

Introduction

The politics of the Late Roman Republic in the city of Rome and the dynamics of the provincial reality have been typically studied by modern scholars as two differentiated spheres or two fields considered in isolation, without establishing interrelation between them. Accordingly, while the scholars who have focused on the different Roman crises that led to the rise of the Principate have rarely paid attention to the overseas territories controlled by the Republic, the analysis of the provinces has been relegated to historiographical traditions. These two groups of scholars have rarely engaged in a fluent dialogue that could enable new approaches to the investigation of the last decades of the Roman Republic. Nevertheless, most of the leading politicians of the first century BCE held provincial governorships. The armies that invaded Italy at various points, although originally recruited in the peninsula, were trained and originated in the Empire's periphery. The different proconsuls sent overseas amassed an uncontrolled power that allowed them to act almost as autonomous sovereigns of their *provinciae* during their terms of office. The provincial populations had their own interests in supporting the factions involved in the civil wars. Pompey founded his hegemony on the basis of the connections that he established throughout the Mediterranean Sea and the wars that he fought and won for the Roman population. The civil conflict between the followers of Pompey and Caesar affected all of the Empire's territories. Yet the local struggles in the Urbs still appear to be more relevant than the Mediterranean reality to explain the end of the Republic.

Just over a decade ago, M. H. Crawford expounded on this issue in his paper entitled "States Waiting in the Wings", citing the senate's loss of control over the territories under the Republic's authority, as well as the formation of authentic proto-states by commanders such as Sertorius, Pompey and Caesar, who acted independently of the Roman government, as the main causes of the fall of the Roman Republic.¹ This provocative approach revealed the need for a new interconnected perspective that addressed the relation between Rome and the provinces to explain the structural problems endured by the Republic, which was a vast political entity whose rule, exercised from Rome, on several occasions was contested and became almost nominal. The less

1 Crawford 2008.

authority exercised by the *res publica* over its territories, the greater the importance of the provinces, as they provided resources and manpower to the distinct commanders clashing over the last decades of the first century BCE to assert their political hegemony. This series of crises ultimately led to the establishment of a new regime which, despite its autocratic nature, understood the vast geographical reality of the Roman Empire, robustly engaging with the same.

In line with this broad perspective of Republican politics, the movement of Sertorius and the exiles in the provinces of Hispania during the 70s BCE serves as a paradigmatic example of both the lack of interest in provincial realities displayed by modern scholars and the relevance of peripheral dynamics in the Late Roman Republic. Although the Sertorian War affected the entire Mediterranean Sea in various ways and was the direct consequence of the first civil war and the subsequent proscriptions, it has been largely overlooked in the historiography of the 20th and 21st centuries, often viewed as a local conflict of little relevance to Republican politics and the development of an Imperial ideology. While considering Sir Ronald Syme's *The Roman Revolution*, Momigliano referred to the problem in the early 1940s: "If we have even to contest the legitimacy of beginning a history of the Roman Revolution at 60 B. C., it is not a question of date. Sallust (Sisenna helping) had already found that the beginning coincides with Sulla's death. The decennium 80–70 determines the problems in their proper perspective (...). Sertorius's great adventure, Lepidus's putsch, Spartacus's rebellion, the pirates, the Mithridatic war give from West to East the measure of the impending difficulties. To take only Sertorius, the last ten years have produced four very remarkable interpretations, by Berve, Treves, Schur, Ehrenberg, but they have not sufficiently emphasised the decisive point of the influence of Sertorius upon Roman History. Sertorius and his Spaniards compelled the Sullan Senate to give full powers to Pompeius to destroy Sulla's constitution; and Pompeius inherited Sertorius's position as a patron of the Iberians. The victory or 'vendetta' of Sertorius was tremendous. The Iberians became a fundamental factor in the Roman Revolution."² Momigliano's point remains valid. The Sertorian War has been mainly relegated to specific, though remarkable, studies such as those by Spann, García Morá or Konrad.³ It has been reduced to a provincial conflict worthy of study by local historians and archaeologists, and deemed a peculiar adventure of a rebel *condottiero* in the boundaries of the Empire whose defeat served merely as another step in the unstoppable career of Pompey the Great. It was a war considered by all to be civil but treated as such by none.

Just as the importance of the *bellum Sertorianum* – a conflict in the 70s BCE that testified the emergence of a government in exile that clashed with the Sullan Republic to assert its hegemony over the territories of the Empire – has been systematical-

2 Momigliano 1940, 78.

3 Spann 1987; García Morá 1991; Konrad 1994.

ly disregarded in the studies on the Late Republic, evidence regarding this long war that has been found in the Iberian Peninsula has also been ignored or dismissed as material of local relevance, confined to the archaeological sites and museums where it is preserved. Thus, only a few studies, such as those of Beltrán Lloris, Stylow, Díaz Ariño and Berdowski, have extensively dealt with the *glandes inscriptae* related to the Sertorian War,⁴ inscribed bullets that were launched by slingers against the enemy on the battlefield and also reproduced the political rhetoric upon which the cause of the exiles was based.

The number of known inscribed projectiles relating to the Sertorian War totals 58 pieces, with the findings coming from different regions of the Iberian Peninsula such as Extremadura, Andalusia, central Spain, Cataluña and the Ebro Valley (see corpus in Appendix 4.2). Despite this remarkable quantity, a note of caution is required, since the troubling circumstances of the discoveries in illegal excavations – as is the case with the inventory composed by Jürgen Wahl and now preserved at the CIL centre of Alcalá de Henares – and their provenance from private collections and auctions have prevented epigraphists from making firm conclusions when studying and publishing this evidence. Beyond its origin and the inscription portrayed by each *glans*, little information may be elicited, and the illegal practices that have led to the discoveries must be condemned and denounced by modern scholars and the society as a whole. Nonetheless, the reproduction of the *Q(uintus) Sertori(us) / Proco(n)s(ul)* legend on the obverse of these *glandes inscriptae*, along with the featuring of terms such as *ius*, *pietas*, *fides*, *veritas* and *spes* and symbols such as the *fascēs*, palm branches, anchors and rudders on the reverse of the bullets, contributes to the reconstruction of the complex political discourse that Sertorius and his followers developed during the long struggle with the Sullan regime. The illicit circumstances of the findings should not prevent us from using and studying these materials, as they offer an exceptional sample of the political rhetoric reproduced by the factions involved in the civil wars of the Late Roman Republic.

These terms and emblems, a sample of the Sertorians' political aims, serve as a guiding thread across this work, as they provide an analytical framework to study the discourse of the exiles, which was based on three broad topics: the legality and legitimacy that the proconsul Q. Sertorius and his associates asserted in the 70s BCE – embodied by the *Q(uintus) Sertori(us) / Proco(n)s(ul)* legend, the *fascēs*, the use of *ius* and the composition of the senate of Osca; moral values, such as *pietas*, *fides*, *veritas* and *spes*, that the Sertorians claimed to display in contrast with their enemies; and the victorious rhetoric that the exiles implemented in the course of the war, resorting to a series of semiotics connected to the icons of the palm branch, the anchor and the rudder, to emphasize their final triumph by land and sea and the extension of their rule across the Empire's provinces.

4 Beltrán Lloris 1990; Stylow 2005; Díaz Ariño 2005; 2008, 243–248; Berdowski 2014.

In order to ensure an effective analysis of the political discourse of the Sertorians, a multidisciplinary approach should be adopted when examining the terms and symbols featured on the *glandes inscriptae*. This epigraphical evidence must be put in relation, firstly, with the literary accounts that offer reliable narratives of the *bellum Sertorianum* – Plutarch, Sallust and Appian – and, secondly, with the ancient sources that were contemporary to the civil wars of the Late Republic and reproduced the political vocabulary spread over the first century BCE – chiefly Cicero, Caesar and Sallust. On the other hand, the vocabulary and iconography will be contrasted with numismatic evidence from the Republican period, which provides a clear picture of the lexicon and symbology used in the political arena of the Roman Republic. Finally, a remarkable number of archaeological sites in the Iberian Peninsula linked to the Sertorian conflict may contextualize and assist in our understanding of the rhetoric developed by Sertorius and his followers.

The reconstruction of this political discourse should not be limited to the dynamics of the Sertorian War. It may also be related to some of the main research topics on the Late Roman Republic, thus fulfilling the objective of reintegrating the *bellum Sertorianum* into the studies of the first century BCE civil wars, by highlighting its relevance to our understanding of the period. The Sertorians created a parallel government to that of the oligarchy in the Urbs and claimed to uphold the legal foundations of the Roman Republic that had fallen under the rule of an autocratic power, which challenges the theory of the “Sulla myth” that regards the negative image of Sulla as a product of the period after Caesar’s victory or even the imperial era.⁵ The Sertorian movement also offers a case study of the use and reproduction of the moral lexicon spread over the civil wars, exemplifying how concepts such as *pietas*, *fides*, *veritas* and *spes* were used to justify military insurrections and to highlight the ethical values of the political leaders in contrast to the lack of morality of their enemies. It further reveals how these values were understood and transmitted by the followers (either Romans, Italians or provincials) of the different factions involved in the struggles of the Late Republic. Moreover, this work addresses the notion of truthfulness – *veritas* – as a new concept not yet considered in the political vocabulary of the first century BCE.

Providing an outstanding sample of the ideals and iconography of the Late Republic, the Sertorian experiment also represented an important step in the creation of an Imperial ideology and the implementation of a model of provincial administration, a precursor of the policies adopted by Pompey and Augustus to exploit the powers of the proconsul and the ethical values supposedly held by the provincial governor. As a government in exile that claimed to uphold the legal foundations and ethical principles of the *res publica*, the Sertorian polity clearly challenged the hegemony of Rome over the provinces under its rule. Both entities aimed to extend their authority throughout

5 This trend was initiated by Laffi’s article “Il mito di Silla” (1967).

the same geographical reality, i. e. the Mediterranean Sea. Therefore, this confrontation crystallized in the adoption, by both sides, of the novel notion of *imperium terra marique* to assert the Imperial rule that both Republics (that of the Sullani and that of the exiles) claimed to exercise over the Empire's territories.

Notwithstanding its civil nature, the Sertorian conflict, like the rest of the Roman civil wars of the Late Republic, severely affected the Mediterranean Sea as a whole, since the provinces subjugated to the power of Rome could not escape the outcomes of a confrontation which, although in principle involved Roman citizens, soon reached a greater scale. As a consequence, the inhabitants of the provinces who participated in the Republican civil conflicts may not be considered passive subjects forced to follow the cause of the different commanders, but rather, as individuals with their own objectives and agendas who endorsed a faction and contributed to its development with the expectation of receiving benefits. The provincials, whether *stipendiarii* or *socii*, played a fundamental but often overlooked role in the Roman Revolution.⁶ Since the Sertorian faction should be considered a multicultural entity composed of Romans, Italians and Iberians who fed the political discourse of the commander and the exiles, whenever possible, this study will address the aims of the different components of Sertorius' armies, including the analysis of the implications that the terms and symbols featuring on the *glandes inscriptae* had for both the ruling elite of the Sertorian polity and its followers. Thus, a Mediterranean perspective of the civil wars will be advanced, a broader approach that will consider the Sertorians as agents directly involved in the development of an idea of Empire.

The Sertorian War was not a bizarre adventure of a rebel *dux*, nor should it be reduced to an Iberian conflict. It was the direct consequence of the civil war that had bled out Italy in the 80s BCE, the regime established in Rome by Sulla and his associates, and the subsequent proscriptions that forced many of the Italian elite to flee to the Empire's periphery. In their need to sustain the conflict with the oligarchy that had sentenced them to death, the exiles sought the support of the inhabitants of the provinces by developing a political discourse that would address the aims of Romans, Italians and Hispani alike, establishing a government in exile that ruled over a significant proportion of territories under control of the Republic, in line with the principles of legality, morality and victory emphasized by their rhetoric. This study examines how the political movement of the exiles of the Sullan regime can no longer be considered a local conflict, but rather, the development of a complex discourse which, while spur-

6 As a matter of clarification, throughout this work, I will use the term *socii* to refer, on the one hand, to the Italian peoples allied with Rome, and, on the other, to the Iberian or Italian groups living in the provinces under Roman rule who held privileged Latin status or were bound to the Republic by *foedus* treaties. I am aware that ancient sources referred to *socii* as a generalized term for provincials, but due to the ambiguity of this usage, I have chosen to limit my use of the term in this specific manner.

ring the entire Mediterranean Sea during the 70 s BCE, established an important step in the implementation of a notion of empire shared both by the ruling Italian elites and the provincials subject to the rule of the Roman Republic.

A Note on Terminology

While this monograph examines the exiles' perspective during the 70 s BCE, shaped in part by their viewpoint, a preliminary note of caution is warranted. The term 'exiles' used throughout this work to describe Sertorius and his associates should be interpreted in its primary contemporary sense, denoting individuals who have been forcibly expelled from their territory of origin due to political and punitive motives. Given that ancient sources already refer to either Sertorius or his followers as *exul*/φυγάς or their derivatives – see, e.g., Macer's speech (Sal. *Hist.* 3.15R): *gerant* (the *nobiles*) *habeantque suo modo imperia, quaerant triumphos, Mithridatem, Sertorium et reliquias exsulum persequantur*; Flor. 2.10.22.2; Auson. *Epis.* 7.2.64–65; Dio 44.28.2; Plut. *Sert.* 1.5, 6; 22.1; 25.2 – and that a significant portion of Sertorius' followers were proscribed or persecuted and compelled to flee Italy following Sulla's victory and ensuing reprisals, 'exiles' may be applied in every respect and effectively conveys the Sertorians' situation in the 70 s. When using the term 'Sullani' as a synonym for the Roman ruling class, it does not suggest a homogeneous and unified group governing the Republic following the dictator's demise. This was clearly not the case. However, Sertorius and his adherents certainly regarded their adversaries as such, considering themselves combatants against the faction that emerged victorious in the Civil War of the 80 s. Throughout this volume, therefore, the noun 'Sullani' or the adjective 'Sullan' is used to convey the Sertorian perspective on their foes. Similarly, the existence of a 'Sullan regime' is not proposed in objective terms; Sulla's reforms of the Republic are much more intricate, and their consequences, though enduring, cannot be perceived as either a monolithic structure created anew or a specific method of state organization. Once more, the Sertorians perceived themselves to be confronting an autocratic system which, besides persecuting them across the Mediterranean, outlasted Sulla and was bequeathed and upheld by the oligarchy ruling in the Urbs during the 70 s. Therefore, from my standpoint, the 'Sullan regime' represents the most apt characterization of the Sertorian perception of the political framework established in the Roman Republic after the Civil War.⁷

7 Regarding the 'Sullani' and the post-Sullan senatorial oligarchy that governed the Republic in the 70 s see Badian 1970; Gruen 1974, 6–46; Keaveney 1984, focusing mainly on the 80 s; Santangelo 2012; 2014; Steel 2014; and the distinct contributions in S. Pittia, M. T. Schettino & G. Zecchini (2021, eds.). For the fragments of Sallust's *Historiae*, I will follow Ramsey's edition (2015). Regarding the years 77–72 BCE of the Sertorian War, which conflict in terms of chronology, throughout this work I will adopt the timeline established by Konrad (1995). Unless otherwise specified, all dates are BCE.