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Italici an Itali?

Name Used by the Italian Insurgents of the Social War (91–87 B.C.) to Call Themselves

ABSTRACT: During the Social War, certain linguistic choices must have had particular importance for the rebel Italian allies who fought against Rome. This article aims to demonstrate why the insurgents were likely to have rejected the term *Italici* and adopted the name *Itali* as their self-designation. A thorough analysis of the meanings and connotations of Greek and Latin terms used for the inhabitants of Italy clearly indicates that during the war the ethnonym *Itali* allowed the rebel Italians to radically dissociate themselves from the Romans and strengthen their own common identity.

KEYWORDS: Social War, *Italici*, *Itali*

In the first book of the *Civil Wars*, Appian of Alexandria refers to the Italian allies who rebelled against the Roman republic by the term Ἰταλιῶται, commonly used by Greek authors to designate the *Italici*.¹ However, in the passages relating to the beginning of the Social War

¹ In the article, I apply the term *Italici* or ‘Italians’ to the peoples of central and southern Italy, except the Latins, Romans (Roman citizens), Etruscans and Italian Greeks. In the period concerned, the *Italici* were formally independent communities with a status of Roman allies.

(App. *Civ.* I 38, 169 and 40, 181) he twice uses the word Ἰταλοί, whose Latin equivalent is *Itali*. Appian's use of this term may not be coincidental. According to Theodor Mommsen and Emilio Gabba, that is how the Italian insurgents actually called themselves.² The claim seems to be confirmed by the fact that Ἰταλοί also appears in the extant parts of Diodorus Siculus' *Library of History* concerning the War of the Allies (Diod. Sic. XXXVII 1, 4; 2, 1; 2, 11). Obviously, a similar term must have been used in the Sabellic languages spoken by the peoples of central and southern Italy.³

Both Mommsen and Gabba added their remark in a footnote without making it the subject of a separate analysis. Yet a thorough examination of literary and epigraphic sources allows us to substantiate the remark and identify the reasons why the term *Itali*, uncommon as a designation for the Italians of late republican times, may have been chosen by the insurgents.

We do not have historical accounts written by the rebel Italians in which they speak of their aims and refer to themselves by any name. Only some traces of an Italian perspective have survived in ancient literature. The perspective was adopted to some extent by Velleius Paterculus, Appian,⁴ and the earliest of them, Diodorus, whose account contains strong anti-Roman accents – references to the Italians' struggle against Roman domination and for freedom.⁵ These aspects are also

² Mommsen 1886: 418 n. 1; Gabba 1965: 44 n. 1: "i popoli insorti si dissero *Itali*, che Appiano traduce a I 169 e 181 con Ἰταλοί, ma con Ἰταλιῶται a 165 e a 212 (*Italici* sono detti dalle fonti latine)".

³ The Sabellic version is not attested. From the insurgent coinage we only know the Oscan word *Viteliù* (*Italia*). The Sabellic root would be *vit* (*e/o*)*lo-*, from the Italic **wet-e/o-lo-*, Poccetti 2014: 343, 345–346; see also e.g. Devoto 1967: 102.

⁴ Gabba 1973a: 347–360; Gabba 1965; Russo 2010: 178–196; Russo 2012a: 15–21. On only a partly Italian point of view in Velleius and Appian, see Mouritsen 1998: 10–22; Pobjoy 2000: 196–197.

⁵ E.g. Diod. Sic. XXXVII 1, 6: "the nations of Italy revolted against Rome's domination [ἡγεμονία]"; XXXVII 22: "The Italians, who so many times before had fought with distinction on behalf of Rome's empire [ἡγεμονία], were now risking life and limb to secure their own"; XXXVII 14: "They [the Italian commanders] shared the booty with the soldiers, so that by getting a taste of the profits of war the men who had experienced its perils would undertake the struggle for freedom with a willing heart" (transl. F.R. Walton); see also Diod. Sic. XXXVII 2, 11; Plut. *Mar.* 32, 3; App. *Civ.* I 38, 169; Mouritsen 1998: esp. 2, 4, 5–6, 9, 29, 141; Pobjoy 2000: 197.

present in Ovid's poems, echoing, occasionally, the Italians' pride and aims, as in the well-known lines:

*Paelignae dicar gloria gentis ego,
quam sua libertas ad honesta coegerat arma,
cum timuit socias anxia Roma manus.*

I shall be called the glory of the Paelignian race,
whose love of liberty compelled to honest arms,
when anxious Rome feared the allies.⁶

Henrik Mouritsen noted: "Born at Sulmo in 43 B.C., Ovid is likely to express a local tradition of the Social War as a glorious moment when the Italians had stood up to Rome and fought for their freedom".⁷

But the only sources carrying a direct message from the rebel Italians are the coins they minted along with scarce epigraphic records, such as inscribed slingshot bullets (*glandes*), mainly from Asculum in Picenum, besieged by the Romans in 90–89 B.C.⁸ Although the coinage does not provide any collective designation of the insurgents, its iconography and legends make it a highly expressive vehicle of their ideology. On more than seventy percent of the coins the names *Italia* or Oscan *Viteliù* are inscribed,⁹ referring to the Italian community and the

⁶ Ov. *Am.* III 15, 8–10, transl. Dart 2019: 37. See also Ov. *Tr.* IV 10, 3.

⁷ Mouritsen 1998: 10.

⁸ App. *Civ.* I 47, 206; I 48; Cic. *Phil.* XII 11, 27; Liv. *Per.* LXXVI; Dart 2019: 153–158. Inscriptions from Roman and Italian slingshot bullets found in Italy are collected mainly in CIL IX 6086 and Zangemeister, nos. 3–48. Other epigraphic sources, e.g.: Oscan 'eituns' inscriptions from Pompeii from the period of the Roman siege of the city in 89 B.C., *ImItal*, vol. II: 617–627, Pompei 2 – Pompei 7; fragments of two stone blocks from central Italy with Oscan inscriptions and a bas-relief, perhaps the remains of an Italian trophy with a representation of a bull trampling a she-wolf, Sironen 2006; rock inscriptions from Appennino Modenese written in an Italic language and alphabet, and very difficult to read and interpret due to the erosion of the rock, a multitude of ligatures and overwriting of the texts; some of them would be "exhortations to revolt against Rome and form an Umbrian League", Zavaroni, Sani 2009 (quotation p. 103); Oscan dedication from the area of Castel di Sangro mentioning a *kusul* who, according to Michael Crawford, would be an Italian 'consul' from the period of the Social War, *ImItal*, vol. II: 1235–1236, Aufidena 1; Cappelletti 2020: 60–61.

⁹ I.e. on 630 from 888 preserved insurgent coins with legends; my statistics based on Campana 1987, the corpus of the Italian coins from the Social War period.

new sovereign state established during the war, which proves that such naming was of crucial importance for the insurgents.

The most expressive messages on Italian sling bullets are wishes that the projectile hit the enemy and invectives or curses against him.¹⁰ Most often, however, they identify the ‘senders’, i.e. communities involved in the fighting on both sides.¹¹ On some missiles the word *Itali* appears,¹² which clearly shows that the insurgents, or at least some groups, used this term to identify themselves.

There were important semantic differences between the word *Ἰταλοί/Itali* and the other Greek and Latin terms for Italians. The choice of *Itali* instead of the more common *Italici* must have been crucial for the rebels and certainly reflected their attitudes. In the sources one may trace two parallel traditions on the aims of the allies during the Social War. The first is focused on their desire to obtain Roman citizenship, the other on their fight against Roman hegemony and for independence.¹³ According to Adrian N. Sherwin-White, ancient historians “do not distinguish between the cause of the revolt, which lay in the Roman refusal of the Italian request for the citizenship, and its purpose, which was a break-away aimed at independence”.¹⁴ The latter is clearly visible in the insurgent coinage. Even if it was primarily a propaganda tool, the very nature of the fierce and persistent fighting confirms that,

¹⁰ *Feri* (‘hit’): e.g. CIL IX 6086, 9, 27 = CIL¹² 857, 27 = Zangemeister, no. 9; *feri Pompeium*, e.g. CIL IX 6086, 9, 24 = CIL¹² 857, 24 = Zangemeister, no. 9; *em tibe / malum / malo*, e.g. CIL IX 6086, 27, 1 = CIL¹² 875, 1 = Zangemeister, no. 27 (surroundings of Ascoli Piceno).

¹¹ E.g. *Firmani*, Roman soldiers from the Latin colony of Firmum, e.g. CIL IX 6086, 6, 18–33 = CIL¹² 854, 18–33 = Zangemeister, no. 6.

¹² CIL IX 6086, 1 = CIL¹² 848 = Zangemeister, no. 3 (Corropoli – Truentum, Picenum); CIL IX 6086, 2, 2 = CIL¹² 849a, 2 = Zangemeister, no. 3a (Ascoli Piceno); CIL IX 6086, 2, 1 = CIL¹² 849a, 1 = Zangemeister, no. 3a; CIL IX 6086, 3, 1 = CIL¹² 849b, 1 = Zangemeister, no. 3b; CIL IX 6086, 3, 2 = CIL¹² 849b, 2 = Zangemeister, no. 3b (Ascoli Piceno). On some sling bullets abbreviated forms are inscribed, e.g. *Ita*: CIL IX 6086, 3, 3 = CIL¹² 849b, 3 = Zangemeister, no. 3b.

¹³ Eychenne 1990: 77–79; Mouritsen 1998: 5–22, 173–175; Pobjoy 2000; for discussion, see Dart 2019: 9–21.

¹⁴ Sherwin-White 1973: 145.

irrespective of the multiplicity of goals the Italians may have had, the Social War was undeniably an anti-Roman insurrection.¹⁵

In the aforementioned passage of *Appiano e la storia delle guerre civili*, Gabba brings up two important facts that help to understand why the rebels may have refused to call themselves *Italici* during their struggle against Rome: “il significato complessivo di *cives Romani et socii* che è racchiuso nel vocabolo *Italici* [...] in uso nel II e nel I sec. a C. specialmente in Oriente”, and the fact that “*Italici* sono detti dalle fonti latine”. But there are many more arguments supporting his view.

This article aims at demonstrating why the insurgents, in a sense, had to reject the term *Italici* and adopt the name *Itali*. An analysis of the meanings and connotations of Greek and Latin terms used for inhabitants of Italy indicates that the ethnonym *Itali*, unlike *Italici*, allowed the rebel Italians to radically dissociate themselves from the Romans and that it best served their self-identification.

Terms for Italians in Latin sources

The Romans referred to the Italian peoples by the general term *Italici*,¹⁶ but since they perceived them first of all as allies they also called them *socii Italici*, or *socii*.¹⁷ These terms were often employed in expressions derived from legal language, in which the Italian allies are named together with the Latins.¹⁸ The three terms became synonyms, with the

¹⁵ See Sherwin-White 1973: 135–149 (the author points out that the Greek historians use the same term, ἀπόστασις, for the Social War and other “rebellions aimed at independence”, p. 145); Aleksandrowicz 1978: 500–501; Eychenne 1990; Mouritsen 1998; Pobjoy 2000; Keaveney 2005; Cappelletti 2020.

¹⁶ E.g. Sall. *Iug.* 26, 1–2; Livy XXIII 15; XXIV 15; *Per.* LXXI; Vell. II 6, 2; 21, 1; see also: Ilari 1974: 3 with n. 9, 6 n. 11; Aleksandrowicz 1978: 494.

¹⁷ E.g. Sall. *Iug.* 40, 2; 58, 5; 84, 2; 95, 1; Livy XXI 17; XXII 13; XXIII 5; XXIV 47; XXV 14; XXXI 7; XXXIV 12.

¹⁸ Ilari 1974: 1–2 n. 4. These expressions are: *nomen Latinum et socii*: CIL^I 2 581 (*SC de Bacchanalibus*); *homines nominis Latini et socii Italici*: Sall. *Iug.* 40, 2; *socii nominisve Latini*: *Lex agraria* (111 B.C.), CIL I¹ 200 = CIL I² 585; *socii et nomen Latinum*: Cic. *Brut.* 26, 99; *Rep.* I 31; *socii nomenque Latinum*: Cic. *Rep.* III 41; *socii ac nomen Latinum*: Sall. *Iug.* 42, 1; *socii et Latini*: Cic. *Verr.* II 5, 60; *Sest.* 13, 30;

word *socii* being the most formal and clearly conveying a decidedly Roman perspective.

Significantly, *socii* is the only term used by Cicero for the ‘Italians’.¹⁹ Cicero, who often employs legalistic expressions, refers strictly to their formal relationship with the Roman republic. Sallust uses the terms *socii* or *socii Italici*,²⁰ but also *Italici*.²¹

In Latin sources, the same three terms are applied to the allies who took up arms against Rome. In *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, a work of an unknown author dating to the 80s of the 1st century B.C. and thus nearly contemporary with the Social War, the Italians are only referred to as *socii*.²² This treatise probably quotes fragments of authentic Roman wartime speeches²³ in which this term must have dominated.

Also Cicero, when writing about *bellum Italicum*, consistently employs the word *socii*,²⁴ whereas Asconius (1st century A.D.), in his commentary on Cicero’s *Pro Cornelio de maiestate*, in the passages concerning the Social War once uses *Italici* (Asc. *Corn.* 74 C) and twice *Italici populi* (68 C), in addition to the term *socii* (67 C). In Livy’s *Periochae* the rebel Italians are called *Italici* (three times: Livy *Per.* LXXI 2; LXXII 5; LXXVI 6.), *Italici populi* (once: *Per.* LXXII 1),²⁵ *socii et Italici populi* (once: *Per.* LXXI 1) and *socii* (once: *Per.* LXXI 2). Velleius Paterculus uses only the term *Italici* (twice: Vell. II 16, 1; 21, 1), and Florus exclusively *socii* (eight times).²⁶ In Latin literature of the first half of the 1st century B.C., we also find the word *Itali*, but without any reference to the Social War. It appears in Cicero’s *De haruspicum responso* speech (*Har. resp.* 19) and in *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (IV 32) as a generic term for Italians. Sometimes, therefore, it

Balb. 8, 21; *Latini sociique*: Livy XXVII 9, 2; *socii populi ac Latini*: Cic. *Balb.* 8, 20; *Latinum nomen sociique*: Livy XXVII 9, 1.

¹⁹ E.g. Cic. *Rep.* VI 12; *Off.* II 75; see also n. 18.

²⁰ See n. 17.

²¹ Sall. *Iug.* 26, 1–2; 67, 3.

²² *Rhet. Her.* III 2; 7; IV 13 (twice); 16; 22; 37.

²³ Mouritsen 1998: 134–136; Sensal 2013.

²⁴ Cic. *Phil.* XII 11, 27; *Leg. agr.* II 90.

²⁵ But also in *Per.* LXXX 1, LXXXVI 3 and LXXXVIII 1, in the passages concerning the enfranchisement of the Italians and Sulla’s campaign against the Samnites, thus partly related to the Social War.

²⁶ Flor. *Epit.* II 5, 17, 6; 5, 17, 9 (twice); 6, 18, 2; 6, 18, 3; 6, 18, 4; 6, 18, 6; 7, 19, 1.

occurs in orations as appropriate to the elevated style and having much broader meaning than *Italici*.

Itali was primarily a literary term, used mainly in poetry²⁷ for metrical reasons,²⁸ and because of its general meaning and clear reference to ancient times. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil never once uses a word with the root *Italic-*; he refers to the ancient inhabitants of Italy exclusively as *Itali*²⁹ and always employs the adjective *Italus*, *-a*, *-um*.³⁰ These terms are very rarely applied to contemporary Italians of the late republic.³¹

In extant Latin sources on the Social War, *Itali* does not appear at all, which must imply that the Romans did not call the insurgents in that way.

Terms for Italians in Greek sources

Greek authors usually call the Italians Ἰταλιῶται (sing., Ἰταλιώτης), but in some contexts also Ἰταλικοί (sing., Ἰταλικός) or Ἰταλοί (sing., Ἰταλός). The etymologically close Greek term Ἰταλία originally denoted the southwestern extremity of the Apennine peninsula and later a larger area colonised by the Greeks and remaining under their influence.³² The word Ἰταλιῶται was initially used to describe Italian Hellenes. For instance, in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Roman Antiquities*, depicting the early history of Rome up to the beginning of the First Punic War, the term Ἰταλιῶται is applied exclusively to Italian Greeks (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* XIX 9, 1; 14, 4; XX 1, 1).³³

²⁷ E.g. Catull. *Carm.* I 5; Ov. *Fasti* IV, 64; IV, 251.

²⁸ Poccetti 2014: 323.

²⁹ E.g. Verg. *Aen.* I 109; III 440; V 82; IX 532; XII 189; 251; 582; 628; 705.

³⁰ E.g. Verg. *Aen.* I 252; VI 92; 762; VII 85; 178; 643; VIII 331; 715; XII 35. For the impact of traumatic experiences of the Social War on the vision of the struggle of the Romans and Latins against the 'rest of Italy' in the *Aeneid*, see Barchiesi 2008; Bourdin 2017.

³¹ In later times, under the Principate, both terms *Italicus* and *Italus* were used in inscriptions interchangeably to indicate the Romans of Italian origin: *natione Italus*, e.g. CIL X 1967; 3474; VI 2787a; *natione Italicus*, e.g. CIL X 1968; 8119; XVI 152.

³² Strabo *Geogr.* V, 1, 1; on the origins of the name *Italia* and the development of the Greek concept of Italy, see e.g. Lepore 1963: 92; Mele 2011: 33–43; Poccetti 2014: 329; De Sensi Sestito 2014: 53–92; Bearzot 2014: 31–32.

³³ See also Hdt. IV 15, 2; Thuc. VI 44, 3; 88, 7; 90, 2; Strabo *Geogr.* VIII 8, 1.

Probably after the Roman victory over Pyrrhus and his Italian allies, which marked a turning point in the Greeks' perception of the Romans and Italy,³⁴ the terms Ἰταλιῶται, Ἰταλικοί and Ἰταλοί began to mean the Italian peoples. An important regularity regarding the use of these terms can be seen in Strabo's *Geography*, where the word Ἰταλοί is reserved for the earliest Italians, while the *Italici* of the Roman period are usually referred to as Ἰταλιῶται.³⁵

This common term is used in the Greek accounts of the Social War, but, as mentioned above, in the texts of two authors we also find the uncommon Ἰταλοί. In the first Book of Appian's *Civil Wars*, in the chapters concerning *bellum sociale*, this term is used twice. First it appears in the following passage:

When the Italians [Ἰταλοί] learned of the murder of Drusus and of the reasons alleged for banishing the others, they considered it no longer tolerable that those who were labouring for their political advancement should suffer such outrages, and as they saw no other means of acquiring citizenship they decided to revolt from the Romans altogether, and to make war against them with might and main (App. *Civ.* I 38, 169; transl. H. White).

The second occurrence of the word is when Appian enumerates the Italian commanders:

The Italians had generals for their united forces besides those of the separate towns. The chief commanders were... [Ἰταλοῖς δ' ἦσαν μὲν στρατηγοῖ] (App. *Civ.* I 40, 181).

However, Ἰταλοί is Appian's preferred term for Italians throughout his work. In the five books of the *Civil Wars* it occurs twenty times,³⁶

³⁴ Gabba 1990: 73.

³⁵ Strabo *Geogr.* III 5, 3; IV 6, 4; IV 6, 12; V 1, 1; IX 3, 7; also, Italian insurgents are called Ἰταλιῶται: V 4, 2; V 4, 11. The term Ἰταλικοί is rare, e.g. III 4, 20.

³⁶ App. *Civ.* I 38, 169; 40, 181; 102, 474; 108, 508; II 34, 134; 49, 203; 74, 308; 74, 309; 75, 313 (twice); 77, 321 (twice); 80, 335; 80, 337; 82, 349; III 69, 283; V 27, 106; 131, 545; 137, 570; 137, 570. Appian's preferences may explain the use by Ludwik Piotrowicz of the term 'Italowie' (*Itali*) instead of the usual 'Italikowie' in the Polish translation.

while Ἰταλιῶται fourteen times,³⁷ and Ἰταλικοί only once (App. *Civ.* I 107, 501). The adjective Ἰταλός is, by contrast, less frequent (seven occurrences)³⁸ than the more common Ἰταλικός (twelve occurrences).³⁹ Ἰταλοί appears most often in the second book of the *Civil Wars* (eleven times), which relates to the period after the enfranchisement of the Italians. Hence, Appian continues to use it⁴⁰ in the general sense of ‘inhabitants of Italy’, for the Italians who were formally Romans, and sometimes for ‘those from the territory of Italy’ as opposed to ‘those from the city of Rome’ (e.g. *Civ.* V 12, 49). Indeed, the Latin term *Italicus* must still have been in common use in Italy in the 1st century B.C. and later in spite of its changed meaning. Besides, when writing about the civil wars, the historians certainly emphasised the fratricidal struggle between the ‘men of Italy’ (e.g. *Civ.* II 77, 321), while *Italia* was constantly present in the political propaganda of the period.

Also, in the other books of Appian’s *Roman History* the word Ἰταλοί is the most frequent, occurring twenty-two times in total,⁴¹ while Ἰταλιῶται six times,⁴² Ἰταλικοί three times (*Pun.* 41, 175; 43, 183; 109, 516), and the adjective Ἰταλικός six times.⁴³ The terms for Italians are basically interchangeable in Appian, and any clear rules for their use are hard to find.

Could the use of Ἰταλοί, Appian’s favourite term, actually have any special significance in the account of the Social War then? One must stress that almost all possible terms denoting Italians appear in

³⁷ App. *Civ.* I 7, 30; 19, 78; 21, 87; 22, 94; 29, 132; 34, 152; 35, 155; 36, 162; 36, 163; 37, 165; 49, 212; 96, 445; II 134, 560; V 12, 49.

³⁸ App. *Civ.* I 79, 363; II 49, 203; 70, 289; 77, 321; V 93, 389; 95, 396; 120, 497.

³⁹ App. *Civ.* I 7, 28; 9, 35; 99, 464; II 49, 203; 75, 314; 75, 315; 78, 325; III 79, 324; IV 3, 10; 75, 318; 100, 422; V 138, 575.

⁴⁰ Which is not reflected in H. White’s translation from 1899, e.g. App. *Civ.* II 77, 321: “They had pity for the valor of these men [...], especially because they saw Romans embattled against Romans”, while the original text reads: “Italians [...] against Italians” (Ἰταλοί). Also in App. *Civ.* IV 75, 318: “Italian discipline” is translated as “Roman discipline”.

⁴¹ App. *Reg.* 1, 1; *Hisp.* 28, 114; *Hann.* 59, 247; 60, 250; *Pun.* 41, 171; 41, 177; 42, 179; 45, 193; 47, 205; 58, 257; 92, 434; *Ill.* 14, 41; *Syr.* 31, 157 (twice); 31, 158; 34, 175; *Mith.* 16, 57; 22, 85; 23, 89; 23, 91; 24, 94; 28, 108.

⁴² App. *Hisp.* 14, 55; *Pun.* 8, 33; *Mith.* 41, 159; 54, 219; 62, 256; 58, 236.

⁴³ App. *Ill.* 5, 14; *Mith.* 2, 4; 87, 394; 93, 427; 23, 91; 54, 219.

this book: Ἰταλιῶται (twelve times),⁴⁴ Ἰταλικοί (once, *Civ.* I 107, 501), and Ἰταλοί (four times),⁴⁵ next to σύμμαχοι ('allies', *Civ.* I 21, 86) or σύμμαχοι ἐξ Ἰταλίας ('allies from Italy', *Civ.* I 8, 32), or more descriptive phrases.⁴⁶ Thus, the most frequent term is Ἰταλιῶται. Ἰταλοί occurs four times in total: twice when referring to the causes and beginning of the Social War (see above), and twice when referring to the Sullan War (*Civ.* I 102, 474; 108, 508). Hence, its use in only two passages of the account of the *bellum sociale* may indeed have special meaning.

On the basis of the relatively late work of Appian, and given this author's specific terminological preferences, it is not possible to make a reliable analysis of the nuances in meaning of the Greek terms denoting Italians, which were certainly perfectly sensible in the 2nd and 1st centuries B.C. But there is one interesting detail: whenever Appian speaks of Italians and Romans as two separate communities he invariably uses the expression: Ἰταλοί καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι or Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ Ἰταλοί.⁴⁷ This was probably a commonly used, phonetically good-sounding phrase, which, however, may have also reflected a semantic nuance: Ἰταλοί was better suited than Ἰταλιῶται whenever Italians needed to be named as a community distinct from the Romans.⁴⁸

In Diodorus, in the passages on the Social War, the Italians are described nine times as Ἰταλιῶται⁴⁹ and three times as Ἰταλοί. The first time Ἰταλοί appears is at the beginning of Book 37, in a sentence recalling the victory over Hannibal, which was only possible thanks to "the prowess of the Romans and Italians" (τῆς τῶν Ῥωμαίων καὶ τῆς τῶν Ἰταλῶν ἀνδραγαθίας, *Diod. Sic.* XXXVII 1, 4). The second time Ἰταλοί is used is in the context of the beginning of the war:

⁴⁴ App. *Civ.* I 7, 30; 19, 78; 21, 87; 22, 94; 29, 132; 34, 152; 35, 155; 36, 162; 36, 163; 37, 165; 49, 212; 96, 445.

⁴⁵ App. *Civ.* I 38, 169; 40, 181; 102, 474; 108, 508.

⁴⁶ 'Peoples of/in Italy' – ἔθνη τῆς Ἰταλίας: App. *Civ.* I 39, 177; ἐν Ἰταλίᾳ ἔθνη: App. *Civ.* I 13, 56; ἔθνη τὴν Ἰταλίαν: App. *Civ.* I 34, 150; 'Italian race' – Ἰταλικόν γένος: App. *Civ.* I 7, 28; 9, 35.

⁴⁷ Ἰταλοί καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι: App. *Pun.* 41, 171; *Mith.* 23, 91; Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ Ἰταλοί: App. *Syr.* 31, 158; 34, 175; *Mith.* 22, 85.

⁴⁸ See also *Diod. Sic.* XXXVII 1, 4; XXXVI 8, 1; although in XXXVII 24, 1 Diodorus uses Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ οἱ Ἰταλιῶται.

⁴⁹ *Diod. Sic.* XXXVII 2, 2; 2, 4; 2, 8; 2, 13; 2, 14; 19, 4; 19, 5; 22, 1; 24, 1.

...it was called Marsic after those who led the revolt, for certainly it was the united Italians [σύμπαντες γε Ἴταλοί] who went to war against Rome (Diod. Sic. XXXVII 2, 1).

And we last find it in a passage concerning a later phase of the war:

Since the Romans were increasingly gaining the upper hand, the Italians [Ἴταλοί] sent to King Mithridates of Pontus, [...] asking him to bring an army into Italy against the Romans (Diod. Sic. XXXVII 2, 11).

In the excerpts from the other Books of Diodorus' *Library* this term appears only four times: once to designate the Greeks of Italy (Diod. Sic. XIV 100, 3) and three times to denote Italians, twice with the general meaning, 'inhabitants of Italy', once in the expression Ῥωμαῖοι καὶ Ἴταλοί (V 36, 3; fr. of Books XXXIV–XXXV: 31, 1; XXXVI 8, 1).

Diodorus' and Appian's use of the ethnonym Ἴταλοί to describe the insurgents certainly reflects the choice of terms in some lost sources closer in time to the war, i.e. sources in which the name actually adopted by the Italians may have appeared. In the case of Diodorus this source was probably Poseidonios, a contemporary of the war.⁵⁰ It also seems to be no coincidence that in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* the word Ἴταλοί is used precisely in the context of the Social War, in a sentence concerning the definitive submission of the Italians (Plut. *Mar.* 34, 1).⁵¹

But in order to better discern the nuances and connotations of the three terms – Ἰταλιῶται, Ἰταλικοί and Ἴταλοί – we have to examine an earlier source, namely Polybius' *Histories*. In the context of the Roman reality Polybius' use of these words is the most revealing. He always applies them to Italians (never to Italian Greeks), sometimes in the sense of 'inhabitants of Italy including Romans'. The term Ἰταλιῶται appears seven times in the *Histories*. Four times it denotes Italians but excluding Romans: twice the Italians subjugated by the Romans⁵² and twice

⁵⁰ Càssola 1982: 763–764.

⁵¹ While in Plut. *Mar.* 17, 4 and 19, 4 Ἰταλικοί is used; in the *Lives* of other famous men of these times, e.g. Lucullus, Pompey, Cicero, and Cato the Younger, Ἴταλοί does not occur.

⁵² Polyb. III 2, 6: subjugation by the Romans of various peoples, including "Italians and Sicilians [Ἰταλιωτῶν καὶ Σικελιωτῶν]"; Polyb. VI 50, 6: "the subjection of Italy [of Ἰταλιωτῶν]", transl. W.R. Paton.

those opposed to the Romans by Hannibal.⁵³ In three cases, by contrast, Ἰταλιῶται designates the inhabitants of Italy in general; two of these uses evidently include the Romans.⁵⁴ The term, therefore, has a rather general meaning in Polybius and can refer to the peoples of Italy with or without the Romans. Also significant is Polybius' use of Ἰταλικοί, which appears four times in the *Histories*. In three cases this term refers to Italian allies in the ranks of the Roman army (Polyb. XIV 8, 6; 8, 8; XVIII 19, 11) and in one case to the Italians whom the Carthaginians considered to be kinsmen and friends of the Romans, and whom they slaughtered in an act of revenge directed against Rome (Polyb. XXXVI 7, 5). Ἰταλικοί, corresponding to the Latin *Italici*, is therefore applied to the Italians somehow associated or identified with the Romans⁵⁵. When using this name Polybius may have been relying on Roman sources or direct information obtained from the Romans. In contrast, the term Ἰταλοί appears only once in Polybius, when he speaks of Italians in Hannibal's army.⁵⁶ Ἰταλοί, then, is used uniquely and it unambiguously refers to the Italians hostile to the Romans.

⁵³ Polyb. III 85, 4: “[Hannibal added] as on a previous occasion, that he was not come to fight with the Italians [Ἰταλιώταις], but with the Romans for the freedom of Italy [of the Italians, Ἰταλιωτῶν]”.

⁵⁴ Polyb. II 31, 7: “Thus were destroyed these Celts during whose invasion [...] all the Italians [Ἰταλιώταις] and especially the Romans had been exposed to great and terrible peril”; Polyb. VI 52, 8–10: “though the Romans are [...] much less skilled in naval matters, they are on the whole successful at sea owing to the gallantry of their men. [...] Now not only do Italians [Ἰταλιῶται] in general naturally excel Phoenicians and Africans in bodily strength and personal courage, but by their institutions also they do much to foster a spirit of bravery in the young men”, Ἰταλιῶται refers here to the Italians and Romans; Polyb. XXXIV 10, 13: “the Italians [Ἰταλιῶται]” working “together with the natives” in a gold mine near Aquileia; whether ‘Italians’ included ‘Romans’ is not said.

⁵⁵ The adjective Ἰταλικός has a generic meaning, e.g. Polyb. I 3, 4; II 8, 2; XIV 8, 6; XV 9, 8; XVII 43, 12; XXVIII 16, 9.

⁵⁶ Polyb. XI 19, 4: “For he [Hannibal] had with him Africans, Spaniards, Ligurians, Celts, Phoenicians, Italians [Ἰταλοῦς], and Greeks, peoples who neither in their laws, customs, or language, nor in any other respect had anything naturally in common”. According to Domenico Musti, Polybius' account “si rivela come una tappa fondamentale nel processo di definizione della nozione di Italia e di Italici”; the author points out “un'ambivalenza di fondo” of these terms, and a latent “possibilità di una specificazione e di una contrapposizione tra gli abitanti dell'Italia nel suo complesso, e i Romani”, Musti 1987: 40.

It seems, therefore, that in the 2nd and early 1st century B.C., Greek authors used Ἰταλοί primarily to designate Italians excluding Romans. As Alfonso Mele remarked, “*Italo*i saranno gli Italici perché non Greci e poi perché non Romani”.⁵⁷

Why were the insurgents likely to have rejected the name *Italici*?

Certain meanings of the Latin word *Italici* must have been unacceptable for the insurgents. According to some scholars, in specific legal contexts in the 2nd century B.C. this term could refer to the Roman citizens settled in Italy.⁵⁸ Furthermore, outside the peninsula, especially in Greece, Asia, and Africa, the term *Italici* usually designated Italians and Romans together. To others they were a single community of ‘men of Italy’.⁵⁹ The Italians were treated as kin to the Romans, or as Romans, and often suffered harsh consequences, as shown by episodes from the Hannibalic, Jugurthine and Mithridatic Wars.⁶⁰ Also, the Italians and Romans residing in the provinces, especially merchants, assumed themselves such a common identity. In the inscriptions from Delos from the second half of the 2nd and early 1st century B.C., Italian and Roman *negotiatores* presented themselves in Greek as Ῥωμαῖοι or Ἰταλικοί, and in Latin always as *Italici*.⁶¹ Ἰταλοί almost never appears as a general term for ‘people from Italy including Romans’,⁶² and the Latin *Itali* is not used at all.

It is also meaningful that in the Greek inscriptions from Delos the Romans and Italians never appear in such expressions as Ῥωμαῖοι

⁵⁷ Mele 2011: 44.

⁵⁸ Harris 1972: 644; Laffi 2001: 21 n. 14, 26–27 n. 34; Mouritsen 1998: 46–49, 52.

⁵⁹ Hatzfeld 1912: 132–134; Gabba 1965: 43–44 n. 1; Pobjoy 2000: 205; Hasenohr 2007: 222–225; Poccetti 2014: 322–326; Poccetti 1984: 647.

⁶⁰ E.g. Sall. *Iug.* 26, 1–2; 67, 3; Polyb. XXXVI 7, 5; Diod. Sic. fr. of Books XXXIV–XXXV 31, 1.

⁶¹ Hatzfeld 1912: 132; Gabba 1973b: 216–218; Ilari 1974: 4 n. 9; C. Hasenohr 2007: 223; Poccetti 2014: 323–326.

⁶² I found Ἰταλοί with this meaning only in one inscription: ID 1694, not dated: Ἰταλοί καὶ Ἑλληνας.

καὶ Ἰταλοί/Ἰταλιῶται, but they are always referred to by one collective designation, initially Ῥωμαῖοι, and from the turn of the century as Ἰταλικοί/*Italici*.⁶³ It is the latter term that continued to be used at Delos during and after the Social War, thus expressing the collective identity of people from Italy better than Ῥωμαῖοι.⁶⁴

According to Gabba, it was in the eastern provinces, among the *negotiatores*, that the actual integration of the Italians and Romans took place. The contrast between how the *Italici* were treated outside Italy and their subordinate status at home gave rise to generalised discontent and was one of the causes of the Social War.⁶⁵ Italian claims of *consanguinitas*, repudiated by the Romans after they had gained control of the Mediterranean,⁶⁶ were obviously dismissed by the insurgents. There is no doubt that during the war they refused to be identified with the enemy.

But the main reason for the rejection of the term *Italici* was certainly the already mentioned fact that, in the 2nd and early 1st century B.C., the name was synonymous with ‘Italian allies of Rome’ and reflected a distinctly Roman perspective. When saying *Italici* the Romans usually meant *socii nostri*⁶⁷ – those who had to supply Rome with

⁶³ Ἀθηναῖοι καὶ Ῥωμαῖοι, e.g. ID 1643 (bef. 126/5 B.C.); 1648 (124/3 B.C.); 1652 (ca. 118/7 B.C.); 1653 (112/1 B.C.); 1657 (ca. 96/5 B.C.); Ῥωμαῖοι, e.g. ID 1724 (ca. 100 B.C.); *Italici*/Ἰταλικοί, e.g. ID 1688; 1735; 1742 (ca. 100 B.C.); 1699 (99 B.C.); *Italicei et Graecei*/Ἰταλικοί καὶ Ἑλληνες, e.g. ID 1727 (beg. 1st century B.C.); 1695; 1696 (ca. 88 B.C.).

⁶⁴ Poccetti 2014: 325; Hatzfeld 1912: 134; e.g. ID 1620: [*L. Licinium L. f.*] *Lucullum pro q[uaestore]/ p[opolus Athe]niensis et Italicei et/ Graece[i que]i in insula negotiantur* (84–80 B.C.); 1698 (ca. 82 B.C.). See also Adams 2003: 652.

⁶⁵ Gabba 1973b: 216–218, 239–245; Gabba 1990: 79. On Roman-Italian integration at Delos see also: Hasenohr 2007: 224–229.

⁶⁶ Russo 2010; Russo 2012a: 15–42; Russo 2012b: 44.

⁶⁷ See e.g. *Rhet. Her.* IV 16: *Socii nostri cum belligerare nobiscum vellent* (“Our allies, when they wished to wage war with us”); IV 13: *Quibuscum bellum gerimus, iudices, videtis: cum sociis, qui pro nobis pugnare et imperium nostrum nobiscum simul virtute et industria conservare soliti sunt* (“Men of the jury, you see against whom we are waging war – against allies who have been wont to fight in our defence, and together with us to preserve our empire by their valour and zeal”, transl. H. Caplan). These passages may have been taken from speeches delivered during trials under the *lex Varia*, brought against the Romans who allegedly incited the Italians to revolt, App. Civ. I 37, 165; see also n. 23.

troops and preserve her *maiestas*.⁶⁸ On the eve of the Social War they were often treated as subject peoples.⁶⁹ Implicit in the term *Italici* is their subordinate position in relation to Rome. As Gabba stated: “It is only in relation to the predominant partner, that is to say Rome, that they are seen as a group and thus bear this title”.⁷⁰

The *socii Italici* were not bound by a multilateral alliance. The system of *foedera* concluded by Rome did not represent any form of federation, but “an agglomeration of bilateral treaties of various form between Rome and individual Italian tribes and cities”.⁷¹ One of its goals was to divide peoples and erode former local alliances and leagues.⁷² These connotations of the term *Italici* must also have led the insurgents to reject it, as they had broken their treaties with Rome and entered into one common alliance.

As Virgilio Ilari remarked, the word *Italici* related to a particular Roman political concept of Italy developed in the 3rd century during the Punic Wars, when Rome’s political intention was to unite the peninsula under her authority. In this period the name *Italia* would have acquired a precise territorial and geographical meaning, indicating the part of the Apennine peninsula under Roman rule.⁷³ And, at the end of the 2nd century B.C., *Italia* “was still referred to as a military alliance of Roman citizens and allies”.⁷⁴ The insurgents opposed such a concept.

⁶⁸ Ilari 1974: 9 n. 19, 32–35, 51, 57.

⁶⁹ Dench 1995: 103; Sherwin-White 1973: 134–135; Gabba 1994a: 33–43; Mourit- sen 1998: 141; Bourdin 2018: 183; Cappelletti 2020: 52; see also Vell. II 15; Diod. Sic. XXXVII 13, 2 (“for Servilius [in Asculum] spoke to them not as to freemen and allies, but as to slaves, and insulted them with the greatest scorn and contempt imaginable.”).

⁷⁰ Gabba 1989: 209; see also: Gabba 1990: 44; Gabba 1994b: 19.

⁷¹ Badian 1958: 142; see also Ilari 1974: 6–7, 32–33; Ziółkowski 1994: 54; Mourit- sen 1998: 39–44; Laffi 2001: 17.

⁷² Gabba 1990: 44; Bourdin 2018: 183.

⁷³ Ilari 1974: 4 n. 9; on the Roman concept of Italy and *terra Italia*, see, e.g. Maz- zarino 1973, vol. I: 211–212, 237–239; vol. II.1: 96–102, 212–217, 230–232; Catalano 1978: 525–545; Gabba 1990: 43–44; Ziółkowski 2000: 133–135; Russo 2012b. The Roman concept of *Italia*, formed in the 3rd century, probably began to take shape earlier, mainly during the Samnite Wars, see Lepore 1963: 99–100, 102–103; Musti 1987: 38; Harris 2007; Humm 2009; Humm 2010: 56. Note that the Greek geographic-political concept of *Italia* was known and to a certain degree assimilated by non-Greek Italian populations before reaching Rome, Gabba 1994b: 17; Humm 2010: 48–53.

⁷⁴ Erdkamp 2007: 47; see also: Brunt 1965: 98.

The gradual Romanisation of Italy did not mean that the conquest was forgotten. It must have left lasting traces in Italian collective memory, and its political, social, economic and psychological consequences must long have been felt to varying degrees. Unconditional *deditiones*, totally depriving the conquered of their political sovereignty,⁷⁵ capture and enslavement of population, the take of enormous booty and coercive nature of treaties, forced incorporation of communities into the Roman state with the imposition of citizenship, displacement of population, seizure of land, and expropriation and establishment of colonies – all the instruments of subjugation of conquered peoples⁷⁶ – despite various benefits that their new status gave them over time, must have generated a deep sense of injury and strong resentment among the allies. Their mind-set must also have been radicalised by the increasingly domineering and often contemptuous attitude of the Romans. Hostility towards Rome was fuelled by drastic cases of the abuse of Latins and Italians as well as their arbitrary and harsh treatment by Roman officials, including killing for minor offences or insignificant oversights.⁷⁷ Roman contempt was also evident in some negative stereotypes of Italians.⁷⁸ Aggression and cruelty towards the Romans at the beginning and in early stages of the war⁷⁹ cannot be explained by anything else than an outburst of accumulated anger and a desire for revenge on the part of the Italians.

The insurgents certainly refused to refer to themselves by a term synonymous with *socii*. It was precisely to cease being ‘the allies’ that they were waging war against Rome.⁸⁰ Therefore, it was only natural

⁷⁵ Faszczka 2017: 22.

⁷⁶ Various aspects of the Roman conquest are analysed, e.g. in: Harris 1979; Ziółkowski 1994; Ziółkowski 2000: 88–125; Oakley 2002: 9–37; Tarpin 2016: 183–200, esp. 192–193; Faszczka 2017: esp. 9–12, 22–23.

⁷⁷ E.g. Livy XLII, 1, 6–12; Gell. *NA* X, 3, 3.

⁷⁸ Dench 1995: 97, 98–102, e.g. “ideology of Samnite barbarians” in the Roman propaganda (p. 101); on negative Roman stereotypes of Italians, see also: Giardina 1994: 42–47.

⁷⁹ E.g. App. *Civ.* I 38, 171–175; 42, 185; 42, 190; Diod. Sic. XXXVII 13, 2; 19, 4–5; 20.

⁸⁰ Laffi 2001: 42, immediately before *bellum Italicum*: “Gli alleati chiedono ormai di non essere più alleati”; App. *Civ.* I 34, 154.

for them to choose the ethnonym *Itali*, devoid of any contemporary Roman connotations.

Why *Itali*? In search of common roots and identity

According to Edward T. Salmon, the word “*Itali*, i.e. Italians [...] might suggest that all the non-Roman and non-Latin inhabitants of Italy joined the rebels”.⁸¹ Indeed, *Itali*, with its broader meaning than *Italici*, may have been used to raise the morale of the combatants, for it indicated that there was a greater number of them than there actually was. But the insurgents adopted it primarily to refer to the most ancient, pre-Roman Italic traditions, to a genuine ‘Italicity’ that the ‘romanised’ term *Italici* had lost.

The name *Itali* was strictly linked to the origins of Italy and the ethnogenesis of many Italian peoples. It was borne by one of the earliest indigenous tribes recorded by the Greeks: that inhabiting the southwestern tip of the peninsula. According to a tradition, widespread in antiquity, it was from this ethnonym or tribal name that the geonym *Italia* was formed.⁸² In Greek texts, Ἰταλοί usually refers to the ‘first Italians’ (e.g. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* II 71, 1; App. *Reg.* 1, 1). Strabo applies Ἰταλοί only to this most ancient ‘eponymic’ tribe. And it was Ἰταλοί that was felt in Greek to be a proper ethnonym, while Ἰταλικοί denoted a more generally geographic origin.⁸³ During the Social War the Italians, searching for common roots, may therefore have claimed descent from the first Ἰταλοί/*Itali*.

In the context of the issues considered in this article, what is important is not the actual etymology of the words Ἰταλοί/*Itali* and Ἰταλία/*Italia*, which remains uncertain,⁸⁴ but the ancient traditions concerning their origin, which were adopted by the Italians. A well-known Greek tradition derived the ethnonym Ἰταλοί and the geonym Ἰταλία from the

⁸¹ Salmon 1958: 162 n. 14.

⁸² Pallottino 1985: 66.

⁸³ Poccetti 2014: 322. Significantly, in modern Greek, Ἰταλός is a proper noun for ‘an Italian’ – an inhabitant or citizen of Italy, while Ἰταλικός is merely an adjective.

⁸⁴ Abundant bibliography on the etymology of *Italia* and a review of selected hypotheses are provided in: Borghi 2011.

mythical Oenotrian ruler Ἰταλός,⁸⁵ founder and king of a prosperous state, civiliser and legislator, about whom Aristotle wrote:

According to the historians one of the settlers there, a certain Italus, became king of Oenotria, and from him they took the name of Italians instead of that of Oenotrians, and the name of Italy was given to all that promontory [...]. It was this Italus then who according to tradition converted the Oenotrians from a pastoral life to one of agriculture and gave them various ordinances (Arist. *Pol.* VII 1329 b, transl. H. Rackham).⁸⁶

Strabo says that it was because of the prosperity of Ἰταλοί that the name Ἰταλία, which initially referred to Oenotria, was extended to neighbouring peoples and lands (Strabo *Geogr.* V 1, 1). Obviously, the Samnite and Sabellian peoples, who constituted the core of the insurgents, cannot be seen as direct descendants of the Oenotrian Ἰταλοί. The Sabellians were formed later as a result of the influx of successive waves of Italic migration,⁸⁷ but they belonged to the same large ethnic group of Italic peoples and were partially intermingled with the *Itali*; therefore they considered themselves their successors. This genealogy, present in the majority of Greek accounts, was regarded by the Italians as ‘ennobling’ in a similar way as the accounts of the Greek origin of many Italian peoples, created and spread by Italiot Greeks.⁸⁸

However, during the war the insurgents primarily referred to a parallel tradition, deriving the words *Itali* and *Italia* from a term meaning ‘young bull’, which is evident in the symbolism and legends of the coins they issued. Timaeus of Tauromenium (4th/3rd century B.C.) and

⁸⁵ Italus is mentioned mainly by Antiochus of Syracuse (5th century B.C.), quoted by Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* I 12, 3; I 35; Italus, as ruler of the Sikels, is mentioned by Thuc. VI 2, 4; on the most ancient peoples of southern Italy, see Pallottino 1985; Peroni 1989: 113–189 (on Italus and *Itali*: 146–150).

⁸⁶ See also De Sensi Sestito 2014: 59–60.

⁸⁷ Pallottino 1985: 53, 70, 120–127; Pareti 1997: 37; Salmon 1967: 28–39; Tagliamonte 2005: 3–13, 128–136, 221–222.

⁸⁸ E.g. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* I 11, 2; see also Humm 2010: 40–41; La Regina 2022 (I am grateful to Prof. La Regina for having sent me this article); on Spartan origin of the Samnites, see, e.g. Strabo *Geogr.* V 4, 12; Dench 1995: 53–58; Tagliamonte 2005: 23–28.

later Varro speak of the connection of the name *Italia* with an ancient Greek word *italos*, meaning ‘bull’:

Nam bos in pecuaria maxima debet esse auctoritate, praesertim in Italia, quae a bubus nomen habere sit existimata. Graecia enim antiqua, ut scribit Timaeus, tauros vocabat italos, a quorum multitudine et pulchritudine et fetu vitulorum Italiam dixerunt.

The cow should be in the highest esteem among cattle, and especially in Italy, which is supposed to have derived its name from the word for oxen. For the ancient Greeks, according to Timaeus, called bulls itali, and the name Italy was bestowed because of the number and beauty of its cattle, and the great number of calves (Varro *Rust.* II 5, 3, transl. W.D. Hooper, H.B. Ash).⁸⁹

In Varro there is a terminological confusion – the name *Italia* would be derived from oxen, bulls or calves, but his overall message is that it was connected to cattle (*boves, tauri, vituli*). Interestingly, the claim that the name was formed from an ancient Greek word may not be without foundation. In Greek there is an attested dialectal archaic word ἔτελον/ἔταλον, meaning ‘young bull’ or ‘yearling’, cognate with the Latin *vitulus* and related terms in Sabellic and some other Indo-European languages.⁹⁰

In the same passage of *De re rustica* (II 5, 3), Varro mentions another version of the etymology of *Italia*: “Others say it is so named from the fact that Hercules chased hither from Sicily a noble bull which was called *italus*”. This is an inaccurate reference to the tradition handed down by Hellanicus of Lesbos (5th century B.C.), better preserved in Dionisius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* I 35, 2). According to Hellanicus, Heracles, driving the cattle of Geryon across the Italian peninsula, searched at the southern edge of Italy and in Sicily for a calf separated from the herd. When asked about the lost animal, the indigenous people used its name in their native, non-Greek language: οὐίτουλος. Following that, Heracles was to call the entire region Οὐίτουλία/Οὐίταλία.

⁸⁹ See also Varro *Ling.* V 96.

⁹⁰ Chantraine 1970, vol. 2: 383, s.v. ἔτος; Beekes 2010: 474, s.v. ἔταλον; Poccetti 2014: 343 with n. 121; Mele 2011: 47; Wojtylak 2003.

In the opinion of Ettore Lepore, this etymology was artificially created in the time of Hellanicus, when the influence of the Italian peoples in the south of the peninsula was growing.⁹¹ Although the etymology given by Hellanicus is controversial from a purely linguistic point of view, it should not be underestimated. It was probably transmitted by Hippias of Rhegium (beginning of the 5th cent. B.C.); thus, it was earlier than Hellanicus. It may have originated from ancient local traditions and been assimilated by the Greeks,⁹² just as the myth of Heracles searching for the lost calf might have when it presumably followed a Greek *interpretatio* of a local legend.⁹³ The unique value of that tradition lies primarily in the clear indication of a word in the local, non-Greek language as the word from which the name *Italia* would have been formed. This implies its close connection with local realities linked to the huge role of pastoralism and animal husbandry. Regardless of the actual etymology, the names Ἰταλία/*Italia* and Ἰταλοῦ/*Itali* must have been associated very early with the region's distinctive robust cattle. The antiquity of the tradition is confirmed by, among other things, the myths of Heracles the shepherd, his widespread cult among the Italians⁹⁴ and frequent toponyms derived from the words 'bull' or 'ox' in southern Italy, which reflected the abundance of herds. Southern Italy may indeed have been seen as the 'land of *vituli*',⁹⁵ although for the ancients its name meant 'land of *Itali*' rather than 'land of young bulls'. But the tribal name *Itali* could have originated from the animal totem ἰταλόζ/*vitulus*, as some earlier scholars have asserted.⁹⁶

The connection between the names *Itali* and *Italia* and the word for a young bull must have been extremely strong in the collective consciousness of the Italians, as the bull became the symbol of Italy fighting against Rome shown on the insurgents' coins.⁹⁷ There is a clear mul-

⁹¹ Lepore 1963: 91–92.

⁹² For an analysis of these issues, see: Mele 2011; Poccetti 2014: 334–354; Poccetti 1988: 58–60; De Sensi Sestito 2014: 62–66; Bearzot 2014: 32–33.

⁹³ Poccetti 1988: 60; De Sensi Sestito 2014: 63, 65 n. 45.

⁹⁴ See, esp. Martin 1972.

⁹⁵ Mele 2011: 43–56; Poccetti 2014: 343–351.

⁹⁶ Nissen 1883: 61–62; Pais 1894: 34–39; Pareti 1997: 39.

⁹⁷ Campana 1987, coins' series 6 and 9, 10, 11; Briquel 1996: 108–125; Eychenne 1990; Pobjoy 2000: 201–205; Tataranni 2005. The bull is also mentioned on some Ital-

tidimensionality and multivalence of symbols here. Indeed, this animal also had a special significance for the Samnites due to its prominent role in their ethnogenesis. It was the bull that was the guide sent by Mars to the Sabines. Fulfilling the Italian ritual of *ver sacrum*, young Sabines consecrated to Mars, led by a bull, arrived in the new lands and became the progenitors of the Samnites.⁹⁸

It seems that for the ancient Italians there was no contradiction between the word *Viteliù*, associated with a young animal, and the image of a bull. The syntagm *vitluf turuf*, which appears on the Umbrian Eubugine Tablets, shows that in the Sabellic languages, unlike in Latin, it was possible to combine the words for calf and bull in a single phrase (literally ‘calf bull’), referring to a young animal destined for reproductive purposes.⁹⁹ As Paolo Poccetti convincingly argues, this means that “the overlapping terminology, both in the tradition dating back to Hellanicus and in the ideology of the Social War, is neither the result of coincidence nor an artificial construction, but rather results from a classificatory model proper to Italic culture and specifically Sabellian.”¹⁰⁰

During the war the Italians certainly did not ‘dig up’ some forgotten traditions but drew on traditions still alive among them, which were part of their heritage.¹⁰¹ Otherwise the symbolism of the coins would have been incomprehensible to the masses of insurgents. The iconography of the coinage, designed chiefly to consolidate the rebel Italians, “reveals a clear attempt at creating an identity distinct from that

ian sling bullets (*glandes*), e.g. CIL IX 6086, 29, 1 = Zangemeister, no. 29: [*T*]aurum vo[re]s malo/ Ta[m]en evomes omnem, the translation of which could read more or less like this: “Devour the bull to your doom!/ You’ll puke it all up anyway!” (my translation) or “Swallow the bull and go to hell!/ But you’ll vomit up the lot”, transl. E.H. Warmington, quoted in Bradley 2019: 183 n. 64. Zangemeister proposed such a meaning: “*Taurum vores malo tuo (vel communi), lupa, etiam si voraveris, tamen evomes omnem*” – “Devour the bull to your destruction, wolf, even if you devour it, you’ll still puke it all out!”.

⁹⁸ Strabo *Geogr.* V 4, 12; Heurgon 1957; Aigner Foresti 1995; Tagliamonte 2005: 17–21.

⁹⁹ Poccetti 2014: 345–347.

¹⁰⁰ Poccetti 2014: 346 (my translation).

¹⁰¹ Poccetti 2014: 351. See also: Letta 2008: 171–195.

of Rome”.¹⁰² *Italia*, whose name is featured on a vast proportion of the coins “rappresentò efficacemente non solo la realtà politica ma anche la comune origine degli insorti”.¹⁰³

Certainly, as Guy Bradley points out, there were important pragmatic, military reasons for the Italians to refer to shared traditions and build a common identity. They could only have stood a chance against Rome if they were united, which was not easy, as they had never before formed a single bloc. If they had to fight together it was always under Roman leadership. Italy was fragmented, former alliances and leagues were systematically dismantled by the Romans, and there were still deep internal divisions within regions and peoples during the Social War. This is why common symbols and rallying cries were so important to the insurgents.¹⁰⁴

But the Italians’ desire to build a common identity should not be reduced to the military sphere and propaganda of the time alone. Perhaps already before the war, and certainly in the course of the fighting, an authentic will to unite must have spontaneously arisen in the insurgents, with emotional aspects playing an important role, as in any war. The word ‘common’ (κοινός, κοινή, κοινόν) is repeated in historical accounts (common senate, common army, common leaders, common capital city, common safety)¹⁰⁵ and Diodorus speaks of “the united Italians” (XXXVII 2, 1). The community they were building could not only be a strictly political-military entity. By establishing a “union of Ἰταλοί”¹⁰⁶ they succeeded, to some extent and for a short time, in forging strong bonds among themselves and recreating relationships that the treaties with Rome had effectively weakened or dissolved.¹⁰⁷

In extending their rule over the Italian peoples the Romans never truly united them. From the very beginning, Roman conquest and the system of bilateral *foedera* precluded the formation of a common

¹⁰² Pobjoy 2000: 198; see also Mouritsen 1998: 69 (images and legends on the insurgent coins as “potent symbols of anti-Roman unity”).

¹⁰³ Devoto 1967: 102. See also Cappelletti 2020: 73.

¹⁰⁴ Bradley 2019: 173–176, 182–183.

¹⁰⁵ App. Civ. I 39, 177; 40, 181; Diod. Sic. XXXVII 2, 4–7; Firpo 1994: 469; Cappelletti 2020: esp. 54–55, 66.

¹⁰⁶ Cappelletti 2020: 55.

¹⁰⁷ Gabba 1990: 81.

Italian identity.¹⁰⁸ It remained forever “*identità incompiuta*”, as Andrea Giardina defined it. After the Social War and the Sulla’s civil war “Italy was united, but only in name, not in sentiment”.¹⁰⁹

It was the Italians, during the insurrection against Rome, who made the only ‘grassroots’ attempt at a more authentic unification of Italy, not based on anyone’s hegemony but appealing to common traditions and identity. For Massimo Pallottino, “a consciousness of Italian identity was now felt – strikingly, but belatedly and almost nostalgically – and proclaimed in opposition to Rome. It may well be asked how such a consciousness of opposition squares with the initial reason for the conflict, the demand made for Roman citizenship. Clearly, however, we are here dealing with a confluence of political motives and emotional impulses, which together brought about this paradoxical war...”.¹¹⁰

An alternative idea of Italy, certainly of a more Sabellian character in opposition to Roman Italy, must have been born in the minds of the Italians.¹¹¹ The term *Italia* had been appropriated by the Romans for about 200 years, but the Italians did not simply ‘borrow’ it. Reaching back to the most ancient non-Roman traditions, they gave it a deeper meaning. Their *Italia*, perhaps regarded by them as *patria* (Diod. Sic. XXXVII 2, 5), meant a community of the *Itali*, peoples recognising the first Ἰταλοί as their ancestors.

There is also a lot to suggest that, in creating a new rebel state, the Italians by no means copied the Roman model,¹¹² as the account of Diodorus might suggest at first glance, but drew on native Italian traditions of unions and leagues of peoples.¹¹³ This is evidenced by the

¹⁰⁸ Giardina 1994: 51.

¹⁰⁹ Syme 1939: 88; see also 86–87; lack of real Italian unity under Roman rule is also emphasised in Gabba 1994a: 33–37, and Gabba 1994b: 16, 17–31.

¹¹⁰ Pallottino 1991: 155, transl. M. Ryle et al.; in the original edition: Pallottino 1985: 184.

¹¹¹ According to Ilari, the name *Italia* and the iconography of the coins demonstrate that “La loro Italia [...] era un’Italia osca, *Viteliu*, e si contrapponeva non tanto a Roma, quanto all’Italia creata dai Romani a partire dalla prima guerra punica”, Ilari 1974: 10 n. 20.

¹¹² Firpo 1994; Mouritsen 1998: 198; Cappelletti 2020; Bradley 2019: 174–175; Dart 2009: 215–224; Dart 2019: 106–113.

¹¹³ Bourdin 2018; Bourdin 2019; Letta 1972: 65–79; Letta 1994; Senatore 2006.

iconography of insurgent coins and information in literary sources on the earlier forms of organisation of the Italian peoples.

Speaking of one of the most famous sling bullets from Picenum, with the name of the Italian commander *T(itus) Laf(renius) pr(aetor)* on one side and the word *Itali* on the other,¹¹⁴ Mark Pobjoy observes: “the description of his soldiers on these missiles as ‘Itali’ suggests that they were being represented (and perhaps were representing themselves) as possessing a unified identity similar to that implied by the formation of a state called ‘Italia’: in other words, that besides the new state, there was also a people, perhaps a new nation, or ‘ethnos’”.¹¹⁵ Even if we consider this statement as going too far, we have to admit that during the war, as literary, numismatic and epigraphic sources show, many Italians did in fact manifest a strong sense of community.

The insurgents, wishing to liberate themselves from the definition of ‘subject peoples’, had every reason to reject the label *Italici*, which reduced them to the role of *socii*, and take the name *Itali*, strictly associated with the origins of Italy and the ethnogenesis of its indigenous peoples. Both the Greek etymology of the names *Itali* and *Italia* from the eponym *Italus*, and the local etymology, closely linked to the myth of Heracles, represented elements of their glorious traditions. In Aristotle we read that it was the Oenotrians themselves that took the name *Ἰταλοί/Itali*, which means that the first Italians were using it as a self-designation. Behind this and other etymologies, recorded or created by the Greeks, there is probably one fact: the word *Itali* was an endonym. It may have been considered by the Italian peoples to be their proper native name. By using it, the insurgents were showing that they were not subjects of Rome but full citizens of Italy. We may presume that the name *Itali* restored to them a sense of self-worth and dignity.

¹¹⁴ CIL IX 6086, 1 = CIL¹² 848 = Zangemeister, no. 3; Lafrenius is mentioned in App. Civ. I 40,181; 47.

¹¹⁵ Pobjoy 2000: 191.

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Abbreviations

CIL – *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, Berolini 1863.

ID – *Inscriptions de Délos*, Paris 1926–1972.

ANRW – *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, Berlin–New York 1972.

ImItal – *Imagines Italicae. A Corpus of Italic Inscriptions (3 vols.)*. *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies supplement 110*, M. Crawford et al. (eds.), London 2011.

Zangemeister – C. Zangemeister, ‘Glandes plumbeae Latine inscriptae’, *Ephemeris Epigraphica* 6, Rome 1885.

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