In 1976, Claude Nicolet called for the study of *contiones* as integral parts of the Roman “constitution” in his work *Le métier de citoyen dans la Rome républicaine*: “L’étude systématique de toutes ces assemblées préparatoires au vote des lois ou aux grands procès n’a pas encore été faite. Elle serait cependant possible tant les mentions indiscutables, pour ne pas parler des récits parfois suspects qu’on trouve chez Tite-Live ou Denys, sont nombreuses. Elles représentent à coup sûr ... un très intéressant recours à l’opinion publique ... Il faudrait donc faire une analyse extrêmement détaillée de toutes ces occasions parvenues à notre connaissance, et étudier de très près les différences de vocabulaire, de raisonnement, les types d’arguments, ainsi que les différences des techniques politiques, utilisées par les leaders selon les époques ou les circonstances. On arriverait ainsi, indirectement, à avoir une idée de la composition et des réactions du public ... Il faut nous contenter, à ce jour, d’esquisser cette direction de recherche, avant de l’exploiter ailleurs.”

Nicolet was right in calling attention to this scholarship omission. Until then, only Botsford had devoted a few pages to *contiones* in his book on Roman assemblies, while Lily Ross Taylor had dealt with the places where those meetings were usually held. Otherwise, *contiones* had only received marginal attention limited to the participation of prominent Roman politicians, and no monograph had analyzed this type of popular assembly, its method of operation or even the institutional and political role it played in the history of Rome.

Nicolet’s words proved fateful and appeared to encourage the study of *contiones*. Indeed, from 1989 onwards the *contio* was the main subject of study in a series of publications in different languages. That year, the first monograph on this topic, my own, was published in Spanish, on the basis

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of a doctoral thesis. The volume contained a detailed study of the dynamic of the assemblies as well as a comprehensive typology and catalogue of the known contiones throughout the history of Rome. A brief synthesis with the main conclusions of the book was published in English in 1995, and the following year the volume Contra arma verbis, a detailed study of speeches in the contio and their political role in the Late Republic, was published in German.

The last decade of the twentieth century also saw a paper published by Hölkeskamp in German on the relevance of public oratory in the political culture of the Roman Republic, as well as the book by Laser on the participation of the urban plebs in political conflicts in the Late Republic, in which the contio was presented as an essential element. In 2001, Mouritsen also analyzed the intervention of the plebs in the politics of the Late Republic and in his book, written in English, an entire chapter was devoted to the contio as an instigator of popular movements. A thorough study of public oratory as a tool of power, once again focusing on the Late Republic, was published in English in 2004 by Morstein-Marx. We must add to this list the paper published by Martin Jehne in 2006 on the number of participants in Roman assemblies and their social background, issues which had already been approached by Mouritsen in the aforementioned publication.

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4 F. Pina Polo, Las contiones civiles y militares en Roma (Zaragoza 1989).
9 H. Mouritsen, Plebs and politics in the late Roman Republic (Cambridge 2001), especially 38–62.
10 R. Morstein-Marx, Mass oratory and political power in the late Roman Republic (Cambridge 2004).