Dorieus and Timoleon: two maritime experiences compared.

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In the relation between maritime experience and divine presence, in the Greek period, the expeditions of Dorieus from Sparta (VI B.C.) and Timoleon from Corinth (IV B.C.) certainly stand out for the many political and propagandistic implications.

Two centuries separate the expeditions but they are associated by the same political and family background that made both of them ‘undesired’ in their countries of origin. Although the preconditions were similar, historical results and consequent historiographical and propagandistic emphatisation have made the first man of the *hybris* and other *hieros aner*.

Herodotus (5,42,2) says that Dorieus not tolerating being ruled by Cleomenes, asked the Spartans for a group of people and he took them to set up a colony without asking the oracle at Delphi for which land he should settle down in nor carrying out all the ritual proceedings. So he settled by the Cinyps river in the fairest part of Libya, but after three years he was chased away by the Macae and went back to the Peloponnesus. After this failure, he tried a second maritime expedition following the Greek tradition: elected *oikistes* by his homeland he enquired the Delphic oracle but in an ‘unusual’ way. As highlighted in the sources, he enquired the oracle more as a conqueror than as an *oikistes* and his interference into political dynamics in Magna Graecia was the evidence of this: going against the divine response he helped Kroton that was fighting against Sybaris. Once arrived to Sicily, he set up Heraclea that, after few years, was destroyed by the Carthaginians. Dorieus died fighting too. Dorieus did not become a lucky *oikistes* neither in Libya nor in Sicily because, as mentioned in the sources, he was arrogant towards the fate and without any pity towards gods.

Only after some decades (480 B.C.), the tyrant Gelon, directing his army against the Carthaginians, will promote an hegemonic war as a war to revenge Dorieus’s murder.

Totally different was the result of Timoleon’s expedition. Actually disguising political reasons, he was undesired in his homeland too for killing his brother Timophanes, tyrant to be. The pretext to move away Timoleon from Corinth was offered by the Siracusans who asked for military help against tyrant Dionisios II. His appointment itself happened thank to a man inspired by a god and foresees Timoleon’s expedition as welcomed by god. Just before the fleet sailed away from Corinth, the first of several prodigious events that characterized the expedition took place: the two Demetra and Kore’s priestess in Corinth, dreamt about the two goddesses who were worshiped in Acrocorinth and in Sicily, sailing precisely to Sicily together with Timoleon. This was the first omen announcing the lucky expedition and the benevolent protection of the gods for Timoleon. So Timoleon devoted to Demetra and Kore the most beautiful ship. Setting off from Corinth to Sicily, Timoleon stopped in Delphi, according to the most ancient Greek tradition, to commit a sacrifice to god and put the mission over his divine protection. Exactly in Delphi another unmistakable omen took place: a *ταινία* embroidered with *στεφάνους καὶ Νίκας* fell on Timoleon’s head ὡς δοκεῖν αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ στεφανούμενον ἐπὶ τὰς πράξεις προπέμπεσθαι. That, together with στεφάνους καὶ Νίκας, symbolized the happy ending that the military expedition, blessed by god, would have had. Timoleon received divine acknowledgement as *oikistes*: ὡσπερ οἰκιστῆς ἠγαπάτο.

This paper aims to underline the common points and the differences between the two maritime missions paying particular attention to the political use of the divine presence into the two expeditions and the emphasis it has received by historiography.