

STEFANIA GIALDRONI*

CONFERENCE: THE ROMAN ARMY
AND THE DAWN OF EUROPE
(Roma Tre University, 9-11 May 2019)

In May 2019, Prof. Luca Loschiavo organized, at Roma Tre University's Law Department, in collaboration with the association "Ravenna Capitale d'Occidente", the international and interdisciplinary conference: "The Roman army and the dawn of Europe. Conceptual models and social experimentation: Languages, institutions, law (4th-8th centuries)". The conference took place between the Department of Law and the Department of Humanistic Studies.

The importance of the army in Roman political and social history is a well-known and widely studied matter. Just as well known is the role played by the army as a vehicle for the "Romanization" of people in the Empire's provinces. Less known is the impact that the organizational models carried by the army (administration, hierarchies, institutions, justice, fiscal revenue, etc.) had on the rising Barbarian and Romano-Barbarian societies, which progressively replaced the great construction of the Western Empire during the centuries between the passage from Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages. Increasingly open to the recruitment of non-Roman men, for centuries the Imperial army was also the meeting place of different cultures. Continuously forced to adapt to different situations and environments, the Roman army had to develop multiple and innovative solutions that allowed it to keep Roman control over very large territories with diminished troops, using force as little as possible. Sometimes Roman officers imposed, on the occupied territories, models taken from the Latin tradition (the use of language and writing, ownership structures, the separation between

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administration and religion, etc.). In other cases, they realized that it would have been more useful and effective to adapt solutions already used by the local populations (simplified negotiating practices, formalism, reliance on divine judgment, gift economy, military and paramilitary clientele). Very often the groups of Barbarians that penetrated the borders dealt with these very models, and they eventually adopted them in the moment of settling within the Empire, replacing their model of governance with the Roman one. The great flexibility and adaptability of these solutions (which was a precursor to their durability and dissemination across Early-European spaces) represent today the greatest reason of interest for this kind of investigation.

It was on this basis – that of analyzing the defining moment when Antiquity was concluded and a new age began, (which to some extent continues today) – that scholars belonging to different disciplinary experiences and to different countries, gathered for the first time in Cagliari in October 2012. Their perspectives ranged from political, social and economic history to law, anthropology, religion and iconography. The purpose of that first meeting was to reconstruct the *status quaestionis* over different areas. The result was the volume “Civitas, Iura, Arma. Organizzazioni militari, istituzioni giuridiche e strutture sociali all’origine dell’Europa (secc. III-VIII)”, F. Botta and L. Loschiavo (eds.), Il Grifo ed., Lecce 2015.

During the month of May 2019, the same group – in the meantime further enriched with new specialists – met again to continue the research and to share their knowledge. The conference at Roma Tre paid close attention to cultural and specifically lexical aspects. One of the main purposes of the meeting, in fact, was to work on strategies in order to avoid confusion and misunderstanding among scholars from different disciplines about the use of similar terms, which are recurrent along a temporal spectrum of various centuries and yet assume different meanings in different contexts. Such misunderstanding, in fact, could hinder (as has happened in the past) necessary dialogue. At the center of many contributions there was an attention to the legal aspects having had the greatest social impact: marriage, succession, personal status, personal bonds, dispute resolution.

The conference started with a greeting from Gisella Bassanelli (Bologna), President of “Ravenna Capitale d’Occidente” and Stefano Gasparri (Venice), who chaired the first session, entitled “The words of the soldiers”. Ian Wood (Leeds), gave a

paper on “The transformation of the military in the Late Antique West”, which focused on the profound transformation of the army between the 4th and 7th centuries. With her “*Significati di ‘foedus’ e ‘foedera’ in età imperiale*”, Elvira Migliario (Trent) addressed the topic of the *milites foederati* in relation to the formation of the ethnic identity of Barbarian groups. Pierfrancesco Porena (Rome) dedicated his “*Hospitalitas*” to the famous Roman legal device called *hospitalitas* during the late Roman Empire, while Wolfgang Haubrichs (Saarland) proposed a detailed analysis of the military-style language of the Germanic people in the late Empire and in the Early Middle Ages in his “*Il linguaggio della guerra presso i popoli germanici occidentali*”. The linguistic analysis continued with Carla Falluomini’s (Perugia) “*I Goti e i termini militareschi*”, as she focused on the Gothic terms related to the military sphere.

The second day of the conference opened with a session dedicated to “Rituals, religious beliefs, identity and iconographic models”, under the chairmanship of Walter Pohl (Vienna). Jean-Pierre Poly (Paris Ouest-Nanterre) opened this session with a report entitled “*Comptez, comptez vos hommes... Les unités de l’armée romaine à la fin de l’Empire (394-437)*”, dealing with the topic of the immigration of Barbarian soldiers within the borders of the Empire and the consequent problem of defining their social status. Francesco Borri (Venice) was the first one to focus attention on historiography by analyzing a classic work of early medieval history, *i.e.* Reinhard Wenskus’ “*Stammesbildung und Verfassung*” (1961), which he defined as «often quoted (and criticized) but almost never read» in a speech entitled “*Ibi omnis nobilitas perit Foroiulanorum. ‘Warband’ e ‘Traditionskern’ tra sale dell’idromele e accademia*”. Andrea Verardi (Rome) shifted the attention to archaeological investigation analyzing the new meanings that the *cingulum*, *i.e.* the decorated belt worn by Roman soldiers and officials, assumed in the post-Roman world with his paper “*Cingulum militiae*”. Esperanza Osaba García (Bilbao) introduced, with her paper “*Acudir o non acudir a la llamada de las armas*” the issue of “refusing induction”, with particular focus on the late Visigothic kingdom. The power of images emerged through Saverio Lomartire’s (Alessandria) paper “*Il potere militare e il linguaggio delle immagini, IV-VIII sec.*”, which proposed a wide range of images related to military history between the 4th and the 8th century, often neglected by art historians.

The afternoon session, devoted to “Social structures and juridical models”, was

chaired by Wolfgang Haubrichs (Saarland) and opened by Andrea Trisciuglio (Turin), who proposed a further study on the fundamental institute of the *hospitalitas*, with his speech on “*I limiti del munus hospitalitatis. Come conciliare esigenze socio-economiche e militari nel Tardoantico*”. The following report by Stefan Esders (Berlin) was devoted to the military organizational units in the Frankish and Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: «About *castrum, centena*, hundred». Stefano Gasparri (Venice) dealt instead with the topic of the organization of the Lombard army in his “*Fare, arimannie, arimanni: l’esercito longobardo fra mito e realtà*”. The issue of soldier marriages before and after the fall of the Western Roman Empire was the topic of Francesco Castagnino’s (Milan) “*Creare una famiglia. Il ius connubii e i figli dei soldati prima e dopo la caduta dell’impero*”. The last speaker of the day was Iolanda Ruggiero (Rome), who dealt with the classic theme of inheritance from a very specific perspective: the one of the succession *mortis causa* in the military environment during the transition from Late Antiquity to the Barbaric legislation, starting from the classic work by Nino Tamassia “*Testamentum militis e diritto germanico*” (1927) in her “*Disporre dei beni dopo la morte. I privilegi dei militari in tema di successioni dalle costituzioni imperiali alle leges barbarorum*”.

The last session of the conference, entitled “Geometries of power and military justice” was chaired by Arnaldo Marcone (Rome) and was opened by Soazick Kerneis (Paris Ouest-Nanterre) with a paper entitled “*La justice militaire des populations barbares de l’Empire. Les premières applications de l’ordalie*”, devoted to the influence of the army on the development of the administration of justice in the Late Empire. With his paper on “*Civitas’ e ‘militia’ fra III e VI sec.*”, Valerio Marotta (Pavia) approached the issue of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in order to propose a different interpretation of Roman citizenship between the 3rd and the 4th centuries. Luca Loschiavo’s (Teramo) aim was to propose an innovative interpretation of a classic problem of legal historiography: the one of which laws should be applied to the mixed population of the Roman-Barbaric kingdoms, in his “*Ius speciale o personalità del diritto? Il diritto dei soldati e le legislazioni romano-barbariche*”. Fabio Bottà’s (Cagliari) report “*Forme di solidarietà di gruppo nel diritto penale militare (IV-VIII sec.)*” addressed the issue of the legal definition of joint criminal liability in the military sphere. Finally, Walter Pohl (Vienna), whilst closing the last session of the conference, proposed a paper on the multi-ethnic dimension of the Roman army in Late Antiquity with his “*Dall’esercito agli eserciti: cambi di ordinamento, cambi di identità?*”.

The conference highlighted a legal and administrative continuity in both the Roman and the Barbaric armies. It seems that the Barbarians adopted models, terminologies and iconographies well rooted in the Roman tradition, creating a framework of mutual and almost inextricable influences. The proceedings of the conference will be published by the end of 2020 by Maggioli di Santarcangelo di Romagna.