Cicero and 'Sampsiceramus'
A Factor in the Formation of the First Triumvirate

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The fall of the Roman Republic is an historical problem at least as important as the fall of the Roman Empire. It was, after all, the tumultuous revolution of the first century B.C. which finally destroyed enough of the old order in Rome to allow one man, the Emperor Augustus, to replace republicanism with Empire. The fall of the Republic is also, one may argue, the more interesting problem if only because of the great personalities involved. These include, beside Augustus himself, Marius, Sulla, Caesar, Pompey, Crassus, Cato, Cicero, Brutus, Antony, and Cleopatra. This historical question, both important and interesting, is one which has many focal points. But among all the events of the Roman Revolution, the modern historian may rightly emphasize that affair chosen by the ancients themselves as the most decisive: the formation of the so-called 'First Triumvirate' by Julius Caesar, Marcus Crassus, and Pompey the Great in 60 B.C.[1]

The triumvirate was essentially a private agreement between these men which allowed them to lay aside their usual animosities and to work together. Each of the three had made legitimate requests for political action in the Roman Senate, but each had been rebuffed by conservative opposition led by the implacable Cato. Crassus had wanted the Senate to revise the tax contracts for the province of Asia in order to satisfy the needs of his political supporters. Pompey the Great, the renowned conqueror of the Eastern Mediterranean, had been trying since his return to Rome in late 62 B.C. to have the Senate ratify his political settlement of the East and to provide land for his discharged veterans. Caesar had wanted to celebrate his recent victories in Spain with a state ceremony, a triumph, and to stand for election to the consulship. None of these politicians was powerful enough as an individual to overcome the opposition to his proposals. So it was that Caesar, the junior member at this point, convinced Pompey and Crassus to join ranks with him and to pool their political resources in order to surmount the obstructions of Cato and the conservatives. It was in

1. Among the ancients who emphasized the pact now called the 'First Triumvirate' were Cicero, *ad Att.* 2.1.6-10; Cato, according to Plutarch, *Caesar* 13, and *Pompeius* 47, *cf. Crassus* 14.1-3 and *Cato Minor* 31; the historian Asinius Pollio, according to Horace, *Carm.* 2.1.1; Livy, *Periochae* 103; Florus 2.13.8-11; Lucan, *Pharsalia* 1.84-86; Velleius 2.44.1-2; Varro, according to Appian, *BC* 2.9; Dio 37.54-58; Suetonius, *Iulius* 19; and Zonares 10.16. Modern opinion, as exemplified by Sir Ronald Syme, *The Roman Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), pp. 8-9 and 35-36, often echoes that of the ancients. All dates, unless otherwise noted, are B.C. References are abbreviated according to the standards set by L'année Philologique.

this way that three of the most powerful men of Rome were able to dominate the state, to impose their will on the Senate, and so to begin the revolution that would make of the ruined Republic an Empire.

Scholars, of course, have never ceased to ponder this turning point in history. Caesar's political position has long been a focus of attention, and recently the question of Crassus' role has received renewed emphasis.[2] But what of Pompey's position? He was unquestionably the most powerful and prestigious member of the triumvirate, the man most surprising for his failure to get what he had wanted from the Senate. Surely his role in this political union is the most problematical given his pre-eminent stature as the military hero of the Mithridatic wars in the East. Yet, no historian has shown how the Senate was able to obstruct his *acta,* his political settlement of the East, for some three years. This was the reason for his frustration in 60 B.C. which led to his participation in the 'First Triumvirate'.

This paper will explore part of that problem by suggesting new evidence for the political tactics used by Pompey's enemies to block ratification of the *acta.* Most scholars agree that Pompey's opponents, particularly Cato and Pompey's predecessor in the east, Lucullus, had managed to block ratification for several years by challenging and quibbling over various details in the *acta.* No historian, however, has tried to identify any of the specific objections. Certainly there were many, since the debates lasted from late 62 to the middle of 59 B.C. when Caesar, as consul, paid off Pompey by forcing the *acta* through the Senate. The purpose of the following arguments is to suggest that one such objection can be identified in Cicero's allusions to Pompey as "ille Sampsiceramus".

In four of his letters to his friend Atticus written between the crucial months of April and October, 59 B.C., Cicero uses the name 'Sampsiceramus' when referring to Pompey the Great.[3] These allusions have never been given the close attention they deserve, a surprising fact since the vast correspondence of Cicero has often been investigated for such clues. The major commentators, for their part, have confined themselves to the simplest identifications of the historical person Sampsiceramus. D. R. Shackleton-Baily, for example, mentions only that Sampsiceramus was "actually ruler of Hemesa in Syria, probably confirmed as such by Pompey."[4] This does not explain why Cicero used that name for

2. The standard work on Caesar's position is still M. Gelzer, *Caesar; Politician and Statesman,* 6th ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969), although article literature too voluminous to list has added a number of interpretations. For recent appraisals of Crassus' role see B. A. Marshall, *Crassus: A Political Biography* (Amsterdam; Hakkert, 1976) and A. Ward, *Marcus Crassus and the late Roman Republic* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1977) One should also consider, in conjunction with these, E. S. Gruen's "M. Licinius Crassus: A Review Article", *American Journal of Ancient History* 2 (1977). 117-128.

3. *ad Att.* 2.14 (April 20-28), 16 (early May), 17 (early May), and 23 (before October 18).

4. *Cicero's Letters to Atticus,* 7 vols. (Cambridge; CUP, 1965-1970), I.379. This commentator passes over the seven subsequent references to the Emesene Sampsiceramus in

Pompey at all, much less why only during the troubled months of 59. Apparently the allusion meant nothing in particular and has no relevance political or otherwise, surely a dangerous presumption for any Ciceronian scholar.

The approach of commentators How and Clark offers no improvement.[5] Half of their remarks, which concern descendants of the third century A.D., are utterly superfluous; the remainder is equally uninformative. To whatever extent Pompey was the "conqueror" of Sampsiceramus, a matter deserving much further consideration, it fails to account for Cicero's particular use of the name here. Nor, one might add, does this criticism apply only to Ciceronian commentators. Even in a book *devoted* to Cicero's references to Pompey in order "to trace the attitudes toward Pompey found in Cicero's *Correspondence*", V. L. Holliday concludes only this: " 'Sampsiceramus' was one of the many nicknames applied to Pompey by Cicero"[6].

Those, on the other hand, who have bothered to suggest some meaning behind these illusions have all taken the same position: Cicero simply found the name amusing, and so twitted Pompey with it. Jules Ooteghem, for instance, writes in his biography of Pompey that "il (Sampsiceramus) devint même l'ami de Pompée, si bien que, dans ses lettres à Atticus, Ciceron nomme plaisamment Pompée: ille noster Sampsiceramus".[7] Similarly, Tyrrell and Purser explain Cicero's remark as:

> One of the many nicknames for Pompey, most of which are high-sounding Oriental names coined or applied to travesty his Eastern victories . . .So we might call a general 'the Mikado' if he made too much of victories in Japan.[8]

These modern scholars find no special significance in the choice of Sampsiceramus over any other Easterner, and so render his name "Pasha" in translation.[9] Finally, the historian Richard Sullivan's explanation is the very same, though shorter: "Harmless hilarity back in Rome".[10]

silence. He does, however, note the only two other nicknames for Pompey occuring in letters of 59 ("Hierosolymarius" in *ad Att.* 2.9 and "Arabarches" in *ad Att.* 2.17), but with no better insight: see his pp. 370 and 386.

5. *Cicero. Select Letters,* 2 vols. (Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1925-1926), II.105.

6. *Pompey in Cicero's 'Correspondence' and Lucan's 'Civil War'* (Paris: Mouton, 1969), p. 9 and p. 28, n. 13.

7. *Pompée Le Grand: Batisseur d'Empire* (Brussels: Palais des Academies, 1954), p. 229.

8. *The Correspondence of M. Tullius Cicero, arranged according to Its Chronological Order,* 7 vols. (1901-1933), I.303.

9. *Ibid.* p. 308; likewise, their translation of "Arabarches" (*ad Att.* 2.23) as "Emir", p. 329. E. O. Winstedt gives the same translations throughout in the Loeb Classical Library edition.

10. "The Dynasty of Emesa", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.8 (1977): 202, n. 16. Sullivan simply follows Staehelin in *RE* I A, 2 (1920) 2227 (s.v. Sampsiceramus) without further reflection.

These few statements represent all that scholarly methodology has so far contributed to the problem of these six allusions. The results are quite unsatisfactory. Even if one believed that Cicero were simply making a joke at the expense of Pompey's pride, this does not explain why 'Sampsiceramus' was chosen for the purpose. Nor does it explain why this particular jest arose only between May and October, 59. Cicero certainly mocked Pompey on other occasions, so if 'Sampsiceramus' were so popular a high-sounding Oriental catchphrase, why does it not appear elsewhere in Cicero or other authors? This is suspicious since other short-lived nicknames used by Cicero are more easily understandable: they came and went with the political times. These were, obviously, topical references, names like "dynastus" and "traductor ad plebem", which reflected current events. That "Sampsiceramus" was also a topical allusion in 59 seems more reasonable than that it was some casual, comical remark. This possibility has never been considered.

The context of these allusions, in fact, makes it clear that Cicero did not have in mind "harmless hilarity back in Rome". There is no humor in his remark (*ad Att.* 2.14.1):

> There is nothing now which I think we should fear more than that our 'Sampsiceramus' may begin to rush headlong when he realizes that he is abused by everyone's talk and sees these measures overthrown.

Likewise, in letter 2.16 Cicero is asking "Sampsiceramus" how he will defend his quasi-constitutional actions, and the reply anticipated by Cicero is that Pompey will use unconstitutional military force. Next, Cicero writes to inform Atticus that: (*ad Att.* 2.17.1):

> I am wholly of the same opinion as you that 'Sampsiceramus' is up to trouble. There is nothing which we should not fear; he is contriving a position of tyranny.

The tone of Cicero's remarks is consistent in all three of these letters, and it is far from jocular. It is, in fact, at the other extreme: Cicero uses the name 'Sampsiceramus' when he expresses grave anxiety that Pompey might become more dangerous and resort to even more unconstitutional political methods. For any conservative Roman, and more so for Cicero, this is neither harmless nor hilarious.

Finally, Cicero returns to this nickname when he reports: (*ad Att.* 2.23.2):

> I want you to know, first of all, that our friend 'Sampsiceramus' is very sorry about his position and wants to return to the place from which he fell; he shares his disappointment with me and openly requests now and then a cure, but I can't find one.

This allusion followed by as much as five months the previous remarks on Sampsiceramus, and much had happened in the meantime.[11] Though the theme has changed somewhat and Cicero says less of Pompey running rampant, the tone remains just as serious. In fact, not a line in the entire letter is lighthearted, least of all this description of Pompey's remorse and recent better judgement. Clearly, those who look for mockery in these allusions have overlooked the context, and thereby missed the meaning.

Since "Sampsiceramus" does not appear "plaisamment" in any of the four letters, that further argument which makes it one of many Oriental names coined "to travesty his Eastern victories" cannot stand. Besides, in all of 59 this is the *only* Easterner's name applied to Pompey in Cicero's letters.[12] The misleading suggestion that Cicero was inventing or borrowing many such nicknames hides the fact that in this turbulent year Cicero chose only one which is known. There is, furthermore, no sound evidence that "Sampsiceramus" could be used to burlesque Pompey's Eastern campaigns. Pompey never fought Sampsiceramus, for Appian states that these regions submitted quietly to Roman rule.[13] There was, therefore, no known military action to boast about, and for some reason the political surrender found no place in the accounts of such affairs in Plutarch, Pliny, Diodorus, Josephus, Justin, Dio, or Appian. No such source, in fact, even mentions that Pompey had anything to do with Sampsiceramus. Although the latter must have figured in the *imperator's* settlement, extant sources did not bother to report it.

When one searches through the lists in our sources of those humbled by Pompey, one finds Mithridates, Tigranes the elder and younger, Phraates, Oroeses, Silas the Jew, Artoces, Pharnaces, Antiochus of Commagene, Antiochus of Syria, Deiotarus of Galatia, Aretas the Arab, and Hyrcanus and Aristobulus of Judaea. Led in triumph were Artaphernes, Oxathres, Darius, Xerxes, Cyrus, Olthaces, Aristobulus, and many others.[14] Pompey's pretensions lie in these lists, and a number of the Oriental names here would suffice to belittle his conquests if Cicero were so inclined. If the serious context of the letters were not enough, the attested existence of petty Eastern rulers with peculiar names

11. The very uncertain date of this letter makes it dangerous to speculate too much about it. It was dictated (Cicero apologizes that it is the first epistle to Atticus not in his own hand, and even this might encourage pseudonyms) sometime before the consular elections, which Caesar's troublesome colleague Bibulus postponed to October 18.

12. Again, see note 4 above; two other *titles* are used allusively: "Hierosolymarius" and "Arabarches". The latter is another way of saying "Sampsiceramus" in a short letter already mentioning the proper name twice; the former recalls the famous capture of Jerusalem in 63, an achievement not to be ridiculed.

13. *Mithr.* 106; no names of rulers are given. For the abiding loyalty to Rome of Sampsiceramus' son and successor, see Cicero himself, *ad Fam.* 15.1.2 (Jan., 50) and note 23 below.

14. Appian, *Mithr.* 117, which includes the inscription commemorating Pompey's victories. Likewise, see Pliny *HN* 7.26(97-98), which also gives the text of a dedication by Pompey in the shrine of Minerva.

who *were* actually paraded as Pompey's conquests justifies the search for some other reason for the mention only of "Sampsiceramus".[15]

Surely Cicero did not intend a vague reference to just any "Pasha", nor was he mocking Pompey's pride, nor aiming for harmless hilarity. The slightest regard for proper historiography compels the classicist and historian to seek something more specific in these allusions. But because scholars have failed to pose the question on the one hand, or to pursue it on the other, they have all failed to find an adequate answer. Having demonstrated this oversight, one must suggest some better insight into the problem of Cicero and "Sampsiceramus".

First and foremost, it is significant that Pompey's *acta* were very much a topical issue at just that time when Cicero called him "Sampsiceramus"; the Eastern settlement had just been ratified and rendered old business when Cicero stopped.[16] It cannot be mere coincidence that the short life-span of these allusions begins in the last quarter of April and ends some *triae nundinae* (the time required for legislation to be passed in Rome) later in mid-May.[17] In that period the long-standing debates over the details of the Eastern settlement were feverishly renewed for the last time: people were talking about these provisions, and the news reached Cicero outside the city. The ex-consul heard about the debates, about the stipulations for the *vectigal* (revenues) from Syria, and apparently about a certain Sampsiceramus.[18] No one doubts that the Emesene must have figured in Pompey's settlement; therefore, the name might have come up at precisely this time. No better explanation can account for it in these particular letters of Cicero.

The next step is to understand what was being said about Sampsiceramus, and why this made his name an appropriate synonym for Pompey in 59. For this, one must determine as far as possible who this dynast was. It has been shown that Sampsiceramus has no place in any of the accounts of Pompey's Eastern

15. Objections only increase when one includes every Oriental prince whether named as a conquest or not in the sources. Pompey will have included many peculiar persons in his Eastern settlement and often had summoned these rulers while campaigning: Plut. *Pomp.* 38.2; Dio 37.7a, and Josephus *Ant. Jud.* 15.34. Besides Sampsiceramus, the devious Azizus is known from Diodorus 40.1a,b. The installation of an Arab dynast named Tarcondimotus is also attested, see J. Leach, *Pompey the Great* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), p. 90. Some argue on the basis of Strabo 16. 2.10 that Sampsiceramus was not a petty prince, but a significant if silent power in Syria, and that he shared his crown with his son Iamblichus. Cicero knew that curious name also: *ad Fam.* 15.1.2. If Cicero had so wide a choice, why then "Sampsiceramus"?

16. For the ratification of the *acta* by a law of Caesar, see Plutarch *Pomp.* 48.3; *Cato Min.* 31.1; Dio 38.7.5; Suetonius *Iulius* 19.2; Velleius 2.44.2; Appian *BC* 2.9; Caes. *B. Alex.* 68; and, by inference, Cic. *ad Att.* 2.16.2. For the date, consult Lily Ross Taylor, "On the Chronology of Caesar's First Consulship" *AJP* 72 (1951): 264.

17. The apparent exception of letter 23 both in date and context has been noted above. On the *triae nundinae,* see A. Lintott, "Nundinae and the chronology of the Late Roman Republic", *CQ* (1968): 189-194.

18. Cicero shows that in these discussions the new revenues involved in the *acta* were linked with the expenditures for the proposed Campanian law, *ad Att.* 2.16. Cicero's letters once again provide invaluable information on the political talk of the times.

arrangements, so that his part was probably passed over in the official version written by Theophanes.[19] Either the Arab's role was considered insignificant or else it was deliberately suppressed. The former reason does not explain the talk in Rome or Cicero's use of the name when expressing grave doubts about Pompey; the latter might offer some tantalizing suggestions, but itself needs explanation.

Besides Cicero, the only extant sources for Sampsiceramus are Strabo and Diodorus. Strabo simply reports that Arethusa was among the cities governed by Sampsiceramus and his son Iamblichus, adding that Sampsiceramus governed it with ability.[20] Therefore, the extent of his dominion alone begins to destroy the notion that Sampsiceramus was a petty prince easily ignored by the sources, except as an aside from Cicero. This much Sullivan concedes, but without suspicion.[21] This scholar further reiterates numismatic evidence which indicates that Arethusa adopted a "Pompeian" era dated 64/3; thus, in Pompey's local settlement, Arethusa was liberated from the Seleucid Empire and left subject to the Emesene.[22] So far it seems that this was a local ruler of some stature whose submission to Pompey somehow left no trace in the sources, was presumably uncontested, and was of tangible advantage to himself. This profitable relationship with Rome survived Sampsiceramus and endeared his son to many, including even Cicero.[23]

The testimony of Diodorus 2.1a-b is far more conclusive, for it shows the real range of Sampsiceramus' influence in the East:

> 1a. Certain of the Antiochenes, emboldened against King Antiochus as a result of his defeat, stirred up the populace and proposed that he be banished from the city. There was a great uprising, but when the king prevailed, the ringleaders of the sedition fled in alarm from Syria; gathering in Cilicia they proposed to restore Philip, son of the Philip whose father was Antiochus Trypus. Philip proved receptive

19. On Theophanes of Mytilene, an historian in the service of Pompey during the Eastern campaigns, see *FGH* II B, 919.

20. Strabo 16. 2.10-11.

21. Sullivan, pp. 203-204.

22. Sullivan, pp. 201-202 and especially note 13.

23. *ad Fam.* 15.1.2. This great loyalty of the son to Rome suggests, at least, that the dynasty was firmly and favorably bound by Pompey's Eastern arrangement. In addition, Strabo 16.2.10 intimates that under Emesene leadership, Arethusa declared for the Pompeian Bassus in 46. This might mean a second generation commitment to Pompey as patron, especially since the *imperator* apparently rewarded Sampsiceramus with that city in his settlement. This evidence does not prove, however, that Sampsiceramus was alive in 46 and sharing his throne with Iamblichus. That argument by Sullivan, p. 202, would help the case presented here, but ignores the fact that Cicero *ad. Fam* 15.1 mentions only Iamblichus in 50, and Josephus *Ant. Jud.* 14.129 and *B. Jud.* I. 188 does likewise for Spring, 47. Just because Arethusa, "the city of Sampsiceramus and Iamblichus", supported Bassus does not mean both ruled there in 46; the city was simply still associated with the formidable ruler confirmed there by Pompey.

to the proposal and arranged a meeting with Azizus the Arab, who gave him a ready welcome, set a diadem on his head, and restored him to the kingship.

1b. Pinning all his hopes on the alliance with Sampsiceramus, he sent for him to come with his army. He, however, having made a secret agreement with Azizus to do away with the kings, came with his army and summoned Antiochus to his presence. When the king, knowing nothing of this, complied, Sampsiceramus acted the part of a friend but placed him under arrest, and though for the time being he merely held him closely guarded in chains, he later had him put to death. So too, in accordance with the agreement to divide up the kingdom of Syria, Azizus intended to assassinate Philip, but Philip got wind of the plot and fled to Antioch. [Translation from the Loeb Classical Library. All other translations are the author's.]

This is important information outlining Sampsiceramus' role in Eastern dynastic politics. He and his army were powerful enough to constitute a Seleucid monarch's only hope against a rival; that power actually enabled Sampsiceramus to hold Antiochus captive, and even to kill the king in a plot to seize half of Syria. A man of such intrigue and such ambition should certainly demand the attention of the sources for Pompey's settlement; silence, again, cannot be attributed to the insignificance of Sampsiceramus, and suggests that something has been suppressed. The problem is to determine what role Pompey played in these struggles, since he aggrandized in his *acta* the very Arab who plotted against and killed the last Seleucid king, a monarch who met Pompey personally and was denied the throne in order that Pompey might annex Syria. These unsettling circumstances (whatever the truth behind them) might indeed explain the talk in Rome and Cicero's allusions when expressing serious doubts about Pompey. A brief review of the events in the East from 69 to 64 will bring these suspicions into sharper focus.[24]

In 69 the great general in the East was not Gnaeus Pompey, but Lucius Lucullus. After five years of hard-fought campaigning against Mithridates, Lucullus carried the war against his adversary's son-in-law, Tigranes of Armenia. This move brought Rome into the vexed political struggles of Seleucid Syria, for Tigranes had ruled this region as king since 83. Prior to the invasion of Armenia, Lucullus had dispatched his brother-in-law Publius Clodius Pulcher to Antioch demanding that Tigranes surrender his father-in-law Mithridates. The conniving Clodius failed in this, but did manage to persuade a number of Arab dynasts to support the Roman cause.[25]

24. The best account of these activities is still Alfred Bellinger's "The End of the Seleucids", *Transactions of the Connecticut Academy of Arts and Sciences* 38 (June, 1949): 54-86. Besides the basic books and biographies, Sullivan's article already cited and Glanville Downey's *Ancient Antioch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), pp. 69-72 provide helpful summaries.

25. *FGH* 3B.360 (Memon F 46): Plut. *Luc.* 21: Plutarch names Zarbienus of distant Gordyene as one of the princes won over by Clodius. Later it is reported (*Luc.* 29) that

These un-named sheiks were, like Tigranes and others, the beneficiaries of the Seleucid decline. After a century of civil war in Syria, the Seleucid monarchy had exhausted itself; nearly two dozen kings, often three at a time, had fought each other for the throne since 162. As a result, the empire had disintegrated; the east was permanently lost; many Syrian cities gained their independence; the Hasmoneans, Idumaens, and Nabatean Arabs rose to prominence in the south; in the north Tigranes shared sovereignty with such Arab dynasts as Azizus and Sampsiceramus, along with various unchecked pirate bands. And in addition there were still Seleucids claiming to be the legitimate kings of Syria. Antiochus XIII, for example, had been in Rome with other claimants from 75 to 73 seeking the senate's recognition as rulers of Egypt; Cicero, for one, asserts that their sovereignty over Syria was indisputable.[26] At the time of Lucullus' Armenian Campaign this Antiochus XIII ("Asiaticus") was biding time in Asia Minor, awaiting a chance to claim his kingdom. It was, characteristically, the actions of Roman commanders operating in the area which first allowed Antiochus to gain his throne, and last of all to lose it.

When Lucullus captured Tigranocerta in 69 he forthwith recognized Antiochus XIII as king of Syria.[27] But barely had the one attained his kingdom and the other his conquests before the careers of both suffered reverses. Sometime in 68 an insurrection in Antioch was raised against the Seleucid. This challenge was at first overcome, but the revolutionaries fled to Cilicia where they raised up Philip II Barypous as a rival king. Philip sought support from an Arab dynast named Azizus while Antiochus responded by resting all his hopes upon the support of Sampsiceramus. Thus resumed the Seleucid civil wars, each claimant depending now upon the arms of powerful Arab sheiks. The role of these dynasts, however, was to loom far larger in the settlement of Eastern affairs than either Seleucid had anticipated.

Diodorus next relates that this Sampsiceramus plotted with Azizus to remove both Seleucid contenders in order to seize and divide Syria among themselves. In this venture Sampsiceramus fulfilled his part – he summoned Antiochus and held him prisoner for some time before finally murdering him. It was

Zarbienus' secret alliance with Rome was uncovered before the Armenian invasion, resulting in the execution of Zarbienus and his household. He was lavishly honoured by Lucullus after the battle at Tigranocerta, and his plight illustrates the earnest struggle for allies between Rome and her enemies. Whether or not Sampsiceramus figured as one of those dynasts courted by Clodius can only be speculated. Later events suggest that he was, and Plutarch emphasizes that the Arabs were especially displeased by Tigranes'strong control.

26. *In Verrem* 4.27. Of Antiochus specifically Cicero reports: "is cum amicus et socius populi Romani esset" ("He is like a friend and ally of the Roman people.")

27. Justin 40.2.2. It is uncertain to what extent Lucullus was acting upon the Senate's earlier "recognition" of Antiochus as king (note 26 above), but his approval of the Seleucid probably did reflect the senate's general position on the matter. The more this is true, and it is undoubtedly Cicero's expressed opinion, the more such persons might attack Pompey's later dismissal of Antiochus' petition to reign. This is political powder that Lucullus would surely light in the debates over the *acta* in 59.

Azizus who failed to assassinate Philip, allowing this Seleucid to flee to Antioch and to reign in the absence of Antiochus. Thus did Sampsiceramus dramatically enter upon the stage of eastern dynastic politics and thus did Antiochus XIII make an unhappy exit. No one can deny the direct connection between these events of 69, nor again when this scene repeated itself five years later.

Meanwhile, however, Lucullus' fortunes had also turned. By the winter of 68/7 efforts were well under way both at Rome and in the east to remove Lucullus from command. The same Clodius who had earlier bargained for the support of local dynasts at Antioch was now fomenting rebellion among Lucullus' troops at Nisibis. The Roman army would march no further. At the same time, Pompey's tribunes Cornelius and Gabinius were elected for 67 and ready to propose that the Senate give to Pompey a powerful military command against the pirates of the eastern Mediterranean. This position directly infringed upon Lucullus' sphere of operations, his *provincia* (province), and brought Pompey into play in Eastern politics, particularly in just those areas of Cilicia where the Seleucid contenders had staged their "coups". The tribune Gabinius also introduced a bill removing Bithynia and Pontus from Lucullus' command and, in fact, transferring the Mithridatic war to another general, Manius Acilius Glabrio. Similarly, the province of Cilicia was alotted to Marcius Rex, the consul of 68, who was another brother-in-law of the crafty Clodius.

Pompey's part in these political/military maneuvers can be variously interpretted, but clearly his interests were being well served at the expense of Lucullus. Historians have often wondered whether Pompey or his agents employed Clodius to undermine Lucullus' command.[28] The evidence is too tenuous to prove collusion, but the possibility might be kept in mind. It is enough to remember that both Pompey and Clodius were operating in the east, whether independently or together, to the detriment of Lucullus' career.

After Clodius had stirred the mutiny at Nisibis, he fled to his other relative, Marcius Rex, in Cilicia; Lucullus, his command crippled, appealed to Rex for aid, but was summarily refused. Clodius was then given command of a fleet by Rex, but soon was captured by pirates. His release, states Dio, was due directly to the pirates' fear of Pompey.[29] Whether or not Pompey personally interceded in Clodius' behalf is unknown. Meanwhile, Rex travelled to Antioch and demanded funds from Philip II for the prosecution of the pirate war. This was to be the closest this Seleucid would come to Roman recognition during his one- or two-year reign. It was, indeed, soon after Rex departed that Clodius, newly freed, arrived again in Antioch. The situation, as in most cases where

28. See, for example, Leach, p. 65. The evidence is from Plut. *Luc.* 34 where Clodius uses Pompey's treatment of *his* troops as an example to convince the twentieth legion that Lucullus is an unfit commander. Then, Pompey later reinstated these troops (Dio 36.17) even though they had been discharged by Rome.

29. Dio 36.17.

Clodius is concerned, remains unclear. Dio 36.17 relates that Clodius offered to assist Philip against "the Arabs". The only Arab known to be in a position threatening Philip is Sampsiceramus, since the rival Antiochus was still his prisoner. But Clodius' promises would be of a dubious nature even if they were known, since the last time he had been in Antioch he had suborned the dynasts he presumably was helping Philip fight.

It is only clear that Philip gained nothing. The Seleucid disappeared altogether and Clodius nearly lost his life in the riots which he caused. It is curious how Clodius' insurrection left a power vacuum in Antioch which can be filled by the name of but one man – Sampsiceramus.

The suggestion here is that in the aftermath of the riots only Sampsiceramus was in a position to act from strength. He held a trump card, Antiochus XIII, and apparently chose this time to play it. Since this Seleucid was reigning when Pompey himself arrived in 64, Sampsiceramus must have released him sometime the previous year.[30] Unless Antiochus were completely in the Arab's power, his release is inconceivable. That he was now a puppet of sorts might explain the danger felt by Philip II in the final days of his reign. The possibility that Antiochus really escaped might lessen Sampsiceramus' role as a maker of Seleucid kings at this point, but creates even greater suspicion later when Sampsiceramus must "recapture" and kill Antiochus while Pompey is effecting his settlement. Throughout the shuffle of Seleucids, accompanied by the intrusions of Clodius, Sampsiceramus' power always emerged undiminished.

The scene is now set for the arrival of Pompey the Great. Already he had relieved the embittered Lucullus of command and, in the words of Plutarch, endeavored to undo all of Lucullus' *acta*.[31] Pompey and his legates met the kings and dynasts of Syria on several occasions; the general was well aware of the political situation and quite prepared to deal with it. His aim would have been stability in the East lest another Tigranes advance to the Mediterranean. To this end Pompey must support stronger rulers and supplant weaker ones. One might anticipate, then, Pompey's treatment of the Seleucid Antiochus and the Arab Sampsiceramus in his emerging settlement.

Antiochus XIII, the sometime king of Syria, sought to secure his ancestral throne from Pompey. The Roman refused the request. Pompey knew too well that the Seleucid house was incapable of defending Syria. There could be no stability in the East unless Syria were annexed by Rome, and so it was in 64. No doubt there was an international outcry against the unseating of the last Seleucid, a sentiment reflected in some of the later sources.[32] Romans, too, may have

30. This is the most acceptable understanding of the sources, as shown by Bellinger, p. 84.

31. Plut. *Pomp.* 31.

32. Appian *Syr.* 49, for example. The revenues from Syria would of course have been welcomed by many, and Cicero says that these were at issue in 59 (note 18 above). But though many, especially the *equites* already alienated by Lucullus, would thus favor annexation, the *optimates* of the Lucullan faction would have carried much senatorial support, *cf.* Dio 37.50.1; Plut. *Pomp.* 4-6.3, *Cato* 31.1, *Luc.*42.6.

objected. Cicero had earlier accepted Antiochus' right to rule Syria. The king had labored for years in Rome to win the senate's favor and surely gained other supporters; indeed, Lucullus and his partisans must have felt further insult since they had first recognized Antiochus' right in 69. But however unpopular with Pompey's opponents, the decision was practical beyond all protests. Thus, just as Antiochus gained his throne in the settlement of Lucullus, he lost it in the settlement of Pompey.

Finally, Sampsiceramus must have been involved in Pompey's Eastern arrangements. After all, this dynast's ability to manipulate Antiochus was the telling argument for denying the Seleucid's ability and right to be king. All that has just been outlined above underscores what has been argued all along. That is, Sampsiceramus was "a big fish in a small pond". In a region partitioned among local dynasts, this Arab was the most ambitious and daring. In spite of gaps in our evidence, Sampsiceramus has been seen to play a decisive role in Seleucid politics – he removed the king confirmed by Lucullus and, when Pompey refused to recognize the same king, it was Sampsiceramus who removed the Seleucid permanently. Adding the intrusions of Clodius, it seems possible that Sampsiceramus played a role in Roman politics as well. Given the political struggle between Pompey and Lucullus, Sampsiceramus' actions would align him squarely with the interests of Pompey. For present purposes, the real importance is not to show that Sampsiceramus was a Pompeian agent, but that Pompey's enemies could perceive his as such. After all, Pompey was not displeased that Sampsiceramus had eliminated Antiochus XIII, for the Arab's position was immediately secured and strengthened as a result of the *Imperator's acta.*

It is precisely these *acta* which bind the historical Sampsiceramus to Cicero's allusions in his letters. Now it is possible to understand what was being said about Sampsiceramus such that Cicero used the name for Pompey when expressing grave fears about him. Cicero was a close friend of Lucullus and sympathetic to Lucullus' fierce campaign against Pompey's settlement of the East. When this sensitive issue was being debated for the final time between late April and mid-May, 59, Cicero was well-informed of the arguments for and against ratification. The name of Sampsiceramus obviously was raised and reflected in Cicero's correspondence as a synonym for Pompey the dangerous *"dynastus".* Here is a significant insight into the accusations and attacks directed by the Lucullan faction against Pompey's *acta.*

Lucullus, his agents, and indeed all enemies of Pompey's settlement would have assaulted the most vulnerable elements of these *acta.* Just such a blemish was the dismissal of the reigning Seleucid king, Antiochus XIII, even though the monarch had much support in the senate, and more importantly, had the recognition of Lucullus himself. This attack against an act of personal imperialism on Pompey's part would be a powerful political weapon. Symbolic of Pompey's very Eastern policy was this ambitious and unbridled dynast named Sampsicer-

amus, an arguable agent of Pompey who rid the Roman general of all Seleucid sympathizers by murdering the cashiered king. For this favor, as the Lucullans would have it, the insolent Arab was duly rewarded in the final settlement of Syria. This was the political powder of 59 when Cicero saw in Pompey the excesses of Sampsiceramus. Add to this the scheming of Clodius, a Lucullan enemy and at times another possible agent of Pompey, and the entire Eastern affair can be understood among the rumors and fears of early 59. Given the joint menace felt by Cicero in this period due to the threats of Clodius and the reluctance of Pompey to intercede, it is little wonder that Cicero was especially responsive to reckless rumors about what that pair had done in Syria. The allusions are, then, as complex and crushing as one might expect from Cicero. The orator is neither joking nor just meaning to say "Pasha", Cicero *means* Sampsiceramus for reasons great and grave.

This investigation has suggested a new interpretation of a problem long overlooked by scholars. There is no sure way yet to prove what Cicero meant when he alluded to Pompey as "Sampsiceramus"; yet, there is reason now to suspect that the Roman writer was making a strong political statement relevant to the issues of early 59. That is the content of his letters, and the context of his fertile phrase "ille Sampsiceramus". Those insights offered here are at best a valuable indication of the political gossip of an important age, and at least an alternative to the oversight of modern scholars. Here, at last, may be reflected the political problems which Pompey faced in Rome. Such attacks aimed at his controversial Eastern settlement had forced Pompey the Great to join ranks with Crassus and Caesar. Their pact, the so-called "First Triumvirate", would be a turning point in history. It has been appropriate, therefore, for the historian to turn back to that point. To do less is to miss the meaning of Cicero's 'Sampsiceramus': Quamquam nihil est iam, quod magis timendum nobis putem (Cicero, *ad Att.* 2.14 - 'There is nothing now which I think we should fear more. . . .').