Guido Bartolucci

Carlo Sigonio and the ‘Respublica Hebraeorum’: A Re-evaluation

Abstract: The study of the Respublica Hebraeorum (Hebrew polity) as a model for political thought in early modernity is increasingly recognized as significant for the history of ideas. Carlo Sigonio, who, I argue, should be considered one of the first writers in this genre, has not yet received sufficient attention for his pioneering work, and this for a number of reasons. Respublica Hebraeorum literature is generally regarded as a Protestant project, whereas Sigonio was writing in Catholic Italy. In addition, Sigonio has been revered for his meticulous antiquarian research but not for expounding ideas of any relevance to his society. No less important, Sigonio does not fit the mold that has been created, based on other scholars’ writing in the genre, so he’s been left out. This article views Sigonio’s De republica Hebraeorum against the backdrop of his other work, the context of the society in which he wrote, and the broader European context. It highlights the significance of Sigonio’s work in his own time and for the subsequent history of political thought and paints Sigonio as an innovative thinker and a pioneer of early modern political Hebraism not only for his antiquarian research but as much for the ideas he espoused.

1. Introduction

In 1582, Carlo Sigonio, a historian of Greek and Roman antiquity, published De republica Hebraeorum (The Hebrew Republic), on the institutions of the ancient state of Israel. The book was initially published in Bologna, the second city of the papal states, and was reprinted several times.

I would like to thank Aleida Paudice for her help in translating my work from Italian into English.

1 Carlo Sigonio, De republica Hebraeorum libri VII (Bononiae: apud Ioannem Rossium, 1582), (hereinafter DRH).
times, becoming the most famous work on its topic in all of early modern Europe.\textsuperscript{2} The cultural and historical context of Sigonio’s work has posed something of a problem for scholars seeking to recover its meaning and historical significance: while the study of the Hebrew polity and its employment as a model for politics was not uncommon in Calvinist countries, Sigonio was writing in a Catholic environment and dedicated his book to the pope. Furthermore, like some of his Calvinist contemporaries, Sigonio presented the Hebrew state as a possible model for the separation of powers between the religious and secular realms, which would effectively neutralize the papacy’s secular authority.

The implications of Sigonio’s work for contemporary political studies have not been taken sufficiently seriously by scholars. Sigonio is usually characterized as an objective historian and a champion of antiquarianism, and his book on the polity of the ancient Hebrews has been seen as a collection of source texts devoid of meaningful ideas that could be applied to his own context. Yet, as we shall see, the matter is far more complicated. To determine the meaning of Sigonio’s work in its time, one must take into account a wide array of issues, including his relationship with the archbishop of Bologna, his interest in historiography, his knowledge of contemporary European political debates, and his long-running quarrel with the Catholic censors. Ultimately, Sigonio will be shown to have had mixed motivations, writing at some times for political purposes and at others out of a commitment to objective history. In this respect, he was no different from his contemporaries researching the ancient Hebrew state, in Italy or abroad.\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{2} By the end of the eighteenth century, there were at least twelve editions of Sigonio’s \textit{De republica Hebraeorum}. For a complete list, see William McCuaig, \textit{Carlo Sigonio: The Changing World of the Late Renaissance} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 347–355.

One reason scholarship has failed to see Sigonio as part of the greater phenomenon of *Respublica Hebraeorum* study in early modern Europe has to do with how scholars have accounted for the increased interest in the ancient Jewish polity during the period. Some have identified the primary stimulus as the study and dissemination of the fourth book of Josephus Flavius’ *Jewish Antiquities* during the second half of the sixteenth century. Others have pointed to the progressive “secularization” of biblical history, which permitted scientific analysis of the Jewish political model. This model then became—as classical political models had been for some time—a means of legitimizing specific political positions (although “secular” here is something of a misnomer, since the model was used in religious debates).

This assessment that the “secularization” of Bible study is fundamental to the political study and use of Scripture has resulted in modern-day historians, with few exceptions, concentrating on the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and studying works published in countries such as England and the Netherlands. The concurrence of political strife, advanced Bible study, and a ruling Calvinism (in all its variations) explained the presence of works devoted to the Hebrew republic. Accordingly, scholars...


4 See note 7, below.

5 On the first aspect, see Ligota, “Histoire à fondement théologique,” pp. 149–167. On the second, see Manuel, *Broken Staff*.

6 In truth, neither of these constitutes a complete explanation. Probably one reason political thinkers turned to the Hebrew model was the concept of *prisca theologia*, which ranked the validity of different traditions according to their antiquity, thus placing the Hebrew tradition at the top of the hierarchy, since it was considered most ancient. In a similar vein, the second half of the fifteenth century saw the discovery and translation into Latin of works by ancient authorities who claimed that the Greek philosophical disciplines had been imported from the Hebrew tradition. Whereas earlier, the Hebrew model had been considered irrelevant, since it lacked fields comparable to those of the classical tradition (specifically ethics, rhetoric, and philosophy in general), now it could be viewed as the authentic origin of those fields and thus more relevant than anything else.

7 A compendium of all these works is provided by the Israeli scholar Kalman Neuman, who sees in Christian Hebraism at the end of the sixteenth century the context in which a biblical antiquarianism emerged that allowed a political interpretation...
have focused on the works of Cunaeus, Grotius, Selden, and Harrington, disregarding the founders of this genre, such as Bonaventure Corneille Bertram and Carlo Sigonio (authors of *De politia Iudaica* [1574] and *De republica Hebraeorum* [1582], respectively), since their works were deemed to be of less political relevance.\(^8\)

A more careful analysis may show that Bertram, a sixteenth-century Calvinist theologian and Hebraist, could also be included in the aforementioned group.\(^9\) But Sigonio is different: an eminent historian of Greco-Roman antiquities and professor at the *Studio* (or “University”) in the papal city of Bologna, he resists the mold scholars have constructed to account for political Hebraism. His omission is particularly problematic when we consider that of all works on the polity of the ancient Hebrews published in early modern Europe, Sigonio’s was the most frequently cited. In fact, all subsequent authors even remotely interested in Jewish political


Valerio Marchetti offers another explanation. Starting from the reaction to this phenomenon in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Germany, Marchetti extended his research to other fields as well, pointing out that the attack was directed not only at the Jewish political model but also at an entire philosophical movement accused of “judaizing” European culture beginning in the fifteenth century. A study of the dissertations of Protestant pastors during the same period reveals the delegitimization not only of the existence of a Jewish political model, but also of those arguments which claimed the dependence of Aristotle and Pythagoras on Judaism, and which had in general represented the principles of *prisca theologia* and of the “judaization” of European culture in the fifteenth century. See Valerio Marchetti, “An Pythagoras proselytus factus sit,” *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 2 (1996), pp. 111–121; Marchetti, “Aristoteles utrum fuerit iudaicus. Sulla degiudaizzazione della filosofia europea in età moderna,” in Bruna Bocchini Camaiani and Anna Scattigno, eds., *Anima e Paura. Studi in onore di Michele Ranchetti* (Macerata, Italy: Quodlibet, 1998), pp. 249–266; Marchetti, “Sulla degiudaizzazione della politica. In margine alla relazione di Horst Dreitzel,” in A.E. Baldini, ed., *Aristotelismo Politico e ragion di stato: Atti del convegno internazionale di Torino 11–12 Febbraio 1993* (Florence: Olschki, 1995), pp. 349–358; A.E. Baldini, “Il teologo Johann Franz Budde (1667–1729) e la filosofia ebraica,” in Mauro Perani, ed., *L’interculturalità dell’ebraismo* (Ravenna: Longo Editore, 2004), pp. 299–314.

\(^8\) This is the standard perception of Sigonio’s work: “It is not always evident that the motivation for the work is other than pure scholarship. Sigonio was first and foremost an antiquarian and historian. His attempt to describe the political system of the Hebrews after writing descriptions of the systems of the Romans and the Athenians seems to reflect the same academic interest.” Neuman, “Political Hebraism,” p. 66. This definition suggests that the study of antiquity is detached from time and space and from reality in general. On the contrary, as evidenced by the presence of Sigonio’s work within the context of the French discussion of Roman institutions, this kind of study constituted the basis for the elaboration of political ideas in the framework of contemporary historical events.

institutions referred to the work of our Modenese historian. Nonetheless, The Hebrew Republic has been considered “mere erudition,” dismissed as a curiosity, or viewed as the product of the political-religious agenda of Sigonio’s patron, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti. In other words, Sigonio’s work has always been isolated from others in its genre and from both the Italian and broader European cultural context in which he lived.10

2. CARLO SIGONIO IN CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Carlo Sigonio was born in Modena (ca. 1520–1524) and moved, over the course of his life, between the most important cultural centers of northern Italy.11 His cultural gestation took place in Modena, where his teachers included Francesco Porto and Ludovico Castelvetro, and where he replaced Porto as Greek lector. He taught at the St. Marco school in Venice between 1552 and 1559, then in Padua until 1563, when he moved to Bologna to hold the chair of humanities at the Studio. From the beginning, Sigonio divided his interests between the study of Greek and Roman antiquities and that of Aristotle’s Rhetoric. In the first field of research, he concentrated on the different magistracies throughout Roman history and later on Livy’s history of the Roman republic. He also analyzed Roman law and the history of Athenian institutions.12 As for his other field of investigation, Sigonio had lectured on Aristotle’s


12 Cf. C. Sigonius, De antiquo iure civium Romanorum (Venice: apud Iordanum Zilettum, 1560); C. Sigonio, De antiquo iure Italiane (Venice: apud Iordanum Zilettum, 1560); T. Livius, Historiarum ab Urbe condita libri, cum commento C. Sigonii (Venice: apud Paulum Manutium, 1555); C. Sigonius, De Republica Atheniensi (Bologna:
Rhétoric while teaching at St. Marco and had published a translation of it. During this period, Sigonio developed some of his cardinal ideas, which ultimately shaped all his activity as a historian.

2.1 Venice

In Venice, Sigonio wrote *Oratio de laudibus historiae*, which is enormously helpful in understanding his historical method within the cultural context of his time. In this work, Sigonio finds history to be the noblest of the humanities, writing that those who overlook the passage of time and past events cannot really be considered men; they are rather like inexperienced boys unable to distinguish one thing from another. Grammarians, rhetoricians, poets, and philosophers must resort to the art of history in order to truly understand their own disciplines, since history—the analysis of particulars with the aim of reaching universals—lies at the foundation of every science. After further explaining how grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy are indebted to history, he adds that

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13 Aristoteles, *De arte rhetorica* (*Carolo Sigonio interprete*) (Venice: ex officina Stellae Iordani Ziletti, 1565). On Sigonio’s lecture on this work, see *MS gamma* 6.18 (Bergamo: Biblioteca civica Angelo Mai). This manuscript contains the transcription of Sigonio’s lectures on the first book of Aristotle’s *Rhétoric* at the St. Marco school during the years 1553–1554. For the description and content of the manuscript, see McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio*, pp. 19–23. I am indebted to Dr. W. McCuaig for giving me his copy of the text. It must be noted that Sigonio’s literary interest continued during the period of his lectures in Padua on the *Poetics* and is reflected in the composition of *De dialogo* (an analysis of the concept of mimesis). Torquato Tasso was one of Sigonio’s students in these years and quotes his teacher in the introduction to the *Rinaldo*. See C. Sigonius, *De dialogo liber* (Venice: apud Iordanum Zilettum, 1562). For the lectures on the *Poetics*, see W. McCuaig, “Carlo Sigonio’s Lectures on Aristotle’s Poetics,” *Quaderni per la storia dell’Università di Padova* 16 (1983), pp. 43–69. On the relationship between Tasso and Sigonio, see McCuaig, *Carlo Sigonio*, pp. 50–53 and the quoted bibliography.

14 C. Sigonius, *Oratio de laudibus historiae* (Venice: Ioannem Zilettum, 1560), p. 38r: “Etenim, si omnem nostram scientiam, tum demum vere scientiam esse dicimus, cum causas in universum, cur aliquid ita sit, videmur posse reddere. Universa autem omnia non nisi singulis rebus ante perceptis ac diuturno studio collectis continetur. Quis scientiam hanc, sine veterum notatone temporum ac sine priscorum observatione hominum, aut sibi, aut aliis videbitur esse adeptus?”

this discipline is of capital importance in understanding civil institutions. Philosophers who wrote on the state had to investigate and compare the different kinds of constitutions and determine which forms survived, which degenerated, and which turned into tyranny. Sigonio ends the Oratio with the remark that philosophers draw their conclusions not by means of the secrets of their discipline but rather by direct observation of the history of the particular states whose description they find in the works of the ancients.

The Oratio addresses—in embryonic form—two fundamental issues that illuminate the subsequent scholarship of our author. The first is his method of historical inquiry, whereby universal conclusions are reached by analyzing and comparing particulars. This approach had its foundations in Italian humanism and had been employed, for example, by Guillaume Postel in his study of languages and religions. During the second half of the sixteenth century, it became a cornerstone of the new historiography, whose most prominent exponent was none other than Jean Bodin. The second issue is Sigonio’s defense of the study of history. He argues that historical research should be regarded not just as a “cult of antiquities” but as an effort to reconstruct the evolution of certain foundations of human society, particularly those of juridical and civil institutions. Humanism had attacked traditions using philology. Sigonio considers himself part of this historical-philological trend and applies it with full force.

Sigonio’s library held several French works, namely Bauduin’s De institutione historiae universae et eius cum iurisprudentia coniunctione; the works of Hotman, among them the Franco-Gallia; and probably Bodin’s Methodus (Method for the Easy Comprehension of History). His

16 Sigonius, Oratio, p. 41r: “Etenim quis est, qui suam egregie capessere rempublicam possit, cum genus ipsius reipublicae cum causas salutis, atque interitus ignoret? Aut quis est, qui optime civitati suae possit consulere, si neque maiorum leges, neque mores aut instiuta percallate? Quid porro aliud continent scripti a philosophis de republica libri, nisi multa esse rerum publicarum genera, eaque inter se facile commisceri, causas esse quasdam, quibus illae conserventur, hae pervertantur, consilia vero alia ad libertatis, alia ad tirannidis diuturnitatem?”

17 Sigonius, Oratio, p. 40v: “Quae si ita sunt, ea certe non ex arcana magis ista philosophorum scientia, quam ex aperta diversarum observatione rerum publicarum, unde fere illa etiam admirabilia philosophorum praecepta sumpta sunt, eruere poterit, qui vetera annalium monumenta perlastraverit.”

18 The question of Sigonio’s library was addressed only in 1933 by Simeoni, who published Sigonio’s will, which included a list of his books. No one has addressed this list’s inclusion of French legal texts such as those cited above. McCuaig has discovered another very informative list of texts, commissioned by Giacomo Boncompagni, who was once in possession of Sigonio’s property. The French legal references on this list are:
reflections on the ancient states of Rome and Athens belong to the same Venetian period in which he wrote the Oratio and developed his historical form in the greater European context. Already in his lectures on Aristotle's Rhetoric, where he lauds the mixed-constitution model of Cicero’s Scipio, Sigonio reveals his predilection for the form of the Venetian republic that hosted him and which for his audience was formed mainly by the ruling class of the Lagoon Republic. His praise for the mixed model of government accorded with the Aristotelian concept of the six types of state.

A similar dependence on Aristotle can be found in one of Sigonio’s most important works, De Antiquo Iure Civium Romanorum, where he analyzes the Roman state from its origin to the end of the republican period. The first of several ideas on which Sigonio dwells is Aristotle’s analysis identifying the three just forms of government (monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy) and the three corrupt ones (tyranny, oligarchy, and ochlocracy). He adds that what distinguishes the two groups is not the number of people taking part in the administration of the state but rather the purpose they set for themselves: the rulers of just forms always govern for the sake of the common good, whereas the rulers of

1. “Balduini, Istitutuz Historia, in 4°, Venetiis,” which should correspond to F. Balduinus, De institutione historiae universae et eius cum iurisprudentia coniunctione. This work was never actually published in Venice, but there is no question that it was among the books owned by Sigonio.
3. “Balduini, Cartechesis, in 8°, Lion,” which is F. Balduinus, Iuris civilis catechesis ex... praelectionibus (Basel: apud Ioannes Orpinum, 1557), 8°.

We also find references to Hotman’s “Othoman, Franc. Gul, in 8°, Lion,” and “Othoman, De optim. Gener, in 8°, Lion,” which probably correspond to P. Hotomanus, Francogallia. Libellus statum veteris Reipublicae Gallice, tum deinde à Francis occupatæ, describens. Editio secunda (Coloniae: ex officina Hieronymi Bertulphi, 1574), 8°; and Hotomanus, De optimo genere iuris interpretandi (Lugduni Batavorum: apud Antonium Gryphium, 1566), 8°, respectively.


19 McCuaig, Carlo Sigonio, pp. 19–24.
20 On the analysis of Sigonio’s study of Roman institutions, see McCuaig, Carlo Sigonio, pp. 96–250.
degenerate forms govern in pursuit of their own interests.\textsuperscript{21} Interestingly, Sigonio offers an additional type of government: the \textit{respublica temperata}, which combines all three just forms and which he considers the best.\textsuperscript{22}

\subsection*{2.2 Bologna}

Sigonio’s time in Bologna, where he taught from 1563 until his death in 1584, was a turning point in his career. This period was characterized by a shift in his interests, which had heretofore centered on history from the late empire until medieval Italy. Paolo Prodi has dwelt on Sigonio’s collaboration with Gabriele Paleotti, archbishop of Bologna from 1566, during this period, pointing out that Sigonio became the instrument of Paleotti’s attempt at cultural and religious reform.\textsuperscript{23} But there was life in the papal city of Bologna beyond the presence of Paleotti and his ecclesiastical policy, which sought to reform the Church according to the principles of the Council of Trent. The city was also imbued with strong political tensions between the central government of Rome, on the one hand, and the Bolognese aristocracy, with its aspirations of autonomy, on the other.

Sigonio was torn between these two positions. While he collaborated with the bishop, being involved in 1569 in the reformation of the liturgical office of St. Petronius, he also showed interest in the history of Bologna and in its longstanding autonomous tradition, and the city’s senate even asked him to write on the subject.\textsuperscript{24} In the resulting tract, in describing events closer to his own time—particularly to the birth and

\textsuperscript{21} C. Sigonius, \textit{De antiquo iure populi romani libri undecim} (Bologna: apud Societatem Typographiae Bononiensis, 1574), p. 3: “Quia autem praecepta nobis adhuc de republica reliquerunt, ii fere in eo universi consentiunt, ut tres rectas esse respublicae statuant et tres contra depravatas. In bonis regem numerant, optimates et populum, in vitioso tyrannum paucorum factionem et plebem. Bonas autem vocant respublicas, cum sive a rege sive ab optimatibus, sive a populo bene ac iuste atque ad totius civitatis utilitatem accomodate res ipsa publica administratur; pravas vero, in quibus sive tyrannum regi, paucorum, sive plebis libidine atque utile utilitate omnia diriguntur.”

\textsuperscript{22} Sigonius, \textit{De antiquo iure populi romani}, p. 3: “Ut autem rectas illas, quas dixi, vocarent, sic quae ex illis rectis esset temperata atque confusa, multi optimam esse arbitrati sunt.” In his other work on ancient institutions, \textit{De Republica Atheniensium}, Sigonio uses the same Aristotelian categories: The Greek city was built in two stages—first, a kingdom, and second, a popular government.


development of the Roman Church—Sigonio was forced to step into the contemporary historiographical debate and take a stand in the controversy between Catholics and Protestants. At this point he had to deal with a conflict between his historical-philological method and the Church's need to legitimize its positions against attacks originating in Transalpine Europe.

Beginning in 1569, Sigonio became a target of ecclesiastical censorship. The first criticisms were directed at his *Historia Bononiensis* and accused him of doubting the privilege granted to Theodosius and of questioning the veracity of other historical documents, to the detriment of the Church of Rome.25

Sigonio's works following this period reflect a continuous conflict between Rome, represented by Cardinal Sirleto, and Bologna, home of Sigonio's greatest advocate, Paleotti. *De regno Italiae* is another work which was to cause numerous problems for its author. In a memorandum written in 1569, Sigonio states that he was asked to write a history of Bologna, adding that he intends to extend his research to other Italian cities, particularly in Lombardia and Romagna.26 This is the basis of Sigonio's history of the Italian peninsula, especially its northern part, from the Lombard invasion to the defeat of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I at the hands of the Italian *communes*.27 While Sigonio describes these events in the style of a chronicle, he allows himself some digressions of particular interest for our discussion because they touch upon the connection between the Holy Roman Empire and the papacy. Sigonio claims that the communes ultimately owe their freedom not to the papacy but to the empire. Furthermore, he states that the pope, who represented spiritual authority, held no political power over the communes in his land, as everything secular was the domain of the empire.28 This work

26 Bologna, Archivio Isolani, MS F 31 3, f. 14v–16v.
27 The *communes* were part of a new kind of political institution which emerged in Italy in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and revived the forms and ethos of the city-states of antiquity. They were characterized by a secular government in which officers were elected, and they had de facto independence under the nominal overlordship of emperor, pope, king, etc.
28 C. Sigonius, *De regno Italiae* (Frankfurt: apud heredes Andreae Wecheli, 1591), p. 177: “Et sane, quanquam Italia a rege, eodemque imperatore et a romano pontifice tenebatur, non eadem tamem erat in utroque auctoritas. Pontifex Romam Ravennamque et ditiones reliquas tenebat auctoritate magis quam imperio, quod civitates pontificem, ut reipublicae principem, regem vero, ut summum dominum intueretur, atque ei tributa, obsequiaque quae dixi, praebentur. Et pontificis vires in sacrís detestationibus versabantur, quas christiani reges tum maxime exhorrerunt, imperatoris in armis et expeditionibus,
encountered papal censorship, and Sigonio was compelled to modify some sections considerably. Sigonio’s next work, *De occidentali Imperio*, which covered the centuries from Diocletian to Justinian (284–565 C.E.), was also very controversial, especially regarding the “Donation of Constantine,” which the author considered a forgery. The Church (specifically Cardinal Sirleto) considered the “Donation” authentic and requested that it be integrated into Sigonio’s work. The dispute ended when Sigonio yielded to the Church, which permitted the publication of the work in 1578.

The year 1578 marked an improvement in Sigonio’s relations with the papal court, though it was not to last: Gregory XIII, elected in 1574, decided to avail himself of Sigonio’s erudition and summoned him to Rome to entrust him with the task of composing a history of the Church which would confute the Protestant work *Centuriae magdeburgenses*. Once again, however, Sigonio’s research and his conception of the proper role of history clashed with the polemical spirit which drove the actions of the Holy See. Although Sigonio devoted himself fully to this project, producing the first three books in a short time, the reaction of the Holy See was so negative that publication was interrupted at book 14, and the rest of the work remained in manuscript until the eighteenth century, when Argelati edited it as part of Sigonio’s *Opera Omnia.*

The authorities objected that Sigonio’s history neither faulted the Protestants nor defended the Roman Church. This clearly emerges from the censor’s reports on Sigonio’s works: the author is accused of using language inappropriate for the narration of the history of the Church and of failing to condemn the heresies of antiquity, which, according to the Church, only anticipated new ones. Sigonio responded to this criticism by stating his priorities and explaining that the integrity of his philological method did not allow him to describe the past with the polemical language of the present.

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29 The “Donation of Constantine” was a famous document probably written in the late eighth century in Rome and listing grants made to Pope Sylvester I by Emperor Constantine I. Because it represented the foundation of the secular power of the Church of Rome, the debate on its authenticity was crucial. Even though in the fifteenth century both Lorenzo Valla and Nicholas of Cusa had proven it a forgery, this document was again the object of the dispute between the Catholic Church and the Reformation movement in the sixteenth century. The latter, seeking to undermine the Church’s secular authority, followed Valla and maintained that it was a forgery.

30 Sigonio, *Opera*, vol. 4, pp. xvi–318.

31 Sigonio’s last four works (*De regno Italiae*, *De occidentali imperio*, the commentary on the *Historia Sacra* of Sulpicius Severus, and *De republica Hebraeorum*) were attacked by Rome, as demonstrated by the censorship texts. The most numerous are
Despite his conflict with the Holy See, Paleotti—who was engaged in the cultural reform of Church institutions and popular religious sentiments in Bologna and of Christians in general—commissioned Sigonio to prepare an annotated edition of Sulpicius Severus' *Historia Sacra* (published in 1581) with the aim of providing the clergy with a tool for the study of biblical history. As we shall see, it is here that Prodi identifies the origins of Sigonio's *De republica Hebraeorum*. This book on the ancient state of the Jews was to be Sigonio's last historical work.

Sigonio would die two years later, in 1584, devastated by the scandal surrounding the publication of his edition of the *Consolatio*, a work supposedly written by Cicero but considered by many to be a fabrication. Some scholars had accused Sigonio of writing the book himself, and therefore he spent the last years of his life defending its authenticity. After Sigonio's death, his works were no longer published in Italy, as the friction he had encountered with the ecclesiastical censors had impugned his reputation as a historian, in particular of late-ancient Italy and of the Jewish state. His works did, however, continue to be very successful in the rest of Europe.

those written against *De republica Hebraeorum*, which contain more than ninety objections. A first edition of these texts was included by Argelati in the sixth volume of Sigonio’s *Opera Omnia* (see Sigonius, *Opera*, vol. 6, pars tertia, coll. 1067–1234). Dr. W. McCuaig has completed a critical edition of these texts, which I’m currently editing with the authorization of McCuaig and the University of Toronto’s Center for Reform and Renaissance Studies. McCuaig has corrected Argelati’s version and filled in the gaps. The following response by Sigonio indicates his conflict with the censors: “Ad extremum censor obiicit Sigonio crimen omissionis et ait: debuisse loqui de Concilio Tridentino contra omnes haereses celebrato; quod primatus S. Petri sit de iure divino; quod fides illa sola sit Catholica quam Romana Ecclesia tenet ac docet; quod standum sit sanctis conciliis, sacris canonibus et Ecclesiae mandatis; debuisse agere de doctrina septem Ecclesiae sacramentorum, de merito bonorum operum, carpere haereticos huius temporis et eorum haereses confutare. Cui respondetur: haec omissa esse, quia ad historiam Sulpicii non pertinebant, quae finitur anno Christi 400 et Sigonio propositum tantum habuit illustrare acta Hebraeorum ab Adam usque ad Christum et nihil praeterea. Pro pueros autem non desunt libri qui talia doceant, ut catechismus Romanus et libelli de doctrina Christiana, qui in scholis leguntur.” Sigonius, *Opera*, vol. 6, pars tertia, col. 1162. As can be seen, Sigonio refuses to use history as a polemical tool in the conflict between Catholics and Protestants. He views his work as independent of theological considerations.

32 Sulpicius Severus, *Sacrae Historiae libri ii*, In eodem Caroli Sigonii Commentarius (Bologna: apud Societatem Typographiae Bononiensis, 1581).

3. The Composition of ‘De Republica Hebraeorum’

3.1 Prodi’s Hypothesis

What motivated Sigonio, hitherto concerned with classical topics, to study the Hebrew polity? As mentioned, Prodi connected the genesis of *De republica Hebraeorum* to Sigonio’s work on Severus’ *Sacrae Historiae*. A dedicatory letter to Paleotti, included in Sigonio’s edition of the latter, demonstrates the Bolognese bishop’s and Sigonio’s shared interest in a history of Christianity that treated the people of the Old and New Testaments as part of one continuous history of salvation, which began with Adam’s first sin and would end with Christ’s salvation. Prodi’s explanation seems plausible, because Sigonio’s background of studies cannot be reconciled with his choice to pursue an analysis of Jewish institutions, unless we take into account the intervention of Paleotti.

Verifying any hypothesis regarding the generation of *De republica Hebraeorum* is complicated by the conspicuous absence of correspondence documenting its composition. Whereas Sigonio’s method of writing was usually characterized by continuous dialogue with colleagues and constant requests for information from them, in this case there is no trace of the process by which he collected material or progressed in his work. Strangest of all, we find no reference to this work in Sigonio’s letters to his dearest friends, such as Pinelli, with whom he discussed his research at length. This seems to leave no option but to accept the hypothesis that the work ultimately originated in the dialogue between Paleotti and Sigonio on the history of the Church and its continuity with the Old Testament. Additional evidence supporting this theory can be found in the dedicatory letter to Gregory XIII placed at beginning of *De republica Hebraeorum*, in which Sigonio declares the ancient state of the Jews an appropriate model for the Roman Catholic Church, as this state exem-

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34 “[…] ad extremum vero sacrae etiam historiae lectionem in eadem auditoria inducere, a quibus adhuc tamquam perpetuo quodam damnata exilio abfuerat, voluit, non quidem, ut profanarum inde rerum cognitionem eiceret, quam robustioribus tradi convenire putavit, sed ut prima cognoscendae vetustatis initia a Deo sumenda esse iis, qui ad sapientiae, et pietatis professionem ingrederentur, ostenderet […] Quamobrem recte prudentia vestra, breviarum eius aliquod ex immenso illo utriusque Testamenti corpore conquisivit, quo studiosa iuventus omnia ab Adam usque ad Christum, idest a peccato ad salvem in ipsius Dei populo gesta quasi in unam tabulam conlata conspicere; et cum duos B. Severi Sulpicii libros in hoc genere distincte, atque ornate admodum scriptos probavit, tum ad tollendum exquisitoribus interpretationis hominibus occupatis laborem, eosdem etiam expositione illustrari aliqua voluit.” Severus, *Sacrae Historiae*, p. 3v. On the commentary on this passage and on Prodi’s thesis, see Prodi, *Storia sacra e controriforma*, pp. 80–81.
plifies the Augustinian idea of a City of Man and a City of God. Sigonio adds that the pope himself gave him the idea of writing this work when he asked him to compile a history of the Church. Thus Sigonio seems to imply that all the works he wrote between 1578 and 1582 (Historia ecclesiastica, the commentary on Severus, and De republica Hebraeorum) were part of the same concept.

3.2 Connections to Thinkers Elsewhere in Europe

Sigonio's claim in the dedicatory letter that the pope inspired the project would make sense if not for the following quotation from Corneille Bertram, a French theologian who taught Hebrew in Geneva, in the introduction to his De politia Iudaica:

> And so, while we both were waiting until someone who would deal with these things would appear, behold Sigonio, a very learned man and one of extraordinary skill in Roman and Greek history, promised a specific treatment of this topic.

De politia Iudaica was published in 1574, four years before Gregory XIII would entrust Sigonio with writing the history of the Church. Therefore both Sigonio's version of events (according to which the idea of De republica Hebraeorum came about as a consequence of this invitation in 1578) as well as the hypothesis suggested by Prodi (according to which the inspiration for writing the book began with Paleotti's commission to write a commentary on Sacrae Historiae in 1581) are untenable.

How should we date this statement by Sigonio, to which Bertram refers? On the basis of Bertram's dedicatory letter to Bèze, where he reconstructs how he began thinking in 1561 about writing on the ancient state of the Jews, we could say he came into contact with Sigonio around the time of the first publication of his De politia Iudaica. Here is the evidence: in the second edition of Bertram's text, in 1580, he amends the

35 DRH, pp. *2v–*3r.
36 See p. viii of this letter.
sentence, which originally stated that Sigonio had “promised” (pollicetur) to write a work on Jewish institutions, to read that he “seemed to promise” (polliceri visus est), apparently because a few years later Bertram no longer believed his colleague actually intended to write it.  

The second problem posed by the quotation is how Bertram became aware of Sigonio’s intention to write about the ancient state of the Jews. Once again the answer is problematic, because we have no statements of this kind in the works written before 1574 or in his letters. One possible connection could be through Henri Estienne, the French printer and eminent Hellenist who lived in Geneva and was in contact with Sigonio. The association between the two dated back a long time, presumably to 1555, when they visited Bessarione’s library in Venice. We also have a letter from Sigonio to Estienne dated 1563, written while Sigonio was in Padua and about to move to Bologna. This is the only known correspondence between the two, and it testifies to a certain familiarity and a frequent enough exchange of information, demonstrated by the fact that Sigonio updates Estienne on his research.

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40 Sigonio’s letter is found in J.Ph. Krebs, Carlo Sigonio einer der grössten Humanisten des sechszehnten Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt am Main: Druk und Verlag von Heinrich Ludwig Bröhrner, 1840), pp. 29–30. In the appendix, the author includes some letters written to and by Sigonio, including the one by Estienne and those by Jacob Gorski, Joannes Caselius, Paolo Sacrati, and Josephus Castalio. This is the full text: “Accepi libellum a te perelegantem eum, in quo tu summum studium veterum fragmenta poetarum quasi aligus ex foeda tempestate tabulas collegisti. In quo eodem nescio iudiciine, an amoris erga me tui studio magnitudinem sim potius admiratus, iudicii, quod ex ea re litterarum ad me mittendarum occasionem quaesiveris, cuius me magnopere studium delectaret. Amoris, quod me eiusmodi munere ad similiter litterarum officium, quod tibi gratissimum fore significas, provocari. Ego vero cum librum ipsum vale probavi, tum causam, quae ad eum mittendum impulit, multo magis, neque enim illustri, mihi crede, tua erga me benevolentia ad volupatatem quidquam suavius, neque iis, quae a diligentia ingenioque tuo profiscituntur, ad usum accomodatus aliquid potest contingere. Itaque doleo in primis, me tandem Xenophonitis illius tui Graeci Latinique iucundissimum fructum carere, quem te ad me mississe binam iam litteris repetis. Neque vero ego solus hoc coniicior desiderio, sed familiares mei omnes, qui his dediti studii sunt, ita te tuosque labores amant, ut ullamrem vehementius cupiant. Quam ob rem scire avemus omnes, quae ex officina tua,
Still, all this amounts to rather weak evidence considering that we have no indication that Estienne and Bertram were ever in contact. At best, but not to be disregarded, it shows a part of the network built by Sigonio within the Republic of Letters. By overemphasizing Sigonio’s collaboration with Paleotti, Prodi dismisses the possibility that Sigonio’s involvement in other cultural settings could have spurred his interest in the Hebrew polity and the fact that the cultural life of Bologna cannot be reduced to the politics of its bishop.

Insofar as Sigonio’s involvement in other environments is concerned, it is worth considering his strong ties with German scholars, and in particular with the renowned Joannes Caselius, who between 1563 and 1566 lived in Italy, where he met Sigonio. Numerous letters indicate that this relationship continued in the following years; Sigonio even hosted Caselius’ students in his house in Bologna.41

Sigonio’s scholarly reputation also reached France: Bodin quotes him often, criticizing some of his positions; Bauduin refers to his works on Roman law already in 1561. The polemics on the curiate law42 saw Sigonio opposing Grouchy, which reinforced his image in Transalpine Europe. Similarly, from the correspondence between Dupuy and Pinelli, we learn of the success Sigonio’s works enjoyed all over Europe, drawing the attention of Parisian printers and even of Wechel in Frankfurt.43


41 A history of Sigonio’s relations with the German academic community has not yet been written. In particular, no one has dealt with Caselius’ key role in disseminating Sigonio’s works. At least five letters inform us of this encounter and its importance. Some appear in I. Caselius, Epistolae bona frugis plenae, quarum paucae antehac editae fuerant, pleraeque iam primum lucem aspiciunt (Hamburg: Typis Iacobi Rebenlini, 1641), pp. 24–27, 146–148.

42 See McCuaig, Carlo Sigonio, pp. 56, 197–225.

In this respect it is useful to note the history surrounding the text of *De regno Italiae*. This work was published in Venice in 1574 after being harshly attacked both by the Church of Rome and by the government of Venice, which objected to the way the city was portrayed. From the Pinelli-Dupuy correspondence, we learn how Sigonio (thanks to Pinelli) made his way into the European book market. Together with a letter dated March 18, 1575, Pinelli sent Dupuy a non-censored copy of *De regno Italiae*. Dupuy’s reply to Pinelli on March 25 clarifies Sigonio’s editorial strategy, confirming that the text would have three editions: In Venice; in Frankfurt, published by Wechel; and in Lausanne (actually Basel), published by Pietro Perna. The three versions have yet to be compared, but from the different sources we can gather that Sigonio had very good connections in the European intellectual community, in particular on account of Pinelli.


44 On the history of this work, see Pinelli and Dupuy, *Une correspondance*, pp. 132, 133, 157.

45 Pinelli and Dupuy, *Une correspondance*, p. 157: “Nell’istoria del Sigonio fecero un gran rumore, ma senza proposito, poiche non è stata punto mutata da quel di prima, quanto a Vintitiani, per un altro principe si [Pinelli refers to the Pope], del quale v’informerà un giorno il suddetto Luyeres [i.e., François Pithou]. Basta che V.S. ha l’esemplare, che non è stato mutato, et questo per gratia del libraro, ch’è mio amico.”


47 Pinelli was also acquainted with another scholar who played a key role in kindling interest in the ancient state of the Jews: the jurist François Roaldès. In the introduction to *De politia Judaica*, Bertram notes that the first person to suggest that he study the “twofold” jurisdiction of the Jewish state was Roaldès, his teacher in Cahors. See Bertram, *De politia Judaica*, p. 7: “Tertius et decimus agitur annus, Vir Clarissime, quum Franciscus Rhoaldus, iurisconsultus legum romanarum totiusque antiquitatis consultissimus, Cadurci meam in discutienda iudaica politia, eiusque duplici iurisdictione operam efflagitavit.” On Roaldès’ life (d. 1598), see E.L. de La Mothe-Langon, ed., *Biographie Toulousaine, ou Dictionnaire historique des personnages qui... se sont rendus célèbres dans la ville de Toulouse ou qui ont contribué à son illustration* (Paris, 1823), vol. 2, p. 1823; Nicolas-Toussaint Le Moyne Des Essarts, *Les Siècles littéraires de la France* (Paris, 1880–1881), vol. 6; F. Roaldès, *Discours de la Vigne*, ed. Hilippe Tamizye de Larroque (Bordeaux: imprimerie G. Gounouilhou, 1886). Roaldès came to Italy in 1579 and met several Italian scholars, among them Pietro Vettori, Sigonio, Girolamo Mercuriale, Fulvio Orsini, and Gian Vincenzo Pinelli in particular. (These meetings are listed in a letter from Roaldès to Pierre Pithou. Cf. Roaldès, *Discours de la Vigne*, pp. 79–80.) Pinelli had heard about Roaldès before his arrival in Italy, and Pinelli’s
3.3. Bologna as a Cosmopolitan Environment

Just as Sigonio was not interested exclusively in Bologna, having works from other European cities in his library and seeking to publish abroad, so the cultural world of Bologna was not monopolized by Paleotti. It was permeated by different trends, particularly concerning the rule of the city and republican virtues. The tension between the local government of Bologna and the State of the Church was very high at all levels, as Angela De Benedictis has shown, and resulted in a trend toward republican writing, typified by Camillo Paleotti’s *De Republica Bononiensi*.48

This republicanism affected the Bolognese Printing Society, of which Sigonio was the scholarly director, and it should be placed within the context of the life of the city and its citizens’ pride in their form of government. This trend is evident not only in the publication of Sigonio’s history of Bologna, promoted by the city’s senate, but also by the emblem chosen by the Printing Society, which portrayed Felsina (the female anthropomorphization of the city of Bologna) holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a flag bearing the motto “Libertas” in her right. Another cultural icon of Bologna was Ulisse Aldrovandi, a famous naturalist who was close to Cardinal Paleotti and at the same time involved in the great European debates and in particular in discussing the origins of culture and the genealogy of peoples. In unpublished works such as *Bibliologia* and *Theatrum biblicum naturale*, Aldrovandi makes a series of characteristic assertions that the Jews were the founders of all human knowledge. According to this line of reasoning, philosophy, physics, and even politics were invented by the Jews, and other cultures (including the Greeks) had copied from them. These works should be placed within the European and Italian context of the book and compared in particular to contemporaneous chronologies of ancient peoples and their *prisca sapientia*.49

library contained the manuscript of one of Roaldès’ juridical works. (Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, MS B 143 sup. Franciscus Roaldesius, *Methodus ad ius universale* [1570]. On first reading, the work seems to contain no reference to Jewish law.)

48 On the debate in Bologna, see A. De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto. Bologna: una città europea nello Stato della Chiesa* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995). Two copies of the work (F 55, 124, which represents the “draft,” and E 50.2, which is one of the definitive copies) are in the Archivio Isolani in Bologna. For a discussion of this work, see Prodi, *Il Cardinale Gabriele Paleotti*, vol. 2, pp. 47–50; and De Benedictis, *Repubblica per contratto*, p. 249.

However little detail it contains, the passage cited from the introduction to Bertram’s *De politia Iudaica* is crucial for recovering the factors that led Sigonio to compose his own work and for constructing an alternative to Prodi’s hypothesis that will place *De republica Hebraeorum* in the context of the political debates of its time.

4. The Content of ‘De Republica Hebraeorum’

As mentioned, *De republica Hebraeorum* was dedicated to Pope Gregory XIII and is divided into seven books. In the first book, in the chapters on the history of Jewish religious and civil institutions, Sigonio lays out a precise structure for the rest of the text, to which he later refers at various points in his discussion. After introducing the history of the Jewish people, Sigonio dwells upon the focal point of the Hebrew republic: the law given by God to Moses. Sigonio claims it is possible to delineate the representation of every institution according to a scheme that distinguishes the proper precepts for religious jurisdiction from the laws designed to regulate the civil order. Accordingly, the remaining six books are divided into two sections: one concerning religious institutions, and the other, civil.

The first section (books II–V) contains an antiquarian analysis. The description of the sacrifices, the priests, the calendar, and the holy places is mostly a dry list of citations, without comment, from sources ranging from *Annali della scuola speciale per archivisti e bibliotecari dell’università di Roma* VIII:1–2 (1968), pp. 85–181. This work, which among other things reflects on Jewish culture, has not yet been studied. We encounter, for example, a chapter on “Della dottrina degli Hebrei che è di tre sorti” (fols. 535–537), in which Aldrovandi discusses the Jewish Kabbala and its meaning. The chapter on “Che il Misna et il Thalmud è una medesima cosa” (fols. 537–539) is also interesting, especially where Aldrovandi writes (fol. 539): “Thalmud è il medesimo che dottrina, la quale contiene tutti i commenta et constitutioni de gli antichi, et l’istorie di certi tempi; opera veramente piena non solo di sapienza divina et naturale, ma politica et regale, come chiaramente testifica il dottissimo Galatino nel suo primo libro De Archanis Catholicae veritatis.” Just as Bodin had used the etymology of Hebrew words to support his political thesis, so Aldrovandi writes (fol. 444): “Questa santa et divina lingua non solo è attinta a fare conoscere le cose divine, ma ancora per conseguire le scienze humane. Percioché chi considererà diligentemente la vista delle parole et saprà la forza della lor etimologia farà più progresso in la cognitione delle cose naturali che se egli havesse a memoria tutta la dottrina d’Aristotele.” The *Theatrum* can be found in Bologna’s Biblioteca Universitario, MS 54, 2 voll, fol. 4r: “Quamvis Tales, ut testatur Cicero, primus natura rerum disputasse dicatur, scire tamen oportere eum diu post Mosen fuisse. Flouruit enim eo tempore quo Ezechias Iudeis et Numa Pomplius Romanis praesidebat. […] Etiam vetustissimi Graecos prophetis hebraeis sunt iuniores”; fol. 4v: “Quicquid gentiles dogmatum atque mysteriorum posterius reliquerunt id omne ab Hebrais praeertim a Mosis divinissimi vatis voluminis sacris suffusati sunt, quod Clemens Alexandrinus, Atticus Platonicus, Eusebius et Aristobulus aperte testatur.”
from the Bible through the Church Fathers, ancient Jewish authors such as Josephus Flavius and Philo of Alexandria, and the Talmud and other rabbinical texts cited through secondary sources.

The second section contains a strictly political reading of the ancient Hebrew polity. Here Sigonio elaborates a view which diverges both from pre-Bodin political thought, which ignored the Hebrew model, as well as from precedents set by Bodin and Bertram, who advocated monarchical and mixed-constitutional readings of the Hebrew polity, respectively. This “aristocratic” view would become common in writings of subsequent thinkers.50

Sigonio finds the distinction between the religious and civil authorities in the Israelite polity to be grounded in Mosaic law, and hence the chapter entitled “The law Given by God to the Israelites” is key to understanding the work in its entirety. Sigonio imposes a two-part structure on Mosaic law and further divides each part into two. The resulting four-part structure breaks with medieval tradition,51 which viewed ancient Jewish law as composed of three kinds of precepts: Moral, ceremonial, and jurisdictional. For Christian theologians, first among them Aquinas, only the first part (pertaining to moral precepts) remained valid for Christians, while the other two applied solely to Jewish history.

Sigonio takes a different approach. He begins his construct of Jewish law with the two commandments of loving God and loving one’s neighbor, claiming they represent the categories of religious life and civil life, respectively. These categories cover between them all of Jewish law. Sigonio then differentiates between two types of commandments which regulate religious life—mandates and precepts—and between two types of commandments which rule the civil sphere: iudicia and iustificationes. The first two categories include norms of ritual and religious organization, and the last two are strictly juridical (being, in effect, the God-given tools by which humanity condemns the guilty and acquits the innocent).

This four-part scheme sheds light on Sigonio’s controversial views on the validity of the Ten Commandments and the book of Deuteronomy. Although Sigonio concurred with Catholic consensus on the Ten Commandments, seeing them as an elaboration of the first two principles (love of God and love of man), on the book of Deuteronomy he parted ways with the Church, seeing it as a development and interpretation of the Decalogue.

50 See note 49, above.

This has two important implications that help us understand the intentions of our author and his vision of the Jewish state:

The first concerns the structure of the law, which makes it relevant politically-juridically and not just theologically. Jewish law and its commentaries then became relevant and comparable to the secular legacy of Greece and Rome. It almost seems as if Sigonio is referring to the same conception of the history of law which dominated the European debate in those years and attempted to reconstruct a genealogy of the various ancient juridical traditions, placing the Jewish model at the top of the hierarchy dictated by chronology.\textsuperscript{52}

The second, which is actually more important for understanding the contribution of the Jewish state, concerns the result that this division of the law produces in the distribution of powers within the state itself. The theoretical separation between the religious and civil spheres also requires a practical separation between the investment of religious authority and civil authority in the hands of individuals. In other words, those in charge of the administration of religious matters (the priestly class) could not intervene in the administration of the state, particularly the activities of the court. The pontiff could preside over the Sanhedrin (when it acted as a court of law) only if the crime to be judged was of a religious nature.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{52} It is important to bear in mind the following passage, where Sigonio describes the judicial role of issuing acquittals and condemnations: "\textit{Iudicii porro in lege praescripti hoc sit exemplum: 'Nocturnum furem occidito'; iustificationis: 'Diuturnum dimittito.' Item iudicii: 'Qui prudens hominem occiderit, capite poenas luet,' iustificationis: 'Qui imprudens, rite exulerit.'}” It is useful to place it side by side with a work published in France in 1574, which compares the same biblical passage with the Roman juridical tradition: “\textit{Quod si duodecim tabularum: 'nocturnum furem quoquo modo, diurnum autem si se audeat telo defendere, interfici iubent,' scitote, iuris consulti, quia Moyses prius hoc statuit, sicut lectio manifestat. Moyses dicit: 'Si perfodiens nocte parietem inventus fuerit fur et percussitter eum alius et mortuus fuerit hic, non est homicida quis percuusserit eum. Si autem sol ortus fuerit super eum, reus est mortis percussor: et ipse morietur.' Paulus libro sententiarum v ad legem Corneliam De sicariis et veneficis. 'Si quis fuerit nocturnum vel diurnum cum se telo defenderet occiderit, hac quidem lege non tenetur, sed melius fecerit, qui eum comprehensus transmittendum ad praesidem magistratibus optulerit.'}” P. Pithoeus, \textit{Collatio legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum}, in P. and F. Pithoeus, eds., \textit{Observationes ad Codicem et Novellas Iustiniani Imperatoris} (Parisiis: e typographia regia, 1689), p. 33. Petrus Pithou, a French jurist and disciple of Cujas, published an edition of this anonymous work which was written around the fourth century and systematically compares the laws found in the Old Testament with those described by ancient jurists in order to find similarities. On the early modern tradition of interpretation of Mosaic law, see Bartolucci, \textit{La repubblica ebraica di Carlo Sigonio}, pp. 177–184. I will further elaborate on Sigonio’s interpretation of this law and his sources in my introduction to Carlo Sigonio, \textit{The Hebrew Republic} (forthcoming, Shalem Press).

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{DRH}, p. 257: “\textit{Advocarunt vero hoc concilium aut rex aut pontifex, prout crimen delatum aut civitatem attigit aut religionem.”}
One is consequently led to question the sincerity of Sigonio’s recommendation, in his dedication to the pope, that the Hebrew republic serve as a model for the Church of Rome, because an application of the separation of powers identified in the Hebrew model would effectively cause the Church to forfeit its secular authority. Sigonio must have recognized the political ramifications of such a doctrine for Rome, since the separation of religious and secular powers dominated the debates in Europe among all confessions.

The political significance of Sigonio’s work becomes most evident when we analyze the pages of his work devoted to the birth and development of the Jewish state. In this discussion, Sigonio distances himself from the nuances of his earlier writings on ancient institutions, and he seems to modify his language in light of the contemporary European political discourse. His thoughts on the Hebrew state are summarized in the fifth chapter of the first book, where he outlines its history, particularly with respect to the transition from aristocracy to monarchy.

4.1 Aristocracy Versus Monarchy

First of all, Sigonio distinguishes between the relevant forms of state based on who holds the authority: a few individuals or just one. In this context, he considers two kinds of constitutions: one based on law, and one on the will of one person. The aristocracy was founded on the initial will of God (manifested in laws), but following the rejection of his will (i.e., the rejection of the laws), God granted by concession a second constitution in the form of a monarchy. Thus, from Moses to Samuel, the Hebrew state was an aristocracy, and from Saul up to the destruction of the Second Temple, it was a monarchy.

Starting from this identification of the form of a state with its number of rulers, Sigonio develops a theoretical approach profoundly different from that in his earlier works. First, he abandons the scheme of the mixed constitution in favor of simpler forms. Second, he analyzes the two forms of state without ascribing a moral quality to either of them (unlike his

54 Ibid.: “Ceterum cum de forma reipublicae quaeritur, nihil aliud quaeritur, nisi pesnes quem principatum summa rerum fuerit constituta.”

55 See note 61, below.

56 DRH, p. 23: “Sequitur, ut de forma reipublicae disseram, quam Deus aut superiore lege prae scriptit, aut post induci, neglecta lege, permisit.”

57 Ibid., pp. 23–24: “Haec vero apud Hebraeos primum penes optimates posita fuit, deinde penes reges, quorum principatum illum aristocratiam, hoc regnum graeci vocant. aristocratia fuit sub Moyse, Iosue, senioribus et iudicibus, regnum sub regibus.”
analysis of the differences between monarchy and tyranny, for example). Rather, he evaluates them based on their dependence on the law. Aristocracy is a positive model because it rules within legal parameters; monarchy, on the other hand, being the arbitrary rule of one person, departs from God’s precepts. Unlike in his other works, Sigonio articulates a very clear contradistinction between aristocracy and monarchy, the latter intended as an institution free of any law (*rex legibus solutus*). Gone is his openness to the mixed constitution, which was so important in his Venetian years. Rather, as we shall see, he resorts to the kind of terminology which was becoming more and more prominent in the political thought of the second half of the sixteenth century, particularly in the writings of authors such as Bodin.

Sigonio identifies a key transition period between the rule of Joshua and that of the Judges, noting that no central power united the Jews of this era, but nonetheless authority was aristocratic. In this case Sigonio highlights the important role played by inferior magistracies, represented by the heads of the cities and tribes. The institutional role of local government dominated contemporary European debate and was often connected to the study of Jewish institutions. Bertram in particular had pointed out that the “*respublica sancta*” did not disappear after Joshua, despite the absence of a leader, because of the rule of local authorities. Sigonio writes in the same vein, insisting on the role of these officers in the structure of the state, as we shall see.

Sigonio’s analysis of the subsequent period of the Judges identifies the aristocracy as the administrative authority (as opposed to the holder of power) of the republic. While the Judges acquired authority and ruled the

58 See note 100, below.


60 “Conciderat nimium maxima ex parte facies illa elegantissima sanctae reipublicae quae emicerat temporibus Mosis et Iosuae, ita tamen ut non prorsus extincta esset, remanserunt enim in unaquaque civitate sui iudices et seniores, nimium Chiliarchi, Centuriones etc.” Bertram, *De politia Iudaica*, p. 55. This idea recalls the praise of the government of the citizens and provincials, which was a major aspect of Hotman’s treatment. He stated that the original form of the government of the Gauls consisted of the magistracies in the individual cities and provinces. On the relationship between Bertram and the Huguenot literature of his time, see Bartolucci, *La repubblica ebraica di Carlo Sigonio*, pp. 45–65.

61 Bodin also emphasized this passage of Jewish history. In the *Methodus* he maintained that the Jewish state was an aristocracy, while in *Six Books of the Commonweal* he wrote that God himself governed the people, sending prophets as his representatives. See Bartolucci, *La repubblica ebraica di Carlo Sigonio*, pp. 40–41.
state, the law was enforced as before, and power remained in the hands of God.\textsuperscript{62}

The reference to God as the holder of power in the republic might be misconstrued as an allusion to a passage from the second book of \textit{Against Apion}, where Josephus praises the constitution of the ancient Jewish state because of its uniqueness and difference from all the Aristotelian models. Since the Jewish constitution was ruled by God, Josephus coined a term to define it: \textit{theocracy}. But this analysis could not have satisfied Sigonio, who preferred to place the Hebrew republic within the Aristotelian scheme, presenting it as the most ancient model worthy of imitation. Consequently, he adopted the idea that the republic of the Jews was an aristocracy from Josephus’ \textit{Jewish Antiquities}.\textsuperscript{63}

Returning to the evolution of political institutions, Sigonio writes that when the Jews asked Samuel for a king like every other nation, they effectively renounced God’s rule over them, and the law consequently lost its value.\textsuperscript{64} Monarchy was rule without law. Sigonio emphasizes the difference between aristocracy and monarchy, praising the former to the detriment of the latter. For this purpose, he cites a passage in which Aristotle emphasizes the superiority of the rule of law over the rule of man. This statement was the cornerstone of many treatises which found aristocratic government to be the best model for the state. Here is the passage, as quoted by Sigonio:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Ibid., p. 25: “Hoc autem ita esse, probatur etiam ex Iosepho, qui libro iiii Antiquitatum legem Dei ad hunc locum pertinenter explicuit, sic loquentem faciens Moysem: Aristocratia et vita, quae ex ea degitur, res optima est, nec vos capiat desiderium alterius reipublicae sed hanc amate leges habentes dominas, ex iis omnia facientes, salis enim est, ut Deus praesit. Quod si regis cupiditas vos incesserit, is ex eadem gente sit.”
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Ibid.: “Hanc vero aristocratiam, in qua lex potissimum cum Deo dominata est, regnum ipsum excepit. Regnum autem appelarunt imperium summum unius hominis non ex lege, sed ex arbitrio imperantis, quem a Samuele Iudice postularunt his verbis VIII primi Regum: ‘Constitue nobis regem ut iudicet nos, ut universae habent nationes’ [I Samuel 8:5]. Quod ut ille audivit, sibi Deum, quid opus esset facto, consultuit, qui ita respondit: ‘Audi vocem populi in omnibus quae loquantur tibi non enim te abiecerunt, sed me, ne regnem super eos’ [verse 7]. Et addit: ‘Veruntamen contestare eos et praedic eis ius regis, qui regnaturs est super eos’ [verse 9]. Significavit enim aperte, Iudicibus rerum summam ex lege habentibus regnasse Deum super Hebraeos, quia lex dominata esset, imperio vero ad regem gentium more translato, Deum non regnaturum, cum non penes legem, sed penes voluntatem unius hominis summa rerum esset futura.’
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{62} DRH, pp. 24–25: “Iudicibus inde rerum potientibus eodem modo aristocratia fuit, sigundem illis principatum administrantibus et lex, ut ante valuit, et Deus ipse imperium tenuit.”

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., p. 25: “Hoc autem ita esse, probatur etiam ex Iosepho, qui libro iii Antiquitatum legem Dei ad hunc locum pertinenter explicuit, sic loquentem faciens Moysem: Aristocratia et vita, quae ex ea degitur, res optima est, nec vos capiat desiderium alterius reipublicae sed hanc amate leges habentes dominas, ex iis omnia facientes, salis enim est, ut Deus praesit. Quod si regis cupiditas vos incesserit, is ex eadem gente sit.”

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid.: “Hanc vero aristocratiam, in qua lex potissimum cum Deo dominata est, regnum ipsum excepit. Regnum autem appelarunt imperium summum unius hominis non ex lege, sed ex arbitrio imperantis, quem a Samuele Iudice postularunt his verbis VIII primi Regum: ‘Constitue nobis regem ut iudicet nos, ut universae habent nationes’ [I Samuel 8:5]. Quod ut ille audivit, sibi Deum, quid opus esset facto, consultuit, qui ita respondit: ‘Audi vocem populi in omnibus quae loquantur tibi non enim te abiecerunt, sed me, ne regnem super eos’ [verse 7]. Et addit: ‘Veruntamen contestare eos et praedic eis ius regis, qui regnaturus est super eos’ [verse 9]. Significavit enim aperte, Iudicibus rerum summam ex lege habentibus regnasse Deum super Hebraeos, quia lex dominata esset, imperio vero ad regem gentium more translato, Deum non regnaturum, cum non penes legem, sed penes voluntatem unius hominis summa rerum esset futura.”
Qui legem vult imperare, Deum vult imperare, qui regem, idest hominem, belvam. Quod non semper ratione sed plerunque cupiditate ducatur.  

Translated as:

He who would have the law govern would have God govern; He who would have a king govern would have a beast govern, because man is led not always by reason, but frequently by his desires.

Sigonio slightly altered this passage by inserting the word “regem” (king), though perhaps in so doing he clarified rather than distorted Aristotle’s intended meaning. Whereas the original text speaks only of man’s role in ruling the state, Sigonio’s version refers to the specific role of the king. However faithful this alteration of Aristotle’s text was to its author’s intentions, it is very strange that a scholar like Sigonio, who takes great care in the accurate citation of his sources, could make such a mistake. Furthermore, the inventories of his library mention at least four commentaries on Aristotle’s Politics, among them that of Vettori, who was a friend of Sigonio’s and devoted part of his analysis to this passage in particular and its variations in different manuscripts. Perhaps Sigonio simply misremembered the passage. But this explanation does little more than confirm that he was more interested in interpreting the statement than in faithfully reproducing it. His interpretation attributes to the passage aristocratic and anti-monarchic meanings which other commentators of the time vehemently denied.

Sigonio also introduces another factor, independent of Aristotle. In his attempt to demonstrate the arbitrary rule of the king, he quotes the famous passage from I Samuel 8, where Samuel describes for the Jewish people the right (ius) a king would be able to exercise in his dealings with them. The interpretation of this passage was one of the strongest points of anti-monarchic polemics. Bodin (as a pro-monarchist) had taken pains to invalidate this point by understanding the Hebrew term mishpat (“right,”

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67 Regarding the problem of the manuscript tradition and its impact on early modern political thought, see Bartolucci, La repubblica ebraica di Carlo Sigonio, pp. 165–177.
translated into Latin as “ius” and into Greek as “dikaioma”) as “custom” and “behavior” (“mores”). Once again Sigonio relies on the tools employed by contemporary opponents of royal absolutism.

The final aspect of Sigonio’s political analysis of the Hebrew republic is his treatment of what he perceives as its tri-leveled structure. He states that the republic is composed of three concentric circles, the first encompassing the entire state, the second encompassing the tribes, and the third encompassing the cities of each tribe. The first, all-encompassing level operated from whichever location God had chosen at any given point for the religious rites (i.e., wherever the ark of the covenant was, ultimately Jerusalem). It included the main institutions of the republic: The supreme magistrate (the judge or king), the great senate, and the main court of law. Each tribe had its own leader, who was also the head of the lesser leaders of the different families. Likewise, every city had its own senate, magistracies, and civil and criminal court. This three-tiered structure was one of Sigonio’s most important contributions to the study of the Hebrew polity, particularly with respect to the analysis of the court system.

68 DRH, p. 27: “Est porro illud quoque tenendum, rempublicam Hebraeorum quodammodo tripartitam fuisse: una enim fuit, quae universum populum, idest XII tribus, complexa est; altera, quae singulas ipsius populi tribus; tertia, quae singulas singularum tribuum civitates.”

69 Ibid., p. 27: “Primae reipublicae sedes in ea collocata urbe fuit, quam Deus religionis causa sibi ascivit. Ibi enim summus magistratus, summus senatus iudiciumque consedit.”

70 Ibid., p. 27: “Secunda respublica praefectum unum habuit, qui princeps tribus dictus est, itemque alios, qui familiarum principes nominati sunt, qui tamen omnes summo principi, penes quem tota erat respublica, paruerunt.”

71 Ibid., pp. 27–28: “Tertia vero hoc modo constitutata fuit. Unaquaeeque civitas suum habuit senatum, qui de republica ad ipsam precipue pertinentibus decerneret et causas privatlas captalesque cognosceret et suas magistrate, qui senatum haberent et iudicia exercerent.”

72 Vittorio Conti has shown how this scheme inspired not only Grotius’ De republica emendanda but also Althusius’ Politica. Sigonio’s scheme succeeded partly because its Jewish “federalism” suited the institutions of the countries in which these authors lived. The Calvinist commentator Johannes Nicolaus notes: “Tripartitum tale Imperium ad hunc usque diem viget. E. g. in Belgio foederato ubi 1. Est status generalis qui curat generalia harum regionum. 2. Quaelibet provincia proprias habet suas leges propriis et rectoribus paret. Et 3. Uniuscuiusque provinciae civitas rursus suas peculiares leges habet. Sic etiam rex Angliae tria quasi tenet regna: Angliae, Scotiae et Hyberniae, quae singula sua habent parliamenta et dividuntur in varios comitatus, regiones et urbes, quae singulae propriis gaudent et legibus et institutis.” Cf. Sigonio, De republica Hebraeorum (Lugduni Batavorum, apud Cornelium Boutestein, 1701), p. 90. On the influence on Grotius and Althusius, see Conti, Consociatio civitatum (Firenze: Centro Editoriale Toscano, 1997), pp. 116–119; and G. Bartolucci, “The Influence of Carlo Sigonio’s ‘De Republica
4.2 Sigonio and the Censors

To fully understand the innovations of Sigonio’s text and the problems it posed, it is useful to look at the reaction of the ecclesiastical censors. This reaction indicates the threat which the Church of Rome recognized in the political analysis of the ancient state of the Jews. As we have said, Sigonio claims the Jewish commonwealth experienced two types of state: the first aristocratic, where God and the law ruled through the magistrates; and the second monarchic, where the king held power according to his will, ignoring God and the law. We should first look at the censors’ reactions to the identification of the Jewish commonwealth as an aristocracy.

Sigonio’s analysis connects his concept of aristocracy with the Aristotelian conception of the best government as the rule of law and reason as opposed to the rule of one person (i.e., the monarch). Sigonio had already used this definition in his commentary on Sulpicius Severus’ Historia Sacra in 1581. There he wrote that a free people does not accept rule according to the will of one person; such a people accepts only the rule of law.73 Sulpicius’ text, as quoted by Sigonio, can be translated as follows:

The people have desired the kings (something detested by all free peoples), showing a clear and evident example of insanity; they have preferred to exchange liberty for slavery.74

Sigonio’s commentary reads:

Sulpicius was amazed that the Hebrews should prefer kings to judges, because the republic of the Judges was defined as free, while the monarchic one was defined as a state of slavery. And he ascribes to the masses a natural preference for new things that are not in the Scriptures. Free peoples fight the institution of kings, because a free people obeys laws (that is, is obedient to reason), and a people that submits to a king obeys a will (that is, the caprice of one man, who is usually vicious.) So the man who prefers a king instead of liberty is insane.75

73 Severus, Sacrae Historiae, p. 141. The reference is to 1 Samuel 8, in which the Jewish people, dissatisfied with Samuel’s sons, requests a king.

74 “Regium nomen (cunctis liberis populis invisum) populus desiderabat, planeque non sine exemplo amentiae praebat libertatem servitium mutare.”

75 “Miratur autem Sulpicius, Hebraeos reges Iudicibus praetulisse, cum in republica Iudicum libertatis esset species, in regia servitutis, idque naturae vulgi nova semper optantis tribuit, quorum nihil est in scriptura. […] Liberi autem populi aversantur reges, quia
The censor quite understandably attacked this reading of Sulpicius, stating that while the passage could be interpreted in different ways, Sigonio had given it an exclusively anti-monarchic cast, justifying contemporaneous rebellions against regal authority. Sigonio equivocates in his response. Rather than watering down his argument, he incorporates nuances that strengthen it. He connects the Aristotelian passage defining the best state as the government of the best men with the passage from I Samuel describing the right of the king (ius regis) in terms of a series of acts against the people, carried out by a monarch above any kind of law.

But Sigonio’s argument seems disconnected from the biblical narrative. On other occasions, he had justified his non-traditionalism as a literal reading of the sources, describing events as they historically happened and not as they should have happened in theory. In this case, however, Sigonio is very clearly expounding a principle found in Aristotle as if it were confirmed by the Holy Scriptures.

The censor’s text regarding the Historia Sacra is arranged differently from the other three censorial texts addressed to Sigonio. Whereas the other three were arranged in the form of statements by the censor and responses from Sigonio, here the initial statement by the censor is followed by a response from Sigonio, then an additional retort from the censor. In the interchange on the subject of aristocracy, the censor begins by stating that if this is a discussion about norms, then one should look to Catholic doctrine, not to Aristotle. The censor then interprets the aforementioned passage from Aristotle as referring to tyrants instead of kings. According to the censor, whereas the tyrant rules according to caprice,

\[ \text{liberi populi obedient legibus, idest rationi, qui vero parent regi, obedient voluntati, idest libidini unius plerumque pravi. Quare amens est, qui regem libertati anteponit.} \]

Sigonio, Opera, vol. 6, pars tertia, col. 1147: “Quod Sulpicius dixit de regibus po-test multis modis excusari, sed quae dixit expositor nullo pacto. Is enim liberam vivendi rationem non solum regum regimini et monarchiae anteponit, sed tamquam impium et a ratione alienam damnat, tacite confirmans hoc pacto pravitate illorum, qui hodie contra suos reges bella gerunt, atque ut libere vivant ab eorum obedientia defecerunt.”


At ubi ratio postulat ut ponat quae ad bonos mores, ad Catholicam doctrinam et usum in Ecclesia Romana receptum factiunt, facere debuissest. Nam quid nobis cum Aristotelis sententia hoc tempore?”
the king follows reason.\textsuperscript{79} Here the censor links Sigonio to such anti-
monarchists as Scotsman George Buchanan. Passages in the commentary on the *Historia Sacra* are traced (perhaps even correctly) to Buchanan’s oration on the Scottish right of freedom, *De Iure apud Scotos*.\textsuperscript{80} The censor raises additional objections to other anti-tyrannical statements which portrayed the king as the enemy of freedom, since these positions were clearly opposed to the pro-monarchical stance of the Church. Furthermore he criticizes Sigonio for interpreting the passage from the book of Samuel with the aim of showing how the Holy Scriptures rejected royal power.\textsuperscript{81}

Let us suspend, for the moment, these considerations regarding the censorship of the commentary on *Historia Sacra* and turn instead to the Church’s response to *De republica Hebraeorum*. As stated, Sigonio had described the original Jewish state as an aristocracy ruled by law as opposed to a monarchy ruled by the will of an individual. First, the Church took issue with his reliance upon the authority of Josephus in defining the Israelite form of government, since it would have been more appropriate for Sigonio to have based himself on Scripture. Second, he was accused of espousing theories similar to those of heretics such as Calvin and Buchanan. The censor points out that this sin is all the more grave, since he had already been admonished for the same.\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.: “Nec respondet Sigonio crimini, quod obiicitur, sed alio rem transfert, ut auctoritate Aristotelis monarchiam impugnare velle videatur, in qua re primum confundit regem cum tyranno, quod nec philosophia nec religio patitur. Ita enim dicit ‘obediunt voluntati eorum, idest ‘libidini unius plerumque pravi. ‘ Rex vero ratione, tyrannus libidine gubernat.”

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.: “Buchananus haereticus in Dialogo de iure Regni Scotiae similibus fere argumentis persuasit populo, ut se in libertatem vendicarent, reges eiicerent, et depeditam popularem libertatem quasi postlimnio revocarent.” The censor is very well acquainted with Buchanan’s work. The Scottish author had in fact written: “ut recte ac vere mihi dixisse videantur Aristoteles, qui legi pareat, eum Deo et legi parere, qui regi, homini et belvae.” Cf. G. Buchanan, *De iure regni apud Scotos dialogus*, in Buchanan, *Rerum Scoticarum historia* (Edinburgh: Ad exemplar Alexandri Arbuthneti editum, 1600), p. 16v.

\textsuperscript{81} Sigonius, *Opera*, vol. 6, pars tertia, col. 1148: “Praeterea cum locum 1 Regum adducat Sigonio in suam sententiam, vereor ne cum cum Buchanano sentiat, qui eodem argumneto Saulenum tyrannunm fuisse contendit, quod falsum est. Nam tamesi in 1 Regum Samuel ita dixit, ut populum avertet a petendo rege, non tamen proinde regem dominatum improbatur a scriptura. Sed vult Sigonio pertinaciter confirmare quod dixit hoc tempore etiam ad pueros instituendos, quasi mos, qui iamdii in Ecclesia Dei est, a summis pontificibus approbatus et constitutus creandi reges et imperatores, scripturae contradicit.”

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid., col. 1193: “Cum totus liber Iudicum usque ad finem tractet propositam ab ipso historiam, et ahiis in locis scriptura petere possit, male ad confirmandam rem propositam citat Josephum lib. 4 Antiquatum, cum melius et verius in sacrís litteris habeantur. Quae vero eadem pagina dicit de regibus falsa omnino sunt, et a Calvinio et Buchananano
The censor continues analyzing the controversial passages of *De re publica Hebraeorum* in more detail, emphasizing that the king cannot rule if he is not subject to the laws, since in Deuteronomy 17 God established limits on regal authority, and in the same way (as Sigonio also mentions) the monarchs themselves had been elected by God. It is because of divine intervention, according to the censor, that the Jewish model of state is unique and cannot be compared to the other forms of government. In this model it is God who rules the republic, in accordance with his will.\(^83\) It seems that the Church is attempting to deny the political value of the Hebrew model of state; probably the censor is thinking not only of Sigonio's work but of other treatises composed throughout Europe in that period which tried to legitimize non-monarchic models, basing themselves on the Mosaic histories.\(^84\)

The censor also objects to Sigonio's anti-monarchic interpretation of I Samuel 8:7, where God tells Samuel that the people “have not rejected you but have rejected me.” Rather than God's rejecting the idea of monarchy, the censor holds that this verse reflects the departure of the priestly class from the government of the state.\(^85\) Similarly he interprets

\[\text{hereticis excogitata, ut ius regni delerent et civitates optimis legibus institutae everterent, sed in hac re auctor gravior peccavit, quod cum iam alias de hoc errore maxima cum caritate admonitus fuerit, non modo non resipuit, sed etiam vehementius et pertinacius animum obfirmavit.}\]

\[^83\] Ibid.: “Semper enim Deus illius populi legislator, rector et gubernator fuit, cum lex quid agendum esset perscriberet et illi arbitratru suo non regerent, sed Dei mandatis et iussis moverentur. Lex enim erat regimini regula et norma, quae neque ad hos, neque ad illos transferri poterat, cum ex unius Dei voluntate pendere, quod sane ad formam aliquis reipublicae traduci non potest, cum illae gubernentur iudicio eorum qui praesunt et ad illorum arbitrium pro variis rerum eventibus immutentur. Haec quidem a Deo sui regimini habet regulam, cum iudices et reges iuxta praescrispectum formam gubernassent, sacerdotes vero legis interpretes exitissent.”

\[^84\] It is no accident that the same argument, that the Jewish state was a theocracy and therefore not comparable with the Aristotelian models, was used in 1648 by Conring to defend the German princedoms against the republics of the radical Calvinists. See Marchetti, *Sulla degiudaizzazione della politica*. See note 6, above.

\[^85\] Sigonio, *Opera*, vol. 6, pars tertia, col. 1194: “Quamobrem Dominus ut populum a regis postulatione deterret, durum et difficile regum dominatum futurum esse proponebat, ut homines ab ea cogitatione ad aliam meliorem praestantiorumque traduceret. Neque enim Dominus ideo regnum improbat quasi non esset ab eo, per quem reges regnant et legum conditores iura decernunt, constitutum, sed quia melius a sacerdotibus quam a regibus gubernanda erat respublica. […] Quare cum dicat Dominus i Regum: 'me et non vobis abiecerunt,' non significat legem Domini a regibus omnino contemptam, aut in iudicando neglectam fuisset, ita ut non penes legem sed suo arbitratru populum gubernare eas liberum fuerit (absurda enim haec sunt, ut voluit auctor) sed quia sacerdotes et Levitae qui proxime ad Deum accedunt, a reipublicae gubernacione eiecit erant, eis eictis Deus imperio exclusum et se iniuria affectum conqueritur.”
the Aristotelian distinction between the rule of law and the rule of kings as anti-tyrannical, not anti-monarchical.\textsuperscript{86}

Sigonio’s response is long and highly nuanced. He begins by simply rejecting the censor’s most defamatory accusation: that he was influenced by the political ideas of Protestant heretics. Next, he claims that he chose his definition of monarchical form to stress its differences from the aristocratic one (though this assertion does not satisfactorily address the interpretive objections of the censor). He then tries to demonstrate to the censor that his reading refers not only to the passage in Samuel but also to the pro-monarchical passage in Deuteronomy 17.\textsuperscript{87} Indeed, Sigonio uses this second source in book VII, in the chapter devoted to kings, but he quotes it together with a paraphrase of Josephus Flavius—without commenting on it—and in effect cites Samuel only to argue (as he had in all other contexts) that the rule of monarchy was arbitrary.

After quoting a long passage from \textit{De republica Hebraeorum}, Sigonio re-asserts that his work is orthodox in yet another respect: he presents the Jewish monarchy in a negative way, because in the history of the people of Israel the rule of the judges proved itself superior to that of the kings.\textsuperscript{88} To support this contention, Sigonio quotes passages from Thomas Aquinas, although he ignores this author’s mixed model, perhaps because he identifies only the two simple forms of aristocracy and monarchy in the Hebrew republic. Nonetheless, he attaches great importance to Thomas’ interpretation of the power of kings.\textsuperscript{89} Sigonio uses Thomas

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.: “Nam cum citet auctor locum Aristotelis his verbis: ‘Deinceps disputandum est de rege qui sua voluntate gerit,’ non videt de tyranno potius quam de rege disputare? Plenum enim regnum proxime ad tyrannicum accedere videtur.”

\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.: “Diluamus modo atrocem censuram, qua pene Calvinianus et alter Brutus factus est Sigonio. Principio praemittendum arbitrari, verba quae cavilandi ansam censori obtulerunt, ea potissimum de causa fuisse a Sigonio prolata ut paucis exprimeret discrimen praecipium inter regiminis formam quae sub iudicibus obtinuerat, ab ea quae sub regibus inducta est, moderantibus scilicet iudicibus legem dominatam esse cum Deo, at in regum principatu hominis voluntatem dominatum tenuisse, non vero ut regium ius regiamque dominationem quod Calvinus, Buchananus, aliique faciunt sectarii convelleret.”

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., col. 1196: “Ex hisce prolixis contextibus appareet quod initio dixeram, propo- suisse videlicet sibi Sigonium lectoribus aperire discrimen inter iudicium dominationem et regum, non vero animum habuisse auctoritatem regiumque ius veluti intellegitimum atque iniquum damnandi, quod sectarii pervesse moluntur. Hac enim re ne ullam quidem ver- bum Sigonio protulit. Id unum adversus regium principatum colligi posse videtur, scilicet praestantiorem regio Iudaeorum dominatu iudicium aristocratiam fuisse.”

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.: “Verum hoc iure negari non posse mihi videor. Atque ut omittam modo scripturae testimonia quae id evincunt, placet hic S. Thomae auctoritatem usurpare, ex pr. 2, qu. 105, art. 1 in corpore, ita docentis: ‘Unde optima ordinatio principium est in aliqua civitate vel regno, in qua unus praeficitur secundum virtutem, qui omnibus praestit et sub ipso sunt aliqui principantes secundum virtutem. Et tamen tali principatu ad omnes pertinet, tum quia ex omnibus eligi possunt, tum quia ab omnibus eligitur. Talis enim est
to argue that the episode of the first Jewish king, described in the book of Samuel, was not only negative, but was inextricably connected to the treachery of the Jewish people, which was consequently given a king as a punishment by God. Thomas then draws on the Aristotelian argument that virtuous individuals are extremely rare and that therefore monarchy easily degenerates into tyranny.\footnote{Sigonio, \textit{Opera}, vol. 6, pars tertia, col. 1198: "Haec S. Thomas, qui praeterea cum sibi obieisset optimam esse civitatis vel populi ordinationem, ut per regem gubernetur, ac propterea non debuisse Deum Iudaeis permettere ut sibi regem quando vellet constituentur, sed ab ipso Deo ab exordiis Iudaicae reipublicae oportuisset constitui, haec respondit, quae satis innuunt priorem Hebraeorum sub Iudiis dominatum, quem in corpore articuli absolute dixerat, regio postmodum inducta erat, regio postmodum inducto fuisse perfectior: 'Ad secundum dicendum (sunt verba S. Thomae) quod regnum est optimum regimen populi si non corrumpatur, sed propter magnam potestate eius, quae regi conceditur, de facili regimen degenerat in tyrannidem, nisi sit perfecta virtus eius, cui talis potestas conceditur [...] perfecta autem virtus in paucis inventur, et praecipue Iudaei crudeliores erant, et ad avaritiam proni, per quae vitia maxime homines in tyrannidem decidunt. Et ideo Dominus a principio eis regem non instituit cum plena potestate, sed iudicem et gubernatorem in eorum custodia, sed postea regem ad petitionem populi quasi indignatus concessit, ut patet per hoc quod dixit ad Samuelem [...]:' Non te abiecerunt sed me, ne regnum super eos.'"\textsuperscript{190}}

There is more to Sigonio’s defense, but what we have described thus far is sufficient for our purposes and can enhance our understanding of the political thought of \textit{De republica Hebraeorum}. Sigonio defends a concept of kingship whereby a king rules not through laws but according to his will, arguing that the distinction is not between legitimate and illegitimate monarchy, or between monarchy and tyranny, but between an aristocracy bound by law and a king free of all legal limitations. It is no mistake that the censor mentions people such as the constitutionalist Buchanan, since the rejection of absolutism made use of the same analytical schemes. Even the reference to Thomas Aquinas does not dispel suspicion of unorthodoxy, since Aquinas’ writings on tyranny and the right of resistance were also employed in the constitutionalist literature.\footnote{Some years ago, Diego Quaglioni did much to clarify the importance of the exegesis of I Samuel 8 in the history of the juridical interpretation of the role of the king from Augustine to Bodin. In his analysis, Quaglioni reconstructs an interpretative trend which extends from Thomas to Tolomeo da Lucca (who completed Aquinas’ \textit{De regmine principum}) to Bartolo da Sassoferrato. See Quaglioni, “L’iniquo diritto: ‘Regimen regis’ e ‘ius regis’ nellesegesi di i Sam. 8, 11–17 e negli ‘specula principum’ del tardo Medioevo,” in A. De Benedictis, ed., \textit{Specula Principum} (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1999), pp. 209–242.}
4.3 Connections to Other European Thinkers

It is particularly appropriate to place *De republica Hebraeorum* in the context of the political discourse in the rest of Europe. One cannot explain Sigonio’s profound interest in the political application of the Hebrew model without considering his influences from the other side of the Alps. In Sigonio’s earlier works, the comparison of the histories of different peoples as a way to understand the essence of political institutions had driven him to accurately compare the distinctive elements of the various ancient and modern experiences—Roman, Greek, and Venetian. Similarly, in his work on the state of the Jews, Sigonio establishes some parallels between different political institutions—for instance, between the Jewish criminal trial and the Venetian one. Nonetheless, the commonalities with his previous efforts are not so numerous that they could be regarded as one, unified study of antiquity.

As we have seen, Prodi’s attempt to place Sigonio’s interest in the Jewish people within a religious-cultural project promoted by Cardinal Paleotti is contradicted by the peculiarly political characteristics of *De republica Hebraeorum*. For instance, with respect to Jewish law, Sigonio provides a scheme which deviates from the traditional Catholic understanding. His separation between ritual and civil law is more reminiscent of Calvinist thought, particularly the work of Bertram. Indeed, it is conspicuous that within a few years, two works were published on the Hebrew state and based on a similar analysis of Mosaic law, describing it as a model in which the religious sphere was separated from the civil.

According to this line of reasoning, we can understand how Aquinas’ interpretation of the biblical right of kings as an unjust “right of tyrants” greatly influenced the late medieval juridical literature through its crystallization in *De regimine principum*. In this work Tolomeo da Lucca, using the passage from Samuel as a starting point, concluded that when God appointed a king, he had wanted to support the idea that for the people a *regimen politicum*, like that of the judges, was superior to a monarchy. See Quaglioni, “L’iniquo diritto,” p. 223. Such a dichotomy was taken up by Bartolo in *De regimine civitatis*, and it was re-interpreted when the liberty of the Italian cities was jeopardized by the ascent of the *seigniories* (nobility). Against the backdrop of this conflict, Bartolo interpreted the passage from Samuel as indicating the inferiority of monarchical rule relative to rule by judges, the latter being a desirable model and one praised by God (adding in this context a passage from book 3 of Aristotle’s *Politics*). Quaglioni, “L’iniquo diritto,” pp. 226–227. Bartolo da Sassoferrato, *De regimine civitatis*, ii, pp. 191–230, cited in D. Quaglioni, *Politica e diritto nel Trecento italiano* (Florence: Olschki, 1983), p. 157: “Et per istos iudices Deus rexit populum Iudaorum per multa tempora.” It is thus clear how the medieval political-juridical literature influenced early modern political literature.

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92 DRH, pp. 305–306: “Fuere ergo tribuni, centuriones, quinquagenarii et decani magistratus, qui inter cetera ipsorum manera iudicibus praepositi causas ad eos introduxerunt et fortasse etiam docuerunt, quod hodie quoque Venetiis factunt, quos Advocatores Communis dicunt.”
The significance attached by Sigonio to the different parts of the law, in particular the civil part, recalls the preoccupation of many scholars with Mosaic law in those years. These scholars built not only comparative schema incorporating the different juridical experiences but also a genealogy of legal systems, which placed Jewish law at the top of the hierarchy. This interpretative scheme sheds new light on the history of Jewish institutions, which progressively became more accepted as a model and as an instrument of legitimization for specific political agendas. Thus, whereas the history of Israel had for centuries been excluded from studies of political thought and relegated to theological and controversialist arenas, from the fifteenth century onward it acquired an increasingly important role within European culture in political science as well as in other fields. This transition was justified not only by the re-discovery of the biblical sources, which from Valla to Erasmus had been characteristic of the Reformation, but also by the Italian Renaissance ideology of *prisca theologia* and its reverence for ancient texts. In line with this development, Sigonio praises the Hebrew republic in his dedicatory letter to Gregory XIII not only based on its divine origin, but also because it was the most ancient of states. We do not wish to imply that Sigonio was part of the *prisca theologia* phenomenon, but it is certainly important to note that his colleague Ulisse Aldrovandi, whose library Sigonio used to complete his work, took part in the debate on the origins of human culture.\(^\text{93}\)

Perhaps most significant, the censors viewed Sigonio within the greater European context, since in their attack on *De republica Hebraeorum*, they placed it alongside the anti-monarchic literature of the period. The comparison is understandable; Bertram, for instance, identified in the Jewish tradition all the elements of Huguenot, anti-monarchic thinking: the key role played by the representatives of the people gathered in the assembly of the States-General, who hold supreme administrative authority; the people’s power of election or dismissal of the king; and the importance of the provincial and civic magistracies in the administration of the state.\(^\text{94}\) To these one must add the decisive role of the concept of contract, which aimed at uniting the king, the people, and God. The right of resistance to tyranny was grounded in these principles, and tyranny was defined as disregard for them. Resistance to tyranny became

\(^{93}\) See note 52, above.

a hallmark of Huguenot political thought following the increasingly violent repression of Protestants in late-sixteenth-century France.95

Sigonio also lived in an environment rife with republican tensions, with the Bolognese magistracies’ coming into open conflict with the institutions of the Church in Rome. Angela De Benedictis has shown that between 1588 and 1589 all the motifs of the European political-juridical debate had been introduced into this conflict, including all those aspects of the right-of-resistance literature which were inspired by examples in Jewish history.96 Sigonio had contributed to this discussion both in the Historia Bononiensis and in De regno Italiae, but with De republica Hebraeorum he went even further in advocating republican ideas.

Sigonio’s analysis relates to the crucial problems discussed in Europe at the time: The role of the law; the rule of the aristocracy as opposed to the abusive rule of the king; the prerogatives of the assembly in electing the magistrates and the monarch; and, most of all, the three-part scheme of the republic, which entrusts the provincial and civic magistracies with the task of administrating parts of the state. The last point leads inevitably to contemporary Huguenot thought and to Hotman in particular, who had praised this role of the local offices as the backbone of the entire kingdom in his Francogallia.97

Sigonio’s scheme of the three concentric circles enjoyed great popularity in the political literature of the seventeenth century. Both Althusius and Grotius adopted his model, and Grotius, particularly in De republica emendanda, makes an analogy between Sigonio’s respublica Iudaica and the United Provinces.98

Another nuanced aspect of Sigonio’s tract is its discussion of the concept of power. Sigonio introduces the subject by claiming that the structure of the state is determined by the attribution of supreme power

95 On August 24, 1572, during the festivities celebrating the marriage of Henry of Navarre to Marguerite of Valois, the Catholics massacred the Huguenots in Paris and other French towns.

96 De Benedictis, Repubblica per contratto, pp. 275–276: “erano stati messi in campo […] tutti i motivi del dibattito politico-giuridico in corso nell’Europa di quello scorso di secolo. Sovranità popolare, imperium, consenso, polizia e giustizia, ruolo dei magistrati, irrevocabilità di capitolazioni e patti.” Camillo Paleotti’s writing of a tract entitled De republica bononiensi during these years demonstrates the Bolognese cultural interest in republican questions. See note 51, above.


98 See note 76, above.
to an authority (*principatum*). This definition is very different from that used by Sigonio for the Roman and Athenian republics. In these two cases, there was full conformity with Aristotelian definitions, most importantly in the distinction between just constitutions and degenerate ones, which Sigonio ignores in relation to the Jewish state. This definition seems to refer to Bodin’s claim in the *Methodus* that the state is defined by its ruler. Bodin added that the form of the state depends not on the moral qualities of the holder of power but rather on the description of the ruling authority. This analysis is connected to the rejection of any reference to a mixed form of government. If sovereign power (*imperium*) is thus characterized, it cannot be divided between multiple authorities. Rather, it must reside only with one who is prepared, if necessary, to delegate some prerogatives to other bodies of the state. On this principle Bodin bases his distinction between form of state and form of government: if in the form of state no partition is possible, in the administration of the state several entities can take part.

We have seen how Sigonio initially (in his Venetian years) idealized mixed government. He had praised the Roman republic of Scipio described by Cicero, comparing it to the rule of the Serenissima (the Venetian state). In the case of the Jewish state, he rejects mixed government in favor of simple constitutions. For example, while discussing the functions of the popular assembly, he hastens to add that even if the people assist in the management of the state, the senate (in an aristocracy) and the king (in a monarchy) are the ones who actually hold the power.

Another connection between Bodin and Sigonio can be seen in their analyses of the role of the king. For Bodin, one of the most important characteristics of the supreme power was the right of life and death,
unbound by any law and in the hands of the sovereign.\textsuperscript{103} In describing the Jewish judicial system, Sigonio identifies in the sovereign power one of the main points which differentiated judges from kings in the Bible: during the period of the judges, the right of life and death was limited by law; during the period of the kings, however, it rested on the discretion of the king's will.\textsuperscript{104}

Sigonio’s work plays an important role in the development of these themes in subsequent European political thought. The deeply Aristotelian framework which characterizes his thinking on the institutions of Israel made them intelligible to European thinkers and thus participated in the process by which the content of Jewish history penetrated European political culture. Earlier Christian Hebraists had perhaps already begun translating Hebrew legal texts into Latin juridical-political terminology, but by discussing the Hebrew model within an Aristotelian framework, Sigonio goes one step further and places it on a par with the Greco-Roman tradition, or even in some cases above it, because of its antiquity and holiness. This encounter between classical tradition and the divine Hebrew republic posed a problem for the absolutist literature, which was forced to view the Jewish model as a danger to traditional balances. As we have seen, the censor’s replies to Sigonio had already attempted to limit the political significance of the Jewish republic, anticipating the reaction of seventeenth-century German thought, in which the scholar Herman Conring, in his \textit{De republica Hebraeorum}, would claim absolute incompatibility between Jewish political history and the Aristotelian model. Conring’s approach typified the “dejudaization” of European culture, which gradually expelled Judaism from every form of knowledge, relegating it to the theological and polemical space from which it had emerged at the beginning of the fifteenth century.\textsuperscript{105}

5. SIGONIO’S JEWISH SOURCES

We will now look at the last aspect of Sigonio’s work which will be useful in better understanding the significance of his analysis: his use of Jewish sources. In \textit{De republica Hebraeorum} we find several references

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Bodin, \textit{Methodus}, p. 177: “\textit{Multo magis ad summum imperium perinet, leges iubere ac tollere, bellum indicere ac finire, extremum ius provocare, vita denique ac prae-miorum potestatem habere.”}
  \item \textsuperscript{104} DRH, pp. 279–280, 281: “\textit{Ius vero necis liberum haudquaquam habuerunt, quia in omnibus legem sequiti sunt. Qua deinde soluti reges fuerunt. [...] Atque omnino vitae, necisque potestatem arbitrariam habuit et quodammodo superior legibus fuit.”}
  \item \textsuperscript{105} Cf. Marchetti, \textit{Sulla degiudaizzazione}.
\end{itemize}
to the Talmud and other post-biblical texts, such as Sefer Hakabala by Abraham Halevi. Most of these quotations are found in the parts of the work devoted to religion, whereas only two references are included in the last two books. In these last two citations, Sigonio refers not only to rabbinic texts but also to the secondary source of his information. Both quotations concern the court system and the role of the Sanhedrin as a judicial body, and they are taken from the Opus de arcanis catholicae veritatis, an anti-Jewish polemical work written by Pietro Galatino in 1518. Sigonio’s use of Galatino is of little significance in the development of his political thought. Sigonio uses him only partially, ignoring altogether, for instance, Galatino’s talmudic distinction between the twenty-three-member and three-member law courts, which had drawn the attention of his predecessors, such as Bodin and Bertram. For Sigonio’s purposes, the Jewish political model had to be understood exclusively through the


107 Both Bodin and Bertram had referred to the distinction between the two kinds of Jewish tribunals. Their analysis represents an important link between Bodin’s Methodus and Bertram’s work. Bertram, De politia Iudaica, pp. 79–80: “Denique si unquam locum habuit politia illa magistratum et iudicium quam Talmudistae nostri tradunt, profecto ad huius temporis progressum referenda est. Tradunt videlicet supremum Hebraorum senatum, nimirum septuaginta, gladii seu morte plectendi potestatem, quam habebant in causis maioribus, (quales erant, de Tribu, de summo sacerdote, de Pseudopropheta, et de Maiestate). Vigiinti tribus viris capitalibus, qui דיני נפשות, id est, iudicia capitalia tractabant, comunicasse, septem viros iudices דיני ממנות, id est, pecuniarum et bonorum in singulis urbibus constitutos; quaram tres (fortasse duo Levitae praefecti et unus ex loci iudicibus) iudicia instituerunt, quinque de prima provocatione cognoscerent, septem de secunda decernerent. Praeterea decem iudices rerum venalium, quasi aediles creatos fuisse, quorum unus ex sacerdotali genere esset, quinnetiam receptos arbitros tres, quorum uteque iudicaret unum eligebat, electi duo tertium optabant. Atque de his fusissime in Talmud ad tractatum de Synedriis, et apud Maymonem in lib. De perplexis.” Bodin, Methodus, pp. 219–220: “Moses vero Maymo lib. III perplexorum cap. postremo scribit, gladii potestatem habuisse senatum. ab codem senatu xxii viros capitales, qui tvpn ynd id est animarum iudices et septem viros iudices pecuniarum ac bonorum, id est, twnnmm ynd in singulis urbis constitutos, quorum tres iudicia instituebant, quinque primam appellationem disceptabant, septem de secunda provocatione decernerant. Praeterea decem iudices rerum venalium quasi aediles creabantur, quorum unus erat sacerdos ad haec arbitri recepti tres, quorum uteque iudicaret unum eligebat, electi duo tertium optabant. Quae omniam in Pandectis Hebraeorum, titulo Sanedrim cap. I. II. III copiose explicantur.” See Bartolucci, La repubblica ebraica, pp. 62–63.
categories of classical political thought, which would have been impossible if he had referred to the juridical tradition of the Talmud.

In the first five books of De republica Hebraeorum we do find other passages quoting Jewish sources. Among them are the depiction of Ezra’s re-codification of the law, a description of Kabbala, a quotation from Sefer Hakabala, and, above all, an unusual description of the Second Temple. Sigonio did not own any of the original sources, nor could he have read them, since he did not know Hebrew. The only accessible text Sigonio could rely on for trustworthy translations of these Jewish sources was the Chronographia by Gilbert Génébrard, a teacher of Hebrew at the College of France.

Génébrard’s chronology is divided into four books, extending from the creation of the world to the end of the sixteenth century. In the first part on Jewish history, we find all the same information included in Sigonio’s book. It is noteworthy that Génébrard was the Latin translator of Sefer Hakabala and Seder Olam (a classic Jewish chronology) as well as part of Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah (in particular, the section on the Messiah). As an example of the relationship between Sigonio’s and Génébrard’s texts, let us examine our author’s definition of Kabbala:

But the things Moses taught orally he first communicated to Joshua, and then Joshua to the elders, the elders to the prophets, and the prophets to the scribes. In the later scholarship of the Hebrews, these traditions are called cabala historica.

This distinction between written and oral law and, more importantly, the definition of cabala historica could not be found in the Christian Kabbalistic tradition of the time. The source could, however, be found in two different passages of Génébrard’s work:

Joshua was instructed by Moses on the meaning of the law and divine right. [...] He conveyed it to the seventy elders, who directly conveyed it to the prophets, and the prophets conveyed it to the sages, i.e., the scribes and the Pharisees. The rabbis prided themselves

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108 The confusion of the Jewish oral law and even the Talmud with Kabala was commonplace in the tradition of Christian Kabala that developed in the Renaissance and that served as sources for Génébrard and Sigonio.

109 Gilbert Génébrard (1537–1597) was a professor of Hebrew at the Collège de France from 1569. His contribution to the study of the Hebrew language and the translation of Hebrew texts, such as Seder Olam and Sefer Hakabala, was great. For a complete bibliography, see Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), s.v. “Génébrard, Gilbert.” Sigonio had Génébrard’s work in his library. Cf. Città del Vaticano, Archivio vaticano, Fondo Boncompagni, Armadio 1, mazzo q, Nota di tutti i libri acquistati dalla eredità del celebre letterato Carlo Sigonio dal duca Giacomo Boncompagni Seniore, cc. 11: c. 3r.
on having received from them their own knowledge. In *Pirkei Avot* 1, the rabbis called this *Cabala* or oral law.\(^{110}\)

This first part derives, as Génébrard says, from the mishnaic tractate *Avot*, and it is followed by a more precise explanation of the concept of Kabbala. Whereas Reuchlin and Pico had defined the Kabbalistic tradition as a science (*ars*), Génébrard repeats this definition sarcastically, referring to the content of Kabbala as insignificant trivia (*nugae*). Instead he offers a different definition:

This is not the *Cabala* exalted by the learned fathers, which is one part historical and one part what is called *tora b’al peh*, i.e., oral law. [...] In effect it is the simple interpretation of the written law and contains the simple traditions of the synagogue, the customs, and the explanations of the ritual of the forefathers. Sometimes the Talmud, doctrinal homilies, responsa, etc., contain fragments of this tradition, but we will discuss this elsewhere.\(^{111}\)

It is clear that Sigonio was also using this passage in his reference to *cabala historica* as oral law and the interpretative tradition of the written law.

Apart from secondary sources, Sigonio uses the Bible, the Septuagint translation, Josephus Flavius, Philo, and a few others. His aim was most likely to give his work scholarly legitimacy despite his lack of direct access to the sources, but this information does not play a decisive role in his analysis. As in other works of the period on the same subject, he intends to build a “scientifically” valid model, and for this purpose the Jewish sources were not important. Sigonio tries to place the history of the Jewish political institutions within the context of a well-defined intellectual tradition (in which Jewish sources had no place), influenced primarily by the struggles and hopes of his time.

Thus the Hebrew republic is used by Sigonio to legitimize, on account of its antiquity and holiness, a political model where the religious and civil spheres are clearly separated and the aristocracy rules through the law.

\(^{110}\) Genebrardus, *Chronographiae*, p. 88: “*Eductus est Iosue a Mose legis iurisque divinae intelligentiam* […] *Eam docet seniores septuaginta, qui per ordinem eam communicant cum prophetis et prophetae cum sapientibus, id est scribis et pharisaeis, a quibus rabbeni se suam sapientiam accepisse gloriantur. Pirke Aboth i. hoc vocant Cabala, sive legem ore acceptam.*”

\(^{111}\) Ibid., p. 317: “*Neque enim ea est Cabala ab eruditis patribus laudata, quae partim historica est, partim [תורה שבעל פה] nominatur, id est lex ore precepta. […] Haec enim legis scriptae pura est interpret, et simplices Synagogae traditiones, consuetudines, ritus maiorum explanationes continet, quarum fragmenta nonnumquam suppeditant Talmud, doctrina derasim, quaestiones et c. sed de hoc alias.*”
In this framework, the inferior magistracies of the tribes and cities play an important role. These issues were very controversial, both between the different European confessions and within each one. The debate in which Sigonio participates transformed life in countries such as France and the Netherlands, where brutal wars erupted from conflicts both religious and political. The discussion would continue in Grotius’ Holland and Althusius’ Germany, with these thinkers’ relying on the Sigonian model as an important contribution to the development of their works.

University of Bologna