



Formation of a roman soldier in the fourth century a.D. and the foundation of a Military Paideia: rethinking the Vegetius *Epitoma rei militaris*

Wendryll José Bento Tavares* and Ana Teresa Marques Gonçalves

Programa de Pós-graduação em História, Universidade Federal de Goiás, Goiânia, Goiás, Brazil. *Author for correspondence.
 E-mail: historiawendryll@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. In this article we undertake a study about the training process of the Roman soldier in the *Epitoma rei militaris*, document written during the last years of the fourth century a.D. We aim here to analyze the procedure reported by Vegetius view that aimed to turn the recruit in soldier in the Roman army. We are supported in the concept of the Military Paideia, defining the process based on an ideal model of a soldier to problematize some essential points for the formation of the Roman soldier. We expect this work to develop an analysis of the elements of the Vegetius vision that they could form a Roman military matrix that would beat all the enemies.

Keywords: Roman empire, army, Vegetius.

A formação do soldado romano no IV século d.C. e a instituição de uma Paideia Militar: relendo a *Epitoma rei militaris* de Vegécio

RESUMO. No presente trabalho empreendemos um estudo acerca do processo de formação do soldado romano na obra-documento *Epitoma rei militaris*, escrita durante os últimos anos do IV século d.C. Objetivamos aqui analisar o procedimento relatado por Vegécio que visava transformar o recruta em soldado do exército romano. Para tal nos apoiamos na conceituação de uma Paideia Militar que define o processo de formação do militar com base em um modelo ideal de soldado para problematizarmos alguns pontos essenciais para a constituição do soldado romano. Esperamos com este trabalho desenvolver uma análise dos elementos que segundo a visão de Vegécio formariam uma matriz militar romana que permitiria vencer todos os seus inimigos.

Palavras-chave: império romano, exército, Vegécio.

La formación del soldado romano en el siglo IV d.C. y la institución de una Paideia Militar: reliendo la *Epitoma rei militaris* de Vegécio

RESUMEN. En el presente trabajo emprendemos un estudio sobre el proceso de formación del soldado romano en la obra-documento *Epitoma rei militaris*, escrita durante los últimos años del siglo IV d.C. Objetivamos aquí analizar el procedimiento relatado por Vegécio que pretendía transformar el recluta en soldado del ejército romano. Para ello, nos apoyamos en la concepción de una Paideia Militar que define el proceso de la formación del militar con base en un modelo ideal de soldado para problematizar algunos puntos esenciales para la constitución del soldado romano. Esperamos con este trabajo desarrollar un análisis de los elementos que, según la perspectiva de Vegécio, formarían una matriz militar romana que permitiría vencer a todos sus enemigos.

Palabras clave: imperio romano, ejército, Vegécio.

Introduction

Arther Ferril, in his work *The Origins of War: From the Stone Age to Alexander the Great*, argues that an organized warfare is defined by one word: formation. When men can be placed in formation and there is now a:

[...] work as a team under a commander or leader, instead of a bunch of heroes without leadership, they cross the line of 'primitive' war to the 'true' or 'organized' war (FERRIL, 1997, p. 11, emphasis added).

For this American author, columns for the march or in line layout are a *sine qua non* condition for the

existence of war. We have tried not to discuss in this article how pejorative exists in primitive duality *versus* organized, or if there are other ways of fighting than through organized groups. What we want is to show how you can still join the military organization to a warlike phenomenon itself.

Among the people from Antiquity said Classical, the military organization has always been a cause for attention and reflections by various authors. When dealing with a specific type of sources, military manuals, documents which aimed to provide *exempla* for military use, we found for several times this concern with military organization. This need to get an increasingly organized army can be seen, for example, in the work *The General* by Onassandro, which is about as a General should proceed to the formations do not undo (ONASSANDRO, *The General*, XXVII, I) or in the work *Stratagems* by Frontinus, when it is devoted to talking about the discipline and its effect in Book IV of his work (FRONTINO, *Stratagems*, IV, I; IV, II). However, it is in *Epitoma rei militaris* by Vegetius where we find a greater concern with the formation of a strong and organized Roman army.

The military manual written by Vegetius deals with various preceptives aspects of the war. In this work there are concerns that start from choosing and recruiting the soldier and go to the best way to protect and attack a city. Due to the large amount of information provided by the author and mostly because of the way he approaches the various military aspects, we do our best on an analysis of the military organization in *Epitoma rei militaris* in this article. In this work, we found some very intriguing answers to think about how the Romans of the fourth century a.D.¹ understand military formation. The military concept of Paideia is fundamental to structure the thought of Vegetius regarding the training of men who would take up arms for the Empire. This study is divided into two parts: first, we present the figure of Vegetius and the *Epitoma rei militaris*, so that it is possible to establish the potential for analysis; and a second phase, we do our best on the concept of paideia and military formation of the soldier process in the *Epitoma rei militaris*.

Vegetius and the *Epitoma rei militaris*

Before we consider the questions of military organization in this document it is necessary to

¹There is not a delimited period for the writing of the play and much has yet been discussed about the years in which this document was written. We adopt here one dating from the late fourth century a.D., during the reign of Theodosius I (378-395) due to the amount of evidence found in the work corresponding to various events of that moment.

introduce the author and his work with more details. Who was Flavius Vegetius Renato? All we can know about this character is related to the information we can extract from the works written by him: *Epitoma rei militaris* and *Digesta Artis Mulomedicinae*². The first problem to be solved when dealing with this individual refers to his own name. In recent years the name Publius Vegetius Flavio Renato imposed by A. Önnersfors (VEGÉGIO, 1995) in his critical edition of the work, made this choice to become trend among experts on the author, however, currently it is possible to aim at other directions. David Paniagua Aguilar in his critical edition of *Epitoma rei militaris* states: “Despite the fortune of that name, is not too much to pay attention to the question because there are data that deserve to be revisited” (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 9).

Among the oldest manuscripts that we see today, the author appears with the nomenclature of Flavio Renato Vegetius, as in the edition adopted by us: “[...] Flavius Vegetius Renato”³ (*Epitoma rei militaris*, I Pref.). According to João Gouveia Monteiro, the oldest testimony of *Epitoma rei militaris* that reached us (Ms. *Vaticanus Reginenses*, 2077) presents him as P. Vegati Renati (genitive) and all the medieval sources present the nomenclature of “Fl. Vegeti Renati or Fl. Vegati Renati” (also in the genitive). However, in the manuscripts *Institutiones Grammaticae* by Prisciano of the sixth century⁴, the author appears as ‘Renatus’ preceded by another name, such as ‘Vegetius’, ‘Vegetus’ or ‘Vigitus’. John-o-Lídio, author who lived in the sixth century, cites as ‘Renatus’ (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 87).

This myriad of classifications has led many authors to treat *Epitoma rei militaris* and *Digesta Artis Mulomedicinae* as products of different hands. Despite this trend, the most contemporary studies researchers have chosen to think the two works as fruits of the same author. A. Önnersfors, a Swedish philologist,

[...] proposed that the full name was actually Publius Flavio Vegetius Renato and that P. (abbreviation of Publio) fell into disuse or it was lost somehow in the beginning of the transmission process and copy of *Epitoma* (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 11).

²According to João Gouveia Monteiro this work is “[...] a veterinary treatise on horses and cattle diseases signed by such ‘P. Vegeti Renati’ that the majority of scholars identify as the compiler of *Epitoma*, given the similarity of the name of the author and the verbal and linguistic parallels already pointed out in 1888 by C. Schoener” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 87).

³[Flavii Vegeti Renati] (VEGÉTIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, Pref.).

⁴All dates referred to in the text are from the period after Christ, unless otherwise when we explicit.

When dealing with the *praenomen* 'Flavius', Phillipe Richardot tells us that this name was imposed in the Roman empire by Constantine after his victory over Licinius (RICHARDOT, 2002). After that time all the officers and staff of higher rank wore this designation that eventually became an honorary title. Probably the prestige that accompanied the name has done Vegetius to choose to put such a name, since it may facilitate the reception among his audience. The fact that corroborates to this hypothesis is that the period in which Vegetius wrote, using *praenomen* was almost extinct, and few senators and *curiales* responsible for maintaining this custom.

Regarding to the cognomen 'Renatus', it is usually an indicative of belief in Christianity⁵. Richardot indicates that 'Renatus', the born again, is a Christian toponym. The Vegetius belief may be indicated by several passages of *Epitoma rei militaris* such as in the following passage:

[...] [the soldiers] also swear to God, to Christ and to the Holy Spirit and to the majesty of the emperor, who, after God must be esteemed and honored by mankind (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, V).

Related to the nomen of the author, it is possible to extract several fundamentals data about his life. In his origin the Gentile is a derivation of the name *Vegetus*, which is found in an epigram attributed to Seneca. After the "[...] acquisition of Roman citizenship by a *Vegetus* his name had produced a gentile with the characteristic suffix in *-ius*, giving rise to *Vegetius*" (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 14). This form, as well as all other of its common core, suggests that this name is characteristically western and prevalent in the province of Hispania and Gaul Narbonense⁶.

In the manuscripts of *Epitoma rei militaris*, we can find in the presentation of the work the following words: "[...] The Compendium of Military Art by Flavius Vegetius Renato *uir illustris comes*, in number of four books, starts at a happy hour⁷" (*Epitoma rei militaris*, I, Pref.). The way of treatment *uir illustris* was established in the year of 372 and was given to the men occupying the highest positions in the imperial administration. In *Notitia Dignitatum*, this treatment appears reserved to

[...] six mayors of the palace, eight *magistri militum*, both *praepositi sacri cubiculi*, both *magistri officiorum*, both *quaestores*, both *comes sacrarum largitionum*, both *committees rerum priuatarum* and four *comites domesticorum* [...] (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 17).

Only 28 people across the Empire⁸ received such treatment, which meant that Vegetius had some proximity to the Emperor, which may be observed in several places, as in the example where Vegetius refers to the Emperor's order for him to perform his work of compilation:

Actually, Your Serenity, ó Undefeated Emperor, want ancient teachings of books with a will stronger than an earthly mind can conceive, since it exceeds the antiquity itself for recent achievements. So, as I was ordained to summarize as much as possible in writing, to your Majesty, certain matters, not so much to teach them as to remember, the dedication often entered into conflict with shyness (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, Pref.).

By analyzing the different medieval manuscript tradition, Schöener came to the conclusion that Vegetius was a *comes sacrarum largitionum*⁹, which meant that he was one of the leaders of imperial finance. This makes sense if you look at the comments that Vegetius makes when dealing with the training of soldiers in preference to hiring mercenaries: "[...] it is known that it is cheaper to train their soldiers in arms than hiring foreigners to pay" (VEGÉGIO, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XXVIII). Other passages which show clearly the ability to look at financial matters are on the second book. The first refers to the need to reorganize and regulate the armies:

For once an organized army, be careful, be negligently, have the same expenses, it is useful not only for the present time as to the future times (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, III).

The second passage refers to the expenditure required to form strong soldiers: Indeed, the mill can get what you want to be done if it is not denied the appropriate expenditure (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XVIII).

A dissenting voice in this sense is from Walter Goffart. To this writer, Vegetius did not require an administrative position to make such observations, according Goffart: "It may be more plausible

⁵The work is by a Christian author, however, we found no proselytizing or evangelizing intention in the course of the text, perhaps Vegetius had a measured posture and this attitude was called by Santo Mazzarino as a formally Christian (MAZZARINO, 1991).

⁶Although the *nomen Vegetius* is indicative of the region of origin of our author, it can not categorically state that he is Hispanic.

⁷We used in the present work our translations. As support for the translation work we emphasize the importance of critical editions published by João Gouveia Monteiro, Michael Reeve and David Paniagua Aguilar.

⁸We refer to the Empire in its two parts: East and West.

⁹According to Paniagua Aguilar, the functions of *comes sacrarum largitionum* consisted "[...] in overseeing the collection of indirect taxes, such as tariffs, the collection of taxes paid in precious metal to cost the *donatia* that were granted to the army and the administration and management of mining deposits, quarries and textile factories" (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 19).

(based on *Mulomedicina*) that his office was in charge of the sacred stables”(GOFFART, 1977, p. 89). In reading this author, although *Mulomedicina* do not offer data about the career of our character, it provides biographical information that helps us to reach the conclusion that he was a man who traveled throughout the Empire, and he knew diverse people, like Persians, Armenians and Sarmatians, who was tolerant to the accommodation barbaric and mostly it was always involved with the care of horses and cattle. Moreover, the probable hispanic origin of Vegetius appears again, as Hispania and Gaul were the great centers of horse breeding in the western Empire (MILNER, 1996, p. 34).

Other evidences corroborate in linking Vegetius with the province of Hispania. The first is that Vegetius has great interest in relation to the figure of Sertório¹⁰. This character appears as a model while talking about the recruitment of soldiers,

[...] the force of authority and the foundation of the Roman people based on an initial assessment at the time of enrollment [...] task which, among the ancients, is acknowledged to have been praised before more in Sertório (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, VII).

In addition to these quality recruitments, Sertorius was recognized by the way he trained his soldiers, because only with a lot of training, the troops of Pompey¹¹ could be in his height:

Sallust remember, about the practice of Gnaeus Pompey Magnus, that 'he rivaled with the agile in jumping, with the fast in the race, with the strengths in the fight'. Indeed, neither he could have been to the height of Sertorius if he himself and his soldiers had not been prepared, through frequent exercises for fighting (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, IX).

Another point of great interest of Vegetius is the taking of Numantia by Scipio, the African¹². During two passages (I, XV; III, X) this fact is

¹⁰The Fifth Sertorius (126-73 b.C.) was a Roman general proscribed by Sila that exiled himself in the Hispania region and organized a highly competent local army, able to intimidate the envoys of Rome. In the work *Parallel Lives* by Plutarch, Sertorius is compared to Eumenes of Cardia, because "[...] both were born to command, and dealers for the war stratagems, both were exiled from their land, commanded foreign troops and their deaths experienced a harsh and unjust fortune" (PLUTARCH, *Parallel Lives*, VIII, I-VI).

¹¹*Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus* (106-48 b.C.) was a major political and military of the late Republican period. He participated in numerous military operations, like the war with the Pirates, the campaign against Sertorius and the operations which ended the revolt of Spartacus. Consul for three opportunities, he was one of the triumvirate, alongside to Julius Caesar and Crassus.

¹²*Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus* (236-183 b.C.) was a great Roman general who commanded the Roman armies during the Second Punic War, being recalled as the man managed to beat Hannibal at the Battle of Zama and therefore received the nickname of 'African'. After the death of his father and his uncle, Scipio was sent in 211 b.C. to the region of *Hispania* to fight against the forces of the brothers of Hannibal.

recalled and in one of them the term *hispanienses* is used to deal with the people from Numantia: "Scipio African often accepted *hispanienses* armies that had been defeated under the command of other generals" (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, III, X). The passage that explains more strongly the uniqueness of the treatment of Vegetius to Hispania is inserted at the time that some stereotypes are shown in speaking of *hispanienses*. Vegetius puts them on a level of importance that is hardly recognizable among Roman authors:

In fact, we see that the Roman submitted people around the world by any other reason except for weapons training, for discipline of the camps and for experience of the army. Actually, what would have been worth the Roman shortage against the Gaul's crowd? What could have dared the Roman low stature faces the Germans high stature? It is clear that the Hispanics were higher than ours, not only by number but also by the forces of their bodies; we were always inferior in the tricks and the wealth of Africans. Nobody doubted that we were vanquished by the arts and by the ingenuity of the Greeks (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, I).

Initially there may be some doubt about the belonging of Vegetius to Western or Eastern Empire. David Paniagua Aguilar cites the source *Of magistribus* by Juan Lido where he puts Vegetius beside Celsus, Paterno, Catiline, Frontinus and Cato as a Roman writer. All these characters were from the western part (except in the case of Catiline that is totally unknown). The only exception is explicit in Book I, where Vegetius refers to "[...] Homer, declaring that Tydeus, though smaller body, he was however stronger in arms [...]" (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, V). The selection that Vegetius did, including using imperial documents, can be seen in Book I in which the author explains his main sources of information:

This need forced me, consulted the authors, to say as faithfully as possible in this booklet those things that the celebrated Cato-the-Censor wrote about the military system, what Frontinus and Cornelius Celsus thought that should be exposed, what Paterno, an overzealous defender of military law, drafted in books, what was established by the constitutions of Augustus, Trajan and Hadrian. Indeed, I do not claim myself no authority, I just organize in the form of summaries the matters from whose that I mentioned above and which are dispersed (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, VIII).

To David Paniagua Aguilar there is a fundamental element determining the West as a place of belonging of Vegetius: the cultural formation. This formation was manifested mainly

in the field of language in which he wrote. This is noticeable because of the “[...] basis for application of the precepts of rhetoric and the principles governing the grammar and the deep knowledge of Roman literary classics and particularly Virgil¹³” (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 23).

Peter Heather, in *La Caída del Imperio Romano*, conducted a study, from the letters of Symmachus, the way the aristocrats were educated in the second half of the fourth century and early fifth century. The cornerstone on which the system was based was the intense study of a small number of literary texts with the monitoring of an expert guide, the grammarian. This professional kept his pupil busy for at least seven years (from the time the boy reached eight years old) reading four authors: “Virgil, Cicero, Sallust and Terence” (HEATHER, 2006, p. 36).

After the end of this stage, the young went to study with a *retor*, who examined a range of wider texts, with a reading alongside the student line by line and each change of language was properly identified and discussed¹⁴. The texts that were considered canonicals were taken as linguistic standards of quality and young people were forced to learn this pattern. Besides being a way to keep the language within a closed circle, this form of education allowed an aristocrat to be recognized when he opened his mouth. In addition to the ability of oratory, grammar was also important as an introduction to formal logic. Literary texts also served as *exempla* of human behavior, from which it was possible to know what should or should not be done. In short, “[...] what this education did was to give to their beneficiaries the ability to drive the rest of humanity [...]” (HEATHER, 2006, p. 38).

The study of ancient texts also implied that these men could make new editions and comments about old authors. Heather tells us about the work that Symmachus wrote about *Natural History* by Pliny and it was normal that the medieval copyists reproduced the comments made by these men during the transcription of the texts. Vegetius clearly fits this scenario, because (as we see in subchapter dedicated to the typological

study of the work) he makes a selection of ideas from earlier Roman military texts. We can identify in Vegetius one “[...] exponent of the defenders of traditional Roman culture [...] that approaches him to Symmachus, Pretextato, Avienus, Macrobio, Servius, etc” (PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 25).

With regard to his typology, the *Epitoma rei militaris* is part of the group of works aimed at *ars militaris*, ie, jobs that have on your body all the elements necessary for good preparation and conduct of war, not to forget issues related to *militaris discipline*. Because of these characteristics, we cannot study such a source as a set of ‘true’ historic events in rankian sense, but on the other hand, we can reflect, for example, about the selections and constructions made by Vegetius in order to defend some elements of Roman identifications with and in the war.

Regarding to the organization of *Epitoma rei militaris*, we can say that this was formatted by Vegetius divided into four books according to the author himself as follows:

The first book teaches the selection of youth, from which places or what kind of soldiers must be approved, or through what kind of exercises they must be trained. The second book contains the tradition of the old army, according to which a pedestrian army can be made.

The third book exposes all kinds of arts that seem necessary to ground combat.

The fourth book lists all machines with which the cities are either attacked or are defended; and adds the precepts of naval warfare (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, Pref.).

We know that Vegetius wrote a first book with 28 chapters devoted to the issue of recruits selection and training and he consecrated it to the Emperor who approved the text and ordered the author to continue the work:

So, as I was ordered to summarize as much as possible in writing, to your Majesty, certain matters, not so much to teach them as to remember them, the dedication often entered into conflict with shyness. [...] Because I, as a modest server, recently presented a booklet about the recruitment and training of young people, and nevertheless, I escaped without censure; therefore, I am not afraid in complying the order to undertake a work which, when it was spontaneous, emerged unpunished (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, Pref.).

The second book, dedicated to the organization and differentiation of the Legion according to the former consists of 25 chapters. In the third book, Vegetius shows us how the

¹³Aguilar tells us even about a virgilianism that was studied by D. Comparetti in the work *Virgilio nel Medio Evo*, ie, aesthetic and cultural feeling of IV and V centuries. To Aguilar: “With Virgil as a central foundation of education in the schools of grammar and rhetoric in the Latin West, who received an education of this kind assumed Virgil and his work as the main model and as ‘the author that gathered in himself all the ideals of science and culture that were proper of that time’”(PANIAGUA AGUILAR, 2006, p. 24-25).

¹⁴A typical exercise that Heather (2006) tells us was to express some success in the daily life in the style of some of ‘canonicals’ authors.

military should work in campaign, according to the words of the author, it sounds the *classicum*¹⁵. Furthermore, in this book 32 maxims strategic and tactical for the conduct of war are presented. In the last book, there is a division into two themes: 30 chapters are aimed to *poliorcetica*, ie, the art of besieging cities, and 16 chapters focused on the specificities of naval warfare.

In the four books when thinking about the reason of the Roman military superiority, Vegetius tells us that this was based on three elements. For him: “[...] In fact, we see that the Roman submitted people around the world by any other reason except for weapons training, for discipline of the camps and for experience of the army” (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, I). This tripod, as we can see, was related to the ability of Roman military organization. While the Gauls were characterized by the crowd, the Germans by stature, the Hispanics by force, the Africans by tricks and by riches and the Greeks by the ingenuity and by the arts, the Romans showed superiority to other people by teaching the rules of the weapons, by daily exercise and by severe punishment related to the negligence (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, I).

We think that this Vegetius reasoning is linked to the Roman scenario after the Battle of Adrianople in 378. Armies of the eastern part of the Roman Empire suffered significant casualties and from the moral point of view such defeat meant a great humiliation for military forces on both sides of Empire with the death of Valens, Emperor responsible for the East. Adrian Goldsworthy gives us an idea of the size of the disaster:

Adrianople was a monumental disaster [...] The critical aspect was that most of the soldiers immediately available to the Emperor of the East to active campaigns had died (GOLDSWORTHY, 2010, p. 329).

Theodosius I, to whom we think that Vegetius addressed the work, was named *Augusto* of the eastern provinces and was in charge of rebuilding the defeated army. The *Epitoma rei militaris* so, in our view, is an attempt to point out ways for a recovery of the Roman military force so celebrated during the previous centuries.

Besides a reduction in troop numbers due to defeat in military operations¹⁶, there was the matter

¹⁵According to João Gouveia Monteiro: “[...] the *classicum* corresponded to the sound released into the air by brass instruments, signaling the grouping of troops and the call to fight [...]” (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 438). On the other hand, Vegetius will speak on practical actions during military expeditions.

¹⁶Besides the Battle of Adrianople in which the losses were in large proportions, the Romans had smaller losses in military operations such as punitive expeditions into enemy territory, where the example of the fourth

of recruitment. We know that Theodosius I sought tried to enroll the maximum possible of men. However, there were many exemptions, as in the case of senators, bureaucrats, clerics and even cooks, bakers and slaves. The men of the cities, considered of little value to the armies, were also hardly recruited. It was on the “[...] shoulders of small farmers and peasants aged between seven and thirty-five that the burden fell” (GRANT, 2009, p. 47). This feeling of hostility towards the military men who live in cities is noticeable even in *Epitoma rei militaris*:

On this point, I believe that it could never doubt that the people of the fields was more fit for the weapons, the people who are created outdoor and work, supporting the sun and despising the sun, baths unaware and ignorant of the pleasures, single spirit and satisfied with little, with hardened and capable members to tolerate all kinds of work and for those who wield the iron, open a gap or carry a burden are habits of country life (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, III).

In this passage, we can see how there is a duality among the *exercitus*, which in Latin means besides physical, effort, exercise, had a sense of military force, of army (OXFORD LATIN DICTIONARY, 1968, p. 641), and the *inertia*, which carries a sense of lack of skill, abstention or disinclination for activity, laziness, idleness and indolence (OXFORD LATIN DICTIONARY, 1968, p. 892). The field would be the place where the exercise was never forgotten, because these men's lives depended on their activity while the city would place the seductions and pleasures, which poisoned the minds of soldiers.

In a scenario in which recruit men became increasingly a complicated task, it was necessary to make men available the best possible. This is clear in the words of Vegetius himself when it reports that “[...] it is not so much the crowd and the uneducated courage which often give the victory, but the art and the training” (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, Introduction). It was necessary to work with the tools they had at hand, and in this case it was a priority to use men available in the best possible way in an environment that not only was under threat of people like the Goths, but it was also experiencing internal dissidence such as the uprisings of Maximus and Eugenius.

Training and discipline: an analysis of the military Paideia

The response of Vegetius to contemporary problems was to mount an organized army. This

century AD most celebrated is the expedition of Julian in Persia, which resulted in his defeat and subsequently his death.

organization would pass through a feature in particular: a military discipline. The war among the Romans went through a learning process, as well as math or literature, so the need of the *exercitium*, *education* that had a fundamental purpose “[...] give to the Roman soldier superiority over the barbarian in battle” (LE BOHEC, 2008, p. 143).

In this context the definition of a military *Paidéia* gains importance in our work. As Werner Jaeger argues in *Paideia: the formation of the Greek man*, the term *Paideia* designated a concept that would encompass modern terms as civilization, culture, tradition, education and literature. In this sense, *Paideia* means the “[...] formation of a high type of man” (JAEGER, 2010, p. 7). This superiority of man would come as an idea, as generality of universal and normative value and not of man as an autonomous being. This notion of an ideal model of man is identified, for example, in the Latin word *humanitas*, which according to *Oxford Latin Dictionary* designates the human nature while it is quality that distinguishes civilized to wild men (OXFORD LATIN DICTIONARY, 1968, p. 808). At the same time that it is a human characteristic, it is only possible because it elects a model man. In our argument, we think that the thought of Vegetius was to use this feature to make an ideal combatant as standard when talking about the training of the soldier. We associate the gain of discipline through the learning process with the formation in the global sense of the Greeks, inasmuch as that the recruits should progressively acquire the qualities to become good soldiers based on an abstraction. Vegetius was the collective representative, as long as his work had possible acceptance among his readers and the essence of the training of the soldiers would be exactly the “[...] shaping of individuals by the standard of the community [...]” (JAEGER, 2010, p. 15). The correct execution of orders or the obedience to superiors should be taught and the soldier was formed based on a process of repeated tasks, approaching the standards desired by Vegetius.

For a soldier was disciplined, he should go through numerous phases of training that would make him able to be a military to integrate Roman ranks. We shall not dwell in the selection of recruits process, but the later process, when the best received the distinctive hallmarks. Firstly, it was necessary that these men had a motivation to continue the painful transformation of a recruit in a Roman soldier. Vegetius tells us that to defend the *res publica* itself is the duty of the soldiers.

While the athlete, the hunter and the coachman look for increasing their skills by reward or favors of the plebs, the armed men should defend the *res publica*, because the military hierarchy and the will of the Emperor gave them riches and honors (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XXIV). Due to this need to honor the Emperor and the army, these men should always be training and being prepared to never be defeated, never letting their standards fall into enemy hands.

The soldiers performed two types of activities: collective and individual. According to SE Stout, essential points existed in the training of soldiers: 1) recruits should be carefully selected; 2) they should learn how to use and care for their equipment; 3) they should be placed at the largest point of physical preparation for daily exercise; 4) they should as much as possible, be placed in contact with likely situations in the battlefield and know how to face adversities; and 5) they would have to learn to obey orders and not to run away from work (STOUT, 1921). The individual and collective activities were sometimes interspersed during the training, since this was a continual process. The first thing he should learn to be an integral part of Roman lines would be the military march. The march is in the principle of the soldier formation, as Vegetius tells us:

Thus, recruits must learn the military march early in their training. For nothing should be more safeguarded in the march column or in the battle line than all the soldiers maintain the same order of progression, which can only happen if they learn through a regular workout to walk rapidly and in a uniformly line. In fact, a divided and disorganized army always runs a very grave danger before the enemies (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, IX).

During a military march, men should walk twenty thousand steps (six kilometers) in five hours and in fast-paced twenty-four thousand steps (about seven kilometers). Each soldier should do the route with a weight of up to sixty pounds (twenty pounds) to get used to carrying their weapons and their custard (ration given by the state). Recall that after the reform of Marius, which among other things sought to reduce to a minimum possible the number of carries helpers of military baggage, each soldier was responsible for transporting his belongings. This march training (*ambulatium*) should be performed three times a month and, besides the infants, riders should participate. They were asked to make advances and retreats exercises in different types of terrain during the march, so that the armies were

never surprised (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XXVII).

The collective strength was the most important characteristics of the military because Vegetius argued that the Legion was the factor of imbalance between the Romans and their enemies. Although its size from five to six thousand men during the Principality has fallen to about one thousand men, it remained a Roman military unit par excellence. To Brian Campbell,

[...] its command structure, tactical organization and fighting methods - based on the use of the spear-thrower (*pilum*) and the short perforation sword - remained substantially unchanged (CAMPBELL, 2005, p. 111).

This collective force should be strengthened by training focused on individuality. A well trained soldier not fear the fight, while an untrained soldier could avoid it (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XXIII). Individual activities could also be classified into two categories: purely physical activities and proper military actions. Physical activities were started with the practice of race, so that the military could move or hold his positions more quickly:

But young people should be used primarily to race, to make progress against the enemy with greater impetus, so that when the need arises, either they quickly occupy convenient positions or they anticipate the opponents willing to do the same, so that they swiftly carry out the exploration work and return even faster, then they can pick up easier the fleeing enemies (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, IX).

Besides racing necessary to enhance the *velocitas* the soldier should also be trained in jumping, which would enable the armed men overcome obstacles on the battlefield. Let us return to Vegetius:

The soldier should also be trained in jumping, through which the ditches are exceeded or some impediment obstacle is overcome, so that when problems of this type arise, they can overcome the effortlessly (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, IX).

The last properly physical exercise which we will deal with is swimming. One of the biggest military difficulties that men of the ancient world faced when dealing with nature, was the crossing of rivers. An example of this difficulty was the crossing of the Danube in the eastern part of the Empire by the Goths with Roman help. A great example of the need for training of swimming is

from the Emperor Julian campaign in Gaul, when he ordered his tribune Bainobaudes and a regiment of auxiliary troops crossed the Rhine swimming in order to attack by surprise a group of refugees on an island, whose war plan was very successful (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 386). Frontinus, speaking about ambushes, cites as stratagem involving a commander of Julius Caesar in Gaul, Titus Labienus¹⁷, that is interesting to have an idea of the importance of swimming:

Titus Labienus, Gaius Caesar lieutenant, was anxious to get into combat with the Gauls before the arrival of the Germans, who came to help them. Pretending himself discouraged, he set up his camp on the other side of a brook and announced that he was leaving the next day. The Gauls, thinking he was in retreat, began to cross the river. Labienus turned around with his troops and caught the Gauls in a difficult situation, in the middle ground of their crossing and made them into pieces (FRONTINO, *Stratagemas*, II, V).

The Vegetius own alert to the risk of crossing the rivers:

In crossing the rivers a serious setback often happened to the careless. Indeed, if the current is stronger or the river bed wider, it may well overwhelm the baggage, the young and even the weaker combatants themselves (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, III, VII).

Then, Vegetius requires learning to swim because of the danger of crossing rivers. However, due to adverse weather conditions, this type of exercise can be done only during the period when it was hot;

Every recruit must also learn during the summer months, the habit of swimming. Actually, not always the rivers are crossed by bridges, so the army, either to advance or to withdraw, is frequently forced to swim. Often, the rivers overflow because of sudden rains or snows, and the ignorance of swimming creates a serious danger, that comes not only from the enemy as the waters themselves (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, X).

In this phase of training, the recruits were not only trained, but even the horses and *galliaros* (Servants). It is worth remembering that this activity was important since the formation of the militia of Roman citizens, since the Champ de Mars was a neighbor to the Tiber river, where the men washed their sweat and practiced swimming after training

¹⁷Titus Labienus is famous for having abandoned Julius Caesar in favor of Pompey during the early 49 b.C. Civil War and died in the Battle of Munda, essential to put an end to that war.

with weapons (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, X). Thus, we make room for the next phase of this Article: the military exercises themselves. Yann Le Bohec tells us that the phase of physical training itself involve the hardening of the body, while the next phase would involve activities related to the management of weapons (LE BOHEC, 2008).

The first information that Vegetius gives us is about the training on the posts. For the recruits were given shields of wicker that were much heavier than the *scutum* and wooden maces also heavier than the swords¹⁸ to be used against the posts in two shifts: morning and evening. We have, again, a detailed description by Vegetius:

Each of the posts was spiked to the ground by each of recruits, so that it could not move and rise up six feet (about 1.80 meters) above the ground. Against this post, just as against an opponent, the recruit exercised with that shield of wicker and the maces, as if he trained with the *gladius* and with the common shield, sometimes to seek to achieve the pole as a head or a face, sometimes to threaten the flanks, sometimes try to strike the knees and legs, to retreat, to move, to jump against this pole as if it were a real opponent, so that he strikes the post with all the ardor and with all the art of combat. In this workout, it is used such a caution, so that when the recruits attack to inflict a blow, he does not expose himself to a wound on a body part (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XI).

This simulation of individual confrontation, made to improve the skills of fencing and use of shield, possessed peculiarities regarding to recruits and experienced soldiers. The recruits should train in two shifts, while experienced soldiers were trained once a day, but could never stop training. For Vegetius, the untrained soldier was always a recruit (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XXIII). In this training, the future soldier learned to use the sword to give thrusts, because then the swords penetrate vital organs and would protect the warrior, while the blow with the edge hardly penetrated the armor and bones and had the disadvantage of expose the weaknesses of the Roman to the opponent.

The next step in the training of recruits was the teaching of *armatura*. Although among the ancient authors has not been very clear that this type of exercise was conducted by *campidoctores*, it is known that this was essential for the proper functioning of the troops. The prominence of this exercise was so large for the war forces that the men who did not

have progress in this learning should be punished exchanging his wheat for barley, while the successful ones earned double the custard. During the *armatura*, according to Vegetius, the soldiers;

learn to keep the ranks and follow his banner amid such chaotic situations, even in simulated combat; and no error arises among trained soldiers, yet there is a great confusion of the crowd of fighters (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XXIII).

The *armatura* would be the part responsible for training the soldiers in order to avoid the abandon in the middle of a battle. A fleeing army became an easy prey for its opponent. So it was necessary to place recruits in training camp and make them repeat several times the battle formations. It was necessary to make them understand that there was a definite space between a row and another, so that there was no loophole for the enemy arrival. The *armatura* seems to be the time that the collective had great importance during the training and various exercises done at this stage of training corroborated towards the formation of a cohesive legion. As we can see by reading the *Epitoma rei militaris*:

Therefore, recruits must be taken regularly for training camp and should be arranged in battle formation according to the order of their incorporation, so that, at first, the line is unique and elongated and that has no boss or curves then a soldier can have a distance from the other in an identical and regular space. Thereafter, they are suddenly commanded to fold line, so that the order they are used to be is maintained in the actual combat. Thirdly, it is ordered that they suddenly form a rectangle, since the line must be transformed into a triangle, which they call 'wedge'; this training is often very useful in the war. It is still ordered to form circles, through which, when the strength of the enemy breaks the formation, experienced soldiers often resist, preventing the bulk of the army run away and incurs in a grave danger (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XXVI).

Thus it was possible to anticipate most of the formations in battle and make the soldiers less afraid of surprises in the battlefield. Besides training the men for the moment of the encounter of armies, had to do more specific training. Among these, it was highlighted the training with throwing weapons: darts, arrows, stones and lead darts, which received the name of *mattiobarbuli*. When should happen this training? Vegetius tells us that concurrently with the training on the poles, which would also increase the strength of arms. Vegetius again tells us that:

¹⁸In the fourth century AD, long swords continued to be the main military trend, *spathae* and *gladius* which were known seem to have decreased their use (BISHOP; COULSTON, 2009).

The recruit who is trained with the maces should also be forced to throw against the post, as if it were against a man, rods with a higher weight than the true darts will have. In this exercise, the weapon master is watching the recruits who are throwing the rod with great force and the dart aiming the pole, or very near it. Indeed, through this exercise, not only increases the strength of arms as also acquires the expertise and experience to launch (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XIV).

The recruits that have the most suitable for the use of such weapons should receive a distinguished training, with the use of wooden arches:

For this exercise, expert instructors should be chosen and must be used a great skillfulness in order the recruits hold the bow with wisdom, to arm itself energetically, so that the left hand stays firm and for the right to be properly conducted, then the view and the spirit converge in relation to what is to be achieved, to be taught to shoot arrows with clearance, either on horseback or on foot (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XV).

The throwing of stones with the use of slings has not been forgotten by Vegetius. This type of weapon was very effective against warriors with body armor, because despite penetrate the opponent's body, causing many injuries:

This practice should, therefore, be learned by all recruits through a frequent practice because to carry the sling gives no work. And it happens, sometimes, that the fight rages on rocky places, that amount or any hill must be defended, or that the barbarians have to be away from the attack to forts and cities through stones and slings (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XVI)

We see how, to Vegetius, the soldiers with throwing weapons were an important part of the legions. When describing the layout in the battlefield of the legion, since the first line existed fighters using the small-sized lead dart known as *mattiobarbuli* and also the *pilum*¹⁹ (Also called *spiculum* by Vegetius), which was much larger than the aforementioned weapon. The prominence given by Vegetius to this type of weaponry is shown even greater when he speaks about the importance of the third line in battle, which consists of *ferentarii* and *scutati*, that besides the darts they had on their bodies archers and *funditores* that throw stones and also the *tragularii* that

shot arrows with *manuballistae*²⁰ (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II, XV).

Another specific type of exercise was related to riding. An interesting fact is that Vegetius emphasized that all recruits and experienced soldiers should learn to ride horses. Despite the infantry be placed as the main branch of the Roman military art, the cavalry appears as essential for the establishment of a good army field, as well as the navy. But, back to riding training:

They used to put wooden horses under a roof in winter or on the practice field during the summer; young people were forced to climb on them, firstly without weapons until they become accustomed, and then armed. And so was the care that they learned not only to dismount and mount either the right side or the left side, still waving unsheathed rods or swords (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XVIII).

The last phase of the soldier learning, which will make the recruits a really disciplined soldier, according to the organizational standards of the Roman army, would be learning the setting up of camps. At this point, it appears one of the most important concepts of *Epitoma rei militaris*: The walled city. When the camp was well built, it meant that the whole army would rest in safety. However, according to Vegetius, the custom of erecting camps was being lost over the years by the Romans and many Roman defeats, to the author, were caused due to this lack of care for the assembly of the camps (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XVIII). Choosing a safe place, which has firewood, grass and water available without a mount close by, as well as the respect of the ratio between number of soldiers and baggage, were very important when building a camp.

The shape of the camp had also some importance as the need demanded: square, triangular or semi-circular. The location of the *Praetoria* always facing the place where there were the enemies or to the east, or still the importance of *decumana*, door to where the offending soldiers were brought to punishment, those were fundamental information shared by soldiers. All that a recruit should know, but the more demanding to the soldier was that he needs to know how to fortify a camp:

The fortification of the camps has three different forms. In fact, if there is no urgent risk, clods of earth are torn and with them it is built like a wall with a height of three feet (40 cm) above the

¹⁹*Pilum* "Spear-thrower comprised of a long, thin iron rod attached to a wooden handle and provided with sharp pyramidal tip. This is a typical weapon of the Roman armies, an 'individual creation'" (FEUGÈRE, 2002, p. 80, quoted in MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 406, emphasis added).

²⁰*Manuballistae*: "Ballistas hand [...] The propulsion system based on two metal arms from where they left the strings that were pre-twisted. The system allowed increasing the twisting force, making the darts go further and faster" (MONTEIRO, 2009, p. 432).

ground, so that, before it, the gap from which was extracted the earth stays; then gives up to the makeshift trench width of nine feet (2.70 m) and a depth of seven feet (2.10 m). But when a stiffer force of the enemy is approaching, then it is very important to fortify the perimeter of the camp with a true gap, so that the width needs to have twelve feet (3.6 m) and a depth of nine feet (2.7 m) 'below the line', as they say; but, above, the earth extracted from the gap heaped on one side and the other, forming a wall with four feet tall (1.2 m). Consequently, the gap will have a total height of thirteen feet (3.9 m) and twelve feet (3.6 m) wide; the top, very strong wooden stakes that soldiers normally carry are spiked. For this work, it is always advisable to have hoes, rakes, baskets and other kinds of utensils (VEGETIUS, *Epitoma rei militaris*, I, XXIV).

After the camp being erected, three heralds announced that their centuries had finished their work and then the centurions should inspect the work of the men and to those who were negligent in their work were punished. Only after completing all these steps satisfactorily, a recruit could say that he is a good Roman soldier, a disciplined soldier who should go through the ultimate test: the battle. This whole process of teaching and training the soldier served precisely to prepare this man to come face to face with the enemy. Only after becoming a disciplined soldier, because discipline here is not only blind obedience to orders, but the result of learning, creating a worthy man to integrate the ranks of the Roman legions.

Final considerations

In the complex scenario of the end of the fourth century a.D. when the Roman military power had suffered heavy military and moral defeat, some proposed reforms were undertaken. Vegetius proposed strengthening the armies from the training and gain of discipline of the soldiers. The notion of *paideia* military took shape in this direction because we think that this author proposed the formation of an ideal combatant as a military standard. For this fighter to be formed it was necessary that the armed men pass through several phases of training: individual, collective, purely physical and military. The military victories, such as those achieved in the past, will only be possible if the habit of turning on simple young in brave soldiers who internalizing the training and were disciplined. We believe that Vegetius offered an alternative as opposed to the growing trend of the systematic use of mercenaries in the armies.

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