While the Syracusans were living through the dramatic moments following the death of Agathocles—hard times attested to with plenty of evidence by ancient historians, especially Diodorus,—we know less about the situation of the other Sicilian poleis. Diodorus, however, informs us of the presence of tyrants in many places (22.2.1):

Κατὰ δὲ Σικελίαν ἦσαν τύραννοι Ἰκέτας ἐν Συρακόσῃ, Φιντίας εἰς Ἀκράγαντα, Τυνδαρίων ἐν Ταυρομενίῳ, καὶ ἄλλοι τῶν ἐλαττόνων πόλεων.

Throughout Sicily, there were tyrants, Hicetas in Syracuse, Phintias in Akragas, Tyndarion in Tauomenion, and others in lesser cities.

Again Diodorus, narrating the expedition of Pyrrhus in Sicily, gives the names of other tyrants and the poleis they were governing. From Diodorus 22.7.6, we learn that in Syracuse, after Hicetas, one Sosistratos was tyrant; in 22.8.5, we read that the tyrant of Leontini was Heracleides. We have many more problems if we consider the polis of Catane, where Pyrrhus and his fleet put ashore before reaching Syracuse, sailing along the eastern coast of Sicily. Some modern authors, basing themselves on an anecdote reported by Aelianus (Hist. Anim. 5.39) concerning one Onomarchos, tyrant of Catane, thought that he was certainly one of the heteroi tyrannoi mentioned by Diodorus. But I must say that we have no proof supporting this modern theory, and we must be very careful in recognizing Onomarchos as a 3rd century Sicilian tyrant! In any case, the Diodorean list poses many

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1 The problem of the sudden rise of tyranny in Sicily after the disintegration of Agathocles’ empire is one of the main themes of my work in progress for the ‘Dottorato di Ricerca’ at the University of Rome ‘La Sapienza’, in which I am researching into the causes and the events of the Sicilian expedition of Pyrrhus; some of the conclusions I have reached there for the tyrants, I put forward again in this paper. For a general view of the Siceliote tyrannies of the beginning of third
problems and should drive us to ask some questions. When did these tyrants take power? What is the role that they played in Sicily after the death of Agathocles, until the coming of Pyrrhus? What are the peculiarities of Sicilian tyranny in this decade?

I will start with the chronological question, because it is surely less problematic than the other two, and therefore more easily solved. We do not have proof which lets us establish an absolute and precise chronology; nevertheless, we have to admit an interdependence between a sudden reduction of the power of Syracuse (especially in foreign politics) and the wide, uniform rising of Sicilian tyrannies; of course, this could happen only after Agathocles’ death, between 289 and 288 B.C. Therefore, new figures of tyrants emerged in poleis which had been freed from Syracusan political interference, but then fell prey to new class-struggles and devastating staseis. The intervention of the tyrants succeeded in stopping the internal strife; so, time after time, they were able to stabilize their territories in the blundering political scene of Sicily, and keep hold of power for a decade. We can strengthen our statement by referring to a twofold proof, again from the testimony of Diodorus; in 22.8.3 and 5, he shows the tyrants of Leontini and Tauromenion, Heracleides and Tindarion, still holding power at the time of the Sicilian expedition of Pyrrhus.\(^2\)

Unfortunately, owing to the lack of literary and archaeological sources, it is impossible even to attempt a reconstruction of tyrannical activities in the decade before the arrival of Pyrrhus. Nevertheless, it is no accident that all the tyrannies which are known to us from the second decade of 3rd century B.C. in Sicily can be located in

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1. For the strange case of Catane and the supposed tyrant Onomarchus, see Aelian. Hist. anim. 5,39: καὶ Ὀνόμαρχος δὲ ὁ Κατάνιος τύραννος καὶ ὁ Κλαμέννος ὑπὸ σωσίτων ἔχον λέοντας. G. De Sensi Sestito, ‘La Sicilia dal 289 al 210 a.C.’, in E. Gabba and G. Vallet, La Sicilia antica, 2, 1; La Sicilia greca dal VI secolo alle guerre puniche (Napoli, 1980), 345, has no doubts on the truthfulness of this passage and she puts it chronologically at the beginning of the third century B.C. This problem is also posed by F. Sandberger, Prosopographie zur Geschichte des Pyrrhos (Stuttgart, 1970), 174–175, n. 63; finally, W. Kröll, ‘Onomarchos’ (2), RE 18.1, 1, col. 505, and H. Berve, Die Tyrannis, 461, do not agree in believing that Onomarchus was a third century tyrant in Catane.

2. The same chronology has been proposed by La Bua, ‘Finzia’, 126. On Heracleides, tyrant of Leontini, see T. Lenschau, ‘Heracleides’ (27), RE 8, 1, col. 462; Berve, Die Tyrannis, 461; Sandberger, Prosopographie, 109–110, n. 36.