

L. CATILINA LEGATUS: SALLUST, *HISTORIES* I. 46M

As Fragment 46 of the first book of Sallust's *Histories* Maurenbrecher¹ prints: *Magnis operibus perfectis obsidium cepit per L. Catilinam legatum*. This he takes in effect to mean that Lucretius Ofella after the completion of great siege works received reinforcements brought by L. Catiline legate of Sulla. The interpretation depends largely upon his contention that the phrase *obsidium cepit* is to be taken as equivalent to *subsidium cepit*, for which he claims the authority, ultimately, of Verrius Flaccus as represented by Festus p. 193M s.v. *obsidium*. Though opinions may occasionally have differed as to the precise event documented by the fragment, this central assumption seems to have gone unchallenged by historians. Yet it rests upon remarkably insecure foundations. The reading *cepit* has scant authority and the interpretation of *obsidium* as *subsidium* (= *auxilium*) none at all. It is in fact the result of misunderstanding the passage of Festus in which the text is embedded.

In Lindsay's edition (p. 210)² the Festus entry which is here quoted in full runs as follows:

Obsidium tamquam praesidium, subsidium recte dicitur, cuius etiam auctor C. Laelius pro se apud populum (i.e. Orat. 9): 'Ut in nobis terra marique simul obsidium facerent.' Et Sallustius historiarum I (46): 'Magnis operibus perfectis obsidium coepit per L. Catilinam legatum.'

Coepit is the reading of the manuscript F, which has been generally accepted, while *cepit* appears only in the Aldine edition where it may well be an emendation or even an error, there being no obvious independent source which might have provided it. For Maurenbrecher it was merely the 'correction' of Corte (1724) who produced the earliest roughly chronological arrangement of the fragments of Sallust's *Histories*.

At first sight neither of the cited examples lends the slightest colour to the supposition that *obsidium* could ever mean anything but 'siege'; but is not Festus trying to support the use of the word as equivalent to *praesidium* or *subsidium*? Change *coepit* to *cepit* and perhaps at least the second example can be made to fit. So appears to run the argument and, one suspects, the whole case for *cepit*, whoever first wrote it.³ Festus, however, was not in the least interested in the meaning of *obsidium*, which was not in question, but in the *form* of the word. He meant: '*ob-sidium*, compare *prae-sidium*, *sub-sidium*, is a correct locution (*recte dicitur*)'. A little later (p. 218L) his interest in the form is again attested by the preference he expresses for *obsidio*:

Obsidionem potius dicendum est quam obsidium, adiuvat nos testimonio suo Ennius in Telamone, etc.

We may take it, then, that what Sallust was saying was: 'After the completion of great siegeworks he began the siege through his lieutenant L. Catiline.' It was Maurenbrecher's conjecture that the siege in question was that of Praeneste, which fell to Lucretius Ofella in 82 B.C. His connection of it with the career of Catiline was

¹ B. Maurenbrecher, *C. Sallusti Crispi Historiarum Reliquiae*, fasc. 1 (Stuttgart 1891, repr. 1966), p. 18.

² W. M. Lindsay, *Festus, De Verborum Significatu cum Pauli Epitome* (Leipzig, 1913).

³ It may be noted, however, that *cepit* could bear the sense 'undertook' or 'took charge of', cf. Cic. *Ad Att.* 8. 3. 4.

based upon the report of Orosius (5. 21. 8) that the severed head of M. Marius Gratidianus was sent to Praeneste, where its display to the besieged C. Marius was instrumental in bringing about his suicide. If Catiline, as Maurenbrecher supposed, took reinforcements to a siege, it might as well have been the one to which the head that he himself had cut off was also taken. Though Orosius says nothing of Catiline in this context there is good evidence from elsewhere⁴ as to the part he played in the murder of Gratidianus. On the strength of Maurenbrecher's argument T. R. S. Broughton⁵ assigned the rank of *legatus* to Catiline in 82 B.C.

Conrad Cichorius,⁶ however, had already questioned the validity of Maurenbrecher's hypothesis (though not his reading of Sallust's text) on the grounds that if, as is generally agreed, Catiline was born in 108 B.C. or not much earlier, he was too young to have held the quaestorship, and consequently unlikely to have served as legate as early as 82 B.C.; that it was in any case not Sulla, whose lieutenant Catiline was supposed to be, but Lucretius Ofella who was in charge of the siege of Praeneste; and finally that in his brief retrospective survey of events before 78 B.C. Sallust would not have had occasion to enter into the details of particular military operations. Cichorius therefore concluded that Catiline's legateship should be dated later, and that he might well have campaigned under P. Servilius Vatia Isauricus against the pirates in Cilicia in the years 78–75 B.C.

It cannot, surely, be anything but hazardous to generalize about what Sallust may or may not have included in an introduction which survives in so fragmentary a form. In any case, nine words hardly amount to a detailed account of a campaign. If, however, we read *obsidium coepit*, it must be regarded as certain that the siege to which Sallust referred was not that of Praeneste, where it was Lucretius Ofella and no one else who was responsible for the conduct of operations from the outset (Appian, *B.C.* 1. 94). There is no sign in Appian's account that any other commander was in any way involved, and indeed in a later passage we learn that Ofella was relying on the *gloria* he had earned from the capture of Praeneste when he made his ill-fated bid for the consulship of 81 B.C. (1. 101).⁷ There were, even so, in the succeeding years other sieges at which Catiline might have been present as Sulla's lieutenant. Given the conspicuous loyalty, not to say ferocity which Catiline had shown in the Sullan cause it would be by no means surprising if Sulla had made some further use of him. The killing of Gratidianus was perhaps the most atrocious, and certainly the most notorious of the services Catiline had rendered, but our sources leave us in no doubt that there had been many others of a like kind.⁸ He could plainly be counted upon to deal with appropriate ruthlessness with the opponents of Sulla wherever they might be. No weight should be attached to Cichorius' contention that Catiline's youth and presumed inexperience of public office would have prevented his serving as *legatus* in the military sphere until 78 or 79 at the earliest; all that was necessary was for his commander to appoint him.⁹

⁴ Plut. *Sulla* 32. 4; Seneca, *De Ira* 3. 18; Berne Scholiast on Luc. 2. 173.

⁵ *M.R.R.* 2. 72.

⁶ *Römische Studien* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 173.

⁷ Indeed, if we were to deny Ofella this glory we should have to assign it not to Catiline but to P. Cornelius Cethegus who seems to have had a hand in persuading the garrison to surrender (Val. Max. 9. 2. 1).

⁸ Here see in particular [Q. CIC.] *Comm. Pet.* 9–10 and Asconius 84 C.

⁹ The view held by some that a military *legatus* must be a member of the Senate is also mistaken. On this question see R. E. Smith, *Service in the Post-Marian Roman Army* (Manchester, 1958), p. 62 notes 2 and 3.

It is perhaps worth remarking that Catiline might quite conventionally have held a quaestorship in 81 B.C., if, as seems probable, he had by then completed 10 years military service. The minimum

There is then no technical difficulty in assuming that Catiline could have acted as Sulla's lieutenant in one of the sieges which took place in the years 80–79 B.C. Two sources, Livy, *Ep.* 89, and Licinianus, p. 32 F, provide us with evidence of centres of resistance at Volaterrae and Nola. From Livy we learn merely that Sulla retook Nola and received the surrender of Volaterrae. Licinianus is somewhat more informative (p. 32, 4 F):

Et Volaterrani se Romanis dederunt ante occiso per seditionem lapidibus Carbone praetorio, quem Sulla praefecerat [is Cn. Carbonis frater fuit] et proscriptos ex oppido demiserunt quos equites a Claudio et Servilio missi conciderunt. Iam ante [anno superiore] et Samnites qui Nolae erant idem fecerant metu obsidionis.

Since it appears that it was the unfortunate Carbo who began operations at Volaterrae, even if he did not live to finish them in 79 B.C., Sallust, *Hist.* 1. 46 cannot be made to fit here. In the preceding year, we learn, the Samnites at Nola had, like the Volaterrani, surrendered on terms *metu obsidionis*. Sulla may well have delegated the reduction of Nola to another, as he had done at Volaterrae, and the man may have been Catiline. The question however arises: were the Nolans in fact besieged? The phrase *metu obsidionis* need not imply that they were, but rather that they had grounds for supposing that they would be. The enormous preparations of which the Sallust fragment speaks make it clear that, on the occasion referred to, the siege was a present fact, not a future probability. Nola then may not be what we are looking for.

As they stand, our sources provide us with the name of no other town to which Catiline might have gone at this period for the purpose of conducting a siege. There was, however, another important stronghold of the anti-Sullan faction which is nowhere apparently recorded as being retaken, though it must have been recovered at about the same time as the others, viz. Aesernia.¹⁰ Might Catiline have been sent there? The suggestion must remain speculative, but there is, at any rate, nothing to contradict it. Mommsen indeed proposed that the name of Aesernia should replace that of Nola in the text of Livy, *Ep.* 89. It is, as we shall attempt to show, more probable that the names of *both* towns were originally present.

The readings of the two principal manuscripts of Livy, *Ep.* 89, p. 93, 15–16 R are:

Syllam tam in Samnio recepit N; Sylla Nolam in Samnio recepit P.

N belongs to the ninth century while P is a twelfth-century copy or near relative of the ninth-century but now fragmentary B. It is possible, but hardly helpful, to regard the reading of N as a corruption of that of P, which Rossbach prints.¹¹ This cannot, surely, represent the original text, for Nola is not in *Samnio*. To put matters straight we must either (a) remove or emend in *Samnio*, or (b) replace *Nolam* with the name of some other town which is geographically acceptable, or (c) suppose that the name of such a town has fallen out after *Nolam*.

As to (a), in *Samnio* is unlikely to have crept into the text as a gloss on *Nolam*, nor can it be excluded on the grounds that it is syntactically offensive. Such formulae are

age-limit of thirty, which Cichorius assumed, was of course a Sullan innovation: cf. A. E. Astin, *The Lex Annalis before Sulla* (Brussels, 1958), p. 43. It is in any case plausible to suggest that Catiline entered the Senate in 81 B.C. He would surely have been included among the 300 or more equestrians and others whom Sulla drafted in that year.

¹⁰ Aesernia had been captured by the rebels in 90 B.C. (Appian, *B.C.* 1. 41). The suggestion that Sulla may have retaken the town in 89 B.C. was made by P. A. Brunt, *Italian Manpower* (Oxford, 1971), p. 356. This hypothesis is, however, invalidated by App. *B.C.* 1. 51, and Diod. Sic. 37. 2. 9, who clearly show that Aesernia was still holding out in late 89 B.C.

¹¹ O. Rossbach, *T. Livi Periochae Omnium Librorum* (Leipzig, 1910).

to be found elsewhere in the *Epitomes*; e.g. at 93, 19 R we find *Mitylenae quoque in Asia*, cf. *Ep.* 15, p. 20, 25 R, *Ep.* 19, p. 23, 21 R. Of emendations perhaps *a Samnitibus* (Gronovius) is the most plausible in point of sense (cf. Licinianus quoted above), but the corruption is not easy to account for. As to (b), it is tempting to follow Mommsen in changing *Nolam* to *Aeserniam*. Aesernia is unquestionably in Samnium and is moreover a town about which we might expect to hear at this point, but it is highly improbable palaeographically that *Aeserniam* could simply have become *Nolam* in the common ancestor of N and P.

This leaves us with (c): something must have fallen out before *in Samnio*. If N's reading is nothing more than a garbled version of that of P, the missing words have left no trace in our manuscripts. An analysis of some of the peculiarities of N, however, reveals another possibility. A comparison of places (listed by Rossbach on pp. xiii–xiv) in which P preserves good readings and N is corrupt shows that in addition to some typical uncial errors N contains others which appear to derive from a majuscule MS in which there were areas of illegibility due to some kind of damage, presumably holes or damp patches. Sections of text ranging from one to ten letters were obliterated. In N these lacunae are not signalled, the text being allowed to run on whether it makes sense or not. At p. 93, 15 R P may be taken as evidence for the presence of *Nolam* in the original. The nature of N's damaged ancestor can perhaps offer the key to what followed. It is significant that *Syllam* and *Nolam* have *lam* in common. A copyist may have jumped from SYL to the LAM of NOLAM, or, equally possibly, the letters NOLA were unreadable and the lacuna, as elsewhere, ignored. Either way, *Syllam* hides a true *Sylla Nolam*. What then are we to make of *tam*? Confusion between *l* and *τ* is common in copying from a majuscule exemplar. This happens in N for example at 102, 23 R where *iecto* has become simply *et*. Thus TAM may represent the legible remains of <AESERN>IAM, the rest of which, together with a preceding ET, we must suppose to have been obliterated. The size of the omission, eight letters, is in no way remarkable. N omits *obstructus* at 63, 11 R and *regem vel* at 96, 17 R. The unfortunate absence of *et Aeserniam* from P may be independently due to homoeoteleuton.

If the true reading at 93, 15 R is *Sylla Nolam et Aeserniam in Samnio*¹² *recepit*, the inference may be drawn from the conjunction of their names that both towns fell in the same year. If therefore Catiline served as legate of Sulla, he most probably did so in 80 B.C.¹³

University of Kent at Canterbury

A. KEAVENEY

University of Hull

J. C. G. STRACHAN

¹² It may also be noted that it is not unknown for the epitomator to specify the geographical location of *coloniae* (like Aesernia) in Italy. Thus in *Ep.* 15 we have *Ariminum in Piceno* and, in *Ep.* 19, *in agro Sallentino Brundisium*.

¹³ The authors are grateful to Professor D. C. Earl for advice and assistance on a number of points.