Evans, R. 2016. *Ancient Syracuse: From Foundation to Fourth Century Collapse*. London: Routledge. Pp. xviii + 241. ISBN 9781472419379. US$149.95.

Richard Evans, a specialist in ancient military history, here presents a history of Greek Syracuse down to the tyranny of Dionysius II and the revolt of Dion in the mid-fourth century BCE, which aims to 'allow the Syracusan point of view to take precedence over the more usual Athenian or Spartan perspectives' (p. xvi). The author rightly notes (p. xv) that such a history is a substantial desideratum; whether the present volume fills this void will depend on the reader's interests. Evans has chosen a narrow military-political approach, based exclusively on literary sources, and this book will become a valuable resource for those interested in military (and to a lesser extent political) topics. However, the book's title suggests a wider scope than it actually provides, and some will be disappointed that a wide range of interesting and important topics – the cross-cultural encounter between Greeks and indigenous peoples, Deinomenid ideology and culture, and the Sicilian economy, to name only three – are left unexplored.

Chapter 1 ('The Myths and the Reality of the Foundation', pp. 1-18) addresses the foundation of Syracuse, with the goal of lowering its date, and that of most other colonies in Sicily, by some 50 or more years. A table of suggested dates (p. 17) gives the foundation of Syracuse at 680-675, as opposed to the traditional date of 733. This is based on idiosyncratic readings of the literary evidence and some questionable assumptions. I mention only two examples. First, Evans assumes that Greek colonists must have settled Italy before Sicily, simply because it was closer to Greece, and that the Corinthians who sailed with Archias, the founder of Syracuse, would have taken any spot (such as those of Rhegium or Megara Hyblaea) that was unsettled at the time; Syracuse must therefore have been the last colony founded on Sicily's east coast. However, the settlement of Pithecusae – the earliest, but also farthest, Greek site in Italy – shows that this is unnecessary. Second, Evans takes for granted that a story in Strabo (6.2.4; cf. 6.1.12), which brings the founders of Syracuse and Croton to Delphi together, implies that the two cities were founded at about the same time – despite recent work on colonial foundation narratives which suggests that such stories were constructed later for ideological purposes and do not preserve trustworthy historical data.[1]

What is most striking in this chapter, however, is the total absence of archaeological evidence. What would Evans make of the Late Geometric I pottery (a style usually dated to c. 750-725) from the site?[2] In fact, archaeological evidence generally supports the Thucydidean dates, at least in broad strokes. Recognizing that the traditional chronology is probably based on a biased, pro-Syracusan source which is untrustworthy in detail does not require abandoning the idea of an initial settlement in the late eighth century. The chronology of archaic Greece is by no means airtight, but it does hang together remarkably well. Evans does not succeed in challenging this aspect of it.

Next, the book passes over the few known events from Syracuse's archaic history – the foundation of sub-colonies, the war with Camarina in 552 – and proceeds directly to the age of tyrannies (Chapter 2, 'The Deinomenid Tyranny', pp. 19-56). There is little on social history or cultural context. Evans' strength lies instead in military issues, such as troop numbers, topography, and battle narratives. His reconstruction of Gelon's Himera campaign in 480 (pp. 32-42), for instance, is detailed and convincing. His account of Hieron likewise focuses on dynastic politics and the political and military situation, both in Sicily and southern Italy.

Evans turns next (Chapter 3, 'The Fifth Century Collapse', pp. 57-78) to the fall of the tyranny and the establishment of democracy in the 460s, a notoriously difficult period. It has long been noted that Diodorus' chronology, in particular, is deeply confused. Evans proposes that the expulsion of the last Deinomenid tyrant, Thrasybulus, was the result of intra-regime dynamics, rather than a broad-based popular revolt. On this model, which relies heavily on the testimony of Aristotle (*Pol.* 5.1312b), a faction of the Deinomenid clan hoped to replace Thrasybulus with another member of the family; why this failed must remain a matter of speculation. Evans also raises important problems in squaring Diodorus' military account with the topography of Syracuse (pp. 61-2), and any future work on this period will need to take this analysis into account. The chapter concludes with a lengthy discussion of the changing

[1] Strabo 6.1.12, 2.4; J. M. Hall 2008. 'Foundation stories' in G. Tsetskhladze (ed.), *Greek Colonisation* II.383-426. Brill; N. MacSweeney 2013. *Foundation Myths and Politics in Ancient Ionia*. Cambridge.

[2] I. Morris 1996. 'The absolute chronology of the Greek colonies in Sicily', *Acta Archaeologica* 67: 51-59; R. Leighton 1999. *Sicily Before History*. Edinburgh. Pp. 222-25.

demographics of Syracuse (pp. 66-78), aimed at elucidating social hierarchies within the citizen body that led to serious instability for several years.

A short fourth chapter ('Democracy and Ducetius', pp. 79-92) treats a series of ill-attested episodes from the political and, especially, military history of the period between 460 and 427. A major theme that emerges in this and the next two chapters is that, contrary to the usual belief, Syracuse's military capabilities were quite limited, and most engagements were relatively small in scale, until the Athenian siege in 414. This is one of Evans' more striking and successful proposals.

Chapters 5 and 6 ('The First Athenian Expedition' and 'The Second Athenian Expedition', pp. 93-145) cover the two Athenian expeditions to Sicily, in 427-424 and 415-413. Evans rightly points out some flaws in Thucydides' military narrative: for example, the account of the Athenians' overnight sail from Catana past Syracusan defenders into the Great Harbor (Thuc. 6.65; pp. 121-22) is shown to be implausible and 'presented in such a way as to draw out the dramatic element of a manoeuvre that may have taken rather longer to organize'. Apart from this sort of critique, however, Evans sticks very closely to the Thucydidean account, even to the point of paraphrasing the main arguments of the historian's speeches. Evans knows well that 'Thucydides cannot be regarded as an infallible guide to events in Sicily,' but this statement is relegated to a footnote (p.111 n.9) and seems only to have influenced his account in limited ways. A more thoroughly critical approach, particularly one that fully took onboard the advances of recent decades in understanding Thucydides as a literary author, would have been welcome. The account of military operations is nonetheless detailed and valuable.

Chapters 7 and 8 ('The Rise of the Tyrant Dionysius I' and 'The Fourth Century Collapse', pp. 147-88), begin with a lengthy narrative of Dionysius' rise down to 404, which closely tracks that of Diodorus. However, Evans somewhat surprisingly chooses not to treat the next 37 years of Dionysius' reign in any detailed narrative. Instead, he presents a synoptic account of dynastic politics, which focuses on elucidating the family relationships (see the helpful chart on p. 170) and dates of birth of various figures. These relationships form the key to his interpretation of the career of Dion, the tyrant's brother-in-law, whom he suggests was functionally the heir apparent for at least two decades during the minority of the tyrant's son, Dionysius II. Frustration at being passed over for the eventual succession led him to raise a rebellion against the latter. Evans' decision to end his account here means that he has chosen not to treat the careers of Timoleon, Agathocles, and Hieron II. An overall chronological table and six appendices follow (pp. 191-221), four of which collect translations of literary sources that bear on specified topics; the other two consist of lengthier discussions of the Damareteion coinage and the trophies erected during the Athenian siege.

This is a book with conflicting senses of its intended audience. On the one hand, detailed discussions of the sources of Diodorus and Strabo are unlikely to be of interest to non-professional readers; on the other, there is far too little scholarly apparatus and citation of modern scholarship. An enormous volume of work has been done in recent decades on numerous aspects of Sicilian history, but Evans does not take much of this into account.[3] Scholars will also find deeper problems. A too-trusting attitude towards the ancient literary sources has deeply conditioned the presentation of material. Moreover, Evans' adherence to the outdated methodology of *Quellenforschung*, despite a growing body of work that tries to rehabilitate Diodorus as an independent historical thinker, will also raise some eyebrows.[4] He usefully highlights the importance of the lost fifth-century historian Antiochus of Syracuse, but exactly how to recover this perspective is a difficult methodological question, which Evans does not seriously address. *Ancient Syracuse* will become essential reading on Sicilian military history, but in other respects the book's scope falls short of the title's promise.

Mark Thatcher,
Boston College, USA.

[3] In fact, the odd note introducing the bibliography (p. 223) points readers to websites such as Perseus, Lacus Curtius, and even Wikipedia!

[4] K. Sacks 1990. *Diodorus Siculus and the First Century*. Princeton; P. Green 2006. *Diodorus Siculus 11-12.37.1*. Austin; and (too recent for Evans to have consulted), C. Muntz 2016. *Diodorus Siculus and the World of the Late Republic*. Oxford.