CHAPTER SIX

SULLA’S INFAMOUS ASSOCIATES

Numerous victims of the Sullan proscriptions are known, although they number considerably less than the tally of victims of the triumviral proscriptions.1 We are not equally well informed about those who claimed and got hold of their properties. On the other hand, it is well established that the land confiscations related to the proscriptions affected the most diverse areas of Italy, from Beneventum to Casinum, from the Campanian coast to Alba Fucens.2

Beside the short, if colourful, accounts provided by Appian and Plutarch, it is Cicero that provides the most detailed narratives of how a proscription was decided and enforced. One concerns the misdeeds of Oppianicus, as we have seen, while the other is contained in the first chapters of the pro Roscio Amerino. In fact, according to Cicero’s forceful reconstruction, Roscius’ proscriptio was illegal. The father of Cicero’s client, a keen partisan of Sulla and a client of several prominent aristocratic families, was murdered in Rome. Cicero insinuates that two of the victim’s fellow citizens, T. Roscius Capito and T. Roscius Magnus, were involved in the murder. They then told Chrysogonus, an influential freedman of Sulla, of the value of Roscius’ patrimony, and suddenly the name of the victim appeared on the proscription list: “the name of Sextus Roscius, a most zealous supporter of the nobility, is put on the proscription lists”.3 According to Cicero, the operation obeyed no political rationale; its only purpose was to favour a bunch of profiteers by damaging an honest and unsophisticated farmer from an Umbrian

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1 See the catalogue in Hinard 1985a, 327–411.
2 On Beneventum, see Cic. Verr. 2.1.15.38. On Casinum, see Cic. leg. agr. 3.4.14. On Marius’ Campanian villa, bought for a ridiculous price by Sulla’s daughter Cornelia, see references and discussion in Badian 1973, esp. 121–125, 130–132. On Alba Fucens, see Plut. Sull. 31.11–12. ILLRP 146 might be evidence for land assignments to the veterans of Metellus Pius in its territory after the Civil War: Gabba 1979. It is possible that the city took part in Lepidus’ revolt, and that this was a reaction to the Sullan confiscations: see Oros. 5.22.16–17, with Coarelli 1998 and Liberatore 2004, 16. Plut. Gras. 6.6 is no evidence for land confiscations at Tuder, pace Gabba 1986, 98 (= Gabba 1994a, 205).
municipium. Moreover, it was unacceptable from a legal point of view. Roscius had no relationship whatsoever with the Marians, and he was included on the proscription list aliquot post menses since the final date set for the proscriptions and for the sale of the confiscated properties was 1 June 81 BC. Unfortunately, the only internal evidence we have for a precise dating of the presumably illegitimate confiscation has no parallel elsewhere. When the enemies of Roscius told Chrysogonus about the potential operation, he was at Volaterrae, then besieged by Sulla. The date of the conquest of this last Marian stronghold is uncertain; it is beyond doubt, however, that it fell during Sulla’s dictatorship.

According to Cicero, Sulla could not have known about the fraudulent behaviour of his protégé because of his many duties. The role of Chrysogonus, however, remains a problem, as much as his relationship with Sulla, and one cannot be satisfied with the clever rhetorical move of Cicero, who needed to de-politicize the case, if he wanted to stand any chance to win it. If Cicero’s speech downplays the connection between the dictator and his freedman, a passage of Pliny the Elder’s Naturalis Historia is much more explicit on Chrysogonus’ actual role and influence. He opens a list of freedmen who managed to enrich themselves thanks to the favour of their patrons, whom Pliny mentions in

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5 Cic. Rosc. Amer. 7.20: res ad Chrysogonum in castra L. Sullae Volaterrae defertur (“the matter is reported to Chrysogonus in Sulla’s camp at Volaterrae”).

6 Cf. Rosc. Amer. 8.22: neque enim mirum, cum eodem tempore et ea quae praeterita sunt reparet et ea quae uidentur instare praeparet, cum et pacis constituantiae rationem et belli gerendi potestatem solus habeat… (“it is not surprising [that he is not aware of Chrysogonus’ plan], since at the same time of the events he is mending the past and preparing the things that appear to be in store for the future, and he alone possesses the power to establish peace and to wage war”). On Sulla’s presence at Volaterrae, see Krawczuk 1960, 14–21 and Harris 1971, 257–258.

7 Plin. 35.58.200: sed quid has referat aliquis, litterarum honore commendatos? talem in catasta uidere Chrysogonus Sullae, Amphionem Q. Catuli, Hectorem L. Luculli, Demetrium Pompei, Augeque Demetri, quamquam et ipsa Pompei credita est, Hipparchum M. Antoni, Menam et Menecratem Sexti Pompei aliasque deinceps, quos enumerare iam non est, sanguine Quiritium et proscriptionum licentia ditatos (“But why mention these men, made so distinguished by their literary merits? We have seen on the stand in the slave market Chrysogonus, freedmen of Sulla, Amphio freedman of Quintus Catulus, Hector freedman of Lucius Lucullus, Demetrius freedman of Pompey, and Auge freedwoman of Demetrius, although she was believed to have belonged to Pompey, Hipparchus freedman of Mark Antony, Menas and Menecrates freedmen of Sextus Pompeius, and others there is no need to list now, made rich by the blood of the Quirites and the licence of the proscriptions”).