³ Cf. PRITCHETT (note 23), pp. 247–54.

⁴⁴ KREMMYDAS (note 30), p. 269, but see above pp. 9–10 and note 16.

Abstract

This article discusses literary and epigraphical evidence for some of the sources of silver for the Syracusans after their victory over the Athenians in 413. Thucydides tells us (6.31.3–5) that the Athenians took a great deal of coined money to Sicily in 415; he refers also (7.82.1–3) to four hollow shields which were filled with money taken from Athenian captives in 413. Another substantial source of silver for the Syracusans must have been the captives themselves, and evidence from Thucydides, from Demosthenes Against *Leptines* and from *IG I³*, 125 shows that most of the prisoners did not in fact die in the Syracusan quarries, but that some were sold into slavery and others were ransomed and rescued. The silver Syracuse obtained from defeating the Athenians was hardly unremarkable, and provided the Syracusans with a solid base for their coinage in the following years. The discussion strongly supports a *terminus post quem* of 413 for the coinage of the 'Signing Artists' at Syracuse and elsewhere in Sicily.

Zusammenfassung

Im vorliegenden Beitrag geht es um literarische und epigraphische Belege für Silbereinkünfte der Syrakusaner nach ihrem Sieg über die Athener 413 v. Chr. Thukydides berichtet (6.31.3–5), dass die Athener 415 v. Chr. grössere Mengen geprägter Münzen nach Sizilien mitnahmen; er erwähnt auch (7.82.1–3) vier Schilde gefüllt mit Münzen, welche 413 v. Chr. den athenischen Gefangenen abgenommen wurden. Eine weitere umfangreiche Quelle für Silber mussten die Gefangenen selbst dargestellt haben und Hinweise bei Thukydides, Demosthenes (*oratio* gegen Leptines) sowie die Inschrift *IG I³*, 125 zeigen, dass nicht die meisten Gefangenen in den syrakusanischen Steinbrüchen umkamen, sondern dass manche in die Sklaverei verkauft und andere freigekauft wurden. Das Silber, welches Syrakus aus dem Sieg über die Athener erwirtschaftete, war kaum unbeachtlich und versah die Syrakusaner mit einer soliden Grundlage für ihre Münzprägung der folgenden Jahre. Die Ergebnisse der vorliegenden Untersuchung sprechen für einen *terminus post quem* von 413 v. Chr. für die Prägungen der «signierenden Künstler» in Syrakus und anderswo in Sizilien.

Key to figures:

1. Tetradrachm of Syracuse, 413. British Museum, BMC Sicily, p. 165, no. 143; Acc no. RPK,p254K.70; 17.32 g.
2. Tetradrachm of Camarina, 413. British Museum, BMC Sicily, p. 35, no. 10 (= JENKINS – WESTERMARK, p. 177, no. 132.3, pl. 12 and 18); Acc. no. RPK,p227A.3Cam; 17.24 g.

Mirko Canevaro
N. Keith Rutter
School of History, Classics and Archaeology
William Robertson Wing
Old Medical School
Teviot Place
Edinburgh EH 8 9AG
Mirko.Canevaro@ed.ac.uk
K.Rutter@ed.ac.uk