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THE ARMY OF THE LATER ROMAN EMPIRE DESCRIBED
IN *NEW HISTORY* BY ZOSIMUS

New History is a unique, almost complete, historiographic relation presenting the pagan view point at the time when the victory of Christianity was practically determined and its position established. If we can agree that Zosimus lived in the second part of the 5th century, or at the turn of the 5th and 6th centuries¹, we must admit that he was conscious of the decline of political power of Rome in the West though in his work there is no mention of this matter². This perspective undoubtedly formed the pessimistic tone in the *New History*³. In the historical literature the pagan orientation of Zosimus had been known as well as his opinions on the destructive role of Christianity, and on the abandonment of the cult of ancient gods in the process of declining in the Roman state. Zosimus presented the view-point of the intellectuals and civil officers who played an important role in the cultural and political life of the Eastern Empire⁴, precisely the pagan part of society. In spite of his dependence of historical sources, he could express his own opinions, and those of the members of his environment, the natural readers of his work⁵. Besides the two authors of basic sources

¹ Actual opinions about Zosimus were presented by E. Wipszycka in the *Introduction* (p. 5–50) to the Polish edition of Zosimos, *Nowa historia*, przełożyła H. Cichocka, Warszawa 1993; esp. p. 7–11. There is also there a bibliography of Zosimus, p. 337–341. T. Sinko (*Literatura grecka*, t. 3, cz. 2, Wrocław 1954, p. 339–340) i O. Jurewicz (*Historia literatury bizantyńskiej*, Wrocław 1984, p. 33) refer to an opinion which identifies Zosimus the historian with Zosimus of Gaza executed during the reign of Zeno (474–491). According to this opinion Zosimus lived at the turn of the 1st and 2nd halves of the 5th century.

² It is difficult to draw some conclusions from that because „New History” is not completed, and we do not know at what moment of history the author wanted to end his work.

³ Wipszycka, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁵ In my opinion Wipszycka is right (*op. cit.*, p. 25–26) when she disagrees with F. Paschoud who refuses to acknowledge Zosimus’ independence of opinions.

of Zosimus, Eunapius and Olympiodorus, presented something near his social environment as they belonged to the pagan intellectuals. Eunapius of Sardes (about 345–420) was an erudite and a writer⁶. Olympiodorus, born in Egyptian Thebes, lived in the 1st part of the 5th century and was above all a literary man who had also taken part in diplomatic missions⁷.

In this article I wished to present Zosimus' views on Roman army, described with many details in his history from the reign of Constantine I the Great till the turn of 409/410⁸. It must be said that the authors of Zosimus' sources, Eunapius and Olympiodorus, as well as he himself were not military men and had no near contact with the army which they perceived as notorious civil officers. In Zosimus' work I looked for an image of and opinions on the army taking no account of numerous factographic mistakes, inexactness and contradictions⁹. Zosimus' tendency in interpreting certain facts makes difficult historical reconstruction but sometimes enables understanding the opinions of the author.

In the 4th century, as well as in the 3rd century, the emperors were effective, not only nominal – as it happened later – commanders-in-chief. A situation such as this generated diverse consequences – of which the most important was the dependence of emperors on the army. The army elevated as well as abolished emperors, the emperors were unable to win and to retain their throne without help and assistance of the soldiers. This strict and mutual relations comes out in these parts of Zosimus' work where he tells about elevation and abolition of emperors, and deals with civil wars. According to Zosimus' opinion the killing of Pertinax in 193 and exposing emperor's authority to *sui generis* auction was a turning point when soldiers – in this instance the praetorian guards – seized the power to dispose of imperial throne, eliminating the Senate from the ruler's election¹⁰. Provincial armies chose their own candidates and the choice of Maximinus in 235 by Pannonian army began rule of humble origin people, members of the army¹¹. These soldiers estimated elected emperors in view of their own interests such as the amount of pay, food supplies and relaxation of discipline. If the emperor did not satisfy their wishes, they just abolished him, and chose someone else. This interdependence between emperors and soldiers, so detrimental to the stability of the Empire, was

⁶ Gy. Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, Bd. I, Berlin 1958, p. 259–261.

⁷ E. A. Thompson, *Olympiodorus of Thebes*, „Classical Quarterly” 1944, 38, p. 43–53.

⁸ The Book One of *New History* outlined the Roman history from August till Diocletianus, and the relation about the reign of the latter is lost.

⁹ Cf. R. T. Ridley, *Zosimos, the Historian*, „Byzantinische Zeitschrift” 1972, Bd. 65, p. 288–292.

¹⁰ *Zosimi comitis et exadvocati fisci historia nova*, I 7, 2–3, ed. L. Mendelssohn, Lipsiae 1887.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, I 13, 1–3.

often characterized by mutual fear on either side, for instance soldiers rebelled against Severus Alexander because they wanted to avoid punishment for their own disobedience, while the emperor conceded for fear of his power and life¹². The Book One of *New History* presents continual civil wars, rebellions and usurpations in the 3rd century. The praetorian guards and provincial armies took part in these wars in hope of prizes and privileges. According to historian's relation armies had no political programs, they changed their opinions, if the enemy was stronger or promised more advantages. As a matter of fact armies were functioning like parasites on the state looking for material profits when they were fighting for the throne for their candidates. This chaos was favourable to external enemies who invaded and destroyed Roman Empire¹³.

This view of the 3rd century crisis was left by Zosimus without comment. It is rather difficult to treat as a commentary a critical opinion on imperial authority expressed at the beginning of the work¹⁴. He considers the influence of soldiers on elections to be a natural thing, and the negative consequences of such a state of affairs he could not associate with the abandonment of the cult of ancient gods.

In the Book Two beginning with Diocletianus' abdication, the relation of our historian becomes more detailed. The army had still a decisive influence on elections. Promises of financial advantages for soldiers were frequently mentioned as a reason to declare support for a particular candidate. Those promises – in Zosimus' opinion – decided mainly of Constantine's election in 306 and the election of Maxentius by praetorians in Rome the same year¹⁵. The latter due to the money saved fidelity of his soldiers, stirred up against him by his own father Maximianus¹⁶, and bribed some troops of Caesar Severus sent against him by Augustus Galerius¹⁷. Additional money supported the fidelity of Constantius' II soldiers as well as those of Vetrano before the battle against the usurper Magnentius¹⁸. Many a time financial arguments were used by usurper Procopius when he assembled troops to fight Valens¹⁹. Even during the night rest in the battle on Frigidus River in 394 emperor Eugenius is told to engage enthusiasm and fidelity of his troops by means of the money²⁰.

¹² *Ibidem*, I 12, 1; 13, 2.

¹³ *Ibidem*, I 26–28; 31–32; 39.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, I 5, 2–4.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, II 9, 1–3.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, II 11, 1.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, II 10, 1.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, II 44, 3–4.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, IV 5, 4; 6, 3–4.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, IV 58, 4.

Talking about elections of new emperors or usurpers, sometimes Zosimus does not mention reasons of soldiers' decisions. Sometimes decisions were taken by senior officers. In this way were elected Iovianus after the death of Julian the Apostate during the Persian expedition in 363, and Valentinianus I in 364. Although Zosimus tells about these two cases that decisions were taken during talks between officers and soldiers, in fact the final decisions taken by officers were transmitted to the whole army²¹. Sometimes power was grasped by commanders like Domitius Alexander²² in Africa in 308 or Procopius²³, the relative of Julian the Apostate, in 365 who thought themselves threatened by legal rulers. The successive elections in Britain in the years 406–407 of Markus, Gratianus and Constantine were results of the invasion of Gaul by Vandals, Sueves and Alans, and feeling of danger in the troops left on the island without support by emperor Honorius²⁴. The election of Augustus Julian in Gaul, caused by the discontent of the army forced by Constantius II to go on the war in Persia, is told to be anticipated by „leaflet action” among soldiers, carried on by officers²⁵. It happened that the attempt of usurpation was an action calculated only for financial gain just as frantic as ruffianly. In 350 the nephew of Constantine the Great, Nepotianus, was an emperor in Italy during 27 days as a commander of the crowd of marauders, vagabonds and other people, before he was defeated by the army of another usurper Magnentius²⁶. In the fight for the throne often and often there appeared references to dynastic ideas. They mattered in 306 with the elections of Constantine and Maxentius²⁷. Later on during the murder of emperor's family after the death of Constantine the Great to preserve the throne for his sons; Zosimus presumes that Constantius was responsible for the murder²⁸. The memory of Constantine the Great and loyalty to his sons were called on during the soldiers meeting while Vetranio was dethroned in 350²⁹. Philip, the messenger of Constantius to the usurper Magnentius, used similar arguments towards soldiers of the latter³⁰. Popularity of the usurper Procopius among soldiers was also a result of his relationship with Julian the Apostate³¹. Zosimus presumes that five years old Valentinianus II, son of Valentinianus I, was elected by

²¹ *Ibidem*, III 30, 1; 36, 1–3.

²² *Ibidem*, II 12, 1–3.

²³ *Ibidem*, IV 5, 1–5.

²⁴ *Ibidem*, VI 2, 1–2; 3, 1.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, III 9, 1.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, II 43, 2–4.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, II 9, 1–3.

²⁸ *Ibidem*, II 40, 1–3.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, II 44, 3–4.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, II 46, 3.

³¹ *Ibidem*, IV 7, 1.

officers in 375, because they feared that a part of state without ruler might have been invaded by barbarians³². The age of the new emperor seems to suggest that election was a result of the loyalty of officers to the dynasty.

The attitude of the army towards emperors can be observed during civil wars and abolitions of rulers. Galerius had to break his expedition to Italy against Maxentius, because he was not sure of the loyalty of his army³³. Otherwise the soldiers of the latter took his part during the conflict with his father Maximianus³⁴. The usurpation of Magnentius in 350, proclaimed on a military feast, was caused – in Zosimus' opinion – by homosexuality of emperor Constans and the deplorable state of provinces. Private soldiers did not know what had happened during the feast, but did not hesitate to support the usurpation against legal ruler³⁵. Whem messenger Philip, mentioned above, shook the attitude of Magnentius' soldiers, the latter had to recall Constans' vileness and his own election done by the army. He also invited his officers on the feast, and regained control on the army³⁶. Suppression of Procopius' usurpation was mainly possible because in the series of battles the troops of the usurper were brought over to Valens' side³⁷. The favouring of Alan mercenaries by emperor Gratianus is said to be the cause of soldiers' revolt, of Magnus Maximus usurpation in Britain and of the access of troops in Gaul to the usurper³⁸. When emperor Valentinianus II died in 392 in consequence of Arbogast's action, there was no reaction on the side of the army which accepted election of Eugenius³⁹. But when the latter in the battle on Frigidus River in 394 was defeated by Theodosius, his soldiers asked the victor to take them to his service⁴⁰.

If Zosimus' presentation of soldiers' motives is neither complete nor profound, there is no doubt that he chose motives he thought the most important. Facts mentioned above seem to prove that though imperial power was stronger and more stable when compared with the situation in the 3rd century, the motives of the militaries were in most cases the same. The most important were financial advantages. Though some civil wars were extremely cruel, the soldiers simply took decisions of disloyalty, and emperors, conscious of real motives of the army, easily excused recent adversaries and sometimes punished only the commanders of mutiny. The

³² *Ibidem*, IV 19, 1.

³³ *Ibidem*, II 10, 3.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, II 11, 1.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, II 42, 2–5.

³⁶ *Ibidem*, II 46, 3; 47, 1–3; 48, 1.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, IV 7, 4; 8, 1, 3.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, IV 35, 2–6.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, IV 54, 3–4.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, IV 58, 6.

welfare of the Empire was never mentioned as a motive of soldiers' action unless extremal danger required prompt changes and a new strong ruler had to be elected. Undoubtedly some dynastic ideas became more and more important; some emperors naturally enjoyed soldiers' attachment and love. Emperors, of course, looked for popularity in the army. Licinius in his last fight against Constantine had a group of faithful and friendly soldiers⁴¹. Julian, the favourite hero of Zosimus, was liked by the army as he was a fortunate and good commander, fighting arm to arm with his soldiers, heartening them up on the battle field, generous in favours but rigorous in action⁴². Theodosius also cared for the welfare of his troops, so he could rely on their loyalty⁴³. His sons, Arcadius and Honorius, not being rulers-commanders, cared for their popularity in the army just by being present in various occasions. However their authority in the army was rather low because the soldiers in Arcadius' eyes killed Rufinus, his minister⁴⁴, and during the mutiny against Stilicho in 408 in Ticinum, inspired by emperor himself, Honorius was unable to control the frantic soldiers slaughtering their victims at the ruler's feet⁴⁵. Finally his commanders suppressed revolts, and emperor conceded to all personal demands of the army⁴⁶.

Zosimus knew of course that the fundamental duties of emperor included command of the army, defence of frontiers from external danger, and guarantee of internal peace, so in his characteristic of emperors he often emphasized their commanding capacities. Zosimus had a negative opinion of Constantine the Great because of pro-Christian politics of the latter. Telling about military advantages of Constantine he was inclined to attribute them to army commanders and favourable circumstances, suspecting emperor himself of cowardice and refusing to fight the barbarians⁴⁷. Valens was also a bad commander because he had no military experience at the time of election and he was by nature disposed to idleness. His imprudence, his pride and lack of military experience led to the defeat at Adrianopolis in 378⁴⁸. It is Julian who was for Zosimus the ideal commander. Just his presence on battle field guaranteed order, calm and high military spirit. Julian could impress his energy, his courage combined with precaution, his wide military and engineering knowledge⁴⁹. To emphasize emperor's merits

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, II 25, 1.

⁴² *Ibidem*, III 4, 2; 5, 3; 9, 1; 11, 3; 13, 3; 18, 1, 6; 28, 4.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, IV 44, 4.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, V 7, 5-6.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, V, 32, 3-7.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, V 31, 1-3; 47, 1-3.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, II 31, 3; 32, 1.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, IV 4, 1; 24, 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, III 11, 4; 18, 2; 20, 1, 5; 26, 1.

Zosimus quotes Julian's epitaph: „Here lies Julian who came from beyond the quick Tiger – a good emperor and great warrior”⁵⁰. Valentinianus I was estimated by Zosimus with moderate approval because of his military experience⁵¹. Theodosius I, the second negative hero of our historian, was presented with more interest. Zosimus could not deny his courage, military abilities and experience, his energy and resistance to the hardships of military life⁵², but he accused emperor of long periods of laziness, dissoluteness and impassivity⁵³.

At the beginning of the 4th century civil and military functions were separated, and some new commanding officers were created. Zosimus with his negative attitude towards Constantine the Great, denounced these reforms because praefecti praetorio were deprived of their commanding functions being still responsible for the maintenance of the army. Zosimus says that praefecti could guarantee military discipline by a possibility to limit supplies. Deprivation of this weapon led to weaken military discipline⁵⁴. Zosimus criticized as well augmentation of the number of senior and junior commanders by Theodosius, altering and exaggerating purposely the scale of the phenomenon, though it might be that he just lacked information. He maintained that these reforms were a burden for state finances and new officers with their cupidity and malversations were dangerous to the welfare of soldiers⁵⁵. According to Zosimus the new nominations of the emperors resulted in the exchange of most senior officers in the army. It corroborates that in the Roman Empire there was no precise and fixed system of nominations among senior officers. Commanders were usually appointed for a particular campaign or to fulfil an immediate task; it might even happen that the new commanders had no military knowledge⁵⁶. Often and often conflicts burst out between commanders and omnipotent eunuchs, resident of the imperial court, whom Zosimus evidently disliked⁵⁷. He approves however many commanders worth regards and praise. He emphasizes their courage and heroism⁵⁸, their military skill and precaution⁵⁹, power and physical efficiency⁶⁰, gentleness and generosity⁶¹ as well as their incorruptibility

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, III 34, 4.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, IV 3, 5.

⁵² *Ibidem*, IV 16, 6; 24, 4; 49, 1.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, IV 50.

⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, II 32, 2; 33, 3–5.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, IV 27, 1–3.

⁵⁶ *Ibidem*, IV 2, 3; 34, 1; V 9, 1; 14, 2; 15, 1; 25, 3; 36, 3.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, II 55, 1–2; IV 23, 5; 40, 8; V 8, 3; 10; 13, 1; 17, 4.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, II 51, 3–4; III 30, 4; IV 33, 2; 51, 1; 55, 1; V 36, 2.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, II 14, 2; IV 17, 1; 33, 2; 53, 1; 57, 2; V 21, 3; 36, 2.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, IV 40, 1.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, II 14, 2; IV 40, 6.

and unconcern to financial advantages⁶². Zosimus' opinion about the very same commander are sometimes contradictory. In what regards Stilicho, he is treated as a negative person when historian's relation is based on Eunapius' source⁶³, and a positive person when the source is that of Olympiodorus⁶⁴. Such opposite opinions regard Gerontius too⁶⁵. It is characteristic of Zosimus, the enemy of barbarians and their affluence to Rome, that he praises some commanders of barbarian origine if they are pagans⁶⁶.

As Zosimus blamed reforms on commanding level, he was also highly critical towards Constantine the Great who had withdrawn the best troops from the frontiers to make them field armies (*comitatenses*) because Zosimus was convinced that the new system reduced frontier defence and exposed the state to barbarian invasions⁶⁷. He mentioned also the liquidation of praetorian guards by Constantine⁶⁸.

A general view of the army presented in Zosimus' work is different. The author talks about soldiers and troops well-trained, disciplined and courageous⁶⁹ but he does not forget these who were bad, cowards and ill-trained⁷⁰. In his opinion emperors and commanders were responsible for the general state of the army. The proper system of recompensing and punishing could guarantee a high value of troops. Particularly efficient seemed to be Julian the Apostate. Zosimus quoted a story, unknown to other historians, about coward soldiers wrapped in woman's clothes; the operation was to work up courage and enthusiams of ashamed troops⁷¹. Julian also applied other punishments⁷², but generally his own deeds and words were the best way to rouse military spirit⁷³. Emperor Valentinianus I in his speech revealed infamous deeds of Batavian troops and threatened that they might be sold. Penitent soldiers manifested real acts of heroism⁷⁴. Military success had a good influence on the mood of the army, any defeat put the spirit down⁷⁵. Military training was very important as a guarantee

⁶² *Ibidem*, IV 32, 2; 53, 1; V 34, 6; 46, 2.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, V 7, 1-2.

⁶⁴ *Ibidem*, V 34, 6.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*, IV 40, 1, 6; V 5, 6; 6, 4.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, IV 33, 1-2; 53, 1; V 20, 1; 46, 2-3.

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, II 34, 1-2.

⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, II 17, 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, II 19, 2; 50, 3; III 3, 4; 5, 4; 21, 2; IV 22, 1, 3; V 4, 2; 45, 1.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, III 3, 2, 4; 29, 4; IV 4, 2; 40, 2.

⁷¹ *Ibidem*, III 3, 5.

⁷² *Ibidem*, III 19, 2; 22, 1.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, III 18, 1; 25, 2; 28, 4.

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*, IV 9, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, III 24, 1; 25, 7; IV 25, 2; 34, 6.

of high military level, but it also enabled proper organization of the time off-duty. Zosimus accuses soldiers of revolts⁷⁶, careless attitude towards their service⁷⁷, general dissipation and effeminacy⁷⁸. Officers were accused of greed and abuses against interests of soldiers⁷⁹.

Zosimus does not seem to understand real causes of the weakness of Roman army but he takes every chance to accuse of negligence the two emperors he treats as his personal enemies. In his opinion Constantine's decision to withdraw troops from frontiers to the towns heightened the risk of demoralization of soldiers who frequented performances and practised debauchery⁸⁰. Theodosius was responsible of reducing the number of troops⁸¹ and of filling up vacant places with barbarians. It caused disorder in the army, intermixing of Romans and barbarians and affluence of rather poor recruits⁸².

Zosimus' attitude towards the problem of barbarians is neither clear nor equivalent. In Book One he predicts later disasters „when the mutilated Roman Empire passes into the hands of barbarians”⁸³ and he shows the turn point of this process in Diocletianus' abdication⁸⁴. *New History* is full of descriptions of barbarian invasions and plunders. Wars against external enemies were a constituent part of Roman history. The evil lay in the affluence of barbarians and their engagement in military service. In his summary of Theodosius' reign Zosimus says: „Roman Empire was weakening step by step, it then became home for barbarians, and finally was deprived of its inhabitants and it reached the state when it was difficult to indicate places where once the towns were situated”⁸⁵. The exaggeration in this opinion just means how partial Zosimus was. Dealing with mercenaries he mentions Claudius II Gothicus⁸⁶. Constantine the Great proceeded the same way⁸⁷, and so did the admired Julian. Valentinianus and Valens⁸⁸. The most censured for his pro-barbarian politics was Theodosius⁸⁹. Zosimus was

⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, II 13, 1; V 31, 1; 47, 1-3.

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, IV 16, 5; 20, 2; V 20, 2.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, II 34, 2; IV 23, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibidem*, IV 27, 2.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, II 34, 2.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, IV 29, 1.

⁸² *Ibidem*, IV 30, 1; 31, 1.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, I 58, 4.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, II 7, 1.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, IV 59, 1.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, I 46, 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, II 15, 1.

⁸⁸ *Ibidem*, III 8, 1; 25, 5; IV 12, 1; 26, 1-2.

⁸⁹ *Ibidem*, IV 30, 1; 34, 3-5; 39, 5; 40, 6-8; 56, 1; 58, 2.

indignant because emperor seemed to favour barbarian troops⁹⁰. On the other hand, as have already mentioned, Zosimus admired many barbarian commanders and emperor Honorius' refusal to nominate Alaric *magister militum* before he conquered Rome, and to give land to his soldiers in Noricum, he treats as an error committed in the state of infatuation⁹¹. At the same time Zosimus knew that barbarian troops had been often and often engaged in internal plots, and after the death of Theodosius in the rivalry between Western and Eastern parts of the Empire.

In his account of internal and external wars Zosimus differentiates Roman and barbarian troops in service of the Empire. Some difficulties appear when he deals with the reign of Theodosius and his sons. The idea of an army was no longer synonymous with the Roman army. Barbarian troops were often fighting with other barbarian troops. Though anti-Germanic reactions on East in 400 and on West in 408 were perceived as the Roman movements.

Relations between military and civil people seem to be beyond Zosimus' interest; he just mentions some facts here and there. There is no doubt that people suffered injuries during civil wars. Constantine was told to destroy the towns resistant to him when he had been marching against Maxentius⁹². Usurper Magnentius besieged and ruined towns on Sava River⁹³, the inhabitants of the cities must have suffered all sorts of calamities. Zosimus talks a lot about rapes and plunders of revolted barbarian troops which were formally in Roman service⁹⁴. The fact was that Roman troops, natural protectors of people against barbarians did robbery and plunder just as well. This happened in the towns on Danube River, where Roman soldiers equalled barbarians in demolition during the reign of Valentinianus I⁹⁵. The expedition of Stilicho to the Balkan land which aimed to defend this territory from Goth invasion, was unsuccessful; the soldiers however robbed and plundered all that was left after the earlier barbarian expedition⁹⁶. The above mentioned location of *comitatenses* in the towns of Interior by Constantine in Zosimus' exaggerated opinion caused ruin and depopulation of these centres⁹⁷. The anti-Germanic actions in Italy in 408 were accompanied by pogroms of barbarians⁹⁸ and the native population as well⁹⁹.

⁹⁰ *Ibidem*, IV 35, 2; 40, 1-2.

⁹¹ *Ibidem*, V 48, 3; 50, 2-3; 51, 1.

⁹² *Ibidem*, II 15, 1.

⁹³ *Ibidem*, II 49, 2-3.

⁹⁴ *Ibidem*, IV 16, 5; 40, 7; V 13, 3; 15, 1-2.

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, IV 16, 5.

⁹⁶ *Ibidem*, V 7, 2-3.

⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, II 34, 2.

⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, V 35, 5.

⁹⁹ *Ibidem*, V 32, 5.

Anti-Christian Zosimus neglects the problem of religion in the army. In Constantine's case he just says that emperor, when in Rome, would take part in pagan ceremonies because he did not want to hurt soldiers' feelings¹⁰⁰. It might signify that the army in those days was rather pagan. Twice Zosimus declares that soldiers do not know any better than praying; he thinks of course of Christian soldiers¹⁰¹. The new religion did not favour courage and military virtues of the army – this seems the only conclusion to be drawn.

Zosimus thinking about the army seems to confirm generally our knowledge based on other sources. It is, of course, a view point of civil officers, and a mosaic like image composed of current and conventional opinions. Zosimus however sees a composite, heterogenous structure of the army, the diverse values of troops and a variety of attitudes among commanders and junior officers. With all its variety the army in Zosimus' history seems to be rather a homogeneous part of the state which lives beyond civil community. Army is above all a political instrument without its own political face; it is also a dangerous and exigent instrument which views its own advantages. Talking about the decline of the Roman Empire, Zosimus seems not to perceive the role of the army in this process. He censures the reforms of Constantine the Great and Theodosius I but he himself has no positive conception of the army like, for instance, the restoration of its pure Roman character, postulated by some political centres on the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries. We can assume that Zosimus' view point was near to the opinions of pagan centres, although this is just a supposition.

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OBRAZ ARMII PÓŹNORZYMSKIEJ W NOWEJ HISTORII ZOSIMOSA

Artykuł podejmuje próbę zebrania i zestawienia informacji na temat politycznej i społecznej roli oraz oceny armii w IV w. i pierwszym dziesięcioleciu V w., zawartych w dziele pogańskiego historyka z drugiej połowy V w., Zosimosa. Najwięcej miejsca zajmuje przedstawienie roli armii w związku z obwoływaniem i obalaniem cesarzy oraz omówienie motywów działania wojska. Z relacji o wzajemnych stosunkach władców i żołnierzy wyłania się obraz armii jako decydującej siły politycznej w państwie, dbającej przede wszystkim o własne, zwłaszcza finansowe interesy, w niewielkim natomiast stopniu kierującej się racją stanu. Historyk odnotował jednak nasilenie się idei dynastycznych oraz sympatie wojska do niektórych cesarzy.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, II 29, 5.

¹⁰¹ *Ibidem*, III 3, 2; IV 23, 2.

Władca powinien być, według Zosimosa, dobrym wodzem i prowadzić umiejętną politykę wobec armii. Idealem pogańskiego historyka był z tego punktu widzenia Julian Apostata, natomiast zasłużeni dla chrześcijaństwa cesarze – Konstantyn Wielki i Teodozjusz Wielki – zostali przedstawieni w negatywnym świetle. Mniej miejsca poświęcił Zosimos ocenie wodzów i wartości całej armii, problemowi jej barbaryzacji oraz stosunkowi żołnierzy do ludności cywilnej. Historyk, przedstawiciel cywilnych kręgów inteligencji pogańskiej, postrzegał armię w sposób konwencjonalny i raczej mało zróżnicowany. Nie potrafił zdobyć się na wnikliwą analizę jej roli w państwie, podporządkowywał natomiast swe oceny tezie o upadku Rzymu, będącego rezultatem odejścia od religii pogańskiej i zapanowania chrześcijaństwa. Można sądzić, że jego poglądy były reprezentatywne dla tej warstwy społecznej, której sam był przedstawicielem.