

Decebal NEDU

IN THE SHADOW OF NAPLES. THE IMPLICATION OF TARENTUM IN THE CRISIS OF 327-326 B.C.*

Abstract: There are two versions about the crisis that existed at Naples between the years 327-326 B.C.: one of Livy and the other one from Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Both of them certify the diplomatic implication of Tarentum, supporting the Greek city from Campania. Livy's narrative may be questionable because it has an obvious annalistic impression. If we read only the Livian text we may believe that the implication of Tarentum in the crisis of Naples is an anticipation of the later conflict between Rome and the Dorian colony. But the version of Dionysius contains elements that prove that there is a Greek source behind his narrative, exempt of deformations. Both Livy and Dionysius mention the implication of Tarentum at Naples. Relying on these findings, we may infer that Tarentum was an important actor of the events which took place at Naples in 327-326 B.C.

Keywords: Rome, Tarentum, Naples, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Italiote League.

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The crisis which started in 327 B.C. at Naples had a great importance for the development of the relationship between the communities of Italy during the last decades of the fourth century B.C. This led to the outbreak of the Second Samnite War, which allowed Rome to establish its power over the middle area of the peninsula, after twenty years of fighting. In the same time, the incidents which happened at Naples in 327-326 B.C. represented the opportunity to define some new systems of agreements, very important for the balance of forces in Italy.

The development of the crisis of Naples is preserved in two versions, due to the authorship of Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The first historian presents the following evolution of the events: in 327 B.C., the Greeks from Naples and

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Palaeopolis committed hostile acts against the Romans from Falernum and from Campania and they refused to discuss the possible reparations which could have solved the situation peacefully; facing such an attitude, the Romans initiated military operations against the city, entrusting the leadership to the consul Q. Publilius Philo; the other consul, L. Cornelius Lentulus, with an army, was charged to prevent a possible Samnite intervention in favour of the Greek city (8.22.7-10); in spite of these measures, 2.000 soldiers from Nola and 4.000 Samnites managed to enter the city by intimidation rather than request (8.23.1-2); in 326 B.C., the Lucanians and the Apulians concluded treaties with Rome, promising soldiers and weapons (8.25.3); due to the siege length, to the privations involved by the isolation of the city and to the sizeable Samnite presence, some of the inhabitants of Naples decided to come to a diplomatic agreement with Rome, although there were rumours about the arrival of some support from Tarentum (8.25.7-8); after the negotiations with the proconsul Q. Publilius Philo, the Samnite and Nolan troops had been evacuated outside the city; this action proved to have useful consequences, because in the same year Naples concluded a treaty with Rome, which preserved its independence (8.25.9-8.26.7).

The version of the crisis of Naples preserved in *The Roman Antiquities* of Dionysius offers a different perspective on the events which took place in 327-326 B.C.: the inhabitants of Naples committed hostile acts against the Campanians who were in friendly relationship with the Romans; the Roman ambassadors asked the Greeks not to bring damages to the subjects of Rome and if they have any litigation, they should solve it by negotiations and not by war; but privately the delegates of the Roman Republic were negotiating with the political leaders of Naples the city revolt of the city against the Samnites' authority and the initiation of diplomatic ties with Rome (15.5.1); in the same time, ambassadors were arriving from Tarentum, refined men who had a traditional relationship with the people of Naples; together with them, delegates from Nola advised the inhabitants not to make any agreement with Rome and not to abandon the Samnite friendship; the Greeks were advised not to give up in the context of an open warfare with Rome, because the Samnites would send help and Tarentum would put a strong fleet to their disposal (15.5.2-3); the members of the council could not manage to make a decision and thus the debates took place in the assembly of the people; influenced by the Samnites' representatives, who promised the retrocession of Cumae, which had been occupied by them two generations ago, the people sent the Roman ambassadors back home without any answer, thus beginning the war (15.6.1-5).

Notwithstanding the differences concerning the details, both versions result in the fact that four "actors" actively participated in the rising of tensions between 327-326 B.C. In the foreground there are Rome and Naples, which were on the edge of warfare, but in the background the texts present two other powers interested in the development of the crisis: the Samnite League with its allies from Nola and the Dorian colony of Tarentum.

The participants' grouping in a coherent pattern and the explanation of the role played by each of them in the development of the events does not represent an easy target. Either directly or indirectly, the Tarentum's participation in the incidents

that took place around the Greek city from Campania had been disputed by some researchers inclined to believe that the Tarentine intervention could only be an anticipation of the strained relationship between Rome and the Dorian colony during the following decades¹. If we consider only the Livian paragraphs, then we may have doubts concerning the Tarentine involvement in the crisis of Naples. The text of Livy includes plenty of elements that indicate, in all likelihood, hidden behind the narrative itself, an annalistic source which distorted the events to Rome's advantage. The responsibility of the conflict is assigned to the Greeks who committed acts of violence against the Romans from Campania and Falernum and refused to accept a diplomatic solution in order to end the crisis². In their turn, the Samnites succeeded in bringing troops inside the city, rather by intimidation and pressures than at the inhabitants' request³. These examples of the Livian version probably represent traces of the annalistic intervention upon the description of the events, meant to emphasize the ethics of the position adopted by the Romans in 327-326 B.C. They can undoubtedly be submitted to a critical examination.

But the exclusion of the Tarentine intervention cannot find arguments strong enough in the literary tradition that recorded the events of the years 327-326 B.C. If we only study the text of Livy, then the denial of the Tarentine participation could be taken into consideration. But the other version of the crisis, preserved in the work of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, offers another perspective on the events, while Tarentum appears as well in the narrative of the Greek historian. Dionysius gathered many of the episodes of the history of the Roman Republic from the annalistic literature, but the investigated issue seems to count among the exceptions. According to his version, the Greeks of Naples did not commit any hostile acts against the Romans who were situated in close proximity, as Livy declares, but against the Campanians⁴. During the negotiations between Rome and Naples, the Roman ambassadors were having private "underground" talks with the prominent members of the community, in order to remove the Samnite influence from the city⁵. These two elements of Dionysius's version rise question marks upon the author's source of inspiration. Would an annalist really admit that the Roman delegates negotiated in secret and simultaneously with the official talks, in order to spread the Roman influence over the city? The most plausible answer is a negative one, thus inducing us to question the annalistic source of the paragraphs elaborated by the Greek historian about the crisis of Naples. Other short descriptions seem as well to be unknown within the annalistic horizon. The source of Dionysius had been able to inform him about the existence of a council and a public assembly at Naples, which represented specific institutions of a Greek city. In accordance with the description of Dionysius, the strained situation which appeared in 327 B.C. had been initially

¹ G. de Sanctis, *Storia dei romani* II, Torino, 1907, p. 299.

² Livy 8.22.7.

³ Livy 8.23.1.

⁴ Dionysius 15.5.1.

⁵ Dionysius 15.5.1.

discussed in the council, whose members reached no conclusion, and then the responsibility for the decision had been transferred to the assembly of the people⁶.

The elements emphasized above have little chances to be found in a work elaborated by an annalist. These component parts of the narrative of Dionysius prove the existence of a Greek source as a textual ground for the description of the crisis which occurred in 327-326 B.C. The political involvement of the four actors, Naples, Rome, the Samnite League and Tarentum probably arises from the same literary source and there are insufficient reasons to dwell upon it with an excessive doubt⁷.

From our point of view, Tarentum was one of the powers that participated to the evolution of the crisis of Naples from 327-326 B.C. Its presence is clearly certified by both Dionysius and Livy. Consequently political and strategical explanations may be discussed in order to justify the intervention⁸.

There is no doubt that Naples and Tarentum had political ties before 327 B.C. The Italic League seems to be the structure within which the previous relations have been developed. The Greek League of the cities situated in the Italic Peninsula had been established around 396 B.C., in order to be able to withstand the aggressiveness of the Syracusan tyrant Dionysius the Elder and the attacks of the Italic populations settled in close proximity⁹. In the IVth century B.C., after the withdrawal of Dionysius, there have been certified as members of the league the cities of Croton, Thurii, Metapontum, Naples, Tarentum and Heraklea. Probably around the half of the century, during the flourishing of the Dorian city under the leadership of Archytas, the headquarters of the federal organism moved from the Cape of Lacinium, from the territory of Croton, to Heraklea, colony of Tarentum¹⁰.

⁶ Dionysius 15.6.1-2.

⁷ See W. Hoffmann, *Rom und die griechische Welt im 4. Jahrhundert*, Philologus, Suppl. 27, Leipzig, 1934, pp. 21sq., 131sq.; M. Frederiksen, *Campania*, Oxford, 1984, pp. 208sq.; S. Oakley, *A Commentary on Livy Books VI-X II*, Oxford, 1998, pp. 640-642; G. Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome. From Prehistory to the First Punic War*, London, 2005, pp. 293-294.

⁸ The involvement of Tarentum had been accepted by Th. Mommsen, *Istoria romană*, I, Bucharest, 1987, p. 213; E. Ciaceri, *Storia della Magna Grecia II*, Milano, 1927, pp. 20-21; E. Pais, *Storia di Roma. Dalle origini all'inizio delle guerre puniche V*, Roma, 1928, p. 134, W. Hoffmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 22sq., P. Willeumier, *Tarente des origines à la conquête romaine*, Paris, 1939, pp. 89-90; A. Afzelius, *Die römische Eroberung Italiens (340-264 a.Chr.)*, Aarhus, 1943, p. 162, M. Frederiksen, *op. cit.*, p. 208; G. Brauer, *Taras. Its History and Coinage*, New York, 1986, pp. 73-74; K. Lomas, *Rome and the Western Greeks, 350 BC-AD 200. Conquest and Acculturation in Southern Italy*, London, 1993, pp. 46sq.; S. Oakley, *op. cit.*, pp. 680-682.

⁹ The set up of the Italiote League: E. Ciaceri, *Storia della Magna Grecia III*, Milano, 1932, p. 413; the Greek alliance from Italy already existed in 393 B.C., when Dionysius the Elder besieged Rhegium (*ibidem*); cf. P. Willeumier, *op. cit.*, p. 64, G. Brauer, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰ Data concerning the history of the league and its structure: E. Ciaceri, *Storia de la Magna Grecia III*, pp. 436-437; G. Brauer, *op. cit.*, p. 55; K. Lomas, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

The establishment of the league's capital at Heraklea, a city under the direct influence of Tarentum, shows that the great Dorian colony succeeded in establishing itself as the leader of the Italic federal structure.

Going back to the crisis of Naples, it is hard to believe that Tarentum together with the members of the Italic League passively assisted to the convulsions that were about to put the city under the Roman control. The two versions that we have at our disposal only present the Tarentine reaction to the incidents that took place between 327-326 B.C., but this focus can easily be understood if we take into account the position of Tarentum within the league. The danger that threatened Naples was more likely to be the subject of the common debates between the members of the Italic alliance¹¹. The sending of a military expedition to Campania was definitely not an easy decision, due to the distance and the possible implications of the intervention. The long and contradictory debates, as well as the necessary time for the equipping of the army and of the fleet that were about to leave for Naples, all these represent hypothetical elements that might help us to understand the reason why the help of the Greek League did not manage to arrive at the right time¹².

As the leader of the Italiotes, the Dorian colony had probably been the one that informed the Greeks of Naples that the other cities were not indifferent to their fate and assured them about their readiness to provide help. Another reason for which Tarentum took over the mission of encouraging the Greek resistance at Naples, facing the war with Rome, is suggested in the text of Dionysius. At Naples arrived delegates of Tarentum, selected among the elite of the city, who had a traditional relationship of hospitality with the citizens of the Greek city from the Campanian coast¹³. This detail opens an interesting perspective on the relationship developed between Tarentum and Naples before 327 B.C. and explains once more the reason why the powerful Dorian city in the South had been intensely active in matters of diplomacy during the crisis.

In 326 B.C., after one year of siege, Naples concluded with Rome a treaty in favourable terms. Although the situation was politically solved without dramatic consequences for the Greek community, the crisis of Naples however represented an essential point for the further development of the balance of power in Italy. The premises of the Second Samnite War are found in the incidents that took place at Naples in the years 327-326 B.C. The war stained with blood the middle part of Italy

¹¹ K. Lomas, *op. cit.*, p. 40 noticed the fact that there was a confusion in sources concerning the federal decisions and the individual initiatives of the league's members; from this point of view, it is hard to tell which actions refer only to the Tarentine affaires and what decisions resulted after the common consultations.

¹² The relationships between Naples and Tarentum developed not only within the political sphere but also in the economic field. It is possible that Tarentum would have issued coins after the weight standard of some coins from Naples. The dating of this currency with "Campanian influences" is uncertain (see M. Frederiksen, *op. cit.*, pp. 208 sq.; K. Lomas, *op. cit.*, p. 202, n. 38.).

¹³ Dionysius 15.5.2.

until 304 B.C. but, in the same time, the strong efforts of the two adversaries determined the spreading of the war's consequences towards the South of the peninsula. From another view, the intervention of Tarentum at Naples, as well as the entering of the Greek city from Campania within Rome's sphere of influence, represent the starting point of some Roman-Tarentine diplomatic relationship that had been very strained during the last years of the IVth century B.C. and the first decades of the following century. The Italic League had lost an important member and Tarentum felt the exit of the city from its influence like a hard blow. From this moment on, Rome and Tarentum suspected each other and the political game of the alliances developed in the peninsula, proving that both powers were trying to be as cautious as possible¹⁴.

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¹⁴ The Roman-Tarentine strains may have older sources, they may date back to the presence of Alexander the Molossian in the South of Italy. In 331 B.C., the king expanded his area of action towards Poseidonia. This context led to a treaty between Rome and Alexander (Livy 8.17.10-11; Justin 12.2.12), whose terms have not been preserved. It is possible that this diplomatic document had been understood as a Roman menace by the Tarentines, who were in conflict with the king because of his attempts to assert his independence in the Italic space.