

## Rumors of War in Cicero's *De Imperio Cn. Pompei* and *Pro Rege Deiotaro*

In his speeches *De Imperio Cn. Pompei* and *Pro Rege Deiotaro*, Cicero labels the movement of certain information to and within Asia Minor as *rumor*. This paper will demonstrate that the rhetorical construction of such military and political intelligence as *rumor* does not address its accuracy but only its mode of travel. The significance of rumor for Cicero lies in its consequences.

Rome's failure to subdue Mithridates after two decades of conflict birthed the proposal in 66 BC to grant a special command to Pompey. Cicero, speaking at a *contio* in support of the proposal, emphasizes the deleterious impact of insecurity on Rome's revenues (Jehne 2013). He asserts that a single rumor of danger can ruin a year's tax collection [15]. When Cicero reviews the recent defeat at Zela, he comments on the totality of the disaster by claiming that a rumor, not a messenger, reported the news to Lucullus, the commanding general [25]. By contrast, Roman interests will be protected by a mere rumor of Pompey's appointment [46]. Cicero positions his audience to accept the validity of all three rumors (Conde 2012), but to notice the power of rumor, not its potential for falsehood.

Twenty-one years later Cicero stood before Pompey's rival and conqueror, Julius Caesar, to defend King Deiotarus of Galatia (Gottoff 2002). Although Caesar had forgiven Deiotarus his support for Pompey at Pharsalus, the king was accused by a disaffected relative of plotting an assassination attempt against the dictator long before the Ides of March. Cicero quickly addresses the larger political context, working to excuse Deiotarus' choice of sides in the Roman civil war (Nótári 2012). Rumors about the Republic's panicked response to the Rubicon led Deiotarus astray [11]. The truth about Caesar's efforts at reconciliation, Cicero concludes, never arrived in Asia Minor. More rumors, now about Caesar's difficulties in Africa, might have tempted the king

to some rash words [25]. In this instance, Deiotarus, according to his accusers, had agents on the coast collecting such rumors for immediate conveyance to the king. Although misinformation leads to missteps and inaccurate reports lead to inadequate interpretation, Cicero constructs rumor as reasonable in order to excuse the resulting response.

Every such reference, of course, is merely playing its small part in Cicero's larger aim of persuading his audience. Each appearance of *rumor* in these orations unveils not a history of intelligence gathering (Austin and Rankov 1995; Perley 2016) but the orator's construction of history. Cicero finds that rumor and its unverified status (DiFonzo *et al.* 2007) create a world which desperately needs Pompey's leadership, a world in which a foreign king can stumble into trouble through a haze of uncertain information.

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