PART 4

Conclusion

CHAPTER 14

Timeless Principles of War and the Vertical Transmission of Military Knowledge through the *Taktika*

Georgios Theotokis

> A book which I composed about the management of wars and their organization; about the knowledge [accrued] about the conditions of fighting and their assessment, so that he who chances upon it of the [Sultan's] noble commanders and the leaders of his armies [might] be guided by it. He among them who did not experience the path of war, because of the youth of his age, can be guided by its [expert] informants.[1]

⁂

It is my intention in this chapter to bring to the forefront the common elements and ideas that shaped the structure and content of what we have come to identify as military manuals, and to compare samples of this particular literary genre from different cultures (Rome, Byzantium, Islamic polities) in order to showcase the vertical (chronological) transmission of military knowledge between "military cultures". My focus will be on the following common characteristics: the advisory nature of these manuals; the writing during a period of intense socio-political instability for the State; the author trying to make sense of the socio-political turmoil and decline of his time; the trend to blame their contemporaries, not just for not consulting previous treatises on military matters, but for completely ignoring the study of the 'science' of war; the timeless interest in the fighting abilities, ideology and institutional framework for war of their nation's neighbours and enemies; the struggle to make sense of defeat; avoiding battle and to confirm the historians' view that sieges, raids, skirmishes and ambushes dominated medieval and early modern warfare.

1 'Umar Ibn Ibrahim Al-Awsi Al-Ansari, *A Muslim Manual of War, Being Tafrij Al-Kurub Fi Tadbir Al-Hurub*, ed. and trans. G. T. Scanlon (Cairo/New York, 1961/2012), p. 41.

 | DOI:10.1163/9789004696433_016

1 A Genre?

Historians love to disagree with each other, stir up debates and try to demolish academic views that have been chiselled in the annals of history for several decades. Ancient authors who wrote about war have not escaped modern academic scrutiny in that matter, yet there still has not been substantial agreement on the conventions of the military manual as a genre – or even if it is a genre in its own right. For Brian Campbell, "… Greek and Roman writers of *military handbooks* do not fit easily into a single category. These works were partly historical, offered general guidance of moral value and some potentially useful practical and technical information, but also were intended to amuse and delight the upper classes."[2] Considering that the noun *handbook* (or *manual*) describes a book capable of being conveniently carried as a ready reference on a specific topic, other leading scholars in the field like Gilbert Dagron, Taxiarches Kolias, George T. Dennis, Dennis Sullivan, Philip Rance, and Eric McGeer, readily adopted the term *handbook* (or *manual*) to denote the military texts of the 'ancient authorities' that "concentrate on theory and offer the commander a series of paradigms of battle situations to ponder. […] More often than not, they reflect actual operations in the field."[3] Furthermore, after myself "having devotedly given my attention to the ancients", I offer my definition to the topic "as a modest assistance in these matters".[4] In this chapter, I would treat the – so-called – *Strategika* or *Taktika* as a specific category of literary works devoted to war, written by and for military veterans and/or military novices, which contained constitutions and treatises of military nature and other historical *exempla*, and which have been compiled by the author through personal experience and/or through oral and written tradition.

---

2 Brian Campbell (ed.), *Greek and Roman Military Writers, Selected readings* (London, 2004), p. 17.

3 George T. Dennis, "The Byzantines in Battle," in: *Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*), ed. K. Tsiknakes (Athens, 1997), p. 166. See also: Denis F. Sullivan, "Byzantine military manuals: prescriptions, practice and pedagogy," in: *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson (London/New York, 2010), pp. 149–61; idem, "Tenth Century Byzantine Offensive Siege Warfare: Instructional Prescriptions and Historical Practice," in: *Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*), pp. 179–200; Taxiarches Kolias, "Η Πολεμική Τακτική των Βυζαντινών: Θεωρία και Πράξη" ["The Military Tactics of the Byzantines: Theory and Practice"], in: *Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*), pp. 153–64; Philip Rance, "The Reception of Aineias' Poliorketika in Byzantine Military Literature," in: *Brill's Companion to Aineias Tacticus*, ed. by Maria Pretzler and Nick Barley (Leiden, 2017), pp. 290–374; Eric McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington DC, 1995), pp. 191–95. The reasons for the prominence of military manuals in Byzantium have been described by: Gilbert Dagron, Haralambie Mihaescu, *Le Traité sur la guérilla de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris, 1989/2011), pp. 103–11.

4 *The Taktika of Leo VI*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis (Washington, DC, 2010), prologue §6.

AQ5

If we agree that the military manuals constitute a distinct literary genre, as Whately has argued about the Byzantines who inherited and preserved the corpus of ancient military treatises,[5] then how do we begin to tackle such a dizzying array of different texts? The answer is straightforward; sub-genres – and there are plenty of them, a fact that confirms their multifaceted nature in different military cultures and throughout the ages! To take one example, the 9th century Syrianos magistros has been attributed as the author of a comprehensive Byzantine military *compendium*[6] that was published, probably c. AD 875–86, as three separate works broadly covering all aspects of warfare: the *On Strategy* (*De re strategica*), "which is really the most important branch of the entire science of government"; the *Rhetorica militaris*, a guidebook on how to compose and deliver rhetorical speeches for the exhortation of the troops and, finally, the *Naumachiae*, which covers various topics related to strategy and tactics at sea. The *compendium* may also have included a section on siege warfare no longer extant.[7] This is how, more or less, Hunger and McGeer also categorized the different texts that treated war in its various aspects.[8]

Syrianos' military *compendium* is an interesting example of another division into sub-genres. In the *On Strategy*, the author explains that: "There are two kinds of war, at sea and on land. The tactics appropriate to each must be examined separately."[9] Then, at the beginning of the *Rhetorica Militaris*, the author claims he wished to examine the "rhetorical" ('Logical') part, which is divided into two further parts, the one about speaking in the public assembly and the epistolic one, as opposed to the "practical" ('Strategic') part of the political science he had already examined in detail.[10]

Finally, the most intriguing and – probably – practical division was put forward in a collective volume on the Greek and Roman military manuals. In it, Chlup and Whately suggested two distinct, yet complementary, sub-genres of

5 Conor Whately, "The Genre and Purpose of Military Manuals in Late Antiquity," in: *Shifting genres in late antiquity*, ed. G. Greatrex and H. Elton (Farnham, 2015), pp. 250–52. See also: James T. Chlup and Conor Whately, "The ancient military treatise, genre, and history," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (London/New York, 2021), pp. 4–7.

6 Georgios Theotokis and Dimitrios Sidiropoulos, *Byzantine Military Rhetoric in the Ninth Century, A Translation of the Anonymi Byzantini Rhetorica Militaris* (London/New York, 2021), pp. 1–2.

7 Rance, "The Reception of Aineias' *Poliorketika*," p. 318, n. 82.

8 Eric McGeer, "Military texts," in: *The Oxford handbook of Byzantine studies*, ed. E. Jeffreys with J. Haldon and R. Cormack (Oxford/New York, 2008), p. 907; Herbert Hunger, *Βυζαντινή Λογοτεχνία, Η λόγια κοσμική γραμματεία των Βυζαντινών* (Athens, 2000), vol. II, pp. 155–57.

9 "On Strategy," in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, CFHB: 25 [Washington, DC, 1985/2008 (repr.)], ch. 14.

10 Theotokis and Sidiropoulos, *Byzantine Military Rhetoric*, p. 57.

military handbooks;[11] first, the theoretical, which works as a reference work for 'the perfect general', or something pertaining to a modern 'army field manual' or a 'military guide' for most (but certainly not all) conflicts, and it includes Aeneas Taktikos, Onasander, Vegetius and Maurice's *Strategikon*. Second, the specific (I prefer calling it the 'practical'), which has the same didactic purpose as the theoretical one, but in which the authors chose to illustrate their advice in the form of historical *exempla* with minimal exposition, like Frontinus' and Polyaenus' *Strategemata*. It is understood that authors of the first sub-genre also made frequent use of historical *exempla* in their theoretical narrative – the one does not negate the use of the other.

Chlup and Whately make a critical point about the historical value of both sub-genres: "What they appear to share in common is the desire to convey a transhistorical and transcultural perspective of ancient warfare. […] In both instances, one may surely reasonably argue, later cultures (that is, Roman, Byzantine) could understand an additional context through which they could – and ought – to establish a connection to the past."[12] I would argue, therefore, that the genre of the *taktika* is an excellent pool of information about the history of warfare, as it offers an invaluable insight into the strategy, tactics, siege warfare, logistics, ideology and the institutional framework of war. Furthermore, a careful analysis and comparison of these sources could provide significant hints regarding the 'vertical' (chronological) diffusion of knowledge between 'military cultures'[13].

2 Authorship, Aim, Historical Context and Literary Clichés

Compiled about a century after what should be considered the oldest military treatise[14] in the world that has come down through history to be called *Sun-tzu*

11 Chlup and Whately, "The ancient military treatise, genre, and history," p. 6; Conor Whately, "Military manuals from Aeneas Tacticus to Maurice, Origins, scholarship, genre, audience, and history," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, pp. 23–4.

12 Chlup and Whately, "The ancient military treatise, genre, and history," pp. 6–7.

13 A *Military Culture* can be defined as: (a) the 'operational code of war' that is followed by an entire nation or people or, (b) 'a way of understanding why an army acts as it does in war': I. v. Hull, *Absolute Destruction, Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany* (Ithaca, 2005), pp. 93–94; J. L. Soeters, D. J. Winslow and A. Wibull, 'Military Culture', in *Handbook of the Sociology of the Military*, ed. Giuseppe Caforio (New York, 2003), pp. 237–54.

14 Both Lionel Giles and Dallas Galvin call it "the first military treatise in recorded history": Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. with an introduction by D. Galvin, trans. by L. Giles (New York, 2003), p. 3; Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. by L. Giles (The Project Gutenberg eBook, 1994).

ping-fa, or *Sun Tzu on the Art of War* (written between 514 and 472 BC), historians have ascribed the honours of writing the first military manual in history to Xenophon,[15] for his *Cyropaedia* ('Education of Cyrus'). This was a fictional life story of Cyrus II where tactics, morale, obedience, and generalship are accentuated, and techniques of military and political leadership are exposed both through example and through direct instruction.[16] Yet, the first fully developed work of this literary genre dates from the fourth century BC, while numerous such works from the Byzantine period have also survived, especially from the tenth century when they proliferated during the so-called period of the 'Byzantine Reconquest' of the East.

Most (although not all) of the authors of these manuals were, undoubtedly, experienced military officers. To give some examples: Aeneas, the so-called 'Taktikos', probably was a military instructor or a mercenary commander who saw action in the Peloponnese and in Asia Minor in the second quarter of the fourth century BC; Frontinus was the military commander of Roman Britain between AD 74–78, with military experience fighting the Silures in south Wales; the author of the *Strategikon* (c. AD 600) may be identified with Philippicus, the brother-in-law of emperor Maurice and the general (*magister*) of the Imperial Forces in the East;[17] Kekaumenos[18] was an army officer in eastern Asia Minor

---

Beatrice Heuser describes it "as the starting point of all writing on asymmetric warfare": *The evolution of strategy: thinking war from antiquity to the present* (Cambridge, 2010), p. 390.

15 Whately, "Military manuals from Aeneas Tacticus to Maurice," p. 20.

16 Jeffrey Rop, "Refighting Cunaxa, Xenophon's Education of Cyrus as a manual on military leadership," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, pp. 153–71.

17 John Wiita has proposed that the most likely candidate for the authorship of the *Strategikon* is Philippicus, a view endorsed by the editor and translator of the treatise, George T. Dennis: John Earl Wiita, "The ethnika in Byzantine military treatises" (PhD thesis: University of Minnesota, 1977), pp. 15–49; *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, trans. by George T. Dennis (Philadelphia, PA, 1984), p. XVII. Philip Rance, whose forthcoming English translation and commentary of the Strategikon is eagerly awaited, argues that "*The Strategikon*, a comprehensive military treatise [was] compiled in the 590s by, for or in the name of the emperor Maurice (582–602)": "The Ideal of the Roman General in Byzantium: The Reception of Onasander's Strategikos in Byzantine Military Literature," in: *Military Leadership from Ancient Greece to Byzantium: The Art of Generalship*, ed. S. Tougher (Edinburgh, 2022), pp. 242–263 [quotation from p. 247]. See also: idem, "Maurice's Strategicon and "the Ancients": the Late Antique Reception of Aelian and Arrian," in: *Greek Taktika. Ancient Military Writing and its Heritage*, ed. P. Rance and N. V. Sekunda (Gdańsk, 2017), pp. 217–255.

18 Although the title of Kekaumenos' admonitory work is *Consilia et Narrationes*, only sections 9–36 is described as a στρατηγικὸν, a 'military handbook': Konstantinos Karatolios, *Βυζαντινή Αυτοκρατορική Ιδεολογία: Τα Κάτοπτρα Ηγεμόνος Της Μέσης Βυζαντινής Περιόδου*, ["Byzantine Imperial Ideology: the Mirrors for Princes of the Middle Byzantine Period"]

at a time when the defences of Anatolia against the Seljuk Turks had crumbled (writing between 1075–78); the early ninth century al-Khalīl Ibn al-Haytham al-Harthami al-Shaʿranī was an experienced and learned soldier writing for a refined and knowledgeable warrior caliph, al-Ma'mun (reigned, AD813–33); the treatise of Theodore Palaeologus, marquis of Montferrat (1306–38), reflects first-hand experience in the reality of war in Italy during the first decades of the fourteenth century; Muhammad Ibn Manglī was an officer in the Mamluk army at Alexandria during the reign of the Mamluk Sultan al-Ashraf Shaʿbān (reigned, AD1362–1376); Umar ibn Ibrahim al-Awsi al-Ansari held the position of the Mamluk *qāḍī al-›askar*[19] ("judge of the army") in Aleppo during the depredations of Timur, and his imprisonment gave him the knowledge of the Mongol military organization, strategy and tactics that he included in his work (written shortly before 1408); finally, Esirî Hasan Ağa was an experienced military officer in the Ottoman armourer corps in the late seventeenth century, and he spent two years in Belgrade as a Hapsburg prisoner of war (between 1687 and 1689), where he had a chance to study the Hapsburg military system that he – like al-Ansari – included in his work (written in the late 1720s). All of the authors of these manuals were highly educated and, in many cases, multilingual, yet none of them were as brilliant as the tacticians whose military exploits many of them knew and/or refer to in their works, like Pericles, Alexander the Great, Scipio or Julius Caesar.

The great value of these manuals lays largely on their quality as repositories of (military) knowledge, and on their advisory and didactic use for up-and-coming army officers and civil servants.[20] The anonymous[21] author of the

(Athens, 2015); Charlotte Roueché, "The rhetoric of Kekaumenos," in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, (London, 2003), pp. 23–37.

19 A high-ranking *qadi* of the Mamluk judiciary. As senior member of the royal court, he supervised judicial affairs, heard legal cases, oversaw legal matters of the military-administrative personnel, and handled campaign duties.

20 These manuals served various purposes: first, as utilitarian texts that commanders used in preparation for campaigns or combat; second, as pedagogical tools for up-and-coming commanders; third, as sources of entertainment and knowledge. To Whately's list, one should add Chatzelis' point that these manuals could also have been used as 'literary projects' for political propaganda, either by an emperor or by an up-and-coming individual: Whately, "The Genre and Purpose of Military Manuals," pp. 255–61; Georgios Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals as Literary Works and Practical Handbooks, The Case of the Tenth-Century Sylloge Tacticorum* (London/New York, 2019), pp. 88–94.

21 Dennis has identified him with Leo Phokas, younger brother of emperor Nikephoros II, who served as *strategos* of Cappadocia (c. 945), and Anatolikon (c. 955), *Domestikos* of the West and of the East (c. 960/61): *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, p. 139; *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, vol. III, p. 1667 ["Phokas, Leo"].

Byzantine treatise *On Skirmishing* (late 960s) explains his reasons behind the writing of his manual, during a period when it might not have found "much application in the eastern regions [i.e, Cilicia, northern Syria and Upper Mesopotamia]", adding a sentence that signals his adherence to the conventions of historical writing: "… in order that time, which leads us to forget what we once knew, might not completely blot out this useful knowledge, we think we owe to commit it to writing."[22] The author underlines the manual's practical use for future generations in the following sentence, that "if in the future, then, some situation should arise in which Christians need this knowledge, it will be readily available to assist those who have the responsibility of using it."[23] Al-Ansari also explains that he "looked into the books of history in their variety, and reflected upon the battles of wars in them with their different types, […] and upon that which the most learned of writers had cited in the recommendations to the leaders of the armies."[24] In a similar manner, the Abbasid Al-Harthami portrayed his work as an "effort to draw attention and alert" based on "concepts that have come to us from the books of the ancient ones (*al-awa'il*)", although he adds his own interventions concerning these matters.[25] For ʿAlī Ibn Bakr al-Harawī, a Persian traveller (d. 1215) who wrote his admonitory work for an Ayyubid Prince between 1192 and 1215, he described it as "a useful memoir and an elegant literary work which will serve the scholar, will allow the shrewd to rise, will provide aid to the Sultan against whomever resists him, and to the Prince against whomever attacks him."[26]

For Vegetius, the Romans had inherited all the knowledge of the Ancient Greeks, and he was ensuring that the achievements of the past could become lessons for all time:

"Following these men's precedents [Athenians and Spartans] the Romans maintained the principles of warfare in practice and transmitted them in writing. This material, dispersed through various authors and books, Invincible Emperor, you ordered my Mediocrity to summarise, so that neither should

22 *On Skirmishing*, preface, pp. 147–49. For more on Herodotus' claim (*The Histories*, 1.1.0) that the purpose of writing history is to prevent any memory from being obliterated by time: Leonora Neville, "Why Did Byzantines Write History?," in: *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies*, ed. Smilja Marjanović-Dušanić (Belgrade, 2016), pp. 265–276.

23 Compare with *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 82–83; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, p. 42.

24 Al-Ansari, p. 41.

25 Malik Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," *History of Political Thought* 28/2 (2007), 198.

26 Janine Sourdel-Thomine, "Les conseils du Šayh al-Harawī a un prince Ayyūbide," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 17 (1961–1962), 239–40.

boredom arise from excessive detail nor complete confidence be lacking because of brevity."[27]

Vegetius was aware of the difference between writing to educate and to entertain, and he was cautious to place himself firmly in the former literary tradition that required him to assemble material "dispersed through various authors and books".[28] In Maurice's *Strategikon,* the author also draws attention to his research on the topic, which he put down in writing for didactic purposes, "succinctly and simply, drawing in part on ancient authors and in part on our limited experience of active duty, with an eye more to practical utility than to fine words."[29] Further down, he avers not to have broken new ground but, instead, to have "devised a rather modest elementary handbook or introduction for those devoting themselves to generalship," a study which, as he claims, "should facilitate the progress of those who wish to advance to a better and more detailed knowledge of those ancient tactical theories."

In both the works quoted above, we can recognize a number of literary *topoi* – or *clichés* – that correspond to earlier works of the same genre, a fact that indicates their authors' adherence to literary conventions and their familiarity with specific antecedents. For the author of the *Strategikon*, identifying his manual as an introduction (*εἰσαγωγή*) to a topic in his preface conforms to the style of the introductory chapters of two 'classics' of the genre, Onasander's *Strategikos* (AD 49–57/8) and Aelian's *Taktike Theoria* (AD c.106–13), which required the pronouncement of 'authorial humility' and general self-deprecation based on the author's – supposed – limited experience of active duty.[30] These expressions of doubt as to the author's writing ability has been pointed out that are strongly connected with the rules of ancient rhetoric, and they become very common in Latin as well.[31] Both Frontinus and Vegetius

27 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. preface.

28 Nadya Williams, "The blind leading the blind? Civilian writers and audiences of military manuals in the Roman world," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, p. 68.

29 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 8. Compare with Leo VI's *Taktika*, prologue §5–6.

30 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 8 ["μετρίαν πεῖραν ἐπὶ τῶν ἔργων εὑρόντες"]. Compare with Onasander, *Strategikos*, prooemium §3, 7–10; Aelian, *Taktike Theoria*, epistle of Aelian addressed to the Emperor Hadrian; Polyaenus, *Strategemata*, Book I [preface] and Book V [preface]; Leo VI, *Taktika*, prologue §6, p. 7. See also Rance, "Maurice's *Strategicon,*" pp. 222–26.

31 Tore Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces, Studies in Literary Conventions* (Stockholm/Uppsala, 1964), p. 124. On authorial humility: Derek Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: The Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia, PA, 2004). In the *Rhetoric to Alexander* (4th century BC), it is generally emphasized how a speaker can win goodwill or dispel prejudice in a deliberative speech by presenting a modest demeanor: Michael de

describe their works as 'summaries', while the latter does not defer from calling himself a 'mediocrity' (*mediocritatem meam*) compared to the 'authority' (had he dared to imply otherwise) of the Emperor to whom he dedicated his work, a phrase that spread and appealed particularly to Christian authors.[32] Interestingly, Esirî Hasan Ağa also refers to his work as "the observations of this poor man on the measures and preparations for war." This reference confirms Esirî's 'authorial humility', which is certainly a *topos* considering that he had already acquired a reputation as an experienced and learned man while still a junior officer in the Ottoman armourer corps, to the point that Eğinli Mehmed Ağa, then a senior military officer of the janissary corps, often used to consult with him on various military issues.[33]

Modern historians have shown that late antique authors often made extensive use of earlier texts of little contemporary practical value, only so that they demonstrate to their audience that they could – and were willing to – engage with the 'giants from the hallowed antiquity.'[34] In Byzantium as well, every literary work aimed at an educated reader echoed literary models from the past and, unsurprisingly, military manuals were no exception. For example, Syrianos magistros made extensive use of Aelian, the author of Maurice's *Strategikon* demonstrated his knowledge of Aelian's *Taktike Theoria* and Arrian's *Acies contra Alanos*, while the *Taktika* of Leo VI relied primarily on Maurice's *Strategikon* and on relevant passages from Onasander, Aelian and Polyaenus. Yet, what historians have coined as the Byzantine *mimeses* (*μίμησις*: imitation) is no longer considered to be a slavish imitation of ancient models but, rather, an innovative paraphrase of their sources to fit their period and context, so that "the story remains the same, but now becomes another."[35]

Brauw, "The Parts of the Speech," in: *A Companion to Greek Rhetoric*, ed. Ian Worthington (London, 2007), p. 193.

32 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, Book I [preface], p. 3; Vegetius, *Epitome*, Book I [preface], pp. 1–2; Book I. 8, p. 10; Book III [preface], p. 62; Janson, *Latin Prose Prefaces,* p. 125.

33 Georgios Theotokis, Aysel Yildiz, "Diffusion of military knowledge in the 17th century Ottoman Empire: the case of Esirî Hasan Aga's "Advices to Commanders and Soldiers", in: *War and Conflict in the Mediterranean*, eds. G. Theotokis and A. Yildiz (Athens, 2018), pp. 108–15.

34 See the introduction and the following contributions in Chlup and Whately (eds.), *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*: Hans Michael Schellenberg, "The limited source value of works of military literature," pp. 39–54; Williams, "The blind leading the blind?," pp. 55–77. See also David Whitehead, "Fact and fantasy in Greek military writers," *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48 (2008), 139–155.

35 Ingela Nilsson, "The Same Story, but Another, A Reappraisal of Literary Imitation in Byzantium," in: *Imitatio – Aemulatio – Variatio, Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposiums zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur* (*Wien, 22.–25. Oktober 2008*), ed.

Along these lines, Haldon has explained that "to argue that Leo [VI] was merely a compiler and an imitator both misrepresents and misunderstands Leo's text and to some extent his intentions," although he adds, "Leo's description of the tactical military organization of the provincial armies completely ignores [contemporary] developments."[36] Likewise, in his edition of the (c. 930s) *Sylloge Taktikorum*, Chatzelis considered in detail the author's adaptation of Onasander, Polyaenus and Julius Africanus, to conclude that "its innovations paint the picture of an army which has some similarities with the LT [Leo's *Taktika*], but at the same time was totally different," calling the *Sylloge* "one of the most innovative military manuals the Byzantine world produced."[37] McGeer also demonstrated that Nikephoros Phokas, the author of the (c. 969) *Praecepta Militaria*, "combined existing tactical precepts with his own experience and observations, in the light of which he retained, modified or rejected the instructions of his predecessors."[38] Finally, I also drew heavily on the military manuals of the tenth century, considering them side by side with the surviving narrative sources and earlier *taktika*, to show how Byzantine armies adapted to the tactical challenges presented by their Arab opponents during the mid-tenth century Byzantine expansion in the East.[39] In my view, the manuals of the tenth century clearly reflect a number of significant contemporary changes in the tactical structure and deployment of the Byzantine armies – both infantry and cavalry – in the operational theatres of eastern Anatolia, northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria.

Reference to the 'ancients' was paramount for the authors of *taktika*, not only because it gave prestige and authority to the information they provided, but also because it allowed for the necessary literary 'show-off' of their education.[40] On top of that, statements of authorial modesty were also necessary in a

---

by A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (Vienna, 2010), pp. 195–208. See also Michael Bartusis, "The Function of Archaizing in Byzantium," *Byzantinoslavica* 56 (1995), 271–78; John Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 12–19.

36 Haldon, *Commentary*, chapter 2 [quotations from pp. 52–3 and p. 82]. Compare with Meredith L. D. Riedel, *Leo VI and the transformation of Byzantine Christian identity: writings of an unexpected emperor* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 4–5 and chapter 2.

37 Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, pp. 72–84.

38 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 181–88.

39 Chapters 7 and 8 of my *Byzantine Military Tactics*.

40 For the regular education in Byzantium and the basic handbooks on Greek rhetorical theory that were taught as "preliminary exercises": Elizabeth Jeffreys, "Rhetoric," in: *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, pp. 828–33; Antonios Markopoulos, "Education," in: *Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, pp. 785–95; Roueché, "The rhetoric of Kekaumenos," pp. 28–37.

culture where self-promotion was disliked or suspected.[41] And because literary *kainotomia* (*καινοτομία*: novelty) was generally shunned, anyone who wished to make a contribution to the 'art of war' besides pleasing an audience of military novices had to 'justify' his innovations, either as 'minor' (even if they were not) additions to the established practices, or by explaining the obsolete nature of previous practices that necessitated these innovations.[42] A typical example of the former literary 'strategy' is Kekaumenos' advice to the general: "The people who have written on the subject of The General have laid down that, if the army is defeated, it should not go out to battle again for three seasons; and they ruled well on this … But I tell you, that if you are defeated …"[43] For the latter literary 'strategy', we have Nikephoros Phokas' brief historical comparison between the infantry formations and depth of the phalanx of his time (mid-10th c.), and that of the Macedonian phalanx. Nikephoros was fully aware that his recommendation of a seven-man deep phalanx ran counter to the formation tactics of Alexander's Macedonian phalanx, but he justified his recommendation by pointing out that in his time "this type of phalanx is impractical [*ἄχρηστος*]."[44]

Moreover, the evidence is clear that many of the authors of the *taktika* and the soldiers who read and construed them as repositories of knowledge did not regard these works as definitive, exhaustive or preclusive. In fact, these manuals allowed for a great degree of discretion in the field that would have encouraged the soldiers to combine both 'theoretical' knowledge with the lessons drawn from their own experience. Kekaumenos' pertinent point reads:

"Devise what you need yourself, as well – not only what you have learned and heard of from the ancients … Don't say; 'It wasn't handed down to us by the

41 A great analysis of the standard practice for Byzantine historians to claim authorial humility: Leonora Neville, *Anna Komnene: the life and work of a medieval historian* (New York, NY, 2016), pp. 24–41.

42 Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, pp. 88–94; McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, pp. 187–88. Rance deals extensively with this issue in: "Maurice's Strategicon and 'the Ancients'".

43 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 70–71. Other examples in pp. 56–57, 58–59. Compare with Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 57, 93; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §32; Leo VI, *Taktika*, IV. §57–63; VI. §25–3; *On Strategy*, §16, pp. 54–55; *On Tactics*, §1, pp. 246–47; Al-Ansari, *A Muslim Manual of War*, pp. 41–42; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 198]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," p. 231 [§19].

44 McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, p. 182. Compare with Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 23–25, 27–28; Leo VI, *Taktika*, prologue §6, VII. §63, XIV. §98; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §35.3–4; *On Tactics*, §32, pp. 326–27; Esirî Hasan b. Şeyh Hüseyin, *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel* (Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Koleksiyonu no. 803) p. 386. For Machiavelli, "A Macedonian phalanx was not otherwise than is a battalion of Swiss today": *Art of War*, II. 18, II. 144.

ancients.' I tell you that human nature possesses innate cunning and wisdom; just as those very ancients invented their devices; you make your own discovery yourself and win a victory."[45]

The point of drafting a military manual for posterity becomes more apparent considering the different periods when such works were compiled which, in many cases, was during times of intense military activity, when aggressive policies of expansion or defensive wars necessitated the writing of manuals for obvious reasons. It is a common trait for the authors of these manuals, therefore, to express a general feeling of apprehension, coupled with a vivid language of lamentation about the neglect of the 'military matters' during their times, while they readily blame their contemporaries for not consulting previous treatises on military matters. All of the authors were mindful that they lived in a period of change and, at times, one of anxiety over modernization/change, failure to follow which would inevitably lead to the demise of the state. In some cases, this feeling can be justified based on the geo-political and social developments of the time; in others, it was simply a stereotypical expression of 'rhetorical pessimism', employed to draw attention to the socio-political need for these works.[46]

The first 'historical lament' over the *negligentia* of the current military affairs among the young comes from a man who had a profound influence in the Latin language. Acting as defence counsel for former governors accused of atrocities, Cicero's first speech (c. 69BC) in support of Marcus Fonteius, governor of Transalpine Gaul, came at a time when the Romans were consolidating their control of that province and simultaneously fighting a bitter war in the Iberian Peninsula:

"There has been a greater abundance of such men [experienced in war] in the republic than there is now [...] What, then, ought you [judges] to do now, when military studies ["studiis militaribus"] have become obsolete among our youth, and when our best men and our greatest generals have been taken from us, partly by age, and partly by the dissensions of the state and the ill fortune of the republic?"[47]

We should keep in mind that Cicero would also serve as a proconsul in Cilicia in 51BC, defending that crucial Roman province from the expanding

45 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 64–65. See also pp. 72–73. Compare with Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 8, 126; *On Skirmishing*, preface, pp. 146–47; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 199]; Al-Ansari, *A Muslim Manual of War*, p. 110.

46 Kolias, "Η Πολεμική Τακτική των Βυζαντινών," p. 158; Rance, "Maurice's Strategicon and 'the Ancients'," p. 224 (n. 23).

47 M. Tullius Cicero, *For Marcus Fonteius*, 42.

Parthians. Furthermore, Cicero's letter to his friend (written in 50BC), Lucius Papirius Paetus, reveals Cicero's access to a lost *taktikon*, written by a Roman author at a period when tactics against the Parthian threat were a hot topic.[48]

The critical state of the Byzantine economy in the closing years of the sixth century, combined with the empire's engagement in two operational theatres of war in the Balkans and in Mesopotamia, would certainly have caused alarm and great consternation in the empire. Yet, the evidence is inconclusive as to what degree 'the military affairs had fallen, so to speak, into oblivion.'[49] But that does not negate the fact that Heraclius came to power in the midst of a serious political and military situation that would have looked bleak to the author of the *Strategikon*, and his lament over the 'military *negligentia*' of his times could have been a rhetorical *topos*, especially given the fact that it was copied almost verbatim in the *Taktika* of Leo VI some three centuries later:

"The state of the armed forces has been neglected for a long time and has fallen so completely into oblivion, so to speak, that those who assume the command of troops do not understand even the most obvious matters and run into all sorts of difficulties. Sometimes the soldiers are blamed for lack of training, sometimes the generals for inexperience."[50]

In his treatise *On Strategy* (c. AD875–86), Syrianos magistros writes a comment both disconcerting and critical of the lack of contemporary experience and knowledge of the different phalanx formations, "Since very few people nowadays have any practical knowledge of tactics."[51] The increased military activity on land and at sea during the reign of Emperor Basil I could explain both Syrianos' aforementioned critical comment and the necessity for a military *compendium* (treatises on land and naval warfare, and on exhorting troops in battle) by the end of the ninth century.[52] However, we should also consider that Syrianos' discussion on tactics in the *On Strategy* is – largely – drawn from Aelian, who based his *Taktike Theoria* on the art of war developed in the late

48 Murray Dahm, "The lost Tactica of Lucius Papirius Paetus," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, pp. 172–82.

49 John F. Haldon, "The Reign of Heraclius. A Context for Change?," in: *The Reign of Heraclius (610–641): Crisis and Confrontation*, ed. G. J. Reinink and B. H. Stolte (Leuven, 2002), p. 2; idem, *Byzantium In the seventh century: the transformation of a culture* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 34–40; Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army, 284–1081* (Stanford, CA, 1995), pp. 19, 93–98.

50 *Strategikon*, preface, p. 8; Leo VI, *Taktika*, prologue §5, pp. 4–5. See also Rance, "Maurice's Strategicon and 'the Ancients'," p. 224; John F. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on The Taktika of Leo VI* (Cambridge, MA, 2014), pp. 124–25.

51 *On Strategy*, §15, p. 47.

52 Theotokis and Sidiropoulos, *Byzantine Military Rhetoric*, pp. 11–21.

Hellenistic period, taking the Macedonian phalanx as his model.[53] His comment, therefore, could have been an opportunity for a literary "show-off" of his knowledge on 'ancient' phalanx formations, and of how much his writing was guided by tradition as well as originality.

Perhaps the most famous 'complainant' among military historians is Vegetius who, in a very somber mood, accentuates the dereliction of the military of his time several times in his manual, a declining state of affairs which broke with the glorious past of the Roman Empire that he wished to resurrect as part of the empire's identity.[54] Vegetius' emphasis on the 'military *negligentia*' of his times plays well with his arduous contribution on the state of affairs – his *Epitome*, and he is keen to emphasize that his authority as author is based on his thorough research of earlier authorities and, most importantly, the emperor's tasking of Vegetius with writing the manual in the first place. We read, "Neglect due to long years of peace has destroyed the tradition of this subject. Whom can you find able to teach what he himself has not learned? We must therefore recover the ancient custom from histories and (other) books."[55] And guess who was the 'right man' to undertake that task! Yet, Vegetius' hyperbolic[56] comment about the lack of study of military affairs of his time, and the accompanying lack of military training, could only have been a careful criticism not of the reigning emperor – probably Theodosius the Great – but of his predecessors, reminding everyone that a well-managed army could benefit the future Roman generations. In Vegetius' mind, he had identified a weakness in the Roman military establishment, and his prescribed remedy was a return to the (idealized) knowledge of earlier 'authorities'.

An experienced soldier who was highly critical of his contemporaries about the socio-political downturn of his time was Kekaumenos,[57] who composed his text – probably – between 1075 and 1078. The outcome of the Battle of Manzikert in August 1071, combined with the political ambitions of the Norman

53 Carl Zuckerman, "The Military Compendium of Syrianus Magister," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 40 (1990), 217–19. See: Aelian, *Taktike Theoria*, §7–9.

54 Williams, "The blind leading the blind?," p. 68.

55 Vegetius, *Epitome*, I. 8; I. 20; I. 21; I. 28; III. 10.

56 Partly rhetorical hyperbole, partly true comment: Stephen Morillo, Jeremy Black, Paul Lococo, *War in world history: society, technology, and war from ancient times to the present. Volume 1, to 1500* (New York, 2009), pp. 119–24.

57 Michael Attaleiates, Michael Psellos, and Kekaumenos complain openly about the erroneous state policy of withholding payments, neglecting the army, and converting military service into cash: Dimitris Tsougkarakis, "Η αυτοκρατορία σε κρίση και η οπτική των σύγχρονων: μια ανάγνωση των μαρτυριών" ["The empire in crisis and the view-point of the contemporaries: a reading of the sources"], in: *The Empire in Crisis (?), Byzantium in the 11th Century (1025–1081)*, ed. V. N. Vlyssidou (Athens, 2003) pp. 275–290.

renegade mercenary leader, Roussel de Bailleuil, ushered in an element of chaos in the geo-political history of the Empire in the 1070s. Add to that the explosive socio-political situation with the Patzinaks in the Paristrion that followed the *vestarches* Nestor's rebellion in 1074,[58] we can understand the following:

"From what cause do such things usually come about? I am sure that it is [Patzinak invasion of Romania] especially thanks to the inexperience of the frontier-commanders. For, because they have no experience of military knowledge or wisdom, and don't reckon up what is likely to result from this and what from that, but direct affairs without experience, and write and say to the emperors things to please them …"[59]

A final example worth examining here is that of Esirî Hasan Ağa's 'Advice to Commanders and Soldiers', which is a part of his World History titled *Standards of States and Probe of Nations*. His firm belief in the corruption of Ottoman society and in the ignorance of the science of war (*ilm-i cenk*) among the ranks of the Ottoman army is clearly reflected in his explanation of military defeats, like that of Vienna in 1683. Esirî readily blames the Sultans for appointing officers based on networks of patronage rather than merit, and he is even quicker to point the finger at undisciplined and greedy soldiers for harassing, plundering, and looting innocent people, especially during the Beç campaign of 1687.[60] However, Ottoman intellectuals of the seventeenth and early eighteenth century considered military problems as symptoms of the degeneration of the whole of society and its institutions; hence, they studied them in a more general perspective, rather than focusing on a return to the (idealized) system of the old. Therefore, instead of looking to revive the old military literature and consult old sources, they seem to resort to advice literature instead.[61] Esirî was no exception, although his work is clearly a military manual rather than a mirror for princes. His formulation of the corruption of the entire Ottoman society, as it was reflected in the decadence that plagued the Ottoman army of his time, led him to turn his attention to the ordinary soldiers and their commanders. He strongly criticized their motives for going to war, and emphasized the significance of *ghaza*: "Participation in war should be for the sincere

58 Marek Meško, "Pecheneg groups in the Balkans (ca. 1053–1091) according to the Byzantine sources," in: *The Steppe Lands and the World beyond Them*, ed. F. Curta and B. Maleon (Iasi, 2013) pp. 188–90.

59 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 76–77. Compare with an interesting passage from: Michael Attaleiates, *The History*, trans. A. Kaldellis and D. Krallis (Cambridge MA, 2012) pp. 209–11.

60 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion of military knowledge," p. 119.

61 P. Fodor, "State and Society, Crisis and Reform in the 15th–17th Century Ottoman Mirror for Princes," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarium Hungarica* 40/2–3 (1986), 217–40.

intention of fighting, not just for salary, a *tımar*, and promotions … A real soldier endures hot and cold, mud and dry, hunger and thirst and never gives up and does his best to perform his tasks."[62] He also offered simple and practical advice on battle tactics, weapons, and siege techniques in a period when – as he often acknowledged – the nature of war was changing beyond recognition.[63]

3 On Strategy

3.1 *Mould a Leader/Traits of Leadership*

"A ship cannot cross the sea without a helmsman, nor can one defeat an enemy without tactics and strategy."[64] Despite the extraordinary attention that modern armies – and many other institutions in our society – pay to the subject of leadership, the answer to the question, "What makes a good leader?" is neither simple nor universal. Yet, for the authors of *taktika* that lacked the meticulous screening process and the rigorous psychological testing of military cadets that modern academies apply, they assigned great importance on the qualities of a commander in their manuals, with many notable parallels that are drawn – largely – from Onasander's *General* (I & II).

Because the noun *δύναμις* (strength) has often been associated with physical power since Homeric times,[65] the defining traits or features of the body of a commander have always been – instinctively – linked to imposing size and shape that, in turn, indicated strength and vigour. For Leo VI, the general "must, inasmuch as possible, keep his body well-looking (*εὐπρεπῆ*) and strong (*ῥωμαλέον*)," while Vegetius recommended that a centurion "should be chosen for great strength (*magnis viribus*) and tall stature (*procera statura*)".[66] Moreover, a commander's overall appearance in armour and the condition of his military equipment was also of great concern, as it reflected directly on the quality of the equipment and the overall discipline of his soldiers and, on that matter, it was a testament to the army's fighting prowess and willingness to engage in combat. According to Vegetius, "the glitter of arms strikes very great fear in the

62 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion of military knowledge," p. 133.

63 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion of military knowledge," pp. 123–24.

64 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 64; Leo VI, *Taktika*, prologue §9. On the personality and the desirable qualities of a leader in Late Antiquity: Łukasz Różycki, *Battlefield emotions in late antiquity: a study of fear and motivation in Roman military treatises* (Leiden, 2021), pp. 172–216.

65 *Odyssey*, 2. 39; 20. 237; *Iliad*, 8.294; 13. 787.

66 Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §18; Vegetius, *Epitome*, II. 14 [for the 'tribune': II. 12]. Compare with Onasander, *The General*, I. 1; *On Strategy*, §4; Machiavelli, *Art of War*, I. 203–4.

enemy … Who can believe a soldier warlike, when his inattention has fouled his arms with mould and rust?"[67]

The social background of the commander was, also, of paramount importance, and we clearly see a tendency in our sources to favour meritocracy over wealth and socio-political networking. Maurice is adamant that "The best general is not the man of noble family, but the man who can take pride in his own deeds," while Leo also seems concerned about the 'hi-jacking' of the military commands by up-and-coming members of great aristocratic families like the Doukai, Phokades and Argyroi.[68] For that reason, making appointments based on an individual's merits rather than patronage served two purposes; first, it prevented corruption and factionalism in the military, something that Esirî heavily criticized in his work; second, it allowed for the selection and training of good recruits.[69]

The general traits and aspects of the character of the (ideal)[70] commander take up a substantial part of most of our *taktika*, which is – of course – something to be expected because "The general should be a model and a pattern to everyone".[71] Foremost in every author's mind was the commander's intelligence and "practical wisdom", which they emphasize at the beginning of every section on the topic.[72] In addition, a leader had to be temperate and modest both in his appearance and in his everyday life, and to share in the daily burdens and hardships with his soldiers in order to win their respect rather than to provoke envy and – possibly – hatred that could lead to insubordination.[73] He should also be discreet as a man and – in a very Christian

67 Vegetius, *Epitome*, II. 14. Compare with Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 9, 75–76; Leo VI, *Taktika*, V. §11, XIV. §98; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 86–87.

68 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 87; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §15–17; Haldon, *Commentary*, pp. 131–32. Compare with Onasander, *The General*, I. 17–25 & II. 1. The author of the *Sylloge* does not preclude a rich general from command if he behaves in a moral manner: *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1. 36–37.

69 Vegetius, *Epitome*, I. 7, II. 3; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §83; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 246–49; Theotokis, Yildiz, *Diffusion of Military Knowledge*, pp. 121, 131.

70 Most features of an ideal commander stemmed from promotional literature or biases in historical narratives: Chatzelis, *Byzantine Military Manuals*, p. 103.

71 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 86–87.

72 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 23; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §1, §7; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 200–1]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," p. 230 [§16]; Al-Ansari, p. 70; Esirî, p. 387a, 387.

73 Polyaenus, *Stratagems*, 8.23.23, 33; Frontinus, *Strategemata*, IV. I. 11; IV. III. 1–15; IV. VI. 1–4; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 9, 79, 88; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §5–6; XX. §5, §211; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.4, §1.7–8, §1.19; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 84–85; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 200]; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 43–6; Esirî, pp. 388–89. Compare with Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 77.13,1. On the importance of the behaviours

fashion – "not so dragged down by physical pleasures".[74] On top of that, he should avoid taking bribes as these "can bring destruction down on his army," and demonstrate to everyone that he is a soldier of high moral standards.[75] Yet, he should also plan his strategy "like a good wrestler, feinting in one direction in an effort to deceive his opponent."[76] Like a good father, he should be a strict disciplinarian, but also fair and generous to his soldiers.[77] In fact, he should be a father himself for obvious reasons,[78] and he should be able to "explore carefully how soldiers are feeling on the actual day they are going to fight," so that he will be able to dissuade any fear that may render them numb during the battle or, even, "to postpone it [battle] if the experienced warriors are afraid of fighting."[79]

Moreover, a commander should be vigilant and cautious, but also calm and patient, especially when dealing with important matters while campaigning in foreign lands.[80] Yet, courage and boldness are also paramount in a successful

---

of modern leaders in influencing the extent to which various stressors soldiers experience are related to different types of strains: Thomas Watson Britt et al., "How Leaders Can Influence the Impact That Stressors Have on Soldiers," *Military medicine* 169 (2004), 541–45.

74 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, x. 24; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 9; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §1–3.

75 Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §83; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.24–26; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 66–67; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," p. 231 [§18]; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 59–64.

76 The 'wrestler' metaphor is common in Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 89; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.13–15; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §124. Compare with Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 9–10; Al-Ansari, p. 70–71.

77 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, IX. 45; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3. 1. 6; Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.1–15, 5.8.12–15; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 26; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 9, 80–81, 86, 91; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.5–6, §1.38; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §4–6, XX. §55, XX. §211; Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 66–67; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 203]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," p. 230 [§16]; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 46–50. On the balance between the 'carrot and the stick': A.D. Lee, "Morale and the Roman Experience of Battle," in: *Battle in Antiquity*, ed. Alan B. Lloyd (Swansea, 2009) pp. 199–218 (emphasized in pp. 203–5).

78 *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.32–34; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §9–10.

79 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 12. On the issue of fear in the battlefield and how to assess and suppress it: Różycki, *Battlefield emotions*, 61–67; Richard Holmes, *Acts of War, The Behavior of Men in Battle* (London, 1989) 136–140.

80 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, III. 5; VIII. 12; XII. 22; Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3. 1. 6; Polyaenus, *Stratagems*, Book VII [Preface]; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 6; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 9, 79–80; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.9; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §4–5; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 200]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," pp. 230–31 [§17]; Al-Ansari, p. 70–71; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 86–7.

general.[81] He should also be willing to learn new things,[82] be secretive[83] about his plans and unwavering[84] in his decisions. It is also necessary to be a good public speaker, to inspire confidence in his troops and raise their morale in adverse times.[85] Like a good strategist, he should also be able to "manage not only matters of immediate concern, but must also take thought for the future".[86] Finally, a great commander to work with/for should be "prudent in counsel, and courteous to his associates," although Maurice cautions that "for what should be done seek the advice of many; for what you will actually do take council with only a few trustworthy people; then off by yourself alone decide on the best and most helpful plan to follow, and stick to it."[87]

3.2 *Know Your Enemy*

The Byzantines encountered many different nations on the battlefield during their long history.[88] The surveys of foreign peoples in their *taktika* amply illustrate their readiness not only to scrutinize and evaluate the tactics and fighting abilities of their enemies, but also to learn from them when necessary and adapt their tactics to the requirements of each operational theatre.[89] For Maurice, "the purpose of this [XI] chapter is to enable those who intend to wage war against these peoples to prepare themselves properly [*ἱκανῶς ἁρμόζεσθαι*]."[90] In fact, Kaegi Jr. argued that it was military manuals, namely the *Strategikon* of Maurice, which proved most useful to Heraclius and his advisers in his military planning against the Persians, much more than the works of Prokopios,

81 Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3. 1. 6; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 23, 79–80; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.10–11; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 201]; Al-Ansari, p. 70–71.

82 Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, 3. 1. 6; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 91; Leo VI, *Taktika*, IV. §5.

83 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, X. 35; Frontinus, *Strategemata*, I. 1 ["On concealing one's plans"]; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 6.

84 Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 9, 80–81.

85 Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 66, 89; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.12, §1.30; Leo VI, *Taktika*, II. §1, §12; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 203]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," pp. 231–32 [§19]. There is plenty of material about that in Syrianos' *Rhetorica Militaris*, especially §36 and §45.

86 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, XII. 16; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 87; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §117.

87 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 9; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 84–85; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §66; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §1.20; Leo VI, *Taktika*, IV. §4; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," pp. 223–24 [§9]; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 50–3.

88 Anthony Kaldellis, *Ethnography after Antiquity, Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013).

89 Gilbert Dagron, "Ceux d'en face: les peoples étrangers dans les traités militaires byzantins," *Travaux et Mémoires* 10 (1987), 207–32.

90 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 113; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XII. §106, XVIII. §1.

Agathias and Menander.[91] And we have to underline that it was a common trait among most of the authors of the *taktika* discussed so far to display varied interest in the fighting abilities, ideology and institutional framework for war of their nation's neighbours and enemies.

Sun-Tzu wrote that, "if you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."[92] Nine centuries later, the first military treatise that paints a (short) portrait of foreign warriors was Vegetius' *Epitome*. Following Hippocrates' climatic theory of human nature,[93] which supported the belief that physical appearance was transmitted by heredity, and which in turn was determined by climactic and geographical factors, Vegetius' grouping of recruits divided the world into peoples that constituted recruits for the Roman army rather than neighbouring people that threaten the Empire. This was supplemented by stereotypical views about the 'characters' of nations like, the "Germans and the Spaniards are taller and stronger", the "Africans are cunning and easily corrupted", or that the "Greeks are intelligent but effeminate."[94] Frontinus also calls the Spaniards "sturdy soldiers, to be sure, but fighting for others,"[95] who fought with "swiftness characteristic of their race,"[96] while the Africans were – rather – "less powerful [than the Spaniards], but more resolute."[97]

Maurice's *Strategikon* was the first to devote an entire book of the political, social and military organisation of all the nations that bordered the Empire.[98] The author's discussion of the characteristics and tactics of various peoples follows the same structure throughout Book XI, beginning with an introduction to the polity and the social and ethnic divisions of these people, their geographical and ethnological backgrounds, and the usual stereotypical characteristics that we can also see in the *Epitome*. Critical aspect of Maurice's analysis is that he is repeating negative contrasts to stress the difference between the Roman

91 Walter E. Kaegi Jr., *Heraclius: emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 74.

92 Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, §3.18.

93 Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters and Places*, §24. See also Tacitus, *Germany and its Tribes*, §4–5; Jordanes, *The Gothic History*, §3–4. Ammianus' famous account of the Huns is heavily infused with classical ethnographic stereotypes: Ammianus Marcellinus, 31. 2. 1–12. As is his less well-known account of the 'Saracens': 14. 4. 3.

94 Vegetius, *Epitome*, I. 1–2; Machiavelli, *Art of War*, I. 121.

95 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. III. 1.

96 Idem, II. V. 31.

97 Idem, II. III. 1.

98 Łukasz Różycki, "The Strategikon as a source – Slavs and Avars in the eyes of Pseudo-Maurice, current state of research and future research perspectives," *Acta Archaelogica Carpathica* 52 (2017), 109–31.

and their enemies' tactics – they do not attack like X (like the Romans do), but instead they attack like Y (a unique or peculiar tactic):

> They draw up for battle in three equal bodies, centre, right, left, with the centre having up to four hundred additional picked troops. The depth of the formation is not uniform, but they try to draw up the cavalrymen in each company in the first and second line or phalanx and keep the front of the formation even and dense.[99]

The authors of both the *Strategikon* and the *Taktika* were also deeply interested in their enemies' *κρᾶσις*– the physical strength and endurance of warriors in adverse conditions. They built their discussion around the offensive and defensive equipment of the foreign warriors, their camps and battle formations, followed by the identification of weaknesses that each nation eventually displays on the battlefield, and advice on how to take full advantage of them.[100] But although these two manuals were compiled some three centuries apart, and the geo-political conditions had changed, the geographical grouping of the 'foreign nations' into four categories remained; the Persians/Arabs in the East, the Slavs/Bulgars in the Balkans, the Avars/Magyars and other steppe nations in the Black Sea coast, and the Franks-Lombards/Italian Lombards across the Adriatic.

The climatic clichés also stayed the same; for example, Leo's views on the Arabs echo Maurice's comments on the Persians as people who prefer heat and dislike cold and rain because it slackened their bowstrings! Leo repeated this cliché, although he also failed to inform the reader about the 'classified' material that, apparently, left the Byzantine bowstrings intact in similar weather conditions![101] Yet, it is the consideration of the conflict of Christian Byzantium against the forces of Islam, which includes a derogatory (or outright hostile) description of the Muslim faith and a stunning admission of the positive aspects of Muslim recruitment practices, and against the 'brotherly' Christian Bulgars, that sets apart Leo's *Taktika* from its predecessors.[102]

What is striking, however, is the lack of any stereotypical description of the Arabs in the *taktika* commissioned by Nikephoros Phokas – *On Skirmishing* and the *Praecepta Militaria*. Although the author of *On Skirmishing* clearly had no sympathy for the Armenians in the imperial army, and he is keen to highlight their unruliness, both he and Nikephoros painted an image of the Arabs

99 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 114.
100 Detailed discussion in Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics*, pp. 106–12.
101 Riedel, *Leo VI*, pp. 45–46.
102 Idem, pp. 46–49.

as a smart and ingenious enemy, fully capable of injecting fear and confusion into their opponents, who regarded death in battle as a great honour. We read that, "they [Arabs] might make their stand in that very place, unloading the pack animals and throwing up a sort of rampart of all the things lying around, and form up for battle against us. This would cause great difficulty."[103] Both authors were military professionals whose battlefield experience in the operational theatre of Syria and Mesopotamia span many decades and had filled them with great respect for their Arab adversaries.

Although they underline the critical importance of knowing your enemy and the significance of espionage and intelligence in procuring information about one's opponent, Muslim authors of *taktika* are often disappointing in their comments on the fighting abilities and the institutional framework for war of their enemies.[104] There are exceptions, however, as Al-Harthami falls short of examining in detail the characteristics and motivations of different nations (Turks, Arabs, Kurds, Byzantines, Indians, Kharijites), writing – rather – "war is not one thing" and encouraging the general to prepare for war according to the nature of each opponent.[105] No doubt influenced by Leo's *Taktika*, which he was able to read directly in Greek in the many libraries of Mamluk Cairo, Ibn Manglī's twelfth chapter of his *al-Adilla* refers in detail to the fighting tactics of the Franks, Byzantines, Turks, Arabs and Kurds.[106] Finally, we saw that Esirî Hasan Ağa had no express wish to revive old institutions but to catch up on new developments in the field of warfare, a rare view among Ottoman intellectuals of his period. Therefore, he described in detail the greatest enemy of the Ottoman Empire at the time, the Hapsburgs:

"Especially the Austrian and Hungarian wars were famous for being the bloodiest, since these nations are very tricky, expert in firearms (*ateşbaz*) and violent people. Thus, in cases of having entrenchments opposite to the Austrian units or involve in open war, a reasonable strategy is required to fight against them."[107]

Esirî's eagerness to push the Ottomans to adapt to the Hapsburg army's tactical breakthroughs drove him to draw a battle-diagram that demonstrated the

103 *On Skirmishing*, §10 [On the Armenians: §2]. See also *Praecepta Militaria*, 11.93–133.

104 Medieval Muslim travellers, like al-Masʿūdī (893–956) and al-Idrisi (d. 1165), divided the world into seven latitudinal zones or 'climes' and assigned different stereotypic qualities to the people that inhabited them: Carole Hillenbrand, *The Crusades, Islamic Perspectives* (Edinburgh, 1999), chapter 5.

105 Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 203].

106 Tarek M. Muhammad, "Ibn Manglī between the Arab and Byzantine Worlds: New Evidence," *Journal of Medieval and Islamic History* 3 (2003), 36–37 (& n. 75).

107 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion of military knowledge," pp. 116–17.

changing features in the battle-formations of his time and was, indeed, material evidence of the 'horizontal' transmission of military knowledge. Through his military connections with the head of the janissary corps and the Grand Vizier, he insisted that the Ottoman commanders should take his advice and the diagram seriously into consideration.

3.3 *Avoid Your Enemy*

In the light of the debate on the nature of medieval strategy, and the subsequent emergence of the theory of "Vegetian strategy," a theory that places particular emphasis on the logistical constraints, the centrality of fortifications, and the subsequent avoidance of battles in medieval warfare,[108] we read some intriguing views on 'battle-avoidance' by the authors of our *taktika*. For Esirî Hasan Ağa, a commander should resort to pitched battle only if he has exhausted all other prospects of conflict resolution, because "warfare is a dangerous, perilous and a risky undertaking."[109] This is an attitude that bears great similarities to the western European and Byzantine worlds, including their Muslim enemies: they did not risk taking to the battlefield unless the odds were overwhelmingly stacked in their favour.[110] We read:

> It is preferable to subdue an enemy by famine, raids and terror, than in battle where *fortune* ['fortuna'] tends to have more influence than bravery."[111]
>
> "To try simply to overpower the enemy in the open, hand to hand and face to face, even though you might appear to win, is an enterprise which is very *risky* ["της τυχούσης"] and can result in serious harm. Apart from extreme emergency, it is ridiculous to try to gain victory which is too costly and brings only empty glory.[112]

---

108 John Gillingham, "William the Bastard at War," in: *Studies in Medieval History Presented to R. Allen Brown*, ed. C. Harper-Hill et al. (Woodbridge, 1989), pp. 141–58; idem, "Richard I and the Science of War in the Middle Ages," in: *War and Government in the Middle Ages*, ed. J. Gillingham and J. C. Holt (Woodbridge, 1984), pp. 78–91; idem, "'Up with Orthodoxy!' In Defence of Vegetian Warfare," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 2 (2004), 149–58; Stephen Morillo, "Battle Seeking: The Context and Limits of Vegetian Strategy," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2003), 21–41; Clifford J. Rogers, "The Vegetian "Science of Warfare" in the Middle Ages," *Journal of Medieval Military History* 1 (2003), 1–19.

109 Esirî, p. 386a.

110 I provide many more examples from primary sources in Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics*, pp. 31–35.

111 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 26; Frontinus, *Strategemata*, IV. VII. 1.

112 Maurice, *Strategikon*, Book VII [preface]. Compare with Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §51. See also XVII. §4, XX. §53; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §7, §8, §14, "the *unpredictability* of battle and

The rarity of battles in the pre-industrial era comes as a direct result of a hugely influential factor: chance! Although the outcome of a battle does not necessarily prove the social, economic or technological superiority of a 'military culture' over another, other things such as an accidental arrow, unexpected rainfall, fog or a royal horse running astray in the battlefield, could upset the turn of events. This is what Clausewitz called "*friction*, which cannot, as in mechanics, be reduced to a few points, is everywhere in contact with chance, and brings about effects that cannot be measured."[113] The element of chaos introduced into a geo-political conflict by a pitched battle was also emphasized some four and half centuries earlier by Al-Ansari:

> he who goes out to engage the enemy … even if Victory helped him and Conquest accompanied him, then in his dangerous adventures involving hateful calamities and the biting of swords and the pain of wounds and the severity of wars and the contention of warriors is the extreme of hardship and the limit of peril, for he does not know whether the victory, after the hazarding of these hardships, will be to him or to his enemy.[114]

Although they came from different (military) *subcultures*, or component segments, of the same *Big* (*military*) *culture* of the Mediterranean basin,[115] most of the authors mentioned so far praise the use of diplomacy,[116] the paying of subsidies,[117] and the employment of stratagems,[118] craft, wiles, bribery and "other means" to deceive the enemy and bring back the army with as few

---

the *uncertainty* of victory" in §19.1; *On Strategy*, §33; *On Skirmishing*, §19–20; *Praecepta Militaria*, IV.195–207.

113 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. M. Howard and P. Paret (Princeton, NJ, 1989), p. 120.

114 Al-Ansari, *A Muslim Manual of War*, p. 59; Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 200].

115 Stephen Morillo, "A General Typology of Transcultural Wars – the Early Middle Ages and Beyond," in: *Transcultural Wars*, ed. by Hans-Henning Kortüm (Berlin, 2010), pp. 29–42.

116 Jonathan Shepard, "Information, disinformation and delay in Byzantine diplomacy," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 10 (1985), 233–93. See also the collection of papers in *Byzantine Diplomacy*, ed. S. Franklin and J. Shepard (Aldershot, 1992).

117 Nikolaos Oikonomides, "Το όπλο του χρήματος," [Money as a weapon], in: *Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*), pp. 261–8.

118 On the importance of stratagems in Ancient Greek and Roman military tradition, which was inherited by the Byzantines: J. E. Lendon, "The rhetoric of combat: Greek military theory and Roman culture in Julius Caesar's battle descriptions," *Classical Antiquity* 18 (1999), 273–329 (mainly, 290–5).

casualties as possible. It was, after all, considered absurd to lose experienced soldiers and money to draw a campaign to a violent and uncertain end.

> Strive to wear down your enemy with ruses and artifices and ambushes, and last of all, if it is inevitable, fight.[119]

> There is no disputing that deception and stratagems in war are required both by law and by reason.[120]

Considering the constraints set on pre-modern commanders by resources, transport technology, and geography, the advocates of the so-called 'New Military History'[121] stress the predominance of sieges, raids, skirmishes and ambushes rather than pitched battles in warfare in the pre-modern period. For Esirî Hasan Ağa, therefore, a numerically inferior army could easily lock themselves in a fortified position and harass the aggressor, although then they would have to endure the "miserable conditions inside [the fortifications]," and the fact that the defenders would have to pin their hopes on a relief army or face surrender and/or death. For the invader/aggressor, Esirî rather considers a pitched battle to be a better course of action than a protracted siege that would bog down an army in enemy territory and far from its supply bases.[122] Much of the warfare in the Levant during the Crusades conformed to this pattern, with the apparent exception of Saladin's battle seeking strategy of the 1180s.[123] Likewise, Byzantine defensive strategy from the mid-seventh to the mid-tenth century was based largely on garrisoning key fortified positions, ambushes, denial of supplies, shadowing the enemy, and counter-raids.[124] Hence, we read the Byzantine chronicler Theophanes' description of Emperor

---

119 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, pp. 54–55, 62–63. Compare with Sun-Tzu, *The Art of War*, §3.2–7; Maurice, *Strategikon*, Book IV and pp. 65, 72, 80–86, 90–93, 102; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XII. §107, §108; XVII. §2, §4, §59; XX. §51, §53, §86, §119; *On Strategy*, §33; *On Skirmishing*, §19; *Praecepta Militaria*, IV.195–207. Theodore Palaeologus acknowledges three categories of war: the western-style *chevauchée*, the war of deception, and the generalized form of open conflict: *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 80, 84–5.

120 Al-Ansari, *A Muslim Manual of War*, p. 59 and Books Four and Seven. Compare with Al-Harthami [in: Mufti, "The Art of Jihad," p. 200]; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," pp. 232–34 [§20]; Esirî, p. 391a.

121 Stephen Morillo, *What is Military History?*, (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 4–5.

122 Esirî, p 387a–388a. Compare with the *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §19.1.

123 Steve Tibble, *The Crusader Armies, 1099–1187* (New Haven, CT/London, 2018), pp. 51–64.

124 Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics*, chapter 2.

Leo IV's preparations to defend Anatolia against a large-scale Abbasid invasion in 778:

> The Emperor [Leo IV] arranged with his *strategoi* that they should not meet the Arabs in the field, but secure the fortresses and bring in men to guard them. He also sent officers to each fortress, who were to take three thousand picked men to follow the Arabs closely so that their raiding party could not disperse. Even before this they were to burn whatever fodder was to be found for the Arabs' horses.[125]

4 On Tactics

4.1 *Fighting Your Enemy*

Two essential parameters that have played a critical role in the planning and outcome of every battle is the time and place where it takes place. For the experienced generals that Frontinus used as his *exempla*, the idea behind their strategy of choosing the right time for a battle was to postpone the clash until the end of the day in order to keep the enemy waiting in formation so that they grow weary, hungry and lose heart.[126] We read, "At Chaeronea, Philip purposely prolonged the engagement, mindful that his own soldiers were seasoned by long experience, while the Athenians were ardent but untrained, and impetuous only in the charge."[127] For Frontinus, therefore, Philip's strategy clearly portrays both his experience and his knowledge of the enemy. To stack the odds in his favour, therefore, a general should attack either before the enemy is in battle order, like Lucullus at Tigranocerta (69BC),[128] during lunchtime or while the enemy is foraging, like Iphicrates,[129] during the night, like Pompey against

125 Theophanes Confessor, *Chronicle*, pp. 624–5. Similar strategy followed by the *Domestikos of the Scholae* Christopher against Chrysocheir, the leader of the Paulicians of Tephrike, in 872: Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 135; Compare with Frontinus, *Strategemata*, I. III. 5 [Livy, XXVIII. 2–3]; *On Skirmishing*, preface, §14, §20, §21. See also Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 111; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XV. § 58; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §55.3; *On Tactics*, §21; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 89–91.

126 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 1–4, 13; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 10–11; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 65, 150; *On Strategy*, §33; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XII. §106, XIII. §8, XIV. §71, XVIII. §27; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §19.2, §84; Sourdel-Thomine, "Conseils," pp. 232–34 [§20]; Al-Ansari, p. 78; Esirî, p. 388–89.

127 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 9; Polyaenus, *Stratagems*, 4.2.7.

128 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 14; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 86; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §101.

129 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 5–6; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 22; *On Strategy*, §33; *On Skirmishing*, §9; Esirî, p. 386.

Mithridates (66 BC),[130] or take advantage of their religious beliefs and superstitions, like Vespasian's attack against the Jews on Sabbath (AD70).[131]

According to Leo's *Taktika*, "You will be stronger, O general, against your enemies if you carefully observe the nature of the seasons and the places and the enemy you are fighting. In doing this, you apply your own skill and methodology to deal with each situation."[132] Good intelligence, reconnaissance of the battleground and knowledge of the enemy would offer the general the best chances in different battle situations; observe and adapt are the key verbs here! The same applies to Frontinus' *exempla*, and the reader is left under no illusions as to how critical it is to take advantage of the terrain against your enemy. The army who dominates the higher ground is in a favoured position, like the Byzantine commanders who fought the Paulicians of Tephrike at the pass of Bathyryax in 872/78.[133] If the enemy's phalanx is stronger when deployed in extended front, use a confined space to give battle. The same applies to when the enemy outnumbers you, so that you deny him his numerical advantage because of poor manoeuvrability in a narrow space; Tzimiskes observed that the battlefield was narrow at Dorystolon (971), giving the numerically inferior Rhus a great advantage.[134] It is imperative to use topographical features like marshes, rivers or hollows to obstruct the advance of enemy units, especially those on horseback, again in an attempt to hinder their manoeuvrability and to preclude any encircling attempts.[135] Obstacles like felled trees and/or caltrops were also deployed, like when Alexios Komnenos dispersed caltrops in front of the centre of his formation at Arta (1082) to thwart the Norman cavalry attack.[136] Exploiting the weather conditions like wind, rain, sandstorm and intense heat

130 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 12; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 94–96; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XVII. §11–25; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §48; Al-Ansari, pp. 93–94.

131 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. I. 16–17.

132 Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §60; epilogue §46. See also *Rhetorica Militaris*, §27.2, §39.7–9.

133 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. II. 2–4; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 13; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XIV. §9; Al-Ansari, pp. 95–96. For the Battle of Bathyryax: Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 136.

134 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. II. 1, 13–14; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 13, 26; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 84–86; *On Strategy*, §33; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §64, §96, §189; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §23.6; Al-Ansari, pp. 99–103; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, pp. 72–3. Compare with Onasander, *General*, XXI. For the Battle of Dorystolon: Skylitzes, *Synopsis*, p. 291.

135 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. II. 6, 10–11; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 13, 26; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 94; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XIV. §24, §77, §96; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §98.3.

136 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. II. 9; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 24; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 54; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XIV. §41–46; *On Tactics*, II.17–20; Machiavelli, *Art of War*, II. 98; J.-A. De Foucault, 'Douze chapitres inédits de la tactique de Nicéphore Ouranos', *Travaux et mémoires* 5 (1973), 298–300. For Komnenos' use of caltrops (*triboloi*) at Arta and felled-trees (*xyloklasiae*) at Dyrrachium: *Alexiad*, V.4, XIII.5.

came highly recommended, like the strong wind that blew the dust "in clouds right up to heaven" outside the Tzachas-held fortress of Mytilene in 1092.[137]

The general had to scrutinize all these factors and then, once it was decided to take the field, it was time to line up the army for battle. The hallmark of Roman and Byzantine field tactics was the ordered line of battle, and both the military treatises and the narrative histories repeatedly emphasize the impact of Roman battlefield formations on the enemy host.[138] What the authors of the *taktika* considered most characteristic of the Roman/Byzantine armies' battlefield effectiveness were order, discipline and the reliance on collective effect rather than on individual prowess, although a lot of attention to these is paid by Muslim authors as well.

Nothing encapsulates this better than Leo VI's conviction that "it is not true, as some inexperienced persons may hold, that wars are decided by a multitude of men and courage, but by the favour of God and by generalship and discipline."[139] It was the multitude of – often – disparate and multi-ethnic units with several subdivisions in the command structure of armies like the Byzantine one, that made it imperative for the high command to enforce discipline and order from top to bottom and, therefore, context and the quality of leadership were critical prerequisites for effective discipline.[140] In fact, one of the usual clichés of the Roman/Byzantine authors of *taktika* was the differentiation between the disciplined Romans and the undisciplined and rash 'barbarians'.[141] Esirî also blames the lack of discipline on and off the battlefield for the successive failures of the multi-ethnic Ottoman armies in his time, and

137 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. II. 7–8; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 14; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 86; *On Strategy*, §33; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §108; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §89; Al-Ansari, pp. 95–96. For the Byzantine siege of Mytilene: *Alexiad*, IX.1. Nature mysteriously conspiring in favour of the Byzantines during war goes back to Heraclius' campaigns against Persia: James Howard-Johnston, "The official history of Heraclius' Persian campaigns," in: *The Roman and Byzantine Army in the East: Proceedings of a Colloquium Held at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków in September 1992*, ed. E. Dąbrowa (Krakow, 1994), 81–82.

138 Explaining the parallels in the battle formations between different 'military cultures', as these are described in the military manuals from Late Antiquity to the pre-modern era is a vast undertaking that will take me beyond the scope of this chapter. A recent publication of mine tackles this topic, with a chronological and geographic focus in Syria and Mesopotamia in the 10th century: Theotokis, *Byzantine Military Tactics*.

139 Leo VI, *Taktika*, prologue §8, XX. §55.

140 Sun-Tzu, *Art of War*, IX. §43–44; Vegetius, *Epitome*, II. 3, 9; III. 4, 10; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 16, 79, 83; Leo VI, *Taktika*, IV. §44, XII. §1–6, §14XX. §4–5, §211; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §17.2, §49.4; *Praecepta Militaria*, II. 115, IV. 110 [see also McGeer, *Sowing*, p. 302]; *On Tactics*, §21, §30; Al-Ansari, pp. 70–75.

141 Vegetius, *Epitome*, I.1; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 52, 96, 119; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XVIII. §38, §76, §83.

he highlights that most Ottoman commanders were not concerned with disciplining the soldiers and never critically took part in their recruitment; his comparison with the Hapsburg recruitment system, chain of command and discipline is key.[142]

The first step towards disengaging from the enemy was to leave them a clear way out of the battlefield as a means to de-escalate without both sides sustaining more casualties. The reason behind this is simple, "… trapped men draw extra courage from desperation, and when there is no hope, fear takes up arms. Men who know without a doubt that they are going to die will gladly die in good company."[143] Frontinus listed several historical *exempla* from Antiquity on the use of this tactic, while adding a cunning 'twist': "When certain Germans whom Gaius Caesar had penned in fought the more fiercely from desperation, he ordered them to be allowed to escape, and then attacked them as they fled."[144] Following his invasion of Byzantine Illyria in October 1081, the Norman Duke Robert Guiscard ordered his fleet to be burned after it had become clear that the Byzantine army was preparing for a battle the following morning (Battle of Dyrrachium, 18 October 1081).[145] This was a desperate attempt by the duke to boost the morale of his soldiers and encourage them to fight to the end. However, the author of the *Sylloge* has some stern words for the general who 'inflicted' this tactic on his troops:

> Of course I cannot praise as much as blame generals who destroy their own defences, or cross rivers, or put steep cliffs and gulfs behind their men, so that they might prevail if they hold fast, or perish if they want to escape. Because I think that this [tactic] which is risky or too daring and dangerous [is] not a product of good judgement and tactical knowledge, but of luck.[146]

4.2 *Disengaging from Your Enemy*

Ending the war after a successful engagement was not an easy matter. For Vegetius, it was critical that the general would not become complacent and contended with his victory, because "Never does greater danger tend to arise

142 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion," pp. 113–15.

143 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 21. Compare with Sun-Tzu, *Art of War*, XI. 51; Polyaenus, *Stratagems*, I.30. 3, II.1. 6, III.9, VIII.23. 29; Onasander, *General*, XXXII; *On Strategy*, §39; Maurice, *Strategikon*, pp. 91, 96; *On Skirmishing*, §34; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §23.5, §98, §102.3; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XVII. §19; Al-Ansari, p. 112.

144 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II. VI. 4. See also the entire section II. VI.

145 *Alexiad*, IV.6. Repeated by Bohemond in 1108: *Alexiad*, XIII.2.

146 *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §10.1.

for the side that is celebrating, than when over-confidence is suddenly turned to panic."[147] Any victorious general had to tackle two great threats/perils immediately after a pitched battle; one came from the enemy troops that may still be lurking near the battlefield, albeit demoralized and disorganized. Vegetius advised the general, immediately before the aforementioned comment, that he should engage the enemy only "if there are hills nearby, [or] if there are fortifications to the rear," for the simple reason that "often a previously routed army has recovered its strength and destroyed those in loose order and pursuing at random."[148] For that reason, Maurice encouraged the general not to leave any 'unfinished business' after a victorious battle, using the phrase "There can be no rest until the enemy is completely destroyed," as opposed to – perhaps – the more famous "Be victorious, but do not press your victory too hard," which he dismissed outright as an erroneous strategy by inexperienced commanders.[149]

Maurice also emphasized the other great threat to a victorious general, the prospect of losing control over one's troops, especially when they get berserk at the anticipation of looting the enemy camp or when they halt their pursuit to pick up discarded gear and/or other enemy valuables.[150] In fact, several authors report the ancient stratagem of spreading coins to cover an army's retreat,[151] while experienced officers like Esirî, Nikephoros Phokas and Theodore Palaeologus made repeated references about the significance of a disciplined pursuit of an apparently beaten foe.[152] In short, a victorious general had to remain composed, calm and suspicious of enemy moves, maintain order among his troops, and pursue a decisive outcome. Ultimately, "Aware of the uncertainties of war, the general ought to be ready, even after victory, to listen to proposals of the enemy for peace on advantageous terms."[153]

147 Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 25. Compare with Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 82; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XVI. §13, XX. §32; *Sylloge Taktikorum*, §51; Al-Ansari, p. 112.

148 Leo VI also highlighted the danger of the enemy slipping back into nearby fortifications: *Taktika*, XIII. §12.

149 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 74; Philip Rance, ""Win but do not overwin" – The History of a Proverb from the *Sententiae Menandri*, and a Classical Allusion in St. Paul's *Epistle to the Romans*," *Philologus* 152 (2008) 191–204.

150 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II.IX.6–7; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III. 11; Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 74; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §104.

151 Frontinus, *Strategemata*, II.XIII.1–3; Vegetius, *Epitome*, III.22; *On Strategy*, §40; Al-Ansari, p. 113.

152 *Praecepta Militaria*, II.44–9; II.75–9; IV.151–3; IV.163–6; *On Tactics*, §25; Esirî, pp. 387a–387; *Les enseignements de Théodore Paléologue*, p. 75.

153 Maurice, *Strategikon*, p. 87; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XX. §104.

4.3 *Rationalizing a Defeat*

It is easy for a victorious general to boast, "Victory comes from the Heavens", but as we all know, so does defeat! There is no question as to who was the ultimate judge in the battlefield, but it was inevitable for several questions to arise after the defeat of an army, regardless of whether the enemy belonged to the same religion or not: 'Were we the most just army on the field? If not, why did we undertake the fight? And, if so, why did God allow us to lose?' Therefore, it was critical for a military defeat to be rationalized, so that the defeated would not lose royal and/or popular support!

For God's 'Chosen People' of Romania, military success over infidels was associated with divine blessing and, conversely, military defeat with the withdrawal of blessing because of sin.[154] What seemed more difficult to explain and accept in spiritual terms was the defeat in an intra-religious conflict. A typical tactic among historians of justifying the defeat of armies, whether Christian, Muslim or other, was to blame the people – either the combatants, the non-combatants or even both – for comfort and luxury that, inevitably, led to corruption, vanity and idleness (sloth).[155] Hence, the real reason behind the decline of the Roman Empire was:

> A sense of security born of long peace, [which] has diverted mankind partly to the enjoyment of private leisure, partly to civilian careers. Thus, attention to military training obviously was at first discharged rather neglectfully, then omitted, until finally consigned long since to oblivion.[156]

For Vegetius, it was obvious that the Romans themselves were responsible for the disasters that had befallen them, rather than a vengeful God or Fortune,[157] precisely because they had succumbed to the deadly sins of avarice and sloth. Esirî Hasan Aga and Kekaumenos follow the same admonitory course of condemning the moral failures of those in charge (both at a central and at local level). For Kekaumenos, the direct cause of the defeats of Roman armies lies on the flattery and inexperience of the commanders that comes out of their promotion because of political connections rather than merit, adding ominously "that even if they should escape the penalties imposed by men, they

154 Riedel, *Leo VI*, pp. 162–81.

155 Kelly DeVries, "God and Defeat in Medieval Warfare: Some Preliminary Thoughts," in: *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, ed. D. J. Kagay and L. J. A. Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 87–97.

156 Vegetius, *Epitome*, 1.28. See also 1.7 ['corruption' and 'neglect'], III.4 ['idleness' and 'luxury'], and III.22 ['apathy'].

157 Onasander, *The General*, proemium; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XVI. §15.

will not avoid the righteous judgement of God."[158] On top of that, two of his historical *exempla* also emphasize the importance of avoiding the 'deadly sins' of pleasure and idleness.[159]

Esirî's firm belief in the corruption of Ottoman society, the ignorance of the science of war (*ilm-i cenk*) and the luxury and idleness among the ranks of the Ottoman army, all are clearly reflected in his explanation of military defeats during his time. He notes repeatedly that soldiers were running away before any real clash in the battlefield, which indeed became almost a regular pattern in 17th century Ottoman warfare: undisciplined soldiers retreating prior to any confrontation but looting the regions during their retreat. For Esirî, this was a 'self-defeat' due to lack of strategy, discipline and coordination and, thus, an act of wrath by God.[160] Interestingly, Maurice and Leo have nothing to add in the explanation of a military defeat as – simply – 'God's will'.[161] Finally, both Syrianos and Leo Phokas lay the blame for different misfortunes and defeats of the army on the failures/errors (Greek: σφάλματα) of the general/commander, both before and during battle (strategic and tactical level). The message is clear: if you [general] fail to follow these instructions laid down here, you will be thoroughly defeated![162]

For the various recommended ploys designed to bolster an army's morale after defeat, Syrianos' *Rhetorica Militaris* provides the best guidelines for a general. The two main categories of 'defeat speeches' are the consolatory and the reproach depending, of course, on the soldiers' motivation and performance in the battlefield. Syrianos' language is key here concerning the cause of the defeat:

> [56.1] In a consolatory speech, when we have to comfort the defeated soldiers, we emphasize from the beginning that the defeat did not occur out of cowardice, but because of the numerical superiority of the enemy, or by a game of chance, or for reasons of topography," while also asking the general to remind them that "[56.2] even if God punished them for something bad they did in their lives, if they choose to be in God's way again, then He too will fight with them for redress.

158 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, p. 76.

159 Kekaumenos, *Strategikon*, p. 96 [pleasure: *ἡδονᾶς*], p. 108 [carelessness: *ἀμεριμνίᾳ*, soft life: *τρυφῇ*, indulgence: *ἀνέσει*].

160 Theotokis, Yildiz, "Diffusion," p. 114.

161 Strategikon, *Maurice*, pp. 72–73; Leo VI, *Taktika*, XIV. §15–20, XVI. §12–15.

162 *On Strategy*, §33; *On Skirmishing*, §17, §25.

Immediately after that, Syrianos offers a ready scapegoat for the emperor, who "[56.3] can resort to another innovation, that is, to transfer the responsibilities of defeat from the soldiers to the general." Finally, in delivering a reproach speech the general had to talk like a strict but caring father and "[57.2] … not only rebuke those who have been defeated because of sluggishness in battle, but at the same time comfort them, and through consolation and exhortation motivate them to war."

5 Conclusions

Whether they were written to provide entertainment for well-educated civilian and/or military men, or to increase the chances for socio-political ascendance as 'literary projects', or – simply – as utilitarian texts for battle, the *taktika* provide us with a huge wealth of evidence about the history of warfare, the strategy, tactics, siege warfare, logistics, ideology and the institutional framework of war from different 'military cultures'. My intention was to highlight the remarkable number of common elements and ideas that shaped the structure and – particularly – content of manuals from different regions of the same 'Big Culture' (i.e., broad area sharing major cultural features) and from different historical periods ('horizontal' and 'vertical' transmission).

Most of the authors of these manuals were, undoubtedly, experienced military officers, highly educated and, in many cases, multilingual. They all emphasize their manual's didactic use for future generations as a repository of knowledge, although in many cases they followed well-trodden 'literary paths' in describing it as an introduction, while expressing doubt as to their own writing ability in a sort of 'authorial humility'. Another *cliché* was the complaining about the negligence of military affairs of their time, which was often a literary *topos* to emphasize the socio-political need for these works.

Reference to the 'ancients' was paramount, not only because it gave prestige and authority to the information the authors provided, but also because it allowed for the necessary literary 'show-off'. Although literary *kainotomia* was shunned, these manuals were in no way mere compilations of previous works. In fact, many of the authors introduced meaningful tactical innovations that reflected the geo-political conditions of their times, and they also encouraged a great degree of discretion and innovation in the battlefield.

It is no surprise that there is extensive reference to the physical and moral qualities of a commander in the *taktika*, obviously because "The general should be a model and a pattern to everyone." What should also come as no surprise is the common trait of the authors to display varied interest in the fighting

abilities, the *κράσις*, the ideology and the institutional framework for war of their nation's neighbours and enemies, compounded with many stereotypical views about the 'characters' of nations. Yet, what we see in all of the *taktika* is a clear tendency not to risk taking to the battlefield unless the odds were overwhelmingly stacked in their favour, preferring to defeat the enemy by 'other means'!

We also see many parallels in the critical parameters of the *time* and *place* that can decide a pitched battle, while practically every author elaborates on the link between good leadership and effective discipline and order within the army. These were essential for a successful disengaging from the enemy too, and the authors emphasize that a victorious general had to remain composed, calm and suspicious of enemy moves, maintain order, and pursue a decisive outcome. Finally, all authors understood the need of the defeated in battle to rationalize their defeat so that they might not lose royal or popular support and, in many cases, this explanation reflected the author's views on (and criticism of) society, the socio-political elites and the organization of the army. Although we should understand that every military manual must be read within the socio-political context of its time and should be understood as a pragmatic approach to contemporary problems, what I hope I explained here is that some traits of war will always remain timeless.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

A Tenth-Century Byzantine Military Manual: The Sylloge Tacticorum, trans. G. Chatzelis and J. Harris (Oxon, 2017).

Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, and Onasander, trans. by Illinois Greek Club (Cambridge, MA, 1923).

Al-Ansari, Umar Ibn Ibrahim Al-Awsi, *A Muslim Manual of War, Being Tafrij Al-Kurub Fi Tadbir Al-Hurub*, ed. and trans. G. T. Scanlon (Cairo/New York, 1961/2012).

Esirî Hasan b. Şeyh Hüseyin, *Mi'yârü'd-Düvel ve Misbârü'l-Milel* (Süleymaniye Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi, Hekimoğlu Ali Paşa Koleksiyonu no. 803).

Kekaumenos, Στρατηγικόν ["Strategikon"] ed. and trans. in modern Greek D. Tsougkarakis (Athens, 1993).

Les Enseignements de Théodore Paléologue, trans. C. Knowles (London, 1983).

Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy, trans. by George T. Dennis (Philadelphia, PA, 1984).

On Skirmishing, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, CFHB: 25 [Washington, DC, 1985/2008 (repr.)].

On Strategy, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, CFHB: 25 [Washington, DC, 1985/2008 (repr.)].

On Tactics, in: *Three Byzantine Military Treatises*, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis, CFHB: 25 [Washington, DC, 1985/2008 (repr.)].

Praecepta Militaria, in *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington DC, 1995).

Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. with an introduction by D. Galvin, trans. by L. Giles (New York, 2003).

The Taktika of Leo VI, ed. and trans. G. T. Dennis (Washington, DC, 2010).

Vegetius (Flavius Vegetius Renatus), *Epitome of Military Science*, trans. by N.P. Milner (Liverpool, 1996).

Secondary Works

Campbell, B. (ed.), *Greek and Roman Military Writers, Selected readings* (London, 2004).

Chatzelis, G., *Byzantine Military Manuals as Literary Works and Practical Handbooks, The Case of the Tenth-Century Sylloge Tacticorum* (London/New York, 2019).

Chlup, J. T., Whately, C., "The ancient military treatise, genre, and history," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (London/New York, 2021), pp. 1–16.

Dagron, G., Mihaescu, H., *Le Traité sur la guérilla de l'empereur Nicéphore Phocas* (Paris, 1989/2011).

DeVries, K., "God and Defeat in Medieval Warfare: Some Preliminary Thoughts," in: *The Circle of War in the Middle Ages: Essays on Medieval Military and Naval History*, ed. D. J. Kagay and L. J. A. Villalon (Woodbridge, 1999), pp. 87–97.

Haldon, J. F., *A Critical Commentary on The Taktika of Leo VI* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

Heuser, B., *The evolution of strategy: thinking war from antiquity to the present* (Cambridge, 2010).

Kolias, T., "Η Πολεμική Τακτική των Βυζαντινών: Θεωρία και Πράξη" ["The Military Tactics of the Byzantines: Theory and Practice"], in: *Byzantium at War (9th – 12th c.)*, pp. 153–64.

McGeer, E., *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington DC, 1995).

Mufti, M., "The Art of Jihad," *History of Political Thought* 28/2 (2007), pp. 189–207.

Nilsson, I., "The Same Story, but Another, A Reappraisal of Literary Imitation in Byzantium," in: Imitatio – Aemulatio – Variatio, Akten des internationalen wissenschaftlichen Symposiums zur byzantinischen Sprache und Literatur (Wien, 22.–25. Oktober 2008), ed. by A. Rhoby and E. Schiffer (Vienna, 2010), pp. 195–208.

Rance, P., "Maurice's Strategicon and "the Ancients": the Late Antique Reception of Aelian and Arrian," in: *Greek Taktika. Ancient Military Writing and its Heritage*, ed. P. Rance and N. V. Sekunda (Gdańsk, 2017), pp. 217–255.

Rance, P., "The Reception of Aineias' Poliorketika in Byzantine Military Literature," in: *Brill's Companion to Aineias Tacticus*, ed. by Maria Pretzler and Nick Barley (Leiden, 2017), pp. 290–374.

Rop, J., "Refighting Cunaxa, Xenophon's Education of Cyrus as a manual on military leadership," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (London/New York, 2021), pp. 153–71.

Roueché, C., "The rhetoric of Kekaumenos," in: *Rhetoric in Byzantium*, ed. by E. Jeffreys, (London, 2003), pp. 23–37.

Różycki, Ł., *Battlefield emotions in late antiquity: a study of fear and motivation in Roman military treatises* (Leiden, 2021).

Różycki, Ł., "The Strategikon as a source – Slavs and Avars in the eyes of Pseudo-Maurice, current state of research and future research perspectives," *Acta Archaelogica Carpathica* 52 (2017), pp. 109–31.

Sourdel-Thomine, J., "Les conseils du Šayh al-Harawī a un prince Ayyūbide," *Bulletin d'Études Orientales* 17 (1961–1962), pp. 205–268.

Sullivan, D. F., "Byzantine military manuals: prescriptions, practice and pedagogy," in: *The Byzantine World*, ed. P. Stephenson (London/New York, 2010), pp. 149–61.

Sullivan, D. F., "Tenth Century Byzantine Offensive Siege Warfare: Instructional Prescriptions and Historical Practice," in: *Byzantium at War* (*9th–12th c.*), pp. 179–200.

Theotokis, G., Sidiropoulos, D., *Byzantine Military Rhetoric in the Ninth Century, A Translation of the Anonymi Byzantini Rhetorica Militaris* (London/New York, 2021).

Theotokis, G., *Byzantine Military Tactics in Syria and Mesopotamia in the Tenth Century, A Comparative Study* (Edinburgh, 2018).

Theotokis, G., Yildiz, A., "Diffusion of military knowledge in the 17th century Ottoman Empire: the case of Esirî Hasan Aga's "Advices to Commanders and Soldiers," in: *War and Conflict in the Mediterranean*, eds. G. Theotokis and A. Yildiz (Athens, 2018), pp. 105–142.

Whately, C., "Military manuals from Aeneas Tacticus to Maurice, Origins, scholarship, genre, audience, and history," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (London/New York, 2021), pp. 17–38.

Whately, C., "The Genre and Purpose of Military Manuals in Late Antiquity," in: *Shifting genres in late antiquity*, ed. G. Greatrex and H. Elton (Farnham, 2015), pp. 249–61.

Wiita, J. E., "The ethnika in Byzantine military treatises" (PhD thesis: University of Minnesota, 1977).

Williams, N., "The blind leading the blind? Civilian writers and audiences of military manuals in the Roman world," in: *Greek and Roman Military Manuals, Genre and History*, ed. J. T. Chlup and C. Whately (London/New York, 2021), pp. 55–77.