Sicily *Verrines* passages

Q: How might Sicilians be presented by prosecution? How does Cicero present them? What associations did Sicily have for the Romans? What has been the effect of Verres' governorship on the landscape? Why does Cicero stress this?

"When I arrived in Sicily after a four years' absence, it had to my eyes the look we associate with countries that have been the seat of a cruel and protracted war. The fields and the hill-sides that I had once seen green and flourishing I now saw devastated and deserted; the countryside seemed itself to feel the loss of the men who once tilled it, and to be in mourning for its old masters. The cornlands of Herbita and Henna, of Murgentia and Assorus, of Imachara and Agyrium, were for the most part so completely abandoned that we looked in vain not only for the cattle but for the proprietors who were once so numerous: and the land round Aetna that used to be so richly cultivated, and that headquarters of corn-farming, the plain of Leontini, whose aspect formerly was such that to see it under crop removed any fears that corn would be scarce and dear—these were so wild and miserable a waste that there, in Sicily's most fertile regions, nothing reminded us of Sicily. The year before had dealt the farmers a staggering blow; this last year had ruined them altogether." (Cicero In Verr. 2.3.47)

"Sicily is the nation's storehouse, the nurse at whose breast the Roman people is fed.'" (Cic. *In Verr*. 2.2.5, quoting Cato)

"You have listened to the official witnesses from Centuripa, [114] Agyrium, Catina, Aetna, Herbita, and not a few other places, telling how the countryside is a lonely wilderness, how the farmers have fled from their farms, how the whole land has become a neglected and abandoned desert." (Cic. *In Verr.* 2.4.113-14)

"By what, then, can this be made evident? Chiefly by this fact, that the land of the province of Sicily liable to the payment of tenths is deserted through the avarice of that man. Nor does it happen only that those who have remained on their lands are now cultivating a smaller number of acres, but also very many rich men, farmers on a large scale, and skillful men, have deserted large and productive farms, and abandoned their whole allotments. That may be very easily ascertained from the public documents of the states; because according to the law of Hiero the number of cultivators is every year entered in the books by public authority before the magistrates. Read now how many cultivators of the Leontine district there were when Verres took the government. Eighty-three. And how many made returns in his third year? Thirty-two. I see that there were fifty-one cultivators so entirely got rid of that they had no successors. How many cultivators were there of the district of Mutyca, when you arrived? Let us see from the public documents. A hundred and eighty-eight. How many in your third year? A hundred and one. That one district has to regret eighty-seven cultivators, owing to that man's ill-treatment, and to that extent our republic has to regret the loss of so many heads of families, and demands them back at his hand, since they are the real revenues of the Roman people. The district of Herbita had in his first year two hundred and fifty-seven cultivators; in his third, a hundred and twenty. From this region a hundred and thirty-seven heads of families have fled like banished men. The district of Agyrium—what men lived in that land! how honourable, how wealthy they were? —had two hundred and fifty cultivators in the first year of your praetorship. What had it in the third year? Eighty,—as you have heard the Agyrian deputies read from their public documents…

[122] But now, O judges, if you neglect the fortunes of the Sicilians,—if you show no anxiety about the treatment the allies of the Roman people receive from our magistrates,—at all events undertake and defend the common cause of the Roman people. I say that the

cultivators have been driven out,—that the lands subject to tribute have been devastated and drained by Verres—that the whole province has been depopulated and tyrannised over. All these things I prove by the public documents of the cities, and by the private evidence of most unimpeachable men." (Cic. In Verr. 2.3.120-122)