SERTORIUS’S OVERLOOKED CORRESPONDENT?

Numismatic evidence can sometimes help to solve historical questions. One such coin may be the joint issue of C. Cassius and L. Salinator, dated by Michael Crawford to 84 B.C.\(^1\). The first of this pair was probably the cos. 73, a member of the noble plebeian family of the Cassii Longini\(^2\). I propose connecting this particular Cassius with a report in several literary sources\(^3\). These sources tell us that, at the end of the Sertorian War in the late seventies B.C., when Pompey captured Sertorius’s successor Perperna, the latter offered to show his captor letters from influential men in Rome (Plutarch’s Sertorius specifies ‘censors’) who had invited Sertorius to return home from Spain and to overthrow the Sullan regime.

A small controversy has raged concerning these reports. Was Perperna merely lying in order to save his life or is this a case of Plutarchan imprecision\(^4\)? If there was indeed an offer

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2) *Ibid.*, p. 371. See *MRR* ii. 109. Admittedly, the identification of the *monetalis* with the cos. 73 is not assured; cf., e.g., E.S. Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1974), 126, n. 21. See also the final sentence of n. 10, below.


specifying consulars, who were they? One approach is to maintain that there were no consulars who would have written to Sertorius, for the consuls of the Sullan restoration were Sullans. As Prof. Badian has cogently argued, however, many of these Sullans had simply joined what promised to be the winning side, that of Sulla. During the seventies, Sertorius also may have shown promise, at least sufficient to warrant taking out ‘insurance’ via correspondence with Sertorius.

Another approach is to accept the reports, to survey the consulars still living at the time, and attempt to trace closet populares. M. Perperna, cos. 92 and the father of the Perperna in Spain, C. Valerius Flaccus, cos. 93, D. Brutus and Mam. Lepidus, each cos. 77, and the possibly surviving M. Herennius, cos. 93, have all been surveyed, with more or less plausibility. While not denying the plausibility of Perperna’s lying or the likelihood that, among others, P. Cornelius Cethegus, a praetorius, but also a powerful political boss and former Marian, wrote to Sertorius, I suggest that the consul of 73, C. Cassius Longinus, would be an excellent choice. Admittedly, Cassius was not a consular during the early to middle seventies, the period of Sertorius’s great success, when such correspondence would appear most likely – or least unlikely. However, he had risen

6) Spann, Quintus Sertorius, 196f., n. 158, believes that M. Perperna, cos. 92 and father of the Perperna in Spain with Sertorius, and C. Valerius Flaccus, cos. 93, were the only surviving Marian consuls, with the exception of M. Herennius, cos. 93, who may have been alive during the seventies. Flaccus, however, seems to have accepted the Sullan regime: E. Badian, ‘Notes on Provincial Governors from the Social War down to Sulla’s Victory’, Studies in Greek and Roman History, 95f. (repr. from PACA 1 [1958]). Spann also follows G. V. Sumner, ‘Manius or Mamercus?’, JRS 54 (1964), 45f., in rejecting the interpretation of E. Badian, Foreign Clientelae (264–70 B.C.) (Oxford, 1958), 277, which tended to link Mam. Lepidus and D. Brutus, the consuls of 77, with the rebellion of their relatives, M. Lepidus and M. Brutus, and to see them as somewhat sympathetic to Sertorius, inasmuch as they refused to go to Spain to fight against him. We cannot be certain. Cf. on this question B. Twyman, ‘The Metelli, Pompeius, and Prosopography’, in Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt. Festschrift J. Vogt, I, 1 (Berlin/N.Y., 1972), 844f., 848f. It seems clear that there are a number of potential consular correspondents.
7) Cf. Spann, Quintus Sertorius, 197; Badian, Foreign Clientelae, 280, n. 3.
8) To my knowledge, this is an entirely new suggestion.
9) Even the end of Sertorius’s rebellion is not excluded, if one accepts the weighty arguments of W. H. Bennett, ‘The Death of Sertorius and the
Sertorius's Overlooked Correspondent?

to a consulship before 72, when Perperna apparently spoke. Under the circumstances, Perperna surely would have been entitled to call Cassius a consular, quite apart from Plutarch's customary imprecision.

What arguments favor Cassius? First, and most fundamental is the fact that the Cassii Longini had numerous ties with Marius, Cinna, and their faction(s)\(^\text{10}\), from which Sertorius had emerged\(^\text{11}\). Second, a moneyer who held office in 84 must, one thinks, have been on good terms with that faction, for it was then dominant in Rome\(^\text{12}\). Third, Cassius's own colleague in his moneyership, with whom he coined jointly, L. Salinator, was a legatus of Sertorius in 81\(^\text{13}\). Fourth, interestingly, we have no information establishing Cassius as in any way a Sullan\(^\text{14}\), i.e.,

Coin', *Historia* 10 (1961), 459-472, especially 468 f., that Sertorius was still doing well, was 'a potential winner' (468) when his erstwhile supporters struck him down.

\(^{10}\) As the stemma (which, in certain details, is not beyond question) on p. 50 of G. V. Sumner's *The Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology* (Toronto and Buffalo, 1973) indicates, L. Cassius Longinus Ravilla, colleague in the consulship with Cinna's (probable) father during 127, was grandfather of the monetalis of 84; L. Cassius Longinus, colleague of Marius during the latter's first consulship in 107, was father of the monetalis; L. Cassius Longinus, tr. pl. 89, who took action on behalf of creditors, presumably for the most part equites, a class with which Marius and Cinna were associated (Diod. 34/35. 38. 1: Marius himself a publicanus; and Ascon. p. 89 C), was brother of the monetalis. Not included on Sumner's stemma are Cassius Sabaco, a senator and a close friend of Marius early in the latter's career (Plut., *Marius* 5. 4-6); and C. Cassius, proconsular governor of Asia 89/88, who co-operated with the Marian Marius Aquilius, cos. 101, against Mithridates VI during the early eighties (*MRR* ii. 34 and n. 6 on p. 38; see also Badian, *Studies in Greek and Roman History*, 87 f. and n. 106; and T. J. Luce, 'Marius and the Mithridatic Command', *Historia* 19 [1970], 186-90). The praenomen 'Gaius' borne by a Cassius of proconsular rank points to the Cassii Longini, who used the praenomina L., c., and Q., while *MRR* ii. 543 f. lists no Cassii other than Longini of such high rank in that period (apart from this governor).


\(^{12}\) After all, the period from 87 to 84 was known (later, and somewhat unfairly) as the 'Cinnae Dominatio'.

\(^{13}\) *MRR* ii. 78 and n. 5. Gabba suggests that Salinator set out from Italy with Sertorius as quaestor (in 83): *Republican Rome. The Army and the Allies*. Trans. P. J. Cuff (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1976), 112 (Italian Ed., 1973; repr. from *Athenaeum* 32 [1954]).

\(^{14}\) Gruen, *The Last Generation of the Roman Republic*, 126: 'For only three consuls in the 70s are no Sullan connections discoverable: C. Cassius Longinus, ....'. See also *MRR* ii. 109, but this information does not estab-
as fundamentally opposed to Sertorius. In order to gain election to the consulship during 74, he must have accommodated himself to Sulla’s new status quo, but old loyalties, old (family) ties are apt to have persisted. Whether earlier in the decade or as late as 73, correspondence with Sertorius, I suggest, was the result.

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lish political allegiance. So, too, the conjecture of Twyman, *ANRW*, I, 1, 858, that Cassius had connections with Pompey in 73 is not only questionable, but, even if true, would not decisively conflict with my suggestion concerning Cassius’s earlier ties. Indeed, a shrewd and not overly loyal politician would attempt to remain on good terms with all potential powers, as I note above. Cf. J. Suolahti, *The Roman Censors. A Study on Social Structure* (Helsinki, 1963), 670 and 672, considering Cassius ‘of moderate views’ and even a possible censor of 64 or 61. W. Drumann-P. Groebe, *Geschichte Roms*, IV² (Leipzig, 1908; repr. Hildesheim, 1964), 389, call Sertorius’s correspondents ‘Optimaten’, a paradoxical designation.