

Milo and Clodius Script Notes

Clodius was from a rather uncustomary elite family – e.g., his sister Clodia did not conform to norms and was quite powerful in her own right. Some of her biography is recorded (with extreme bias) by Catullus and her brief affair with the poet.

The picture we have of him is that he had a bad temper, was very ambitious, and loved to cause a stir. For example, the Bona Dea scandal in 62 BC in which he apparently dressed up as a woman to attend the women's only event at Caesar's official residence (due to Caesar's role as pontifex maximus). It is due to this scandal that Caesar claims he divorced his wife.

Clodius also started a mutiny in 68 BC after making speeches in Lucullus's (his brother-in-law) army. We also have a good quote from Cicero about Clodius (see p. 214 of Christian Meier's biography of Caesar).

Clodius championed the cause of the plebs, so in his 30s, he got a 20 year old man to "adopt" him into his plebeian family in 59 BC. Pompey played augur in the ceremony, although he opposed the radical move.

By the mid-50s, Clodius was the hero of the mob, ruling the streets. He used violence to agitate and push the opposition.

Clodius became tribune in 58 BC and exiled Cicero (he was supported by Caesar, apparently).

Milo was tribune in 57 BC and recalled Cicero from exile (supported by Pompey). Caesar, still powerful agreed to this only when it was stipulated that Cicero would behave himself.

Thus, Milo was an ally of Cicero. He tried to convict Clodius, but Clodius was immune to prosecution as aedile in 56 BC.

By the mid-50s, Pompey had lost the support of the people because he waffled too much on critical issues. Consequently, he was virtually powerless against Clodius, and violence became horribly worse.