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DIVIDED LOYALTIES IN EASTERN SICILY
UNDER VERRES

There are clear signs, in the *Verrines*, that Cicero is using his rhetorical skill to induce the jury to believe that every city-state in Sicily was solidly behind him, whereas we can see that at least in eastern Sicily this was not necessarily the case.

In his *Brutus* (1), Cicero, surveying the history of Roman oratory, regards Servius Galba as the first Roman to use certain common and justifiable oratorical features. One of these is *ut auget rem*, variously rendered as «magnifying his theme» and «exaggeration». Clearly in every speech of Cicero's we need to read between the lines and to beware of taking every sweeping statement at face value. Whereas in a number of his speeches (2) the use of exaggeration is not hard to discern, the misdeeds committed by Verres during his three years in Sicily were so great and so shocking that one might be pardoned for thinking that no magnifying of the theme was needed. But on closer inspection it seems clear that certain aspects of the prosecution are either exaggerated or intentionally omitted.

It may be argued that both exaggeration and omission are used in connection with the support given to Cicero by the Sicilian city-states. He himself had been quaestor at Lilybaeum in 75 B.C., when there was a shortage of grain in Rome, and had caused large supplies to be shipped from western Sicily. He had cut down on the expenses of his staff, had co-operated with Romans

(1) *Brut.* 82: *is ... princeps ex Latinis illa oratorum propria et quasi legitima opera tractavit, ut egrederetur a proposito..., ut auget rem ... (legitima not «legitimate» but «statutory»: Cic. Brut. ed. A.E. Douglas, Oxford 1966, ad loc.).*

(2) For example, the *De lege agraria*: O.A.W. Dilke, *Cicero's Attitude to the Allocation of Land in the De Lege Agraria*, «Ciceroniana» 3, 1979, 183-7. For Cicero's dramatisation of episodes see M. Fuhrmann, *Tecniche narrative nella seconda orazione contro Verre*, in this volume.

and provincials alike, and 21 years later claimed that, although it did not confer on him all that amount of glory, yet he doubted if anyone would be able to point to a Sicilian quaestorship that was more distinguished or pleasing (3). Obviously we can discount some of his self-glorification, but at least he had shown himself enormously fairer than Verres and his staff.

In the *Verrines*, addressing himself to a court which was discussing (4) the affairs of the whole province of Sicily, he had to make himself familiar with the area of the eastern as well as the western quaestorship. This involved considerable travelling, so we need not be surprised if certain areas are less well covered (5). But seemingly Cicero had also to fight harder to achieve cooperation from the city-states furthest removed from Lilybaeum. The exact boundary line between the quaestorships based on Syracuse and on Lilybaeum, which originated in the distinction between Greek and Punic spheres of influence, is unknown, but it is clear that the Lilybaeum quaestorship covered the whole of the west (6).

There was, however, another reason, apart from less familiarity, which caused Cicero to be more cautious in the east of Sicily, namely the permanent hostility of Messina, the temporary hostility of Syracuse and the lukewarm attitude of some of their city-states to his cause. The place about which he expresses most caution is Leontini, which as observed by Pritchard (7) constitutes some-

(3) *Planc.* 64; wrongly paraphrased by T. Petersson, *Cicero: a Biography*, Berkeley, California 1920, 172.

(4) M.C. Alexander, *Hortensius speech in defense of Verres*, «Phoenix» 30, 1976, 46-53, claims that Hortensius stayed in court and made a speech after the *Actio Prima*. Cicero's words in *Verr.* 2, 5, 177 have perhaps misled commentators: see C. Venturini, *La conclusione del processo di Verre*, in this volume.

(5) For a map of Cicero's possible itinerary in collecting evidence in Sicily see N. Marinone, *Quaestiones Verrinae*, Università di Torino, Pubblicazioni della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia II, 3, Torino 1950, 41. Cicero's assiduity in collecting data is praised by R.G.M. Nisbet, *The Speeches*, in *Cicero*, ed. T.A. Dorey, London 1965, 54-5. The example which he quotes, agricultural statistics from Agyrium, is of an inland town in eastern Sicily, one which Cicero obviously did not know well. Hence he was keen to impress the jury, who were unlikely to know Agyrium at all, with factual information.

(6) Cf. *Verr.* 2, 2, 22: *quaestor ... is qui Erycum montem obtinebat*; A. Holm, *Geschichte Siziliens im Altertum* 3, Leipzig 1898, 75f.

(7) R.T. Pritchard, *Perpaucae Siciliae civitates: notes on Verr.* 2, 3, 6, 13, «Historia» 24, 1975, 33-47; S. Calderone, *Problemi dell'organizzazione della provincia di Sicilia*, «Kokalos» 10-11, 1964-5, 63-98.

thing of an anomaly. On the one hand its inhabitants are said to live *misera in civitate atque inani*; on the other hand it is situated *in uberrima Siciliae parte* (8).

It had been treated generously after the defeat of Hannibal, land being restored to original holders (9). The river Terias was navigable at that time, and fishing and exports by sea may have contributed to the local economy. Yet some difficulties must have arisen from a monopoly situation. In Verres' time no one from Leontini except for Mnasistratus' family had *possessio* of any land there (10). It was obviously *ager publicus* at that period, just as it was at the time of the *Philippics* (11); and it was presumably farmed out by the family to *coloni* who had no *possessio*. We are told by Livy (12) that in 211 B.C. land in the territory of Syracuse was assigned to pro-Roman Spaniards. These two and Leontini may have had the only *ager publicus* in Sicily apart from some given to veterans in 199 B.C. It seems unlikely that at Leontini this was centuriated: it was probably assigned *en bloc* in the first instance and still so held. But tenant farmers from Centuripa came to farm land there, as also in the community of Aetna, and according to Cicero (exaggerating no doubt) Centuripans *in omnium fere finibus possessiones habent*, i.e. if we take his words literally have a security of tenure in the territories of other states such as they do not have in the territory of Leontini (13).

Cicero has to admit that the people of Leontini have not, as a community (*publice*), helped him much; in fact, during Verres' governorship the activities of the *decumani* actually helped them. In view of this statement it seems odd that the number of farmers

(8) *Verr.* 2, 2, 160: *Leontinis, misera in civitate atque inani, tamen istius in gymnasio statua deiecta est*; 2, 3, 47: *quod caput est rei frumentariae, campus Leontinus... sic erat deformis atque horridus ut in uberrima Siciliae parte Siciliam quaereremus.*

(9) Livy 24, 40.

(10) *Verr.* 2, 3, 109: *in agro Leontino praeter unam Mnasistrati familiam glebam Leontinorum possidet nemo.* In this phrase the word *Leontinorum* must (despite modern translations) be attached to *glebam*.

(11) *Phil.* 2, 43; 2, 101; 3, 22.

(12) 26, 21, 11-12: cf. M.I. Finley, *A History of Sicily: Ancient Sicily to the Arab Conquest*, London 1968, 139.

(13) *Verr.* 2, 3, 108: *arant enim tota Sicilia fere Centuripini.* Some statistics of land farmed by non-local cultivators in Egypt are given as a parallel by R.P. Duncan-Jones, *Some Configurations of Land-holding in the Roman Empire*, in M.I. Finley, ed., *Studies in Roman Property*, Cambridge 1976, 13.

during those three years declined from 84 to 32 (14). In the last year of Verres' tenure, 71 B.C., there were 30,000 *iugera* in the territory of Leontini under wheat. Duncan-Jones reckons that originally, including other crops, there must have been about 70,000 *iugera* under cultivation (15). This would give an average of 830 *iugera* per *colonus*, a very high average; and one may suspect that the actual figure was appreciably lower. If, however, all but one of the holdings was farmed by a non-Leontinan, it would follow that the local βουλή was very unrepresentative.

This is one case where Cicero admits the difficulties he encountered. Another city where he tells us something of the inside story was Syracuse. There the authority was clearly opposed, in the first place, to sending any representative to Rome to help Cicero (16). The unfortunate condemnation of Heraclius and the donation of his estate to the local palaestra (17) had, if we read between the lines, sharply divided public opinion. Of the wealthy, some had suffered under Verres, some had benefited; of the poor, most had benefited, since the amenities of their athletic park had been enhanced. Cicero puts up an imaginary interlocutor to object: *ergo, inquiet aliquis, donavit populo Syracusano illam hereditatem* (18). No doubt one can legally disprove that Verres had made such a gift to the people of Syracuse: he had merely manoeuvred things so that judges appointed by him declared testamentary stipulation unfulfilled. But the average citizen would still look upon Verres as something of a local benefactor, a σωτήρ, as Cicero saw inscribed in a statue of his at Syracuse (19). To say that Verres bribed the

(14) *Verr.* 2, 3, 113; 116; 120: *recita tandem quot acceperit aratores agri Leontini Verres. 'octoginta quattuor'. quot anno tertio profiteantur. 'triginta duo'. duo et quinquaginta aratores ita video deiectos ut iis ne vicarii quidem successerint.* Here even the simple subtraction is made to sound dramatic.

(15) R.P. Duncan-Jones, *op. cit.*

(16) *Verr.* 2, 4, 136-8. When in the βουλή Cicero is asked why he has not been forthcoming, he says: *respondi neque Romae in conventu Siculorum... legatos Syracusanorum adfuisse, neque me postulare ut quicquam contra C. Verrem decerneretur in ea curia in qua inauratam C. Verris statuas viderem.* For the help given to Verres by Syracuse and other Sicilian cities see C.J. Classen, *Verres' Gehilfen in Sizilien*, in this volume.

(17) *Verr.* 2, 2, 35: *a quibusdam Syracusanis admonetur... esse in eo testamento quo ille (sc. Heraclius) erat scriptus, ut statuas in palaestra deberet ponere. 'faciemus ut palaestritae negent ex testamento esse positas, petant hereditatem'.*

(18) *Verr.* 2, 2, 45.

(19) *Verr.* 2, 2, 154: *eum non solum PATRONUM illius insulae, sed etiam ΣΩΤΗΡΑ inscriptum vidi Syracusis. hoc quantum est? ita magnum ut Latine*

people of Syracuse to overlook his other thefts is merely putting it the way Cicero would like: rather than robbing Peter to pay Paul, he could be thought of as anticipating Robin Hood, robbing the rich to pay the poor, though probably with self-interest dominating his actions.

As to Messina, there is clear evidence, from Cicero's own accounts, of the discords prevalent there. C. Heius, the wealthiest man there, was head of the delegation sent to praise Verres, but had only retained his position by selling statues to Verres at a ridiculously low price (20). Again, however, the ordinary people of Messina can be said to have benefited from Verres' governorship. A large cargo ship, built at the city's expense according to Cicero, was acquired free by Verres, while at the same time he exempted Messina from providing soldiers and sailors. Cicero, of course, makes out that Verres totally neglected the maritime fortification of eastern Sicily; but we happen to know from a fragment of Sallust (21) that this was untrue.

But what of Agrigentum? Here we have one of the most prosperous cities in the province, with a harbour and good agricultural land. In the third *Verrine* (22) Cicero says: *audietis Agrigentinarum, fortissimorum virorum, diligentissimorum aratorum, querimonias*. But in fact we do not hear anything about agricultural complaints from Agrigentum. On the contrary, Cicero actually admits (23) that Verres approved the corn levies of Centuripa, Agrigentum and perhaps some other places.

An attempted seizure of a statue of Hercules in the territory of Agrigentum was foiled, and Cicero can find no more than a seal ring, a censer and two statuettes to accuse Verres of stealing (24). There is also a political episode recounted in the second speech of the *Actio Secunda* (25). The earlier constitution of Akragas

uno verbo exprimi non possit. is est nimirum σωτήρ qui salutem dedit. From tutelary deities the word comes to be applied to Hellenistic monarchs.

(20) *Verr.* 2, 4, 3 ff.

(21) *Hist.* 4. fr. 32 Maurenbrecher: *C. Verres litora Italia propinqua firmavit.*

(22) 2, 3, 103.

(23) *Verr.* 2, 3, 180: *at enim frumentum Centuripinorum et Agrigentinarum et non nullorum fortasse praeterea probasti et his populis pecuniam dissoluisti. sint sane aliquae civitates in eo numero quarum frumentum improbare nolueris* (this puts it as negatively as possible): *quid tandem? his civitatibus omnine pecunia quae pro frumento debita est dissoluta est?*

(24) *Verr.* 2, 4, 58; 48; 93.

(25) 2, 2, 123.

had been laid down by Empedocles; but the way in which the βουλή was elected was established by laws of Scipio Africanus maior in 205 B.C. Under these, the number of *coloni* could not exceed the number of original inhabitants on the βουλή. Obviously the two categories did not get on well together. Despite a protest deputation, Verres appointed one of the *coloni* to fill a vacancy caused by the death of an original inhabitant. Naturally, Cicero interprets this as due to bribery; but it might be simply a desire to placate the Roman *conventus*, in a city which was one of the governor's official *fora* where each year he had to conduct a judicial session. It would seem, then, that Cicero had left a space in his speeches to accommodate agricultural complaints from Agrigentum, but that he eventually found none to insert. Instead, he makes much of a political question which perhaps worried Pompey and his clientèle. Their interests in Sicily appear to have lain mainly in the north (Badian (26) stresses the usefulness of Sthenius to Pompey), but they may have been interested in affairs in the south, and may not have wished the *coloni* of Agrigentum to acquire illegal influence in public affairs.

At Centuripa, where despite exemption from taxes the local inhabitants were strongly against Verres, there were obviously factions opposed to each other. This was a Sicel centre west of Mt. Etna, obscure in Greek times but one which developed a pottery industry and was much more prosperous under the Romans. Even so, Cicero was almost certainly exaggerating wildly in calling it *civitate totius Siciliae multo maxima et locupletissima* (27): Syracuse at least, although smaller than in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C., must have greatly exceeded Centuripa's 10,000 citizens. In any case, Cicero says *urbem Syracusas maximam esse Graecarum, pulcherrimam omnium saepe audistis; est, iudices, ita ut dicitur; and later ea tanta est urbs ut ex quattuor urbibus maximis constare dicatur*. By saying that it is the largest of Greek cities, he is contrasting it not with Centuripa but, for example, with Rome.

In Centuripa Cicero had obviously influenced representatives to such an extent that Hortensius was forced to treat Artemo as a hostile witness (28). Evidently the privileged position which

(26) E. Badian, *Foreign Clientelae*, Oxford 1958, 282 ff.

(27) *Verr.* 2,4,50; accepted at face value by H. de la Ville de Mirmont, in the Budé edition.

(28) *Verr.* 2,2,156: *qui priore actione ita testimonium graviter vehementerque dixerint ut Artemonem Centuripinum legatum et publice testem Q. Hortensius accusatorem, non testem esse diceret.*

this city had acquired for helping Rome in its struggle against Carthage now shielded it from some of the worst excesses. The agricultural abuses suffered were not by the community but by individual Centuripans. The senate and people of Centuripa instructed its representatives, who included Artemo, not to complain of such abuses, since they had been committed outside the city's territory (29). As a result the farmers appointed their own representatives.

The position regarding corn levies from Centuripa, unless Cicero is speaking of different years, seems to be contradictory. He tells us in one passage (30) that, as in the case of Agrigentum, Verres had treated the community of Centuripa relatively well; though we need to remember, as he does not remind us, that the legal status of the two was different, Centuripa being a *civitas sine foedere immunis ac libera*, as clearly indicated at the beginning of the same speech (31). In a passage of the fourth speech (32), however, he implies that Centuripa, like Halaesa, had to pay out a large amount of money to compensate for the corn which Messana should have supplied but from which Verres had exempted it. When Cicero indulges in a hypothetical rhetorical exercise on what he would have said if L. Metellus, Verres' successor, had not forced the people of Centuripa to replace statues of Verres, he says: *commemorarem decem milia civium esse Centuripinorum, fortissimorum fidelissimorumque sociorum; eos omnes hoc statuisset, monumentum istius in sua civitate nullum esse oportere* (33). But in view of the conflicting interests of Centuripans employed inside and outside their territory, it seems quite possible that the stipulation that at least 30 local senators should be present when the statues were demolished indicates that only a majority of the local senate, not all 10,000 citizens, actively approved of this resolution.

If Cicero was well briefed there, conversely he was not very well informed on Netum and had rather little to say on Tauromenium. In the case of Netum, he only tells us in his last speech

(29) *Verr.* 2, 3, 108: *de iis iniuriis quae cives Centuripini non in suis sed in aliorum finibus acceperunt, senatus et populus Centuripinus legatos noluit mittere.*

(30) *Verr.* 2, 3, 180 (see n. 23).

(31) *Verr.* 2, 3, 13.

(32) 2, 4, 20.

(33) *Verr.* 2, 2, 163.

(34) that it and Tauromenium were both *foederatae*, whereas earlier (35) he had said *foederatae civitates duae sunt...*, *Mamertina et Tauromenitana*. Secondly, he shows that Verres had written to Netum demanding money, but the form of words which he uses (36) reveals that he did not know whether Netum, relying on its treaty, had stood out or had been unable to withstand Verres' demands. Since the people of Netum had given witness in the present case, this probably shows that they kept quiet about the episode and would not take Cicero into their confidence.

In conclusion, as our orator himself says, there is no point in enumerating every one of the city-states of Sicily, cities which neither in the slave revolts nor at this time acted entirely in agreement (37). They were certainly numerous, and there were probably fewer than has sometimes been thought which were insignificant. Earlier commentators imagined that the mention of Ietini alluded merely to some village or thinly populated rural area. But now Iaita has been thoroughly excavated, and has been shown to have had substantial public buildings, including a theatre with finely carved Telamones (38). Cicero purposely piles on *color* to his description of the allegedly insignificant places from which Verres' supporters came, *ex miseris desertissimisque oppidis* (39). Moreover Lipara, a volcanic island, was certainly not so infertile as he would have us understand (40).

The combined population of the Roman province must have been substantially higher than his statements on Centuripa would lead us to believe. A distinction has to be made not only between east and west Sicily but between maritime and inland Sicily. The harbours seem on the whole, apart from Gela, to have been relatively well populated under the late Republic. Even if there were abuses at Syracuse (which witnessed many executions),

(34) *Verr.* 2, 5, 56: *cur Tauromenitanis frumentum, cur Netinis imperasti? quarum civitatum utraque foederata est.*

(35) *Verr.* 2, 3, 13.

(36) *Verr.* 2, 5, 56: *quid potius ... suspicari possumus ... quam ... aut ... aut...?*

(37) U. Kahrstedt, *Die Gemeinde Siziliens in der Römerzeit*, «Klio» 34, 1942, 246-67; E. Gabba, *Sui senati delle città siciliane nell'età di Verre*, «Athenaeum» n.s. 37, 1959, 304-20.

(38) Universität Zurich, Archäologisches Institut. *Studia Ietina*, ed. H. Bloesch and H.P. Isler, I, *Die Stutzfiguren des griechischen Theaters ...* Erlenbach-Zürich 1976.

(39) *Verr.* 2, 2, 14.

(40) *Verr.* 2, 2, 84: *agri Liparensis miseri atque ieiuni*; 85.

Catina and elsewhere, in general the harbours of eastern Sicily cannot be said to have suffered unduly severely. Agricultural communities suffered most, but Cicero has to admit (41) that Verres allowed farmers to sue tax-collectors for eight times any additional tax illegally imposed, whereas if a tax-collector sued a farmer he could only claim four times the amount due. Cicero says he will elaborate on the hardships of Heraclea, Gela and Solous (42), but where does he do so?

This is not in the least to excuse Verres, whose illegal and unscrupulous gains must have been vast (Cicero's legal gains as governor of Cilicia amounted to as much as 2,200,000 sesterces) and who fully deserved severe punishment. It is merely a plea that in an area, that of the eastern quaestorship, with which Cicero was less familiar we should not always take him at face value, or believe that the inhabitants of this area were unanimous on many issues. As E. Thomas, speaking of the prosecution's brief, put it: "Nous le croirions plus volontiers s'il prétendait moins nous convaincre". In a typically rhetorical flourish of the speech against Q. Caecilius, Cicero starts his sentence (43): *Sicilia tota si una voce loqueretur...* But leaving aside personifications, we may reflect that neither at that time nor at most other times in antiquity did the whole of Sicily speak with one voice.

(41) *Verr.* 2, 3, 26.

(42) *Verr.* 2, 3, 103.

(43) *Caec.* 19.