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Soldier loyalty in Late Antiquity and *Sacramentum militare* in the context of selected sources¹

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Ensuring the loyalty of the army was always a key factor for Roman leaders. In Late Antiquity, following the crisis of the 3rd century², when the army had immense influence on both choosing and dethroning successive emperors, the loyalty of soldiers was of crucial importance for the stability of the state and imperial rule. Rulers would employ various means of winning the hearts and minds of army men, either by outright buying of loyalty through *donativium*³ with its elaborate ceremonial aspect⁴, by enforcing strict provisions of military law, or by putting their faith in the military oath. All this with the goal of guaranteeing the army's *fides*.

The purpose of this piece will be to provide a short analysis of the potential effects that a Roman military oath⁵ (*sacramentum militare*) might have had on the

¹ This is a continuation of my research on the military oath, which began in a piece published in Polish: Łukasz Różycki, "Sacramentum militare w świetle wybranych źródeł późnorzymskich", in *Przysięga wojskowa idea i praktyka. Z dziejów wojskowości polskiej i powszechnej*, ed. Andrzej Niewiński (Oświęcim: Napoleon V, 2016), 6–15.

² On the subject of the crisis itself, see: Géza Alföldy, "The Crisis of the Third Century as Seen by Contemporaries", *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 15 (1974): 98–103; for a more contemporary look: Alaric Watson, *Aurelian and the Third Century* (London: Routledge, 1999). See particularly pages 1–21, where the author briefly analyzes the causes of the crisis.

³ And we should bear in mind that rulers were aware of the fact that similar donations were a form of bribery, since the literature of the period uses terms such as δῶρα or *largitio*, which literally means "bribe".

⁴ See an excellent analysis: Mark Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire, AD 235–395* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 83–85.

⁵ See a short summary of studies on *sacramentum militare* in the piece: Sara Elise Phang, "Military Documents, Languages, and Literacy", in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 117.

loyalty of legionnaires in Late Antiquity, focusing mostly on the work of Vegetius and the commentary to it.

The Roman military oath of Late Antiquity had its origins in a much earlier period, dating back to the times of the pagan republic. *Sacramentum* was sworn before the gods and the *sacer* himself, in the event of breaking his word, was considered cursed⁶. This means that supernatural power was attributed to the oath (as it was given before a divine entity) but the legal consequences for breaking it were suffered already in the earthly life. The first confirmed mention of *sacramentum* can be found as early as in *Lex Duodecim Tabularum*⁷; it is an obligation to pay a penalty in the event of losing a legal case (*poena Sacramento*)⁸. In the Roman army *sacramentum* had a different form – that of a military oath (*sacramentum militare*). But it is worth mentioning that it was also sworn before gods and any oath-breaker suffered repercussions both in this life and the next. Men who joined the ranks of the army were bound by their word to observe the provisions of military law that were enforced through a strict penal code⁹. Prior to the times of Julius Caesar, the *sacramentum* was sworn before the consul¹⁰, which bound the soldiers to the commander rather than the state. This probably changed with the establishment of the Principate, when the Emperor began playing the leading role¹¹. In Late Antiquity the term *sacramentum* took on a new meaning and was defined by Christians through the prism of their religion¹², although to the educated Christian authors it still held its original judicial meaning.

In sources for Late Antiquity there is only a handful of mentions of the military oath, which, nevertheless, grant some insight into how it came to be and how it evolved. It was sworn at least on three occasions: when a soldier joined the army, when a new emperor ascended to the throne, and during an annual renewal¹³. It was obligatory for commanders¹⁴ and regular soldiers alike, even barbarians who were only

⁶ The term *homo sacer* is the subject of intense disputes in legal and philosophical literature. See more in: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer. Suwerenna władza i nagie życie* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka, 2008); Ely Orrego Torres, “Homo Sacer y violencia divina en el caso judío: Lo insacrificable sometido a castigo”, *Revista Pléyade* 2 (2008): 22–32.

⁷ Gaius, *Institutiones*, 4.14. *Patronus si clienti fraudem fecerit, sacer esto* Wiesław Litewski, *Rzymskie prawo prywatne* (Warszawa: PWN, 1994), 28, 122.

⁸ Initially, the amount was paid even before the sentence had been passed (and returned in the case of winning the lawsuit); only later did the Romans introduce *praedes sacramenti*, i.e. payment of the penalty only once the case was lost.

⁹ Ireneusz Łuć, *Boni et Mali Milites Romani relacje między żołnierzami wojsk rzymskich w okresie wczesnego cesarstwa* (Kraków: Avalon, 2010), 39.

¹⁰ *Commentarii rerum gestarum, Bellum Gallicum*, 91.

¹¹ Compare to the civil oath (*ius iurandum*) introduced in the times of Augustus.

¹² Christine Mohrmann, “*Sacramentum* dans les plus anciens texts chrétiens”, *The Harvard Theological Review* 47/3 (1954): 141–152.

¹³ Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army*, 162.

¹⁴ Ammianus Marcellinus, 21.5.10; 26.7.4 (Amm.Marc.)

temporarily in Roman service¹⁵. The primary source of information about the oath is the passage from the work of Vegetius¹⁶, who most likely copied it from an earlier work¹⁷. The text included in *Epitoma rei militaris* is believed to be the most complete rendition of a military oath¹⁸ and will serve as the basis for this study:

The soldier swears by the Heavenly Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit, and by the Majesty of the Emperor, who second only to God should be the object of the highest devotion and affection for all mankind. Once the newly-elected emperor has adopted the name of Augustus, he shall be owed eternal love and diligent service, as the visible representation of God. Therefore every man, be it an ordinary citizen or a soldier, exemplifies their devotion to God through faithful service to those that rule by divine right. Soldiers swear to closely obey any order by the emperor, to never desert from the army and to lay down their lives for the Roman state¹⁹.

In this short note Vegetius encapsulated the essence of Roman military law, informing the reader not only about the oath itself, but also about the most serious offences that were supposed to be prevented by it. A soldier owed fealty to the ruler,

¹⁵ Zos. 4.56.1–2.

¹⁶ On the dating of Vegetius's work, see: Michael Bernard Charles, *Vegetius in Context Establishing the Date of the Epitoma Rei Militaris* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2007); Timothy Barnes, "The Date of Vegetius", *Phoenix* 33/3 (1979): 254–257. The writing of Vegetius influenced many generations of military commanders, even up to the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. See: Christopher Allmand, "The De re militari of Vegetius in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance", in *Writing War Medieval Literary Responses to Warfare*, ed. Corinne J. Saunders, Françoise Hazel Marie Le Saux, Neil Thomas (Cambridge: Boydell & Brewer, 2004), 15–29; Christopher Allmand, *The de Re Militari of Vegetius: The Reception, Transmission and Legacy of a Roman Text in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ This is indicated for example by the fact of bringing up the republican ethos. It is likely the original source was the work of Frontinus, who wrote the following about the military oath: "L. Paulo et C. Varrone consulibus milites primo iure iurando adacti sunt; antea enim sacramento tantummodo a tribunis rogabantur, ceterum ipsi inter se coniurabant se fugae atque formidinis causa non abituros neque ex ordine recessuros nisi teli petendi feriendive hostis aut civis servandi causa". Frontinus, *Strategemata*, 4.1.4. The author emphasized that before Lucius Aemilius Paullus and Gaius Terentius Varro were consuls, soldiers would swear to each other that they would not desert their comrades in the face of the enemy and only break ranks in search of weapons. Starting from 215–213 BC (which is when Gaius Terentius Varro held the office of consul), soldiers had to swear not to each other (which was a reflection of the republican ethos), but before a consul.

¹⁸ Doug Lee, *War in Late Antiquity: A Social History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 52–53.

¹⁹ "Diligenter igitur lectis iunioribus animis corporibusque praestantibus, additis etiam exercitiis cotidianis quattuor uel eo amplius mensuum, iussu auspiciisque inuictissimi principis legio formatur. Nam uicturis in cute punctis milites scripti, cum matriculis inseruntur, iurare solent; et ideo militiae sacramenta dicuntur. Iurant autem per Deum et Christum et sanctum Spiritum et per maiestatem imperatoris, quae secundum Deum generi humano diligenda est et colenda. Nam imperator cum Augusti nomen accepit, tamquam praesenti et corporali Deo fidelis est praestanda deuotio, inpendendus peruiuil famulatus. Deo enim uel priuatus uel militans seruit, cum fideliter cum diligit qui Deo regnat auctore. Iurant autem milites omnia se strenue facturos, quae praeceperit imperator, numquam deserturos militiam nec mortem recusatos pro Romana republica", Veg. 2.5.

who was the avatar of God on earth and as such demanded loyalty. Disobedience or desertion were transgressions against both earthly and divine law, as confirmed by the contents of the oath. This needs to be clearly emphasized, since from later sources we know that once the *sacramentum* was sworn, soldiers were read the basic provisions of military law²⁰. The combination of these two aspects of military routine only confirms that the oath was supposed to be an additional method of ensuring obedience to their commanders and loyalty to their country personified by the emperor. In Christian times references to pagan gods were removed²¹ and replaced with the Holy Trinity and the person of the emperor, who was the representative of god on earth. In pagan times the religious character of the oath was emphasized by the existence of the *sacramenti genii* cult²², although we should mention that it was not one of the army's official cults. *Sacramentum* was a Roman means to ensure that the state, personified by the emperor, would have the loyalty of the soldiers, at the same time improving the morale and discipline of the troops swearing it.

What is interesting is that the case described by Vegetius clearly refers to a military oath sworn to a new ruler ascending the throne; this was customary²³, as the oath was simply part of a larger ceremony related to the *donativum*²⁴. This means that immediately after it was sworn, the mutual agreement between the soldiers and the emperor was cemented by a one-off monetary donation paid out to the troops. We may assume that if the ritual did not take place in the presence of the emperor, it was even more elaborate, and the soldiers had to bow down before the imperial *imago*²⁵. The symbolic importance of such rituals should not be overestimated, especially since the whole army participated in it and its strength would be intensified by the sense of community. In theory, through such events the ruler ensured the loyalty of his armies; in practice, such rituals and payments would become expected by the men, becoming part and parcel of military life. As Mark Hebblewhite rightly pointed out through the example of differences between Maximian and Constantine, an armed man who fought only because they expected to receive further *donativa* became nothing more than a mercenary

²⁰ The combination of these two components was supposed to directly impact the loyalty and attitude of the soldiers. One was the military oath, frequently tied to the *donativum*; the other was the strict military law. So, it was a typical "carrot-and-stick" approach.

²¹ We are not able to pinpoint the exact moment when that occurred. Still in the times of Theodosius II his soldiers supposedly swore by the gods. Libanius, *Orat.* 30.53.

²² See an analysis of appropriate inscriptions in: Oliver Stoll, *The Religions of the Armies*, in *A Companion to the Roman Army*, ed. Paul Erdkamp (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 453. Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army*, 161.

²³ *Sollemniter*. It was emphasized, e.g. by Ammianus on the occasion of Julian ascending to the throne. Amm. Marc. 21.5.10.

²⁴ This was also pointed out in: Roland Delmaire, *Largesses sacrées et res private* (Rome: Publications de l'École Française de Rome, 1989), 556–557.

²⁵ Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army*, 84.

(*uenales manus*)²⁶, whereas true respect and loyalty of troops were achieved through strength of character and good rule²⁷.

In this context, it is worth looking at the commentary on the work of Virgil written by Servius at the end of the 4th century²⁸. We should assume that in the two short comments²⁹ Servius incorrectly applies his own historical context to the source material and as a result reflects rather the spirit of his own times than that of Virgil's period that he commented on. This is actually fortunate, especially since we have few other applicable sources. And, consequently, we can further emphasize that, according to Servius, by swearing the *sacramentum* before setting off to war a legionnaire made a promise not to do anything that would threaten the well-being of his country (in the second quote – that he will act for the good of the republic)³⁰ and to leave the ranks only once military service has ended. This is another instance where *sacramentum* refers directly to a serious issue penalized by military law, i.e. desertion and flight from a battlefield. In this case, soldiers were to swear that they would not allow this to happen under any circumstances. This is further proof that the military oath was closely tied to military law. It is also worth noting that by Servius's account the oath was made by invoking the authority of the state, and did not include any references to gods; which is contrary to the description given by Vegetius, who mentions the Holy Trinity, or the opinion of an earlier Christian author – Tertullian.

We already know from Vegetius's work that the military oath was religious in character. In his times legionnaires swore their allegiance to the Christian God, who in the text of the *sacramentum* replaced the pagan gods. The sacred character of the pagan *sacramentum militare* is confirmed, e.g. by a piece written at the beginning of the 2nd century by Tertullian³¹, a prominent Christian theologian, who talks about the military oath with evident hostility³². According to the author of

²⁶ Hired hand.

²⁷ Hebblewhite, *The Emperor and the Army*, 85.

²⁸ On the dating of the works, see: Robert A. Kaster, *Guardians of Language: The Grammarian and Society in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 356–59.

²⁹ “[...] nam miles legibus sacramentorum rogabatur, ut exiens ad bellum iuraret, se nihil contra rem publicam facturum [...] plerumque sacramento rogati, quia post electionem in rem publicam iurant, sicut dictum est. Et hi sunt qui habent plenam militiam; nam viginti et quinque annis tenentur. Servius, Vergilii Aeneidos libros, 2.157. And later on: legitima erat militia eorum, qui singuli iurabant pro republica se esse facturos, nec discedebant nisi completis stipendiis, id est militiae temporibus: et sacramentum vocabatur”, Servius, *Vergilii Aeneidos libros*, 8.1.

³⁰ What is important to note here is that no passage makes any mention of the figure of consul, before whom an oath would be sworn in republican times, as the representative of the state. Titus Livius, 22.38; Servius, *Vergilii Aeneidos libros*, 8.614.

³¹ Timothy D. Barnes, *Tertullian: A literary and historical study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971).

³² In the case of Tertullian's works we should maintain a degree of caution, since the author often transl. the Greek term *mysterion* as *sacramentum*. See: William A. Van Roo, *The Christian Sacrament* (Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 1992), 37–39; Owen M. Phelan, *The Formation of Christian Europe: The Carolingians, Baptism, and the Imperium Christianum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

*De Corona*³³ a Christian man owed his loyalty only to God, which prevented them from taking any other oaths, including military ones. Swearing on pagan gods or the emperor was seen as a grave sin, which a Christian was not to commit³⁴. In fact, in Tertullian's works we can find more information on oaths. In a piece devoted to pagan beliefs, this Christian author points out the lack of authority of the Roman pantheon, using the example of the *sacramentum* as an oath made by the citizens. This is his opinion on pagans:

Now, as to that, who among you is pure of the charge of perjury? By this time, indeed, there is an end to all danger in swearing by the gods, since the oath by Caesar carries with it more influential scruples, which very circumstance indeed tends to the degradation of your gods; for those who perjure themselves when swearing by Caesar are more readily punished than those who violate an oath to a Jupiter³⁵.

Based on the above quote, and assuming that what the author claims was true (even if he employed hyperbole), we may venture a hypothesis that in Tertullian's times, at the beginning of the 3rd century, the character of the Roman oath was starting to change. The Christian author argued that swearing by pagan gods was becoming a thing of the past and that Romans were at the time swearing mostly by their rulers. A *sacramentum* of that sort supposedly had greater legal power³⁶, which comes as no surprise, since the figure of the emperor was itself deified. According to Tertullian, a Christian man could swear allegiance only to his God, and any other oath, be it to the emperor or pagan deities, was unacceptable.

Having established the close ties between the *sacramentum* and Roman religious rituals, let us once again turn to the oath described by Vegetius, which forms the basis of our knowledge of *sacramentum militare*. The religious character of the pagan *sacramentum* has already been mentioned, though it began evolving (pagan deities were being replaced by the figure of the deified emperor) most likely at the end of the 2nd century or the very beginning of the 3rd³⁷. We can assume that with the Edict of Milan, which brought tolerance for Christianity in the times of Constantine the

2014), 19–20. Though the passage from *De Corona* leaves no room for debate, a Christian soldier could only serve one master – his God; and taking a military oath, or any other for that matter, meant that he now owed allegiance also to the state's ruler, which according to Tertullian was unacceptable.

³³ Tertullian, *De corona militis*, 15.

³⁴ The text of *De Corona* is metaphorical and in the opinion of Daniel G. Van Slyke there is no certainty that the *sacramentum* mentioned in it is actually a military oath, and not a pagan ceremony. See: Daniel G. Van Slyke, "Sacramentum in Ancient Non-Christian Authors", *Antiphon* 9/2 (2005): 203–204. Although the same author admits that we have no basis to believe that: "*sacramentum* unambiguously designates manifestations of pagan cultic worship" (with two exceptions). *Ibidem*.

³⁵ Tertullian, *Ad Nationes*, 1.10.

³⁶ Which Tertullian himself mentions, explaining that perjury in the case of *sacramentum* that also involved the ruler was subject to a more severe penalty.

³⁷ Which is not to say that this transition was complete, as exemplified by the military retinue of Theodosius II, who still swore their oaths by the old gods. Lib. *Orat.* 30.53.

Great, the *sacramentum militare* changed as well, as it ceased to fit this new reality. We should bear in mind that the oath sworn by the emperor (described by Vegetius) was also seen as sacred, since the ruler was the divine representative on earth and all men owed obedience to the emperor as to God himself. We also know that in Christian times the oath did not disappear, but was simply amended to include references to the Holy Trinity and to diminish the role of Augustus, who ceased to be seen as a deity and became “merely” god’s earthly representative. Assuming that Vegetius describes an actual oath of a Roman legionnaire, it would probably be something similar to the following: “I hereby swear by the Heavenly Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit and by the Emperor’s Majesty to fulfill every obligation given to me by the emperor, to never desert my post and to give my life willingly for the Roman state!”. This is, obviously, a reconstruction based on information found in Vegetius and other sources, but it seems quite plausible. The question remains if the only change in Christian times was to replace pagan deities with the Holy Trinity, or if the text of the *sacramentum* itself changed as well.

By swearing an oath before God³⁸, a soldier of Late Antiquity promised to obey imperial orders, usually delivered by military commanders. It was a natural validation of military hierarchy, offering confirmation to the leaders of their soldiers’ loyalty. It is worth emphasizing this aspect of *sacramentum militare*, and the fact that it was sworn or renewed annually. Thanks to the discovery of a papyrus with the text of *Feriale Duranum*³⁹ at Dura Europos we know that Roman legionnaires renewed their oaths every year on January 3rd⁴⁰. So, we can see that *sacramentum militare* was treated by military commanders as affirmation of the soldiers’ dedication to the empire, personified by the emperor, and consequently the soldiers’ obedience to their superiors, who were nominated by the same emperor. In Late Antiquity the oath was used by the commanders in a variety of situations to confirm the legionnaires’ loyalty. One such instance was recorded by a Greek historian Theophylact Simocatta, born in Egypt at the end of the 6th century, in his description of the Persian campaign of *strategos* Philippicus of 586: “Having gathered his soldiers, the commander asked them if their souls are filled with a bold desire to stand and fight. Once they’ve confirmed this and strengthened their resolve with new oaths, the *strategos* led the army to Bibas, which is by the river Arzamon”⁴¹.

³⁸ On the subject of religiousness in the Byzantine army, which was the successor to the Roman army, see: Michał Wojnowski, “Religia a wojskowość bizantyńska w świetle traktatów wojskowych IX–XI wieku”, *Przegląd Historyczny* 100/2 (2009): 199–205.

³⁹ It was the calendar of soldiers belonging to *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, which marked all the major holidays and official festivities. See the text: *The Feriale Duranum*, ed. Robert O. Fink, Allan Spencer Hoey, Walter Fifield Snyder, *Yale Classical Studies* 7 (1940): 1–222.

⁴⁰ In the opinion of most scholars the papyrus contained an official calendar of holidays and events celebrated by Roman soldiers throughout the empire. Nigel Pollard, *Soldiers, Cities, and Civilians in Roman Syria* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 142–144.

⁴¹ Theophylactus Simocattus, 2.15.

Philippicus gathered his army in Roman territory and only after having them swear a military oath promising to remain loyal and bold in the face of the enemy did he decide to move out against the Persian forces. This is an intriguing example of a commander using *sacramentum militare* to guarantee the cooperation of the troops even before any fighting began. It means that problems with discipline and motivation were something the Roman army naturally struggled with regardless of historical period. In this case the military oath was an effective means of encouraging the men and safeguarding their loyalty, but only if any oath-breakers faced inevitable and strict punishment.

The description of *sacramentum militare* in the work of Vegetius provides insight into the most serious disciplinary offences, which in the Roman army were supposed to be prevented or minimized by the oath. Soldiers would swear to remain in service and not to avoid combat, even if it could lead to their death. In other words, that they would not desert their post during garrison duties or in the face of the enemy. This is exactly what Philippicus's men did in the example above – they gave their word they were willing to fight (i.e. willing to do their job!). The issues of desertion and lack of motivation were very strictly dealt with in Roman military law⁴². The sheer number of mentions of deserters in provisions of Roman law leads to the conclusion that it must have been a constant concern for commanders. Lack of motivation or the will to fight was another serious issue, but not as serious as flight from the battlefield, which could result in military catastrophe.

Making the connection between military law and *sacramentum militare* was the most logical solution to reinforce the morale of soldiers. On the one hand, legionnaires swore loyalty to the emperor; on the other hand, provisions of military law were read aloud to them, informing them about the penalties for breaking the oath. In the republican period any soldier who failed to fulfill the obligations of the *sacramentum*, i.e. attempted to leave his unit without an order, could be killed on the spot by his commander⁴³. The ancient art of command was largely based on methods of motivating soldiers and the commander's ability to project a suitable image of himself to his subordinates⁴⁴. The importance of proper encouragement of soldiers on the battlefield should be obvious⁴⁵. The Romans employed numerous psychological and social tricks to influence as many legionnaires as possible.

⁴² We only need to mention that deserters would have been burned alive: *Hostes autem, item transfugae ea poena adficiuntur, ut vivi exurantur. Digesta*, 48.19.8.2. This method of punishment also appears in the Theodosian Code. *Codex Theodosianus*, 16.1.

⁴³ Dionysius Halicarnasseus, 11.43.2.

⁴⁴ On the topic of the spectacle performed by commanders, see such works as: John Keegan, *The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1976); Philip Sabin, "The Face of Roman Battle", *The Journal of Roman Studies* 90 (2000): 1–17

⁴⁵ For more, see the following: Adrian Keith Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War: 100 BC – AD 200* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Lawrence Keppie, *The Making of the Roman Army* (Totowa: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

The military oath was simply another motivational tool, especially when combining the *donativa* and *sacramentum militare* with strict military law, i.e. a reminder about penalties for breaking the oath of obedience made to the emperor. This was also the ultimate goal of rigorous military training, which was a soldier's constant companion throughout his service⁴⁶.

Punishments for breaking the oath of *sacramentum militare* were severe, but any soldier would have been aware that upon joining the army he would be bound by a strict code of conduct. Failure to comply could weaken the state's military strength or result in the death of fellow soldiers, and this is something no army could tolerate. The oath was the primary element guaranteeing a soldier's obedience. A legionnaire swearing by the pagan gods or the Holy Trinity, depending on the time period, and by the figure of the emperor, became part of the military system. He was then obliged to carry out the orders of his superiors, who were nominated by the emperor, and was adopted into a much broader social group, bound by separate laws and different rules than in his civilian life. Swearing the *sacramentum militare* was a promise of obedience to the state and its ruler. Whereas accepting the *donativum*, oftentimes as part of the same ceremony, symbolized that a soldier's service will be properly rewarded by the emperor. The rulers, on the other hand, saw the oath as an effective method of securing the army's loyalty. So, the military oath was a useful tool both in terms of reinforcing devotion to the state as well as improving *esprit de corps*. In any case, it was more than merely a simple repeated ritual, and its impact is perfectly illustrated by the fact that it was sworn by soldiers before commencing operations in enemy territory.

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Żołnierska lojalność a *sacramentum militare* w kontekście wybranych źródeł późnoantycznych

Celem tekstu jest przedstawienie, w jaki sposób przysięga wojskowa miała stymulować i umacniać lojalność żołnierzy wobec władcy. Autor na podstawie wybranych źródeł przeprowadził analizę samej przysięgi wojskowej, wiążąc ją z całym systemem umacniającym lojalność żołnierzy względem władcy oraz państwa. Wynikiem przeprowadzonych badań jest pełniejszy obraz funkcjonowania armii rzymskiej w dobie późnego antyku.

⁴⁶ Training in the Roman army was described, e.g. in: Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 37–73. The issue was also touched upon in: Ramsay MacMullen, "The Legion as a Society", *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 22/4 (1984): 440–56.