

## The Small Towns of Sicily in the Transition from Republic to Principate

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**EN Abstract.** This paper revisits longstanding debates surrounding the political, economic, and social changes that the communities of Sicily experienced in the transition from Republic to Principate by considering new archaeological and epigraphic evidence emerging from the island's smaller urban centres. While the handful of coastal cities that became colonies in the Augustan period or later have long dominated accounts of Sicily's urban development under the Principate, research on a number of smaller, more "peripheral" centres traditionally considered to have been in terminal decline in the imperial period is enabling a more detailed and nuanced understanding of how urban communities (and their ruling classes) weathered the events of the final decades of the Republic and the transition to the new political order established by Augustus. This paper suggests that the picture emerging, albeit very tentatively, is of communities of reduced means that were still intent on establishing and commemorating their place in Augustus' new imperial order, often through the adaptation of older monumental public buildings. Moreover, local elites particularly from Sicily's new municipia were not indifferent to the opportunities for advancement within and beyond their home communities that opened up during the reign of Augustus and his successors. Therefore, although Sicily's experience of the transition from Republic to Principate was still unique in many respects, it was less of an outlier from Italy and other western provinces than usually thought.

**Keywords:** Roman Sicily; Augustus; towns; municipalization; equestrians; evergetism; urbanism.

## ES Las Small Towns de Sicilia en la transición de la República al Principado

**EN Resumen.** Este artículo revisa debates de larga data en torno a los cambios políticos, económicos y sociales que las comunidades de Sicilia experimentaron en la transición de la República al Principado, considerando nueva evidencia arqueológica y epigráfica que emerge de los centros urbanos más pequeños de la isla. Si bien el puñado de ciudades costeras que se convirtieron en colonias en el período de Augusto o posteriormente han dominado durante mucho tiempo los relatos del desarrollo urbano de Sicilia bajo el Principado, la investigación sobre una serie de centros más pequeños y "periféricos" tradicionalmente considerados que estaban en declive terminal durante el período imperial está permitiendo una comprensión más detallada y matizada de cómo las comunidades urbanas (y sus clases dominantes) soportaron los acontecimientos de las últimas décadas de la República y la transición al nuevo orden político

establecido por Augusto. Este artículo sugiere que la imagen que emerge, aunque de manera muy tentativa, es la de comunidades de medios reducidos que todavía estaban decididas a establecer y conmemorar su lugar en el nuevo orden imperial de Augusto, a menudo mediante la adaptación de edificios públicos monumentales más antiguos. Además, las elites locales, en particular las de los nuevos municipios de Sicilia, no fueron indiferentes a las oportunidades de avance dentro y fuera de sus comunidades de origen que se abrieron durante el reinado de Augusto y sus sucesores. Por lo tanto, aunque la experiencia de Sicilia en la transición de la República al Principado fue todavía única en muchos aspectos, fue menos atípica de lo que normalmente se pensaba en Italia y otras provincias occidentales.

**Palabras clave:** Sicilia romana; Augusto; ciudades; municipalización; équités; evergetismo; urbanismo.

**Sumario:** 1. The small towns of Sicily in the late Republic and early Principate: historical and archaeological horizons. 2. Local elites and the transition from Republic to Principate: new insights from epigraphy and archaeology. 3. Conclusion. 4. Bibliography.

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## 1. The small towns of Sicily in the late Republic and early Principate: historical and archaeological horizons

The published speeches from Cicero's prosecution of Gaius Verres (70 BC) have long been extremely well-trodden ground in the scholarship of Sicily under the Roman Republic. The vivid picture that they paint of civic life in Sicily in the late seventies BC has been examined from numerous historical, historiographical, and archaeological perspectives, particularly in the last few decades,<sup>1</sup> and does not need to be revisited in detail here. Nonetheless, it is worth acknowledging, as a starting point for an examination of the small(er) towns of Sicily in the transitional decades between the Republic and the Principate (c. 40s BC-AD 20), that many of the most dramatic episodes of Verres' governorship, as depicted by Cicero, take place outside of the major ports and centres of Roman administration on the island (chiefly, Messana, Lilybaeum, and Syracuse). The long list of *civitates* whose citizens individually or collectively play a role in Cicero's retelling of Verres' crimes include communities well-attested in the historical and archaeological record (Agrigentum, Centuripae, Halaesa, Segesta, Thermae Himeraeae, and Tyndaris) and ones that have left few other literary or material traces (Acesta, Amestratus, Bidis, Halicyae, Herbita, Imachara, Petra, Tissa, etc.). Archaeological research over the past several decades has confirmed that a number of the towns that feature in Cicero's speeches (chief among them Segesta and Halaesa, as well as Agrigentum and Soluntum) had undertaken substantial public building works in the generations that preceded Verres' governorship.<sup>2</sup> These programmes varied in their timing, nature, and extent, and not all can be dated with certainty, but they typically involved the monumentalization of the town's public square (agora) through the construction of stoas and temples, as well as the construction and/or renovation of the theatre. The construction works appear to have been managed –if not also partly or fully financed– by ruling oligarchies whose members were often commemorated in those same public spaces.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Pfuntner 2015; Prag 2014; Dubouloz – Pittia 2007; Prag 2007; Wilson 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Developments summarized in Wilson 2013 and 2000 and discussed further below.

<sup>3</sup> This is most evident at Segesta: Ampolo – Parra 2020, 107-113.

Cicero provides the next significant literary horizon for the history of the urban communities of Sicily under the late Republic: a famous letter written to Atticus shortly after Julius Caesar's assassination, in which he claims that the dictator had granted the Sicilians *Latinitas*.<sup>4</sup> This has generally been understood as the "Latin right" (*ius Latii*), a form of juridical promotion for communities through which the holders of civic magistracies (and their descendants) received Roman citizenship (i.e., *ius adipsendae civitatis per magistratum*). In the same letter, Cicero claims that even more egregious than Caesar's grant is the consul Mark Antony's recent attempt, after allegedly receiving a bribe, to extend full Roman citizenship to the Sicilians, claiming that this had been Caesar's intention.<sup>5</sup> The implications of these two grants –and particularly the extent to which they were actually implemented in Sicily, first during Sextus Pompeius' occupation of the island from late 43 onwards, and then after his defeat and expulsion by Octavian in the summer of 36– continue to be debated, as discussed further below.

Appian's and Cassius Dio's narratives of the war between Octavian and Sextus Pompeius for control of Sicily, and its immediate aftermath, tend to focus on the larger, strategic coastal settlements that played significant roles in military engagements: namely Messana, Lilybaeum, Mylae, Tyndaris, and Tauromenium, with the latter two cities subsequently becoming Roman colonies. While almost nothing is known of how other towns fared during Sextus' occupation, the war with Octavian, and its aftermath, Octavian's postwar treatment of the island, as depicted by Dio and Appian, was perhaps not as explicitly punitive as some scholars have claimed.<sup>6</sup> The only specific action that Dio and Appian record that was directed towards the island's communities was the requirement of a tribute of 1,600 talents –and this exaction (worth about 10 million denarii) appears primarily motivated by Octavian's need to meet the demands of his soldiers: he had committed to discharging and settling 20,000 veterans, and to paying 500 denarii per man to a considerable portion of the remainder of his army.<sup>7</sup> Although this indemnity has been interpreted as a significant blow to the fortunes of Sicilian cities, it was not excessive for the civil war era, when Roman commanders regularly levied enormous sums from whole provinces –and even from individual communities– to support their armies.<sup>8</sup> The sources give no indication of how and when this indemnity was assessed and collected, but presumably, the greatest burden was placed upon the handful of largest and wealthiest cities whose wartime activities could be construed as most supportive of Sextus (e.g., Syracuse). If, less plausibly, the indemnity was split between all the communities of Sicily equally, assuming that around sixty communities remained in existence at the end of the war with Sextus,<sup>9</sup> the burden would have been less than 30 talents per community. This amount is much less than the hundreds, or thousands, of talents levied on the cities of Asia by the Liberators. For example, Cassius allegedly fined Tarsus alone a similar amount (1,500 talents), requiring the city to liquidate (literally) its temple offerings, and to begin selling its people into slavery.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *Att.* 14.12, written from Puteoli on 22 April 44 BC. Although the grant has generally been assumed to apply to all Sicilian communities, Cicero's letter does not state this explicitly.

<sup>5</sup> *Ecce autem Antonius accepta grandi pecunia fixit legem a dictatore comitiis latam qua Siculi cives Romani; cuius rei vivo illo mentio nulla.* For a summary of these grants and their implications, see Wilson 1996, 434-435.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Wilson (1996, 435) claims that Octavian, "in no mood to be forgiving", levied a "massive" indemnity of 1,600 talents.

<sup>7</sup> *App.* *BC* 5.129; *D.C.* 49.14. Exchange rates based on Rowan 2018, 3-5 and 206-208.

<sup>8</sup> Asia and its wealthy cities, which had been hotspots of the Mithridatic wars just a generation before, were the favoured targets of the era's warlords. Most excessive was the penalty that Cassius imposed on Rhodes after its defeat: a fine of 8,500 talents, and the confiscation of the city's fleet and public and private treasure. See Ridley 1980/1981 for this and other civil war-era exactions imposed on provincial communities.

<sup>9</sup> Pliny (*HN* 3.8.88-91), whose source was probably an early Augustan-era document (discussed further below), indicates that Sicily had five colonies and sixty-three other recognized communities (*urbes aut civitates*), forty-five of which were *stipendiarii*.

<sup>10</sup> *App.* *BC* 4.64; Ridley 1980/1981.

Nonetheless, Strabo's *Geography* and Pliny's *Natural History* offer a rather bleak picture of life in Sicily in the early Principate, particularly in the smaller communities of the interior. Strabo famously describes the interior (*mesogaia*) of the island as a deserted landscape.<sup>11</sup> However, Strabo is highly selective in his historical and geographical coverage of Sicily,<sup>12</sup> and relies on a wealth of historiographical material, including the works of Ephorus, Timaeus, Polybius, and Posidonius, rather than autopsy for his description. He begins by describing Enna as having “only a few inhabitants”, and attributes its demographic distress to the slave revolt of Eunus, probably echoing the sentiments of Posidonius. He continues to note the abandonment of other settlements, mostly focusing on Greek *apoikiai*, but also mentioning Camici as a “barbarian” settlement that has disappeared. Strabo then links the Roman response to this desertion (or *erēmia*) –namely, the conversion of the land to pastoralism– to the disruptive activities first of Eunus, and then of the bandit Selurus in his own day, leaving a gap of what we know to be about a century that contributes to an overall impression of chronological imprecision.

Apart from Strabo's rather vague descriptions of Augustus' colonial foundations in Catina, Syracuse, and possibly Panormus, and his other restoration efforts in Centuripae,<sup>13</sup> perhaps the most valuable element of his account for understanding post-civil war conditions in Sicily is his personal commentary on the bandit Selurus. Strabo describes the career of this individual –and his exemplary punishment in the Roman Forum– in vivid detail:

And recently, in my own time, a certain Selurus, called the “son of Etna”, was sent up to Rome because he had put himself at the head of an army and for a long time had overrun the regions round about Etna with frequent raids. I saw him torn to pieces by wild beasts at an appointed combat of gladiators in the Forum; for he was placed on a lofty scaffold, as though on Etna, and the scaffold was made suddenly to break up and collapse, and he himself was carried down with it into cages of wild-beasts –fragile cages that had been prepared beneath the scaffold for that purpose.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Selurus was brought to Rome and given such an elaborate and memorable punishment implies that whatever trouble he was causing was not minor and local in scope. Selurus' execution most likely took place in the late 30s BC, after the defeat of Sextus.<sup>15</sup> However, the unrest he stoked may not be related solely or directly to the Roman civil war; eruptions of Etna in the same period may also have caused economic damage and disruption to law and order in the surrounding region.<sup>16</sup>

The overview and list of Sicilian communities that Pliny the Elder included as part of the *Natural History's* geographical survey of Italy and the provinces is thought to have derived mainly from an Augustan-era source document.<sup>17</sup> Though writing under the Flavians, Pliny would therefore have depicted the administrative arrangement that emerged in Augustus' reign: five *coloniae* and a handful of other towns (*oppida*) on the coast, and in the interior, three communities with the Latin right (*ius Latii*), along with at least forty “stipendiary” or tributary communities (*stipendiarii*) that

<sup>11</sup> Str. 6.272-273.

<sup>12</sup> Pfundtner 2019, 8.

<sup>13</sup> Str. 6.268-272.

<sup>14</sup> Str. 6.273. Translation: Loeb ed. (1924).

<sup>15</sup> Coleman (1990, 53) argues that since the display took place in the Roman Forum, it likely occurred between Strabo's first visit to Rome in 44 BC and the construction of the amphitheatre of Statilius Taurus in 29 BC.

<sup>16</sup> Appian mentions “rumblings” from Etna causing disruption to Octavian's campaign against Sextus in 36 BC (*BC* 5.117) and Dio mentions “a huge flow of lava from Etna which damaged cities and fields” amongst the portents for the year 32 BC (50.8.3). If Selurus' activities were enabled by the general disruption caused by volcanic eruptions, his punishment at the hands of a fabricated Etna would be even more fitting. Moreover, Strabo's description of Selurus as “head of an army” (στρατιᾶς ἀφηγησάμενος) and his failure to link Selurus to Sextus (whereas elsewhere in Book 6 he explicitly blames Sextus for damage to Sicilian communities) suggests that Selurus was acting autonomously.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson 1996, 438; Vera 1996, 38-41; Wilson 1990, 35-38.

were presumably subject to a different tax arrangement than the tithe system of the Republic.<sup>18</sup> It is generally agreed that the five *coloniae* named by Pliny –Tauromenium, Catina, Syracuse, Thermae, and Tyndaris– were established by Augustus around the time of his visit to Sicily in 22-21 BC (with the possible exception of Tauromenium, which may have been founded in the previous decade) and settled with veterans.<sup>19</sup> However, as with Pliny's lists of communities in other provinces,<sup>20</sup> little else about his presentation of Sicily is straightforward, particularly regarding the terminology Pliny (or his source) used to characterize individual communities' juridical and tax status, the date and nature of his source document, and any updates made to it, by Pliny himself or earlier editors. One of the most significant contributions to these debates was made in 1996 by Domenico Vera, who characterized the predominance of tributary communities (*stipendiarii*) in Pliny as largely reflective of Augustus' priorities for the island in the first decades of his rule, when he needed to ensure a secure grain supply to Rome amidst regular and politically problematic shortages.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Vera used Pliny's contrasting treatments of Sicily and Gallia Narbonensis –the latter famously described as more akin to Italy than a province (*Italia verius quam provincia*)– to discuss Sicily's apparently diverging development from Gaul and other western provinces, such as the Hispaniae, that display more overt signs of integration into the political, social, and cultural order of the Principate.<sup>22</sup> Vera particularly highlighted inattention to Sicily from the imperial centre, the apparent lack of upward mobility of its urban upper classes into the senatorial order of Rome, and its "schizophrenia" as a province of largely Greek cultural heritage positioned geographically and historically in the western empire, to explain the apparently divergent development of its communities under the Principate.<sup>23</sup>

Vera's analysis of Sicily's political and economic transition from Republic to Principate and the implications for its subsequent development in the imperial period was prompted by recent epigraphic discoveries from Agrigentum that had confirmed that the city became a *municipium* between 2 BC and AD 14 –a development not reflected in Pliny's list, which probably ceased to be updated at some point in the 10s BC.<sup>24</sup> Given that the expansion of research on the imperial period in Sicily in the late twentieth century that Vera celebrated has continued apace, and in many promising new directions, in the first decades of the twenty-first, it is perhaps an opportune time to revisit certain aspects of Vera's analysis, particularly regarding the ruling classes of the vast majority of Sicilian communities that did not become Roman colonies under Augustus (that is, Pliny's sixty-three *urbes aut civitates*). The rest of this paper considers new archaeological and epigraphic evidence for how these communities and their elites negotiated the transition from Republic to Principate.

## 2. Local elites and the transition from Republic to Principate: new insights from epigraphy and archaeology

In the time since Vera was writing, in the wake of the publication of Wilson's foundational work on the archaeology of Sicily in the imperial period (1990), research on urban centres across the

<sup>18</sup> For the nature of the *stipendium*, its date of introduction, and its relationship to the Republican-era tithe system, the work of Antonino Pinzone (e.g. 1990) is essential. For a summary of the modern historiography on the Sicilian *stipendium*, see Soraci 2011, 100-130.

<sup>19</sup> For a summary of these foundations: Wilson 1996, 437-438 and in more detail, Wilson 1990, 35-40.

<sup>20</sup> For Pliny's depiction of Gallia Narbonensis, see especially the collected works of Christol (2010) and Chastagnol (1995); for Spain, recently, the essays collected in García Fernández – López Barja 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Vera 1996, 42-48.

<sup>22</sup> *HN* 3.4.31. This divergence was also observed by Finley, amongst others (1979, 156): "Throughout the imperial period the Sicilians showed little interest in advancing themselves in Roman government or society. Even in the early Empire, when opportunities were numerous, hardly any Sicilians joined the legions or entered the imperial career service; no Sicilian is known to have attained the rank of Roman senator until the end of the first century. The contrast with southern Gaul, Spain, North Africa or Asia Minor is striking".

<sup>23</sup> Vera 1996, 50-58.

<sup>24</sup> Vera 1996, 32-33 and 38.

island –small and large, coastal and interior– has continued to flourish, with both long-running and more recently initiated projects publishing significant findings related to late Republican and early imperial phases of settlement.<sup>25</sup> Important epigraphic corpora have been published, and key aspects of civic life in Roman Sicily, such as honorific practices in public spaces, have received detailed consideration.<sup>26</sup> Most significantly, new digital resources have made materials from Sicily much more accessible: chief among them the *I.Sicily* epigraphic database, which has swiftly become the standard reference tool for Sicilian inscriptions.<sup>27</sup>

Given these developments, it is perhaps now more feasible, and more effective, to take a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach to the transitional period from Republic to Principate in Sicily: that is, to focus on evidence from the communities themselves, rather than attempt to provide new answers to the (perhaps irresolvable) questions of Caesarian or Augustan “urban” or “municipal” policy in Sicily, based on the limited and problematic textual evidence surveyed in the previous section.<sup>28</sup> Recent analyses have pointed to the more active role of local elites, rather than imperial authorities, in managing the process of “municipalization” that began in earnest in the early Augustan period,<sup>29</sup> but that was never promoted centrally on the same scale, and never had the same reach, as in Gallia Narbonensis or the Spanish provinces. We might therefore ask what, if anything, can be recovered of the lives and aspirations of the individuals and families who played a prominent public role in Sicilian towns in the early decades of the Augustan Principate, and who were presumably the main agents and managers of the political, social, economic, and cultural transitions that their communities underwent.

The longstanding and well-known challenge facing any analysis of civic life in Sicily in the imperial period, particularly in the towns that did not become Roman colonies, is the much less plentiful epigraphic record surviving from these communities, particularly compared to their counterparts in Spain and Gallia Narbonensis, coupled with the lack of detailed ancient narratives of the island’s history under the Principate.<sup>30</sup> This thin evidentiary base leaves the potential for new epigraphic finds, as well as the dissemination of previously unpublished material, to significantly alter our understanding of political developments in individual urban centres. Perhaps the best recent example of this ever-shifting scholarly ground is the discovery in 2008 of an inscription in Marsala (ancient Lilybaeum) that showed that the *municipium* of Agrigentum was granted colonial status in the Severan era.<sup>31</sup>

One area of civic life in early imperial Sicily that can be revisited in light of recent research is the role of members of the equestrian order: that is, prominent Sicilians who had obtained equestrian rank, as well as members of the equestrian order from other parts of the Roman world who resided in Sicily (and indeed, members of these two categories are not always easily

<sup>25</sup> Many of these developments are discussed in Pfundtner 2019.

<sup>26</sup> The published corpora of inscriptions from Segesta (Ampolo – Erdas 2019) and Halaesa (Prag – Tigano 2017), and Henzel’s recent study of honorific practices in Roman Sicily (2022), figure prominently in the pages below. For briefer syntheses of the evidence for transformations in the urban landscape of Sicily in the early Principate, see Campagna 2020 and Portale 2017.

<sup>27</sup> <http://sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk>. Also worth highlighting is ARCAIT (<https://www.arcait.it>), whose bibliographic and documentary databases are particularly valuable for contextualizing political developments in Sicily with those in Italy and other parts of Roman world.

<sup>28</sup> Questions about the “municipalization” of Sicily from Caesar onwards remain unresolved, and debate continues –see recently, e.g., Soraci 2023. See Prag 2024 for an alternative (and potentially more productive) approach to the epigraphic record of Sicily for this period.

<sup>29</sup> Korhonen – Soraci 2019; Soraci 2018.

<sup>30</sup> For the thin historical record on Sicily in the imperial period, Finley 1979, 154–156; Prag 2008, 67–68 on the relative paucity of the Roman-era Sicilian epigraphic record, though thanks to *I.Sicily*, an up-to-date corpus of Roman-era inscribed documents from Sicily is now easily accessible to researchers. For the public epigraphy of the transitional period from Republic to Principate, Prag 2024 is a brief but effective demonstration of the insights that a “more nuanced reading across the multiple dimensions of language, format and materiality” (p. 88) can produce.

<sup>31</sup> Silvestrini 2011; *ISic*003349.

distinguishable).<sup>32</sup> Vera, in his analysis of the integration (or lack thereof) of Sicily into the broader political order of the Principate, focuses on the small numbers of native Sicilians who reached the Senate in Rome, but says almost nothing about the equestrian class. However, the imperial *ordo equester* was much larger than the Roman senate and had less stringent wealth qualifications, and so it would have been a much more likely destination for the substantial numbers of Sicilian notables who held Roman citizenship by the Julio-Claudian period both through individual grants and through holding municipal magistracies. Caillan Davenport, in his recent history of the order, estimates that there would have been 20,000-30,000 equestrians, as opposed to approximately six hundred senators, in any given generation under the Principate.<sup>33</sup> Its lower wealth threshold for qualification (400,000 sesterces versus one million for the Senate) would have been more attainable for Sicilian civic notables, whom, as Vera aptly noted,<sup>34</sup> now faced considerable constraints on their ability to acquire the substantial landholdings that underpinned senatorial wealth: most notably, competition from external, Romano-Italian proprietors, especially senators and the imperial family, but not discounting redistributions related to Augustan colonization. Moreover, while membership of the Senate entailed transferring one's primary residence (and allegiance) to Rome, even the most prolific equestrian careers would likely have been periodic, with intervals between postings, allowing an *eques* to return to his home community, or to settle and become involved in the public life of another Italian or provincial community, for substantial stretches both during and after his official career.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the presence of *equites* is more immediately indicative of a community's (or a province's) level of integration and "buy-in" to the Roman imperial order than the presence of Roman senators:<sup>36</sup> if municipalization, the holding of municipal office, and the acquisition of Roman citizenship was a necessary first step for elite ascension, equestrian status would be the logical next step for many families, and also its inevitable endpoint, given the tighter restrictions on entry to the senate.

While the literary and epigraphic evidence for the presence of equestrians in early imperial Sicily is admittedly rather thin,<sup>37</sup> a recently published Latin inscription from Halaesa (Figure 1) may shed significant light on the role that a local family whose member(s) had obtained equestrian status played in their community in the transitional years from Republic to Principate. The inscription was found during excavations of the late Hellenistic porticoed building (or stoa) in the agora of Halaesa in 1971, but only published in 2017. The editors of the text emphasize its importance as an indication of the continuity of the ruling class of Halaesa in the aftermath of the civil wars and into the early reign of Augustus.<sup>38</sup> The left half of the thin, fragmented marble slab holding the inscription is missing, but the regular and finely carved letters that remain are clear

<sup>32</sup> Particularly in the towns that became Roman colonies under Augustus, where veterans from Italy presumably would have been settled.

<sup>33</sup> Davenport 2019, 226 and 243.

<sup>34</sup> Vera 1996, 54.

<sup>35</sup> Davenport 2019, 256.

<sup>36</sup> See Davenport 2019, 278-298, for an extended discussion of how the achievement of equestrian status and office was commemorated in individual *equites*' home communities in Italy and the provinces.

<sup>37</sup> Demougin (1992) includes only five Sicilians amongst the 770 attested *equites* of the Julio-Claudian era: [-]ius Sex[-] (no. 46), Cn. Pollienus (no. 50), and M. Cestius (no. 354) in Thermae Himeraeae; L. Baebius Iuncinus (no. 696) in Messana; and Pompeius Grosphus (no. 84), an associate of the poet Horace. All of these individuals are discussed further below. There is more substantial (and ever increasing) epigraphic evidence for *equites* in Sicily in later decades and centuries; for example, the Severan-era *tribunus militum* M. Rubellinus Cestianus honoured in a recently-published inscription from Lilybaeum (Silvestrini 2020; *Sic003460*) and in a long-known text from Mazara (*CIL* 10.7212; *Sic000492*). The evidence for individuals and families of equestrian status is also not restricted to literary and epigraphic evidence: for example, the attributes of the six *togati* found in the "Ginnasio Romano" of Syracuse include "status symbols" of the equestrian order (e.g. *calcei equestres*) (Portale 2022).

<sup>38</sup> Prag - Tigano 2017, 44-45: "Il fatto che un membro di una notabile famiglia di Alesa nel periodo ellenistico-repubblicano venga rappresentato con una carica ufficiale all'interno dello stato romano (*praefectus fabrum*) e (probabilmente) onorato nella sua città natale come sacerdote augustale a vita è importante testimonianza della perduranza delle élites durante il tormentato periodo delle guerre civili e del primo impero". See also Prag 2024, 86.

and easily legible. The monument to which it was originally affixed –presumably the base of an honorific statue set up in the agora/forum of Halaesa<sup>39</sup>– honoured an individual who had achieved high status both in Halaesa itself and beyond:

[---La]pironi / [---pr]aef(ecto) · fabr(um) · X̄ / [--flamini(?) Aug]usti · Caesaris / [---perpet(?)]  
uo / [---pecu]nia · publica

(In honor of) [---]Lapiron [---] praefectus fabrum 10 times [---] priest of Augustus Caesar, for life [---] (set up at) public expense<sup>40</sup>

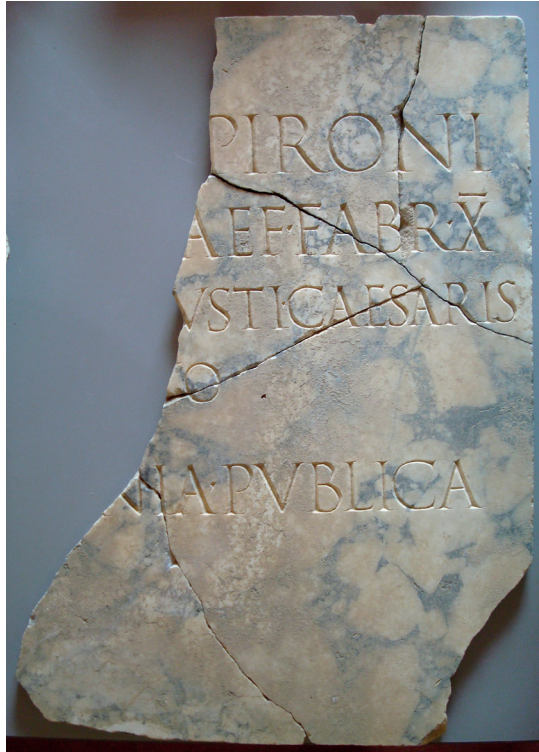


Fig. 1. *ISic003571*. Honours for Lapiron from the agora of Halaesa, inv. ME 30595. Photograph by Jonathan Prag, reproduced with the authorization of the Parco archeologico di Tindari; reproduction is not permitted

Although only the final part of the honouree's name is preserved in the first line, with the missing section presumably having included most of his Roman nomenclature (*praenomen*, *nomen*, and possibly filiation), it is clear from what remains of his *cognomen* that he belonged to a family, the Lapirones (or Laphirones), that is well-attested in Greek honorific inscriptions from the late Hellenistic era (late 2<sup>nd</sup> / early 1<sup>st</sup> century BC). In this period, at least two family members were honoured with statues in the agora of Halaesa.<sup>41</sup> A member of the family is also mentioned in Cicero's prosecution of Verres: Apollodorus Laphiro, who left a controversial legacy to his relative

<sup>39</sup> For this aspect, see Henzel 2022, 279 (Hala19).

<sup>40</sup> Text and translation: J. Prag (*ISic003571*).

<sup>41</sup> *IG* 14.353 (*ISic001175*): the *damos* dedicates a statue of Diogenes Lapiron son of Diogenes to all the gods on account of his *evergesia*; *IG* 14.354 (*ISic001176*): the *koinon* of the priests (of Apollo?) honours Lapiron son of Diogenes on account of his *eunoia* and *evergesia*; and *AE* 1973.266 (*ISic000800*): the *damos* dedicates a statue of Lapiron son of Apollodorus to all the gods on account of his *eunoia* and *evergesia*. See also Henzel 2022, 261-264 and 269 (Hala1, 2 and 7) and Prestianni Giallombardo 2012, 176-180.



Dio (also known as Q. Caecilius Dio, having acquired Roman citizenship from one of the Metelli) that was targeted by Verres.<sup>42</sup> This body of evidence hints at an extended family that had not only dominated the political life of Halaesa across multiple generations, but had also fostered patronage connections with Roman senatorial families by the early first century BC.<sup>43</sup>

The Latin inscription in honour of Lapiron indicates that the family continued to hold influence in Halaesa after the turbulence of the Caesarian and triumviral civil wars. Though little is known of the course and impact of the civil wars on Halaesa, it seems that in Octavian's initial administrative arrangement of the island after his victory in 36 BC, the community went from being a privileged *civitas immunis ac libera* to one of the many *civitates stipendiariae*, before gaining (or regaining) the status of *municipium* later in Augustus' reign.<sup>44</sup> Although we lack precise evidence for the timing of the grant of municipal status, it is not a stretch to hypothesize that the Lapirones –at least one of whose members, Cicero indicates, had acquired Roman citizenship by the latter decades of the Republic– helped to manage the constitutional changes it entailed, while taking care to maintain their own position of prominence in Halaesa.<sup>45</sup>

The second line of the inscription honouring Lapiron provides further insight into how the fortunes of the civic community of Halaesa and its ruling class were intertwined in the early years of the Principate. The surviving right-hand portion of the text indicates that Lapiron held the office of *praefectus fabrum* ten times. Lapiron must therefore be added to the short list of individuals from, or residing in, Sicily who are known to have held this enigmatic office that emerged in the late Republic, but that is best-attested under the Principate (and particularly under Augustus and his Julio-Claudian successors).<sup>46</sup> Although the position may have been rooted in technical and administrative competencies associated with Roman military service, Alberto Cafaro's recent comprehensive study has emphasized the *praefectura fabrum* as a key instrument of patronage that bound together the elites of Rome, Italy, and eventually the provinces, rather than as an administrative role with a well-defined set of functions. The position implied a pre-existing relationship of allegiance and trust between the appointing magistrate (i.e., a holder of *imperium*) and the recipient, and so appointment to the role speaks above all to the recipient's integration into the patronage networks –with the *princeps* now at their head– through which Roman political, administrative, and military careers were realised.<sup>47</sup>

Although Cafaro argues that equestrian status was not necessarily a prerequisite for appointment as *praefectus fabrum*, it was frequently associated with prominent and influential *equites* in the Late Republic, and it continued to be an important (though not necessary) step in equestrian careers under Augustus and his successors. While the office listed before *praefectus fabrum* in line two of the inscription in honour of Lapiron has not been preserved, it is reasonable to hypothesize from comparison with other *praefecti* that it was another equestrian post in the

<sup>42</sup> 2Verr 2.19-24.

<sup>43</sup> For Dio, the Lapirones, and their connections within and beyond Halaesa, see Facella 2006, 229-241.

<sup>44</sup> Facella 2006, 255-278, provides an overview of the town's obscure (and complex) political history from the era of Sextus Pompeius through the reign of Augustus. The most explicit evidence for the acquisition of municipal status is the now-lost inscription recording the dedication, presumably of a statue, to the emperor Augustus by the *municipium* of Halaesa, dated to between 12 BC and AD 14 on the basis of Augustus' designation as *pontifex maximus* (CIL 10.7458; ISic000582). The precise date at which Halaesa became a *municipium* is unclear but must have been later than the date of Pliny's source (Wilson 1996, 438).

<sup>45</sup> Soraci (2018) argues for a gradual and locally mediated process through which Sicilian communities like Halaesa became *municipia*, possibly involving the naming of local notables who already possessed Roman citizenship as the first magistrates (*duoviri*, aediles, etc.), who were then responsible for overseeing the restructuring of the community along "municipal" lines.

<sup>46</sup> Cafaro (2021) includes only three Sicilians or residents of Sicily in his corpus of 432 attested *praefecti* from the imperial period: L. Baebius Iuncinus of Messana (no. 34), M. Cestius of Thermae Himeraeae (no. 51), and Q. Attilius Severus of Catina (no. 257). An additional *praefectus*, [-]ius Sex[-], whose full name has not been preserved is known from Thermae (anon. no. 33). See further below, note 58.

<sup>47</sup> Cafaro 2021, 11-14.

military or imperial administration (most likely *tribunus militum*, or another *praefectura*).<sup>48</sup> Lapiron held the position of *praefectus fabrum* ten times, a remarkably large number that is exceeded in only one attested case: P. Numisius Ligus of Saepinum, who held the post fifteen times, in addition to obtaining a military tribunate with a legion in Africa and completing the full *cursus* of municipal offices in his home town.<sup>49</sup> However, with Ligus, Lapiron, and most other holders of multiple prefectures, nothing is known of the duration, location, or circumstances of the appointments: i.e., were they appointed multiple times by a single magistrate, or by different magistrates, and for the duration of the magistrate's office, or for a shorter period of time?<sup>50</sup> We can say, however, that Lapiron's appointment to the *praefectura fabrum* so many times indicates that he was well-connected to Roman magistrates within and probably beyond Sicily, and that he had a reputation for competence in some administrative sphere(s) (financial, judicial, etc.).

While the second line of the inscription places Lapiron in the broader world of imperial service and patronage, the last three lines confirm his prominence in his home town, and illustrate how he served as a symbolic (and perhaps real) link between Halaesa and the imperial power of Rome, as represented by the *princeps*. Lines three and four, though more difficult to restore than the previous two, seem to indicate that Lapiron held the priesthood for life (*flamen perpetuus*) of Augustus Caesar, perhaps along with another municipal position, such as *duumvir*, which would have been listed at the beginning of line three.<sup>51</sup> Other epigraphic, numismatic, and archaeological evidence indicate the precocious uptake of the imperial cult in Halaesa: the priesthood likely held by Lapiron is also attested on Augustan-era coins of the town, and honours paid to emperors (living and deified) are recorded in other inscriptions.<sup>52</sup> In addition, space for veneration of emperors was marked out in the agora/forum of Halaesa at a relatively early stage through the conversion of several of the rooms lining the back of the late Hellenistic porticoed building (stoa) from an apparently mixed usage (commercial, administrative, etc.) to primarily a sacral function: that is, from "tabernae" to "sacella" equipped with altars and spaces for cult statues. Most conspicuous –and likely connected to the Julio-Claudian phase of the imperial cult in the city– was the adornment of one of the central rooms ("sacellum III") and its entryway with a range of imported coloured marbles.<sup>53</sup>

The flaminiate of the imperial cult was a particularly fitting appointment for Lapiron, perhaps even more so than if he had only pursued a municipal career culminating in the duumvirate, since his equestrian status distinguished him in Halaesa as a member of an empire-wide elite whose prestige derived from the patronage (at least in theory) of the emperor himself.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, many other holders of the *praefectura fabrum* (and other equestrian posts) also held prominent positions in the local and regional veneration of the emperor in their home communities and provinces.<sup>55</sup> The final line confirms that the honours for Lapiron had been sanctioned officially by

<sup>48</sup> As suggested by Prag – Tigano 2017, 45. For example, of the twenty-one *praefecti fabrum* who, according to Cafaro (2021), probably or certainly originated from Gallia Narbonensis in the Julio-Claudian era, eight also held a military tribunate as part of their *cursus* (nos. 28, 47, 59, 71, 94, 131, 141, and 173).

<sup>49</sup> Cafaro 2021, no. 117.

<sup>50</sup> Cafaro 2021, 198-200.

<sup>51</sup> Prag – Tigano 2017, 45.

<sup>52</sup> Coins: *RPC* I, nos. 630-633. Inscriptions: *ISic*000582, 003576, and 003577.

<sup>53</sup> For the early imperial transformation of the portico: Wilson 1990, 46-47; Facella 2006, 340-342; Prestianni Giallombardo 2012, 172; Portale 2017, 112-115; Pfundtner 2019, 80-81; Campagna 2020, 115; Henzel 2022, 51-58. For a summary of the marbles used on the floors and walls of sacellum III, Fuduli 2019, 113-114. Barresi *et alii* (2016, 500) date the "marmorizzazione" of sacellum III to the late Julio-Claudian period, as part of a broader program of renovation of the rooms at the back of the stoa, largely in connection with accommodating the imperial cult, that began in the Augustan era.

<sup>54</sup> Davenport 2019, esp. 227.

<sup>55</sup> To cite just a few of the Julio-Claudian *praefecti* whose careers are detailed by Cafaro (2021):

- L. Calpurnius Fabatus, *flamen divi Augusti* in the *municipium* of Comum (no. 43).

- Sex. Maesius Celsus, who served as *praefectus fabrum* three times and also as *flamen divi Augusti* in Praeneste (no. 107).

- C. Passerius Afer, who served as *praefectus fabrum* three times and obtained the flaminiate of Augustus and of Germanicus in Vienna in Gallia Narbonensis (no. 131).

his home community, with the statue and inscription set up at public expense (*pecunia publica*), and probably with the approval of the town council (*decreto decurionum*).<sup>56</sup>

Lapiron's career probably spanned several decades of the early Principate, potentially encompassing the reigns of Augustus and his immediate successors.<sup>57</sup> The scope of his career beyond his home community is so far unique amongst the Augustan-era *municipia* and other non-colonial settlements of Sicily; the only other known holders of the *praefectura fabrum* (and other equestrian offices) from the island come from Augustan colonies of Thermae Himeraeae and Catina, and from Messana, which Pliny describes as an *oppidum civium Romanorum*.<sup>58</sup> Yet it is perhaps not surprising that of all of Pliny's *civitates stipendiariae*, it was Halaesa that produced an individual with a career in the service of the Roman state, and at a relatively early stage. The town had long-standing (and well-advertised) links to Rome and its elite, mediated both by its leading indigenous families and also perhaps by Italians who had taken up residence by the second century BC.<sup>59</sup> This history of service to Rome, and connection to Roman officials, was also celebrated in numerous monuments set up in the agora in the second and first centuries BC.<sup>60</sup> We might say, therefore, that due to the town's unique geographical and historical affinity with Rome and Tyrrhenian Italy, its late Hellenistic-era ruling class was more overtly outward-looking, both towards Rome and to its official representatives in Sicily, than other communities of similarly middling size and wealth. In the aftermath of the civil war between Sextus Pompeius and Octavian, Halaesa, despite its apparently unfavourable initial taxation status, perhaps had the advantage of long and enduring links between its elites and those of peninsular Italy, and so was more able to tap into friendship and patronage networks relatively early in the reign of Augustus in order to secure political promotion for the town itself and for individual members of its ruling class.

The dedication to Lapiron is, finally, notable for the mixture of continuities and changes in civic life in Halaesa that it encapsulates: its probable placement in or near the late Hellenistic porticoed building (*stoa*) attests to the continuing use of the agora as an honorific space, though the renovation and refurbishment of the rooms opening onto the portico appears to have been associated with the town's early uptake of the imperial cult (as discussed above), and the honours for prominent citizens were now published in Latin rather than Greek, and using conventions found in *municipia* in Italy and throughout the western provinces.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, while at least some of the oligarchic ruling class remained intact from the late Republic, and continued to be involved

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More generally, the complementary service of *equites* to their home communities as priest and magistrates, and to the state through *militia equestres*, is well-illustrated by the three case studies presented in Davenport 2019, 280-284 (Sex. Adgennius Macrinus from Nemausus in Gaul, C. Ennius Marsus from Saepinum, and Ti. Claudius Helvius Secundus from Caesarea in Mauretania, all of whose careers included the post of *praefectus fabrum*).

<sup>56</sup> Prag – Tigano 2017, 45.

<sup>57</sup> Lapiron probably held the *praefectura fabrum* before the reforms of Claudius (AD 41) made it a more junior position in equestrian careers, often given to young men without military experience rather than to “mid-career” men who had already embarked on municipal and/or military careers (Cafaro 2021, 179-180; and more generally, Davenport 2019, 260-261).

<sup>58</sup> Thermae Himeraeae: M. Cestius (Cafaro 2021, no. 51; cf. *ISic000094*) and [-]Jux Sex[-] (Cafaro 2021, anon. no. 35; cf. *ISic000098*); Catina: Q. Atilius Severus (Cafaro 2021, no. 257; cf. *ISic000307*); Messana: L. Baebius Luncinus (Cafaro 2021, no. 34; cf. *ISic000265*).

<sup>59</sup> Facella 2006, 181-255. The presence and influence of Italians is attested in the famous dedication of the Italic to L. Cornelius Scipio (*CIL* 10.7459; *ISic000583*), possibly the earliest Latin honorary inscription set up in Sicily, and the first statue erected in honour of a Roman official (Henzel 2022, 268; Hala6), though there are significant doubts surrounding its dating to the early second century BC. Another possible early dedication to a Roman magistrate comes from Cephaloedium (Cefalù), on the north coast midway between Thermae and Halaesa, and may honour L. Domitius Ahenobarbus, praetor in Sicily probably in 97 BC (*ISic003089*).

<sup>60</sup> Most notably, honouring the fleet commander Caninius Niger (*ISic000612*); a *chiliarch* (*tribunus militum*) of the garrison at Eryx (*ISic001177*); and the proquaestor C. Vergilius Balbus (*ISic001178*) (Henzel 2022, 265-267 and 269-270; Hala4, 5 and 8).

<sup>61</sup> Though Prag (2024, 85-6) points out that there are indications of the adoption of Latin epigraphic conventions in Halaesa at an earlier transitional stage, citing *ISic000070*, a dedication by Markos Aimilios Rhodon, son of Kipos, in Greek that largely follows the formulations used in late Hellenistic inscriptions,

in local civic life, this elite now had the possibility of social and political progression beyond the *municipium*, and of participation in the broader Roman imperial military and administrative order with the *princeps* at its head. The agora-forum, which had previously accommodated statues and other honorific monuments to members of the local elite and prominent outsiders, including Roman officials, now also made space for honours to emperors both living and deified.<sup>62</sup> A unifying factor running through the inscribed public monuments from the late Hellenistic era into the early Principate and beyond is their significance not only as honours to individuals –whether local elites like the Lapirones, Roman officials, or emperors– but also as memorials of the prestige and pre-eminence of Halaesa, particularly as a community that continued to be marked out by its favorable relations with Rome.<sup>63</sup> The honours to Lapiron do not appear to be the only ones that the early imperial community of Halaesa paid to an *eques*: a fragmentary Latin inscription on white marble found in excavations in 1970 in the area of the portico probably honours an individual who had obtained the privilege of the *equus publicus* (“public horse”) and who had sponsored the repair or rebuilding of the *basilica*, which has plausibly been identified with all or part of the porticoed building in the agora itself.<sup>64</sup> The civic community continued to devote its (perhaps diminishing) material resources and (perhaps contracting) public space to paying honours to emperors and members of the imperial family for several centuries thereafter.<sup>65</sup>

While the honours that Halaesa paid to the *praefectus fabrum* Lapiron provide uniquely detailed insights into the transition from the civic world of the late Republic to that of the early Principate, particularly regarding the potential prospects and aspirations of municipal *domi nobiles*, we can discern this process at work –with somewhat divergent outcomes– in a few other Sicilian communities as well. At Segesta, excavations in and around the monumental late Hellenistic agora-stoa complex on Monte Barbaro have evidenced a burst of building activity sponsored by members of a ruling class that, like Halaesa, shows signs of continuity from the late Republican period.<sup>66</sup> Most notably, in the Augustan or early Tiberian period, a small triangular plaza adjacent to the late Hellenistic agora took on monumental form. Its embellishment (including paving) was financed –according to a Latin inscription that extended several meters along the cover of the drainage channel running through the plaza– by M. Onasus and M. Sopolis, probably father and son, from a prominent family attested in Segesta and its environs in the early-mid first century BC.<sup>67</sup> This paved plaza enhanced the appearance and organization of a key, but previously peripheral, area of the agora complex by monumentalizing the intersection of two or more main streets, facilitating foot traffic into the agora and up to the town’s other main public areas on the acropolis (especially the theatre), and improving the drainage of water from the main agora area.<sup>68</sup> Around the same time, a nearby late Hellenistic colonnaded building was apparently converted into a *macellum* through the construction of a circular structure (*tholus*), suggesting that this newly monumentalized southwestern sector of the agora complex was intended primarily for commercial activity.<sup>69</sup>

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but that also uses the interpuncts characteristic of early Sicilian Latin inscriptions from the mid-first century BC to the mid-first century AD.

<sup>62</sup> See recently Henzel 2022, 47-69 for the development of the agora of Halaesa (and honorific practices in it) from the Hellenistic through imperial period.

<sup>63</sup> A point made eloquently by Prestianni Giallombardo (2012, 176) for the second/first century BC inscriptions honoring Caninius Niger (*ISic000612*) and a *chiliarch* (*tribunus militum*) of the garrison at Eryx (*ISic001177*).

<sup>64</sup> *ISic000802*; Prestianni Giallombardo 2012, 181-182. For the history of the *equus publicus* in the Republic and under Augustus and his successors, see Davenport 2019, 37-38, 207-210, and 219-225.

<sup>65</sup> Most intensively, based on the surviving evidence, under the Severans and into the mid-third century: *ISic003584* (Fulvius Plautianus, the praetorian prefect and ill-fated father-in-law of Caracalla, 202-205); *ISic003585* (Julia Soaemias, mother of Elagabalus, 218-222); *ISic003586* (Philippus the Younger, 244-247); *ISic003587* (Trajanus Decius, 249-251); and *ISic003588* (Volusianus, 251-253).

<sup>66</sup> Developments recently summarized in Ampolo – Parra 2020 and Campagna 2020, 111-112.

<sup>67</sup> Ampolo – Parra 2020, 98 and 116-118; Ampolo – Erdas 2019, 119-124 (*ISegesta* L5 and L6). Cf. Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.119 for Onasus of Segesta.

<sup>68</sup> Olivito 2017, esp. 261.

<sup>69</sup> Olivito 2017, 268-270.

This monumental program may be taken as evidence (albeit somewhat ambiguous) of Segesta's prosperity and political stability at the outset of the Principate. Unlike Halaesa, Segesta's transition from its privileged position vis-à-vis Rome in the late Republic, as one of Cicero's *immunes civitates ac liberae*,<sup>70</sup> to a *municipium* in the Augustan period appears to have been relatively smooth. Though the details of this transition are elusive, it is likely that Segesta, along with Centuripae and Netum, which Pliny also describes as *Latina condicio*, had the Latin right granted by Caesar reconfirmed by Octavian during his initial settlement of Sicily (c. 36-21 BC).<sup>71</sup> However, Latin inscriptions of the early imperial period found in and around the agora-forum indicate that the linguistic transition to a *municipium* was not a straightforward process for those who commissioned and executed the texts, with a number of interferences from Greek evident.<sup>72</sup>

Although the names of some members of the early imperial ruling class of Segesta link their citizenship to the Roman *gens Iulia*, and the veneration of emperors was also adopted precociously,<sup>73</sup> so far, unlike Halaesa, there are no signs of the engagement of the local elite of Segesta with the broader world of imperial service and patronage. The men responsible for the enhancement of the town's public spaces in the early imperial period appear to be acting as private citizens, or as holders of local offices (e.g. *duoviri*).<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, the building activities attested in the town in the early Principate are rather restricted in scope: namely, the creation of the small paved triangular complex in part through the adaptation of older public buildings; the pavement of a number of city streets; and the construction of a small podium temple on the western side of the agora a few decades prior to the creation of the paved triangular plaza.<sup>75</sup> A minor but perhaps telling detail is that, unlike the slightly earlier paving of the so-called "decumanus maximus" of Lilybaeum by a *praetor designatus* in the camp of Sextus Pompeius (39-36 BC), where lettering embossed in bronze was used for the dedicatory inscription, the paving inscription of the plaza of Onasus and Sopolis used a simpler, more economical technique.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, around the same time as the monumentalization of the southwestern sector of the agora complex, the main drainage channel running through the agora plaza itself was repaired by replacing one of the original paving slabs covering it with a piece of a balustrade from the late Hellenistic stoa on the north side of the agora. This indicates that while the stoa itself was perhaps partially disused or in ruins, the maintenance of the drainage system of the agora as a whole (which also passed under the plaza of Onasus and Sopolis) was prioritized.<sup>77</sup> The overall impression is of an early imperial ruling class in Segesta with ambitions of celebrating their community's status and history of strong links to Rome, and of continuing to enhance the public infrastructure of their town in accordance with evolving cultural tastes and political and economic conditions,<sup>78</sup> but doing so with more restricted resources than in earlier periods. It is notable that the only literary attestations of Segesta in the early decades of the Principate relate to the town's difficulty in maintaining the nearby Temple of Aphrodite/Venus

<sup>70</sup> 2Verr. 3.13.

<sup>71</sup> HN 3.8.91. Korhonen – Soraci 2019, 106-110; Wilson 1996, 437-438; Vera 1996, 37-38.

<sup>72</sup> See especially Ampolo and Erdas' analysis of *I Segesta L1*, which commemorates the activities of L. Caecilius Martiales Aretaius; and *L8*, in honour of L. Iulius Agrippa (2019, 113-115 and 126-128). For linguistic phenomena in these texts, see also Tribulato 2012, 314-316.

<sup>73</sup> Ampolo – Erdas 2019, *I Segesta L2*, *L3* and *L8* (Iulii at Segesta) and *L9* (*divus Augustus*).

<sup>74</sup> Ampolo – Erdas 2019, *I Segesta L3* (C. Iulius Longus, *duoviri*). Ampolo and Erdas (2019, *I Segesta L6*) tentatively restore the Onasus and Sopolis paving inscription to include the office of *duoviri* for both men, but this is far from certain; they may instead have been acting in a private capacity (Campagna 2020, 112). L. Caecilius Martiales Aretaius, the *praefectus* responsible for moving statues to the small podium temple in the agora (*I Segesta L1*) appears to be the holder of a local office, acting as a substitute for a magistrate ("pro *duoviro*"?), or in a specific capacity (*ad acta*) (Ampolo – Erdas 2019, 112 and 114).

<sup>75</sup> Ampolo – Parra 2020, 106-107 and 114-119; Portale 2017, 100-101; Campagna 2020, 111.

<sup>76</sup> Ampolo-Parra 2020, 117-118. For the paving of the Lilybaeum "decumanus" and its dedicatory inscription (*ISic003400*) see Palazzo – Vecchio 2013, 143 and Silvestrini 2014, 215-220.

<sup>77</sup> Olivito 2017, 251 and 261.

<sup>78</sup> Olivito 2017, 265-269; Portale 2017.

at Eryx, which prompted them to petition the emperors Tiberius and Claudius for assistance.<sup>79</sup> There are few epigraphic or archaeological traces of a vital civic life after the Julio-Claudian period, and the gradual decay and abandonment of the monumental buildings of the civic centre extended into the third century AD.<sup>80</sup>

Of Centuripae, one of the three towns (alongside Segesta and Netum) described by Pliny as *Latina condicio*, much less is known about the development of public space in the early Principate than in Segesta or Halaesa.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, the monumentalized public square in the town centre (the “ex-Mulino Barbagallo – edificio degli Augustali” complex, perhaps the site of the forum) and grand tombs on the outskirts (“La Dogana” and “Castello di Corradino”) attest to the continued presence and evergetism of a local elite for much of the imperial period.<sup>82</sup> Post-antique layers of occupation have prevented detailed knowledge of the imperial-era urban fabric, and in particular, the precise layout and chronology of development of the “ex-Mulino Barbagallo” complex remain uncertain.<sup>83</sup> However, a number of inscriptions and sculptural fragments found in the early twentieth century in and around this complex attest to the social and political advancement of at least one family from Centuripae’s ruling elite under the Principate. Two or three inscriptions probably once affixed to the bases of portrait statues honour the grandmother, uncle, and perhaps also the daughter of Q. Pompeius Sosius Priscus, consul of AD 149.<sup>84</sup> If the prevailing interpretations of this family’s lineage are correct, at least one branch had its origins in Centuripae, with a progenitor possibly receiving Roman citizenship from Cn. Pompeius Magnus or Sextus Pompeius in the middle decades of the first century BC.<sup>85</sup>

Haluntium is included among Pliny’s coastal *oppida*, but like the *oppida* Agrigentum and Lilybaeum and the *civitas stipendiaria* Halaesa, it gained municipal status at some point during the reign of Augustus.<sup>86</sup> Like Centuripae, little is known archaeologically of Haluntium in the early imperial period; most of the ancient structures identified in the town, including the small “Temple of Herakles” later converted to a church, appear to date to the late classical and Hellenistic eras.<sup>87</sup> The small number of public inscriptions from early imperial Haluntium do, however, provide some insight into the community’s socio-political and linguistic transition to municipal status. While in the later Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods, the *municipium* of Haluntium recorded the honours it paid to the emperor and his family in Latin,<sup>88</sup> an apparently earlier honorific text on a statue base was inscribed in Greek. While this inscription has provoked much discussion about its use of Greek, and therefore its possible relationship to an early, pre-Augustan phase of municipalization in Sicily,<sup>89</sup> equally interesting is the fact that it honours Gnaeus Pollienus, who shares his name with a military tribune of the Twelfth Legion who was honoured with two statues in the Augustan *colonia* of Thermae Himeraeae. Pollienus was honoured in a strikingly different fashion in the *colonia* of Thermae and the *municipium* of Haluntium: in the former, his position as military tribune was given prominence, both in the honours accorded by the legion he had served with, and in the honours he received from the Athenians and Roman citizens resident in Athens (both in Latin).<sup>90</sup> In Haluntium, he was honoured for his *eunoia* and for the *evergesia* of his father, in accordance with the late Hellenistic Greek honorific practices seen in other Sicilian

<sup>79</sup> Ampolo - Parra 2020, 120; Tac. *Ann.* 4.43; Suet. *Claud.* 26.5.

<sup>80</sup> Ampolo - Parra 2020, 106; in more detail, Pfuntner 2019, 68-75.

<sup>81</sup> Campagna 2020, 116.

<sup>82</sup> Wilson 1990, 137-138; Pfuntner 2019, 149.

<sup>83</sup> Biondi 2020, 319.

<sup>84</sup> See Henzel 2022, 244-248 (Cent6-11) for these inscriptions and associated statues. The very fragmentary inscription possibly in honour of Pompeia Q. f. Sosia Falconilla, daughter of Sosius Priscus, is in the Museo Civico of Catania, and it is unclear whether it originated in Centuripe (*ISic000305*).

<sup>85</sup> Soraci 2023, 117-118; Patanè 2011; Eck 1996.

<sup>86</sup> *HN* 3.8.90. Wilson 1996, 438; Vera 1996, 33-35.

<sup>87</sup> Sardella - Vanaria 2018; Facella 2010; Wilson 1990, esp. 149-150.

<sup>88</sup> *ISic000587* and *000588*.

<sup>89</sup> *ISic0001190*, dated to 43-36 BC by Wilson (1990, 42). Korhonen and Soraci (2019, 103-106) suggest a later date (reign of Augustus to mid-first century AD); see also Prag 2024, 86-89.

<sup>90</sup> Thermae statue bases: *ISic000095* and *000096*; Henzel 2022, 487-489 (Term3 and Term4).

communities (including Halaesa and Segesta).<sup>91</sup> The honouree in Haluntium could either be a close relative of the honouree in Thermae, or they could be the same individual.<sup>92</sup> In any case, the three dedications attest to the influence of at least one member of a family that had achieved equestrian rank by the Augustan period, in two communities on the north coast of Sicily as well as further afield.<sup>93</sup>

While a limited number of Augustan-era *coloniae* and *municipia* (now including Halaesa) have produced the most consistent epigraphic evidence for the presence and influence of men of equestrian rank, the recent publication of a fragmentary inscription from Ietas, one of Pliny's *stipendiarii*,<sup>94</sup> hints that the influence of such men could extend beyond the small number of Sicilian communities with Roman juridical status. This text, inscribed on a block of local grey limestone found in the agora of Ietas in 2016 in a medieval reuse context, originally may have formed part of a longer building inscription.<sup>95</sup> The front side of the stone is weathered and heavily damaged, and only a small portion of the first two lines can be read, but these appear to preserve part of the name (line 1) and career (line 2) of an equestrian officer. According to Anne Kolb's tentative reconstruction of the text, the sponsor of the unknown building works in Ietas was an individual with the *cognomen* Germanus, who had commanded one of the auxiliary cavalry units of the Roman army (*praefectus cohortis equitatae*) and went on to serve as military tribune (*tribunus militum*) in an unknown legion. The inscription probably dates to the Augustan or Julio-Claudian period – in any case, before the civic centre of Ietas was heavily damaged by seismic activity in the mid-first century AD, without significant subsequent rebuilding.<sup>96</sup> If the sponsor of the presumed early imperial construction in the *agora* of Ietas was indeed an *equus*, he may have been based in one of the larger towns of northwestern Sicily, such as Panormus, upon which smaller communities like Ietas became increasingly politically and economically dependent in the imperial period.<sup>97</sup>

### 3. Conclusion

The trajectories of local elites from the non-colonial communities of Sicily in the early imperial period that this paper has traced so far, on an admittedly small documentary basis, point to the possibilities of careers both within their municipality of origin (as seen particularly in Segesta) and, for a more restricted subset, on a wider imperial scale (as for the *praefectus fabrum* from Halaesa). The dedications by, or in honour of, *equites* in Thermae, Haluntium, and possibly Ietas also hint that men of such status in Sicily could exercise influence in more than one community, and were

<sup>91</sup> Full text (Prag, ISic001190): Τὸ μουνικίπιον τῶ[ν] / Ἀλοντίνων Γναίων / Πολλιηνὸν Πολλιηνοῦ / υἱὸν εὐεργέτην ἀπὸ - / γονον εὐγοία[ς] ἔνεκ[εν]. See note 41 above for honorific texts from Halaesa. For Segesta, Ampolo – Erdas 2019, *I Segesta* G7b: Sopolis honors his mother Phalakria for her *eunoia*; Henzel 2022, 423-426 (Seg2). Another comparable text is the dedication from Soluntum honoring Sextus Peducaeus for his *eunoia* (ISic003419, dated to 76-75 BC); Henzel 2022, 442-443 (Sol2).

<sup>92</sup> If the inscription from Haluntium dates to a pre-Augustan phase of municipalization (c. 43-36 BC), then the Gnaeus Pollienus honoured there is likely the father of the Gnaeus Pollienus of Thermae, who was honoured after the establishment of a *colonia* in 21 BC. However, the Haluntium text describes Gnaeus Pollienus as the “son of a benefactor” (*apogonon euergetēn*), which would suggest that he is the son of the individual honoured in Thermae. It is also possible that the Haluntium inscription refers to the same individual honoured in Thermae, particularly if the Haluntium text dates to the Augustan period, as suggested recently by Korhonen and Soraci (see note 89).

<sup>93</sup> Pollienus' origins are obscure. While some speculate that he was among the early veteran colonists of Thermae, and therefore probably of Italian origin (e.g. Tribulato 2012, 312), it is also possible that he was of Sicilian origin (Wilson 1990, 38-39). Prag (2024, 86) has recently suggested that the use of the striking pink veined “breccia di San Marco” local to Haluntium (modern San Marco d'Alunzio) for the two statue bases from Thermae and for the Haluntium inscription might have been informed by the links between the two towns implied by the honouree(s).

<sup>94</sup> *HN* 3.8.91.

<sup>95</sup> ISic004385 and Mohr *et alii* 2018, 100-102, who link the new discovery with another fragmentary inscription found in the agora in 2008 (Isler 2009, 101).

<sup>96</sup> For the later history of Ietas, see Pfundtner 2019, 47-51.

<sup>97</sup> For this process, see recently Soraci 2019, 1061.

commemorated in those communities in a manner befitting their status. However, honorific and building inscriptions are, by their very nature, indicative of involvement in civic life, which was not the only sphere in which Sicilian notables could exercise influence in the imperial period. The career of one Pompeius Grosphus reveals another new political and economic context in which elite Sicilian and Roman interests could intersect in the post-civil war era: the incorporation of Sicilian lands into the patrimony of the emperor and his favourites.

As with the allocation of land to the Roman colonists settled after the civil war, there is little direct archaeological or epigraphic evidence in Sicily for the disposition of other lands that had been acquired by the Roman state or that came into the possession of Augustus himself, through confiscation, purchase, inheritance, or other means.<sup>98</sup> Surprisingly, some of the most detailed evidence for the acquisition of land in Sicily by the emperor, his family, and his supporters comes from the poems of Horace. One of his *Epistles* is addressed to a certain Iccius, who was sent to Sicily around 20 BC to administer the lands of Agrippa, the man responsible for the naval defeat of Sextus Pompeius, after which he was granted lands on the island presumably abandoned during the war or confiscated from supporters of Sextus.<sup>99</sup> Horace recommends to Iccius one Pompeius Grosphus, a wealthy Sicilian whom Horace implies has extensive land and livestock holdings on the island, and who had apparently come to the poet's attention in Rome.<sup>100</sup> Pompeius Grosphus' *nomen* implies that an ancestor was among the Sicilians granted Roman citizenship by Pompeius Magnus or Sextus Pompeius,<sup>101</sup> while his unusual *cognomen* is attested in Sicily at Centuripae: Cicero describes a certain Eubulidas Grosphus as the leading citizen (*princeps*) of that town during Verres' governorship.<sup>102</sup>

Pompeius Grosphus' imagined interactions with Iccius hint at the social and political manoeuvres (and jockeying for advantage) that probably took place among Sicilian notables – many of whom had previously been aligned with the Pompeii – in the years after Octavian defeated Sextus. Horace's portrayal of Iccius and Grosphus also suggests some of the potentially uncomfortable accommodations that the new administrative order in the province required from both sides. Horace begins by addressing Iccius' implicit complaints (*tolle querellas*), which stem from having to manage another man's lands (i.e., Agrippa's) rather than owning and cultivating his own.<sup>103</sup> On the other hand, Pompeius Grosphus, though apparently a wealthy landowner, is envisioned as a provincial petitioner dependent on the favour of Iccius, a mere procurator of Agrippa. Horace places himself in the role of recommender, as Cicero had been to the Sicilians in his patronage a generation before.<sup>104</sup> Although here and in other poems Horace gently chides both men's greed, he concludes by tying their mutual self-interest to the broader wellbeing of the Roman state: while Augustus, Agrippa, and other members of the imperial family pursue conquests at the edge of empire, men like Iccius and Grosphus have their own part to play in maintaining the food security of Italy.<sup>105</sup>

The case of Pompeius Grosphus also hints at one of the potential challenges that Sicilian communities faced in maintaining their cohesion in the decades after the civil war: namely, the potential weakening of ties of local citizenship, particularly among the wealthiest families. The assumed connection between Pompeius Grosphus and Centuripae is based only on the family

<sup>98</sup> Crawford 1976 lists the handful of attestations of imperial estates in Sicily (restricted to estates owned by the emperor himself, not members of his family), all of which postdate the Augustan period.

<sup>99</sup> *Ep.* 1.12. C. 1.29 is also addressed to Iccius.

<sup>100</sup> *Ep.* 1.12.22–24. Grosphus is also the addressee of C. 2.16 (composed around 28–27 BC), in which Horace alludes to his Sicilian flocks (ll. 33–34).

<sup>101</sup> Soraci (2023, 117) speculates that Pompeius Grosphus may have been spared by Octavian as a show of magnanimity towards the supporters of his erstwhile opponent.

<sup>102</sup> *2Verr.* 3.56.

<sup>103</sup> *Ep.* 1.12.1–4.

<sup>104</sup> In the well-known series of letters of recommendation sent to Caesarian governors of Sicily in the mid-40s (*Fam.* 13.32, 34, 36–37).

<sup>105</sup> Putnam 1995; *Ep.* 1.12.24–29. The poem was composed only a few years after the famine of 22 BC (D.C. 54.1.3–4; cf. Vera 1996, 43–45).



name he shares with Eubulidas. Horace links him to no town, or even region of Sicily. Rather, Pompeius Grosphus and his possible descendants appear to have operated primarily in the cultural, economic, and political spheres of the early imperial equestrian order.<sup>106</sup>

While the pull of opportunities elsewhere, both within the province and beyond, may have gradually weakened ties particularly between elites and the smaller communities of Sicily, the early imperial *praefectus fabrum* from Halaesa indicates that the Ciceronian/Augustan ideal of municipal *domi nobiles* serving both their *patria* and the Roman *res publica* (*domi militiaeque*) did not completely pass by Sicilian civic notables.<sup>107</sup> Just as importantly, we can detect the interest that communities had in sustaining the support of such men through both traditional means (honorific statues in the agora) and new ones (imperial cult honours) in the physical fabric of Sicilian towns themselves. As our knowledge of the late Republican and early imperial phases of these towns continues to improve,<sup>108</sup> we may expect further refinements to our understanding of civic life in the *poleis*-turned-*civitates* of Rome's first overseas province.

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<sup>106</sup> Grosphus and possible descendants, including *duoviri* in Pompeii: *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 612; Nisbet – Hubbard 1978, 252-253. However, Demougin (1992, 91) raises the possibility that the Grosphi of Pompeii had adopted the name of an extinct family.

<sup>107</sup> For this ideal, and its relation to the development of the equestrian order under Augustus, see Davenport 2019, 190-192, 228, and 296-298.

<sup>108</sup> See, e.g., Costanzi 2021 and Reusser 2021 for research projects recently initiated and currently underway at Halaesa and Ietas respectively.

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