

Politics of Gratitude: A Note on Cic. *Phil.* 7.23

Federico Santangelo

Newcastle University, UK

Abstract This note discusses Cicero's reference to the contribution of Firmum and the Marrucini to the early stages of the mobilisation against Mark Antony in 43 BCE, and sets them in the context of Cicero's previous connections with those communities.

Keywords Cicero. Mark Antony. Firmum. Marrucini. Tarutius. Roman Italy. Civil wars.



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D.M. Mario Torelli

An cum municipiis pax erit, quorum tanta studia cognoscuntur in decretis faciendis, militibus dandis, pecuniis pollicendis, ut in singulis oppidis curiam populi Romani non desideretis? laudandi sunt ex huius ordinis sententia Firmani, qui principes pecuniae pollicendae fuerunt; respondendum honorifice est Marrucinis, qui ignominia notandos censuerunt eos si qui militiam supterfugissent. haec iam tota Italia fient. magna pax Antonio cum eis, his item cum illo. quae potest esse maior discordia? in discordia autem pax ciuilis esse nullo pacto potest. (Phil. 7.23)

Or will there be peace with the municipalities, who show such zeal in passing decrees, providing soldiers and promising subsidies that in no single town you miss the Roman People's Senate-House? The people of Firmum, who were the first to promise subsidies, should be commended by a resolution of this House; the Marrucini, who decreed that any dodgers of military service should be publicly disgraced, deserve an honorific acknowledgement. Such things are now about to happen throughout Italy. A fine peace Marcus Antonius will have with them and they with him. What strife can be sharper? Yet peace in the community cannot possibly exist amid strife. (Text and translation from Manuwald 2007)

This is a passage of considerable significance to the study of late Republican political culture.¹ It sheds light upon the tension between centre and periphery through a creative use of the concept of *pax*;² it deploys a reference to *tota Italia* in a piece of pointed political polemic;³ and it identifies *discordia* as a concept of major political relevance. These three themes are framed around the specific exemplary cases of two Italian communities that in Cicero's view had conducted themselves admirably in the early stages of the mobilisation against Mark Antony. Cicero, who is here addressing the Senate in mid- or late January 43 BCE and is putting forward a staunch case for war, focuses on two key instances: the pledge of a sum of money by the people of Firmum, and the decision of the Marrucini to punish with *ignominia* anyone refusing to serve in the troops that were to be enlisted locally.⁴

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1 Cf. the useful factual overview in Manuwald 2007, 892-3.

2 *Pax* is a leading concept in *Phil.* 7, where one can find 24 of the 118 occurrences of the word in the whole series: Cornwell 2017, 68.

3 Cf. also *Phil.* 3.32 and 6.18 (*cuncta Italia*).

4 Cicero is here applying to a municipal context a concept that was central to the running of the Roman censorship. On *ignominia* as a form of degradation and public humil-

It is not immediately clear what might have led Cicero to focus on these two specific instances in a busy picture of military and political mobilisation that will have provided plenty of suitable material for cursory and emphatic discussion. The emphasis on the Firmani is especially striking: it is not apparent what made them *principes* in pledging money to the cause. If they were indeed the first ones to respond to the appeal, as Manuwald and other translators have interpreted this passage, the question arises of what may have led them to act so promptly, and how they were alerted to the impending emergency;⁵ if they were those who made the highest pledge, one wonders what prompted such a keen interest and where the resources were drawn from.

Cicero's choice to single Firmum out for mention and for solemn recognition through a senatorial decree may also be explained with what is known of his previous connections with the town. In a letter written late in 56 (probably in November) he cursorily mentions to Atticus a number of matters of common interest, and then starts discussing a certain Fabius Luscus, who is not cited anywhere else in Cicero's oeuvre, and was ostensibly mentioned in Atticus' earlier letter.⁶ Cicero praises his character and his intelligence, and refers to him as a good acquaintance, but then notes that he had failed to come to visit him during his latest stay in Rome. Cicero claims to have learned this rather disappointing fact from a mutual acquaintance, who is also mentioned on this one occasion: a man called Gavius from Firmum (*ex Gauio hoc Firmano*). He then goes on to note that the matter really ought not retain his interest any further, but that Fabius had supplied him much reliable information in the past: notably, *de Firmanis fratribus*. The identity of these brothers is elusive, and surely bound to remain so. It might be a coded reference to people who have no connection with Firmum whatsoever: Constans and Shackleton-Bailey tentatively suggested that they might be identified with Crassus and Pompey, the consuls-elect, but there is no compelling evidence for that.⁷ We should at least be open to the possibility

iation that was one of the key prerogatives of the censors cf. Bur 2018, 152-7 (529: "étymologiquement la privation du bon nom"). On the importance of decentralised conscription in the run-up to the Mutina campaign and on the interplay between coercion and consent see Cadiou 2018, 245-6.

5 Cf. the translations by C. Yonge ("who set the first example of promising money"), P. Willeumier ("qui ont pris l'initiative de promettre des subsides") and G. Bellardi ("che sono stati i primi a promettere aiuti in denaro"); see also the paraphrases in Volponi 1975, 57 ("furono i primi a impegnarsi finanziariamente") and Grattarola 1990, 141 ("avevano preso l'iniziativa di promettere del denaro"). D.R. Shackleton-Bailey in LCL is somewhat less committal ("who took the lead"), and arguably best captures the ambiguity of *principes*.

6 *Att.* 4.8a.3 = SB 82. See Polverini 1987, 36-7.

7 Constans 1935, 123 fn. 1; Shackleton-Bailey 1965, 190.

that Fabius Luscus, like Gavius, was also from Firmum, and that for reasons no longer accessible to us Cicero took an interest in the predicament of two brothers from the town, on whom Luscus was able to give him accurate information.⁸ But even this scenario is highly speculative. It is sufficiently apparent, on the other hand, that the predicament and actions of the ‘brothers’ were far from straightforward to establish and interpret for Cicero, and that what he especially valued about Fabius’ advice on the matter was its decisiveness (*non dubia*).

Cicero had at least another acquaintance from Firmum: L. Tarutius, *familiaris noster*, whom he mentioned fondly, if critically, in the second book of *De divinatione*, which was finished less than a year before *Phil.* 7 was delivered.⁹ The sceptical persona of Marcus develops a critique of astrological lore, and Tarutius is mentioned as a foremost expert in the doctrines of the Chaldaeans (*in primis Chaldaicis rationibus eruditus*). We know nothing about his background or his politics, but he certainly did apply his astrological doctrine to highly political matters: he drew up a horoscope of Rome, taking the Parilia as the birthday of the city, which he thus placed under the sign of the Libra; on that basis (which Marcus finds entirely delusional) he went on to predict its fate (*nec eius fata canere dubitabat*). A story related by Plutarch gives further context.¹⁰ Tarutius was given the prompt for that investigation by Varro, who asked him to infer the date and hour of the birth of Romulus from the events of his life, by performing a process that was opposite and identical to the predictions of a horoscope. In the process he also established the foundation date of Rome, in the belief that the same principle applies to men and polities alike, and that the alignment of the stars on that day could reliably foretell the later history of the city. The connection and interactions with Cicero and Varro are clear enough indication that Tarutius had considerable social and intellectual standing, and that he should be added to the list of Italians that played a discernible (and in some cases highly significant) role in the Roman intellectual life of the mid-first century BCE.

Firmum was a former Latin colony, whose foundation dated back to 264 BCE, and it is not surprising to see some of its citizens establishing connections with prominent members of the senatorial order in the mid-first century BCE; by then it was one of the few known

⁸ Cf. Münzer 1909: ‘wie es scheint aus Firmum’. On the evidence for other Gavii from Firmum in the Imperial period see Polverini 1987, 58-61.

⁹ Cic. *Div.* 2.98 with Dyck 2020, 212-13. *Familiaris* does point to a close personal connection: Hellegouarc’h 1963, 68-9.

¹⁰ Plut. *Rom.* 12.3-6. On Tarutius see also Solin. 1.18 and Lyd. *Mens.* 1.14.

municipia in central Adriatic Italy.¹¹ The two cases recorded in Cicero's oeuvre are surely representative of a wider pattern. They must also be part of the explanation for Cicero's decision to single out the diligence of the Firmani, and indeed for their decision to play such a prominent role among the 'passionate cities' that mobilised against Antony.¹²

The dossier on the Marrucini is less rich. They were an ethnic group that was largely not organised in a municipal framework, with the notable exception of Teate.¹³ Their only other mention in Cicero's work is in the *pro Cluentio*, over two decades before *Phil.* 7 was delivered, where they are listed among the communities that have sent *homines nobilissimi, honestissimi* and *amplissimi* to Rome to support his client (197), along with the Frentani, the towns of Teanum Apulum, Luceria, and Bovianum, and 'the whole of Samnium' (*totoque ex Samnio*):¹⁴ a fleeting reference that does not point to a more established connection. It is conceivable, though, that the case enabled Cicero to form ties with that community, which might have lasted through time. His difficult relationship with C. Asinius Pollio, the most prominent political figure of the time of known Marrucine ancestry, is not a hurdle to that in principle.¹⁵ In fact, the reference to the commitment of the Marrucini against Antony might also be read as an attempt to distance them from their distinguished compatriot, by then governor in Hispania Ulterior, who was still hedging his bets, and would eventually side with Antony in the late summer or autumn of 43.¹⁶

The importance of *Phil.* 7.23 as a document of the political involvement of the Italian cities in the terminal phase of the Republic remains indisputable.¹⁷ A further level of meaning and significance may be seen at work: its wider historical relevance is intertwined with Cicero's specific concerns. The passage makes some rather fundamental

11 Bispham 2007, 407. Cf. also the passing reference to the contribution of Firmum and other colonies to the counteroffensive against Hannibal in Livy 27.10.7-9. A few years earlier, the town had of course been directly affected by the early stages of the war between Pompey and Caesar, without mounting any resistance to the latter's arrival in early February 49 BCE: Caes. *BG* 1.16.1, with Raafaub, Ramsey 2017, 189.

12 Cf. Tibiletti 1976 (= 1978, 119-34).

13 Nicolet 1991, 81-2 stresses the uniqueness of a decree that appears to have been passed by "un 'peuple italien' dans son ensemble".

14 See Bispham 2007, 410.

15 Pollio's grandfather, Herius Asinius, was *praetor Marrucinatorum* in the Social War: Livy *Per.* 73.9. See *CIL* 9.3018 = *ILS* 5761 on the connection with Teate of Pollio's grandson, C. Asinius Gallus; on the Asinii in the area see Buonocore 2019, 1268-9.

16 Cf. Pollio's letters to Cicero in *Fam.* 10.31-3, written between March and June 43 BCE, and App. *BC* 3.74.304. Valuable discussion and bibliography in A. Drummond, *FRHist* 1.431-2.

17 Gabba 1986, 661 (= 1994, 130).

points, but its argument is corroborated by examples that are steeped in the local politics of Central Italy and speak to the granular detail of Cicero's political connections in that context: to the pragmatics of how he established his ties across Italy, and how he chose to advertise and nurture them.

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