

# Demeter's Sicilian Cult as a Political Instrument

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THE BELIEF that divinities can intervene in the affairs of men is very old, attested as early as the *Iliad*. Less frequently attested is the direct involvement of a god's organized cult in such non-religious activities as war, subversion, colonization and politics. It was routine business for Apollo, however, acting from his seat at Delphi, and no doubt other instances might be catalogued.

Demeter, who by her very nature as an agrarian goddess and mistress of the afterlife seems an uncontroversial deity, is seldom thought of in this connection. Yet in the development of her cult in Sicily, one finds a striking number of occasions in which she becomes so involved. This is especially true of the last phase of Sicilian Greek independence, the dark period preceding and then leading into Roman rule. At this time Demeter's fate becomes closely identified with that of the island.

## I

The circumstances surrounding perhaps the earliest arrival of Demeter's cult in Sicily are prophetic of subsequent events.<sup>1</sup> These

<sup>1</sup> I say "perhaps," for while most of the handbooks cite Gela as the site of the cult's earliest introduction it should be recalled that Megara Hyblaia was founded considerably earlier than Gela, and there can be no doubt that Demeter's cult flourished at a very early time in mainland Megara. See Pausanias 1.39.4 and 40.5 for evidence of Demeter's cult carrying over possibly from Mycenaean times at that site. For other examples of its survival from Mycenaean times, see G. E. Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1961) 19ff and 41; see also M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*<sup>2</sup> I (Munich 1955) 475. Again in respect to Demeter's early appearance at Megara Hyblaia, it is significant that as soon as this city founded Selinus, worship of Demeter was initiated at the great Malophoros sanctuary. It is hard to see why this would have occurred if Demeter's cult did not already flourish at Megara Hyblaia. For Gela as the earliest location of Demeter worship on Sicily, see E. Ciaceri, *Culti e miti nella storia dell'antica Sicilia* (Catania 1911) 189, and B. Pace, *Arte e civiltà della Sicilia antica* III (Milan 1946) 464ff. On the matter of the chronology of the Sicilian colonies the literature is large: see e.g. R. Holloway in *AJA* 66 (1962) 426-27.

are preserved in the following tale found in Herodotus [7.153 (Loeb)]: "This Gelon's ancestor, he who made a settlement at Gela, was of the island of Telos, that lies off Triopium; he, when the founding of Gela by Antiphemus and the Lindians was afoot, would not be left behind. His posterity became in time the ministering priests of the goddesses of the nether world and continued so to be. This office had been won, as I shall show, by Telines, one of their forefathers. Certain Geloans, worsted in party strife, having been banished to the town of Mactorium, inland of Gela, Telines brought them back to Gela, with no force of men to aid him, but only the holy instruments of the goddesses' worship. Whence he got these, and whether or no they were of his own discovering, I cannot say; however that may be, it was in their strength that he restored the exiles, on the condition that his posterity should be made the ministering priests of the goddesses."

Herodotus does not name him, but other sources identify "Gelon's ancestor" as the original Deinomenes.<sup>2</sup> The scholiast on Pindar provides the additional information that this Deinomenes, the ancestor of the famous dynasty of tyrants, brought to Sicily the rites of Demeter.<sup>3</sup> According to Herodotus Telines, one of the descendants of Deinomenes and hence one of the ancestors of Gelon and Hieron, procured the right to have the priesthood of Demeter restricted to his family by healing discord between factions at Gela. The nature of the "holy instruments" by which he carried this out can only be conjectured, but it seems likely that they made some symbolic reference to grain. Throughout antiquity Gela's plain was a rich center for grain. Did Telines threaten to invoke the goddesses's aid in blighting the wheat crop if the quarreling parties refused to put aside their differences?<sup>4</sup> The precise circumstances are lost, but the incident does serve

<sup>2</sup> Schol. Pind., *Pyth.* 2.27b, and *Die Lindische Tempelchronik* (ed. C. Blinkenberg, Bonn 1915) no. 28. The two sources are discussed by T. Dunbabin, *The Western Greeks* (Oxford 1948) 64 nn.5 and 6. See also R. van Compernelle, *Étude de chronologie et d'histoire siciliotes* (Brussels 1960) 383ff.

<sup>3</sup> The history of the Deinomenid family is confused by the fact that Gelon's father was also named Deinomenes, but see Dunbabin, *op.cit.* 483, for an arrangement of the family succession.

<sup>4</sup> Himerios, an Athenian sophist living in the days of Julian the Apostate, says that "an old law ordered the initiates (to the Eleusinian mysteries) to take with them handfuls of agricultural produce which were the badges of civilized life" (*Or. Z.2*, p. 512; quoted by Mylonas, *op.cit.* 275.) A first century B.C. stone relief depicts the sons of the priest Lakratides presenting handfuls of wheat (*cf.* Mylonas, *op.cit.* 197-98, 275, fig. 71). If one adds to this the fact that storage pithoi, obviously intended for grain, are frequently found in Demeter sanctuaries, it is perhaps not too far from the mark to suspect that in the very early times all of the wheat grain reserved for sowing the fields the following year was stored in the

to mark the first recorded occasion in Sicily on which the cult is employed for extra-religious purposes.

There must have been an element of such employment in the rapid and systematic spread of Demeter's rites to the many inland and coastal settlements established by Gela in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.<sup>5</sup> While one cannot document precisely the political expediency behind its propagation, it is evident that the spread of the Greek cult into areas where the preëxisting native chthonian rites<sup>6</sup> would cause it to be readily accepted could have been one effective means of Hellenizing the native inhabitants and of preserving their loyalties.

However that may be, the place where we first encounter the direct manipulation of the cult for political purposes is at Syracuse during the time of Gelon's accession to power. The events lying behind the rise of Gelon at Syracuse were as follows. After their unsuccessful stand at the Helorus against Hippocrates, the Syracusan aristocratic landowners, the *Gamoroi*, found themselves embroiled in civil strife at home and were eventually expelled by a combination of the *dēmos* and the *Killyrioi* or serfs. This event took place in 491 B.C. and marked the beginning of a brief period of democratic rule. The result of this last experiment was anarchy. The exiled *Gamoroi* appealed to Gelon, the recent tyrant of Gela. The democracy found itself in no position to resist, and it fell in 485 B.C.<sup>7</sup>

One of the tyrant's first acts was to carry out a large scale synoecism at Syracuse. More than half the inhabitants of Gela were moved to Syracuse and enfranchised. Soon after this the refounded city of Camarina was destroyed, and its people were joined with the recently enlarged population of Syracuse.<sup>8</sup> Gelon needed an external force to bind together this dangerous combination of peoples, made up of the

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sanctuaries, where the blessings of the goddesses might assure their germination. If this was the case then Telines, as chief priest, would be in an excellent position to make sure that his threats were no empty gesture.

<sup>5</sup> For bibliography and a discussion of Gela's expansion, see P. Griffo, *Sulle orme della civiltà gelese* (Agrigento 1958); also *AJA* 62 (1958) 426, 66 (1962) 400–401, and 67 (1963) 171, 290. Limitations of space do not permit any discussion of the evidence for the introduction of Demeter's rites to those areas under Geloan rule during the seventh and sixth centuries, but it should be noted that the cult was in all probability brought to Monte Saraceno, Monte S. Mauro di Caltagirone, Palma di Montechiaro, Fontana Calda, Vassalaggi and of course Agrigento.

<sup>6</sup> Discussed by Pace, *op.cit.* III, 453ff.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Dunbabin, *op.cit.* 414ff.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* 416.

angry, defeated Syracusans and the uprooted neighboring cities. He found it in his war with Carthage.

The extraordinarily successful outcome of Gelon's pan-Siciliote struggle against Carthage is familiar history. His victory at Himera led to several commemorative gestures. From the Punic indemnity of two thousand talents he had struck the beautiful coin issue of fifty-litre pieces, the *Demareteia*.<sup>9</sup> A golden Nike was sent to Delphi, together with a golden tripod with the inscription telling how the sons of Deinomenes fought for the freedom of Greece.<sup>10</sup> At Olympia Gelon built a treasury, in which he dedicated a huge statue of Zeus and three linen breast plates, trophies of the battle.

But in the context of the present argument, his most telling gesture was the construction of twin temples to Demeter and Persephone from the spoils of war.<sup>11</sup> Gelon's motivations were more than simple gratitude and piety. As has been pointed out, the population of Syracuse at this moment was a mixture of Geloan, Camarinaean and Syracusan people, mostly of the lower classes. At Gela Demeter was an immensely popular deity, and in the case of the other two the cult was at least observed.<sup>12</sup> By bringing Demeter's rites to Syracuse Gelon was able to present the people with a cult pleasing to the majority and uncontaminated by any direct connection with Syracuse's aristocracy,

<sup>9</sup> K. Boehringer, *Die Münzen von Syrakus* (Berlin 1929) 36ff; also W. Schwabacher, *Das Demareteion* (Bremen 1958) in the *Opus Nobile* series.

<sup>10</sup> For the texts accompanying the golden Nike see Dunbabin, *op.cit.* 430, n.3.

<sup>11</sup> These are reported by Diodorus 11.26.7 and Cicero, *II Verr.* 4.53.119.

<sup>12</sup> The main Demeter sanctuary has not yet been found at Gela, but a number of minor, suburban sanctuaries have been discovered. For the sanctuary at Bitalemi see P. Orsi, "Gela," *MonAnt* 17 (1906) 575ff and P. Orlandini, "Frammenti coroplastici e architettonici da Bitalemi," *NSc*, 1956, 398-99. For Madonna dell'Alemanna, see D. Adamesteanu, "Madonna dell'Alemanna. Scoperta di una nuova area sacra," *NSc*, 1956, 382-92. For Carrubazza see Adamesteanu, "Rinvenimento di un edificio sacro in località 'Carrubazza'," *NSc*, 1956, 242-52. For Via Fiume see P. Orlandini, "Via Fiume, 24. Scoperta di un piccolo edificio sacro," *NSc*, 1956, 252-63. These and other sanctuary remains are studied by J. Kesteman in a thesis submitted to the University of Louvain in 1961 for the degree of Licencié, *Les Cultes à Gela de la fondation à 405 J.-C.* The evidence for Demeter's cult at Camarina before the rise of Gelon at Syracuse derives from the early votives found at Camarina and stored today in the Museo Biscari in Catania. For late sixth century terracotta figurines see G. Libertini, *Il Museo Biscari* (Milan 1930) pls. civ nos. 967, 958 and 968 and cv, nos. 983 and 984. Compare these with similar figurines from Grammichele (see *MonAnt* 7 [1897] 235-38) and Bitalemi (see *MonAnt* 17 [1906] 701-702, figs. 524 and 525). For Orsi's Demeter Thesaurus at Camarina see *MonAnt* 9 (1899) 226-35. The pre-Deinomenid cult at Syracuse raises too many problems to be properly discussed here, but I believe that we have evidence for such a cult in the sanctuary of Cyane. For the missing shrine see Orsi, "Daedalica Siciliae," *MonPiot* XXII (1916) 131-62. It is Orsi's argument that the so-called Laganello Head, an early sixth century rendering of a female head, is the cult statue of Demeter's archaic sanctuary at Syracuse.

whose traditional deities were Zeus, Athena, Artemis and Apollo.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Gelon, as the descendant of Telines, had inherited the priesthood of Demeter's cult. As hereditary chief priest he was invested with a kind of holy sanctity. The effect, therefore, achieved by bringing his ancestral cult to Syracuse was that Gelon was able to fortify his own domestic position with Syracuse's polymorphic citizenry at the same time as he weakened the stance of its discredited aristocracy. An indication of this is found in what is known of the ritual composition of Demeter's cult at Syracuse.

The principal festival of the Syracusans was the *Thesmophoria*. While our knowledge of its rites is not comprehensive, it is clear that the festival was democratic or plebeian in character.<sup>14</sup> It was celebrated at the beginning of the harvest season; it lasted for ten days. During this time the people banqueted and exchanged ritual jokes and insults in a fashion similar to the festival at Athens. Little cakes of honey and sesame known as *mylloi* were baked in the form of the female pudendum and paraded about in honor of the goddesses. In its original religious conception the festival was concerned with man's and nature's capacity to reproduce, the blessings of a civilized existence, and the fruitfulness of the earth. The goddesses were celebrated in their universally popular roles of nature goddesses, the protectresses of the life-sustaining soil and the providers of grain, rather than in their alternate roles as the guardians of the dead. But in its application it is clear that the *Thesmophoria* was above all a time of joyful licence for the *dēmos*. That the composition of Demeter's chief festival was so patently oriented towards pleasing the common people can be explained at least in some measure as part of Gelon's calculated policy.

The nature of this policy is further revealed by the so-called Great Oath, sworn at Syracuse to Demeter and Persephone.<sup>15</sup> The swearer was brought into the goddesses' Syracusan precinct. A purple robe was thrown around him and a lighted torch thrust into his hand. In both of the references to this ceremony surviving in ancient literature, its use is reserved for would-be enemies of the state. In the first instance, Agathocles was forced to swear that he had no evil intentions

<sup>13</sup> See Ciaceri, *op.cit.* 194. Apollo's cult was not included by Ciaceri because the temple on Ortygia was not totally cleared until 1937-39. Cf. W. Dinsmoor, *The Architecture of Greece* (London 1950) 75 and 384. See also Pace, *op.cit.* III, 571ff.

<sup>14</sup> Ciaceri, *op.cit.* 196ff.

<sup>15</sup> Discussed by E. Freeman, *History of Sicily from the Earliest Times* IV (Oxford 1894) 285 n.2.

against the democracy and that he would abide in friendship with Carthage (at that time allied with Syracuse).<sup>16</sup> In the second instance Kallippus had to swear that he was not plotting against Dion, then tyrant of Syracuse.<sup>17</sup> Thus in both cases the oath was directly connected with the preservation of the Syracusan state or its chief representative. It was no accident that Demeter should have been so employed, since the oath must have evolved out of a situation in which Gelon and his brother both embodied the state and served as the chief priests of the goddesses.

In addition to his temple foundations at Syracuse, Gelon honored Demeter and Persephone with the construction of shrines in at least one of Syracuse's dependencies<sup>18</sup> and possibly in another,<sup>19</sup> while in yet a third archaeological data support the idea that the cult came to be introduced during the time of Gelon's reign.<sup>20</sup> After his death, however, we find no evidence for the sort of manipulation of the cult which occurred during his lifetime. Instead we find the idea gradually implanted among the peoples of Sicily that the twin goddesses were their special guardians and that they exercised a direct authority over the fortunes of the entire island. This concept of a pan-Siciliote, tutelary deity is illustrated by the story of the Carthaginian general Himilcon's siege of Syracuse in 396 B.C. During the course of the siege he plundered the temples of Demeter and Persephone, "for which

<sup>16</sup> Diod. 19.5.4.

<sup>17</sup> Plut. *Dion* 57.

<sup>18</sup> Diodorus 11.26 says that Gelon founded a temple at Aetna. It is something of a question what town Diodorus had in mind. There existed no town of Aetna until 476 B.C. when Hieron, the successor to Gelon, drove the people of Catane into exile and resettled that town, giving it the name of Aetna. In 461 B.C. the Aetnaeans were themselves expelled from Aetna-Catane and took up residence in a nearby town called Inessa, to which they transferred the name Aetna. Diodorus therefore could have had in mind either Catane or Inessa as the site of Gelon's temple. Of the two, Catane is much the more likely candidate since Inessa could hardly have been known of in Gelon's time. For the recently discovered group of Demeter votives found under the Piazza S. Francesco in Catane, see G. Rizza, "Stipe votiva di un santuario di Demetra a Catania," *BdA Ser. IV, Anno 45* (1960) 247-62.

<sup>19</sup> This would be Himera, which Marconi believes was one of the two temples which Diodorus 14.26 mentions as being built by the Carthaginians at Gelon's command. P. Marconi, *Himera. Lo scavo del tempio della Vittoria e del temenos* (Rome 1931) 164ff. The deity to whom the Himera temple was dedicated is not recorded, but there is some evidence both archaeological and historical which points to Demeter. However, this question cannot be discussed here.

<sup>20</sup> At Acrae. That Demeter was worshipped at this site is known through epigraphic evidence. See L. Bernabo-Brea, *Akrae* (Catania 1956) 28-29, 152 and 158, # 11; see also Pace, *op.cit.* III, 582 n.2. An early fifth century date for the cult is indicated by the votives. See L. Quarles van Ufford, *Les Terres-cultes siciliennees* (Assen 1949) 80 and 102. Acrae's dependence on Syracuse is discussed by Bernabo-Brea, *op.cit.* 17-21.

act of impiety against the deity," Diodorus tells us, "he quickly suffered a fitting penalty." The fortunes of the Carthaginians swiftly worsened. A plague struck, and the Carthaginians were forced to abandon the siege. Himilcon retreated to Africa, where he eventually died by his own hand.<sup>21</sup> One of the side-effects of this debacle was that the Carthaginians decided that Demeter and Kore should be propitiated, and their rites were then introduced to Carthage.<sup>22</sup>

The attitude of the Sicilians toward Demeter had to wait, however, until the expedition of Timoleon (345 B.C.) and the subsequent reign of Agathocles (317–289 B.C.) for the full exploitation of its political and propagandistic potentialities. Timoleon's association with Demeter came about as follows.<sup>23</sup> According to the tradition passed on by Diodorus and Plutarch,<sup>24</sup> the priestess of Demeter at Corinth dreamed that the goddesses told her that they were voyaging with Timoleon to Sicily. On the strength of this sign, or perhaps in anticipation of its circulation, Timoleon named one of his ships *Demeter and Kore* and set sail under the special protection of these two deities. The tradition then continues that during the actual voyage a marvelous light appeared in the heavens in the form of a torch—the mystic sign of the mother goddess' search for her lost daughter—to guide the expeditionary force, now cast in the rôle of a sacred band. According to Sjöqvist the propagandistic impression created by this event was not only that Timoleon's enterprise was under the protection of the gods but also that it was intimately bound up with the general welfare of the island, which was especially watched over by these two deities.<sup>25</sup> It is only in this light that we can understand why after the final victory was won at the Krimisos and after peace and civil liberty were restored to the island, the alliance coinage struck by the minor towns which had sided with Timoleon carried on its reverse a flaming torch set between two ears of wheat.<sup>26</sup>

The next great figure in Sicilian history, Agathocles, was also aware of the value of associating his own private enterprises with what had become by his day the principal symbol of pan-Sicilian

<sup>21</sup> Diod. 14.63.1.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 14.77.4–5. The cult at Carthage is discussed by G. Charles-Picard in his *Les Religions de l'Afrique antique* (Paris 1954) 86ff.

<sup>23</sup> These observations derive from E. Sjöqvist, "Timoleonte e Morgantina," *Kokalos* 4 (1958) 7.

<sup>24</sup> Diod. 16.66.4–5; Plut. *Timoleon* 8.

<sup>25</sup> Sjöqvist, *op.cit.* 7.

<sup>26</sup> See Evan's chapter in Freeman, *op.cit.* IV, 253ff.

unity and success. At the outset of his African campaign in 310 B.C. the crafty leader of the Sicilians called together his forces before the fleet drawn up on the shores of Cap Bon and in view of the assembled troops sacrificed to Demeter and Kore.<sup>27</sup> Then after relating how he had sworn a vow to light up his ships with torches in honor of the goddesses if they delivered him safely to Africa, he called again on these divinities, seized a lighted torch and set fire to his ship. The captains of the fleet were ordered to do the same to their own ships, and soon the entire fleet was ablaze. The only aspect of this curious stratagem that concerns the present argument is that here we see Agathocles manipulating his troops' religious commitments to Demeter in order to win their confidence and presumably to cast himself in the role of a second Timoleon.

Finally, there is some reason to suspect that Agathocles' eventual successor, Hieron II, made roughly the same sort of use of Demeter. A generalized similarity between the coin portraits of Hieron's wife, Philistis, and the veiled-goddess type of Demeter portrait has long been noted.<sup>28</sup> As is the case with the familiar Demeter of Cnidus and other large-scale votives,<sup>29</sup> Philistis is depicted in profile with her head partially veiled by her *himation*.<sup>30</sup> The allusion to Demeter is made more probable by the symbol placed behind the neck, representing in some instances an ear of wheat and a torch in others.<sup>31</sup>

Another feature long recognized in connection with Hieron's coinage is its close affinity to the coins of Ptolemy II Philadelphos. The weight system on which the 32, 16 and 8 litrae pieces were struck is essentially the Ptolemaic system.<sup>32</sup> In addition the Philistis portraits bear a strong resemblance to the portraits of Ptolemy's second wife, Arsinoe II.<sup>33</sup>

It may be asked what stands behind this curious set of double references, first to Demeter and then to Arsinoe, in Hieron's coins. According to Pompeius Trogus, Hieron's birth was illegitimate

<sup>27</sup> Diod. 20.7 and Justin 22.6.

<sup>28</sup> B. Head, *Historia Numorum* 184, fig. 108 and 185. Also S. Grose, *Catalogue of the McLean Collection of Greek Coins I* (Cambridge 1923) 347, no. 105, 10 and 11.

<sup>29</sup> As for instance the Jacobsen Demeter in Copenhagen. See L. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States III* (Oxford 1907) 268, pl. xxviii.

<sup>30</sup> A stone relief in the British Museum may represent the portraits of Hieron and Philistis. The two are rendered in profile, and the woman is depicted wearing a veil over her head. See Pace, *op.cit.* II, 131, fig. 123.

<sup>31</sup> See Grose, *op.cit.* I, 347, no. 105, 10 and 11.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.* I, 345.

<sup>33</sup> Head, *op.cit.* 185 and 850.

because his mother was a slave.<sup>34</sup> But after he gained the throne of Syracuse Hieron appears to have claimed a descent from the first Hieron.<sup>35</sup> By the portrayal of his wife as Demeter or, as is more likely, as her priestess Hieron was asserting for himself and his wife the inherited right to the old ancestral possession of the genuine Deinomenids, the priesthood of Demeter. Consequently the propagandistic force behind this coin issue was a claim of legitimacy. As to the reference on the coins to Arsinoe, it is known that after her death in 270 B.C. the Egyptian queen was worshipped as a goddess, and on occasion as Demeter.<sup>36</sup> Her posthumously released portrait coins depict the same hieratic veil that Philistis wears. However, the explanation for Philistis's resemblance to Arsinoe probably lies only in the well-known admiration that Hieron felt for his more powerful Egyptian counterpart,<sup>37</sup> and its significance goes no further. For while the Arsinoe coins provided Hieron with an iconographical source for the Philistis coins, as well as a precedent for portraying his wife on coins in the first place, there is no reason to see a latent suggestion of deification in the Syracusan releases.<sup>38</sup>

## II

With these scattered instances of the employment of the cult for extra-religious purposes as a background, we may now turn our attention to the events taking place in Sicily during the Second Punic

<sup>34</sup> Justin 23.4.1.

<sup>35</sup> See Lenschau in *RE* VIII.2, 1503 for Hieron II's early life.

<sup>36</sup> Demeter's cult flourished at Alexandria at this time, as Callimachos' *Hymn to Demeter* indicates. For the identification of Arsinoe with Demeter see J. Tondrian, "Princesses ptolomaïques comparées ou identifiées à des déesses," *Bulletin. Société Royale d'Archéologie. Alexandrie* 37 (1943) 18–19. But this assimilation with Demeter was only one, and a minor one at that, among the many this queen underwent. Her connection with Isis was far more important; cf. Tondrian, *op.cit.* 20. However, it should not be forgotten that according to Apuleius (*Met.* 11.5) and Plutarch (*De Is. et Osir.* 27) the Sicilians called Isis Persephone. And Diodorus 1.13.4 says that Isis is more similar to Demeter than any other deity. This conflation was also found among the Egyptians. See L. Cerfaux and J. Tondrian, *Le Culte des souverains dans la civilisation greco-romaine* (Tournai 1957) 214–15. The bibliography concerning Arsinoe's deification is vast, but see Cerfaux and Tondrian, *op.cit.* 489 for indexed references.

<sup>37</sup> For the famous luxury ship, the *Syracosia*, constructed by Hieron and presented by him to Ptolemy III, see Athenaeus, *Deip.* 5.206D–209E.

<sup>38</sup> In other words, while it is probable that Hieron arranged the Syracusan cult so that he might become chief priest of Demeter there is no evidence to suggest that he went the additional step of deifying Philistis and actually assimilating her with Demeter. Given the climate of religious feeling in third century Syracuse such a step would have aroused considerable revulsion.

War. The process, set in motion by the maneuverings of Timoleon, Agathocles and Hieron to use Demeter to further their own aims, finds its logical and far more serious conclusion in the tragic events of the last years of the third century. The situation was as follows.<sup>39</sup>

The succession of Hieron's grandson, Hieronymus, to the throne in 215 B.C. initiated a disastrous change in Syracuse's traditional pro-Roman policy. The young king was known to have been negotiating with Carthage at the time of his death in 215, and the blame for his death was placed on the pro-Roman party. Soon after, the constitutional vacuum created by this event was filled by the so-called Fifth Democracy at Syracuse. The direct inspiration for Hieronymus' anti-Roman policy appears to have come from a pair of Carthaginian citizens of Greek descent, named Hippokrates and Epikydes, who the sources imply were being directed by Hannibal himself. In the earliest days of the Fifth Democracy the pro-Roman party, under the leadership of Hieron's two sons-in-law, Adranodorus and Themistius, again gained the upper hand, but only for a short while. Hannibal's agents, Hippokrates and Epikydes, managed with great skill to accuse the two sons-in-law of trying to reconstitute the monarchy. Violence erupted, and an excited Syracusan mob decided in the name of democratic liberty to extinguish the royal house by a massacre of its remaining members. The triumph of Hannibal's plotting was then complete. His hired intermediaries, Hippokrates and Epikydes, were elected *stratēgoi*. And what was of far greater importance, overnight freedom and democracy become associated with the name of Carthage, while the kingship of Hieron, tyranny and oligarchy were called Roman.<sup>40</sup>

This state of affairs was followed by a revolt against the Romans at Leontinoi, which had the immediate effect of bringing Marcellus into conflict with Syracuse. After being repulsed for eight months, Marcellus relaxed his abortive siege at Syracuse in the fall of 214 B.C. and moved inland to combat the threat of Punic intervention. Livy says that Himilcon had succeeded in taking Acragas, with the result that "the hopes of the other city-states which were on the side of the Carthaginians were so fired as to drive the Romans out of Sicily so that

<sup>39</sup> For these events see E. Pais, *Storia di Roma durante le Guerre Puniche II* (Turin 1935) 324ff; also E. Sjöqvist, "Numismatic Notes from Morgantina," *ANS Mus. Notes* 9 (1960) 58-59.

<sup>40</sup> This last point is well made by Sjöqvist, *op.cit.* 59.

finally even those who were besieged in Syracuse took courage.”<sup>41</sup> At this very crucial moment the city of Morgantina, located some fifty kilometers to the west of Catane in the interior of the island, decided to revolt.

According to Sjöqvist this act was accompanied by Morgantina’s release of the so-called Sikeliotan coinage in defiance of Rome. It is Sjöqvist’s suggestion that Morgantina itself became for a brief time the center for anti-Roman feeling and action throughout the island.<sup>42</sup> More will be said of this coinage below.

Following the revolt of Morgantina, numerous other Roman garrisons were either driven out of their Sicilian stations or overpowered by the native inhabitants. In response to these threats the Roman commander at Enna, L. Pinarius, came to the fateful decision to massacre the town’s population. However defensible Pinarius’ action may have been in the light of the exigencies of the moment, it was from the propagandistic point of view a great mistake; for by his destruction of the populace of this hallowed shrine—the people were tricked into entering the theater where the Roman troops fell on them and cut them to bits—Pinarius unleashed a kind of holy war.

It is possible that he was aware of the risk he was taking, for in Pinarius’ speech to his soldiers Livy puts these words in the commander’s mouth: “And you, mother Ceres and Proserpina, I entreat, and all ye other gods, celestial and infernal, who frequent this city and those consecrated lakes and groves, that ye lend us your friendly and propitious aid, as we adopt this measure not for the purpose of inflicting, but averting evil.”<sup>43</sup> However, the damage was done. “Because every part of it (Enna) was rendered sacred by the traces it contained of the rape of Proserpina of old, the news of its disaster spread throughout the whole of Sicily in nearly one day; and as the people considered that by this horrid massacre violence had been done not only to the habitations of men, but even of gods, then indeed those who even before this event were in doubt which side they should take, revolted to the Carthaginians.”<sup>44</sup>

The subsequent events are well known. In 211 B.C. Syracuse was finally reduced. It appears from Livy that a desperate Morgantina

<sup>41</sup> Livy 24.35.

<sup>42</sup> Sjöqvist, *op.cit.* 61. The year was 213 B.C.

<sup>43</sup> Livy 24.38. For Enna as the principal island sanctuary of Demeter, see Freeman, *op.cit.* I, App. xi, 530–42.

<sup>44</sup> Livy 24.39.

again attempted to revolt against its Roman masters. On this occasion the city was sternly dealt with and then handed over to Moericus and the Hispani.<sup>45</sup> In the next year (210 B.C.), after Marcellus had left the island, Acragas was taken and the rest of the island was quickly and effectively pacified.

Throughout this narrative there runs like a twisted thread the rôle of Demeter. The high point of the tragedy is found in the massacre at Enna, but the events leading up to and following the massacre are no less dramatic. For the former we must return to Morgantina. The so-called Sikeliotan coinage, which Sjöqvist argues was struck by Morgantina, carries on its reverse the inscription ΣΙΚΕΛΙΩΤΑΝ, in other words the "coinage of the Siciliotes."<sup>46</sup> It represents an alliance coinage issued by Morgantina in behalf of the rebelling Sicilian states shortly after this city had destroyed its Roman garrison. The issue presumably continued until the general pacification of the island in 211 B.C. The series includes four different types. The obverse emblem of Sjöqvist's type 4 consists of a portrait of Zeus Eleutherios, Zeus the Deliverer. Types 1 through 3 carry on the obverse portraits of Demeter. We therefore have the following curious situation. At some time after the revolt of Morgantina in 214 B.C. there appears an anti-Roman alliance coinage. This coinage was not only instigated by Punic propaganda, but also financed by Punic funds. Of the four coin types, three bear the sacred pan-Sicilian *emblēma* of Demeter, the island's champion of democracy and protectress of liberty (key phrases in Hannibal's extraordinarily skillful anti-Roman campaign of words).<sup>47</sup> Hence Demeter becomes a partner of Hannibal in a supposedly pro-Greek struggle against Rome. A strange union. It would be very interesting to know if types 1, 2 and 3 preceded Enna's destruction or if they were released in angry commemoration of the event.

However the case may have been, Demeter's alliance with Hannibal was too unnatural to endure, but the goddess had to pay dearly for her separation. After Enna's collapse an explosion of revolt swept the island. During this time Demeter's cult appears to have become a rallying-point for rebellion. Livy's description of the universally hostile reaction generated throughout the island by Pinarius' treat-

<sup>45</sup> Livy 26.21. See K. Erim, "Morgantina," *AJA* 62 (1958) 85.

<sup>46</sup> Sjöqvist, *op.cit.* 53ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* 61-62.

ment of the sacred city of Enna carries with it the strong implication that from that time onwards the struggle against the Romans took the form of a consecrated effort to avenge the goddesses. Proof for this is found in the treatment meted out to the sanctuaries in 211 B.C.

Unfortunately the main sanctuary at Syracuse has not yet been located, so nothing can be said of what occurred here at the time of Syracuse's fall. But at Acragas, the last major Greek city to fall to the Romans, the main Demeter sanctuary—the so-called Great Sanctuary—ceases to exist after the third century. Although the main Doric temple was repaired in Roman times, after the third century votives were no longer offered and the altars and *naiskoi* were abandoned.<sup>48</sup> Since Marconi's excavations brought to light no special traces of a violent destruction at this time, it may be questioned whether it is permissible to see in the collapse of the sanctuary the hand of the Romans. However, the fall of Acragas came in 210 B.C., after Marcellus had left the island and at a time when passions had subsided somewhat, and it is probable that the Romans were content to suppress the cult quietly and without undue violence.

However, Roman violence is clearly manifested at Morgantina, the original instigator of the inland revolt and the town which had rashly decided to slaughter its Roman garrison and then to issue the defiant Sikeliotean coinage bearing on its obverse the portrait of the recently offended deity. During the excavations of this city,<sup>49</sup> Sjöqvist and Stillwell have found traces of a savage destruction throughout its Hellenistic levels, which they date to the closing decade of the third century. Morgantina also is an important site for the study of Sicilian Demeter. The excavations have uncovered at least two important and separate sanctuary areas.<sup>50</sup> Both preserve evidence of a brutal and violent suppression, which in terms of its thoroughness exceeds even the destruction of the civic portions of the city. The excavators associate this with the Roman destruction of 211 B.C.<sup>51</sup>

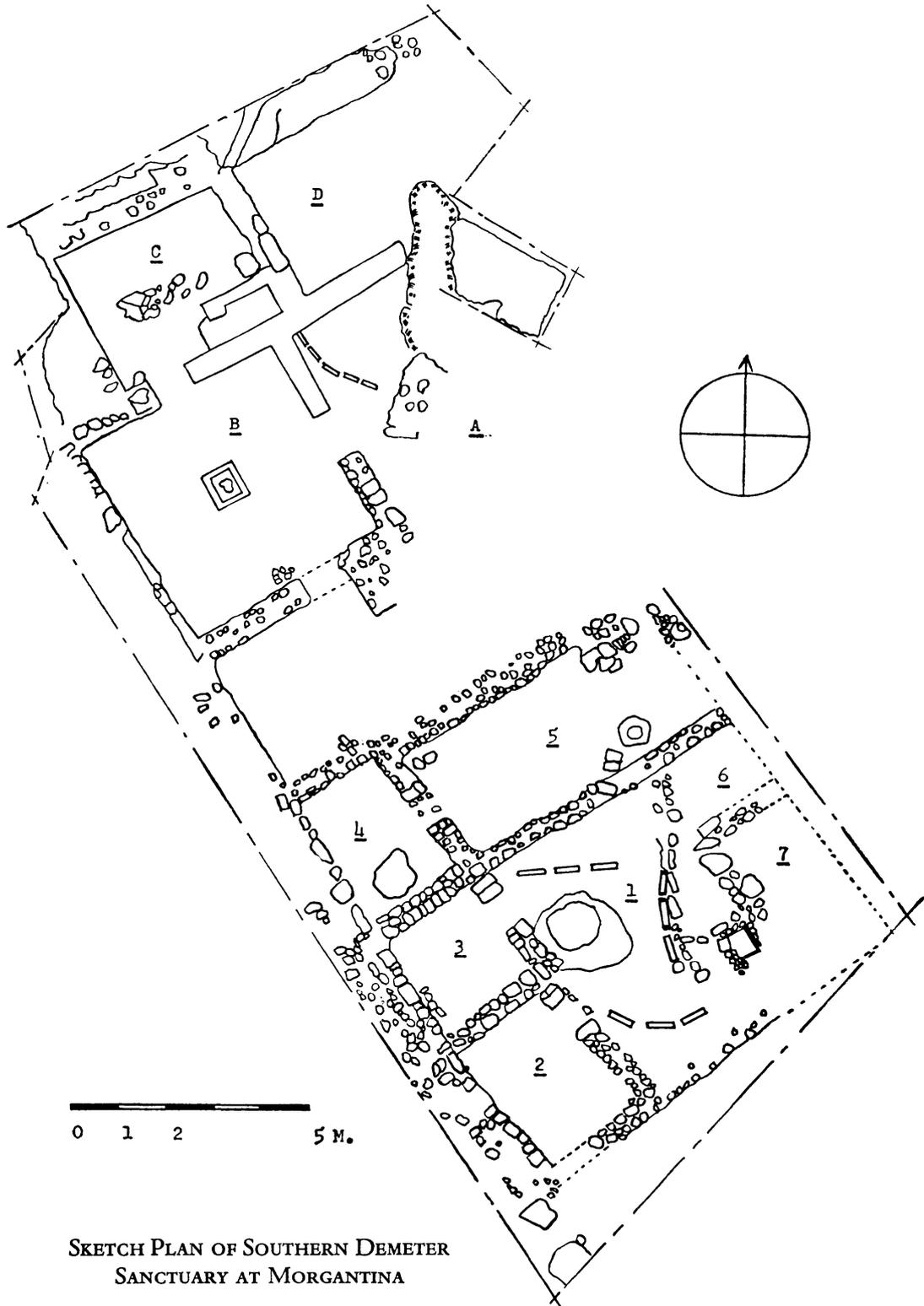
<sup>48</sup> P. Marconi, *Agrigento arcaica* (Rome 1933) 108–09.

<sup>49</sup> For the excavations at Morgantina see *AJA* 61 (1957) 151–59; 62 (1958) 81–90; 63 (1959) 167–73; 64 (1960) 125–35; 65 (1961) 277–81; 66 (1962) 135–43; 67 (1963) 163–72; 68 (1964) 137–48.

<sup>50</sup> For the Demeter sanctuaries see *AJA* 62 (1958) 158–60; 63 (1959) 169 and 171; 64 (1960) 133; 67 (1963) 169–70. See also E. Sjöqvist, "Timoleonte e Morgantina," *Kokalos* 4 (1958) 7–12.

<sup>51</sup> *AJA* 63 (1959) 171; 64 (1960) 133; 67 (1963) 169–70. Also Sjöqvist, *op.cit.* 10; and R. Holloway "Numismatic Notes from Morgantina," *ANS Mus. Notes* 9 (1960) 71–72.

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SKETCH PLAN OF SOUTHERN DEMETER  
SANCTUARY AT MORGANTINA

Its severity is most strikingly documented by the fate of the Southern Demeter Sanctuary.<sup>52</sup> This complex is located some 100m. to the southwest of the theater at a point only a few meters away from the city wall. The surviving remains cover a rectangular area measuring *ca.* 14m. by 25m. (see sketch plan and PLATE 1). Excavation was carried out over a period of two seasons. In 1958 the northern half of the area was cleared as far to the east as was possible before the walls gave way to exposed bedrock; evidently soil erosion had carried away what must have been a considerable portion of the eastern flank of the complex. In 1962 the southern half was opened. This lies at a lower level, with no apparent means of intercommunication between it and the upper level. Its easternmost walls also had suffered considerable damage, this time at the hands of pillagers seeking building material. As a result the arrangement of both levels to the east is lost, but it may be imagined that the two were joined by a ramp (the difference being much less than that of a normal storey) located in the much damaged eastern quadrant.

The arrangement of the upper level suggests a sacral area, while the lower is more purely domestic, but the votives found in both levels make it clear that the two are part of a single complex. Consequently the upper level is referred to as the shrine and the lower as the priestess' (or priest's) house.

The shrine, as preserved, consists of four elements. One entered from an open court (A) into a square room (B), which contained in its center an altar. Only the square base of the altar survives. The altar room at the north led to a kind of adyton (C) which contained to the right a lustral area, shaped like a modern shower stall.<sup>53</sup> To the east of the adyton are the remains of the walls of another room (D), whose floor was built at a lower level. Here were found the smashed remains of two large (*ca.* 41cm. high) terracotta busts, representing either Demeter or her priestess wearing a high polos headdress. These were found on top of a level of fallen roof tiles in such a way as to suggest that they had been thrown out of the ruined adyton onto the des-

<sup>52</sup> For the following information I am indebted to the accurate and clearly recorded field notes of Professor R. Holloway and Mr L. Shear, who cleared this sanctuary, and to Professor R. Stillwell, who directed the excavation and who most kindly has supplied me with his personal observations about the appearance of the sanctuary when first brought to light.

<sup>53</sup> See *AJA* 63 (1959) 171.

troyed portions of this room at the time of the destruction. On the adyton floor were found smashed pithoi and small votive figurines.

The house of the priestess was built around a small court (1), which was probably entered from the street somewhere along its southeast side. The northern end of the court appears to have been roofed over to form a narrow *pastas*. Its exposed area was paved with hard clay. The largest room (5) of the complex lay on the north side of the court. Two pithoi of large dimensions were found in it, which indicates that at least in part it served for storage. In addition the room contained three more terracotta busts, similar to those in Room D of the shrine area, only somewhat smaller (see PLATE 2). The small room (4) to the east of 5 contained an enormous collapsed pithos in which water was stored for bathing, to judge from the sloping floor and stuccoed construction. To the south of Room 4 lay two rooms of modest size (2 and 3) which may have been used for wine storage. Rooms 6 and 7 on the other side of the court were too badly damaged on their eastern extremities to indicate much of their original function, but they too seem to have been used for storage.

As to the destruction, the way in which the fragments of wine amphorae were found in Room 3 indicates that the jars were slung about the room and smashed against the walls, scattering their pieces all over the floor. In the courtyard itself (1) the excavators found the base of a small terracotta *arula* in its correct place, but fragments of its upper portions scattered all along the *pastas*, as if it had been struck by a large stone. Finally the little water basin built by the west wall of Room 7 was found stuffed with deliberately smashed amphorae and smaller vessels.

In addition to this material damage the excavators found evidence for violence of another sort. Lying up against the north wall of Room 5 was the skeleton of a man. The arms were raised above the neck. But the skull lay in the region of the pelvis, while the legs were found in a flexed position about a meter and a half to the southeast of the body. Evidently both head and legs were deliberately cut away from the body. A second body was found, the skeletal remains of which were intact and had received a burial. But because the feet were left protruding from the end of the grave the interment has the air of having been carried out with haste.

The evidence for the date of this purposeful and savage destruction derives from twenty-five coins found in Room 5, concentrated for the

WHITE PLATE 1



SOUTHERN DEMETER SANCTUARY AT MORGANTINA. HOUSE OF THE PRIEST,  
LOOKING SOUTHEAST

PLATE 2 WHITE



TERRACOTTA BUST OF DEMETER, AS FOUND ON FLOOR OF ROOM 5

most part in its northwest corner. Of these, seventeen are Syracusan bronzes, struck by Hieron II and dated therefore to 274–216 B.C. Of these seventeen coins, however, four are the so-called Hieronic half-coins, bearing on the obverse the portrait of Poseidon and on the reverse his trident. These are the normal Hieronic bronzes, reissued as coins chopped in half between the years 214 and 211 B.C.<sup>54</sup> Two are Roman Republican *unciae*, formerly dated to 175–172 B.C.; but their date is now under revision, with the evidence pointing to a date late in the third century.<sup>55</sup> The remaining six coins are either of Syracusan or Sicelo-Punic mintage, and are dated to the late fourth and third centuries. On the basis of this evidence, together with the ceramic remains found in conjunction with the final stages of the sanctuary, the excavators believe that the destruction can only have taken place in 211 B.C.

Consequently it seems that after the Roman forces had made their initial blunder in destroying Enna,<sup>56</sup> they found themselves in the difficult position of having to suppress, along with the rebelling cities, the religious cult of Demeter. This must have been especially distasteful to the Romans in light of the fact that Demeter was one of the earliest of the Greek deities to be honored with her own temple at Rome.<sup>57</sup> While the facts documenting this suppression are not numerous, in the case of the principal victim, Morgantina, they speak with eloquence: both sanctuaries were systematically destroyed and the priesthood dispersed. In other areas, where the cult was less guilty of direct meddling, the punishment seems to have been less severe, as at Acragas where the rites in the main sanctuary were discontinued without overt violence.

Echoes of this suppression turn up at a later time in the history

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Holloway, *op.cit.* 65–73.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. T. Buttrey, "The Morgantina Excavations and the Date of the Roman Denarius," to be published in *Acts of the International Numismatic Congress*, Rome 1961.

<sup>56</sup> There is some probability that Pinarius' men destroyed the ancient cult statue of Demeter at this time, since Cicero describes the one in use in his own day as "not so very old" (*sed non ita antiqua*), *II Verr.* 4.49.109.

<sup>57</sup> In 493 B.C. As Pais has shown (*Ancient Italy* [Chicago 1908] 249ff) Ceres was Greek in origin and was probably introduced from Sicily itself. Roman poets and mythographers located the Rape in Sicily; cf. Freeman, *op.cit.* I, 530–42. According to Cicero the rites of Ceres practiced in Rome were the same as those in Sicily (*II Verr.* 4.99), and epigraphic evidence testifies to the presence in Rome of a public priestess of Ceres of Sicilian birth (*CIL VI*, 1.2181). And, finally, it will be recalled that Greek artists were called in to decorate the temple of Ceres in 493 B.C., which was erected outside the *pomerium* in a site suitable for a foreign cult; cf. Pliny, *NH* 35.154.

of Rome's relations with Sicily. In the third decade of the second century B.C. Sicily once again rose in revolt.<sup>58</sup> The instigators on this occasion were the herdsmen and slaves, whose frightful treatment at the hands of their Roman masters is well known. Enna became the headquarters of the rebels, and in 133 B.C. the consul Calpurnius Piso laid siege to the holy city. It fell the next year to P. Rupilius. What is interesting to note is that as soon as the Romans had pacified the city they sent their *decemviri sacris faciundis* to Enna to placate the goddesses. That many years later Cicero should have to explain that this was done despite the presence of a "splendid and beautiful temple of Ceres here in our own city,"<sup>59</sup> is indicative of the urgency with which the Romans acted to prevent recurrence of the same mistake they had committed almost a century earlier.

The chronological limits which encompass the events here described are very broad, since they incorporate practically the entire history of Demeter on Sicily, from a time shortly after her introduction to the island down to the Roman occupation. Considering the length of time involved, the known issues or events are few. Moreover, the circumstances giving rise to each event vary. These observations, therefore, should not be viewed as an effort to bring to light a non-religious factor constantly present in the development of this cult. Nothing has been detected in the make-up of the cult which would set it apart from other cults and make it somehow more "political," nor do the observations made here need to have any relevance for Demeter's cult outside of its Sicilian context.

Yet because of the particular way in which the island's historical development unfolds, there can be no doubt that the cult came to be frequently entangled in circumstances beyond the immediate sphere of religion. The insular environment, the preëxisting ethnic and religious background, the pressures and rivalries generated between Greek and Sicel, Greek and Greek, Greek and Phoenician, finally Greek and Roman, the volatility and impermanence of political institutions all played their part. And consequently, though few in number, from the rise of Gelon and the Punic defeat to Timoleon's expedition, Agathocles' and Hieron's ambitions and finally the revolt against Rome, the incidents of the cult's involvement with non-

<sup>58</sup> See L. Pareti, *Storia di Roma* III (Turin 1953) 290–306. For the ancient sources see *ibid.* 292 n.8.

<sup>59</sup> Cic. *II Verr.* 4.108.

religious affairs are evenly spread over five centuries of history and are nearly always bound up with important issues.<sup>60</sup>

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