

## Callimachus' ancestor ransoms Plato in Sicily

Source: **The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers**, Book III

**XIV.** And Plato made three voyages to Sicily, first of all for the purpose of seeing the island and the craters of volcanoes, when Dionysius, the son of Hermocrates, being the tyrant of Sicily, pressed him earnestly to come and see him; and he, conversing about tyranny, and saying that that is not the best government which is advantageous for one individual alone, unless that individual is pre-eminent in virtue, had a quarrel with Dionysius, who got angry, and said, "Your words are those of an old dotard." And Plato replied, "And your language is that of a tyrant." And on this the tyrant became very indignant, and at first was inclined to put him to death; but afterwards, being appeased by Dion and Aristomenes, he forebore to do that, but gave him to Pollis, the Lacedæmonian, who happened to have come to him on an embassy just at that time, to sell as a slave. And he took him to Ægina and sold him; and Charmander, the son of Charmandrides, instituted a capital prosecution against him, in accordance with the law which was in force, in the island of Ægina, that the first Athenian who landed on the island should be put to death without a trial; and he himself was the person who had originally proposed that law, as Phavorinus says, in his Universal History. But when some one said, though he said it only in joke, that it was a philosopher who had landed, the people released him. But some say that he was brought into the assembly and watched; and that he did not say a word, but stood prepared to submit to whatever might befall him; and that they determined not to put him to

death, but to sell him after the fashion of prisoners of war. And it happened by chance that Anniceris, the Cyrenean, was present, who ransomed him for twenty minæ, or, as others say, for thirty, and sent him to Athens, to his companions, and they immediately sent Anniceris his money: but he refused to receive it, saying that they were not the only people in the world who were entitled to have a regard for Plato. Some writers again say, that it was Dion who sent the money, and that he did not refuse it, but bought him the garden in the Academy. And with respect to Pollis it is said that he was defeated by Chabrias, and that he was afterwards drowned in Helice, in consequence of the anger of the deity at his treatment of this philosopher. And this is the story told by Phavorinus in the first book of his Commentaries. Dionysius, however, did not remain quiet; but when he had heard what had happened he wrote to Plato not to speak ill of him, and he wrote back in reply that he had not leisure enough to think at all of Dionysius.