

THE DISCOVERY OF AELIAN'S *TACTICA THEORIA* IN ITALIAN HUMANISM

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ABSTRACT

Aelian's Tactica theoria was the most highly regarded Greek military manual in Italian Humanism. This paper aims to investigate the reasons for its success, comparing it to other writings on the same topics, and the key elements and figures that ensured the work's survival: Theodorus Gaza and his Latin translation, the vernacular translation by Ludovico Carbone, the diagrams in Niccolò Machiavelli's Arte della guerra, the editions by Lelio Carani and Francesco Ferrosi, and the studies of Andrea Palladio.

KEYWORDS

Aelian the Tactician, Tactica theoria, Niccolò Machiavelli, Andrea Palladio, Ludovico Carbone, Theodorus Gaza

1. Introduction

Anna Komnene writes that during the campaign against the Seljuk Turks in 1116, her father Alexios I Komnenos put into practice (ἐν ἀληθείᾳ) some tactics which he himself had devised in the battlefield on the Dorylaeum plain. He made some sketches of his tactics: indeed, 'he was not inexperienced in Aelian's "Tactics"' (ἦν γὰρ οὐδὲ τῆς Αἰλιανοῦ Τακτικῆς ἀδαής).¹

Anna refers to Aelian the Tactician,² who in the age of Trajan wrote a

¹ Anna Comn., *Alex.* XV,3.6. On this passage see Loreto 1995, pp. 564–565.

² The tendency to confuse Aelian the Tactician with Claudius Aelian goes back to Suid. αἰ 178 (Αἰλιανός, ἀπὸ Πραίνεστοῦ τῆς Ἰταλίας, ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ σοφιστής, ὁ χρηματίσας Κλαύδιος· ὃς ἐπεκλήθη μελίγλωσσος ἢ μελίφθογγος· καὶ ἐσοφίστευσεν ἐν Ῥώμῃ αὐτῇ ἐπὶ τῶν μετὰ Ἀδριανὸν χρόνων), and the editors of the *Tactica theoria* were also guilty of this, so much so that Konrad Gesner included the Latin translation of Aelian's manual by Theodorus Gaza and Francesco Robortello in the edition of the works of Claudius Aelian (Αἰλιανοῦ τὰ εὐρισκόμενα ἅπαντα. *Claudii Aeliani Praenestini pontificis et sophistae, qui Romae sub Imperatore Antonino Pio vixit, Meliglossus aut Meliphthongus ab orationis suavitate cognominatus, opera, quae exstant, omnia, Graece Latineque e regione [...]* cura et opera Conradi Gesneri Tigurini, Zürich 1556; see here the *praefatio*, pp. without no.), and indeed Johannes Arcerius explicitly attributed the *Tactica theoria* to Claudius Aelianus in the title page (*Cl. Aeliani et Leonis Imp. Tactica*

Tactica theoria: a manual on cavalry and infantry tactics.³ The subject of this treatise — the tactics of the Macedonian phalanx —, its structure and the organization of the subject matter⁴ demonstrate that Aelian follows the common source of two other manuals: Asklepiodotus' *Tactics* and Arrian's *Techne taktike*.⁵ Unlike those works, the *Tactica theoria* had an important impact in the ages which followed, from the sixth century to the tactical reforms of William Louis of Nassau-Dillenburg (1560–1620).⁶

The *Fortleben* of Aelian's work is also testified by revivals, uses, references, and citations — the so-called 'interpolated recension', Maurice's *Strategicon*, Syrianus' *De re strategica* and, through these, Leo the Wise's *Tactica*, the *Sylloge tacticorum*, Nicephoros Ouranos' *Tactica*, and other works — in the Byzantine age and also by both the great number of surviving manuscripts and those we know once existed.⁷ Even a brief analysis of all the stages of this process would be too long to carry out

sive De instruendis aciebus, Graece et Latine, quorum hic Graece primum opera Iohannis Meursii, ille ex Sixti Arcerii nova interpretatione Latina [...], Leiden 1613).

³ Τακτικὴ θεωρία is in the *subscriptio* of the *Laurentianus* 55.4 (f. 159^r), which is the most ancient and important manuscript of the Greek tactical manuals and also the archetype of the so-called *recensio authentica* for Aelian's text (cf. Devine 1989, pp. 34–35; a general description of this manuscript, with bibliography, is in Eramo 2018, pp. 43–45), whereas the *inscriptio* of the same codex (f. 146^r) has Τακτικά, which is the *titulatio* also present in the codices of the so-called 'interpolated recension' (see Köchly–Rüstow 1855, pp. 472–473; Dain 1930, p. 229). It is plausible that the title of this work was actually Τακτικὴ θεωρία, since this title is present both at the beginning of the κεφάλαια (C1: περὶ τῆς ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις τακτικῆς θεωρίας) and in the preface (pr. 1: τὴν παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλησι τακτικὴν θεωρίαν ἀπὸ τῶν Ὀμήρου χρόνων κτλ.) and in ch. 1 (1.1: πρῶτος μὲν ὧν ἴσμεν δοκεῖ τὴν τακτικὴν θεωρίαν), referring to the manuals on tactics.

⁴ The manual is divided into 42 chapters. After the preface, where the author presents the work and its criteria, ch. 1, which contains a list of predecessors in the field of tactical literature, and ch. 2, where he explains the difference between land war and naval war, the other chapters deal with troops (ch. 2.6–2.11), the organization of the army (ch. 3–10), formations (ch. 11–23), movements (ch. 24–35), marches (ch. 36–39), and commands (ch. 40–42): see Devine 1989, pp. 31–32.

⁵ The common source of the three manuals has been identified in a work by the Stoic philosopher Panaetius (among other scholars, Dain 1946, pp. 26–40 and Dain–de Foucault 1967, p. 329, who hypothesized an intermediate source for Aelian and Arrian; Wheeler 1977, pp. 338–350; Stadter 1978, pp. 117–119; Devine 1993, pp. 333–334), but also in Polybius' lost manual on tactics (Devine 1989, p. 33 and 1995): see Rance 2016, pp. 17–19.

⁶ Lyd. I,47.1.

⁷ Hale 1988, p. 290; Rance 2016, pp. 33–35 and 2016a, pp. 226–237. See the *stemma codicum* in Dain 1946, s.n.

here. I will instead concentrate on Aelian's reception in Italian Humanism and will argue that this period was a pivotal moment in the making of the knowledge on Greek military literature in Western Europe.⁸

2. Aelian's aims

Why was *Tactica theoria* read, cited, used, and copied, whereas the other two manuals were not? This question is worthy of preliminary attention. In my opinion, one of the keys to Aelian's success can be found in the words which the author himself uses in the preface to his work. Indeed, he explains the content of his *Tactica theoria* addressing the emperor Trajan with these words:⁹ 'since the age of Homer many authors have written on tactical theory, also those who did not share his same experience in the field of theoretical subjects' (πολλοὶ τῶν πρὸ ἡμῶν συνέγραψαν οὐκ ἔχοντες, ἦν ἡμεῖς ἐν τοῖς μαθήμασι πιστεύθημεν ἕξω ἔχειν). For this reason, Aelian decided to begin from these authors, although he rightly knew that posterity would prefer his treaty to theirs. His initial doubts about writing a manual of this type — due to the fact that he did not have a good knowledge of the practical experience acquired by the Romans in this field — were overcome thanks to Frontinus, who was an expert in military matters (ἀπενεγκαμένω περὶ τὴν ἐν τοῖς πολέμοις ἐμπειρίαν) and interested in the theoretical knowledge of the Greeks (οὐκ ἐλάττονα σπουδὴν ἔχοντα εἰς τὴν παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλησι τεθεωρημένην μάθησιν). Thanks to Frontinus' encouragement, Aelian decided to continue with a work which he had only just begun and to publish it, in order to replace the ancient Greek writings for all those interested in this theory (τοῖς ἐσπουδακóσι περὶ ταύτην τὴν θεωρίαν παραγκωνίσασθαι δυναμένην τὰ τῶν ἀρχαίων Ἑλλήνων συντάγματα). Future readers of his work might find all the topics related to these subjects presented better than the ancients had done previously, since each topic is dealt with in a systematic way.

Aelian knew well that these topics might be considered too basic by those who, like the emperor, had an in-depth knowledge and above all experience of these matters. However, he believed that his work would be

⁸ The introduction to Matthew's new translation of the *Tactica theoria* (2012) has only few remarks on this period.

⁹ The name of the dedicatee Ἀδριανέ in the manuscript tradition (pr. 1) should be considered a corruption of Τραϊανέ, on the basis of the references in pr. 3, where the author cites the father of the dedicatee, Nerva (ἐπὶ τοῦ θεοῦ πατρός σου Νέρουας; see Köchly 1851, p. 22 and Dain 1946, pp. 19–20) and Frontinus (τῷ ἐπισήμῳ ὑπατικῷ), whom Aelian visited at his villa in Formia. This man was Sextus Julius Frontinus, the author of the *Strategemata* and the *De aqueductu Urbis Romae*, who lived during Trajan's principate (cf. Devine 1989, p. 31).

of value in any case, if considered as a ‘Greek tactical theory’ (ὡς Ἑλληνικὴν θεωρίαν), in which the principles applied by Alexander the Great to land tactics are exposed. A reader with little spare time — someone like the emperor, for example — would be able to consult the index of subjects which the author placed at the beginning, so he could quickly locate what was of interest to him.

In the preface to his work, Aelian clearly describes its characteristics: the *Tactica theoria* aims to be a clear, well-structured and user-friendly manual, but above all a theoretical handbook, which does not have a direct relationship with the present, and for this reason is always ‘up-to-date’. This aim, which is already evident from the author’s choice of words (note the frequency of the word *θεωρία*¹⁰ and its derivations), is clear when Aelian states that he had doubts about whether to write the manual, since he was not an expert of Roman military theory and practice, and therefore was afraid that Greek doctrine was out of fashion. However, thanks to Frontinus, Aelian understood that Greek military theory was in fact not inferior to Roman military experience, and thus still of value. This statement alone might in itself justify the current relevance of a work like the *Tactica theoria*, which exposed, as did the manuals by Asclepiodotus and Arrian, the principles of the Macedonian phalanx, but, unlike those earlier works, aimed to develop a tactical ‘theory’.¹¹

The other feature, which certainly ensured the success of the *Tactica theoria* over the following centuries, can be seen in ch. 1, where Aelian admits to experiencing difficulty when reading his predecessors, whose works were aimed at a readership that was already well-versed in the topic, and who failed to provide effective accounts of basic concepts. For this reason, wishing to make sure that his readers would not encounter the same difficulties, Aelian decided to use some drawings (ἐπίκουρον παραλήψομαι ἐπὶ καταγραφῆς τὴν τῶν σχημάτων διατύπωσιν), to provide visual support to aid understanding (ἵνα τὴν ὄψιν τῇ νοήσει συλλήπτορα παράσχῳ), whenever his exposition is not sufficient to clearly explain the theoretical concepts being dealt with.

The manuscript tradition has preserved only traces of the drawings that certainly originally accompanied the text. Nevertheless, as we will

¹⁰ Τὴν παρὰ τοῖς Ἑλλήσι τακτικὴν θεωρίαν [...] ταύτην συντάξαι τὴν θεωρίαν [...] περὶ ταύτην τὴν θεωρίαν παραγκωνίσασθαι [...] ὡς Ἑλληνικὴν θεωρίαν [...] τὴν ἐν ταῖς παρατάξεσιν ἐπιβολὴν θεωρήσεις.

¹¹ See Formisano 2009, p. 230: «Teoria dunque, trattazione astratta ed esemplare, basata su una conoscenza tanto ampia quanto perfetta della tradizione letteraria greco-romana, priva di qualsiasi riferimento storico, dettaglio concreto o descrizione di un fatto o luogo particolare». See also Loreto 1995, pp. 573–574, 586–589. I am currently working on a study of the Roman features of the handbooks of Aelian and Arrian.

see, this visual aid steered the choices of reading material in the Humanist age and in the Renaissance, and contributed to deciding the destiny of the text.

3. The Latin translation by Theodorus Gaza

Naples and the Aragon court of Alfonso V were the main hub for the reception of Aelian in Italy and the West.¹² Indeed, the Italian humanist Giovanni Aurispa sold Alfonso a collection of 12 Greek military writings, which included the *Tactica theoria*.¹³ The King evidently asked Aurispa to translate these writings, since in his letter written from Rome on 6 May 1444 Aurispa asks Antonio Panormita, the King's advisor and the most important member of his cultural circle, to tell the monarch that, as soon as he found a place to live, he would deal with the translation, which Alfonso had asked him to produce:¹⁴

Primum omnium regi, quem deum principum appellare soleo, me commendabis eumque certiolem reddes me, quamprimum collocatus fuero, nam adhuc domum mihi idoneam non inveni et difficile est qualem velim Romae invenire, Disciplinam illam militarem ex graeco in latinum, ut mihi iussit, traducturum.

Aurispa finished the translation of Aelian before the summer of the same year, and communicated this to the King in his letter written in July–August 1444 (the text is problematic, and it is worth printing a brief critical apparatus in this instance):¹⁵

Iniunxisti mihi ut opus codicem quoddam graecum De re militari transferrem in latinum; in eo codice volumina diversorum auctorum

¹² On the cultural activity which Alfonso V promoted in his court and the creation of his library see Bentley 1987; Ryder 1990, pp. 306–357; Bianca 1994, with bibl.; see also Delle Donne 2015, pp. 26–59; Caridi 2019.

¹³ Sabbadini 1927, pp. 83–84 and 1931, pp. xxi–xxii; Franceschini 1976, p. 48.

¹⁴ «First of all, you will recommend me to the King, whom I usually call a god, and inform him that, as soon as I find a house — since I have not found a suitable house for me and it is difficult to find what I want in Rome — I will translate that 'military discipline' from Greek to Latin, as he ordered me to do». Sabbadini 1931, pp. 103–105, no. lxxxiv. Sabbadini believes that *disciplinam illam militarem* refers only to Aelian's manual (p. 104 n. 2), but it is very likely that the King was referring to the whole codex, without being aware of its content.

¹⁵ «You ordered me to translate into Latin a Greek codex on military subjects; in that codex there are works of different authors. I have already translated the first: the 'De ordine acierum in pugna'». See Sabbadini 1931, pp. 108–110, no. lxxxviii.

sunt; transtuli iam primum, cuius tractatus est De ordine acierum in pugna.

[ut opus codicem quoddam graecum De re militari *Ottobon. lat. 1153, f. 41^r Vat. lat. 3370, f. 28^v* ut opus, in codice quodam, graecum, De re militari *Sabbadini*]

It is evident that in this letter Aurispa wishes to stress that Aelian is not the only author included in this codex.¹⁶ Therefore, he recalls a previous letter by the King, where a ‘codex graecus de re militari’ was cited very generally.¹⁷ However, in the same letter, Aurispa expressed doubts on the work commissioned to him, which he did not consider to be worthy of the King; furthermore, he did not believe that his translation would make any useful addition to the King’s education:

Quae res nec tanta maiestate digna esse mihi videtur et hic labor meus parvum aut nullum fructum hominibus pariet. sed in eo volumine excellentia tua, quae eius rei magistra est, animadvertere possit quid ille auctor scripserit, quid tu aut aliquis copiarum imperator sentiat. et puto equidem id in ea re futurum, quod Hannibal cuidam de re militari coram eo disserenti dixit: stultum enim senem illum appellavit qui in eius praesentia de re militari dicere et docere auderet, qui tanto tempore cum populo Romano de totius orbis regno certasset, adversus quem saepe multas magnasque victorias habuisset. id, ut opinor, maiestas tua cum hunc auctorem, quem, de acierum ordine transtuli, viderit, dicet quod Hannibal.¹⁸

¹⁶ This is the meaning which we should give to *volumina*. See Rizzo 1973, pp. 6–7, but also E. Forcellini, *Lexicon totius Latinitatis, s.v.: dicimus libros, h. e. partes, in quas opus aliquod dividitur, saepius volumina appellantur*; F. Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire latin-français, s.v.*; A. Blaise, *s.v.*; *DMLBS, s.v.*

¹⁷ See *supra*. Sabbadini’s conjecture (1931, p. 109, but already id. 1890, p. 94) seems not only unnecessary, but indeed worse than the transmitted text. Actually, *opus* here has the meaning of *codex* (see Rizzo 1973, pp. 5–6 and 46; see also E. Forcellini, *Lexicon totius Latinitatis, s.v.*; Lewis–Short, *Latin Dictionary, s.v.*), as it does in the letter of January 1449: *opus illud regium [...] habet multos variosque auctores* (on which *infra*; see Fiaschi 2014, pp. 139–140) and, more clearly, in his letter to Traversari of May 1425: *opus grande non est, sed solum quinterniones tres* (Sabbadini 1931, p. 27). Therefore, *codicem* could be a gloss subsequently included in the text of the *Ottobonanius lat. 1153*, and from this to its apograph (see Fiaschi 2014, pp. 139–140). Furthermore, it seems clear that using *de re militari* Aurispa refers to the whole collection, regarding military subjects, not only to Aelian’s manual, which is identified with the proper title ‘De ordine acierum in pugna’.

¹⁸ «This thing does not seem to me worthy of your majesty and my work will offer you little or no benefit. However, in that volume your excellence, who is the master on

In his view, it would be both more useful and enjoyable for the King to read a translation into Latin of Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*:

Neque hoc dico quod laborem fugere velim, sed menti habeo, si iusseris, Xenophontem De institutione regis Cyri et de omni eius vita scribentem in linguam nostram vertere; in quo opere magnam, ut spero, voluptatem legentibus feram et maiestati regiae, si quid illi gloriae addi potest, gloriam faciam. Habeo iam opus in manu et id pertracto.¹⁹

In 1451 the codex was taken to Venice by an embassy consisting of Flavio Biondo, Ludovico Puig and Antonio Panormita, and was lent to Francesco Barbaro. In his letter of 7 June 1451, with which Barbaro gives the codex of the Greek military texts back to Antonio Panormita, there is a further piece of information that helps us to understand the structure of this collection:

Helianus de re militari. Onosander ad Q. Veranium de re imperatoria. Mauricius de re imperatoria. Athineus de machinis et instrumentis bellicis cum pictura expressis. Hiero de iaculis que cum manu proiciuntur. Apollodorus de urbibus obsidendis. Philo ad Aristonem, Iulius Africanus de cestis. Digressiones de imperatoriis institutis. Qualem oportet esse ducem exercitus. Epitoma Cyri Nicophori regis. Epitoma Leonis imperatoris de re militari.²⁰

this subject, might find what its author writes, and what you and other generals know. I believe that the same thing that Hannibal said will happen, when he met a man who discussed military subjects in his presence. Hannibal called this old man stupid, because he attempted to talk about military questions and teach a man who for a long time competed with the Romans for the dominium of the world and who had defeated them with many and great victories. I believe that your majesty might say the same thing when reading this work on tactics which I have translated».

¹⁹ «I do not want to say that I wish to avoid this work, but I intend to translate Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* into our language. I hope that with this work I will give the reader pleasure and glory to your majesty, if it is possible to add further glory to you. I have this work in my hand and I am studying it». See Bianca 1994, pp. 191–192 n. 53. It is no. 527 (f. 10^r) of Inventory 1459: *Item Pedia Senofontis, grecus, in membranis, pulcherimus, cum albis de ligno cohoptis corio rubeo stampato et quator azulis* (in Franceschini 1976, p. 158).

²⁰ Sabbadini 1931, p. 168, app. VIII; Bianca 1994, pp. 190–191, nn. 49–50; Barbaro 1999, pp. 723–725. The index is published also in Branca 1964, pp. 213–215 (with some inaccuracies regarding the identification of the texts) and Commare 2002–2003, p. 80; Eramo 2006, pp. 171–172.

Some extra-textual clues lead us to believe that Aurispa's codex (which was then used by Nicolaos Sekoundinos and Theodorus Gaza for their translations: see *infra*) was the *Vaticanus* gr. 1164.²¹ Nevertheless, this question is difficult to resolve, when we consider that most of Aelian's text present in this codex is now lost. Indeed, of the original three quaternions, the first and two leaves of the second are missing; the other two are mistakenly joined to the end of the codex, so that only ten leaves contain the *Tactica theoria*.²² The structure of the collection demonstrates that the codex was one of the witnesses to the 'interpolated recension'²³ and belonged to the branch of tradition which included tactical writings ordered according to what Alphonse Dain called «Recueil de Tactique A».²⁴

Aurispa never finished the translation commissioned to him by Alfonso, although from his letter to Panormita of January 1449 it seems that he had already translated some texts:

Opus illud regium quod transferendum iussit, habet multos variosque auctores, quorum nonnulli docti et eloquentes sunt, alii vero parum eruditi; ex bonis illis quosdam in latinum verti.²⁵

However, no trace of this remains. Moreover, as Remigio Sabbadini ironically remarked, recalling a judgement of Francesco Filelfo: «l'Aurispa non fu molto studioso dei suoi codici [...] era invece tutto inteso a mercanteggiarli».²⁶ The fact of the matter is that a few years later this collection

²¹ Commare 2002–2003 (an essay which offers the most complete treatment on this codex: history, content, codicological aspects), pp. 77–79. On the identification of the codex see also Eramo 2006, pp. 171–174, with bibl. cited; Fiaschi 2014, p. 147.

²² *Vaticanus* gr. 1164, ff. 1–10^v: from *αἱ διπλάσιον* of the ch. 18.6 to *ἔμβολον* of 19.5; from *ὀρθία δέ* of the ch. 30.1 to *ἐκπερισπασμός* of 32.9; from *ὄπλον καί* of 35.3 to the end (see Devine 1989, pp. 36–37; Commare 2002–2003, p. 94).

²³ Generally, the 'interpolated recension' differs from the 'authentic recension' because of the inclusion of a chapter *Περὶ πορειῶν*, which substitutes ch. 30–37 of the authentic recension, the addition of a text entitled *Σύνταξις ὀπλιτῶν τετραγώνος* at the end of the manual, with a diagram (*παράταξις τετραγώνος*), accompanied by a legend, scholia, alterations and omissions, and above all with the inclusion of diagrams with explicative legends for each symbol (see Dain 1946, pp. 61–115). The two recensions of Aelian's treatise will be discussed in a separate study.

²⁴ Dain 1930, pp. 15–18.

²⁵ «That royal work, which the King commissioned me, has a lot and various authors. Among these, some are wise and eloquent, others not too erudite. I translated some of the good works into Latin». See Sabbadini 1931, pp. 122–123, n. ci. Regarding this letter, see also Commare 2002–2003, p. 79 n. 11; Fiaschi 2014, pp. 139–140.

²⁶ Sabbadini 1905, p. 47. Francesco Filelfo's judgement can be found in his letter to Aurispa of 8 July 1440: *Totus es in librorum mercatura, sed in lectura malle[m] [...] declarabis per litteras qui libri tibi et quales sunt vaenales* (Sabbadini 1931, p. 97

was given to other scholars belonging to Alfonso's circle, so that the works included could be translated into Latin: Nicolaos Sekoundinos translated Onasander's *Strategicus*, Theodorus Gaza the *Tactica theoria*.²⁷

Between 1455 and 1458 Theodorus Gaza was in Naples at the court of Alfonso,²⁸ where he worked at this translation between 1455 and 1456, so as to indulge the King's wishes. Alfonso, in fact, wished to complete his military and cultural formation by reading Greek manuals translated into Latin. Indeed, besides Aelian, Theodorus took on the translation of Maurice's *Strategicon* (the second writing of this collection), of which we only have few clues. He probably finished his work, or at least prepared a first version, which he submitted to Alfonso. Theodorus himself cited this circumstance in the epistle addressed to Alfonso, which is the preface to his translation of John Chrysostom's *De incomprehensibili Dei natura*:

Quamobrem post Mauricii illos de re militari libros, quos anno superiori obtuli tibi ut iudici peritissimo eorum quae imperator ille et gessit et scripsit, has de incomprehensibilis dei natura Orationes quinque Ioannis Antiochensis [...] converti.²⁹

In the same way, a translation of the *Strategicon* by Theodorus Gaza is cited in the section of the *De viris illustribus liber* dedicated to Bartolomeo Facio:

n. lxxviii). See also Fabbri 1996, p. 196 n. 5. According to Fiaschi 2014, p. 140, Aurispa again refers to this work in his letter to Panormita of 2 July 1453 from Rome (*sum verax omnibus nihilque mihi in lingua es quod pectori non insederit*), but, as the same scholar admits, the reference is too generic. Moreover, Aurispa presented himself as a trustworthy man, and above all grateful to the King; see for example in his letter to Panormita of 1449 (on which *supra*), where he claims to have translated some texts of the collection: *tu me rei oro excuses, nam non cesso eius voluntatem adimplere; nec solum promissa faciam sed aliquid plus, quod sibi erit ut spero gratissimum*.

²⁷ Eramo 2006, pp. 164–165, with bibl.; Ilari 2002, pp. 288–289; Fiaschi 2014, pp. 145–146. On Theodorus Gaza see above all Bianca 1999.

²⁸ We know from Antonio Panormita's letter to Giovanni Aurispa of November 1455 that Theodorus Gaza had moved to Naples (*Theodorum tuum, quem mihi tantopere commendas, scito apud Alphonsum regem magnifice collocatum*: Sabbadini 1931, p. 139). He then went to Calabria, where he remained briefly, before moving to Rome after the death of Alfonso (27 June 1458); see Leone 1987, pp. 421–422; Leone 1987a, pp. 431–432.

²⁹ «Therefore, after translating Maurice's books which I offered you last year as you are an expert judge of what that emperor did and wrote, I translated these five discourses on the unintelligible nature of God by John Chrysostom». Valencia, Universitat de València, Biblioteca Històrica BH Ms. 732, f. 5^v; this letter is published in Legrand 1885, pp. xlv–xlvi.

Eiusdem est traductio Mauritius de re militari in duodecim libros distinctus ad Alphonsum Regem, a quo receptus annuo salario honestatus est.³⁰

Likewise, in the *Barberinianus* gr. 263 (16th cent.), containing Polyaeus' *Strategemata*, the following note can be read: *Theodorus vertisse dicitur Urbicium ad Alphonsum*.³¹ However, the translation of Maurice is not mentioned in the list of the «Opere ha fatto tradurre i' re Alfonso» placed by Vespasiano da Bisticci at the end of his biography of Alfonso.³² Although we do not know the details of the background of the translation of the *Tactica theoria*,³³ which Theodorus called *De instruendis aciebus*, the preface to this work provides us with a significant insight into the aims of his author, and indeed into his relationship with the translated text.

Theodorus addresses Antonio Panormita (not by chance, as he had introduced Aurispa to King Alfonso) as the *eloquentissimus et praestantissimus* preceptor of the King, who had already brought to completion his *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis* and was finishing a *De re militari*, which he probably never achieved; at any rate, nothing of that work has survived. Along with the usual praise to the emperor and the addressee, Theodorus emphasizes the usefulness of his work for the emperor and his preceptor, who in some parts of the text identify with each other:³⁴ the author offers the emperor a useful read for his cultural and military formation, and Antonio Panormita provides materials to write his work.

³⁰ «He (i.e. Theodorus Gaza) translated Maurice's work in twelve books offering them to King Alfonso, who rewarded him with an annual salary». *Bartholomaei Facii De viris illustribus liber*, nunc primum ex ms. cod. in lucem erutus, recensuit, praefationem vitamque auctoris addidit L. Mehus, Florentiae 1745. See already Eramo 2006, p. 170 n. 65; and later Fiaschi 2014, p. 146.

³¹ F. 130^r (see Schindler 1973, pp. 123–124). The confusion between Urbicium and Mauritius goes back to the title Οὐρβικίου τακτικὰ στρατηγικά of the *Laurentianus* 55.4 (f. 5r): see Dain–de Foucault 1968.

³² *La vita di Alfonso re di Napoli*: Greco 1970, pp. 115–117.

³³ See Fiaschi 2014, pp. 144–147.

³⁴ *Certat porro eloquentia tua cum regis virtute; et quanquam neutram vinci ab altera dixerim, tamen nimirum illud et licet et decet affirmare coeteris regem virtute omnibus praestare principibus, te coeteris doctis esse omnibus eloquentiorem et nomen iam idem mereri: quod Xenophontem: qui digna illa memoratu de Socrate suo preceptore litteris tradidit* (text in De Marinis 1947, II, pp. 3–5; see also the commentary in Id. 1952, I, p. 7; Fiaschi 2014, p. 148). On Theodorus' dedication to Panormita see also Bentley 1987, pp. 92–93 and 149–150.

At the place where he specifically presents the text which he has translated,³⁵ Theodorus uses the preface to the *Tactica theoria* as a guide and a source of inspiration, setting out the reasons which make the translation of Aelian a useful and valuable work also for his times: Theodorus states that Aelian explains tactics so clearly that it is difficult to believe that such a short work could contain so much light and doctrine (*docet hanc*³⁶ *rationem acierum instruendarum tam dilucide, ut vixi credi possit in tam brevi opera tantum lucis doctrinaeque contineri posse*). Many ancient authors therefore wrote about the same subject, although we can say that Aelian was without doubt the best of these, since he explained better that part of military knowledge called 'tactics' (*plerique de hac eadem re opera edidere, sed hoc ceteris omnibus adeo utilius est, ut ne ipsum quidem auctorem hominem modestissimum puduerit omnibus illis anteposendum audere affirmare*). In short, anyone wishing to learn of ancient military tactics should read Aelian's *Tactica theoria* (*cum itaque plures sint partes rei militaris, hanc de instruendis aciebus, quae Graeci tactica nominant, ab Aeliano melius discimus*), which is of great use not only to the study of Greek tactics, but of Roman ones too, since there is no Latin author of tactics from whom it is possible to obtain the theory and practice of this subject (*nec solum ad Graecum instruendi morem, sed etiam ad Romanum, quod tu subtilius videris, accomodatius erudimur, quando nullum — quod equidem sciam — Romani auctoris opus de acierum instructione extat, unde quis rationem universae rei possit accipere et artem*). It is not difficult to perceive here Theodorus' trust in Aelian's view that his *Tactica theoria* was the best work on tactics ever produced and the only one in Roman military practice. In addition, by referring to Aelian with the adjective '*philosophus*',³⁷ Theodorus clearly understands the theoretical character of the work, which Aelian himself had pointed out in the preface to his work.

³⁵ Theodorus Gaza stresses that he used Francesco Griffolini's translation for Homerus' verses in the *Tactica theoria*. This translation was probably commissioned for this occasion by Gaza himself, and was based not on Aelian's but Homerus' text.

³⁶ I prefer here the reading *hanc* of the *Vaticanus* lat. 3414 instead of the *hoc* of the other manuscripts. The text of the letter is in Fiaschi 2014, pp. 147–150.

³⁷ Theodorus did not in any way confuse Aelian the Tactician with Claudius Aelian (Fiaschi's hypothesis, 2014, p. 145), also because in doing this he would have made the mistake of dating Claudius Aelian to the age of Hadrian.

4. The vernacular translation by Ludovico Carbone

Like the original text, the preface to the Latin translation of the *Tactica theoria* enjoyed great success.³⁸ First of all, it was published by Giovanni Antonio Sulpizio da Veroli for the publisher Silber in 1487;³⁹ subsequently it was included in the printed collection of ‘veteres scriptores de re militari’ again for Silber in 1494. This collection contained Vegetius’ *Epitoma rei militaris*, Frontinus’ *Strategemata*, Ps.-Modestus’ *De vocabulis rei militaris*, and the Latin translation of Onasander’s *Strategicus* by Nicolaos Sekoundinos.⁴⁰

Theodorus Gaza’s translation was also used by one of his pupils, Ludovico Carbone from Ferrara, who produced the first Italian vernacular translation of the *Tactica theoria*.⁴¹ Today only the dedication to Ercole d’Este and the initial chapters of this work survive, because of the loss of the leaves at the beginning of the autograph manuscript.⁴² Ludovico Carbone lived at the house of Este, firstly under the protection of Leonello, then of Borso and Ercole, and held the Chair of Rhetoric and *Humanae Litterae*.⁴³ In order to please Ercole, who was very fond of war, hunting and fishing, but also of Greek and Roman history, Ludovico Carbone translated (or rather ‘vulgarized’) Onasander’s *Strategicus* and Aelian’s *Tactica theoria* together, not directly from the Greek, but through the Latin translation by Nicolaos Sekoundinos and Theodorus Gaza.⁴⁴

Carbone himself informs us how he carried out this work in the *praefatio* to his translation of Sallust’s *Bellum Catilinae*, addressed to Alberto d’Este:

Legetti vi priego benignamente l’operetta mia, la qual se m’accorgerò che vi vada per la mente abbracciarò anche de l’altre magiore, benché

³⁸ See the list of manuscripts and editions in Fiaschi 2014, pp. 150–153; on editions and translations see also Hahlweg 1941, pp. 302–307. However, in the printed editions there is no trace of the letter addressed to Panormita: see De Marinis 1952, I, p. 32 n. 84; Id. 1947, II, p. 3; Fabbri 1996, pp. 196–197; Cortesi–Fiaschi 2008, p. 3.

³⁹ Cortesi–Fiaschi 2008, p. 3.

⁴⁰ Cortesi–Fiaschi 2008, p. 3; Fiaschi 2014, p. 135.

⁴¹ On the years of Theodorus Gaza’s teaching in Ferrara see Monfasani 1994.

⁴² *Perusinus* H-6, ff. 181^r–190^v. The translation ends at ch. 2.13 («quegli che Tarentini»). On this manuscript, which is certainly an autograph, see Eramo 2006, p. 161 and nn. 40–42, with bibl. cited.

⁴³ On the life and literary activity of Ludovico Carbone see Eramo 2006, pp. 153–156, with bibl. cited.

⁴⁴ On the characteristics of Ludovico Carbone’s vulgarisation see Eramo 2006, pp. 164–169.

adesso sia occupato in tradure doe opere pellegrine composte da dui greci, l'una come debba esser fatto il buon capitano, l'altra de tutte le forme e modi di ordinare le schiere in campo, e di queste doe ne faccio presente al vostro amantissimo e dolcissimo fratello misser Hercule.⁴⁵

and in the preface to his *Facezie*:

E se più vi piacerà le cosse grave e severe, discorreriti un poco il mio vulgarizzato Sallustio mandato al vostro misser Alberto, o quell'altra traductione de l'arte militare iscritta al mio misser Ercule.⁴⁶

Carbone probably took care of this work between 1456 (after finishing his translation of the *Bellum Catilinae*)⁴⁷ and 1471, when Borso, to whom the *Facezie* are dedicated, died. In the preface to this book, Carbone explains what led him to undertake this work of vernacular translation and its characteristics. He did not wish to perform a philological task, emending the text, but meant instead to produce a 'work of dissemination', or rather, he wanted to make the precepts of both Greek manuals immediately available and useful to readers fond of history and war, such as Ercole. Carbone himself would have preferred to write a manual "del perfecto capitano" to give to his lord, which would have been a supplement to the manual on tactics of Aelian that he translated, if he had not had at his disposal Onasander's *Strategicus*:

Vero è, magnanimo signor mio, quel che dice il nostro Tullio, che ogni buona disciplina da gli Greci ebbe principio e compita perfectione. A creder questo novamente mi son confermato, perché havendo proposto ne l'animo mio di componere un certo tractatello de l'officio del buon capitano, che fosse un supplemento a quel'altro de l'arte militare e del muodo de ordinar le schiere, m'è venuta ne le mane una operetta di un altro greco, che per un compendioso summario in tal materia non si potria migliorare.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Perus. H-6, f. 3^v.

⁴⁶ Perus. H-6, f. 134^r: see Carbone 1989, p. 4. I believe that, with the term "arte militare", he is referring to both works.

⁴⁷ *Terminus post quem* is 1463, the year of Bertoldo d'Este's funeral, where Carbone gave the funeral oration. In the preface to his translation of the *Bellum Catilinae*, he cites this episode as a past event: «Io adoncha che sempre ve ho portato e continuamente porto singulare affectione maxime dopo che ritornassemo da Este dove dal nostro sapientissimo Duca fosti mandato e io insieme cum vui [...] e io fece quella oration funebre»: *Perusinus* H-6, f. 2^{r-v}; see Eramo 2006, p. 163 and n. 50.

⁴⁸ Ms. *Perusinus* H-6, f. 81^r. The text is published in Eramo 2006, p. 177.

5. The role of the diagrams

If the tradition of Aelian's text in the Byzantine age conditioned its success in the West, where it continued to be copied,⁴⁹ the Latin and Italian translations testify to a spread of interest. In this regard, we should not underestimate the role of the diagrams of the *Tactica theoria* and their relationship with the text, created by the same author. Indeed, Aelian cites the presence of the drawings not only in his preface, but elsewhere in the text too.⁵⁰

The manuscripts of the *Tactica theoria* contain these diagrams in varying degrees, accompanied by captions, where soldiers are represented with letters of the Greek alphabet.⁵¹ For these diagrams, the manuscripts and the printed editions of the translation by Theodorus Gaza used simple and stylised forms, which John Hale defined as 'Bologna style' in his essay of 1988 — an essential read if one is to understand this aspect of the military culture of Humanistic Italy.⁵² The 'Bologna style' uses letters of the Latin alphabet (apart from the *lambda* for cavalry and squares for the central part of the array in the triplex conversion) and captions. In this style, there is evidently a process of simplification of the symbols appearing in Latin manuscripts, which in turn attempted to reproduce the symbols of the Greek manuscripts of the *Tactica theoria*. For example, in Greek manuscripts of the *Tactica theoria* the infantryman is drawn with a small circle with a little bar over the top. This symbol becomes a more stylised form in the Latin translation in the *Ambrosianus* L 95 sup. and then the letter 'd' in the edition of 1487: this letter was clearly the typeface which best resembled the freehand drawing of the manuscript.

6. The diagrams of Lelio Carani, Niccolò Machiavelli, Francesco Ferrosi, and Andrea Palladio

The 'Bologna style' is also present in the Italian translation of the *Tactica theoria* by Francesco Ferrosi, published in Venice in 1551 (*Eliano. Del modo di mettere in ordinanza*), and in that by Lelio Carani (*Eliano. De'*

⁴⁹ See Dain 1946, pp. 301–377.

⁵⁰ 1.5, on which see *supra*. See also 18.1: οὐδείς δέ, ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν, σαφῶς ἡμῖν παρέδωκε τὸ βούλημα, διόπερ ἡμεῖς καὶ ἐπὶ καταγραφῆς τὰ σχήματα τάξομεν, ὅπως εὐσύννοπτα γένηται and 20.1: νῦν δὲ χάριν ὑπογραφῆς ὀπίσω τῶν ψιλῶν ἐτάχθησαν. On these texts see Dain 1946, pp. 48–52 and Eramo 2012, pp. 47–49.

⁵¹ See *supra* and Eramo 2012, p. 42.

⁵² Hale 1988, pp. 282–283 on the 'Bologna style'.

Nomi et de gli ordini militari, Firenze 1552).⁵³ However, in the latter translation we find a novelty. Carani includes some Greek letters in the diagram representing the transverse battle. He gives the appropriate explanation of these letters at the end of the drawing (p. 94):

Questi sono i segni, che io ho fatto, acciocche si possano conoscere gli archieri, et i pedoni da gli altri: il che non si può fare se non con le figure descritte. Il capo di squadra ha questo segno Φ, l'armato H, il pedone dalla picca Ψ, l'arciere alla leggiera Θ, quegli dalla rotella o dalla fromba Γ, il pedone con l'adiutore o come dalla rotella K. Quegli dalla lancia a cavallo B, l'arciere a cavallo Ω, il capitano della banda Δ.

Ultimately, Carani feels that he must explain his choice, which might surprise and disorientate the reader used to Latin letters of the 'Bologna style'. However, this choice also means a return to the origins of Aelian's text, which Carani, as opposed to Carbone, translated directly from the Greek.⁵⁴ Moreover, it is very likely that the diagrams of a Greek manuscript impressed Niccolò Machiavelli, who included in his *Arte della guerra* (Florence 1521) diagrams of tactics which present the same characteristics of the drawings in the codices of the 'interpolated recension' of the *Tactica theoria*: Greek letters or symbols which identify each type of soldier accompanied by one general descriptive legend. In the case of the «figura V» of the *Arte della Guerra* («la forma d'uno esercito quadrato»), the similarity with Aelian's παράταξις τετράγωνος is also graphic and regards the symbols used to identify the infantryman or pikeman.⁵⁵

The translations by Ferrosi and Carani, but also the drawings included by Machiavelli in his *Arte della guerra*, recalled the spirit of Aelian's work: to clarify the tactical concepts through illustrations. This was also Francesco Robortello's aim (1516–1567), who in 1552 published for the Spinelli publishers (Venice) both the Latin translation of the *Tactica theoria*⁵⁶ and the *editio princeps* of the Greek text. Robortello included

⁵³ On Francesco Ferrosi see Cosenza 1962², p. 1392. On Lelio Carani see De Palma 1976.

⁵⁴ Ludovico Carbone surely translated from the Latin, not from the Greek: see Eramo 2006, pp. 165–169.

⁵⁵ See Eramo 2012, pp. 45, 56–57. On the influence of Aelian's *Tactica theoria* (through the Latin translation by Theodorus Gaza) on Machiavelli's *Arte della guerra* see also Pedullà 2015, pp. 71–89.

⁵⁶ *Aeliani De militaribus ordinibus instituendis more Graecorum liber, a Francisco Robortello Utinensi in Latinum sermonem uersus, et ab eodem picturis quamplurimis illustratus*, Venetiis 1552. At the end of his translation, Robortello adds the translation by Theodorus Gaza, introducing it with these words: *Idem opus a Theodoro Thessalonicensi Latinum factum et Antonio Panormitae Alphonsi regis praeceptoris dicatum*;

some drawings in the Greek edition and in Latin translation, taken from the *Marcianus* gr. 516,⁵⁷ the Greek manuscript which he used for his edition, but, above all, he gave a didactic value to these drawings, following the aim of Aelian. He already underlined this aspect of his work in the title-page of his edition: *Αἰλιανοῦ περὶ στρατηγικῶν τάξεων ἑλληνικῶν. Aeliani de militaribus ordinibus instituendis more Graecorum liber a Francisco Robortello Utinensi, nunc primum Graece editus, multisque imaginibus et picturis ab eodem illustratus*, and above all in his preface. Here Robortello explained that he would not have carried out a work worthy of praise by lovers of military literature if he had published the texts as they were in the manuscripts. Indeed, Robortello decided, on his own initiative, to include many drawings in his work and to locate them in various positions in the text, in order to encourage the reader to read on, or rather, literally “to force the reader to read”. Any text encompassing knowledge that needs descriptions and illustrations becomes difficult to understand and rather obscure if these descriptions are missing.

Antequam Patavium irem, aestivo hoc tempore pomeridianas horas, dum se calor frangeret, omnes consumpsi in Aeliani libelli hoc legendo, emendando, atque figuris additis, quibus omnia exprimerentur, illustrando [...]. Sed si uti sese habebat descriptus in vetustis exemplaribus fuisset a me editus, non putabam me satis eorum gratiam posse promereri. Dedi igitur opera, ut meo ingenio multas figurationes, et

see Cortesi–Fiaschi 2008, p. 4–5. On Robortello and his work on Aelian see Carlini 1967, pp. 15–16; Fiaschi 2014, pp. 155–160, with full bibliography.

⁵⁷ The *Marcianus* gr. 516 is a large composite manuscript (divided into three parts: geography, tactics, mechanics), which dates to the first half of the 14th century, and later became the property of Cardinal Bessarion and thus of the Marciana Library (see Dain 1942, pp. 26–28; 1946, pp. 303–318; Devine 1989, p. 37; on the codex see Mioni 1981, pp. 381–383; Zorzi 1987, p. 118; Burri 2013, pp. 446–48 and Lovino 2016, with full bibliography). Actually, in the *praefatio* Robortello speaks of a manuscript of *Tactica theoria* that he possessed. This manuscript is unidentified and was probably a personal copy of the *Marcianus* gr. 516 itself. He also mentions two manuscripts in the Marciana (*quod percommode accidit, cum enim praeter illum meum manuscriptum, quem, iam diu habebam, hic quoque in bibliotheca Divi Marci duo alia essem nactus satis vetusta exemplaria*), one of which is certainly the *Marcianus* gr. 516. The other remains unidentified; Dain attempted to reconstruct it (Dain 1937; 1946, pp. 318–319), identifying it as a manuscript in Strasbourg, which was destroyed in the fire of 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War, but later doubting its real existence (in Dain 1946, pp. 318–319) on the basis of the examination of its variants. Carlini prefers to regard it as a twin codex of the *Marcianus* gr. 516, trusting in the words of Robortello (1967, pp. 15–16). Likewise, Stolpe identified this second manuscript belonging to the Marciana Library in the *Marcianus* gr. 522 (15th cent.), but which he did not believe to have been used by Robortello (1968, pp. 54–72).

distributiones suis locis collocarem, quae vel nolentes ad legendum invitare, ac trahere possunt, quod statim intueantur, quali sint illa, quae ab Aeliano traduntur; est enim omne scriptorum genus, quod descriptionibus, et figurationibus artem aliquam egentem tradit, per se difficile, et obscurum, si descriptiones non apponantur.⁵⁸

In order to further underline his choice, and possibly to give more value to the editorial enterprise which he performed, Robortello added a short appendix to the preface to his volume. It was addressed to the reader and explained that he or she would find his name beside the drawings which he himself had designed, inserted and positioned in the text. However, the other drawings had been faithfully and accurately copied from the Greek manuscripts of the work, but included anthropoid symbols in his edition.⁵⁹ In this way, his work would be useful to those who read works of history, which could also contain notions of land tactics and military orders:

Ubi ascriptum vides Francisci Robortelli nomen, eas scito imagines, ac distributiones omnes ab ipso effectas fuisse, quo facilius omnia intelligerentur. Reliquas imagines habebant manuscripti libri notis quibusdam descriptas, quibus et funditores, et equites, et hastati pedites significabantur, sed omnes pingendas curavit Robortellus ad normam, et exemplar propriarum figurarum, ut quivis statim rem ipsam perspicere posset. Magnam utilitatem afferet hic liber legentibus

⁵⁸ «Before going to Padua, in the summer I spent every afternoon, when the heat became unbearable, reading and correcting this work by Aelian, and illustrating it with some drawings, which can explain everything. If I had published this work as it was in old manuscripts, I would not have deserved, I believe, thanks. I dedicated myself to including in this edition many drawings of my choice, and positioning them in the appropriate places in the text, so that they might invite, or rather force the unwilling reader to read the work, and so that the reader might understand what Aelian wishes to say. In fact, every type of writing which needs descriptions and illustrations is difficult and obscure in itself, if it lacks these descriptions» (pp. i–ii). Niccolò Mutoni gives credit to Robortello in his letter to Giovanni Iacopo de' Medici, published as a preface to his translation of Polyaeus' *Strategemata*: «Dell'arte della guerra, et de i fatti et delle persone illustri hanno scritto molti, degni d'esser letti et seguiti, come tra i Greci Tucidide [...] Heliano anchora, novellamente ridotto all'antico suo splendore con le vive et miracolose figure dal raro et dottissimo nell'una e l'altra lingua il S. Francesco Robortello» (*Stratagemi dell'Arte della guerra, di Polieno Macedonico, dalla Greca alla volgar lingua italiana tradotti da M. Nicolo Mutoni, Venice 1551, s.n.*).

⁵⁹ See Hale 1988, p. 290.

historicos, si quando inciderint in loca, ubi de acie instructa, et ordinibus militaribus loquuntur.⁶⁰

Robortello addresses the preface of his edition to Mario Savorgnan (1511–1574).⁶¹ A military engineer, but also a scholar of literature, being disciple of Giano Lascaris for Latin and Greek, Savorgnan was the dedicatee of some translations from Greek: along with Sophocles' tragedies by Giovanni Battista Gabia (Venice, 1543), also the fragments of Polybius edited by Pompilio Amaseo and Raffaele Cillenio.⁶² Savorgnan himself engaged in a work on military matters, entitled *Arte militare terrestre e marittima*, posthumously published by Cesare Campana in 1599. This work also contained 23 drawings.⁶³

⁶⁰ «Where you read the name Francesco Robortello, you know that the drawings and all their distribution are by him, in order to make the text easy to understand. The manuscripts contain other drawings completed by notes, with which the cavalry and the light and heavy infantry are identified. However, Robortello ensured that all these drawings be painted on the basis of those illustrations, so that everyone would be able to know the same thing. This book would be very useful to those who read historical accounts, when they encounter passages that deal with tactics and military array».

⁶¹ On Mario Savorgnan see Casella 2003, pp. 156–171. On the contrary, the preface to Robortello's Latin translation is addressed to an Istrian cavalry captain called Antonio Sergio. Here Robortello lingers on the importance of ancient military knowledge for men of arms, also underlining on this occasion the presence of diagrams: *multis figuris meo ingenio excogitatis, et ad ea, quae ab authore traduntur, accomodatis auctum, et illustratum, ni fallor, quam maxime fieri potuit* (p. 1 s.no.). On this text see also Hale 1983, pp. 438–439.

⁶² *Fragmenta duo e Secto Polybii Historiarum libro De diversis rerum publicarum formis, deque Romanae praestantia*, Pompilius Amaseus vertit, Bologna, Ioannes Baptista Phaellus 1543. *Polybius. Quinque fragmenta decerpta ex ejus historiarum libris quadraginta*, Raphael Cyllenius vertebat, Venice 1549. Beltramini correctly states that «la dedica non sembra frutto di una generica *captatio benevolentiae*, ma di una politica editoriale, se pensiamo che allo stesso Savorgnan era stata dedicata tre anni prima una selezione di frammenti “militari” delle Storie di Polibio» (2009, p. 56).

⁶³ *Arte militare terrestre e marittima, secondo la ragione e l'uso de' più valorosi capitani antichi e moderni, già descritta, et divisa in quattro Libri dall'illustrissimo signor Mario Savorgnano conte di Belgrado [...], hora ridotta alla sua integrità et politezza da Cesare Campana [...]*, Venice 1599. See Hale 1983, pp. 438–439; Verrier 1997, pp. 62–63. In the preface to this work, Savorgnan also stressed the importance of the drawings in order to understand the text: «e perché gli scritti non sono per sé medesimi atti e possenti a far impressione tale negli animi nostri, che vi lasciano fermi e quasi scolpiti gli avvertimenti e le cose che si ascoltano, non sia, spero, né ingrato né inutile il porle anche sotto il senso dell'occhio, per mezzo de' segni e delle pitture, le quali perdendo quasi in compagnia a sentimenti del corpo, le mandino via con maggior forza all'animo e all'intelletto». See Beltramini 2009, p. 60.

Savorgnan was a distant cousin and friend of Giangiorgio Trissino. Both frequented the same intellectual circles to which Robortello and the young Andrea Palladio also belonged.⁶⁴ Everything adds up, then. In Venice, Trissino saw the *Marcianus* gr. 516,⁶⁵ which, as already seen, was used by Robortello for his edition, but he also knew Aelian's work through the Latin translation by Robortello himself, so that he took some descriptions from this translation and placed them in his *Italia liberata dai Goti*.⁶⁶

Regarding Andrea Palladio, thanks to the teaching of Trissino he dedicated himself to the study of Greek and Roman battles from his youth. In the 1540s, Palladio traced a diagram on the lower left margin of the map of the Colosseum which he had drawn, representing a rhombus of lambdas and which seems to be modelled on the diagram of the codices of Aelian's text, where the diagram represented a rhombus.⁶⁷ He probably had the opportunity to read the *Marcianus* gr. 516 or one of the manuscripts consulted by his teacher or where his teacher had put his notes. However, Palladio maintained an interest in Aelian throughout his life. The first drawing of his Polybius represented the disposition of cavalymen in rank and file.⁶⁸ Here, Palladio did not use stylized symbols for the soldiers, but figures of cavalymen inspired by the drawings of the *editio princeps* of Robortello's *Tactica theoria*.

On the whole, knowledge of the ancient military authors was useful to his work as an architect-scenographer. In the preface to his edition of

⁶⁴ Burns 1975, p. 44; Hale 1977, pp. 244–245 and 1983, pp. 443–444; Ilari 2002, pp. 319–321; Beltramini 2009, p. 60.

⁶⁵ According to Hale 1977, p. 244, Trissino drew a tactical diagram reproducing the symbols of the *Marcianus* gr. 516.

⁶⁶ Beltramini 2009, p. 56; see also, in the same book XII, always referring to the *φάλαγξ ἀμφίστομος* (Ael. 37): «Dite ei, che faccia due falangi d'essi, / che volgan contro se tutte le fronti: / E'l spazio che farà tra l'una e l'altra / sia largo nel principio, e stretto al fine, / in guisa d'una forbice da sarto; acciò che noi possiamo uccider tutti quei cavalier, / che son ridotti in rombo».

⁶⁷ See Hale 1977, p. 244; Beltramini 2009, pp. 14–18, 54–67.

⁶⁸ The project of an illustrated edition of Polybius, conceived immediately after publishing Caesar's *Commentarii* (1575), was interrupted by Palladio's death (1580). Only one edition survives, published in Venice in 1564 and entitled *Polibio historico greco. Dell'Imprese de' Greci, de gli Asiatici, de' Romani, et d'altri*. Two copies of this edition have been identified: one at the British Library, the other was sold to a private collector by the Gonnelli bookshop in Florence in 1986. See Beltramini 2009, pp. 25–54.

Caesar's *Commentarii* (1575),⁶⁹ Palladio recounts how, being in the presence of some gentlemen familiar with questions of war:

Feci fare (per compiacer loro) a certi galeotti et guastadori ch'erano quivi, tutti quei movimenti et essercitii militari che siano possibili a farsi, senza mai commettere disordine o confusione alcuna, si che con minor difficultà di quella che molti pensano si potrebbono indurre ne gli esserciti nostri gli ordini et le regole degli Antichi.⁷⁰

The audience was evidently impressed. Among them was Francesco Patrizi (1529–1597), who recalled this episode in his *Paralleli militari* (1594):

E Andrea Palladio Vicentino Architetto di professione, e Valerio Chiericato, non da guerra veduta a nostri giorni nessuna, ma da libri di Eliano, e di Leone, e di Cesare, seponno fare istupire, chi vide a quegli votare, con ordine maraviglioso di ciurma, e di soldati una galea. E a questi far fare a 500 fanti con grande ordine, e facilità tutti i moti militari di Eliano. Ed era io uno de spettatori. E pure questi né alla guerra erano mai stati né di gran lettere erano forniti.⁷¹

The distance between the *Tactica theoria* and the arrangement of troops devised by William Louis of Nassau-Dillenburg and Maurice of Nassau Prince of Orange is evidently shorter than one might believe at first.⁷²

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⁶⁹ *I commentarii di Caio Giulio Cesare, con le figure in rame de gli alloggiamenti, de' fatti d'arme, delle circonvallationi delle città, et di molte altre cose notabili descritti in essi, fatte da Andrea Palladio per facilitare a chi legge, la cognition dell'istoria*, Venice, De Franceschi 1575.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2. See Beltramini 2009, pp. 70–71.

⁷¹ *Paralleli militari di Francesco Patrizi, ne' quali si fa paragone delle Milizie antiche, in tutte le parti loro, con le moderne*, Rome 1594, p. 440. See Hale 1977, pp. 243–245; Verrier 1997, p. 97; Perifano 2002, pp. 243–244 hypothesizes that this anecdote could be an answer to that referred to by Matteo Bandello (*Novelle*, first part, preface to the *Novella XL*), on the inability of the 'theorist' Machiavelli to array soldiers (see Eramo 2012, p. 41 n. 21; Pedullà 2015, pp. 84–87).

⁷² The influence of Aelian's work to the so-called European countermarch goes beyond the remit of this article; for an overall discussion see Parker 1996², pp. 18–20.

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