



Subject Centre for  
History, Classics  
and Archaeology

# Tutor's Guide to: Teaching Byzantium

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## Contents

Contents.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Counsels of Perfection.....	2
Talking Technical.....	2
Elite Subject or 'Equalizer'?.....	3
Pinning Down Byzantium.....	3
Fast Track to Byzantium.....	4
Holy War in Byzantium.....	5
The Road to 1204 .....	6
Missions and Conversions .....	7
Iconoclasm .....	8
Courts as a facet of the topics of 'art' and visual culture.....	8
Conclusion .....	9
Byzantium, Islam and Holy War.....	12
Primary sources.....	12
Secondary works .....	12
Extracts from Leo III's Tactice .....	12
Martyrdom and the Byzantine war-dead.....	18
Glossary.....	19

## Introduction

Byzantium impinges on mainstream medieval history at many points, from Clovis' Franks to the rise of the Italian maritime city states and on into the Italian Renaissance. Yet, like its 'God protected' capital city, it is not particularly accessible to – and in fact deters – the outsider. Faced with the ever-rising tide of publications in their own fields, western medievalists can be forgiven for leaving Byzantium to the Byzantinists. But they will be missing out on new ways of looking at topics such as Holy War, the 'Otherness' of the Islamic

world and the formation of political structures in Eastern Europe. As part of a wider module, a couple of sessions on Byzantium – or visits to Byzantium – can throw light on any of these topics. The narrative sources are now mostly in English translation, survey and text-books are available, the number of English-language monographs is growing and there is a fair amount written on Byzantium's links with 'outsiders', often a topic of fascination for undergraduates.

But what was 'Byzantium', and where? Territorially and institutionally it underwent drastic metamorphoses in the period c. 400 – 1453. The few fixed points were the city of Constantinople, adherence to the Christian faith as defined by Church Councils and upheld by the emperor, and a sense of being the true 'Romans' even though Greek was taken to be the distinguishing language of civilization. The history of 'Byzantium' can easily shade off into the history of the Orthodox Church, or of eastern Christianity in general. Pinning down Byzantium's history and political culture, and even trying to determine its chronological limits (c. 400 or c. 500, or 324 when Constantine the Great decided to make his capital on the Bosphoros?) is one of its challenges, wide open to first-years and professors of Byzantine history.

### Counsels of Perfection

The ideal way of teaching Byzantine history and culture would be with the aid of Byzantine sources, translated by you or a colleague who is already familiar with the historical background. In this way, you will bring students face to face with source-materials. By excerpting from Saints' Lives, inscriptions, tactical manuals, commonplace books, and the occasional archival text, you can partly circumvent one of the barriers to studying Byzantium: the limited number of coherent, readable narratives of events written by the Byzantines themselves.

Unfortunately, this is not a very practical course, so you might consider a compromise. A fair number of the Byzantine chronicles and some of the military manuals have been translated into English, together with parallel Greek texts, and there are also translations of classic accounts of Westerners' encounters with the Byzantine world: for example, Liudprand of Cremona's *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana* (ed. and tr. B. Scott, Reading Medieval and Renaissance Texts, London, 1993); and the opening pages of the *Gesta Francorum*, recounting the First Crusaders' stay at Constantinople, to be compared with Anna Comnena's set-piece of the same events (*Gesta Francorum*, ed. and tr. R. Hill (London, 1962), pp. 2-18; Anna Comnena, *Alexiad*, Book X and XI, tr. E. R. A. Sewter (Harmondsworth, 1969), pp. 308-41; a revised translation of the *Alexiad*, by P. Frankopan, is forthcoming from Penguin).

### Talking Technical

Inevitably, something is lost in the translation, especially when the translator is a highly competent classicist (as was Sewter) but not really expert in Byzantine history. You might consider scanning the translation for words that strike you as ambiguous or bizarre and finding a friendly Greek-reader, who can at least chase up the Greek words, transliterate them and maybe expound the meaning. For example, Sewter's translation of the *Alexiad* has the Crusaders swearing 'oaths of fealty' to Emperor Alexius, and also 'doing homage'. This is a free translation of the Greek, which uses the vaguer term *horkos*, 'oath', though on occasion Anna does describe a Crusader as becoming Alexius' 'man' (*anthropos*) upon swearing the oath (*Alexiad* ed. B. Leib, II (Paris, 1943), p. 215, ll. 3-5; ed. D. Reinsch, I (Berlin and New York, 2001) p. 303, ll. 201). Anna's usage is therefore consistent with the Latin sources' account of what was required of the Crusaders, i.e. performance of homage as well as swearing an oath of fealty. A term often used by Anna and other Byzantine writers is *doulos*. This can mean anything from 'slave' to 'servant' to 'subject' or 'subordinate of the

emperor', and it was used of Crusaders who had sworn the oath of fealty to Alexius. You will find a glossary of the main technical terms and 'buzz words' in several of the textbooks in the bibliography below, but for your convenience a Mini-Glossary is provided as an Appendix to this guide. This includes some basic Byzantine Greek terms, and also terms relating to holy war in Latin and Arabic. Talking with students about these terms when neither you nor they know Greek may seem fatuous or pretentious. But it is no more so than, say, non Chinese-speakers teaching Chinese history and stopping to discuss the meaning of terms. The very process of discussing the difficulty of understanding key terms can be rewarding for teacher and student, putting them on the same level. And it is particularly appropriate for Byzantine studies, since its key terms – starting with *doulos* – often were ambiguous and were meant to be.

### Elite Subject or 'Equalizer'?

It is easy to give up on Byzantium as being simply too 'technical', but with the Mini-Glossary and, ideally, a Greek-reading colleague to pinpoint a few terms, you will be able to take your students straight to the sources. And by focusing on a few key texts such as the *Alexiad* and the *Gesta Francorum*, you will be able to present them with basic issues of evaluating contradictory sources and the reasons why such constructs of events were attempted. As we have said, Byzantium is not particularly rich in detailed narratives – sometimes we have to rely on one main chronicle, of indifferent quality, to reconstruct whole reigns of emperors. Paradoxically, the effect is to make Byzantium *more* rather than less accessible to students, for once they have managed to grasp the outlines of a period, they are not very much worse-informed than the professionals and can move up to the front line of debate. And the lack of hard evidence and the difficulties in interpreting it have a levelling effect. Some aspects of Byzantium are still barely explored, while there is fundamental disagreement over key issues, such as the state of the economy in the seventh to ninth centuries, the nature of and reasons for Iconoclasm, and Byzantium's overall condition in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. These debates are accessible to students from the books and articles listed in the Bibliography. There is plenty to discuss and because these are fundamental questions, they offer students a chance to stretch their wings and to try and devise their own conceptual frameworks. They are good topics for discussion sessions.

### Pinning Down Byzantium

The greatest challenge – and, hopefully, attraction – of Byzantium is that it is so difficult to pin down, and yet it impinges in one way or another on general European history until the fifteenth century and beyond. Muscovite autocrats in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries adopted Byzantine ceremonial and Louis XIV's court at Versailles drew inspiration from the ceremonial in the Great Palace at Constantinople. Here again, newcomers and professors can have something of value to say. None would dispute that Byzantium functioned as a state with attributes that few western polities could sustain for long. There was essentially a money economy under governmental direction; Byzantium had an army that was partly salaried, and a permanent fleet; and it made regular use of written records by officials residing in a 'capital', under the direction of its resident ruler. But there the consensus stops: when did 'the Byzantine empire' begin? And in what sense was it an empire at all, after the loss of the Middle Eastern provinces to the Arabs? How firmly defined were its frontiers, and is it more useful to conceive of Byzantium as a sphere of influence, a culturo-religious entity, rather than simply a military power? These questions are much easier to raise than to answer, and it is no accident that an authoritative 'Historical Geography of Byzantium' - by John Haldon – only appeared in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. The elusive, quicksilver quality of Byzantium's 'Virtual Empire' makes it difficult to tabulate, but all the more worthwhile for students and professionals to chance their arm.

Through looking at the attraction exerted by 'the empire of New Rome' on other élites and cultures, students are introduced to issues such as multiple identities, cultural imperialism and the validity of modern historians' terms for denoting the sphere of influence of the Byzantines, notably the term 'the Byzantine Commonwealth' (coined by Dimitri Obolensky). In fact, the Byzantine 'Empire' was never precisely coterminous with the region where eastern Christianity was practised or where Greek – the main language of the empire from the sixth century onwards – was spoken. It is the very 'plasticity' of Byzantium that makes it relevant to modern – and world – history. The court and the imperial establishment based in Constantinople provided a kind of 'hub' culture or 'exemplary centre', which a medley of 'acquisitional' societies and élites could look to for inspiration. Recent work by anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz and Mary W. Helms [respectively: *Negara: The Theater State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980) and *Craft and the Kingly Ideal* (Austin, Texas, 1993)] can be read with profit as a means of grasping the paradoxes in Byzantium's relations with outsiders. Now that issues such as gift-exchange and rituals of rulership occupy a central place in medieval studies [see for example J. Rollo-Koster, *Medieval and Early Modern Ritual. Formalized Behaviour in Europe, China and Japan* (Leiden, 2002)], the everyday practices of Byzantine diplomacy deserve closer attention from medievalists. The court ceremonial – the Byzantine emperor's 'dream factory' – drew upon and further stimulated a widespread predisposition towards ritual, providing models or a foil for aspiring potentates to adapt or react against. The interplay of court and outlying regions and élites in the Byzantine world can offer useful analogies for the study of centre and periphery in medieval and early modern polities in the West.

## Fast Track to Byzantium

There is no shortage of general introductions to Byzantium textbooks covering specific periods of Byzantine culture and political history. These can help answer basic questions such as:

- In what sense was Byzantium an 'empire'?
- In what ways did the Roman Empire survive in the East?
- Why did Byzantium last so long?
- What was 'civilized' about the Byzantine empire?

M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204: a political history* (London, 1997)

M. Angold, *Byzantium: The bridge from antiquity to the middle Ages* (2001)

Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Oxford, 2006)

G. Cavallo (ed.), *The Byzantines*, tr. T. Dunlap et al. (Chicago, 1997)

T. Gregory, *A history of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2005)

J. Haldon, *Byzantium: A History* (Stroud, 2000)

J. Haldon, *The Palgrave atlas of Byzantine history* (Basingstoke, 2005)

J. Harris (ed.), *Palgrave advances in Byzantine history* (Basingstoke, 2005)

J. Herrin, *Byzantium: the surprising life of a medieval empire* (London, 2007)

E. Jeffreys et al. (eds.) *Oxford handbook of Byzantine studies* (Oxford, 2008)

A. Kazhdan et al., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, I-III (Oxford, 1991) [learned, but many of the entries clearly written and effective as appetizers]

A.E. Laiou and H. Maguire (eds.), *Byzantium. A World Civilization* (Washington D.C., 1992)

C. Mango (ed.), *Oxford history of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2002)

D. M. Nicol, *The last centuries of Byzantium, 1261-1453* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Cambridge, 1993)

G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine state*, tr. J. Hussey (Oxford, 1968) [ageing, but still replete with relevant information in reasonably digestible form]

S. Runciman, *Byzantine Style and Civilization* (Harmondsworth, 1975)

J. Shepard (ed.), *The Cambridge history of the Byzantine empire, 500-1492* (Cambridge, 2008)

W. Treadgold, *A history of the Byzantine state and society* (Stanford, 1997)

W. Treadgold, *A concise history of Byzantium* (Basingstoke, 2001)

M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (Basingstoke, 1996)

Source-Books for Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium include the following. Unfortunately, there are none of equivalent quality and use covering all aspects of Middle or Late Byzantium, but there are excellent guides and excerpts from sources available online.

A. D. Lee, *Pagans and Christians in late antiquity: a sourcebook* (London, 2000)

M. Maas, *Readings in late antiquity: a sourcebook* (London, 2000)

Paul Stephenson (Reader in Medieval History, University of Durham):

<http://homepage.mac.com/paulstephenson/byzantium.html>

Paul Halsall (Editor, Internet History Sourcebooks Project):

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/byzantium/>

The best attempt at a general Byzantine source book is D.J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society and Civilization seen through contemporary eyes* (Chicago, 1984)

An important survey of translations in print may be found at:

<http://www.doaks.org/translives.html>

This site is maintained by the Dumbarton Oaks Research Center, Washington, D.C. Dumbarton Oaks' website gives information on the Center's ongoing programme of publishing Byzantine texts and translations of texts.

It is generally best to 'fast-track' to specific issues arising from a broader medieval theme – such as Holy War in Byzantium and among its neighbours, the road to the capture of Constantinople by the Crusaders in 1204 or missions and conversions – or to focus on one or two essentially Byzantine issues such as Iconoclasm, or the court and its 'magic'. Undergraduates' zeal to analyse source-materials should not be underestimated: a sense of getting to grips with *recherché* sources tends to stimulate rather than to be utterly daunting.

## Holy War in Byzantium

### a) Islam

#### Sample Questions

- Why was *jihad* so fundamental to early Islam?
- What was the early Islamic *jihad* intended to achieve?
- Compare Muslim and Byzantine attitudes towards warfare.
- Did the Byzantines have their own version of 'Holy War'?
- Discuss the Byzantines' tactics in their warfare with the Arabs in the seventh to tenth centuries.

#### Sources

*Koran*, tr. N. J. Dawood (Harmondsworth, 1995):

*Sura VIII* ("The Spoils"), pp. 126-33

*Sura IX* ("Repentance"), pp. 133-46

*Sura XVI* ("The Bee"), pp. 193-6

*Sura XLVIII* ("The Victory"), pp. 359-63

#### Introductory

M. Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic history: doctrines and practice* (Princeton, 2006)

D. Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley, 2005)

M. Cook, *The Koran: a very short introduction* (Oxford, 2000)

- N. El Cheikh, *Byzantium viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge MA, 2004)  
 H. Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates* (London, 1986)  
 "Djihad" (i.e. *jihad*), *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, II, ed. H.A.R. Gibb et al., (Leiden, London, 1960-2004), pp. 538-9 (entry by E. Tyan)  
 F. Lokkegaard, "The concepts of war and peace in Islam", B.P. McGuire (ed.), *War and Peace in the Middle Ages* (Copenhagen, 1987), pp. 263-81  
 R. Peters, *Jihad in classical and modern Islam: a reader* (Princeton, 1996)

Note a 3<sup>rd</sup>, wholly new, edition of the *Encyclopedia of Islam* is now underway, vol. 1 (Leiden and Boston, 2007)

## b) Byzantium

### Sources

See Appendix: Byzantium, Islam and Holy War  
 "" *Skirmishing* in G. Dennis (ed. and tr.), *Three Byzantine Military Treatises* (Washington, D.C., 1985)

### Introductory

- M. Bonner (ed.) *Arab-Byzantine relations in early Islamic times* (Aldershot, 2004)  
 A. Laiou, "On just war in Byzantium", S. Reinert, J. Langdon and J. Allen (eds.), *To Ellenikon: Essays in Honor of Speros Vryonis jr. I* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1993), pp. 153-74  
 W. Kaegi, *Heraclius, emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003)  
 W. E. Kaegi, "Confronting Islam: emperors versus caliphs (641-c.850)", *CamByz*. Pp. 365-94  
 T. Kolbaba, "Fighting for Christianity. Holy War in the Byzantine Empire", *Byzantion*, 68 (1998), pp. 194-221 (repr. In J. Haldon (ed.) *Byzantine warfare* (Aldershot, 2006))  
 G. Regan, *First Crusader. Byzantium's Holy Wars* (Stroud, 2001)  
 P. Stephenson, "Imperial Christianity and sacred war in Byzantium", J.K. Wellman (ed.), *Belief and bloodshed. Religion and violence across time and tradition* (2007), pp. 81-93.  
 W. Treadgold, "Byzantium, the reluctant warrior", N. Christie and M. Yazigi (eds.), *Noble ideals and bloody realities. Warfare in the middle ages* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 209-33.

## The Road to 1204

### Sample Questions

- Why did a Crusade called to liberate Jerusalem end up sacking Christian Constantinople?
- Who is to blame for the Fourth Crusaders' sack of Constantinople?
- Had Byzantium already in effect collapsed by the time the Fourth Crusaders reached Constantinople?
- "A classic example of the 'cock up' versus 'conspiracy' problem." Discuss.

### Sources

- A. J. Andrea (tr.), *Contemporary sources for the Fourth Crusade* (Leiden, 2000)  
*O city of Byzantium: annals of Niketas Choniates*, tr. H. J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1984)  
 Geoffrey de Villehardouin. *Conquest of Constantinople* [tr. M.R.B. Shaw], *Joinville and Villehardouin. Chronicles of the Crusades* (Harmondsworth, 1963)  
 Robert of Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, tr. E. H. McNeal (Toronto, 1996)

### Introductory

- M. Angold, *The Fourth Crusade: event and context* (Harlow, 2003)  
 M. Angold, *The Byzantine Empire, 1025-1204 : a political history* (London, 1997)  
 M. Angold, "The Road to 1204: the Byzantine background to the Fourth Crusade", *Journal of Medieval History*, 25 (1999), pp. 257-78

- C. M. Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West 1180-1204* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968)  
 J. Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London, 2006)  
 A.E. Laiou (ed.) *Urbs capta: the Fourth Crusade and its consequences* (Paris, 2005)  
 P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180* (Cambridge, 1993)  
 P. Magdalino, "Isaac II, Saladin and Venice", J. Shepard (ed.) *The expansion of Orthodox Europe, Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 93-106.  
 J. Phillips, *The Fourth Crusade and the sack of Constantinople* (London, 2004)  
 D. E. Queller and T. F. Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: the Conquest of Constantinople* (Philadelphia, 1997)

## Missions and Conversions

### Sample Questions

- Why were so many religious missions sent out from Byzantium?
- Assess the emperor's role in the history of Byzantine missions.
- Compare the Byzantine missions to Rus with those to other peoples.
- How successful were Byzantium's religious missions?
- What was the role of the host-ruler in Byzantine mission work?
- How was the language-barrier surmounted in Byzantine mission work?

### Sources

- Lives of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius*, tr. in M. Kantor, *Medieval Slavic Lives of Saints and Princes* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1983)  
*The Russian Primary Chronicle*, tr. and ed. S. H. Cross and O. P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge, Mass., 1953)  
 Ilarion, *Sermon on Law and Grace*, tr. in S. Franklin, *Sermons and rhetoric of Kievan Rus'* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991)  
*The Paterik of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, tr. M. Heppell (Cambridge, Mass., 1989)  
*The patriarch and the prince; the letter of Patriarch Photios of Constantinople to Khan Boris of Bulgaria*, tr. D.S. White and J.R. Berrigan (Brookline MA, 1982)

### Introductory

- S. Ćirkovic, *The Serbs*, tr. V. Tošić (Oxford, 2004)  
 F. Curta, *South-eastern Europe in the middle ages, 500-1250* (Cambridge, 2006)  
 F. Dvornik, *Byzantine missions among the Slavs; SS. Constantine-Cyril and Methodius*, (New Brunswick, N.J., 1970)  
 S. Ivanov, "Mission impossible: ups and downs in Byzantine missionary activity from the 11<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century", J. Shepard (ed.), *The expansion of orthodox Europe, Byzantium, the Balkans and Russia* (Aldershot, 2007), pp. 251-65.  
 S. Ivanov, "Religious missions", J. Shepard (ed.), *Cambridge History of the Byzantine empire* (Cambridge 2008), pp. 205-32 (henceforth *CamByz*)  
 M. Kaimakakamova and M. Salomon (eds.) *Byzantium, new peoples, new powers: the Byzantine-Slav contact zone, from the ninth to the fifteenth century* (Cracow, 2007)  
 D. Obolensky, "The Empire and its Northern Neighbours, 565-1018", *Cambridge Medieval History*, IV, Pt. 1 (Cambridge, 1966), repr. in D. Obolensky, *Byzantium and the Slavs* (New York, 1994), pp. 23-73  
 D. Obolensky, *Six Byzantine portraits* (Oxford, 1988)  
 D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971)  
 J. Shepard, "Rus", N. Berend (ed.) *Christianization and the rise of Christian monarchy: Scandinavia, central Europe and Rus' c. 900-1250* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 369-414.  
 J. Shepard, "Spreading the Word: Byzantine missions" in C. Mango (ed.), *Oxford History of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 230-47.  
 D.C. Smythe (ed.), *Strangers to Themselves: the Byzantine Outsider* (Aldershot, 2000)

P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: a Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900-1204* (Cambridge, 2000)

## Iconoclasm

### Sample Questions

- Why did icons matter so much to the imperial authorities AND/OR the Byzantine people?
- Why did eighth century emperors think it so important to regulate popular piety?
- How far was Iconoclasm a reaction to the empire's military setbacks?
- Was Iconoclasm effectively enforced throughout the Byzantine Empire?
- Why did Iconoclasm fail to take root in Byzantium?

### Sources

*Short history: Nikephoros, Patriarch of Constantinople*, text, tr. and commentary by C. Mango (Washington, D.C., 1990)

*The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern history, AD 284-813*, tr. with introduction and commentary by C. Mango and R. Scott with the assistance of G. Greatrex (Oxford, 1997)

*The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: sources and documents*, compiled C. Mango (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1972)

*Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation*, ed. A.-M. Talbot (Washington D. C., 1998)

L. Brubaker, J. F. Haldon and R. G. Ousterhout, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680-850): the Sources: an Annotated Survey* (Aldershot, 2001)

### Introductory

M. Auzépy, "State of emergency", *CamByz*, pp. 251-91.

J. Beckwith, *The Art of Constantinople: an introduction to Byzantine art 330-1453* (2nd ed.) (London, 1968)

J. Beckwith, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art* (2nd ed.) (Harmondsworth, 1979)

A. Bryer & J. Herrin (eds.), *Iconoclasm* (Birmingham, 1977)

R. Cormack, *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons* (London, 1985)

R. Cormack, *Byzantine Art* (Oxford, 2000)

P. Karlin-Hayter, "Iconoclasm" in C. Mango (ed.), *Oxford History of Byzantium* (Oxford, 2002)

L. Rodley, *Byzantine Art and Architecture: an Introduction* (Cambridge, 1994)

M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (Basingstoke, 1996)

## Courts as a facet of the topics of 'art' and visual culture

### Sample Questions

- How did ceremonial contribute to Byzantine court culture?
- "The court ceremonial acted out the claims of Byzantine emperors to be world ruler and made them believable." Discuss.
- What impact did the Byzantine court have on outsiders?
- Why did ritual matter so much to the Byzantine 'Establishment'?
- Compare the Byzantine imperial court with Western rulers' courts in the Early Middle Ages.
- What was the role of precious artefacts and visual arts in the Byzantine political culture and/or diplomacy?

### Sources

*The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: sources and documents*, compiled C. Mango (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972)



*The Works of Liudprand of Cremona : Antapodosis: Liber de rebus gestis Ottonis: Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, tr. and introduction F.A. Wright (Ann Arbor, 1981)  
Liudprand, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, tr. B. Scott (London, 1993)

### Introductory

A. Cameron, "The Construction of Court Ritual: the Byzantine *Book of Ceremonies*" D. Cannadine and S. Price (eds.), *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge, 1987)  
M. McCormick, *Eternal victory. Triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium, and the early medieval West* (Cambridge, 1990)  
J. Shepard and S. Franklin (eds.), *Byzantine Diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992)  
J. Shepard, 'Courts in East and West', P. Linehan and J. Nelson (eds.), *The Medieval World* (London, 2001), pp. 14-36.  
J. Shepard, "'Manners maketh Romans?' Young barbarians at the emperor's court', E. Jeffreys (ed.), *Byzantine style, religion and civilization. In honor of Sir Steven Runciman* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 135-58.  
H. Maguire (ed.), *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204* (Washington D.C, 1997)  
H. C. Evans and W. Wixom (eds.), *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine era, A.D. 843-1261* (New York, 1997)  
H. C. Evans (ed.) *Byzantium: faith and power (1261-1557)* (New Haven, CT, 2004)  
D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London, 1971)

### Conclusion

The above mentioned themes are quite coherent and they interconnect with each other well: Iconoclasm with Courts (via art) and Holy War with the Road to 1204. At the same time they relate to mainstream medieval history. Many other topics remain to be explored, e.g. the army, the economy in town and country and care of the soul in solitude and society. Several new survey-works are on the horizon to assist in introducing them.

A rigorous yet stimulating way of rounding things up is to ask: in what ways was Byzantium different from contemporary western polities in the eighth to twelfth centuries? Both east and west were changing and often the effect was to widen the differences between them. A classic exegesis of the rifts already opening up between east and west in the early middle ages is provided by:

J. Herrin, *The formation of Christendom* (Oxford, 1987)

There is, as yet, no equivalent overview for the period following the end of Herrin's work (i.e. for c.850-c.1050), but ninth-century ecclesiastical developments are covered authoritatively by H. Chadwick, *East and West: the making of a rift in the church from apostolic times until the Council of Florence* (Oxford, 2005), while the Italo-Frankish background is depicted vividly by T.S. Brown, 'Byzantine Italy (680-876)' and M. McCormick, 'Western approaches (700-900)', in J. Shepard (ed.), *CamByz.*, pp. 433-64, 395-432. A broader outline of Byzantino-papal relations is provided in *Byzantine diplomacy, a seminar* eds. S. Lampakis, M. Leontsini, T. Lounghis and V. Vlysidou, tr. N. Russell (Athens, 2007): M. Leontsini, 'The pope and the Byzantine emperor, 395-800', pp. 83-110; V. Vlysidou, 'Byzantine diplomacy and the papacy (800-1054)', pp. 121-144. A radical reassessment of key texts generally assigned to Patriarch Photios' authorship in the ninth century is offered by T. Kolbaba, *Inventing Latin heretics: the Byzantines and the filioque in the ninth century* (Western Michigan University Press, 2008).

For the differences – and continuing axes of concord and exchange - in the twelfth century, stimulating new insights are offered by:-

M. Angold, *Church and society under the Comneni* (Oxford, 1995)

- T. Kolbaba, *The Byzantine lists: errors of the Latins* (Urbana, 2000)
- T. Kolbaba, 'Byzantine perceptions of Latin religious "errors" – themes and changes from 850 to 1350', A. E. Laiou and R. P. Mottahedeh (eds.), *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World* (Washington, DC, 2001), pp. 117-43

In certain respects these reassessments reinforce the line taken in S. Runciman's classic *The eastern schism* (Oxford, 1955)

Despite the fault-lines, certain sets of values and institutions were common to eastern and western Christendom, for example, Church hierarchies, monasteries, lay involvement in monastic life, cults of saints and numerous 'foundation texts' of Christianity. It is worth focusing on a couple of fields in which the Byzantines and Westerners were attempting to achieve much the same thing - religious worship and spiritual awareness, and military effectiveness – and yet went about it in different ways. Hopefully you will have your own reading lists on Western Church life and warfare, and can offer them side by side with the following counterparts on Byzantium:

### Church Organisation and Spiritual Life (including Monasticism) in Byzantium

- M. Angold (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity, V, Eastern Christianity* (Cambridge, 2006)
- J. Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2007)
- S. Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (London, 1981)
- J.M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (Oxford, 1986)
- L. James (ed.), *Text and image in Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2007)
- D. Kroegen, *Byzantine Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2006)
- A. Louth and A. Casiday (eds.), *Byzantine orthodoxies* (Aldershot, 2006)
- R. Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843-1118* (Cambridge, 1995)
- R. Morris (ed.), *Church and People in Byzantium* (Birmingham, 1990)
- T.F.X. Noble and J.M.H. Smith (eds.) *The Cambridge History, III, Early medieval Christianities, c.600-c.1100* (Cambridge, 2008)
- J.C. Thomas and A.C. Hero (eds.), *Byzantine monastic foundation documents: a complete translation of the surviving founders' Typika and testaments*, 5 vols. (Washington, DC, 2001)
- M. Vassilaki (ed.) *Mother of God: Representations of the Virgin in Byzantine Art* (Athens, 2000)

### Byzantium's Armed Forces

A key difference between Byzantium and most western polities before the later Middle Ages is its maintenance of a paid army and a fleet – for which some sort of regular revenue in coin from taxes was indispensable. See the various works of:

- J. Haldon, *State, Army and Society in Byzantium: Approaches to Military, Social and Administrative History, 6th-12th centuries* (Aldershot, 1995)
- J. Haldon, *State, Army and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London, 1999)
- J. Haldon, *The Byzantine Wars: Battles and Campaigns of the Byzantine Era* (Stroud, 2001)

Also stimulating and of value are E. McGeer, *Sowing the dragon's teeth* (Washington, DC, 1995) (containing military manuals with translations as well as analysis) and the numerous articles collected in J. Haldon (ed.) *Byzantine warfare* (Aldershot, 2007). Technical aspects are addressed in, e.g., T. Dawson, "Fit for the task? Equipment sizes and the transmission of military lore, sixth to tenth centuries", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*. 31 (2007), pp. 1-12; J. Haldon, "'Greek Fire' revisited: recent and current research" in G. Jeffreys (ed.)

*Byzantine style, religion and civilization: in honour of Sir Steven Runciman* (Cambridge 2006), pp. 290-325

**For the later period, see:**

M.C. Bartusis, *The Late Byzantine Army. Arms and Society, 1204-1453* (Philadelphia, 1992)  
J. Birkenmeier, *The development of the Komnenian army* (Leiden, 2002)

**On the fleet, see:**

J.H. Pryor, "Byzantium and the Sea" in J. B. Hattendorf and R. W. Unger (eds.), *War at Sea in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (Woodbridge, 2003), pp. 83-104

J.H. Pryor and E. Jeffreys, *The age of the Dromón: the Byzantine navy, ca. 500-1204* (Leiden, 2006)

Economic history and studies in communications can also serve to highlight both the contacts and the differences between Byzantium and western societies. There are, as already noted, basic disagreements as to the way in which the Byzantine economy developed in the middle ages, and the lack of firm quantitative evidence makes it hard to arrive at definitive conclusions. But a clear and useful survey of the controversy over the state of the Middle Byzantine economy is provided by:

A. Harvey, "The Middle Byzantine economy: growth or stagnation?", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 19 (1995), and important "post-revisionist" ideas are offered by M. Whittow, "The Middle Byzantine economy", *CamByz*, pp. 465-92

**And important new work has appeared:**

M. McCormick, *The Origins of the European Economy, AD 300- 900* (Cambridge, 2001)

A.E. Laiou et al. (eds.), *The Economic History of Byzantium from the Seventh through the Fifteenth Centuries* (*Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 39) (Washington, D.C., 2002) 3 vols.

A.E. Laiou and C. Morrisson, *The Byzantine economy* (Cambridge, 2007).

R. Macrides (ed.), *Travel in the Byzantine World* (Aldershot, 2002)

M. Whittow (ed.), *Byzantium: the economic turn* (Oxford, 2008)

There is no 'pat' answer to the question of the similarities or contrasts between Byzantium and the medieval West. The analogy with Britain and USA may, however, be useful. There is, ultimately, a deep difference in their socio-economic order, even though they may have a common language, literature and legal institutions. Analyzing the Anglo-American conundrum can make 'Byzantium and the West' the more interesting for students – especially as it is 'open ended'! And half an eye might be cast on the world of Islam, where the different approaches of Byzantium and the Crusaders may also have some 21st century overtones.

June 2008

## Byzantium, Islam and Holy War: some sources in translation and further reading

### Primary sources

1. Leo VI, *Tactica*, Greek text with Latin parallel translation in J.P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 107. Translation of the following extracts by J. Shepard

- *Constitutio* XII.71-72 (cols. 825-8)
- *Constitutio* XIV.9-11 (col. 852)
- *Constitutio* XIV.35-36 (col. 860)
- *Constitutio* XIV.114-115 (cols. 884-5)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.15-19 (col. 949)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.42, 44 (cols. 956, 957)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.110-112, 116-117 (cols. 972,973)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.124-134 (Cols. 976-7)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.137-140 (cols. 980-981)
- *Constitutio* XVIII.142 (Col. 981)
- *Epilogue* 19-20 (col. 1080)
- *Epilogue* 23-4 (col. 1081)
- *Epilogue* 69 (cols. 1092-3)

2. "Martyrdom and the Byzantine war-dead" – excerpt from the *Chronicle of John Scylitzes*, translated by J.Shepard

### Secondary works

1. M. Canard, 'La guerre sainte dans le monde islamique et dans le monde chrétien', *Revue Africaine* (Algiers, 1936), pp. 605-23. Repr. in Canard's *Byzance et les musulmans de Proche-Orient* (London, 1973), no.VIII

2. N. Oikonomides, 'The concept of 'Holy War' and two tenth-century Byzantine ivories', in T.S. Miller and J. Nesbitt, eds., *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, S.J. (Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 62-68.

3. A. Laiou, 'On Just War in Byzantium', in S. Reinert, J. Langdon and J. Allen, eds., *To Ellenikon: Essays in Honor of Speros Vryonis, jr., I* (New Rochelle, NY, 1993), pp. 153-74.

4. J. Haldon, 'Blood and ink: some observations on Byzantine attitudes towards warfare and diplomacy', in J. Shepard and S. Franklin, eds., *Byzantine diplomacy* (Aldershot, 1992), pp. 281-94.

5. G. Dagrón, 'Byzance et le monde islamique au X siècle. Apropos des Constitutions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI', *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (Paris, 1983), pp. 219-43

6. P. Stephenson, 'Imperial Christianity and sacred war in Byzantium', J.K. Wellamn (ed.), *Belief and bloodshed. Religion and violence across time and tradition* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), pp. 81-93

7. W. Treadgold, 'Byzantium, the reluctant warrior', N. Christie and M. Yazigi (eds.), *Noble ideals and bloody realities. Warfare in the middle ages* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 209-33.

## Extracts from Leo VI's *Tactica*

The Byzantine emperor Leo VI (886-912) composed his tactical manual *Tactica* in the mid-890s for the benefit of his military commanders. He states in his preface that his aim is to revive military science in the face of the Arab threat. The *Tactica* comprises 20 books – 'Constitutions'. Much of the contents was drawn from classical and early Byzantine works, but Constitution XVIII, describing foreign peoples, contains up-to-date material and Leo's objective is to apply the received wisdom of 'the ancients' to present-day realities in a methodical way. Note that Leo, in common with other Byzantine writers, referred to his people as 'Romans': that their state was the continuation of the Roman empire was an article of faith. Nonetheless, Leo here indicates that the 'Romans' could learn something from the Saracens in ways of motivating all members of society to make a contribution to the war-effort.

### Constitution XII.71-2 – The value of eloquent kantatores<sup>1</sup>

The work of the so-called kantatores seems to us to be important in the hour of battle; for they are the ones who urge on the troops with speeches, counselling, chanting and urging them into combat. This work is to be done, if possible, by the soldiers and officers themselves. Commanders are to choose suitably eloquent men who are capable of public speaking in front of the troops. For shared toil and sufferings makes those listening more responsive to fellow-soldiers who keep company with them. The kantatores should urge the army to battle on these lines: firstly, reminding them of the rewards which come from faith in God and of remuneration from the emperor, and certain benefits previously bestowed; also that the fight is for the sake of God and for love of Him and on behalf of the entire nation. Or rather, on behalf of brothers of the same faith and (if appropriate) wives, children and country. And that the memory is everlasting of those who are bravest in battles for the freedom of their brothers. And that this sort of struggle is against God's enemies; we have as our friend God, who has the power to determine the outcome of the battle, whereas they, on account of their lack of faith in him, have him as their enemy. And they [the kantatores] should think up anything else like these statements by way of encouragement. For such a speech delivered at the right time has great power to arouse passions, more so than a mass of money.

### Constitution XIV.9-11 – Taking the high ground

If the enemy's army is huge and there is, on account of the masses of men and beasts, a great din or rather an inflated appearance, do not immediately deploy your army on high ground while the enemy is still far away, in case the men take fright immediately, overwhelmed by the sight of the numbers. But position them in some sort of hollow where they cannot catch sight of the enemy or be seen by them. And whenever the enemy is reported – whether by a whole signal or a half signal – to be on the move, then station the troops on the high ground, so that battle may be joined before they take fright. But if such ground cannot be found and the enemy are far away from your force, then deploy it in such a way that the mass of your baggage-train and the animals is visible, and not just the men alone. If you are able to attack the enemy before they have been drawn up in order, while they are still in loose formation, you will be able to do more harm to them.

### Constitution XIV.35-6 – Casualties

After the battle you, o general, must console those soldiers who have been wounded in it, and honour the fallen with a dignified burial, and bless them repeatedly as ones who did not put their own lives before the faith and (the lives of) their brothers. For it is right and holy to do this and it instils zeal into the living. If there are children or a widow (of the fallen) and if it

<sup>1</sup> kantatores is a term derived from the Latin cantator meaning 'singer, minstrel'.

is clear that they died fighting bravely, then you should honour them with appropriate words of comfort.

#### Constitution XIV. 114-16 – The commander's place

In time of battle you (o commander) must rather supervise those who are fighting ... than leap in too boldly yourself and engage in fighting the enemy at close quarters when there is no need for that. In fact you should wholly refrain from hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, even were you to show extraordinary courage. For you will not benefit the army by doing the fighting as much as you will harm it by perishing – a contingency which is not unexpected with those engaged in combat. For if, as the result of a mere false rumour... that the commander has fallen, his people are completely lost, how much greater harm will be done to the army of a commander who really has fallen? Instead, watch keenly from a place of safety for what needs to be done and carry it out. For a commander is more admired when in time of crisis he takes the right decisions, after assessing what he should do in conditions of security.

Constitution XVIII. 15-19 – Self-sacrifice and various other battle-orders and necessary measures to the benefit of your own force and detrimental to the enemy which the Romans [i.e. Byzantines] have learnt from experience in dealing with various peoples: these we have set down so that you may know how to use them for yourself when the occasion requires and so that you can take suitable countermeasures when the enemy use them.

Know, therefore, o commander, that not only must you yourself be committed and loving your country and ready, should the need arise to lay down your life for the true faith of the Christians. You must also see to it that all the officers under you and all the mass of rank-and-file soldiers are of the same mind, so that those already so disposed may be steadfast in this. As for those under your command who are not, they are to be trained through your care and enthusiasm not to be wanting in this virtue but to be patriotic themselves and to be obedient towards their officers, whether from love or from fear. Let them be long-suffering in their labours and undergo battles for their country. And you yourself manage the many matters of concern to you with consideration and good generalship and, together with the force under you, give priority to good order and not boldness and recklessness.

And all of you alike, fighting for Christ our God and on behalf of relatives, friends, your country and the entire people of the Christians, you must grow accustomed to enduring easily the hardship of thirst, the lack of ready money and the afflictions of heat and cold, and nobly to bear with events when, as happens, they turn out for the worse; for your labours are in return for rewards stored up by God Himself and Our Majesty which is of Him.<sup>2</sup> For we, through our abiding solicitude for you, suffer the same ills that you do.

#### Constitution XVIII.42, 44 – the Bulgarians, fellow-Christians but potential enemies

Since I have mentioned Hungarians<sup>3</sup>, it is not inappropriate to make clear how they are arrayed and how to deploy against them. I have learnt this through a fair amount of experience when we used them as allies after the Bulgarians broke the peace treaty and overran the regions of Thrace.<sup>4</sup> Judgement descending upon them [the Bulgarians] for their loutish behaviour towards Christ our God, the emperor of all, was swift to inflict punishment. For while our forces were preoccupied with the Saracens, Divine Providence fielded Hungarians instead of Romans against the Bulgarians. Our Majesty's fleet ferried them across the Danube and assisted them and they overwhelmingly defeated the army of the Bulgarians which had been wickedly mobilized against the Christians [i.e. the Byzantines] in

<sup>2</sup> Here, Leo is invoking one of the axioms of Byzantine political thought: that the emperor's authority was created and sanctioned by God.

<sup>3</sup> The Hungarians were steppe-nomads who, at the time of writing, were dominant in the steppes north of the Black Sea.

<sup>4</sup> The area to the west and north-west of Constantinople.

three battles, as if Providence had sent them out as public executioners of the Bulgarians in order that the Christian Romans should not wittingly be stained with the blood of Christian Bulgarians.<sup>5</sup>

But since the Bulgarians embrace the peace in Christ and share faith in Christ with the Romans [i.e. Byzantines], we do not think to take up arms against them after the episode of their oath-breaking, and now leave it to God to undertake stratagems against them. Accordingly, we are not inclined to describe their battle-order against us or ours against them, seeing that they are our brothers in one faith and declare that they defer to our proposals.

#### Constitution XVIII.110-112 – The Saracens' beliefs

The Saracens are Arabs by race and once lived in the region of the entrance to Arabia Felix.<sup>6</sup> In time they spread to Palestine and Syria, at first for the sake of settlement but later, when Mohammed took charge of their superstitious beliefs, they occupied the aforesaid regions by force of arms, and also Mesopotamia and Egypt and the other countries; for the war of the Romans with the Persians gave them the opportunity to seize the land.

While they consider themselves to be pious towards God, they show their apparent piety to be blasphemy in that they will not allow Christ the true God and Saviour of the World to be called God, but suppose God to be guilty of every kind of evil deed, and they say that God delights in wars – God, who scatters abroad the nations which desire for war. Their own laws they keep inviolate, anointing their bodies and dishonouring their souls. Therefore we fight against this sort of impiety by means of our piety and orthodox faith, and keeping our laws all the more inviolate we campaign against them.

They use camels as draft-animals, instead of wagons, beasts of burden, asses and mules; and (they use) cymbals and drums in their battle-lines, making their own horses accustomed to this, and by means of this sort of crashing and banging they panic the horses of their enemies and put them to flight. And the very sight of the camels likewise frightens the horses which are unused to them, and upsets them, and stops them from moving forwards.

#### Constitution XVIII. 116-117 – Notions about the Saracens

Neither while pursuing nor while being pursued do they [the Saracens] give up their battle-order. But if it should happen to be broken, they become chaotic and cannot be turned round, striving only to save themselves. For they are bold when they hope for victory, but very cowardly when they despair of it. They say that everything comes from God, even if it be bad; so if they happen to suffer some reverse, they do not resist it, as being something decreed by God; and if their attempt at something fails they lose all their momentum. They are somnolent and consequently they fear night engagements and anything to do with them, especially when they are crossing countryside which is foreign to them. Accordingly, either they retreat into naturally strong positions and keep watch there through the night, or they make fast their own camp so that they may not be exposed to the night assaults of the enemy.

#### Constitution XVIII.124-134 – resisting and imitating the Saracens

This people [the Saracens] are susceptible to cold, winter and the downpour of rain. Consequently we must do battle with them in those kinds of weather, rather than in good

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<sup>5</sup> Leo is referring, somewhat delicately, to events in 893-4 when the Bulgarian ruler Symeon made an incursion into Thrace. The Byzantines responded by making an agreement with the Hungarians and ferrying them across the Lower Danube to ravage Bulgaria and kill many Bulgarians.

<sup>6</sup> The fertile portion of Arabia, as against Arabia Deserta.

weather. For then their bows are slack on account of the damp and their entire body will be found to be sluggish on account of the cold. For often when they have been overtaken by the Romans [i.e. Byzantines] in that kind of weather, they have been destroyed.

Preferring, therefore, the fair weather and the warmer seasons, they congregate then and especially in summer, and at Tarsus<sup>7</sup> in Cilicia they join up with the local forces and go on their expedition. At other times only those from Tarsus, Adana and the other towns of Cilicia go on raids against the Romans. One must attack then, and especially when they go out in quest of plunder in winter. This will happen if the armed forces wait in hiding somewhere nearby and keep watch on their exit-point, to mount their attack on them. For in this way they will destroy them, rather than by all going out together in large numbers and equipped in full battle array. For it is wrong, as we have said many times, to risk some people's lives in open war, even though one may seem to have numerical superiority over the enemy. For fortune's ways are unforeseeable.

They [the Saracens] assemble without being conscripted from military rolls<sup>8</sup>, but they come of their own free will and in large numbers – the rich ready to die for their people in exchange for a reward, the poor wanting to gain some of the plunder. Weapons are supplied to them by their fellow-countrymen, women as well as men, as if they were in this way taking part in the expedition with them; and they regard it as a reward for those unable from bodily weakness themselves to bear arms to arm the soldiers. And this is what the Saracens do, a barbarous and faithless people.

The Romans must not merely try to achieve this condition, so that the soldiers may be stout-hearted and those who have not served before may go out together to fight those who have blasphemed against Christ our God the King of All and so that those campaigning on his behalf against the nations may be empowered in every way, through weapons, gifts and accompanying prayers. [The Romans] must also do more than these [Saracens] do, by looking after the families of those who have gone on campaign with enthusiasm and courage; and should something be wanting from the armies, whether horses or money or weapons, then 'they must supply these with alms and solidarity.

For if that ever happens and if the army of the Romans becomes far more numerous and suitably equipped, and especially those men who have been selected for their courage and character, then wanting for none of the necessities, they will easily – with God's help – gain victory over the Saracen barbarians.

For if we Romans have an advantage over the barbarians in weaponry and especially arrows and quantities of missiles and also in manpower, courage and suitable stratagems and engines of war, then we shall have God's aid in every respect, and we shall easily gain victory over them. This people [the Saracens] is easily assembled in huge numbers from Inner Syria<sup>9</sup> and Palestine, evidently due to their hopes of plunder and their lack of fear of the dangers of war. Unmanly persons are induced by such hopes readily to join up with those going out on campaign. But if we are, with the aid of God, well-armed and well-deployed and we attack them bravely and in good heart, fighting for the good of our souls as well as for God himself and our kinsmen and our other Christian brothers, and if we put our faith unquestioningly in God, we shall not fail, but assuredly we shall gain victory over them.

When they attack in search of plunder, you must make ready for them in the Taurus mountain-range, in its narrow passes, for when they wearily withdraw, carrying with them plunder in the form of animals and goods. You must station archers and slingers in places on the heights, to fire on them and acting thus you must also mount attacks with the cavalry or

<sup>7</sup> A major Arab base in south-east Asia Minor, governed by an emir who organized and sometimes himself led expeditions against the Byzantines.

<sup>8</sup> Leo VI implies that, in contrast, Byzantine troops usually were conscripted from lists of eligible males.

<sup>9</sup> i.e. parts of Syria and Mesopotamia south and east beyond Antioch, and thus set back from the front-line with Byzantium.



by whatever means the situation may call for, whether ambushes or other devices, or boulders rolled over cliffs or by blocking the highway with trees and making it impassable... or in whatever way, or general, you assess to befit the situation at that moment.

#### Constitution XVIII.137-42 – The pattern of Arab raids

For most Saracens go out on expeditions not so much from a yearning for glory and reputation as to gain supplies and necessities. For they do not know how to till the land and enable the poor to make their living that way, but they are trained from their youth upwards to live or to die by the sword and by that alone. That is why a single victory over them will free the Romans from many dangers; for when they see that those who have gone out fail to return and are mourned by their loved ones, they will not dare set off without a care.

The Cilician Saracens train their infantry for both kinds of warfare, both that on land through expeditions across the Taurus range and that by sea in the boats which they call koumbaria.<sup>10</sup> When they do not go out on an expedition by land they set off across the sea and raid places near the coast, often, if the occasion arises, fighting a sea battle... You or general, must keep an eye on [the enemy] by means of reliable scouts, gaining accurate information about them. And you must make preparations with a sufficient force so that when they attack by sea you may, if possible, attack them in their own country by land. But when they are about to mount an expedition by land, then you should inform the commander of the Cibyrrheot fleet,<sup>11</sup> and let him with the warships under his command descend upon those regions of the people of Tarsus and Adana that lie by the sea. For the Cilician barbarians do not have very many troops [at home] when they themselves are engaged in expeditions by land and sea.

The chief way to bring about their ruin is for you and a large enough fleet in liaison with the land-forces together with enough of your fellow-commanders to cross the Taurus, and to raid and attack them. And thus you will devastate the land of those robbers, as once our most blessed father and autokrator of the Romans did in his day through his most sacred command.<sup>12</sup>

#### Constitution XVIII.142 – Public Enemy Number One: The Saracens

To recapitulate on all that has been stated above about tactical theory from the beginning to the end, in respect of weapons and equipment, training and orders of battle and the other techniques of strategy: we have set down, recommended and ordained this on account of the people of the Saracens. For this people, bordering upon our State, troubles us now no less than the people of the Persians once used to do to the emperors of old<sup>13</sup>, and it does damage to our subjects day by day, for which reason we have taken on the present task of issuing ordinances for warfare.

#### Epilogue, 19-20 – Know your enemy

I want you to realize that you must in time of war be well-informed as to the nature and general situation of the enemy, and whether their army is very swift in its actions, deciding the issue with the first assault, or whether it has rather been trained for endurance and for long-term operations. And you must yourself have experience of war, whether it is a long-drawn-out affair and involving some outlay of money, or short and sharp through the speed of the attack.

<sup>10</sup> Large, heavy, slow boats used by the Arabs; the term is probably of Arab origin: H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer* (Paris, 1966), pp.92, 414, n.9.

<sup>11</sup> One of the provincial fleets of the empire, based in an administrative unit of the same name in south-west Asia Minor. In this period the commander had approximately 70 ships and 3,000 men under his command.

<sup>12</sup> Leo is referring to a campaign initiated by his father, Basil I (867-86).

<sup>13</sup> i.e. in the late Antique period, 4th-7th century. In fact, Perso-Byzantine relations at that time were more tranquil than Arabo-Byzantine ones proved to be.

### Epilogue, 23-24 – The importance of morale

You must, then, in advance of the dangers, effectively incline the hearts and minds of the soldiers towards the sort of morale proposed here. And you must also skilfully break down the spirit of the enemy into one of fear, idleness and softness, and then set upon them and fight without any delay. For there is no other way in which you will get the better of the enemy, unless you first of all put them under pressure. Do not lead (your men) into dangers from which the enemy will emerge as victors, the opposite of what you intended.

### Epilogue, 69 – The utility of the emperor's manual

So let these rules and models of leadership, rehearsed here by our majesty from experience, stand and be maintained by you, o general, and by the soldiers and civilians under your command. You must train [them] in what is written here with the greatest attention and seriousness. For you will gain profit and advantage from this book so long as you, for your part, take strict account of the stratagems and ordinances [in it]. Then assuredly, even if the enemy use them too, you will easily think up the correct counter-measures to take against them.

## **Martyrdom and the Byzantine war-dead**

(Nikephoros II Phokas (963-9) was the first real soldier-emperor on the Byzantine throne for almost 150 years. His family had roots in Cappadocia and he had been a successful general fighting against the Moslems on the eastern frontier. He was commander of the expedition to liberate Crete in 960-1; his victory there gave him the standing of a popular hero. Once on the throne, he continued to take a keen interest in the reconquest of land from the Moslems, presenting this as part of his mission as emperor. His enthusiasm for constant campaigning and his desire to dignify it, together with the heavy taxes needed to pay for his forces, eventually made him unpopular in various milieus in Byzantium, including the Church. John Skylitzes compiled his Chronicle in the late eleventh century, but drew on a near contemporary source hostile to Nikephoros.)

'[Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas] was also eager to institute a law that the soldiers who perished in battle should be deemed worthy of the privileges of martyrs, placing the salvation of the soul in war alone and not in any other sphere. He urged the patriarch and the bishops to agree to this doctrine, but some of them nobly opposed him and frustrated his plan, putting forward the canon of the great [St] Basil, which states that those who have slain an adversary in a battle should be debarred from Communion for three years.'

(From John Skylitzes, *Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. H.Thurn (Berlin, New York, 1973), pp. 274-5)

## Sample Glossary on Holy War



Agarenes (Greek) Byzantine name for Arabs, Muslims in general

akrai (Greek) borders

Akritas proper name of Digenes Akritas; Akritas is derived from

akrites (Greek) borderer, frontiersman

Allah (Arabic) God

Almohad (name derived from muwahhidun, referring to tawhid, meaning 'concept of the unity of God') Berber fundamentalists, flourished c.1120-1270

Almoravid (name derived from al-murabit'un, referring to the ribat (q.v.) to which Ibn Yasin retreated) Berber fundamentalists, flourished c.1050-c.1150

amir (Arabic) see emir

al-Andalus that part of Spain under Moorish (i.e. Muslim) rule

ansar (Arabic) literally , 'helpers' – inhabitants of Medina who supported Muhammad

caliph see khalif

convivencia (Span.) coexistence

da'i (Arabic) missionary, usually underground movements

dar al-Islam (Arabic) country of Islam, i.e. Muslim countries

dar al-gharb (Arabic) country of war, i.e. neighbouring countries which have refused to convert to Islam

dawla (Arabic) dynasty or state

Digenes proper name of Digenes Akritas; Digenes is derived from di-genes (Greek), two-raced

dimmi (Arabic) free non-Muslim subjects living in Muslim countries who enjoyed protection in return for paying poll-tax (see also Mozarab)

dinar (Arabic) gold coin

dirham (Arabic) silver coin

djihad see jihad

djund (Arabic) army

emir (Arabic) commander, governor

epilektoi (Greek) the elect, the elite members of the Byzantine theme army

euporoi (Greek) the 'well-to-do' (from whom the elite members of the Byzantine theme army were to be recruited, according to Leo VI)

fiqh jurisprudence, the science of religious law in Islam

fitnah (Arabic) civil war

ghazi (Arabic) warrior for the Muslim faith

habus fi sabil Allah (North African Arabic) 'foundation on behalf of God and his religion' = waqf

hadith (Arabic) body of traditions of what the Prophet said or did; these came to be second in authority to the Quran: 'Though not the eternal word of God, like the Quran it represented divine guidance.' (J.Robson in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, III, p.24)

hadj (Arabic) annual pilgrimage to Mecca

hajib (Arabic) chamberlain

haram (Arabic) sanctuary area, esp. around the Ka'ba in Mecca

hijra (Arabic) emigration of Muhammad from Mecca to Medina in 622, i.e. beginning of the Muslim era

imam (Arabic) literally, 'model, exemplar', supreme ruler

indulgence privilege involving remission from penance or sin in return for fulfilment of a vow to go on a Crusade

iqta (Arabic) assignment of right to collect taxes from a district to an individual, normally in return for his military service

Jahweh (Hebrew) Jehovah, God of the Jews

kantatores (Greek from Latin) Byzantine cheerleaders and orators in battle

khalif (Arabic) Deputy (of the Prophet), supreme ruler of the Muslims (anglicized as Caliph)

khilafat (Arabic) spiritual authority:

Latins Byzantine name for Western Christians (from the language which they mostly spoke)

'little themes' small units of administration on the Byzantine Eastern frontier from late ninth century onwards

Mawali (Arabic) literally 'client', but in first century of Islam non-Arab Muslims

miles Christi (Latin) soldier of Christ, term used of warriors going on First Crusade in Gesta Francorum and other works

'military lands' lands registered as carrying special military service obligations in the Byzantine Empire from the reign of Constantine VII (945-59) onwards (see G. Dagron, 'Byzantium and the Islamic model in the tenth century', pp.16-18)

'military rolls' see stratitokoi katalogoi

misthos (Greek) reward

Mozarab Christian Spaniard living under Muslim rule (see also dimmi)

muhajir (plural muhajirun) (Arabic) those who went on the hijra, i.e. accompanied Muhammad on his departure from Mecca to Medina

mulk temporal authority

murabit'un (Arabic) occupants of a ribat (see below)

muwallad (Arabic) one who has converted to Islam

niketerion (Greek) 'victor's trophy' (name of a Byzantine war-cry)

nomos (Greek) law

novel (Greek) a Byzantine imperial law

peregrini (Latin) pilgrims, term used of those going on First Crusade by their contemporaries

politeia (Greek) 'polity' (ensemble of Byzantine State and Church)

'The Prophet' Mohammed

qadi (Arabic) Muslim judge

ribat (Arabic) barracks-cum-monastic houses where warriors for the faith were trained militarily and spiritually for the ihad

ridda (Arabic) apostasy from Islam; the wars in Arabia resulting from 'apostasies' from Muhammad's cause after his death

Romania literally, 'land of the Romans', i.e. the Byzantines; the term is used in Byzantine and Latin Christian sources

saracen name for Muslims used by both Byzantines and Western Christians

sharia (Arabic) Muslim religious law

strategos (Greek) general, commander, military governor

strateia (Greek) special military service obligations incumbent on the proprietors of 'military lands' (from reign of Constantine VII (945-59) onwards) (see G. Dagron, 'Byzantium and the Islamic Model in the tenth century', pp.16-18)

stratiotes (Greek), literally, soldier; also, proprietor of land Carrying strateia (see above)

stratitokoi katalogoi (Greek) 'military rolls', lists of names of persons having a military service obligation

shahid (Arabic) martyr for the faith

suq (Arabic) market theme (Greek) province of Byzantine Empire

thughur (Arabic) Muslim border areas

trisaqion (Greek) 'thrice-holy hymn', a short hymn popular with the Byzantines

umma (Arabic) the Muslim community

walid (Arabic) governor

waqf (Arabic) Muslim charitable foundations 'on behalf of God and his religion'

wazir (Arabic) chief minister