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# FILLING IN THE GAPS: STUDYING ANACHRONISM IN DIODORUS SICULUS' NARRATIVE OF THE FIRST SICILIAN 'SLAVE WAR'*

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*Abstract*: Diodorus Siculus' narrative of the First Sicilian 'Slave War' is often considered to offer an 'accurate, reliable, and comprehensive' account of the war. This article aims to demonstrate that the text is not necessarily authoritative by reassessing the narrative function of an anachronistic explanatory passage that is often 'fixed' in modern accounts with a plausible, but hypothetical alternative. It is argued that we cannot 'fix' this anachronism without thereby jeopardising the text's narrative structure. In sum, the anachronism was inserted because the author did not understand the events he narrated or their immediate historical context.

*Keywords:* Diodorus Siculus, First Sicilian Slave War, anachronism, historiography

Ancient authors of historiography often stress the importance of their work and their own competence in order to persuade readers of the narrative's worth.[1]

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[1] Both of these concerns have been discussed in great detail by Marincola (1997): for the importance of the work see 34–43 and 95–117; for the historian's competence see 5–12, 68–86 and 128–74.

In a literary world that was increasingly crowded with historical texts,[2] ancient writers would compete, each claiming the primacy of their text over those of their competitors.[3] In spite of the resulting textual clutter, which led Diodorus Siculus to comment that most people found it difficult to read or even find all of the existing historical narratives (1.3.4–8), only a small portion of them has survived to the present day. Among all the effects that this scattered preservation has had on modern narratives of the ancient world, perhaps the most problematic is that for many periods of ancient history we are left with only a single continuous narrative source to depend upon from the many that were written. When studying the First Sicilian 'Slave War' of 136 to 132 BC we encounter this problem even more acutely: the best surviving source for the conflict, Diodorus Siculus, is fragmentary.[4] While discussing the war, Diodorus' narrator observes that (34/5.2.25):

> … καὶ ταῦτα ἀπήντησε τοῖς μὲν πολλοῖς ἀνελπίστως καὶ παραδόξως, τοῖς δὲ πραγματικῶς ἕκαστα δυναμένοις κρίνειν οὐκ ἀλόγως ἔδοξε συμβαίνειν …
>
> … and these things happened unexpectedly and contrary to the expectations of most people, but to those who could judge each matter realistically, they did not seem to happen unaccountably …

Given our reliance on this source for our own narratives of this conflict, we hope that the narrator is among those who

[2] Livy noted this problem in particular, and the difficulty in being noticed in the crowd of historical writers (*praef.* 3).

[3] Again, the work of Marincola (1997) is the essential overview of this competition and the techniques employed to claim the primacy in historiography.

[4] I hope to explore elsewhere the problems created by calling this event a 'slave war', and to argue that this event can be studied profitably if we consciously avoid using terminology that prejudges the event's meaning and its participants' intents. I therefore use the term 'slave war' in quotation marks throughout.

can judge matters realistically. Indeed, the text's authority and construction of events has often been accepted.[5] The implication of this is that we have relied almost entirely on Diodorus' text for our understanding of the problems facing Sicilian society in the mid-second century BC. This has led Bradley, for instance, to comment that despite problems with the source's fragmentary nature, it could be considered 'accurate, reliable, and comprehensive'.[6]

However, it is problematic to deem the text as authoritative when reconstructing the events in Sicily during the 130s BC and discussing the reasons for their occurrence. I have argued elsewhere that the rebel leader of this revolt, a Syrian named Eunus, cannot be understood within Diodorus' narrative without appreciating the literary context of, and historical interpretation behind, his portrayal. Eunus is presented through a complex interweaving of stereotypes related to Hellenistic kingship, ancient magic, and servility that is at odds with the picture painted by the numismatic evidence bearing his royal name.[7] In another context Pfuntner has recently argued that Diodorus' account of the First Sicilian 'Slave War' can be read profitably with a full awareness and understanding of its filtration through Photius' *Myriobiblion* and an appreciation of Photius'

[5] Westermann (1945) 8 argued that the narrator presented 'a brilliant analysis of the neglect of … slave expectations'. The narrator's insight is typically accepted as accurate: see Frank (1935) 62; Green (1961) 13–14; Vogt (1965) 25–6; Forte (1972) 98–9; Verbrugghe (1972) 544–5; Goldsberry (1973) 242; Dumont (1987) 214–15; Sacks (1990) 146–50; Shaw (2001) 13; Urbainczyk (2008) 11. For dissent see Verbrugghe (1975) 197–204, and Manganaro (1980) 438.

[6] Bradley (1989) 54. See, more recently, Dowden's reiteration (2015) of 'the traditional position that Diodorus is our best guide to the content, both topics and expression, of Poseidonios', and, moreover, that the text offers a 'reasoned, principled, and obviously philosophical, *Roman senatorial/optimate* view' of the conflict (italics original). For the former comment see *ad BNJ* 87 F 108f, for the latter *ad* F 108a.

[7] See Morton (2013) for Eunus' literary character, and Manganaro (1982), (1983), and (1990) for the numismatic evidence. The reconciliation of the literary Eunus with his numismatic alter ego, Antiochus, is at the crux of our historical understanding of the First Sicilian 'Slave War', and is a topic I will return to at another time.

influence on the text.[8] It is more generally argued that Diodorus' text owes its entirety to the lost history of the Stoic philosopher Posidonius, although the extent of that debt remains a question.[9] If we recognise the fact that Eunus is portrayed within a certain literary context and also understand the text as a Photian reworking, we make any straight readings of the narrative impossible. This raises a difficult question about how much we can trust Diodorus' text to be accurate, reliable, or comprehensive for our own historical reconstructions. Even so, the precision of the text's explanatory passages remain largely unquestioned, despite the 'notorious anachronism'[10] resting at the centre of the narrative.

The aim of this paper is two-fold. First, we will reassess a well-known anachronism that concludes Diodorus' preface to the narrative. This reassessment will ask how our reading of the text changes if we do not assume that the anachronistic material can be replaced with a plausible but hypothetical alternative. Secondly, we will rethink how far we can use this text to reconstruct our narratives of the war without

[8] Pfuntner (2015).

[9] See, e.g., Forrest and Stinton (1962) 88; Vogt (1965) 21; Verbrugghe (1974) 48; Momigliano (1975) 33–4; Malitz (1983) 37; Sacks (1990) 142–54; Shaw (2001) 27; Ambaglio (2008) 27, 68. I do not intend to comment here on the question of the ultimate source of the information presented in the narrative given by Diodorus, but this is a topic I hope to return to in the future when considering the historiographical purpose of the 'slave war' narratives in Diodorus' *Bibliotheke*: see Morton (forthcoming). For potential routes to answer these questions see Sacks (1990), Matsubara (1998), and now Woznizcka (2018). Wozniczka, in particular, argues for a greater deal of Diodoran input into the text than has been usually argued in the past, especially concerning the principles of analysis that drive the text and narrative. For the purposes of the argument given here it is assumed that the narrative has the same narrator throughout (even if not necessarily the same source), and so I will be using the name Diodorus throughout to refer to the text of Diodorus and the historical tradition which it represents. The peculiar problems presented by the dual preservation of Diodorus' text in the Photian epitome and the Constantinian excerpts will be commented on where applicable.

[10] As Sacks (1990) 146 described the passage in question.

turning to other forms and bodies of evidence. The argument will, therefore, focus on the moment in the narrative in which the narrator presents an anachronistic interpretation of the reasons for an incident during the second century BC. By re-examining this anachronism we will see that it cannot be easily discarded from the narrative but is in fact central to the text's explanation for the conflict's origin—its *αἰτία*—and, by extension, to the text's construction of the beginning—the *ἀρχή*—of the conflict. Finally, by rethinking how the narrative's reading of Sicily intersects with what little we *do* know about second-century Sicily, we will see that the text's anachronism is indicative of a broader, and more problematic, disconnect between the Sicily of Diodorus' *Bibliotheke* and reality. First, however, it will be useful to revisit the anachronism at the centre of this discussion.

## I. The Text of the Anachronism

Diodorus' narrative of the war opens with an explanatory preface for the conflict in which he details the development of Sicily during the preceding years. This preface depicts a rise of banditry among the herdsmen of Sicily, which Diodorus connects to the mistreatment they suffered under slave owners (34/5.2.1–2 and 25–30). He ends the preface with the failure of the governors of Sicily to react to the development—this is preserved in both the Photian epitome and the Constantinian excerpts (34/5.2.3 and 31). Diodorus explains that the governors failed to act because of constraints on them imposed by the extortion courts in Rome. Both Photius and the Constantinian excerpts present this passage in similar ways (34/5.2.3 and 34/5.2.31 respectively):

> *οἱ δὲ στρατηγοὶ κωλύειν μὲν ἐπεχείρουν, κολάζειν δὲ οὐ τολμῶντες διὰ τὴν ἰσχὺν καὶ τὸ βάρος τῶν κυρίων, οἳ ἐδέσποζον τῶν λῃστῶν, ἠναγκάζοντο περιορᾶν λῃστευομένην τὴν ἐπαρχίαν· οἱ πλεῖστοι γὰρ τῶν κτητόρων ἱππεῖς ὄντες τῶν Ῥωμαίων, καὶ κριταὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν*

> *ἐπαρχιῶν κατηγορουμένοις στρατηγοῖς γινόμενοι, φοβεροὶ τοῖς ἄρχουσιν ὑπῆρχον.*
>
> The governors tried to repress them, but did not dare to punish them because of the power and influence of the men who were the masters of the bandits. They were forced to disregard the plundering of the province: since most of the owners were Roman knights, and were judges for charges against governors from provinces, they caused fear in the governors.
>
> *οἱ δὲ στρατηγοὶ κωλύειν μὲν ἐπεχείρουν τὴν ἀπόνοιαν τῶν οἰκετῶν, κολάζειν δὲ οὐ τολμῶντες διὰ τὴν ἰσχὺν καὶ τὸ βάρος τῶν κυρίων ἠναγκάζοντο περιορᾶν τὴν ἐπαρχίαν λῃστευομένην. οἱ πλεῖστοι γὰρ τῶν κτητόρων ἱππεῖς ὄντες ἐντελεῖς τῶν Ῥωμαίων, καὶ κριταὶ τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐπαρχιῶν κατηγορουμένοις στρατηγοῖς γινόμενοι, φοβεροὶ ταῖς ἀρχαῖς ὑπῆρχον.*
>
> The governors tried to repress the madness of the slaves, but did not dare to punish them. Because of the power and strength of the masters they were forced to disregard the plundering of the province. Since most of the owners were recognised Roman knights, and were judges for charges against provincial governors, they caused fear in the governors.

The historical inaccuracy is clear. The description *ἱππεῖς … τῶν Ῥωμαίων*, 'Roman knights',[11] refers to the *equites*. The statement that the *equites* served as judges in the courts for charges against governors is incorrect for the 130s BC. The first court for trying cases of extortion among Roman governors was permanently established in 149 BC, which precedes the First Sicilian 'Slave War'; but this court was

[11] The Constantinian excerpt adds that these *equites* were also *ἐντελεῖς*, 'recognised': they were not only *equites*, but notable ones.

not composed of *equites*.[12] It is clear that Diodorus could not have been referring to this court, and so we must look to the later history of the extortion courts. The next major known change to the system of extortion courts took place at the earliest in 123 or 122 BC. The *lex Acilia* set up a court in which the provincials themselves could bring extortion cases against governors, either with or without a Roman *patronus*.[13] The case was then brought before a jury of fifty men chosen by a complex system of selection and rejection from a standing panel selected each year by the *praetor* of four hundred and fifty men.[14]

The text of the *lex Acilia* stipulates stringent limitations on the composition of the jury. The selected individuals had to be between thirty and sixty years old, could not be or have been major or minor magistrates, and could not be senators or the fathers, sons, or brothers of senators.[15] The text of the *lex Acilia* does not provide any positive qualifications, and for these we have to look to later literary sources. Appian's account from the second century AD about the reform of the extortion courts states that C. Gracchus gave control of these courts to the *equites* (*B. Civ.* 1.22). A passage from Pliny the Elder suggests that the courts were given to a group of people who came to be known as the *equites*, but were first

[12] Rather than having a jury composed of *equites*, the proceedings took place in front of a board of senators, after an appeal had been made to a *praetor*, believed to be the *praetor peregrinus*. See Jones (1972) 48–9; Stockton (1979) 139; Mitchell (1986) 1; Lintott (1992) 14–16; id. (1993) 99–100.

[13] I agree with the arguments put forward by Lintott (1992) 166–9 and Crawford (1996) 49–50, that the *tabula Bembina lex repetundarum* records the *lex* of a colleague of C. Gracchus, rather than a later *lex* by C. Servilius Glaucia in 104 or 101 BC. For this reason the following discussion is based on the reconstruction of the *lex Acilia* from the *tabula Bembina*.

[14] *Lex repetundarum* 6–8, 12–15 (*RS*, Crawford). See Jones (1972) 49–50; Stockton (1979) 141; Mitchell (1986) 2; Lintott (1992) 20–2; id. (1993) 101–2; Crawford (1996) 97.

[15] *Lex repetundarum* 12–18 (*RS*, Crawford). See Jones (1972) 49; Stockton (1979) 142; Mitchell (1986) 2; Lintott (1992) 21; id. (1993) 101–2; Crawford (1996) 98–100.

known as *iudices* (*HN* 33.34). Jones argued that this passage indicates that the positive qualification defined in the law was one of a census qualification of 400,000 sesterces, the same census qualification required to be part of the eighteen voting centuries that were given the public horse.[16] In time, this body became regarded as part of the *equites*, and was certainly thought of as such by the late Republic.[17] But in the 130s it had no control over or input on the extortion courts in Rome.

This error in Diodorus' text is well known. The issue is often dismissed as Diodorus (or Posidonius) mistaking generic aristocratic pressure on the *praetores* for the real threat of legal retribution, which would have made sense in his own time. It is argued that the text is fundamentally correct since only the finer details are incorrect, which can be easily accounted for.[18] We can, in this way, replace the *equites* of the law courts with rich landowners. Nonetheless, some problems remain: by correcting the anachronism with a hypothetical correction we are left with an incomplete understanding of what the anachronism achieves within the narrative, and we create almost from nothing a historical picture of Sicily that is not so readily found in other evidence.

[16] Jones (1972) 86–90.

[17] Badian (1972) 82–4.

[18] See, e.g., Frank (1935) 62; Green (1961) 13–14; Vogt (1965) 25–6; Forte (1972) 98–9; Verbrugghe (1972) 544–5; Goldsberry (1973) 242; Dumont (1987) 214–5; Bradley (1989) 54; Sacks (1990) 146–50; Matsubara (1998) 166–72; Shaw (2001) 13; Urbainczyk (2008) 11; Bernard, Damon, and Grey (2014) 958. Verbrugghe (1975) 197–204 explains this anachronism as an example of Posidonius composing his history through the use of a narrative template, which, when projected backwards in history, became anachronistic. Manganaro (1980) 438 sees this as an example of 'l'ostilità [di Posidonio] verso la classe equestre romana'; see also Manganaro (1967) 211 for an earlier version of this argument.

## II. The *αἰτία*

In order to show this, let us turn to the function of the anachronism. As noted above, the anachronism comes at the end of an extended introduction to the condition of Sicily prior to the war, and effectively concludes that introduction. As an introduction and background to the more detailed account of the event, Diodorus describes the development of banditry on the island in the preceding years, and presents this as the *αἰτία* of the conflict.[19] Although both Photius and the Constantinian excerpts preserve versions of this narrative, the version from the Constantinian excerpts is more detailed, and will be used for the following discussion. The analysis is split into two sections: the first will discuss the actions of Sicilian landowners (the cause), and the second will consider the results of these actions (the effect).

Diodorus describes the actions of the landowners (34/5.2.27):[20]

[19] This vocabulary is present in the Photian version just before the beginning of the introductory narrative (34/5.2.1): *ὁ δουλικὸς αὐτοῖς ἐπανέστη πόλεμος ἐξ αἰτίας τοιαύτης*, 'the slave war arose against them for the following reason'. This Polybian vocabulary is also found in a later section of Diodorus' narrative in which the story of Damophilus is described as being (34/5.2.9) *ἀρχὴ δὲ τῆς ὅλης ἀποστάσεως*, 'the start of the whole revolt'. This is similar to Polybius' theory of causation outlined in 3.6–7 of his *History*, in which he differentiates between the *αἰτίαι*, *ἀρχαί*, and *προφάσεις* of wars: that is, following Walbank (1972) 158, the matters contributing to the decision to go to war, the first acts of the war, and the pretext under which war was declared respectively.

[20] An alternative Photian version is also given (34/5.2.1–2): *ἐπὶ πολὺ τοῖς βίοις ἀναδραμόντες καὶ μεγάλους περιποιησάμενοι πλούτους συνηγόραζον οἰκετῶν πλῆθος, οἷς ἐκ τῶν σωματοτροφείων ἀγεληδὸν ἀπαχθεῖσιν εὐθὺς χαρακτῆρας ἐπέβαλλον καὶ στιγμὰς τοῖς σώμασιν. ἐχρῶντο δὲ αὐτῶν τοῖς μὲν νέοις νομεῦσι, τοῖς δ' ἄλλοις ὥς πῃ ἑκάστῳ ἡ χρεία ἐπέβαλλε. βαρέως δ' αὐτοῖς κατά τε τὰς ὑπηρεσίας ἐχρῶντο, καὶ ἐπιμελείας παντελῶς ὀλίγης ἠξίουν, ὅσα τε ἐντρέφεσθαι καὶ ὅσα ἐνδύσασθαι*. ('Since they had become more prosperous in their daily lives and acquired great wealth, they were buying up a large number of slaves, onto whose bodies, as they were led away from the slave merchant like cattle, they were inflicting brands and marks. They employed the young men as herdsmen, while they employed the others

> *ὅτι παραπλησίως καὶ πρὸς τὰς γεωργίας ἕκαστος τῶν πολλὴν χώραν κεκτημένων ὅλα σωματοτροφεῖα συνηγόραζον· … τοὺς μὲν πέδαις δεσμεύειν, τοὺς δὲ ταῖς βαρύτησι τῶν ἔργων καταξαίνειν, πάντας δὲ τοῖς ὑπερηφάνοις χαρακτῆρσι κατέστιζον. διὸ καὶ τοσοῦτο τῶν οἰκετῶν ἐπέκλυσε πλῆθος ἅπασαν Σικελίαν, ὥστε τοὺς ἀκούοντας τὴν ὑπερβολὴν μὴ πιστεῦσαι. καὶ γὰρ τῶν Σικελιωτῶν οἱ πολλοὺς πλούτους κεκτημένοι διημιλλῶντο πρὸς τὰς τῶν Ἰταλιωτῶν ὑπερηφανίας τε καὶ πλεονεξίας καὶ κακουργίας. εἰς τοιαύτην γὰρ συνήθειαν ῥᾳδιουργίας τοὺς νομεῖς ἦγαγον οἱ πολλοὺς οἰκέτας κεκτημένοι τῶν Ἰταλικῶν ὥστε τροφὰς μὲν μὴ παρέχειν, ἐπιτρέπειν δὲ λῃστεύειν.*
>
> In a similar fashion, the large landowners were buying whole slave markets to work their land ... to bind some with fetters, and wear down others with weight of work, and they marked all with their arrogant brands. Consequently, so large a multitude of slaves flooded all Sicily, that those who heard the extravagant numbers did not believe them. Those of the Sicilians who had acquired much wealth were contending hotly with the Greeks of Italy in arrogance, greed, and wickedness. The Italians who had acquired many slaves allowed their herdsmen such a self-indulgent life-style that they did not provide them food, but permitted them to plunder.

The text describes the actions of landowners in Sicily, and differentiates between how they treated slaves generally and herdsmen in particular. In addition, the text shows that different specifically named groups of landowners were behaving in slightly different ways: it appears that the Ἰταλιῶται, 'Greeks of Magna Graecia', were in competition

in such ways as need arose for each. They abused them with a heavy hand in their service, and altogether thought them worthy of the minimum of care as far as food and clothing were concerned.')

with the practices of the Σικελιωταί, 'Sicilians', with regard to their slaves; whereas the Ἰταλικοί, 'Italians', were those who allowed the herdsmen to get out of hand.[21] Sacks concluded that this narrative actually comprised two separate narratives: one, which comes from Posidonius, blames the Greeks of Sicily and Magna Graecia for the collapse of Sicilian law and order, and another, from Diodorus or some other Sicilian source, blames the Italians and Romans.[22] We do not need to be this complex about the narrative's composition to understand its purpose in the context of the First Sicilian 'Slave War'. In a passage that most likely introduced the whole narrative, Diodorus states that the mistreatment of slaves was the source of a general malaise among the slave-owners on the island (34/5.2.26):

> διὰ γὰρ τὴν ὑπερβολὴν τῆς εὐπορίας τῶν τὴν κρατίστην νῆσον ἐκκαρπουμένων ἅπαντες σχεδὸν οἱ τοῖς πλούτοις προκεκοφότες ἐζήλωσαν τὸ μὲν πρῶτον τρυφήν, εἶθ' ὑπερηφανίαν καὶ ὕβριν. ἐξ ὧν ἁπάντων αὐξανομένης ἐπ'

[21] The Photian version (above, n. 20) does not specify who is mistreating slaves: there is no subject provided for the verb in the first sentence of the passage. This can be taken to indicate a continuation of the subject from the lines immediately preceding which discuss the Sicilians (34/5.2.1): ὅτι μετὰ τὴν Καρχηδονίων κατάλυσιν ἐπὶ ἑξήκοντα ἔτεσι τῶν Σικελῶν εὐροούντων ἐν πᾶσιν, ὁ δουλικὸς αὐτοῖς ἐπανέστη πόλεμος ἐξ αἰτίας τοιαύτης. ('After the destruction of Carthage, when things had been flowing smoothly for the Sicilians in every respect for sixty years, the slave war arose against them for the following reason.') Had we only Photius it would appear that the mistreatment being described was the sole responsibility of the Sicilians. See Prag (2013) 40–1, for a discussion of Σικελιωταί to mean Sicilian within Diodorus, even though the more usual ethnic identifier found in epigraphic texts is Σικελός, for which see ibid. 41–5.

[22] Sacks (1990) 144–51. Verbrugghe (1972) 544–5, seems to consider that the law-court anachronism, and the resulting confusion about who was to blame, was owing to cross-contamination from the narrative of the so-called Second Sicilian Slave War. Dowden (*ad BNJ* 87 F 108d) argues that the inconsistency in slave treatment between different groups on Sicily is the result of Diodorus transferring the story from Posidonius incompletely, leaving loose ends that are filled in by Photius' recapitulation of the story at 33/4.2.1–2.

> ἴσης τῆς τε κατὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν κακουχίας καὶ τῆς κατὰ τῶν δεσποτῶν ἀλλοτριότητος, ἐρράγη ποτὲ σὺν καιρῷ τὸ μῖσος.
>
> Because of the excessive wealth of those enjoying the fruits of the most excellent island, nearly all of those who had become wealthy strove after first luxury, then arrogance and insolence. Because of this, and since the mistreatment of the slaves and their estrangement from their masters increased equally, there was, when opportune, a general outburst of hatred.

The text is clear that arrogance and mistreatment of slaves were widespread amongst those on Sicily. It is not a problem that specific actions are attributed to the Italians regarding their herdsmen, which then led to the herdsmen's reaction: the Sicilians, apparently competing with the Italian Greeks, were mistreating their slaves. This does not create undue problems with the introduction of the Italians, who figure so prominently in the overture to the war, especially since the narrator earlier confirms that mistreatment of slaves was a universal cause of revolt and essentially the *αἰτία* for the war. Within the text as we have it, we do not need two different sources of information as Sacks suggests to understand why everyone was complicit in the mistreatment, or that some engaged in mistreatment in one form, and some in another. We should now turn to the effect of their actions.

## III. Herdsmen and Praetors

The description of the landowners' actions is immediately followed by the results of these actions. This chain of events leads to the introduction of the law-courts anachronism. The Constantinian excerpt closely records the details (Diod. 34/5.2.28–30):[23]

[23] There is a parallel passage in the Photian version, but it is so compressed that it does not appear to be of any use as a comparative

τοιαύτης δοθείσης ἐξουσίας ἀνθρώποις διὰ μὲν τὴν ἰσχὺν τῶν σωμάτων δυναμένοις πᾶν τὸ κριθὲν ἐπιτελεῖν, διὰ δὲ τὴν ἄνεσιν καὶ σχολὴν εὐκαιροῦσι, διὰ δὲ τὴν τῆς τροφῆς ἔνδειαν ἀναγκαζομένοις ταῖς παραβόλοις ἐγχειρεῖν πράξεσιν, συνέβη ταχὺ τὴν παρανομίαν αὐξηθῆναι. τὸ γὰρ πρῶτον ἐν τοῖς ἐπιφανεστάτοις τόποις τοὺς καθ' ἕνα καὶ δύο τὰς ὁδοιπορίας ποιουμένους ἐφόνευον· εἶτα ἐπὶ τὰς τῶν ἀσθενεστέρων ἐπαύλεις νυκτὸς ἀθρόοι συντρέχοντες ἐξῄρουν βίᾳ ταύτας καὶ τὰς κτήσεις διήρπαζον καὶ τοὺς ἀνθισταμένους ἀνῄρουν. ἀεὶ δὲ μᾶλλον τῆς τόλμης προβαινούσης, οὔτε τοῖς ὁδοιπόροις νυκτὸς ἡ Σικελία βάσιμος ἦν οὔτε τοῖς ἐπὶ τῆς χώρας ζῆν εἰωθόσιν ἀσφαλὴς ἐπὶ ταύτης ἡ διατριβή, πάντα δὲ βίας καὶ λῃστείας καὶ παντοδαπῶν φόνων ἦν μεστά. τοῖς δὲ νομεῦσιν ἀγραυλίας γεγενημένης καὶ σκευῆς στρατιωτικῆς, εὐλόγως ἅπαντες ἐνεπιμπλῶντο φρονήματος καὶ θράσους· περιφέροντες γὰρ ῥόπαλα καὶ λόγχας καὶ καλαύροπας ἀξιολόγους καὶ δέρματα λύκων ἢ συάγρων ἐσκεπασμένοι τὰ σώματα καταπληκτικὴν εἶχον τὴν πρόσοψιν καὶ πολεμικῶν ἔργων οὐ πόρρω κειμένην. κυνῶν τε ἀλκίμων ἄθροισμα συνεπόμενον ἑκάστῳ καὶ τροφῆς καὶ γάλακτος καὶ κρεῶν παρακειμένων πλῆθος ἐξηγρίου τάς τε ψυχὰς καὶ τὰ σώματα. ἦν οὖν πᾶσα χώρα μεστὴ καθάπερ στρατευμάτων διεσπαρμένων, ὡς ἂν ὑπὸ τῆς τῶν δεσποτῶν ἐπιτροπῆς τοῦ θράσους τῶν δούλων καθωπλισμένου.

Since power such as this had been given to men, who, because of their physical strength, were able to accomplish everything they chose, and because of their licence and leisure had the opportunity, and because of their lack of food were compelled to undertake perilous

example (Diod. 34/5.2.2): ἐξ ὧν οἱ πλείους ἀπὸ λῃστείας τὸ ζῆν ἐπορίζοντο, καὶ μεστὰ φόνων ἦν ἅπαντα, καθάπερ στρατευμάτων διεσπαρμένων τῶν λῃστῶν. ('The majority of them provided themselves with a livelihood through banditry, and everywhere was full of bloodshed, since the bandits were scattered like armies of soldiers.')

> tasks, it came about that there was a swift increase in lawlessness. First they murdered those who travelled singly or in pairs in conspicuous[24] places. Then, coming together in bands, they attacked in the night the farmhouses of the weak, and were destroying them by force and were plundering the possessions and were killing those who resisted. Since their courage kept growing ever greater, by night Sicily was not passable to travellers, and for those accustomed to living in the countryside it was not safe to spend time there. Everywhere was filled with violence, banditry, and killings of all kinds. Since the herdsmen were experienced in the countryside and equipped like soldiers, they all were, understandably, full of arrogance and boldness: for since they were carrying clubs, spears, and remarkable shepherd's crooks, and covered their bodies with the hides of wolves or wild boars, they had a striking appearance and one that was not far from warlike. A pack of fierce dogs following each man, and a plentiful supply of milk and meat being available made their bodies and minds wild. Therefore the whole countryside was full as though of scattered armies, as if the boldness of the slaves had been armed by the guardianship of the masters.

The text is then concluded by our anachronism concerning the equestrian domination of the Roman law-courts. The anachronistic reference to praetors unable to act because of legal repercussions serves to amplify the magnitude of the problem: not only was there banditry, but no-one could stop it because the authorities had their hands tied at the time. This description has been used to reconstruct the development of slavery in Sicily in this period, including the causal link between mass mistreatment of slaves and revolt. This has been achieved by the simple measure of removing the anachronistic law-courts but otherwise leaving the

[24] In the Loeb edition L. A. Post suggested ἀνεπιφανεστάτοις, i.e. 'inconspicuous'. Perhaps, although the narrative is not inexplicable without this.

historical explanation intact, as we saw above.[25] Yet, doing this diminishes the narrative that the text is developing and fails to address why the anachronism was inserted in the first place—and inserted it evidently was, as it is historically out of place by a full ten years.[26] The narrative purpose of the anachronism is to bind the collapse of order together with provincial and imperial mismanagement, and to show that the conflict was the product of forces external to Sicily. The *ἀρχή*, the beginning, of the whole* war makes this function clear.

## IV. *ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς ἀπόστασεως*: the Beginning of the Revolt

Diodorus noted that, despite his own description of the rise of banditry, the true start of the war, the *ἀρχή*, was caused by Damophilus' mistreatment of his slaves (34/5.2.9).[27] We

[25] For a detailed discussion of these issues see: Farrington (1936) 21; Green (1961) 10; Vogt (1965) 24–7; Manganaro (1967) 211–12; Finley (1968) 137–9; Verbrugghe (1972) 540–58; Manganaro (1980) 437; Sacks (1990) 147–9; Dumont (1987) 213–15, 246–7; Bradley (1989) 47–55; Shaw (2000) 11–12; Urbainczyk (2008) 11–12, 41–2. Strabo (6.2.6) records a similar account of why the revolt happened, with a focus on herdsmen. The passage appears to be grounded in the same logic as that of Diodorus, and is perhaps from the same source.

[26] This is not to suggest that ancient historical writers should not have been expected to try to understand history, nor that historical artifice is *a priori* a problem. It is a problem, however, to assume that where we find an ancient author inserting incorrect material we can excise the contamination without making assumptions ourselves, as will be argued below.

[27] The line, which links the rest of the narrative to Damophilus, is preserved only in Photius. Even so, in what follows, the Constantinian excerpts on Damophilus will be used, as they preserve much greater detail of Diodorus' account: the Constantinian excerpts record the story of Damophilus in 34/5.2.34–6, 38, 37 + 24b, roughly two full pages of the Loeb edition, while the Photian version (34/5.2.10) is barely a third of a Loeb page by comparison. A fragment of Posidonius, preserved in Athenaeus, also blamed Damophilus for the rise of the revolt (12.59.21–9 = F 59 Kidd): *Ποσειδώνιος δ' ἐν τῇ ὀγδόῃ τῶν Ἱστοριῶν περὶ Δαμοφίλου λέγων τοῦ Σικελιώτου, δι' ὃν ὁ δουλικὸς ἐκινήθη πόλεμος, ὅτι τρυφῆς ἦν*

learn that this man copied the behaviour of the Italians in Sicily in terms of both the number of his slaves and their mistreatment. It was among this man's slaves that the revolt actually started, and they incited only those from his household (34/5.2.34–36):

> ὅτι Δαμόφιλός τις ἦν τὸ γένος Ἐνναῖος, τὴν οὐσίαν μεγαλόπλουτος, τὸν τρόπον ὑπερήφανος, ὃς πολλὴν χώρας περίοδον γεωργῶν, παμπληθεῖς δὲ βοσκημάτων ἀγέλας κεκτημένος οὐ μόνον τὴν τρυφὴν τῶν κατὰ Σικελίαν Ἰταλικῶν ἐζήλωσεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸ κατὰ τοὺς οἰκέτας πλῆθος καὶ τὴν εἰς τούτους ἀπανθρωπίαν καὶ βαρύτητα … ἀνάγωγος γὰρ καὶ ἀπαίδευτος τρόπος ἐξουσίας ἀνυπευθύνου καὶ τύχης μεγαλοπλούτου κυριεύσας τὸ μὲν πρῶτον κόρον ἐγέννησεν, εἶθ' ὕβριν, τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον ὄλεθρόν τε αὐτῷ καὶ συμφορὰς μεγάλας τῇ πατρίδι. ἀγοράζων γὰρ οἰκετῶν πλῆθος ὕβρι στικῶς αὐτοῖς προσεφέρετο, στίγμασι σιδήρου χαράττων τὰ σώματα τῶν ἐλευθέρων μὲν ἐν ταῖς πατρίσι γεγενημένων, αἰχμαλωσίας δὲ καὶ δουλικῆς τύχης πεπειραμένων. καὶ τούτων τοὺς μὲν πέδαις δεσμεύων εἰς τὰς συνεργασίας ἐνέβαλλε, τοὺς δὲ νομεῖς ἀποδεικνύων οὔτ' ἐσθῆτας οὔτε τροφὰς ἐχορήγει τὰς ἁρμοττούσας.
>
> There was a certain Damophilus, whose family came from Enna, an exceedingly wealthy man, and of arrogant character, who, since he cultivated a vast

οἰκεῖος, γράφει καὶ ταῦτα· τρυφῆς οὖν δοῦλος ἦν καὶ κακουργίας, διὰ μὲν τῆς χώρας τετρακύκλους ἀπήνας περιαγόμενος καὶ ἵππους καὶ θεράποντας ὡραίους καὶ παραδρομὴν ἀνάγωγον κολάκων τε καὶ παίδων στρατιωτικῶν. ὕστερον δὲ πανοικίᾳ ἐφυβρίστως κατέστρεψε τὸν βίον ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκετῶν περιυβρισθείς. ('Posidonius, in the eighth book of his *Histories*, says about Damophilus of Sicily, because of whom the slave war was set in motion, that he was addicted to luxury, and he writes this: "He was therefore a slave of luxury and wickedness, leading round the countryside with him four-wheeled wagons, horses, beautiful attendants, an ill-bred following of flatterers and even of boys dressed as soldiers. But later he, with his whole household, wantonly ended his life after having been grievously insulted by his slaves."')

> circuit of land, and had acquired large herds of cattle, not only emulated the luxury of the Italians in Sicily, but even their great numbers of slaves and their inhumanity and arrogance towards them … His ill-bred and uneducated nature, having gained possession of unaccountable power and an excessive fortune, first produced satiety, then wantonness, and finally ruin for himself and great misfortunes for his country. For, buying great numbers of slaves in the market, he used to treat them outrageously, branding marks on the bodies of those who had been born free in their own countries, but who had experienced the fate of slavery through capture in war. Some of them he fettered in chains and threw into worker's barracks, while others he assigned as herdsmen, and provided neither appropriate clothing nor food.

The links to the preface provided by Diodorus are clear. Initially Damophilus is introduced as emulating the luxury, slaves, and attitudes 'of the Italians in Sicily' (*τῶν κατὰ Σικελίαν Ἰταλικῶν*). Furthermore, by the end of the passage we are informed that Damophilus is exactly copying the treatment given to the herdsmen in the preface: 'he provided neither appropriate clothing nor food' (*οὔτ' ἐσθῆτας οὔτε τροφὰς ἐχορήγει τὰς ἁρμοττούσας*). These two aspects link Damophilus to Diodorus' preface. Diodorus indicates in another place what truly drove Damophilus' slaves to revolt and it provides further connections to the preface. Several passages from the Constantinian excerpts detail the actions of Damophilus and his wife toward their slaves (34/5.2.38, 37 and 24b):

> *ὅτι Δαμόφιλος ὁ Ἐνναῖός ποτε προσελθόντων αὐτῷ τινων οἰκετῶν γυμνῶν καὶ διαλεγομένων ὑπὲρ ἐσθῆτος οὐκ ἠνέσχετο τὴν ἔντευξιν, ἀλλ' εἰπών· Τί γάρ; οἱ διὰ τῆς χώρας ὁδοιποροῦντες γυμνοὶ βαδίζουσι, καὶ οὐχ ἑτοίμην παρέχονται τὴν χορηγίαν τοῖς χρείαν ἔχουσιν ἱματίων; ἐπέταξε προσδῆσαι τοῖς κίοσι καὶ πληγὰς ἐμφορήσας ἐξαπέστειλεν ὑπερηφάνως.*

*ὅτι ὁ αὐτὸς Δαμόφιλος διὰ τὴν αὐθάδειαν καὶ τὴν ὠμότητα τῶν τρόπων οὐκ ἦν ἡμέρα καθ' ἣν οὐκ ἠκίζετό τινας τῶν οἰκετῶν ἐπ' αἰτίαις οὐ δικαίαις. οὐχ ἧττον δὲ ἡ γυνὴ τούτου Μεταλλὶς χαίρουσα ταῖς ὑπερηφάνοις τιμωρίαις ὠμῶς προσεφέρετο ταῖς θεραπαινίσι καὶ τῶν οἰκετῶν τοῖς ὑποπεσοῦσιν. καὶ διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ὕβριν καὶ τιμωρίαν ἀπεθηριώθησαν οἱ δοῦλοι πρὸς τοὺς κυρίους, καὶ διαλαβόντες μηδὲν ἔτι χεῖρον τῶν παρόντων αὐτοῖς κακῶν ἀπαντήσεσθαι …*

*ὅτι συνετίθεντο πρὸς ἀλλήλους οἱ δοῦλοι περὶ ἀποστάσεως καὶ φόνου τῶν κυρίων.*

Damophilus of Enna, when some naked slaves approached him and talked with him about clothing, could not endure the conversation, but said, 'What? Do those who walk through the country go naked, and do they not offer a ready supply for those who need clothes?' He ordered them bound to pillars and beaten, and dismissed them arrogantly.

Because of his wilfulness and cruelty of character, there was not a day when the same Damophilus was not mistreating some of his slaves without just cause. The wife of this man, Metallis,[28] who delighted no less in arrogant punishments, treated her maidservants, and the other slaves who fell in her way, cruelly. Because of the outrages and punishments from both of them, the slaves became brutal towards their masters, and believing that nothing worse than the present evils could come to them ...[29]

[28] More accurately recorded as Megallis in the Photian version: see Diod. 34/5.2.10, 14.

[29] The narrative picks up again immediately with no change in subject in 34/5.2.24b.

> The slaves agreed with one another about revolt and the murder of their masters.

With Damophilus' instruction to his slaves to loot 'those who walk through the country' (*οἱ διὰ τῆς χώρας ὁδοιποροῦντες*), the text brings to mind images from earlier in the narrative of mass banditry perpetrated by slaves across Sicily. Yet, there is still something of a disconnection between the story of Damophilus' slaves and the herdsmen in the narrative's preface. The text is explicit that it was 'because of the outrages and punishments from [their masters]' (*διὰ τὴν ἐξ ἀμφοτέρων ὕβριν καὶ τιμωρίαν*) that Damophilus' slaves chose to revolt, and specifically because the slaves believed 'that nothing worse than the present evils could come to them' (*μηδὲν ἔτι χεῖρον τῶν παρόντων αὐτοῖς κακῶν ἀπαντήσεσθαι*). In contrast, the herdsmen were earlier described as enjoying 'a self-indulgent life-style' (*συνήθειαν ῥᾳδιουργίας*, 34/5.2.27) and 'full of arrogance and boldness' (*ἅπαντες … φρονήματος καὶ θράσους*, 34/5.2.29). And while Damophilus' excesses are linked to the Italians of Sicily, it is his own 'ill-bred and uneducated nature' (*ἀνάγωγος γὰρ καὶ ἀπαίδευτος τρόπος*), not his learnt behaviour from the Italians, that 'first produced satiety, then wantonness, and finally ruin for himself and great misfortunes for his country' (*τὸ μὲν πρῶτον κόρον ἐγέννησεν, εἶθ' ὕβριν, τὸ δὲ τελευταῖον ὄλεθρόν τε αὐτῷ καὶ συμφορὰς μεγάλας τῇ πατρίδι*; all the above from 34/5.2.35). Critical aspects of Damophilus' character and actions are all understandable without Diodorus' preface, yet the connection to herdsmen and meddlesome Italian landowners provides a compelling backdrop for Damophilus' misconduct. In addition, he becomes part of a much wider problem—the mismanagement of the whole province, exemplified by the paralysation of the Roman governors by equestrian corruption.

What is more, this reading of the narrative was expressed openly in the text itself (34/5.2.33):

> ὅτι οὐ μόνον κατὰ τὰς πολιτικὰς δυναστείας τοὺς ἐν ὑπεροχῇ ὄντας ἐπιεικῶς χρὴ προσφέρεσθαι τοῖς ταπεινοτέροις, ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τοὺς ἰδιωτικοὺς βίους πρᾴως προσενεκτέον τοῖς οἰκέταις τοὺς εὖ φρονοῦντας. ἡ γὰρ ὑπερηφανία καὶ βαρύτης ἐν μὲν ταῖς πόλεσιν ἀπεργάζεται στάσεις ἐμφυλίους τῶν ἐλευθέρων, ἐν δὲ τοῖς κατὰ μέρος τῶν ἰδιωτῶν οἴκοις δούλων ἐπιβουλὰς τοῖς δεσπόταις καὶ ἀπο στάσεις φοβερὰς κοινῇ ταῖς πόλεσι κατασκευάζει. ὅσῳ δ' ἂν τὰ τῆς ἐξουσίας εἰς ὠμότητα καὶ παρα νομίαν ἐκτρέπηται, τοσούτῳ μᾶλλον καὶ τὰ τῶν ὑποτεταγμένων ἤθη πρὸς ἀπόνοιαν ἀποθηριοῦται· πᾶς γὰρ ὁ τῇ τύχῃ ταπεινὸς τοῦ μὲν καλοῦ καὶ τῆς δόξης ἑκουσίως ἐκχωρεῖ τοῖς ὑπερέχουσι, τῆς δὲ καθηκούσης φιλανθρωπίας στερισκόμενος πολέμιος γίνεται τῶν ἀνημέρως δεσποζόντων.
>
> Not only in the exercise of political power should prominent men behave moderately to those who are humble, but also in their private lives, if they are wise, they should attend gently to their slaves. For just as arrogance and a heavy hand in cities produces civil conflicts among the free citizens, so in private homes it produces slave plots against their masters, and terrible revolts in common against cities. The more the powers that be might be changed into savagery and lawlessness, so much more are the characters of those subject to that power made savage to the point of despair: for all whom chance has made humble willingly yield to those in power for virtue and good repute, but when deprived of good treatment become an enemy of those who savagely lord it over him.

This excerpt comes immediately before the account of Damophilus and shows how Damophilus' story serves as an example to demonstrate the moral lesson outlined in this passage.[30] The anachronism, by amplifying the problem of the herdsmen through implications of administrative cor-

[30] See, e.g., Sacks (1990) 144–5.

ruption, elevates the narrative beyond the subject of only a 'slave war'. The narrative demonstrates the benefits of healthy political practice by showcasing an example of an island that fell into war as a result of upper-class arrogance and greed. The *αἰτία* of the war then draws the *ἀρχή* involving Damophilus into the bigger debate: Italian greed and vice corrupt more than administrative duties, going so far as to destroy the practices of the Sicilians themselves, thus causing, indirectly, the *ἀρχή* of the revolt.[31] We cannot remove the *equites* and the governor from the narrative in favour of a more 'accurate' replacement without endangering a great deal more of the narrative's careful construction.

## V. Sicily in the Second Century BC

Diodorus' text is not only using the events of the First Sicilian 'Slave War' to think about issues that go beyond ideas specific to slavery, but was also written at least half a century after the events in question. While the *Bibliotheke* remains one of our only pieces of narrative evidence for Sicily in the second century BC, it does not stand alone when reconstructing the island in this period. If we work from only Diodorus' text we are left with an image of Sicily in which the praetorian governors were both the supreme

[31] Verbrugghe (1975) 197–204, building on the work of Strasburger (1965) 43, argued this tale of administrative mismanagement was a narrative template that 'Posidonius' used to understand a conflict about which he knew only 'episodic adventure stories', for which see Verbrugghe (1975) 192; at 198–201 he argued that this template was based jointly on what he calls the *latifundia* of Italy in the 70s BC and the rise of piracy in the first century BC. This thesis is impossible to prove and is reliant on two hypotheses: first, that the source underlying Diodorus' account is uncomplicatedly Posidonius; second, that the general details of the narrative of the conflict appear to be disconnected from each other because they actually *were* disconnected details. On the first point, see Sacks (1990) 142–54, and Matsubara (1998) 142–84; on the second point, it should be noted that with an account as fragmentary as that of the First Sicilian 'Slave War', it is impossible to tell, for the most part, if the disconnection of narrative details was the case in the original narrative, or merely the result of fragmentation.

authority on the island as well as the only force capable of suppressing possible banditry. The governors' impotence in the face of a corrupt landowning equestrian class left Sicily in danger. This is the picture that readily emerges from scholarship on the 'slave wars'.[32] Yet this image of Sicily reliant on centralised Roman authority and at the mercy of foreign landowners does not fit with what we do know about the second century BC. This is especially the case with regard to two connected points: how Rome governed Sicily; and the practices of slave owners in this period.

First, Prag has shown that Rome did not control Sicily by using troops on the ground. He argued that the annual magistrate in Sicily was not sent with a garrison force assigned to him from Rome or Italy; the forces used to patrol Sicily were from the island itself and were connected to the island's strong Hellenistic gymnastic culture.[33] Moreover, the Sicilian levies used to police the island and protect its coast against pirates were often led by Sicilian officers drawn from the political classes of Sicily.[34] The use of localised levies and commanders in Sicily is just one manifestation of the vibrant and complex political entities, urban vitality, and local identities within Sicily in this period that are not represented in Diodorus' narrative.[35] It is not clear that Sicilian cities would have necessarily needed the praetor to act if they had significant problems with banditry. The backdrop of politically active Hellenistic *poleis* in Sicily does not necessarily disprove the Diodoran narrative, but it does complicate the picture given in

[32] See e.g., Vogt (1965) 24–5; Bradley (1989) 53–4; Urbainczyk (2008) 11. Sacks (1990) 146 n. 116 voices concern about this version of events.

[33] For the prevalence of the Sicilian gymnastic culture see Prag (2007) and Mango (2009). Over twenty examples of *gymnasia* have been found on Sicily: for an overview see Campagna (2006) 29–31.

[34] See Prag (2007) 82–7.

[35] Noted by Prag (2007) 69–70. Sicilian urbanism is now generally regarded to have been flourishing during the second century BC: see, e.g., Wilson (1990) 20–8; (2000) 140–50; (2013a) 101–14; (2013b) 488–92; Campagna (2003) 23–7; (2006) 31–3; (2011) 162–7; and for a generally positive view of Sicily in the second century BC, see Prag (2009).

Diodorus that the governor of Sicily was the sole power on the island. And if the *poleis* were capable of intervening on their own, it raises questions about exactly what the 'banditry' of herdsmen on the island really signified. This is especially the case given the lack of response to the problem from both the Roman authorities and the Sicilian *poleis*, something not accounted for if we simply replace the equestrian law-courts with local landowners within the anachronism.

On precisely the topic of how to read the 'banditry' of Diodorus' narrative, Roth has argued that the 'banditry' that lends the anachronism its narrative force should be read as a slanted description of '(slave) herdsmen using (public) land reserved for the pasturing of cattle, in order to grow food on some part of it'.[36] The banditry of our text could therefore be viewed as the utilisation of public land within the *peculium* granted to the herdsmen of rich landowners, and not as part of a system to dehumanise or oppress the herdsmen. This explanation of the slave-owners' actions sits more comfortably with how the text describes the herdsmen—enjoying 'a self-indulgent lifestyle' (*συνήθειαν ῥᾳδιουργίας*, 34/5.2.27) and 'full of arrogance and boldness' (*ἅπαντες … φρονήματος καὶ θρά-σους*, 34/5.2.29)—although it does not allow the herdsmen enjoying a degree of freedom to fit very well with the story of Damophilus. If we read the 'banditry' of Diodorus' text in this light, we may be able to explain much better why no landowners, Italian, Sicilian, or otherwise, wanted to act against the 'banditry': it was not, in reality, a problem.[37]

[36] Roth (2005) 291–2, citing Festus 392L, whose definition of pasture-land includes reference to herdsmen cultivating small parts of public pasturage for their own provision.

[37] At least not for the landowners. The exploitation of public land in this manner by rich landowners could well have caused conflict between those landowners and the poorer members of their community who relied on the public land to augment their own limited holdings. This, in turn, may be part of the underlying reason for the period of social disorder that arose during the conflict, described at Diod. 34/5.2.48: I hope to return to this disorder at another time. The freedom granted to the herdsmen could well have been a problem for the governor: for this

Taken together, these two points problematise the image of second-century BC Sicily given in Diodorus' text.

## VI. Conclusion

The analysis undertaken here of a single anachronistic passage in Diodorus reminds us that we must be careful, when constructing our own narratives of ancient conflicts, not to assume that we can overwrite narratorial errors in the ancient sources, especially where these mistakes form a key part of the text's analysis. The example discussed here has shown that we cannot rely on our principle ancient source's explanation of why the conflict took place, at least not in terms of slave mistreatment and administrative misconduct as he describes it. The text's moral tale of provincial mismanagement depends upon two aspects. First, irresponsible landowners across Sicily offered their slaves the freedom to seek their own maintenance, resulting in widespread disorder. Second, those same landowners protected themselves from the repercussions of their actions by threatening legal action against Roman governors who intervened. Each aspect requires the other element in order to drive the narrative forward. Without the central anachronism of legal extortion resulting in gubernatorial inaction we cannot assume that the remainder is accurate, especially if we want to make this text central to our own understanding of Sicily in the second century BC. This is not to say that Diodorus' text cannot be used in any way to reconstruct Sicily's history in the second century BC, but rather to argue that relying on the *Bibliotheke*'s narrow historical interpretation and literary presentation is to limit our own horizons, circumscribed as they are by the desire to tell moral tales. The first step to exceed the limitations of

see Bernard, Damon, and Grey (2014) 958–62, who argue that the Polla stone (*CIL* I² 638) records the actions of a governor in Sicily rounding up herdsmen who had been given the licence to plunder as described by Diodorus. In their view, the Polla stone should be understood as part of the negotiation of power between the governor of Sicily, the island's landowners, and landowners in Lucania (see esp. 977–8).

our literary source material lies in evaluating the full range of evidence available for reconstructing the ancient world and endeavouring to challenge where necessary the validity of the analysis provided by our historiographical sources.

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