

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA** 
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 5
2024

Fascicolo 17. Febbraio 2024
Storia Militare Medievale

a cura di
MARCO MERLO, ANTONIO MUSARRA, FABIO ROMANONI E PETER SPOSATO



Società Italiana di Storia Militare

Direttore scientifico Virgilio Ilari
Vicedirettore scientifico Giovanni Brizzi
Direttore responsabile Gregory Claude Alegi
Redazione Viviana Castelli

Consiglio Scientifico. Presidente: Massimo De Leonardis.

Membri stranieri: Christopher Bassford, Floribert Baudet, Stathis Birthacas, Jeremy Martin Black, Loretana de Libero, Magdalena de Pazzis Pi Corrales, Gregory Hanlon, John Hattendorf, Rotem Kowner, Yann Le Bohec, Aleksei Nikolaevič Lobin, Prof. Armando Marques Guedes, Prof. Dennis Showalter (†). *Membri italiani:* Livio Antonielli, Marco Bettalli, Antonello Folco Biagini, Aldino Bondesan, Franco Cardini, Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi, Piero del Negro, Giuseppe De Vergottini, Carlo Galli, Marco Gemignani, Roberta Ivaldi, Nicola Labanca, Luigi Loreto, Gian Enrico Rusconi, Carla Sodini, Gioacchino Strano, Donato Tamblé.

Comitato consultivo sulle scienze militari e gli studi di strategia, intelligence e geopolitica: Lucio Caracciolo, Flavio Carbone, Basilio Di Martino, Antulio Joseph Echevarria II, Carlo Jean, Gianfranco Linzi, Edward N. Luttwak, Matteo Paesano, Ferdinando Sanfelice di Monteforte.

Consulenti di aree scientifiche interdisciplinari: Donato Tamblé (Archival Sciences), Piero Cimbolli Spagnesi (Architecture and Engineering), Immacolata Eramo (Philology of Military Treatises), Simonetta Conti (Historical Geo-Cartography), Lucio Caracciolo (Geopolitics), Jeremy Martin Black (Global Military History), Elisabetta Fiocchi Malaspina (History of International Law of War), Gianfranco Linzi (Intelligence), Elena Franchi (Memory Studies and Anthropology of Conflicts), Virgilio Ilari (Military Bibliography), Luigi Loreto (Military Historiography), Basilio Di Martino (Military Technology and Air Studies), John Brewster Hattendorf (Naval History and Maritime Studies), Elina Gugliuzzo (Public History), Vincenzo Lavenia (War and Religion), Angela Teja (War and Sport), Stefano Pisu (War Cinema), Giuseppe Della Torre (War Economics).

Nuova Antologia Militare

Rivista interdisciplinare della Società Italiana di Storia Militare
Periodico telematico open-access annuale (www.nam-sism.org)
Registrazione del Tribunale Ordinario di Roma n. 06 del 30 Gennaio 2020
Scopus List of Accepted Titles October 2022 (No. 597).
Rivista scientifica ANVUR (5/9/2023)



Direzione, Via Bosco degli Arvali 24, 00148 Roma
Contatti: direzione@nam-sigm.org ; virgilio.ilari@gmail.com

©Authors hold the copyright of their own articles.

For the Journal: © Società Italiana di Storia Militare
(www.societaitalianastoriamilitare@org)

Grafica: Nadir Media Srl - Via Giuseppe Veronese, 22 - 00146 Roma
info@nadirmedia.it

Gruppo Editoriale Tab Srl -Viale Manzoni 24/c - 00185 Roma
www.tabedizioni.it

ISSN: 2704-9795

ISBN Fascicolo 9788892958623

NUOVA **ANTOLOGIA** 
MILITARE
RIVISTA INTERDISCIPLINARE DELLA SOCIETÀ ITALIANA DI STORIA MILITARE

N. 5
2024

Fascicolo 17. Febbraio 2024
Storia Militare Medievale

a cura di
MARCO MERLO, ANTONIO MUSARRA, FABIO ROMANONI E PETER SPOSATO



Società Italiana di Storia Militare



Bombardella in ferro fucinato, Italia centro-settentrionale, fine XIV secolo.
Brescia, Museo delle armi "Luigi Marzoli", inv. 101 (Fotostudio Rapuzzi).

The Pulcher tractatus de materia belli A Military Practitioner's Manual from c.1300

by JÜRIG GASSMANN

ABSTRACT. The second half of the thirteenth century sees a string of pragmatic works on military tactics appear in Latin Europe, among them a short treatise known by the later title *Pulcher tractatus de materia belli*, by an anonymous, presumably Italian soldier. Like other contemporary military tracts, it too relies on Vegetius' *De re militari*, but in an original redaction. The text of the *Pulcher tractatus* remains relatively unknown in anglophone historiography. This article reviews the subject-matter of the *Pulcher tractatus* in detail and relates it to both the military practices of the time and the content of other contemporary pragmatic works on tactics extant, like the Second Book of the Castilian *Siete Partidas*, the *De regimine principum* of Giles of Rome, vernacular translations of Vegetius, and military-related texts from other genres.

KEYWORD. MEDIEVAL WARFARE; MILITARY HISTORY; MEDIEVAL ITALY; PULCHER TRACTATUS; VEGETIUS; GILES OF ROME; SIETE PARTIDAS

The Text – Provenance, Author, Age, and Region

The *Pulcher tractatus* has been transmitted to us in a single manuscript, now kept in the University Library in Graz, Austria, as Cod. I 901. It was transferred there in 1786 upon the dissolution of the monastery of St Lambrecht, situated on a trade route to Italy and where the manuscript seems to have lain since its acquisition shortly after its production. The Graz manuscript is a copy, as evidenced by typical copyist errors. Between 1383 and 1396 it was copied on paper, with watermarks pointing to a Northern Italian provenance, bound with other, extraneous material, and received its current title at that point. The manuscript was edited in 1927 by Alfred Pichler,¹ but so far as I can see, there is

1 *Der pulcher tractatus de materia belli. Ein Beitrag zur Kriegs- und Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters*, PICHLER, Alfred (ed.), Graz-Vienna-Leipzig, Leuschner und Lubensky, 1927. Pichler uses a smaller font where our author quotes Vegetius, and identifies the relevant passage in the *Epitoma*.

no more recent edition, no translation, and no in-depth consideration in English.

The name of the author is not known, and he (presumably the author was male) does not provide autobiographical information in the text. He was reasonably well educated but not an academic, the Latin is good, fluid and easily readable. The Vegetius quotations are spliced (mostly) without doing violence to the grammar, but the text lacks the copious biblical and other references regularly seen in the productions of clerical and lay intellectuals of the time.

Place and time of writing too are obscure; Pichler discusses the clues and excludes the maritime republics as well as Florence.² The time of production is likely the late thirteenth or very early fourteenth century; Pichler notes the mention of Saracen fighting tactics, which could refer to memories of the Saracen units fielded by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and his son Manfred in their Italian campaigns in the mid-thirteenth century.³ However, both Fidentius of Padua and Torsellus (referenced below) discuss Saracen fighting styles, as does the Iberian tactical literature,⁴ so this data point does not seem persuasive.

It seems likely to me that the author was a field grade infantry officer, senior enough to have insight into the mechanics of top command, but also so hands-on that he could appreciate the practicalities of the ordinary soldier's trade. His Vegetius-inspired injunction that the foot soldier has to be able to "use his weapons, carry loads, and dig"⁵ is surely as succinct and timeless a characterisation of the general infantryman as can be imagined.

European Tactical Literature in the High Middle Ages

Before the second half of the thirteenth century, we find comparatively few texts treating military matters on the tactical level; we have Gerald of Wales (c.1146-c.1223) or John of Salisbury (c.1110-1180), but their focus is strategy, not the minutiae of training, command, organising camp, and formations.⁶ In the

2 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 14-18.

3 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 18-19 and 43.

4 GARCÍA FITZ, Francisco, « La didáctica militar en la literatura castellana (segunda mitad del siglo XIII y primera del XIV) », *Anuario de estudios medievales* 19 (1989), pp. 271-283, at pp. 280-81.

5 *Pulcher Tractatus*, p. 43: *cui gestare ferrum, fossam facere, onus ferre consuetudo est*. Translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

6 HOSLER, John D., « Reframing the Conversation on Medieval Military Strategy », *Journal*

late twelve hundreds, the first tactical texts appear, and some of them are here compared to the *Pulcher Tractatus*: the *Siete Partidas*; Giles of Rome's *De regimine principum*; Juan Gil de Zamora's *De preconiis Hispanie*; the Templar Rule; and Torsellus' *Liber secretorum fidelium Crucis* as well as his source, Fidentius of Padua's *De recuperatione Terre Sancte*. The thirteenth century also sees initial translations of Vegetius' text into the vernacular, e.g. Mastre Richard's translation into Norman French; Jean de Meun's *Art de chevalerie*; and Bono Giamboni's *Vegezio Flavio dell'arte della guerra*.

A further interesting text is the Dominican John of Viterbo's *De regimine civitatum*, which describes the government of Florence in the mid-thirteenth century in 146 chapters, mostly centred on the role of the *podestà*.⁷ Chapters 131-136 deal with military matters: The decision to go to war at all, the nature of the enemy, the assembly of the host, the organisation of the march, pitching camp, sentries, and especially discipline.⁸ In the *explicit*, John expressly refers to Vegetius,⁹ but it is hard to see which elements of Vegetius he has used, beyond some general principles.

Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus lived in the second half of the fourth century; his tactical work *Epitoma de re militari* was used throughout the Middle Ages. Innumerable copies survive, and he was regularly excerpted, summarised, edited, and translated, and referred to, into Modern Times. Vegetius probably did not hold active command. His *Epitoma* is essentially a criticism of the decline by Vegetius' lifetime of the Roman legionary infantry (mirrored by an increased reliance on a professional cavalry),¹⁰ and consequently the focus of his advice is

of Medieval Military History 16 (2018), pp. 189-206, at pp. 193-202; ALLMAND, Christopher, *The De Re Militari of Vegetius*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011, pp. 88-91. MERLO, Marco, « Le armi del marchese. Gli armamenti negli *enseignements* di Teodoro Paleologo tra teoria e pratica della Guerra », *Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino* 110.2 (2012), pp. 499-568, at pp. 510-15. Especially Verbruggen argues that mediaeval commanders invested considerable intellectual effort into warfare, tactics and strategy: VERBRUGGEN, J.F., *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, WILLARD, Sumner and SOUTHERN, R. W. (trans.), 2nd Ed., Woodbridge, Boydell, 1998, pp. 204-350.

7 JOHN OF VITERBO, *Liber de regimine civitatum*, SALVEMINI, Gaetano (ed.), in GAUDENZI, Augusto (ed.), *Scripta Anecdota Glossatorum*, Vol. 3, Bologna, Monti, 1901, pp. 215-280. Not much is known about John; *de regimine civitatum* probably dates from around 1240.

8 JOHN OF VITERBO, *De regimine civitatum*, pp. 268-75.

9 JOHN OF VITERBO, *De regimine civitatum*, p. 280: *Explicit liber de regimine civitatum a Vegetio conpositus, qui librum de re militari conposuit*. Neither Salvemini's introduction (*ibid.* p. 216) nor his footnotes point to Vegetius.

10 P. Flavius VEGETIUS Renatus, *Flavii Vegetii Renati Viri Illvstris de re militari*, Cologne, Ce-

on restoring the former glory of the heavy infantry, through focused recruitment and training.¹¹

Another Classical work routinely referred to concurrently with Vegetius is Sextus Julius Frontinus' *Strategemata*, though they are in style very different; Frontinus flourished in the first century and served as a civil engineer, in high military command, as well as the highest civic offices. While the *Epitoma* is a structured theory text, the *Strategemata* put forward summaries of tactical problems illustrated by short – regularly just a sentence or a paragraph – anecdotal solutions taken from Classical literature, arranged in thematic chapters. Vegetius has received much modern academic attention, Frontinus considerably less.¹²

The Rule of the Templars is an early text with military and tactical elements. Its initial redaction, written in Latin, is attached to the minutes of the Council of Troyes in 1128.¹³ The Rule was later expanded – when this occurred is not known, but the text suggests a time between 1257 and 1265 for the latest revisions,¹⁴ so well before the time of the *Pulcher tractatus*. This expanded version, which includes a revised and re-ordered translation of the initial redaction, was almost certainly composed in Old French.¹⁵

Siete Partidas (Seven Parts or Divisions) denotes legislation compiled between 1256 and 1265 in Spanish by a committee of jurists reporting to Alfonso X *el sabio* (the Wise – 1221-1284), King of Castile. Of interest here is the second *Partida*, treating mediaeval government, and within that *Partida* Titles

ruicor, 1532, 3:26 *in fine* (p. 74); MERLO, pp. 501-02.

11 VEGETIUS, 1:8 (pp. 6-7); ALLMAND, pp. 17-21; VACCARO, Giulio, « 'Chi desidera pace apparecchi battaglia: ' Bono Giamboni traduttore di Vegezio », in LUBELLO, Sergio (ed.), *Volgarizzare, tradurre, interpretare nei secc. XIII-XVI*, Strasbourg, Éditions de linguistique et de philologie, 2011, pp. 55-68, at pp. 55-56 ; GASSMANN, Jürg, « Vegetius, Arrian and the Battlefield Cavalry Formations of Medieval Europe », in ROPA, Anastasija, and DAWSON, Timothy (eds.), *Echoing Hooves*, Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2022, pp. 179-203, at pp. 181-82.

12 HOSLER, pp. 191-193.

13 *La règle du Temple*, DE CURZON, Henri (ed.), Paris, Renouard, 1886, p. i; *The Rule of the Templars: The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar*, UPTON-WARD, J.M. (ed. and trans.), Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992, pp. 11-13.

14 *La règle du Temple*, p. iv; *Rule of the Templars*, pp. 13-16.

15 *La règle du Temple*, pp. ix-x; BENNETT, Matthew, « *La Règle du Temple* as a Military Manual, or How to Deliver a Cavalry Charge », in UPTON-WARD, J.M. (ed. and trans.), *The Rule of the Templars*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992, pp. 175-88, at pp. 175-76.

XXI-XXX, dealing with knights; officers at different levels; formations; on the march and setting up camp; signals; naval warfare; spoils and their distribution; and prisoners of war.¹⁶

The *Siete Partidas* routinely refer to “the Ancients” as the source and inspiration for their provisions; in Title XXI, *De los caualleros*, Vegetius is referred to by name (it seems the only time).¹⁷ In the passage where he is quoted, Vegetius says that the worthy *miles* is distinguished by a feeling of deep shame if he is defeated, which makes him want to win.¹⁸ The *Siete Partidas* use that passage to justify why knights were formerly, but are no longer recruited from the hale and hearty though shame-immune yeoman stock that Vegetius advocated, and are now instead selected based on their lineage.¹⁹

The Augustinian friar Giles of Rome (Aegidius Romanus, Aegidius Colonna, c.1243-1316) is known to have studied in Paris, and between around 1270 and 1285 wrote *De regimine principum* for the benefit of his pupil, the later French king Philippe IV *le bel*.²⁰ Of interest here is the third part of the third book, deal-

16 *Las Siete Partidas*, LÓPEZ, Gregorio (ed.), Salamanca, Domingo de Portonaris y Ursino, 1576; *Siete Partidas: Volume Two: Medieval Government: The World of Kings and Warriors*, BURNS, Robert I. (ed.) and SCOTT, Samuel Parsons (trans.), Philadelphia PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001; the Spanish text here used, and underlying Burns’ edition, is the commented (in Latin) redaction by Gregorio López; Spanish legal historians regard it as the most useful edition of the texts. For further reading on the general development of the *Siete Partidas*, see PANATERI, Daniel, « Adaptar y sobrevivir: Estrategías textuales de estabilización sobre Partidas en el siglo XIV », in RUCHESI, Fernando (ed.), *Circulación de ideas en la Antigüedad tardía y la Edad Media: Occidente y Oriente*, Resistencia, Instituto de Investigaciones Geohistóricas, 2020, pp. 169-82; ALLMAND, pp. 96-104.

17 In some detail ALLMAND, pp. 96-104; Allmand argues that the *Siete Partidas* rely heavily on Vegetius, which I do not recognise to the same extent.

18 VEGETIUS, 1:7 (p. 6) *Honestas enim idoneum militem reddit. Verecundia dum prohibet fugere, facit esse victorem*. ALLMAND, p. 96. Vegetius is here using *miles* in the Classical sense of “soldier.”

19 *Siete Partidas* 2:21:2 (ed. LÓPEZ, p. 71r / ed. BURNS, p. 418); ALLMAND (p. 102) does not pick up on this aspect, though he (*ibid.*) does correctly point out that the *Siete Partidas* in other places advocate meritocratic principles for the promotion of officers, up to the level of knighthood, and for the selection of commanders; GASSMANN Jürg, « The *Siete Partidas*: A Repository of Medieval Military and Tactical Instruction », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 9.1 (2021), pp. 1-27, at pp. 4-6.

20 Philipp the Fair was to be the recipient of two further works which cannot be discussed here, both highly original and by Pierre Dubois: the *Summaria, brevis et compendiosa doctrina felicitis expeditionis et abbreviationis guerrarum et litium regni Francorum* (1300) and

ing with military matters, and based to a great extent on Vegetius. Giles was a highly rated and frequently read author throughout the Middle Ages and beyond, and that includes his military chapters.²¹ His redaction is well structured and at times reads like a PowerPoint presentation, but it lacks the military practitioner's feel for the continuing relevance of Vegetius' advice.

De preconiis Hispanie also belongs in the *speculum* genre; it was written between 1278 and 1282 by the Franciscan Juan Gil de Zamora for the *infante* Don Sancho (IV), who succeeded his father Alfonso X as King of Castile in 1284. Comprising twelve chapters, Chapters (or Books) XI and XII expatiate on military matters. It has been thought – and Gil suggests – that both chapters were based on Vegetius; Maria Felisa del Barrio Vega has studied both and confirmed that Chapter XI is indeed derived from Vegetius, but Chapter XII from Frontinus. She has identified a Vatican manuscript where a quire containing a reworked version of the *Strategemata* was inserted into the Vegetius text, and which likely served Gil de Zamora as source. This might have led Gil to believe he was still quoting Vegetius.²² In Chapter XI, Gil in sixteen short paragraphs mainly does a cut-and-paste of parts of Vegetius' Book 1, with a few extracts from Book 3. He also includes all of Chapter 26 of Book 3, in which Vegetius summarises general principles.²³ The subject-matter of Title XXI of the second *Partida*, where Vege-

De recuperatione terrae sanctae (1306).

- 21 AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *De regimine principum – Über die Fürstenherrschaft*, HARTMANN, Volker (ed. and trans.), Heidelberg, heiBOOKS, 2019; BRIGGS, Charles F., « Life, Works, and Legacy », in BRIGGS, Charles F. and EARDLEY, Peter S. (eds.), *A Companion to Giles of Rome*, Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2016, pp. 6-33, at pp. 32-33.
- 22 DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « Un resumen inédito de los *Strategemata* de Frontino como fuente del libro XII del *De Preconiis Hispanie* de Gil de Zamora », *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 26.1 (2006), pp. 101-46, and EAD., « Datos para una nueva edición del 'De preconiis Hispanie' de Gil de Zamora: los libros XI y XII », in MARTÍNEZ GÁZQUEZ, J. DE LA CRUZ PALMA, O., FERRERO HERNÁNDEZ, C. (eds.), *Estudios de Latín Medieval Hispánico*, Florence, SISMEL, 2011, pp. 167-77, at p. 170. For a discussion on the first ten books of the work, see EAD., « Las fuentes clásicas en el *De Preconiis Hispanie* de Gil de Zamora », *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 32.1 (2012), pp. 80-120. Additional manuscripts of the text continue to be discovered, arguing for corrections in the currently received canonical text: ESTÉVEZ SOLA, Juan A., « Un manuscrito desconocido del *De preconiis Hispanie* », *Revue d'histoire des Textes* 12 (2017), pp. 381-92.
- 23 DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « El *De re militari* de Vegecio en el *De preconiis Hispanie* de Juan Gil de Zamora », in FARMHOUSE ALBERTO, P./AUGUSTO NASCIMENTO, A. (eds.), *Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de Latín Medieval Hispánico*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos

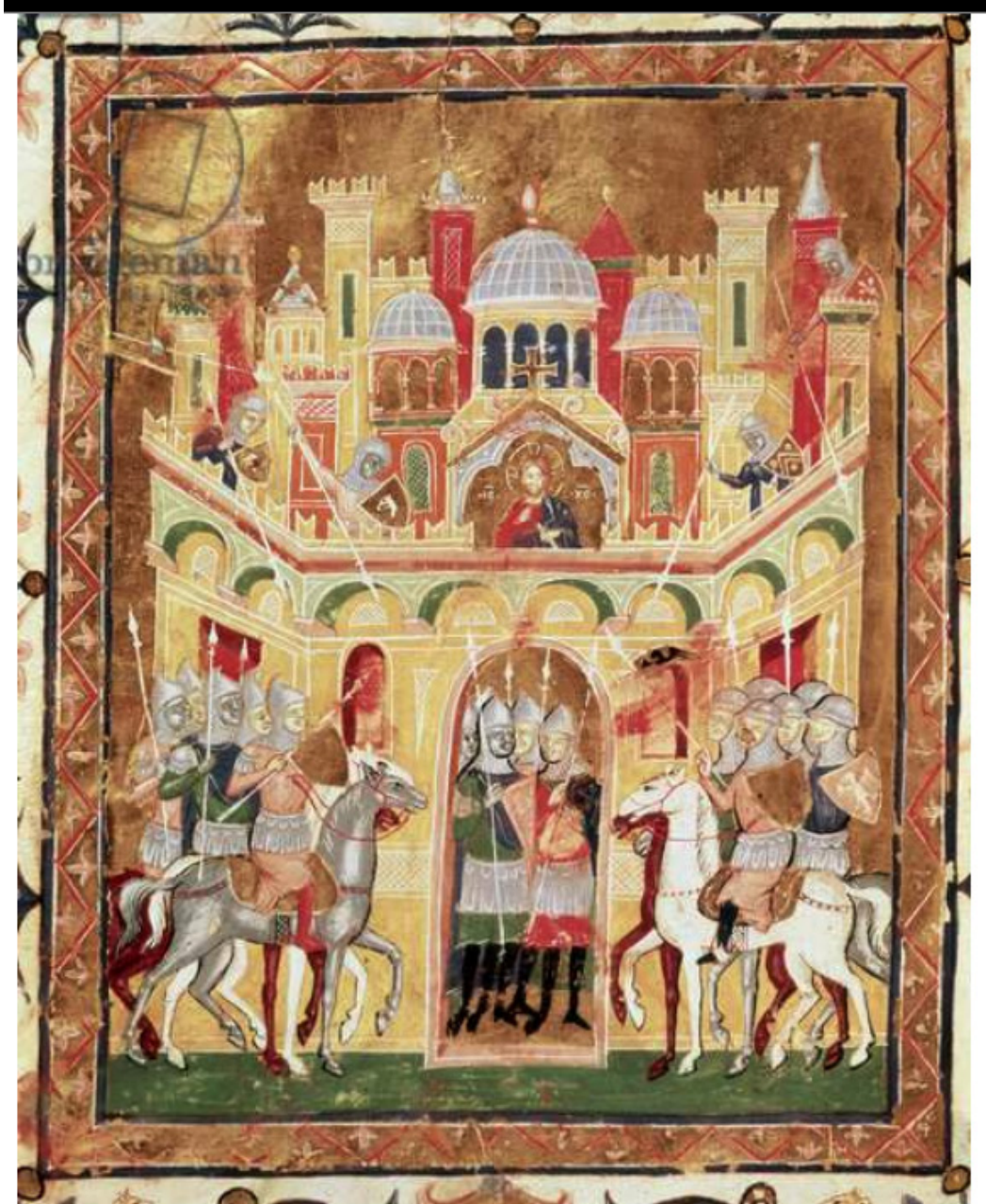


Fig. 1 – The Crusaders Besiege Jerusalem (early 14th century)
in Burchard of Mount Sion, *Descriptio Terra Sanctae*, Ms. 74, c. 14v
© Biblioteca del Seminario Vescovile di Padova, used with permission

tius is cited by name, is not covered by Gil.

The Venetian patrician Marinus Sanudus (or Sanutus, dictus Torsellus, c.1270-c.1343) wrote his *Liber secretorum* in 1306, a prescription for the reconquest of the Holy Land (Acre had fallen in 1291 and Ruad in 1302) as well as for preserving hold over the recaptured areas. In this latter context, Torsellus refers to Vegetius expressly, but writes in Frontinus' anecdotal style and uses examples from Frontinus, as well as from more recent history, though Frontinus is not credited.²⁴

Torsellus to a large extent relied on the Franciscan Fidentius of Padua, who was active in Outremer around 1266-1291. His *Liber recuperationis Terre Sancte* in chapters 23-36 recommended the military preparations and organisation needed for the reconquest of the Holy Land.²⁵ Fidentius' style too is anecdotal, though his references are nearly exclusively to the Bible. However, his advice is quite practical and, as he states, based on observation. For example, he tells the Christians to include large numbers of horse-archers and mounted crossbowmen among the knights, since the Saracen horses are not barded. This is supplemented by an injunction to place pack animals loaded with spare arrows close to the fighting troops, to ensure they do not run out of ammunition.²⁶ Also, Fidentius says the Saracens use lances sparingly, and fear the Christian lances.²⁷

The first known translation of Vegetius' *Epitoma* into a vernacular is that of Mastre Richard, into Norman French. Nothing is known about Mastre Richard. It is thought that he was a scribe at the English court who was commissioned by Eleanor of Castile to produce the translation as a gift to her husband Edward (I) while they were both in Acre 1271-72, and before Edward succeeded to the En-

Clásicos, 2006, pp. 203-17, at pp. 205-06; GARCÍA FITZ, pp. 272-73.

24 MARINUS SANUTUS DICTUS TORSSELLUS, *Liber secretorum fidelium crucis super terrae sanctae recuperatione et conservatione*, BONGARS, Jacques (ed.), Hanover, Wechelian, 1611, 3:15:1-16 (pp. 262-273); SETTIA, Aldo, *De re militari. Pratica e teoria nella guerra medievale*, Rome, Viella, 2008, pp. 28, 56-57; Merlo, pp. 514-15.

25 FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, *Liber de recuperatione Terre Sancte*, in GOLUBOVICH, Girolamo (ed.), *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa*, Vol. 2, Florence, Quaracchi, 1923, pp. 9-60, at pp. 27-35; SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 28, MERLO, pp. 513-14. Further and later examples for the recuperation genre with ALLMAND, pp. 112-13.

26 FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, Cap. 26 (pp. 29-30); this passage is used by TORSSELLUS, 3:15:8 (p. 266); MERLO, p. 557.

27 FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, Cap. 25-26 (pp. 28-30).

glish crown in 1272. Relying on the excerpts included by Thorpe, Mastre Richard draws entirely on Vegetius, omitting Frontinus or more contemporary anecdotes. As always, translation is interpretation – where Vegetius addressed the *tiro* (recruit, and from the context a legionary infantry recruit), Richard uses *chivaler* (and *jovenceau*).²⁸

Jean de Meun's *Art de chevalerie*, written in 1284, advertises itself as a translation into French of the *Epitoma*. Little is known about his person – he lived c.1240-c.1305, studied in Paris, and worked as a poet, with numerous works to his credit. The Vegetius translation was commissioned by Jean I de Brienne, Count of Eu; it is as much a reworking as a translation of the original, and like Richard, Jean uses *chevaliers* and *jovenciaus*. Like Gil de Zamora, Jean references both Vegetius and Frontinus, but unlike Gil, he does not split the two into separate books; instead, he intersperses examples from Frontinus (and later events, with successive manuscripts including more and more up-to-date instances) to illustrate Vegetius' propositions, and he is aware that he is adducing Frontinus.²⁹

The *Vegezio Flavio dell'arte della guerra* by Bono Giamboni (c.1240-c.1292) also purports to be a straight translation of Vegetius, this time into Italian,³⁰ but like Mastre Richard and Jean de Meun, he uses *cavaliere* where Vegetius used *tiro*.³¹ Giamboni does not seem to have had a military career. He may have occupied a judicial post in his native Florence, but his main claim to fame is his literary production, in which – like his contemporary Brunetto Latini – he attempted to re-educate the unruly nobility to behaviour compatible with the orderly ethos of the ruling *popolo grasso*.³²

28 THORPE, Lewis « Mastre Richard, a thirteenth-century translator of the “De re militari” of Vegetius », *Scriptorium* 6.1 (1952), pp. 39-50; ALLMAND, pp. 152-56.

29 JEAN DE MEUN, *Art de chevalerie*, ROBERT, Ulysse (ed.), Paris, Firmin Didot & Cie, 1897; ALLMAND, pp. 156-59.

30 GIAMBONI, BONO, *Di Vegezio Flavio dell'arte della Guerra*, FONTANI, Francesco (ed.), Florence, Giovanni Marenigh, 1815; ALLMAND, pp. 168-69; on a discussion of the manuscript tradition VACCARO.

31 Discussion of the relevance of this substitution with FAINI, Enrico, « Vegezio e Orosio: storia, cavalleria e politica nella Firenze del tardo Duecento », in COLOMBO, M., PELLEGRINI, P., PREGNOLATO, S. (eds.), *Storia sacra e profana nei volgarizzamenti medioevali*, Berlin-Boston MA, de Gruyter, 2019, pp. 237-54, at p. 243 and *passim*.

32 SPOSATO, Peter, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars: Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Florence*, Ithaca, Cornell UP, 2022, p. 25; FAINI; ALLMAND, 168-70.

Another important text is somewhat later, now known as the *Enseignements* by Theodore I Palaiologos, Marquis of Monferrat. Initially written in Greek in 1326 and translated into Latin by Theodore himself, both the original versions have been lost. The only version currently extant is a French translation by Jean de Vignay from the later fourteenth century. The *Enseignements* are a wholly original work, without reliance on Vegetius (or Frontinus); they are also too late to have served as influence.³³

Having said that, the *Enseignements* grew out of the period in which the *Pulcher tractatus* was composed, and represent an intriguing foil for our text, mainly due to the contrasts they offer.³⁴ While most of the writings here considered originated in the environment of the republican city-states dominating both the military and political landscape of Northern Italy during the period, the *Enseignements* stemmed from a principality that managed to assert its independence, in no small measure thanks to Theodore's efforts. While the Catholic European tactical literature of the time is focussed on the Latin classical authors, Theodore was raised in the Byzantine military tradition. This tradition was anchored by a rich literature, written in Greek, which was largely ignored in the mediaeval Latin West.³⁵ In his *Enseignements*, Theodore drew on his personal experience of warfare both in Northern Italy and in the Byzantine Empire. Merlo has characterised his work as an exponent of the mediaeval Latin *speculum* genre, written in the style of a Byzantine military treatise.³⁶

There are a few further texts with tactically relevant elements, such as the *Libro di Montaperti* of 1260, with its detailed description of the order of battle of the defeated Florentines;³⁷ city statutes specifying the recruitment, armaments,

33 SETTIA, *De re militari*, pp. 91-95 and *passim*; KNOWLES, Christine, *Les Enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, London, Modern Humanities Research Association, 1983; SETTIA, Aldo, « L'esperienza e il «senno accidentale» negli «Insegnamenti» di Teodoro di Monferrato », *Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino* 110.2 (2012), pp. 479-98, at pp. 480-81. Though relatively unknown in anglophone historiography, the *Enseignements* have received a fair amount of attention from Byzantinists and Italian historians.

34 SETTIA, « Esperienza », pp. 495-96.

35 GASSMANN, « Vegetius », p. 184.

36 MERLO, p. 518.

37 *Libro di Montaperti*, PAOLI, Cesare (ed.), Florence, Viesusseux, 1889; BARGIGIA, Fabio and DE ANGELIS, Gianmarco, « Scrivere in guerra: I notai negli eserciti nell'Italia comunale », *Scrineum – Rivista* 5 (2008), pp. 1-69, at pp. 6-9, 21-23.

and behaviour on campaign of the city's forces;³⁸ or the bye-laws of associations like the Bolognese *societates armatae*.³⁹ Such texts are also interesting to the extent they support readings and interpretations, but are not sufficiently on point or complex enough to be referred to here for comparison.⁴⁰

Original literature dedicated specifically to military matters burgeons from the late fourteenth century onwards, increasingly written in the vernacular rather than in Latin.⁴¹ However, not only do these later texts originate in diverse geographies, with equally diverse political systems, military organisation, and defensive infrastructure, but the intervening century also saw economic crisis and the Black Death, both of which had a profound influence on the financial strength of Northern Italy's key actors, the city-states, and consequently on the three mainstays of their armed forces, the citizen militia, the nobility and their entourages, and the cities' ability to pay mercenaries.

Background: Warfare and Society in Late 13th Century Northern Italy

The author of the *Pulcher tractatus* very likely grew up, also professionally, in Italy, and would have gained his military experience in the second half of the thirteenth century. Italy at the time was embroiled in the Ghibelline-Guelph conflict – even though the Staufen dynasty had come to an end with the death of Conradin in 1268, the various city-states of Italy continued to fight each other under those labels. After the defeat of the Ghibellines in 1286, the labels shifted to White and Black Guelphs while wars continued.⁴²

The cities' constitutions too changed. The late twelfth and early thirteenth century had seen the development of the *podestà* system, where cities invited a

38 E.g. *Gli statuti Veronesi del 1276*, SANDRI, Gino (ed.), n.pub., Venice, 1940.

39 See GASSMANN, Jürg, « The Bolognese *Societates Armatae* of the Late 13th Century », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 2 (2014), pp. 195-231.

40 In Iberia as well, there are further texts from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century with tactical import – see GARCÍA FITZ; I have omitted these for reasons of space, and because I believe it is unlikely they could have influenced our author.

41 On this complex, see also VERBRUGGEN, *Warfare*, p. 288; SETTIA, *De re militari*, pp. 24-30; ALLMAND, pp. 121-47.

42 FAINI, pp. 238-41; SPOSATO, pp. 7-8; for this and the next paragraph overview with POLONI, Alma, « Il commune di popolo e le sue istituzioni tra Due e Trecento », *Reti Medievali Rivista* 13.1 (2012), pp. 3-27, esp. pp. 3-7, with *passim* a discussion of the state of research.

notable from outside to act as the chief administrator of the city.⁴³ His political neutrality enabled him to serve as arbiter between the city's various factions, in particular between the fractious nobility and the peace-and-order minded *popolo grasso*. By the second half of the thirteenth century, this system began to change, and the tensions among and between nobility and commoners often broke out in violence, resulting in coups and revolutions.⁴⁴ Overall, organised fighting was common, so there was no dearth of opportunities to learn the trade.

The Staufen had brought many a German knight to fight in Italy, and with Charles of Anjou came Provençal and Catalan mercenaries, but even without non-Italian soldiers of fortune, the formal or informal banishment of out-of-favour nobility (*rebelli* and *fuorusciti*) from the cities meant that large numbers of knightly fighters were available for hire at affordable prices.⁴⁵ The infantry consisted of a militia raised from the free men of the city in accordance with well-documented organisation and procedure. Although they were not a professional or standing force, active service was a matter of course, and they were regularly well accoutred.⁴⁶ City hosts of the second half of the thirteenth century as a rule consisted of three elements: The militia infantry; *milites* and their entourages provided by the city's nobility and high-census individuals; and hired *milites*.⁴⁷

43 POLONI, pp. 10-11. The election, position, and function of the *potestas* is prominent in JOHN OF VITERBO's *De regimine civitatum*.

44 POLONI, pp. 17-19; SPOSATO, p. 9. There is evidence in the Bologna *societates armatae* by-laws that city authorities sought to ensure that feuds among the nobility did not engulf the entire city populace: GASSMANN, « Societates Armatae », p. 222.

45 GRILLO, Paolo, « Premessa », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 5-13, at p. 7; SPOSATO, pp. 164-65 and *passim* (focused on Florence).

46 GRILLO, « Premessa/Connestabili », p. 8; VERBRUGGEN, pp. 144-47; GASSMANN, « Societates armatae », pp. 212-13; FRANZOSI, Damiano, « L'esercito cremonese agli inizi del Trecento », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 71-88, at pp. 81-82.

47 In military joint ventures, the participating cities formed a consortium for the procurement of the mercenaries and allocated the cost amongst themselves (*taglia*): GRILLO, « Premessa/Connestabili », pp. 9-10. The supposedly neat tripartition is of course exceedingly simplistic – there were also mounted commoner militia (e.g. for Treviso 1316 VARANINI, Gian Maria, « Note sull'esercito del comune di Treviso nei primi decenni del Trecento (1313 c-1318, 1330-1335) », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 31-70, at pp. 48-49; for Cremona late twelfth and early thirteenth century FRANZOSI, pp. 75-78), as well as mercenary infantry. The military organisation of the Northern Italian city-states in the period was hi-



Fig. 2 – Horsemen
Fresco frieze at the Broletto, Novara, 13th century
Photograph Giovanni Dall’Orto, public domain

Structure and General Content of the Pulcher Tractatus

The text is rendered in 34 chapters, each with a short title; ignoring the author’s chapter repartition, a logical structure captures the following thematic parts:⁴⁸

ghly diverse, and changed within a given city – see GRILLO, « Premessa/Connestabili », pp. 11-13 and *passim*; on the problems of systematically capturing nobility or *militēs* KELLER, Hagen, « Adel, Rittertum und Ritterstand nach italienischen Zeugnissen des 11.-14. Jahrhunderts », in FENSKE, L., RÖSENER, W., ZOTZ, T. (eds.), *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter*, Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1984, pp. 581-608. It should also be noted that while the nobility did consider themselves a warrior elite (FAINI, p. 241; SPOSATO, pp. 143-146 and *passim*), they were not a *rural* elite in Morillo’s model (MORILLO, Stephen, « The “Age of Cavalry” Revisited », in KAGAY, Donald J., and VILLALON, L.J. Andrew (eds.), *The circle of war in the Middle Ages*, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1999, pp. 45-58, at pp. 52-53; GRILLO, Paolo, « Cavalieri, cittadini e comune consolare », in CACIORGNA, M.T., CAROCCI, S., ZORZI, A. (eds.), *I comuni di Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur*, Rome, Viella, 2014, pp. 157-176, at pp. 2-3). Since the *Pulcher tractatus* does not engage with this complex, this issue will not be further elaborated.

48 The repartition here follows PICHLER in *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 23-24, but I have given the

1. Cap. 1: General statement on war and preparation for war
2. Cap. 2: Justification for war
3. Cap. 3: Proactive is better than reactive
4. Cap. 4-6: Military training
5. Cap. 7-10: Political preparations for war
6. Cap. 11-12: Organisation and logistics
7. Cap. 13: On the march
8. Cap. 14-17: Camp and protection of the camp
9. Cap. 18: Discipline
10. Cap. 19: Battle or avoidance or battle
11. Cap. 20-22: Shaping the narrative – dissension in the enemy host, morale in the own
12. Cap. 23: Avoid placing the enemy in an existentially desperate situation when one is sure of victory
13. Cap. 24: The art of avoiding battle
14. Cap. 25: How to fight
15. Cap. 26-29: The battle line
16. Cap. 30: Signals
17. Cap. 31-34: Battle

The author states that he will not be dealing with either naval combat or *poliorcetics*, both of which are part of the *Epitoma*, and for which our author defers to Vegetius.⁴⁹ He also (sadly) declines to discuss which arms are most useful, as other contemporary authors have written about these aspects, and are for this subject-matter more relevant than authors from Antiquity.⁵⁰ On the other hand, he does offer to expand on forming the battle line, where he deviates from Vegetius.⁵¹

Whether our author's service was infantry or cavalry is not revealed – he

different parts an alternative categorisation.

49 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 56. AEGIDIUS ROMANUS does address both, sieges in 3:3:15-22 (pp. 1199-1254) and naval warfare in 3:3:23 (pp. 1255-64), the final chapter.

50 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 55.

51 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 56, discussed below.

refers to both. In Chapter 4 on training, he writes that the horsemen should train in tournaments, lanceplay and duels, while the infantry should practice physical sports and weapons handling.⁵² In Chapter 14 (which is technically about siting the camp), he advises that if you are counting on your infantry defeating the enemy's cavalry, choose broken, sloped, rocky, wooded, or swampy ground, but if you hope to use your cavalry to defeat the enemy's infantry, select flat and open country.⁵³ In Chapter 25, he remarks that good horses tend to win even if the *milites* are less well trained.⁵⁴ The chapters on the arrangement of the battle line (Chapters 28-29 and 34) deal with both infantry and cavalry contingents.⁵⁵

On Training

The question of organised military training for the infantry during the High to Late Middle Ages has preoccupied military historians; there is little evidence in the sources for such training taking place, so the mentions in our text are of particular interest.⁵⁶ Chapter 4, where most of the text is original to the *Pulcher tractatus*, reads as follows:⁵⁷

De modo addiscendi bellare

Quoniam autem ars bellica plus ab exercitio quam a litteris pendet, plus usu acquiritur quam scientia litterali, quamvis et ipsa scripta scientia multum sit utilis. Primo principi necessarium esse videtur, ut robustissimos et abiliores ad bellica faciat assuescere negotio luctativo; nam utilius est armis erudire suos quam alienos mercede conducere. Unde Vegetius eleganter ait: Nil felicius nil firmitus re publica, in qua quidem habundant milites⁵⁸ eruditi. In rebus bellicis celeri-

52 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 42-43. Sections about training are so rare in military literature of the time that this part is elaborated on below.

53 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 49.

54 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 56: *Plerique minus exercitatos milites habentes propter bonorum dextrariorum copiam victoriam reportarunt*. PICHLER (p. 27) reads this passage as saying that the number of heavy cavalry decide the battle – I do not believe that is the implication of the passage.

55 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 57-60 and 63-65.

56 Though there is an instruction from Treviso from 1315 for crossbow target practice: VARANINI, p. 42.

57 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 42-43.

58 *Miles* here has the Classical meaning of simply “soldier”, rather than the mediaeval connotation of “knight”.

tas amplius solet prodesse quam virtus. Velocitas corporis usu ipso acquiritur et scientia feriendi hostem seque protegendi, presertim si gladiis cominus dimicetur. Qui plus in angariis vigilaverit, plus in exercitio militari laboraverit, minus in bello periculum sustenebit. Pauces viros fortes natura produxit, bona instructio plures reddit.

Equites ergo hastiludiis et duellis, que vulgariter dicuntur [lacuna], et torneamentis utantur et omnino milites militiam assuescant. Pedites autem armis congruentibus ad pedestre bellum armati nunc salire, nunc alteri obviam currere, nunc ense fibrare, nunc lapides, nunc missilia iactare condiscant. Arcarii vero et balistarii arcum et balistam assuescant promptissime tendere et in fixum palum feriendo rectissime sagittare. De utilitate agonistici exercitii dicit Vegetius, quod non solum ad hanc utilitatem sed ad sanitatem conservandam multis exercitia bellorum plus valere quam medici. Non solum autem agilitatem et bellandi scientiam sed virile robur prestat exercitium luctativum, Auicenna dicente, ...

[Because the art of war hinges more on practice than on books, it is acquired more through training rather than reading, even though written knowledge too is very useful. First of all, it seems necessary to habituate the strongest and most able to warfare through combat activities, as it is more useful to train your own in arms than to rent strangers. Which is why Vegetius elegantly states: Nothing is more felicitous, more stabilising for the polity in which well-trained soldiers abound. In matters of war, greater speed tends to be more useful than morale. Bodily speed is acquired through training, and the skill of injuring the enemy while protecting oneself primarily through close-quarter fencing with swords. Men who have spent more time mounting guard and in military exercises will encounter less danger in war. Nature produces few strong men, good instruction yields many more.

Horsemen should therefore practice in lanceplay and duels, which are commonly called [*lacuna in the MS*], and tournaments,⁵⁹ and *milites* should generally get used to military duty. Infantrymen, armed with weapons appropriate for infantry warfare, should learn to jump, race against each other, wield swords,

⁵⁹ See the Templar Rule on references to (and regulation of) these activities: BENNETT, p. 181; *Règle du Temple*, paras 95, 128 [with BENNETT incorrectly 126], 315 (DE CURZON, pp. 84, 104, 183-84; UPTON-WARD, pp. 43, 51, 89); on tournaments GASSMANN, « Vegetius », pp. 186-89.



Fig. 3 – The men and herds of Job are slaughtered
Fresco by Bartolo di Fredi, early 14th century
Collegiata di Santa Maria Assunta, San Gimignano, public domain

and throw stones and missiles. Archers and crossbowmen should practice fast draws and good aim by shooting at a fixed pole. Vegetius says about the utility of fighting training, that it is not just good for its immediate purpose, but for many, fighting practice is better than physicians at preserving health. For the combat exercises are not just good for agility and fighting skills, but also for manly strength; as Avicenna says, ...]

Vegetius too stresses the importance of training; for training troopers for instance, he recommends practicing jumping onto false mounts wearing ever increasing equipment, advice which was incorporated by the ninth century Carolingian courtier Hrabanus Maurus in his own redaction of Vegetius, but not transferred to the *Pulcher tractatus*.⁶⁰ Another emphasis in the *Epitoma* is on marching, for the infantry the *gradus militare*.⁶¹ Our author evidently felt Vegetius' specific training regime was no longer in keeping with the times, and he substituted his own thoughts. This approach contrasts with that of Giles of Rome, who essentially copies Vegetius' text; e.g., he includes practicing with the *plumbata*, a lead-weighted dart used to lethal effect by the Roman legions but no longer current in mediaeval Europe; he mentions the crossbow, in the High Middle Ages the most important missile weapon,⁶² only in passing; and after copying out Vegetius' training regimen, he lamely adds that some of these exercises apply to horsemen, some to infantry, some to both.⁶³

Our text does not specify the time or location of the training, or indeed who exactly should initiate and supervise it.⁶⁴ Nor does our author mention either pikes or long lances, or pavises – both important arms on Italian battlefields of the later thirteenth century.⁶⁵ Maybe our author was providing advice to the commanders of forces that have been assembled and are awaiting action – it is a principle of leadership that the troops need to be kept occupied while they wait, or discipline deteriorates.⁶⁶ Alternatively, he could have been addressing those responsible for

60 VEGETIUS, 1:18 (p. 12); GASSMANN, Jürg, « Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6:1 (2018), pp. 63-98, at p. 80. The *Siete Partidas* emphasise that the *cauallero* should cultivate a deep understanding of the nature of the horse and how to select, train, and care for it, as well as an ability to judge the quality of arms and armour: *ibid.* 2:21.10 (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 72r-v / ed. BURNS, pp. 422-23); GARCÍA FITZ, pp. 274-75.

61 VEGETIUS, 1:9 (pp. 7-8).

62 MERLO, pp. 555-57; see e.g. *Statuti Veronesi*, 5:31-34, 38 (pp. 688-91, 694).

63 AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 3:3:7 *in fine* (pp. 1157-58): *Advertendum autem: quorum praedictorum exercitiorum quaedam sunt magis propria equitibus, quaedam peditibus, quaedam utriusque*.

64 The cities produced voluminous records like muster rolls, expenditures, details of protective and offensive arms, or mobilisation procedures – but not on training. Also GARCÍA FITZ, pp. 276-77.

65 MERLO, pp. 558-61, pointing out that the *Enseignements* do not mention pavises, either.

66 VEGETIUS, 3:26 (p. 72): *Exercitus labore proficit, ocio consenescit* (similarly in 3:4 (pp. 42-44) – though the *Pulcher tractatus* references this latter passage in the context of preven-

selecting the participants destined for combat.

Gil too stresses the need for practice and training; the first ten of his sixteen paragraphs deal with various aspects of training and its utility in battle.⁶⁷ Staying faithful to Vegetius, the subjects of his training are (presumably infantry) *tirones*, and not knights as in Jean de Meun or Bono Giamboni. Still, as in the *Pulcher tractatus*, it is not specified who should instruct, provide, or supervise the training, or where or when it should take place.

Before Battle: On the March, Reconnaissance, Pitching Camp, Sentries, Logistics

In a passage largely culled from Vegetius, our author tells commanders to reconnoitre the intended route of march beforehand, to be vigilant during marches, and to maintain mounted scouts while on the march in order to gain advance warning of approaching enemy forces or ambushes.⁶⁸ Marches should be staged between sites held by one's own forces, to benefit from prepositioned supplies, offer rest to man and beast, as well as to discomfit the enemy who, if they ventured to attack one of the secure sites, could be threatened in his rear from neighbouring places.⁶⁹

Relying on different passages in Vegetius, our author advises circumspection in the selection of the campsite, though he adds that sites close to rivers are preferable since they allow comfortable resupply, and to avoid eating fish caught in swamps as they cause illness.⁷⁰ Once in camp – and here the language is mostly our author's –, sentries must be posted and mounted patrols maintained throughout the night, especially during the small hours when enemy attacks are most likely, and our author advises the commander (*dux*) to personally conduct sur-

ting mutinies (p. 51), our author does not pick up on the aspect of keeping troops in camp occupied with training).

67 DEL BARRIO VEGA, « *El De re militari de Vegecio* », pp. 208-12.

68 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 48-49; VEGETIUS, 3:6 (pp. 45-48); also in FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, Cap. 33 (p. 33).

69 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 50-51; mostly based on VEGETIUS 3:8 *in fine* (p. 51). Also mentioned by Gil de Zamora in paragraph 12 – DEL BARRIO VEGA, « *El De re militari de Vegecio* », p. 212.

70 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 49; similarly *Siete Partidas*, 2:23:17-22 (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 87r-88v/ ed. BURNS, pp. 448-54).

prise inspections of the sentries.⁷¹

On logistics, our author echoes Vegetius in stressing careful preparation as well as securing adequate supplies and transportation (including forage for the draught animals used for transportation) before the campaign begins, as an army is more quickly felled by hunger than battle. Conversely, a commander should focus on depriving the enemy of their supplies.⁷²

Just War, Avoiding Battle, Weakening the Enemy, Boosting Morale, Deception, Choke Points

Chapter 2, which is almost entirely the work of our author, warns against waging war casually. War must be a last resort, leaving the just prince (*iustus princeps*) no choice, as in the legal concept of self-defence. It is also the chapter where we find the most references to authority, principally the Bible, Cicero and Seneca.⁷³ But once war is inevitable, the prince must take decisive, uncompromising action.⁷⁴ If the enemy is strong, avoid battle, but if he is weak, do not hesitate to engage. For that to be successful, a commander must have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of his own troops, and take steps to strengthen their morale. Our author recommends surreptitiously spreading the rumour that the enemy forces are riven by dissent and treachery as one of these morale-boosting measures. He further repeats Vegetius' advice to familiarise the own troops with the enemy troops' appearance, horses, weapons, signals, and so on, to minimise the element of surprise.⁷⁵

A leader (*dux*) should readily confer with trusted and objective advisers, but

71 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 49-50; similarly JOHN OF VITERBO, chapter 135 / p. 273.

72 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 47-48; VEGETIUS, 3:3 (pp. 41-42). Also mentioned by Gil de Zamora in paragraph 11, and 16 *in initio* and *in fine* – DEL BARRIO VEGA, « El *De re militari* de Vegecio », p. 212. BARGIGIA/DE ANGELIS, pp. 24-27. Call-up often included instructions for the number of wagons to be brought along, with supplies of food and ammunition, e.g. for Treviso in 1332 VARANINI, p. 56.

73 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 39-41; Vegetius warns about the risk of battle, but just war is not a concern. The warning against engaging in war lightly is already voiced, in very different language, by JOHN OF VITERBO in the early thirteenth century (Chapter 131 (pp. 268-69)); SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 95.

74 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 41-42.

75 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 52-53.

should take care to limit the number who know his plans to maintain secrecy.⁷⁶ Our author stresses that the good leader will use spies to obtain information not just on the enemy, but also to monitor players who now act neutral, but have historical grievances that might induce them to join the fray at an opportune moment.⁷⁷ At the same time, it is critical to misdirect the enemy and to cloak one's own intentions.⁷⁸ In both passages, our author refers to Vegetius, but the words are mostly his own.

Concurrently, our author advises sowing dissension among the enemy, through bribery, by nurturing controversies (whether genuine or fictitious), or by charming them over to the own side through blandishments and promises.⁷⁹ Referring to Vegetius, our author instructs the wise commander to waylay the enemy at choke points such as river crossings the enemy is obliged to use. The best opportunities for attack are while the enemy are exhausted from a long march, are eating, sleeping, celebrating festivities, or are otherwise separated from their horses.⁸⁰

Withdrawing and Fighting

If a commander decides not to fight, he should take great care in withdrawing so as not to encourage the enemy to attack; the enemy should believe that you are surreptitiously seeking a more advantageous position for your own attack. It is best to withdraw under the cover of night, sending a small detachment of cavalry noisily along the most obvious route, while covertly moving the bulk of the forces in another direction. This is also the prime opportunity to set up ambushes, as a pursuing enemy is less cautious.⁸¹

In one respect, our author contradicts himself. In Chapter 23, a short paragraph mostly taken from Vegetius, he advises on no account (*omnino non*) to encircle enemy forces, since soldiers who are staring certain death in the face will

76 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 51. Also mentioned by Gil de Zamora in paragraph 15 *in initio* – DEL BARRIO VEGA, « El *De re militari* de Vegecio », p. 213, and indirectly in paragraph 16 (p. 214).

77 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 44. On good use of spies also the *Enseignements*, p. 85; SETTIA, « Esperienza », pp. 479-80.

78 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 45-46.

79 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 53.

80 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 54.

81 *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 54-55.

fight fiercely and desperately.⁸² Earlier, he recommends a speedy encirclement of a small force that is short on victuals.⁸³

Chapter 25 summarises some final thoughts before the *Pulcher tractatus* concludes with chapters on the battle line and the battle proper. With the exception of the chapter on signals, dealt with next, these concluding chapters are nearly wholly taken from Vegetius, the last chapter (Chapter 34) entirely so. In Chapter 25, our author says that infantry and cavalry should have ample and resplendent arms to strike terror in the enemy – which these should be our author frustratingly does not elaborate, arguing that his modern readers will have a better view on this question than the ancients. He also avers the importance of good horses, since a good warhorse can often compensate for the deficiencies in the cavalryman's training. Horses should also be barded in front, but the details of the barding he leaves to craftsmen.⁸⁴

A special warning is given in Chapter 31: The commander should remain vigilant when the enemy flees, so as not to fall into a trap or be overwhelmed by the enemy's rear-guard or reserves.⁸⁵ A similar caution is voiced by several other authors, usually in the context of warning against premature looting⁸⁶ – a concern that can be read into the *Pulcher tractatus*' more general, less emphatic statement.

Signals

The noise and tumult of battle drown out mere voice and require specialised

82 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 54; VEGETIUS, 3:21 (p. 67).

83 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 48.

84 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 55-56. Theodore also values the cavalry's lances for the magnificent presentation they can offer: KNOWLES, p. 93; MERLO, p. 550. Specifications of defensive and offensive arms are found in e.g. the *Enseignements* (KNOWLES, pp. 56-59; MERLO, pp. 527-67, with a discussion and further literature), various city military regulations, the *Siete Partidas* (*Siete Partidas* 2:26:28 (ed. LÓPEZ, p. 102r / ed. BURNS, p. 493); GASSMANN, « Siete Partidas », pp 16-18), or the bye-laws of the Bolognese *societates armatae* (GASSMANN, « Societates armatae »).

85 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 61.

86 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 61; *Siete Partidas*, 2:26:2-3 (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 95r-v / ed. BURNS, pp. 475-76); FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, Cap. 38 (pp. 35-36) – there as a general warning to maintain constant vigilance, not just on the battlefield. Premature looting led to Conradin's disastrous defeat at Tagliacozzo – SETTIA, Aldo, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie: La guerra nel Medioevo*, Rome, Laterza, 2003, pp. 58-59.

means of communication; our author principally lists four:⁸⁷

- A common battle-cry;
- An identificatory device painted or sewn onto the individual's shield, helmet, lance, or armour, externally visible to distinguish friend from foe;⁸⁸
- Sound signals, with trumpets, horns, etc.,⁸⁹ and
- Standards and pennons (which need to be well guarded).⁹⁰

Our author warns that the signals should not be such that the enemy can recognise their meaning or use them to confuse our own troops, and also advises to maintain quiet while the formation is assembled, so that the instructions of the officers can be heard – but that once the formations are assembled, the common battle-cry should be sounded. When the clamour reaches an intensity that the officers' voice commands can no longer be heard, then the agreed sound and banner signals should be rehearsed, pointing to Vegetius' dictum that nothing aids victory more than troops obeying the signalled commands.

Command

The questions of command – selection of the overall commander, appointment of the various officers, line and staff functions, how officers were educated, whether their selection depended on experience or social standing – bedevil modern mediaeval military historians. Even where administrative records or contemporary accounts are copious, their authors frustratingly rarely address these questions, presumably because they either thought them banal, or because (espe-

⁸⁷ *Pulcher tractatus*, pp. 60-61.

⁸⁸ The bye-laws of the Bolognese *societates armatae* of the mid-thirteenth century regularly oblige their members to mark the society's devices on their kit: GASSMANN, « Societates armatae », pp. 212-13; also TORSSELLUS, 3:15:8 (p. 266), and the *Enseignements* (KNOWLES, p. 58; SETTIA, « Esperienza », p. 495; MERLO, p. 542).

⁸⁹ Military musicians are in evidence in various contemporary records, though details are scarce: SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 99. Also recommended by TORSSELLUS, 2:4:21 (p. 78), where their utility is not limited to the battlefield.

⁹⁰ The *Siete Partidas* are specific on which level of command is permitted to use which size and shape of standard, and when (2:23:12-15, (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 86r-v / ed. BURNS, pp. 447-48)); there is no mention of sound signals. The Templar Rule also stresses the importance of the different standards: BENNETT, pp. 186-87 and *passim*. The articles of the Bolognese *societates armatae* as well stress the importance of the societies' *gonfaloniere*, but do not mention sound either: GASSMANN, « Societates armatae », pp. 214-15.

cially with clerical authors) they were more interested in projecting their Biblical and Classical erudition.⁹¹

Vegetius in his second book spills much ink on the command structure of the Roman Legion, but the passages are so specific to his time that most mediaeval writers, among them our author, sensibly do not bother with them.⁹² The *Siete Partidas* too include several provisions about the selection of the overall commander and the selection and promotion of officers; in each case, competence as well as social standing are important, with an emphasis on competence.⁹³ It needs to be borne in mind that military promotions were a means for the Crown to secure the allegiance of the selected individuals, and so deprive the potentially obstreperous city militias of competent leaders.⁹⁴

The *Pulcher tractatus* refers to command only in one passage, at the end of chapter 11, where our author emphasises a well-trained, lean force over a numerically bloated army. On the subject of efficiency, he refers to advice supposedly given to Alexander the Great to appoint one overall commander, who has under him ten senior officers, each with ten junior officers under him, each junior officer with ten NCOs, and each NCO with ten soldiers. So if a hundred soldiers are needed, the commander need only call up one junior officer, if a thousand, then a senior officer.⁹⁵

A Note on Formations

A distinction needs to be made between unit formations, i.e. how a unit of infantry or cavalry is set up, and arrangements of the line of battle, i.e. the relative

91 GRILLO, Paolo, « I comandanti degli eserciti comunali nel Duecento: uno studio della campagna di Parma (1247-1248) », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Cittadini in armi. Eserciti e guerre nell'Italia comunale*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2011, pp. 9-35, at pp. 12-13.

92 VEGETIUS in 2:7-13 (pp. 24-28). AEGIDIUS ROMANUS in 3:3:10 (pp. 1171-76) does include a summary of Vegetius' text.

93 *Siete Partidas*, 2:22:1-6 for unit commanders, 2:23:4-9 for generals (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 76v-78r and 84r-85v / ed. BURNS, pp. 433-37 and 441-45; GASSMANN, « Siete Partidas », pp. 5-6.

94 GASSMANN, « Siete Partidas », p. 22.

95 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 47. The chapter is headed *Alius modus* and follows the chapter *Quod provisio habeatur in bellando* ("What preparations should be made before war"). PICHLER in a footnote persuasively argues that *Alius modus* makes little sense, and instead suggests *Alius monitus* (i.e. "Additional advice").

positions of different infantry or cavalry formations on the battlefield.⁹⁶

Our author advocates a battle line shaped like a wedge, though he does not use the Latin term *cuneus* that is found in other texts. Instead, he hazards a derivation of *acies* from *acus*,⁹⁷ and concludes that it properly means an array with one unit in front, other units following in echelon. In that he departs from Vegetius, who favoured the traditional oblique line Roman array, though our author later on (in the final Chapter 34) does append, unamended and uncommented, the full text of Vegetius' Chapter 3:20 on the arrangements of the line of battle.

Actual unit formations are systematically addressed and their various merits and tactical applications discussed in the *Siete Partidas*.⁹⁸ Giles of Rome lists four formations: circle, for defence; pyramid (wedge), for attacking a large enemy formation in order to split it; scissor or pincer, a V-shaped formation to encircle a smaller enemy formation; and square – though he describes this latter one as useless (*inter caeteras formas esse magis inutilem*).⁹⁹ However, it seems to me that he is merely regurgitating a source and is not speaking from his own hands-on experience. For example, in the same passage, his solution for arranging the wedge is to take a square, halve it across the diagonal, and rearrange the two halves – a completely theoretical and thoroughly unpracticable method.¹⁰⁰ Torsellus mentions the same four formations as Giles of Rome, and also disdains

96 The *Enseignements* do not deal in detail with either issue, but add a separate dimension by specifying the distribution of various weapons within the formations; for cavalry, Theodore says the front ranks should have lances, but the following ranks should avoid lances and wield swords or maces, and for the infantry, that those armed with bows, crossbows and lances should be positioned on the left wing (KNOWLES, p. 93; MERLO, pp. 550, 554).

97 SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 78.

98 *Siete Partidas*, 2:23:16 (ed. LÓPEZ, pp. 86v-87r / ed. BURNS, pp. 448-50); GASSMANN, « *Siete Partidas* », pp. 7-12; cavalry formations IDEM, « *Vegetius* », pp. 191-92.

99 The disdain for the square is not found with Vegetius. Ironically in this context, Giles a few lines earlier extolls the difficulty of the Vegetian manoeuvre of evolving from a line into a square, and the amount of training this requires. While the round formation favoured by Giles has its tactical uses, it is necessarily immobile, since the soldiers positioned at the points at a right angle from the direction of movement would have to walk sideways, and those at the opposite end backwards, all of which makes it impossible to maintain the required formation discipline – AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 3:3:12 (pp. 1183-88); for a discussion on the various infantry and cavalry formations see GASSMANN, « *Siete Partidas* », pp. 7-12.

100 AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 3:3:12 (pp. 1185-86); he also repeats (3:3:13, pp. 1189-92) Vegetius' injunction to use the sword for thrusts, not strikes – this must have baffled Giles' contemporaries, who fought with very different weapons than the Roman legionary's *gladius* and with different close-order tactics – MERLO, p. 503.

the square.¹⁰¹

Vegetius does in his chapter on infantry training stress the need to practice formation evolutions, i.e. the ability of a unit to transition from one formation to a different one on command,¹⁰² and applies these skills to tactical situations in battle.¹⁰³ Neither the *Siete Partidas*, nor Torsellus, nor Fidentius, mention evolutions. The *Pulcher tractatus* copies Vegetius' language on deploying the pincer formation in battle,¹⁰⁴ but omits Vegetius' references to practicing the required evolutions. The ability to execute evolutions in the heat of battle is an advanced military skill, requiring repetitious unit training to the point of automaticity. Neither our text nor what we know about thirteenth century military organisation suggest that the city-state militia had attained this level of skill.

What is not in the Pulcher Tractatus?

One element strikingly absent from the *Pulcher tractatus* is any mention of feudal relationships. While north of the Alps authorities relied on knights' feudal service obligations and for their infantry on the *ius armorum et sequelae*, with all the restrictions and complications inherent in feudal law institutions,¹⁰⁵ these matters are not mentioned in the *Pulcher tractatus*. Chapter 5 explains which individuals make the best soldiers, but it is not even stated whether the soldiers are general-service conscripts, a select levy, or volunteers (though our author advises against mercenaries).

A troop category absent from the *Pulcher tractatus*, but vividly present in thirteenth century Italian warfare, are the *guastatores*, auxiliaries levied in parallel with infantry and cavalry, and armed with shovels, picks, axes, and similar tools,

101 TORSELLUS, 3:15:8 (p. 267); this passage is not taken from Fidentius of Padua.

102 VEGETIUS, 1:26 (p. 17); AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, 3:3:12 (pp. 1183-84), echoes Vegetius' manoeuvre.

103 VEGETIUS, 3:19-20 (pp. 63-67).

104 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 63.

105 On the difficulty of applying feudal order concepts to the situation in Italy: GRILLO, « Cavalieri, cittadini », pp. 2-4, 9-12 and *passim*; KELLER. In the Marquisate of Monferrat, at least part of the *milites* were called up on the basis of feudal relationships (SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 115), while for the infantry the parliament of Monferrat sought to redefine the service obligation in non-feudal terms (*ibid.*, p. 119); also IDEM, « Esperienza », p. 481, and MERLO, pp. 518-27. *Ius armorum et sequelae*: GASSMANN, Jürg, « A Well Regulated Militia: Political and Military Organisation in Pre-Napoleonic Switzerland (1550-1799) », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 4:1 (2016), pp. 23-52, at pp. 35-36.

with the express task of systematically devastating (as their name implies) the countryside's trees, vineyards, and so on. Notionally, and already at the time, it is difficult to categorically differentiate *guastatores* with their purely destructive function from the *zappatores*, "pick-wielders" with the assignment of digging defensive trenches and more generally easing progress.¹⁰⁶ For Vegetius, engineers are an integral element of the host¹⁰⁷ – but none of these matters are addressed in the *Pulcher tractatus*.

Except for the non-Vegetian advice to the commander not to allow the collection of spoils during battle,¹⁰⁸ the *Pulcher tractatus* also does not deal with the issue of booty, a matter the *Siete Partidas* address at great length and in great detail.¹⁰⁹ It is certainly a matter of tactical relevance, since clear rules on collection, valuation, and distribution of the booty are key to maintaining discipline and ensuring that troops with vital assignments off the battlefield do not abandon their posts in a quest to participate in the pillage. Another issue in that connection – also not raised in the *Pulcher tractatus* – is *restor*, compensation for losses of equipment and especially horses in battle.¹¹⁰

Summary, Conclusions, and Outlook

Vegetius was continuously though in a sense latently current throughout the European Middle Ages. Still, it is tempting to see a connection between the surge in popularity of the *Epitoma* with the appointment at the court of Alfonso X of Castile of the drafting committees for the *Siete Partidas* in 1256. The text provides evidence that the committee considered Vegetius. We may add to this the facts that Alfonso's brother Enrique fought in Italy from 1266, first with his

106 SETTIA, *Rapine*, pp. 55-56; VARANINI, pp. 61-63; also referenced in TORSSELLUS, 2:4:21 (p. 78).

107 VEGETIUS, 2:11 (p. 27).

108 *Pulcher tractatus*, p. 61; SETTIA, *Rapine*, pp. 59-60; IDEM, « Esperienza », pp. 482-83 and *passim*.

109 *Siete Partidas*, 2:25-2:27, 2:29-2:30 (ed. LÓPEZ, p. 93r-106v, 110r-114r / ed. BURNS, pp. 470-506, 516-26); GASSMANN, « Siete Partidas », pp. 12-21.

110 BARGIGIA/DE ANGELIS, pp. 23-24; *Siete Partidas*, 2:25:4 (ed. LÓPEZ, p. 94r / ed. BURNS, pp. 471-72); GASSMANN, « Siete Partidas », p. 14; SETTIA, *Rapine*, pp. 56-75; e.g. for Florence: SPOSATO, pp. 160-61; for Treviso: VARANINI, p. 50; the values of the mercenaries' horses were noted at the time they were hired, and those values formed the basis for *restor* – for Cremona FRANZOSI, pp. 82-83; also in the *Enseignements* – KNOWLES, p. 94.

cousin Charles of Anjou, then fatefully with his cousin Conradin at Tagliacozzo in 1268; and that their sister Eleanor commissioned Mastre Richard's translation. Gil de Zamora evidently moved in Castilian court circles. And Marquis Theodore of Monferrat, author of the *Enseignements*, was a grandson of Beatrice, a daughter of Alfonso.¹¹¹

One of my objectives here was to identify influences on our text; though there are many commonalities with contemporaneous works, most can be explained either by the fact that all works rely to a greater or lesser extent on Vegetius, or that they reflect elementary military know-how. For other common, non-Vegetian (and non-Frontinian) content, e.g. on unit formations, the differences in content, wording, style, and structure make it unlikely that they influenced each other directly.¹¹² To me, this indicates that the authors relied on tactical texts which have been lost or not yet identified – or on a strong oral tradition, but it is unlikely that the many clerical authors referenced here would have moved in the relevant circles.¹¹³

The selections he makes from Vegetius' books, his logical structuring, and the non-Vegetian matters he has added all argue that our author was an experienced soldier.¹¹⁴ He is evidently re-using passages from Vegetius because, and to the ex-

111 There is also a (speculative) connection in the case of Jean DE MEUN's 1284 translation, which according to the *explicit* was commissioned by the *nobles princes Jehans, contes de de [sic] Eu* (*ibid.*, p. 177). Jean de Brienne, comte d'Eu, did not apparently have any Castilian connections, but his namesake, contemporary and uncle Jean de Brienne, from 1254 *Grand Bouteiller de France*, was in 1275 French ambassador to Castile. Maybe the plural in the *explicit* points to a joint commission? The two Jeans de Brienne were courtiers at the French royal court contemporaneously with Giles of Rome.

112 LENG, Rainer (*Ars belli: Deutsche taktische und kriegstechnische Bilderhandschriften und Traktate im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2002, p. 79) believes the *Pulcher tractatus* to be based on Giles of Rome – to me, there are too many differences to justify such a derivation.

113 Authors generally like to refer to written authorities, or relied on what they knew from their own experience was good contemporary practice, but usually do not mention any input by contemporary practitioners. An exception, though a century later, is Christine de Pizan. Since she cannot claim own experience, she is in her 1410 *Livre des fais d'armes* not embarrassed to state that she supplemented her study of Vegetius, Frontinus, and Valerius Maximus by interviews with experienced soldiers, who were keen to discuss the matters with her on the strength of their appreciation for Christine's prior writings: DE PIZAN, Christine, *Le Livre des fais d'armes et de chevalerie*, DUGAZ, Lucien (ed. – Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2021), pp. 45, 166-67 (I, 1), and 327 (II, 20).

114 As pointed out, much of the non-Vegetian matter our author has inserted finds its echo in Theodore's *Enseignements* – SETTIA, « Esperienza », pp. 495-96.

tent, they still made sense – the precepts are valid because they work, not because Vegetius said so. Though he does adduce the odd reference to other authors, one does not get the feeling that he is doing so to impress the reader or to bolster his or his work’s credentials by adorning it with references to “Authority”. Unlike the *Siete Partidas*, Mastre Richard, Giamboni, or de Meun – or for that matter Vegetius, though in a completely different context –, our author does not apply an ideological spin.

Our author emphasises training, but does not address when or where that should occur, or who should be responsible. Furthermore, two issues that are prominent in current academic discussion regarding the late thirteenth century’s military organisation and battlefield tactics are specialisation in the infantry, and whether a classification as *miles* invariably meant the individual fought mounted. The first instance is actively discussed in Italian historiography, where the time’s militia infantry is classified into individuals armed with crossbows, pavises, or pikes.¹¹⁵ The second issue, which is discussed more generally in the context of knights’ tactical role in battle, is whether significant numbers of knights (*milites*) would have been ordered to serve dismounted, to stiffen the less experienced infantry as officers and as better-equipped, more experienced, and horse-wise fighters.¹¹⁶ The *Pulcher tractatus* does not engage with either of these.

Relating to the second point in the previous paragraph, though the *Pulcher tractatus* is from the supposed “Age of Cavalry,” there is no hint of a general predominance of the cavalry over the infantry (nor *vice versa*).¹¹⁷ Rather, our author appreciates their respective tactical strengths and weaknesses, and expects a host to feature both, the overall commander being tasked with the skill of how best to use each for a successful combined arms action. As mentioned, his sections on recruitment and training focus on the infantry; where he refers to the cavalry

115 SETTIA, *De re militari*, pp. 207-11; see here e.g. *Statuti Veronesi*, 5:32-35 (pp. 688-92) on crossbowmen.

116 VERBRUGGEN, pp. 106-08; this is recommended by the *Enseignements* – KNOWLES, p. 93.

117 See the discussion as outlined by MORILLO. As here CAFERRO, William, « Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry in the Age of the Companies of Adventure », *Nuova Antologia Militare* 4.13 (2023), pp. 119-138, at p. 121. Possibly, the prominence of the nobility cavalry in the sources is a consequence of the nobility seeking to justify their existence, privileges, and ideology-motivated behaviour by emphasising their military contribution, and they leveraged their access to “the media” for that purpose. The re-educational efforts of the likes of Bono Giamboni and Brunetto Latini are in a sense the flip side of this dynamic.

in these respects, he exhibits an attitude of “they do their own thing and know what they’re doing.” I read his statements as implying that cavalry was not his speciality or service, but he was confident that the cavalry, at the time (mostly) provided by the nobility,¹¹⁸ had their own established and fit-for-purpose practices and traditions for training themselves and their horses.

As a wider point, it is extremely rare to find tactical literature on cavalry for the High Middle Ages.¹¹⁹ Vegetius was ideologically focused on resurrecting the lost glory of the heavy infantry legionary, who was being eclipsed by the rise in importance of a mainline heavy cavalryman. The vernacular translations of Mestre Richard, Bono Giamboni, and Jean de Meun all purport to address the knight, but in reality merely do a “global replace” of “knight” for “infantry recruit,” with sometimes baffling effect, an effect that must moreover have been evident to the contemporaries. The educational benefit to the commander would I believe have been accidental, by transmitting the largely common-sense precepts of Vegetius. If there was a lesson for the knight, it was – as is particularly evident with Bono Giamboni – an ideological indoctrination. The *Pulcher tractatus* is in my view non-ideological, but as stated focuses on infantry. The one purely cavalry-oriented text from the time is the *Règle du Temple*, though the Rules again have a very limited scope.¹²⁰

Regarding the question of the intended audience, we are left to speculation on the basis of the text’s content, both in respect of what is included and what is left out, and the language (Latin) itself. My suggestion is that our author wrote for the military administrators and leaders of city-state infantry militia – but I believe it is unlikely that he himself was a functionary in a city’s military since he would have integrated references to the cities’ military organisation and administration, and not confined himself exclusively to tactical matters.¹²¹ The military actions he is addressing are regular, ordered war, not the punitive expeditions against

118 As for the infantry, the cities also kept muster rolls for available horses – for Verona *Statuti Veronesi*, 5:1 (pp. 671-73); BARGIGIA/DE ANGELIS, pp. 16-17.

119 GASSMANN, « Vegetius », pp. 189-98; unusually, the *Enseignements* discuss the merits of different types of horses: KNOWLES, pp. 58-59; MERLO, pp. 564-67.

120 BENNETT, p. 177.

121 BARGIGIA/DE ANGELIS, pp. 15-16. SETTIA, *De re militari*, p. 69, 71, sees the popularity of Vegetius’ *Epitoma* increase with the spread of the institutions of the *podestà* and then the *capitani del popolo* and *di guerra* in the course of the thirteenth century.

marauding freebooters that preoccupied Italian cities in the transition to the fourteenth century and beyond.¹²²

Latin continued to be used in a government context, as exemplified by documents such as the city statutes and the bye-laws of the *societates armatae*, all written in good notary Latin.¹²³ Giamboni's vernacular translation (using ideologically slanted vocabulary) on the other hand was intended not as a military manual, but as an educational civics text where the military angle was exploited for marketing purposes.¹²⁴ Maybe the *Pulcher tractatus* failed to achieve wider distribution because the early fourteenth century economic crisis, population collapse in the wake of the Black Death, and loss of the republican constitutions changed the military constitutions of the city-states and so deprived the tract of its intended readership.¹²⁵

Overall, this brief overview demonstrates that there was considerably more tactical literature in circulation in the later thirteenth century than is commonly recognised, and I make no claim to a comprehensive review. Still, among the literature referenced here, by style and content our text is indeed a *pulcherrimus tractatus*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

PRIMARY SOURCES

AEGIDIUS ROMANUS, *De regimine principum – Über die Fürstenherrschaft*, HARTMANN, Volker (ed. and trans.), Heidelberg, heiBOOKS, 2019.

Der pulcher tractatus de materia belli: Ein Beitrag zur Kriegs- und Geistesgeschichte des Mittelalters, PICHLER, Alfred (ed.), Graz-Vienna-Leipzig, Leuschner und Lubensky, 1927.

FIDENTIUS OF PADUA, *Liber de recuperatione Terre Sancte*, in GOLUBOVICH, Girolamo (ed.), *Biblioteca Bio-Bibliografica della Terra Santa*, Vol. 2, Florence, Quaracchi, 1923, pp.

122 Relying mostly on mercenary cavalry: GRILLO, « Premessa/Connestabili », pp. 10-11.

123 On the relevance of notaries for the production of military documentation BARGIGIA/DE ANGELIS.

124 FAINI, p. 242; implicitly also SPOSATO, p. 25.

125 CAFERRO considered the origins of the members of the Florentine infantry in the second half of the fourteenth century and finds an increased professionalism paralleling that of the cavalymen; similarly GRILLO, « Premessa/Connestabili », pp. 11-13. The Bolognese *societates armatae* too flourished for barely a century, between the mid-1200s to the early 1300s: GASSMANN, « Societates armatae », pp. 202-03.

9-60.

- GIAMBONI, Bono, *Di Vegezio Flavio dell'arte della Guerra*, FONTANI, Francesco (ed.), Florence, Giovanni Marenigh, 1815.
- Gli statuti Veronesi del 1276 colle correzioni e le aggiunte fino al 1393*, SANDRI, Gino (ed.), Venice, n.pub., 1940.
- JOHN OF VITERBO (Ioannes Viterbiensis), *Liber de regimine civitatum*, SALVEMINI, Gaetano (ed.), in GAUDENZI, Augusto (ed.), *Scripta Anecdota Glossatorum*, Vol. 3, Bologna, Monti, 1901, pp. 215-280.
- KNOWLES, Christine, *Les Enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, London, Modern Humanities Research Association, 1983.
- Libro di Montaperti*, PAOLI, Cesare (ed.), Florence, Vieusseux, 1889.
- DE MEUN, Jean, *Art de chevalerie*, ROBERT, Ulysse (ed.), Paris, Firmin Didot & Cie, 1897.
- DE PIZAN, Christine, *Le Livre des faits d'armes et de chevalerie*, DUGAZ, Lucien (ed.), Paris, Classiques Garnier, 2021.
- La règle du Temple*, DE CURZON, Henri (ed.), Paris, Renouard, 1886.
- The Rule of the Templars: The French Text of the Rule of the Order of the Knights Templar*, UPTON-WARD, J.M. (ed. and trans.), Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992.
- Las Siete Partidas*, LÓPEZ, Gregorio (ed.), Salamanca, Domingo de Portonaris y Ursino, 1576.
- Siete Partidas: Volume Two: Medieval Government: The World of Kings and Warriors*, BURNS, Robert I. (ed.) and SCOTT, Samuel Parsons (trans.), Philadelphia PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.
- TORSELLUS, Marinus Sanutus dictus, *Liber secretorum fidelium Crucis super terrae sanctae recuperatione et conservatione*, BONGARS, Jacques (ed.), Hanover, Wechelian, 1611.
- VEGETIUS Renatus, P. Flavius, *Flavii Vegetii Renati Viri Illvstris de re militari*, Cologne, Ceruicor, 1532.

SECONDARY LITERATURE

- ALLMAND, Christopher, *The De Re Militari of Vegetius*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2011.
- BARGIGIA, Fabio, and DE ANGELIS, Gianmarco, «Scrivere in guerra: I notai negli eserciti nell'Italia comunale (secoli XII-XIV)», *Scrineum – Rivista* 5 (2008), pp. 1-69.
- DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « Las fuentes clásicas en el *De Preconiis Hispanie* de Gil de Zamora », *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 32.1 (2012), pp. 80-120.
- DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « Datos para una nueva edición del 'De preconiis Hispanie' de Gil de Zamora: los libros XI y XII », in MARTÍNEZ GÁZQUEZ, José, DE LA CRUZ PALMA, Oscar, FERRERO HERNÁNDEZ, Cándida (eds.), *Estudios de Latín Medieval Hispánico*, Florence, SISMEL, 2011, pp. 167-177.
- DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « El *De re militari* de Vegecio en el *De preconiis Hispanie* de Juan Gil de Zamora », in FARMHOUSE ALBERTO, Paulo and AUGUSTO NASCIMENTO, Aires (eds.), *Actas del IV Congresso Internacional de Latim Medieval Hispánico*, Lisbon, Centro de Estudos Clássicos, 2006, pp. 203-17.

- DEL BARRIO VEGA, Maria Felisa, « Un resumen inédito de los *Strategemata* de Frontino como fuente del libro XII del *De Preconiis Hispanie* de Gil de Zamora », *Cuadernos de Filología Clásica. Estudios Latinos* 26.1 (2006), pp. 101-46.
- BENNETT, Matthew, « *La Règle du Temple* as a Military Manual, or How to Deliver a Cavalry Charge », in UPTON-WARD, J.M. (ed. and trans.), *The Rule of the Templars*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1992, pp. 175-88.
- BRIGGS, Charles F., « Life, Works, and Legacy », in BRIGGS, Charles F. and EARDLEY, Peter S. (eds.), *A Companion to Giles of Rome*, Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2016, pp. 6-33.
- CAFERRO, William, « Toward an Understanding of Florentine Infantry in the Age of the Companies of Adventure », *Nuova Antologia Militare* 4.13 (February 2023), pp. 119-138.
- ESTÉVEZ SOLA, Juan A., « Un manuscrito desconocido del *De preconiis Hispanie* », *Revue d'histoire des Textes* 12 (2017), pp. 381-92.
- FAINI, Enrico, « Vegezio e Orosio: storia, cavalleria e politica nella Firenze del tardo Duecento », in COLOMBO, Michele, PELLEGRINI, Paolo, PREGNOLATO, Simone (eds.), *Storia sacra e profana nei volgarizzamenti medioevali. Rilievi di lingua e di cultura*, Berlin-Boston MA, de Gruyter, 2019, pp. 237-54.
- FRANZOSI, Damiano, « L'esercito cremonese agli inizi del Trecento », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 71-88.
- GARCÍA FITZ, Francisco, « La didáctica militar en la literatura castellana (segunda mitad del siglo XIII y primera del XIV) », *Anuario de estudios medievales* 19 (1989), pp. 271-283.
- GASSMANN, Jürg, « Vegetius, Arrian and the Battlefield Cavalry Formations of Medieval Europe », in ROPA, Anastasija, and DAWSON, Timothy (eds.), *Echoing Hooves*, Leiden / Boston MA, Brill, 2022, pp. 179-203.
- GASSMANN, Jürg, « The *Siete Partidas*: A Repository of Medieval Military and Tactical Instruction », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 9.1 (2021), pp. 1-27.
- GASSMANN, Jürg, « Combat Training for Horse and Rider in the Early Middle Ages », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 6.1 (2018), pp. 63-98.
- GASSMANN, Jürg, « A Well Regulated Militia: Political and Military Organisation in Pre-Napoleonic Switzerland (1550-1799) », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 4:1 (2016), pp. 23-52.
- GASSMANN, Jürg, « The Bolognese *Societates Armatae* of the Late 13th Century », *Acta Periodica Duellatorum* 2 (2014), pp. 195-231.
- GRILLO, Paolo, « Premessa », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 5-13.
- GRILLO, Paolo, « Cavalieri, cittadini e comune consolare », in CACIORGNA, M.T., CAROCCI, S., ZORZI, A. (eds.), *I comuni di Jean-Claude Maire Vigueur. Percorsi storiografici*, Rome, Viella, 2014, pp. 157-176.
- GRILLO, Paolo, « I comandanti degli eserciti comunali nel Duecento: uno studio della campagna di Parma (1247-1248) », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Cittadini in armi. Eserciti e guerre nell'Italia comunale*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2011, pp. 9-35.
- HOSLER, John D., « Reframing the Conversation on Medieval Military Strategy », *Journal of Medieval Military History* 16 (2018), pp. 189-206.

- KELLER, Hagen, « Adel, Rittertum und Ritterstand nach italienischen Zeugnissen des 11.-14. Jahrhunderts », in FENSKE, Lutz, RÖSENER, Werner, ZOTZ, Thomas (eds.), *Institutionen, Kultur und Gesellschaft im Mittelalter (FS Josef Fleckenstein)*, Sigmaringen, Thorbecke, 1984, pp. 581-608.
- LENG, Rainer, *Ars belli: Deutsche taktische und kriegstechnische Bilderhandschriften und Traktate im 15. und 16. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols, Wiesbaden, Reichert, 2002.
- MERLO, Marco, « Le armi del marchese. Gli armamenti negli *enseignements* di Teodoro Paleologo tra teoria e pratica della Guerra », *Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino* 110.2 (2012), pp. 499-568.
- MORILLO, Stephen, « The “Age of Cavalry” Revisited », in KAGAY, Donald J. and VILLALON, L.J. Andrew (eds.), *The circle of war in the Middle Ages: Essays on medieval military and naval history*, Woodbridge, Boydell and Brewer, 1999, pp. 45-58.
- PANATERI, Daniel, « Adaptar y sobrevivir: Estrategias textuales de estabilización sobre Partidas en el siglo XIV », in RUCHESI, Fernando (ed.), *Circulación de ideas en la Antigüedad tardía y la Edad Media: Occidente y Oriente*, Resistencia, Instituto de Investigaciones Geohistóricas, 2020, pp. 169-82.
- POLONI, Alma, « Il commune di popolo e le sue istituzioni tra Due e Trecento. Alcune riflessioni a partire dalla storiografia dell'ultimo quindicennio », *Reti Medievali Rivista* 13.1 (2012), pp. 3-27.
- SETTIA, Aldo, « L'esperienza e il « senno accidentale » negli « Insegnamenti » di Teodoro di Monferrato », *Bollettino storico bibliografico subalpino* 110.2 (2012), pp. 479-98.
- SETTIA, Aldo, *De re militari. Pratica e teoria nella guerra medievale*, Rome, Viella, 2008.
- SETTIA, Aldo, *Rapine, assedi, battaglie: La guerra nel Medioevo*, Rome, Laterza, 2003.
- SPOSATO, Peter, *Forged in the Shadow of Mars: Chivalry and Violence in Late Medieval Florence*, Ithaca, Cornell UP, 2022.
- THORPE, Lewis, « Mastre Richard, a thirteenth-century translator of the “De re militari” of Vegetius », *Scriptorium* 6.1 (1952), pp. 39-50.
- VACCARO, Giulio, « ‘Chi desidera pace apparecchi battaglia.’ Bono Giamboni traduttore di Vegezio », in LUBELLO, Sergio (ed.), *Volgarizzare, tradurre, interpretare nei secc. XIII-XVI*, Strasbourg, Éditions de linguistique et de philologie, 2011, pp. 55-68.
- VARANINI, Gian Maria, « Note sull'esercito del comune di Treviso nei primi decenni del Trecento (1313 c-1318, 1330-1335) », in GRILLO, Paolo (ed.), *Connestabili. Eserciti e guerra nell'Italia del primo Trecento*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2018, pp. 31-70.
- VERBRUGGEN, J.F., *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages*, WIL-LARD, Sumner and SOUTHERN, R. W. (trans.), 2nd Ed., Woodbridge, Boydell, 1998.



Altorilievo su pannello di alabastro, Spagna, XIII secolo,
Metropolitan Museum, Fondo Dodge 1913. Public Domain.

Storia Militare Medievale

Articoli / Articles

- *The Art of Single Combat in the Eastern Roman Empire*,
by MATTIA CAPRIOLI
castellano-leonesa durante el los siglos XII y XIII,
por JOSÉ LUÍS COSTA HERNÁNDEZ
- *Ring-sword in Early Medieval Europe*,
by VLADIMIR T. VASILEV
- *Ricostruire gli eventi bellici da una prospettiva archeologica: la battaglia di Stamford Bridge (1066 d.C.)*,
di MARCO MARTINI
- *Un'analisi delle dinamiche strutturali delle aggregazioni cumane nell'XI secolo*,
di FRANCESCO FEDERICI
- *The Pulcher Tractatus de Materia Belli: A Military Practitioner's Manual from c.1300*,
by JÜRIG GASSMANN
- *Il fustibalo. Storia illustrata di un'arma lanciataioa medievale dimenticata*,
DI GIOVANNI COPPOLA E MARCO MERLO
- *Servir al Señor. Una aproximación a las obligaciones militares de la sociedad*
- *Qui saracenis arma deferunt. Il papato e il contrabbando di armi durante le crociate*,
di ANDREA LOSTUMBO
- *Ezzelino III da Romano e la militia veneta in Rolandino da Padova*,
di IACOPO DE PASQUALE
- *Benevento e Campi Palentini. Documenti e cronache delle due battaglie che decisero la conquista angioina del Mezzogiorno*,
di GUIDO IORIO
- *Fanti lombardi e fanti toscani: Piero Pieri e la "nostra guisa" (1289-1348)*,
di FILIPPO NARDONE
- *Chivalric Deaths in Battle in Late Medieval Castile*,
by SAMUEL CLAUSSEN
- *Dai tedeschi ai bretoni: le condotte mercenarie d'oltralpe*
- *nell'Italia centro-meridionale (XIV secolo). Con un focus sulle battaglie del Volturno e di Marino*,
di EMILIANO BULTRINI
- *Come satiri selvaggi. Il guerriero canario e l'invasione normanno-castigliana del XV secolo*,
di DARIO TESTI
- *"Bad Christian" Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta in Crusade or Ancient versus Early Modern in the Humanistic Discourse*,
by DMITRY MAZARCHUK
- *L'esercito ordinario fiorentino a inizio Quattrocento. Una prima ricerca*,
di SIMONE PICCHIANI
- *«Lavorare spingarde et schioppetti». Produzione e circolazione delle armi da fuoco portatili nel ducato sforzesco*,
di MATTEO RONCHI
- *La storia medievale in vignette*
di MIRKO PERINIOLA

Recensioni / Reviews

- FEDERICO CANACCINI, *Il Medioevo in 21 battaglie*
[di NICOLA DI MAURO]
- FABIO ROMANONI, *La guerra d'acqua dolce. Navi e conflitti medievali nell'Italia settentrionale*
(di MARCO MERLO)
- *Fazer la guerra: estrategia y táctica militar en la Castilla del siglo XV*
[di FABIO ROMANONI]
- JOSÉ MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ GARCÍA (ed.), *Hacia una arqueología del combate medieval ss. XII-XV. Puntos de partida*
(di DARIO TESTI)
- PAOLO GRILLO, *Federico II. Le guerre, le città, l'impero*
[di FABIO ROMANONI]
- MARCO VENDITTELLI e MARCO CIOCCHETTI, *Roma al tempo di Dante. Una storia municipale (1265-1321)*
[di EMILIANO BULTRINI]
- MARCO VENDITTELLI e EMILIANO BULTRINI, *Pax vobiscum. La Crociata di Bonifacio VIII contro i Colonna*
(di LORENZO PROSCIO)
- GIANFRANCO PERRI, *Ruggero Flores da Brindisi, templare, corsaro e ammiraglio*
(di ANTHONY TRANSFARINO)