

## THE POLITICAL COMPETITION IN ROME DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE IV<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY B.C. THE CASE OF Q. PUBLILIUS PHILO

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**Abstract.** In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the struggle between the plebeians and the patricians gave an opportunity to many new people to involve in the public life of Rome. As a consequence of the increase in number of the political class, the competition for getting offices and military commandments became kindled. A successful political career highly depended on the number and the influence of the supporters. During the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., we can notice an influential political group gathered around a remarkable public personality of Rome, Q. Publilius Philo.

**Keywords:** Campania, Capua, Naples, Q. Publilius Philo, Rome.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., the struggle aiming at equalizing the social and political status consecrated the access of the elite members of the plebeians to the most important offices of the Roman Republic. The inmoving of the representatives of the plebeian families in the political activity and magistracies also allowed their entry in the Senate in an increasingly large number around the turn of the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C., fact that generated a greater competition between the members of the political Roman elite, for public offices and military commandments. Plebeian leaders involved in Republican Rome's political bodies did not enter the public life by applying revolutionary programs of reforms and the fundamental stake of the fighting which had opposed the patricians was the access to the Senate and to the magistracies (HOMO 1927, 39 *sqq.*; MOMMSEN 1987, 148 *sqq.*; CORNELL 1995, 242-292, 327-344; FORSYTHE 2005, 157 *sqq.*; RAAFLAUB 2005, 185-222; BRINGMANN 2009, 15 *sqq.*).

When the desiderate was achieved, the after values of the patricians were acquired by the plebeian representatives of the public Roman life. *Gloria*, *dignitas* and overall *virtus* became, on an ideological level, benchmarks and targets of the new plebeian politicians, who wanted to ennoble their families and to leave to their followers a testimony of an exemplary conduct put into the service to their homeland (CORNELL 1995, 333-344; LINTOTT 1999, 164 *sqq.*; DOSI 2002, 86; FORSYTHE 2005, 340-344; CARY & SCULLARD 2008, 89 *sqq.*; FLOWER 2010, 50-52).

On this background, the Roman political class, mostly patrician at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., varied up to the end of the century and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Patrician exclusivity manifested itself in blurred forms, while in the public life a patrician-plebeian nobility was forming, in which the groups were structured by interests rather than by origins. The men involved in making decisions record a numerical increase, and the speed-up of the competition is due to the widening of the political class (DE MARTINO 1973, 138 *sqq.*; HARRIS 1979, 29; IDEM 1990, 504-505; CORNELL 1995, 333-344, 369-373; FORSYTHE 2005, 269-276; DEVELIN 2005, 301-308; CARY & SCULLARD 2008, 89 *sqq.*). The new context made the public debates gain particular amplitude and, for imposing an opinion, the individual could not act with real chances to succeed without the support of a large and influential group (*cf.* DOSI 2002, 3-20, BRINGMANN 2009, 53-54).

The political alliances were certainly an important factor, with a major impact on the work of the Roman institutions, in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Unfortunately, the reconstruction of these groups still remains problematic due to the poor literary tradition. Livy described the major stages of the plebeian struggle for gaining access to the political life, but he does not give us a wider view on the relations between the influential men involved in this process. For the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., *Ab urbe condita* offers us more or less true details about the military campaigns conducted by the Romans in Italy, but establishing the links between the magistrates who led those remains a task for the modern scholars. In general, Livy's political view on the last phase of the Roman expansion in the Italic peninsula is a compact one, attributing to the Roman aristocracy, in its entirety, the responsibility for decisions regarding the foreign policy.

Almost a century ago, Fr. Münzer applied the prosopographic method to decipher the relations from behind the public aspects of the political life in Rome. Although equipped with an admirable detailing technique, the German scholar started with the thought that the great families, which were seen as an indissoluble unit of the urban framework, held a great importance in the political life. The premise is risky and often misled Fr. Münzer in shaping groups which acted only because of a converged clanship or because of some marriage ties which connected the families (MÜNZER 1999, 37 *sqq.*; *cf.* also DOSI 2002, 28 *sqq.*, BRINGMANN 2009, 53-54).

During the period under focus, the great traditional family did not benefit of the ancestral cohesion and the various branches preserved only on a mental level and only for prestige the idea of common core with deep roots in the history of Rome. Moreover, this seems to be just the case of the famous patrician families, who fed their prestige from their ancestors' accomplishments. For the plebeians from the Senate, such a glorious tradition of the clan is hard to find because they strikingly entered the public life after the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Under these circumstances, the new politicians manifested themselves as individuals without being acknowledged in the eyes of the citizens by any tradition of some notorious families (MITCHELL 1990, 131-134; the family in the time of Roman Republic: HÖLKESKAMP 2004, 113-136, BOHÎLTEA MIHUȚ FLORICA 2010, 137 *sqq.*).

The method through which we are the most likely to get a coherent picture of the political groups in Rome during the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was shown, in our opinion, by F. Càssola. In his work dedicated to the alliances of the Roman political life, his first step was to identify the characters involved in the major events; his second step consisted in clustering these exponential figures, along with the ones that, according to the texts, appear to be their supporters or to share their interests (CÀSSOLA 1969, 12 *sqq.*; cf. DEVELIN 2005, 301 *sqq.*).

The figure of Q. Publilius Philo appears quite frequently in Rome's internal evolution and foreign affairs, after 340 B.C. According to the written tradition, Philo was the first plebeian who ascended to praetorship, in 336 B.C. (LIVY 8.15.9; BROUGHTON 1951, 139). He was also dictator in 339 B.C. (LIVY 8.12.12-17; BROUGHTON 1951, 137), consul in 327 B.C. (LIVY 8.22.8-8.23.10; BROUGHTON 1951, 145), 320 B.C. (LIVY 9.7.15; DIODORUS 18.44.1; *Fasti Consulares*, year 320 B.C.; BROUGHTON 1951, 152) and 315 B.C. (LIVY 9.12.9-9.15.2; *Fasti Consulares*, year 315 B.C.; BROUGHTON 1951, 156). After his consulship from 327 B.C., he managed to get the first prorogation of magistracy in the history of Rome, being authorized to maintain his military commandment at Naples, as proconsul. (LIVY 8.23.10-12; *Fasti Triumphales*, year 326 B.C.; BROUGHTON 1951, 146).

The association of Philo with certain economic interests or social categories became a well-known problem, to which many modern scholars have dedicated their time and efforts, but without obtaining certain results. Q. Publilius Philo was elected consul in 327 B.C., when the events from Naples risked to lead Rome in war with the Samnite Federation (LIVY 8.22.8-8.23.10). His election in the supreme office for that year does not seem to be only a consequence of a favorable acceptance of his nomination by the people, but, in connection with the future events, indicates Philo as "an expert in Campanian problems" (BELOCH 1926, 478-479; CÀSSOLA 1969, 124; DE MARTINO 1973, 1). The following year, Philo's consular mandate was extended (LIVY 8.23.10-12; BROUGHTON 1951, 146).

The crisis from Naples, in 327 B.C., is marked by the involvement of Q. Publilius Philo. The reasons that made him a supporter of the Roman intervention at Naples can be identified only hypothetically. Taking into account the uncertain information from the literary tradition, the connection between him and the social categories with commercial interests must be cautiously established (*cf.* STAVELEY 1959, 410 *sqq.*; CÀSSOLA 1969, 123-124).

Throughout the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., we can find in Rome the development of some new productive sectors which were distinct from the traditional agrarian occupations. The fields still remain the primary source of living, but, at the same time, we can not overlook the existence of some people that earned their income through commerce or craftsmanship. Excavations carried within the Roman archaeological level dating close to that period indicate, on the basis of the pottery, the existence of some economical links with the Campanian region, the Greek cities from the South of Italy, and with even more remote areas, such as Sicily, Sardinia, the Northern African coast or Liguria (CORNELL 1989, 410 *sqq.*; IDEM 1995, 385-390)<sup>1</sup>.

Probably, the crisis of 327 B.C. that occurred between the political factions of Naples, and the invitation to interfere, made by the Greek aristocracy to Rome, were positively received by the Roman artisans and traders due to their economic implications. Naples was an important center of production and its geographical position made it one of the most significant harbors on the Western coast of Italy. Although running the risk of a conflict with the Samnite League, the intervention was voted, because they wanted to bring the Greek city within the Roman influence or, at least, to strengthen the trade links between Rome and Naples (MOMMSEN 1987, 213; STAVELEY 1959, 410-433; DE SANCTIS 1960, 282; CÀSSOLA 1969, 123-124; CORNELL 1989, 415)<sup>2</sup>. Besides these advantages, we should take into account the fact that, if the Samnites overtook the city, the existing trade relations would have been compromised, as well as Rome's control over the Campanian region.

The proconsular mandate of Q. Publilius Philo from the year 326 B.C. brings into question his personal connections with the people involved in the public life of Naples (BELOCH 1926, 478-479; CÀSSOLA 1969, 124; BAYER 1972, 335). Dionysius of Halicarnassus indicates the existence of some "underground" negotiations between the Roman ambassadors and several important figures of the city, from the previous year, when Philo was consul and operated in the Campanian area (DIONYSIUS 15.5.1; FREDERIKSEN 1984, 208 *sqq.*; OAKLEY 1998, 641-642; FORSYTHE 2005, 293-294; NEDU 2008, 23-28). In Rome, the negotiations conducted under the protection of Publilius Philo were apparently received as signs of a pro-Roman attitude manifested by the leaders of Naples. Therefore, his commandment was extended for another year (LIVY 8.23.11-12) and probably because of his insistence, after the Greeks expelled the Samnite garrison in 326 B.C., Naples received a *foedus aequum* which secured the autonomy of the city (LIVY 8.26.6-7; MOMMSEN 1987, 213; DE SANCTIS 1960, 285-286; HOMO 1925, 240; ADCOCK 1928, 595; HOFFMANN 1934, 36-37; THIEL 1954, 33-34; PIGANOL 1967, 188; CÀSSOLA 1969, 124; HEURGON 1973, 204; CLEMENTE 1990, 23).

For the years 327-326 B.C., the enterprises of Q. Publilius Philo suggest his strong interest for the Campanian region. The information offered by the literary sources is scarce, but probably his focusing towards the South is older and we can connect Philo with some other events that took place beyond the boundaries of Latium. In 343 B.C., the Romans decided to interfere in Campania, hence starting the First Samnite War (LIVY 7.29.1-7.32.2). In 341 B.C.,

<sup>1</sup> It seems that in 312 B.C. the censor App. Claudius Caecus also considered the mobile property for the repartition of citizens in *comitia centuria*; this may be a strong argument for the above mentioned reconstruction (see CÀSSOLA 1969, 97, 135); DE MARTINO 1973, 8-11: the silver coins, the second Roman-Carthaginian treaty, the refined manufactured production show the transition of Rome to a mercantile economy.

<sup>2</sup> According to the analysis of CORNELL 1995, 394, the first series of Roman-Campanian coins was issued in Naples, due to the good relations established in 326 B.C., between the Greek community and Rome; see also FORSYTHE 2005, 336-340.

Rome renewed its alliance with the Samnite League and the conditions of the treaty recognized Rome's protectorate upon the Campanian area (LIVY 8.2.1-4). In 334 B.C., the Romans founded the Latin colony from Cales, in a region controlled by the Samnites (LIVY 8.16.13-14; VELLEIUS PATERCULUS 1.14.3), and two years later, in 332 B.C., the Campanian town of Acerrae was granted *civitas sine suffragio* (LIVY 8.17.11-12; VELLEIUS PATERCULUS 1.14.4). The involvement of Q. Publilius Philo in these events can be only hypothetically assumed, but an interesting fact is that several figures of his suite also seem to be related to the political and military actions carried by the Romans in Campania or in the Valley of the Liris river.

His third consulship was once again exercised at the command of the legions in Campania, in 315 B.C. (LIVY 9.12.9-9.15.2; BROUGHTON 1951, 156). The year that followed was fatal for his career. Details of his disappearance from public life do not appear very clearly from Livy's account, but it seems that his influence in politics faded because of his involvement in the Campanian matters. Taking advantage of the Roman defeat in the battle of Lautulae, Capua revolted in 315 B.C., but the evolution of the Roman-Samnite War did not allow it to separate from Rome (DIDORUS 19.76.3; LIVY 9.25.3, 9.26.5-7). Roman legions triumphed the next year, at Tarracina, event that made Capua the subject of the Roman repression, due to its unfaithful attitude (LIVY 9.26.5-7; DIDORUS 9.76.3-5). The dictator C. Maenius investigated the attempt of secession and his harsh behaviour determined the leaders of the revolt, brothers Ovius and Novius Calavius, to commit suicide (LIVY 9.26.5-7). After suppressing the rebellion from Capua, the investigations continued in Rome, targeting those who devised to win honors and offices in the state (LIVY 9.26.8-9). Although Livy's account is vague and does not identify the precise objectives of the plotters, it seems to indicate that some politicians were charged for having connections with the Campanian nobility. Q. Publilius Philo was among them and probably sought clemency from the senators for the aristocracy of Capua. His insistence did not give the expected results. Instead, it led to the political discrediting of Philo and his fall into obscurity after 314 B.C. (BELOCH 1926, 479; STAVELEY 1959, 427-429; SORDI 1960, 62-63; SALMON 1967, 204; CASSOLA 1969, 125-126; CORNELL 1989, 394; DEVELIN 2005, 304-305; OAKLEY 2005, 304-306)<sup>3</sup>.

Around Philo's remarkable personality, we can notice an active and powerful group that supported him, but also took advantage of his influence for achieving their objectives. Hypothetically speaking, E. Staveley and F. Càssola identified several people who worked with Publilius Philo or at least supported his interests: L. Papirius Cursor, Sp. Postumius Albinus, T. Veturius Calvinus, L. Aemilius Mamercinus, C. Plautius Venox, A. Cornelius Cossus and M. Valerius Corvus (STAVELEY 1959, 426 *sqq.*; SORDI 1960, 62-63; SALMON 1967, 205; CASSOLA 1969, 127-128; FORSYTHE 2005, 269-270, 321-322)<sup>4</sup>. L. Papirius Cursor, the first in our list, was praetor in 332 B.C., when Philo held the censorship, and favored the vote that imposed to the community from Acerrae the *civitas sine suffragio* (LIVY 8.17.11-12; VELLEIUS PATERCULUS 1.14.4; BROUGHTON 1951, 142). Sp. Postumius Albinus was also censor in 332 B.C. (LIVY 8.17.11-12; BROUGHTON 1951, 142) and the literary tradition does not indicate any divergence between him and Philo while exercising this office or at any other time. The same person is recorded as being consul in team with T. Veturius Calvinus, in 334 B.C. This date is an important year for the history of the Roman relations with the Samnites, because the Republic settled a Latin colony at Cales, in a territory controlled by the Samnite Federation (LIVY 8.16.13-14; VELLEIUS PATERCULUS 1.14.3; BROUGHTON 1951, 140). These events allow us to place Sp. Postumius Albinus and T. Veturius Calvinus between the collaborators of Q. Publilius Philo. L. Aemilius Mamercinus and C. Plautius Venox served as consuls during 341 B.C., when Rome renewed the alliance with the Samnite League, under conditions that acknowledged the extent of its influence over Campania (LIVY 8.1.1, 8.2.1-4; BROUGHTON 1951, 134). In Mamercinus' case, the fact that he appointed Philo *magister equitum* in 335 B.C., when he was dictator, indicate a close relationship between the two persons (LIVY 8.16.12; BROUGHTON 1951, 140). The last two politicians from the series, exposed by S. Staveley and F. Càssola, A. Cornelius Cossus and M. Valerius Corvus, represented the pair of consuls from 343 B.C., when Rome started operations in the Northern part of Campania, triggering the war with the Samnite League (LIVY 7.28.10, 7.29.1-7.32.2; BROUGHTON 1951, 132). If Q. Publilius Philo intended to impose to the Roman foreign policy a Southern direction, as we have seen, we can place the consuls from 343 B.C. and 341 B.C. in the political circle of the famous plebeian character.

Viewed from a different angle, Q. Publilius Philo, as his cognomen indicates, seems to be one of those Roman nobles who, in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., displayed an attraction towards the cultural values and the behavioral patterns of the Greek world (GRUEN 1984, 251-253; CORNELL 1989, 418; IDEM 1995, 397-398; WALLACE 1990, 291; FORSYTHE 2005, 344-345). Even if this group did not have the cohesion of a party in politics, it is very likely

<sup>3</sup> BELOCH fully accepted the narration of LIVY regarding the plot from Rome; STAVELEY, followed by CASSOLA, assumed that there was not a conspiracy, but certain bonds were strengthened between Roman nobles and the Campanian aristocracy who wanted to take advantage of Rome's defeat in 315 B.C., in order to obtain the citizenship *optimo iure*; SORDI noted that the dictator C. Maenius launched accusations against the opponents of Publilius Philo, C. Sulpicius Longus, Q. Fabius Rullianus, T. Veturius Calvinus and Sp. Postumius; SALMON appreciated that after Lautulae the politicians who supported the expansion to the South lost their credibility and Q. Publilius Philo was accused by the dictator C. Maenius; according to CORNELL, the crisis of 315-314 B.C. was used by the nobles to obscure a charismatic "plebiscitary" leader as Philo.

<sup>4</sup> SORDI accepted the political partnership between Philo and Cursor, both being plebeians with strong relations in the patrician circles; amongst their adversaries, she identified C. Sulpicius Longus and Q. Fabius Rullianus, T. Veturius Calvinus and Sp. Postumius; SALMON considered that an influent patrician group, consisting of the well-known Valeria, Cornelia, Aemilia and Papiria families, formed after the middle of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C., in alliance with the plebeian leaders C. Marcius Rutilus and Q. Publilius Philo.

that they received the invitation to interfere at Naples as an opportunity to establish a protectorate over a city included in the cultural horizon they admired.

As a conclusion, though the literary tradition available to us is marked by uncertainty, Q. Publilius Philo delineates as a powerful and influential politician, ambitious and competitive, who played a noteworthy role in the Roman expansion toward Campania, during the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.

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