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Crafting the ideal Christian general in Leo VI the Wise's *Taktika*

MA Thesis in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies

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by

Andy Chen

(USA)

Thesis submitted to the Department of Medieval Studies,
Central European University, Budapest, in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the Master of Arts degree in Late Antique, Medieval and Early Modern Studies.

Accepted in conformance with the standards of the CEU.

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Abstract

Early Byzantine military manuals have been drawing more attention in the last decade with the steady publication of critical editions and translations. One of the manuals currently experiencing renewed interest is the *Taktika* of Emperor Leo VI the Wise, a late ninth-/early tenth-century military handbook that has had a significant impact on the genre of Byzantine military literature. Recent treatments of the text—particularly John Haldon’s 2014 commentary and Meredith Riedel’s 2018 book on the religious aspects of the military in the *Taktika*—find instead that the *Taktika* reflects Leo’s wide-ranging articulations on the religious convictions of the Byzantine *oikoumene*.

Despite the increasing attention on the underlying message and place of the *Taktika* in Leo’s ideology for the Byzantine empire, however, so far little work has been done on deconstructing the narrative layers of the text. The manual’s professed aim is to educate generals, and its contents describe the ideal conduct and characteristics of the model general. If the general is the proxy by which Leo articulates a deeper theological argument about the identity of the Christian empire, as Riedel argues, or reacts to his sociopolitical anxieties, such as that of the balance of power between the emperor and élites in the Byzantine administration, then a close examination of the elements which constitute the *Taktika*’s model general is a necessary first step to understand the didactic filter lying between the historian and any "deeper" readings of the manual. In light of this, I offer in this paper an analysis of Leo’s ideal general in the *Taktika*. I argue for a didactic dimension of the *Taktika* and contextualize the development of the archetype of the virtuous and pious general as it eventually appears in the *Taktika* in relation to the manual’s literary tradition in order to demonstrate what Leo means to communicate to readers approaching the text as a handbook. By doing so, I demonstrate both the foundations and innovations of the ideal general of the *Taktika*.

Following a historical review of Leo’s reign and literary production, in Chapter 1 I focus on literary influences and the lineage of the ideal general, with discussion on the genre of military writing in Antiquity and Byzantium and the particular tradition in which the *Taktika* is situated. In Chapter 2, I examine the text of the *Taktika* itself in order to demonstrate how Leo crafts the image of the ideal general in the handbook, as well as how he aims to craft ideal generals out of his audience. I examine particularly details about the structure of the manual, Leo’s selective reception of older sources, and the coherence of didactic and political themes in the manual as a whole.

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Introduction

Early Byzantine military manuals have been drawing more attention in the last decade with the steady publication of critical editions and translations; most recently the *Sylloge Tacticorum* received a book-length treatment by Georgios Chatzelis this year, after Chatzelis and Jonathan Harris collaborated on the first English-language translation of the text in 2017. One of the manuals currently experiencing renewed interest is the *Taktika* of Emperor Leo VI the Wise, a late ninth-/early tenth-century military handbook that has had a significant impact on the genre of Byzantine military literature.

In early scholarship, the *Taktika* was thought to have been the first strategy manual written since the emperor Maurice's sixth-century *Strategikon*, and thus the initiator of what is referred to as the tenth-century revival of military literature during the so-called "Macedonian Renaissance." Alphonse Dain reordered the list of extant military manuals in the first half of the twentieth century after the re-dating of several manuscripts, which Jules-Albert de Foucault edited and published in *Travaux et Mémoires* after Dain's death in 1967.¹ It is now known that between the *Strategikon* and the *Taktika* there exist a number of paraphrases of the *Strategikon*—including the seventh-century *De militari scientia* and the ninth-century *Corpus perditum* and *Apparatus bellicus*—as well as a tripartite ninth-century treatise discussing matters from naval warfare to exhortatory speeches, the *Rhetorica militaris*.² Despite the fact that it cannot be considered a total revival of the genre as such, the *Taktika* is on the other hand still the most extensive and technically detailed surviving manual produced since the structural changes of the Byzantine administration and military in the late seventh and eighth centuries,

¹ Alphonse Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins," ed. Jules-Albert de Foucault, *Travaux et Mémoires* 2 (1967): 315-390.

² For a relatively comprehensive list, see Alphonse Dain, *Les Stratégistes Byzantins*, 340-357. Note that Syrianos Magistros is placed before Maurice, as the dating of his works to the 9th century came after the publication of *Les Stratégistes*.

and the first to have been written by an emperor after the *Strategikon* to date. Furthermore, it is also the first Byzantine military manual to address the person of the general beyond basic adoption of material from the *Strategikon*.³ It became a model for subsequent iterations of tenth-century military manuals, including the *Sylloge tacticorum*, the *De velitatione bellica*, and the *Praecepta militaria*, and prefaces a period in which the copying of classical, Hellenistic, and Roman military texts flourishes. An early tenth-century translation of the text, as well as a later fourteenth-century translation, also survives in Arabic, indicating the *Taktika*'s wide reach.⁴

Literature review and proposal

Among modern commentators, John Pryor and Elizabeth Jeffries argue based on their examination of the treatise on naval warfare in the *Taktika* that the handbook was an antiquarian exercise and not meant for practical application. Other recent treatments of the text—including Haldon's commentary as well as Meredith Riedel's 2018 book on the religious aspects of the military in the *Taktika*—find instead that the *Taktika* reflects Leo's wide-ranging articulations on the religious convictions of the Byzantine *oikoumene*. According to Riedel, Leo expresses "a new perspective on the enemy, on the role of the divine in battle, and on soldiers' Christian cultural identity vis-à-vis Islam."⁵ Leo's demonstrable effort to situate much of the technical information of the *Taktika* within the concerns of the contemporary empire by updating, reformulating, or excising older material, and incorporating information on the structure of the

³ The *Taktika* seems to have spurred more interest in the topic—later manuals, such as the *Praecepta militaria*, *De velitatione*, *On Strategy*, and the *Taktika* of Nikephoros Ouranos address the conduct of the general. Constantine VII's *Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions* and the *Advice and Anecdotes* of Kekaumenos deal similarly with the conduct of the general-emperor.

⁴ Nikolai Serikoff, "Leo VI Arabus? An Unknown Fragment from the Arabic Translation of Leo VI's *Taktika*," *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 4 (2003): 112-118.

⁵ Haldon and Riedel disagree on the practicality of the manual. John Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 44 (2014), 25, and Meredith Riedel, *Leo VI and the Transformation of Byzantine Christian Identity: Writings of an Unexpected Emperor* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 41.

provincial military, furthermore indicates his interest in providing advice relevant to the actual issues impacting the empire.⁶

Despite the increasing attention on the underlying message and place of the *Taktika* in Leo's ideology for the Byzantine empire, however, so far little work has been done on deconstructing the narrative layers of the text. The manual's professed aim is to educate generals, and its contents describe the ideal conduct and characteristics of the model general. If the general in the *Taktika* is the proxy by which Leo articulates a deeper theological argument about the identity of the Christian empire, as Riedel argues, or reacts to his sociopolitical anxieties, such as that of the balance of power between the emperor and élites in the Byzantine administration, then a close examination of the elements which constitute the *Taktika*'s model general is a necessary first step to understand the didactic filter lying between the historian and any "deeper" readings of the manual.

To my knowledge, Irene Antonopoulou's 1994 article on the Byzantine version of the ideal general is the first to provide an overview of the expectations of generals in Byzantine military manuals, from Maurice's sixth-century *Strategikon* to Kekaumenos's eleventh-century *Strategikon*.⁷ While it is useful for examining the impact of certain novelties in the image of the general in Leo's *Taktika* in later Byzantine military literature, her treatment is more concerned with a view of the Byzantine general throughout the centuries, and does not go into much analytical detail. Meredith Riedel's 2018 book likewise contains a chapter on the ideal Christian general, but her treatment focuses more on the impact of the orthodox Christian worldview on the underlying ideologies of the *Taktika* and the general as a culmination of Leo's concept of Byzantine Christian identity. The subtopics of her chapter deal with the character of the ideal general in terms of Leo's Biblical borrowings; correspondences between

⁶ Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue, 2; see also Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI: People and Politics*, 166 and Chapter 7 in general; and Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 42-43.

⁷ Irene Antonopoulou, "Les manuels militaires byzantins: La version byzantine d'un 'chef romain,'" *Byzantiaka* 14 (1994): 95-106.

Constitutions 2 and 20, Constitution 2 and the epilogue, and Constitution 20 and the epilogue; the morale of soldiers when wounded or killed; and the wisdom offered by Leo to his generals. This examination does not seem to include sections of the *Taktika* outside of the prooemion, Constitutions 1, 2, 20, and the epilogue, and her choice of passages for close textual analysis mostly center around scriptural references.⁸

Following this, I would like offer a contextualization of Leo's portrayal of generalship in the *Taktika* by examining its construction within the text in relation to its literary tradition and intellectual history, in addition to the handbook's literary frameworks. Although the *Taktika* certainly contains significant indications of Leo's religious and imperial ideology, it is also fundamentally a didactic text drawing on past models. Leo employed a narrow range of sources and seems to have cared much less about the weight of earlier tradition than preceding Byzantine manuals in terms of structural borrowings, but in terms of content his debt is enormous. No work has been done to my knowledge on the *Taktika's* reception of antique and early Byzantine ideas about the general, during what Dain called "la grande vogue de la copie."⁹

This Byzantine "encyclopedism," as Paul Lemerle called it, has been strongly associated with the 10th century reign of Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus and the publishing activity executed under his commission.¹⁰ In the last decade of scholarship on the subject, however, both the idea of Byzantine encyclopedism and the focus on Constantine as the central figure in this aspect of Byzantine literary and legal culture have been challenged. Paolo Odorico argued in 1990 that texts and activity attributed to Constantine's encyclopedism were in fact part of a larger tradition of compilation that found precedent in pre-10th century collections,

⁸ Riedel, *Leo VI*, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁹ Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins," 353.

¹⁰ Paul Lemerle, *Le premier humanisme byzantine. Notes et remarques sur enseignement et culture à Byzance des origines au X^e siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 266-300.

including gnomologia, florilegia, military writings, and histories.¹¹ In light of the tenth century's "culture of *sylloge*"—its approach to crafting collections by selecting older texts and reconstructing them in a different format and context, so named by Paolo Odorico—Leo's *Taktika* should be examined as part of a tradition of the reception of Hellenistic compilations.¹² Andreas Nemeth and Paul Magdalino have qualified the re-situation of Byzantine collections within this larger tradition with the observation that tenth-century compilation activity was nevertheless unique in its imperial direction and authorship, particularly in the normative nature of its publications.¹³ Although quite broad as a heuristic tool, the acknowledgement of a culture of *sylloge* from Late Antiquity onwards allows for the examination of collection activity before and after the commissions of Constantine's reign as part of a tradition of reception of Hellenistic compilations, rather than a particular innovation of the 10th century.

In this paper I will argue for a didactic dimension to the *Taktika* and contextualize the development of the archetype of the virtuous and pious general as it eventually appears in the manual, in order to demonstrate what Leo meant to communicate to readers approaching the text as a handbook. By doing so, I determine both the foundations and innovations of the ideal general of the *Taktika*. Following a historical review of Leo's reign and literary production, in Chapter 1 I focus on literary influences and the lineage of the ideal general, with discussion on the genre of military writing in Antiquity and Byzantium and the particular tradition in which the *Taktika* is situated. In Chapter 2, I examine the text of the *Taktika* itself in order to demonstrate how Leo crafts the image of the ideal general in the

¹¹ Alexander Kazhdan, C Hannick, J Shephard, and Michael McCormick have all discussed the 10th century as characterised by such encyclopedism.

¹² Paolo Odorico disputes the above characterization in "La cultura della Συλλογή: 1) Il cosiddetto enciclopedismo bizantino. 2) Le tavole del sapere di Giovanni Damasceno," *BZ* 83, no. 1 (1990): 1-21.

¹³ Andreas Nemeth, "Imperial Systematization of the Past: Emperor Constantine VII and his Historical Excerpts" (PhD diss., Central European University, Budapest, 2010); and Paul Magdalino, "Orthodoxy and History in Tenth Century Byzantine Encyclopedism," in *Encyclopedic trends in Byzantium?* edd. Peter Van Deun and Caroline Macé (Leuven: Peeters, 2011), 143-160.

handbook, as well as how he aims to craft ideal generals out of his audience. I examine particularly details about the structure of the manual, Leo's selective reception of older sources, and the coherence of didactic and political themes in the manual as a whole.

Sources and methodology

The *Taktika* survives in two main recensions: the mid-tenth-century luxury manuscript *Laurentianus* LV-4, likely copied for Constantine VII's library, and the late tenth/early eleventh-century *Ambrosianus* B, which shows signs of heavy handling.¹⁴ Early work on the *Taktika* focused on its structural correspondences, language, and novelties, particularly its sections on ethnic and naval warfare in Constitutions 18 and 19.¹⁵ Migne's nineteenth-century *Patrologia graeca* provides an edition and Latin translation of the Ambrosian text, which is significantly longer than the Laurentian in certain Constitutions but appears to be a paraphrase of the Laurentian manuscript.¹⁶ Rezső Vári published an incomplete critical edition of the Laurentian manuscript in 1917, which was used until George Dennis released an edition and the first English translation based on the same manuscript in 2010.¹⁷ Following Vári and Dennis, John Haldon provided a line-by-line critical commentary in 2014 on both of the Laurentian editions, as well as a correspondence between Vári and Dennis. In this paper, I refer primarily to Dennis's Greek edition alongside Haldon's commentary, although I have consulted paraphrases in the *Patrologia graeca* in some sections of Constitution 2 and the

¹⁴ A later eleventh-century manuscript tradition exists but is not often used in scholarship (*Vaticanus* gr. 1164, *Scorialensis* Y-11, and *Barberinianus* gr. 276); manuscripts closest to Leo's time are seen as most authoritative. Ambrosianus is a paraphrase of the contents of Laurentianus, often clarifying ambiguous text in Laurentianus. As far as I can tell, the other major difference is section numbering.

¹⁵ For the classic interpretation of Constitution 18, see Gilbert Dagron, "Byzanz et le modèle islamique au Xe siècle: À propos des constitutions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI," *Comptes rendus de l'academie des inscriptions de belles lettres* (1983): 219-43; and on Constitution 19, see John Pryor and Elizabeth Jeffreys, *The Age of the Dromon: The Byzantine Navy, ca. 500-1204* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).

¹⁶ Leo VI, *Leonis imperatoris Tactica*, (PG 107).

¹⁷ Rezső Vári, *Taktika I-XVIII, A Magyar Honfoglalás Kútfoi: honfoglalás ezredéves emlékére*, ed. Gyula Pauler and Sándor Szilagyi (Budapest: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia, 1900), 11-89; and George Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI the Wise* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010).

epilogue. English translations are a combination of Dennis's and my own, and are marked accordingly.

The source materials analyzed outside of the *Taktika* in this paper are those from which Leo clearly borrowed content and ideas about generalship; as such, they are restricted mostly to military manuals, primarily Onasander's *Strategikos*, Maurice's *Strategikon*, and Polyaeus's *Strategika*, with the exception of the Bible and one parainetical text, Photios's *Kephalaia parainetika*.¹⁸ Onasander's *Strategikos* is taken as the basis of military literature describing the character of the general in this paper, as the earliest known text on the topic to which Leo had access. The ideal general as he appears in Maurice's *Strategikon* is also examined, especially in the gnomologies of Chapter 8, as the *Strategikon* makes extensive use of the *Strategikos* and features heavily both in Leo's tactical borrowings and in his maxims about the behaviour and actions of the general. Correspondences with Polyaeus's stories about the exploits of historical generals are examined where they appear as supplementary information to borrowings or Leo's own contributions.

Methodologically, this paper examines Leo's reception of ancient and Byzantine sources as an independent and creative thinker in a way similar to New Testament scholars' redaction and narrative criticism. "Innovation" with its many facets has not traditionally been a quality accorded to Byzantine authors in modern scholarship, but the *Taktika* inarguably reflects innovation.¹⁹ Leo's revival of a defunct form of imperial writing as a vehicle for his novel interpretation of approaches and solutions to the empire's contemporary military issues

¹⁸ Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, Onasander. *Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, and Onasander*, tr. Illinois Greek Club, Loeb Classical Library 156 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928); George T. Dennis, *Das Strategikon des Maurikios*, tr. Ernst Gamillscheg (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981); and Pseudo-Basil, *Kephalaia Parainetika* (PG 107).

¹⁹ On the concept of "innovation" in Byzantine studies and its actual reception in Byzantium, see Apostolos Spanos, "Was Innovation unwanted in Byzantium?" in *Byzantium Wanted: The Desire and Rejection of an Empire*, ed. Ingela Nilsson and Paul Stephenson. *Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia* 15 (Uppsala: Uppsala University Press, 2014). For a perhaps outdated but prominent opinion on Byzantine innovation, see Herbert Hunger, "On the Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23-24 (1969-70): 15-38.

itself points to a certain degree of stepping outside of the box.²⁰ Riedel's general approach to Leo's work as an author shaping his material for an underlying theological focus is appropriate here specifically to analyze Leo's efforts to shape the sources of the *Taktika* for didactic purposes. Following Riedel, I engage also to some degree with New Testament social location theory as a method of approaching texts—a method which Byzantinists more or less often use, although there is a distinct lack of named methodological apparatuses in Byzantine scholarship at the moment. Social location theory, much as the name suggests, considers the construction of a text in the context of the social location, or position in a social system, of its author.²¹

In describing the ideal general, I have chosen to depart from previous examples in scholarship on the *Taktika* to focus on particular thematic virtues that are prominent in the sources, in order to give more structure to the analysis. This is more customary for scholarship on *Fürstenspiegeln*, or mirrors for princes, and I believe it is appropriate here because of the *Taktika*'s professed didactic aims and its structural parallels with the *Kephalaia parainetika*. Certain correspondences between key words and concepts in the *Taktika* and these Aristotelian-style virtues as they appear in parainetical literature are the basis for my identification of these virtues, although it is possible that this approach makes use of heuristic categories that were not intended in the text itself. I will justify this decision further in the discussion on genre in Chapter 1.

²⁰ Alexander Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850-1000)*, ed. Christine Angelidi (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, Institute for Byzantine Research, 2006), 65.

²¹ For an example of social location in use, see Jerome H. Neyrey, "The Social Location of Paul: Education as the Key," in *Fabrics of Discourse. Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, edd. David Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane Watson, 126-164 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003).

The reign of Leo VI

Leo VI, often styled “The Wise,” acceded to the throne in 886 after the death of his father, Basil I (867-886).²² Born in 866 to Eudokia Ingerina, the former mistress of Michael III (842-867) and subsequently the wife of Basil I, his parentage was under suspicion, and he contended with the question of his own legitimacy throughout his reign. His older half-brother, Constantine, was the son of Basil’s first wife Maria and the first heir to the throne; Constantine’s death in 869/870 elevated Leo to the position of co-emperor and heir, but his education up to that point had reflected his position as second son. Under the religious tutelage of Photios—patriarch in 858-867 as well as 877-886—Leo became widely known for his learning and literary production, but unlike Constantine, never set foot on a battlefield, and had no recourse to the legitimating power of military service. As a consequence, perhaps, his writing is strongly theological, relying on a religious ideology to support his rule. He does not seem to have hesitated to branch out into genres unprecedented in imperial writing, such as military literature and homiletic writing.

Leo’s accession was peaceful, and the empire at the time was in conflict only with the Arabs in the east. Basil had made peace with the Bulgars at the empire’s northern borders in the 860s, and the empire’s western regions of Italy and what remained of its Sicilian territory were calm, although subject to encroachment from the Arabs. The empire had suffered a series of setbacks and defeats at Melitene and Tarsus, from which fortresses the Arabs now launched raids into Byzantine territory both by land and by sea, although Basil successfully defeated a Paulician alliance with the emir of Melitene at Tephrike. Arab incursions came from the Aegean and the Mediterranean as well as from the east. The loss of Crete in 827 and Arab bases in Sicily and southern Italy contributed to the rise of Arab piracy in the Mediterranean;

²² On Leo’s childhood, see Albert Vogt, “La jeunesse de Léon VI le Sage,” *Revue Historique* 174 (1934): 389-428.

Dalmatia was raided in 872, and Syracuse fell in 878 after a nine-month siege. Basil's attempts to regain southern Italy and Sicily failed, but in response to Byzantine weakness at sea he established maritime themes and built a fleet which may have warded off an Arab offensive emerging from Egypt and Syria.²³

Under Leo, the Bulgar peace ended with the abdication of the Bulgarian king Boris-Michael in 889, with whom Basil's peace treaty had been made. Boris-Michael's son Symeon ascended the throne in 893 and began several offensives against the Byzantines following a purported trade dispute; the war involved the Magyars and Pechenegs and eventually culminated with a decisive Byzantine defeat at the Battle of Bulgarophygon in Thrace. Once a new peace treaty was signed, with Byzantium saddled with an annual tribute, Leo turned his attentions to the weak eastern front and to the drafting of the *Taktika*. Against the Arabs, the Byzantines continued to flounder at sea, losing the empire's last outpost in Sicily—Taormina—in the autumn of 902. The most significant damage, including the sack of Thessaloniki in the summer of 904, was dealt by two Byzantine renegades—Leo of Tripoli, and Damianos, the emir of Tyre—who defected to the Caliphate while being held prisoner.²⁴ This clear deficiency in Byzantine maritime power is reflected in the unusual inclusion of a chapter on naval affairs in Leo's *Taktika*. In response to the sack of Thessaloniki, Andronikos Doukas and Eustathios Argyros, two popular *strategoi*, were sent to the eastern frontier; numerous victories under their command boosted Byzantine morale, but in 907 Andronikos Doukas defected to Baghdad after being implicated in a plot against Leo.²⁵ Leo launched attacks on Arab sea bases in Syria and the Mediterranean from 905 to 912, at which point he died and his younger brother, Alexander, acceded to the throne.

²³ Skylitzes 35.158, 132.

²⁴ Skylitzes 33.191; David Frendo and Athanasios Fotiou, *John Kaminiates: The Capture of Thessaloniki*, edited by John Melville-Jones (Perth: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 2000).

²⁵ Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "Revolt of Andronicus Ducas," *Byzantinoslavica* 27 (1966): 23-25.

Some commentators have dismissed the military aspect of Leo's reign as a disaster, but Karlin-Hayter, Mark Whittow, and Shaun Tougher have been much more circumspect about Leo's advances both in the empire's naval defenses and in the development of frontier in the east.²⁶ Karlin-Hayter describes military developments during Leo's reign as having few outright territorial additions, but successful in consolidating Byzantine holdings and strengthening border zones.²⁷ Riedel adds furthermore that Leo's contribution of the *Taktika* reinforced Byzantine Christian identity and military morale against Arab aggressors, epitomizing this articulation with a model of the ideal general.²⁸

Leo's literary production

A large number of works are attributed to Leo which span genres as diverse as legislation, homilies, and poetry.²⁹ Leo's childhood instruction by Photios is evident in the intense interest he showed in theological literature and in ecclesiastical administration; Sophronios Eustratiades and Nikolai Popov have also described Leo as one of the most important Byzantine ecclesiastical poets.³⁰ His religious works include an expansive series of homilies, a one-hundred-and-ninety-chapter treatise on monastic life, an anacreontic ode on the Second Coming, eleven Morning Hymns, and a number of other encomia, prayers, *kanons*, and *troparia*.³¹ At his direction, a *diatyposis* listing the archbishoprics and metropolitan sees of the empire was compiled. He wrote non-religious poetry addressed to his brother Alexander and to the general Andronikos Doukas; Michael Psellos and John Skylitzes also indicate that he

²⁶ Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "When Military Affairs Were in Leo's Hands: a note on Byzantine foreign policy (886-912)," in *Studies in Byzantine Political History: Sources and controversies* (London: Variorum, 1981), 39; Mark Whittow, *The Making of Byzantium*, 314-315; and Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI: People and Politics* (London: Brill, 1997), 166.

²⁷ Karlin-Hayter, "When Military Affairs Were in Leo's Hands," 29.

²⁸ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 17-18.

²⁹ For a more comprehensive overview of works attributed to Leo, see Theodora Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 14-23.

³⁰ Sophronios Eustratiades, "Λέων ὁ Σοφὸς καὶ τὰ ποιητικὰ αὐτοῦ ἔργα," *Ῥωμανὸς ὁ Μελωδὸς* 1 (1932-33): 69-81.

³¹ Attributed to Leo in liturgical books.

wrote letters, though there are none extant. He wrote a funeral oration for Basil, the first in three hundred years to deal with a purely secular personality after the revival of the genre by Theodore Stoudite. These do not include certain *karkinoi* verses and epigrams under the name of “Leo the Philosopher,” which belong to the ninth-century archbishop of Thessalonica, or the *Oracles*, two groups of poems on the fate of the Empire that have been attributed to Leo because of his prophetic reputation. His legislative contributions by far dwarf the contributions of all Byzantine emperors after Justinian.³² His publications include the six-volume *Basilika*—the completion of his father’s legal codification program—and the succeeding *Novels*, both of which dealt with secular as well as ecclesiastical law. The *Book of the Eparch* and the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, texts dealing with the organization of Byzantine bureaucratic mechanisms, were also released under his name with the weight of imperial law.³³ A collection of 190 maxims called the *Pattern of Guidance for Souls* has likewise been attributed to him. On the other hand, the *Taktika* is his only military work.

The range of Leo’s publications are ample evidence for his erudition and scholarly dedication, contributing to the epithet he earned during his own lifetime—Leo “the Wise.” As seen in his extant work, especially the *Novellae*, Leo’s writing is typically didactic and classicizing, reflecting his learning. In his reputation for wisdom and his self-styling as “peaceful” (εἰρηνικός), he aligned himself with the Old Testament image of Solomon the law-giver to Basil I’s David, the founder of the Macedonian dynasty.³⁴ Leo’s publications,

³² Between the rule of Justinian (527-565) and 1453, Leo enacted approximately one-third of all new laws. Marie Theres Fögen, “Legislation in Byzantium: A Political and Bureaucratic Technique,” in *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth–Twelfth Centuries*, ed. Angeliki Laiou and Dieter Simon (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 54.

³³ Nicolas Oikonomedes, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX^e et X^e siècles: introduction, texte, traduction, commentaire* (Paris: Editions du Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique, 1972), 28.

³⁴ “Peaceful” is the literal meaning of the name Solomon. The Old Testament was used as a historical road-map and a source of prophecy, the narrative ‘types’ of which could be superimposed on contemporary affairs either to provide *exempla*, by which a ruler might be praised or corrected, or to invoke a *typos*, finding a prophetic representation of an Old Testament paradigm in a contemporary event or figure. The use of such ‘types’ in the imperial Byzantine context originates from Eusebius of Caesarea, who introduced reference to Biblical figures and architectural foundations in the Bible as a panegyric tool, among other established encomiastic comparisons. On the relationship between Byzantine imperial self-fashioning and Old Testament imagery, see Paul Magdalino

particularly his judicial writings, have been described as an effort to organize, modernize, codify, and apply prior and present knowledge to the improvement of the Byzantine empire; the title of his *Novellae*, “the purifications for correcting the laws” (αἱ τῶν νόμων ἐπανορθωτικαὶ ἀνακαθάρσεις), certainly imparts this sentiment.³⁵ Antonopoulou notes that Leo’s homiletic epilogues reinforce his image as the shepherd of the Roman people, “calling for God’s protection of the chosen emperor and his people.”³⁶ This is no less true for the *Taktika*, the legislative tone of which I will discuss in Chapter 2.

and Robert Nelson, “Introduction,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 4; Claudia Rapp, “Old Testament Models for Emperors in Early Byzantium,” in *The Old Testament in Byzantium* (175- 197), ed. Paul Magdalino and Robert Nelson (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2010), 175; Catherine Jolivet-Lévy, “L’image du pouvoir dans l’art byzantin à l’époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867-1056),” *Byzantion* 57 (1987): 441-470; and Athanase Markopoulos, “Constantine the Great in Macedonian historiography,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium 4th to 13th centuries. Papers from the Twenty-Sixth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St Andrews, March 1992*, ed. Paul Magdalino. Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies, 2 (Aldershot: Variorum, 1994), 171-179. For God granting Solomon the power to decide right and wrong, see 1 Kings 3:9.

³⁵ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 5.

³⁶ Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI*, 43.

Chapter 1

In this chapter I would like to address genre and reception with regards to the *Taktika*, particularly because of the insights they give on the didactic nature of the handbook and on the ideological lineage of Leo's general. I first examine the genre of military manuals and confirm the *Taktika*'s place within the military manual tradition. I propose that the *Taktika*, along with other military texts on generalship, also belong somewhat to the *Fürstenspiegel* genre, in order to situate them within a parainetical framework and to explain a my analytical approach in Chapter 2. I then suggest a didactic reading of the *Taktika* through Leo's choice of genre and discuss "usefulness" as a marker of both the didactic nature of the military manual genre and the manual's applicability as a teaching text. Finally, I establish preliminary images of the generals in Onasander's *Strategikos* and Maurice's *Strategikon*.

Genre

The ancient corpus of what is today called "military writing" existed in the late Classical period at the latest and was maintained in the Roman education system as part of a series of professional textbooks.³⁷ Polybius describes these manuals as part of the training of generals, alongside the guidance of seasoned generals and personal experience.³⁸ In this sense the theories presented within these manuals, and the manuals themselves, have been assumed to have had a practical dimension, which lent themselves to realities that professionals in the field might face. In the Byzantine era as well, the authors of military manuals professed the

³⁷ Topics included agriculture, rhetoric, architecture, etc. See Brian Campbell, "Teach Yourself How to Be a General," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987), 18.

³⁸ Polybius, *Histories*, 9.8.1.

intention that such manuals would help their stated target audience— generals— advance their abilities in the area of tactical theory.³⁹

In any treatment of a textual continuity, the legitimacy or heuristic functionality of a genre, and then beyond that genre, a tradition, is always a matter of debate; this is no less true in the relationship between ancient military manuals and their Byzantine counterparts.⁴⁰ The corpus of what is generally considered “military writing” is extremely diverse in structure and content, and there is a clear separation between ancient and Byzantine manuals that is not really discussed. What often becomes grouped under the heading are works that in some way deal with military matters as their primary focus, despite differences in source materials and approach. The question of genre has come up in scholarship on ancient military writing more frequently than on Byzantine military writing, though in general, literature on the topic is quite sparse.⁴¹ What topics exactly can be considered to be ‘military matters’ can be debated, and legal writing such as sections of military law within the Theodosian and Justinian Codes come to mind; however, within the field there seems to be a large degree of agreement on which texts belong in the genre and which do not. “Military science” texts share one or more of three purposes: 1) as utilitarian handbooks for field generals preparing for war; 2) as textbooks for officers, possibly in some sort of training program; and 3) as entertainment for the literati and

³⁹ Onasander, *Strategikos*, Prologue, 4-5; Maurice, *Strategikon*, Prologue, 21-27; and Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue 5, 8; 20.1.7.

⁴⁰ By genre here I refer to the structuralist sense, in which items may belong based on criteria; by literary tradition I mean the continuity of a canon of writing recognized in some way by the writers themselves, i.e. a selective process where certain texts are handed down through generations; by addressing this as a heuristic I mean that the categories with which we approach both genre and literary traditions are often anachronistic or imposed.

⁴¹ For discussion of the genre of military treatises, see Luigi Loreto, “Il generale e la biblioteca. La trattatistica militare greca da Democrito d’Abdera ad Alessio I Comneno,” in *Lo spazio letterario della Grecia antica*, edited by Guiseppe Cambiano, Luciano Canfora and Diego Lanza, (Rome, 1995), 563–89; Maurice Lenoir, “La littérature *De re militari*”, in *Les littératures techniques dans l’Antiquité romaine: statut, public et destination, tradition* ed. Claude Nicolet (Geneva: Fondation Hardt, 1996), 77–108; Guisto Traina, “Polemologia,” in *Letteratura scienti ca e tecnica di Grecia e Roma* edited by Carlo Santini, Ida Mastroianni and Antonio Zumbo (Rome, 2002), 425–44; Jose Vela Tejada, ‘Warfare, History and Literature in the Archaic and Classical Periods: The Development of Greek Military Treatises’, *Historia* 53 (2004), 129–46; and somewhat less, Conor Whately, “The Genre and Purpose of Military Manuals in Late Antiquity,” in *Shifting Genres in Late Antiquity* ed. Geoffrey Greatrex and Hugh Elton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015), 250-252.

elite.⁴² They are generally divided between those which provide *exempla*, and those which discuss detailed information on manoeuvre execution. Further divisions that have been discussed include Krentz and Wheeler's, which differentiates between a focus on description, in the sense where the manual discusses information relevant for contemporary combat, and a focus on theory, where the manual discusses a system of military management, ideals, or reforms; and Vincenzo Guiffre's, which divides them among those which address "l'art militaire," to use the words of Lenoire, and those which address personal conduct and discipline.⁴³

Analysis of military literature in scholarship seems to have divided naturally into sub-genres—that is, categorical divisions that are be found within the corpus of these military texts. Asclepiodotus's *Tactica* (late first century BC), Aelian's *Tactica theoria* (AD 106-13), and the first part of Arrian's *Ars Tactica* (AD 136/7), for instance, form an antiquarian sub-grouping with nearly identical language, content, and structure focusing on the tactical exposition of the Macedonian phalanx. This seems to reflect authors' own aims with military treatises, despite some lack of agreement among sources themselves on what exactly constitutes "tactics" or "strategy," as well as what information is necessary to teach "generalship."⁴⁴ The tendency, furthermore, in the Byzantine period to create collections of extracts of a single preceding text also somewhat complicates the sub-genre groupings. Eric McGeer identifies rough topics of discussion— tactics, strategy, generalship, siege warfare (poliorcetics), naval treatises,

⁴² Connor Whatley, "Genre and Purpose," 255-261.

⁴³ In this division, Maurice and Vegetius are the only manuals grouped firmly in the "contemporary combat" category; see Peter Krentz and Everett Wheeler, *Polyaenus: Stratagems of War* (Chicago, IL: Ares Publishers, Inc., 1993), xvii. Vincenzo Guiffre, *La letteratura «de re militari». Appunti per una storia degli ornamenti militari* (Naples: Iovene, 1974), 11-13; and Lenoir, "La littérature," 77.

⁴⁴ Aelian explains in his *Tactics* that Aeneas treats the science of military movements as 'tactics,' while Polybius describes with the same word the organization and practical training of novices. Aelian himself professes to deal with 'tactical theory' as a particular area of knowledge (μαθήματα). Aelian, *Tactics*, 3.4.

rhetoric, and stratagems— and groups them all into a Byzantine corpus he calls “military science.”⁴⁵

In my opinion then, the grouping of such military texts as discussed is neither arbitrary nor specious. In considering military manuals of the Byzantine period, on the other hand, it is necessary to note that the balance between the literary and documentary dimensions of such manuals changes with the *Strategikon* of Maurice, and the focus on warfare theory transitions into a mixed focus both on theory and on practical, day-to-day military concerns. This shift in the Byzantine reception of the genre is further impacted with the influence of Leo’s *Taktika*, which maintains strong legal and religious dimensions by means of its language and its structure. Despite these changes, however, I would argue that—in addition to the most important requirement, martial subject matter—the overall continuities in structure and topics of discussion, as well as their debts to preceding military treatises as structural exemplars and source texts, establish Byzantine manuals up to the *Taktika* as continuators of the classical genre.

In fact, the acknowledgement of a sub-category of writings on generalship within the genre of military writing makes it easier to situate the *Taktika* among its predecessors, and narrows down the conceptual precursors to Leo’s ideal general. Leo is surprisingly selective in his use of earlier material, which does not necessarily minimize its extra-generic influences, which I will address in the following section, but which allows us to infer what images of the general Leo was aware of within the genre. Onasander’s *Strategikos*, the main source for Leo’s borrowings on the character of the general, is possibly the only antique text dealing with ‘generalship’ *per se*, inasmuch as it discusses what the person of the general himself should be like as if it has consequences for the success of an army; as such, it is an anomaly within the

⁴⁵ But refrains from dealing with them as a genre *per se*. E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon’s Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington DC, 1995), 171.

genre of military manuals. Despite the influence of the *Strategikos* later in the medieval period, Maurice's *Strategikon* and Leo's *Taktika* are the first treatises to discuss the person of the general after Onasander's *Strategikos*, and Leo's the first to do so to a similar degree.

Extra-generic considerations

One factor that must be taken into account in contextualizing Leo's characterization of the ideal general is the influence of literature from outside of the military manual tradition. As a relatively wide-ranging genre, military manuals engage with other forms of writing which overlap in subject matter; in the case of the *Taktika* specifically, scholars have noted significant ideological correspondences with the *Kephalaia parainetika* on the topic of religious and moral proscriptions.⁴⁶

As mentioned in the discussion on methodology in the introduction, one of the decisions I have made in approaching Leo's ideal general in this paper is to use virtues as a point of reference. My reasoning is that Leo's description of the general in the *Taktika* shares many similarities with descriptions of the ideal ruler in earlier *mirrors for princes*, especially the *Kephalaia parainetika*. In my opinion it is useful to consider military manuals that deal with generalship such as the *Strategikos* and the *Taktika* as "mirrors for generals," in that, like *Fürstenspiegeln*, they provide maxims and examples for prospective or mature generals to follow in the interests of developing their skills and competence towards an ideal model.⁴⁷ This information is fundamentally didactic in nature. Dimitar Angelov describes two types of Byzantine *mirrors*: the first are speeches in literary form, for instance Synesius of Cyrene's *On Kingship*; and the second consists of collections of chapters, featuring an acrostic, and

⁴⁶ I will note these as they appear in Chapter 2. On the authorship of both parts of the *Kephalaia Parainetika*, see Athanase Markopoulos, "Autour des Chapitres parénétiques de Basile 1er," in Εὐνοχία: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler, II. *Byzantina Sorbonensia* 16 (1998): 469-479. For a discussion on martial masculinity and the masculine ideal, see Michael Stewart, "The Soldier's Life: Early Byzantine Masculinity and the Manliness of War," *Byzantina Symmeikta* 26 (2016):

⁴⁷ *Feldherrenspiegeln*, for the teutonically-inclined.

presenting precepts of political wisdom in gnomic form, such as Agapetos's *Ekthesis*.⁴⁸ In many ways, military manuals on generalship fit the second type of *mirror*, especially sections such as the gnomology of Leo's *Taktika*.⁴⁹ Similarly to *mirrors for princes*, in the manuals which I discuss in this paper, categories such as “justness,” “temperance,” and “prudence” stand out very prominently in discussion on the general’s moral character. I demonstrate in Chapter 2 that approaching such texts through the lens of parainetical literature helps, rather than hinders, our understanding of the ideal general, and thus the *Taktika* as a whole.

The *Kephalaia parainetika* consists of two texts: the first, influenced by Pseudo-Isocrates and Agapetos, is a gnomological *mirror for princes* attributed to the two-time patriarch Photios, written for Leo on behalf of Basil I.⁵⁰ Consisting of 66 sections forming an acrostic, it discusses the ideal qualities of the Byzantine ruler. The second part is a much shorter treatise consisting of other advice “from the emperor Basil to his son Leo.” Significantly, as Markopoulos notes, the *mirror* breaks with tradition and does not discuss the military strength or legitimate origins of a ruler, but rather focuses on virtuous qualities, advising that the young ruler should be pious and well-read so that he might apply his knowledge to all parts of his rule.⁵¹ Both parts of the *Kephalaia parainetika* discuss faith in God, respect for priests, mercy, the study of sacred texts, love of peace, courage and prudence, and justice.

Content and structure parallels with the *Kephalaia parainetika* primarily in the gnomology of the *Taktika*, but also scattered throughout the handbook in general, make it likely that Leo was consciously situating at least part of the work—especially the part dealing with the character and moral quality of the general—within a parainetical tradition. These parallels furthermore emphasise the didactic dimensions of the *Taktika* and possibly Leo’s intentions in

⁴⁸ Dimitar Angelov, *Imperial ideology and political thought in Byzantium (1204-1130)* (Cambridge: CUP, 2007), 185.

⁴⁹ I will discuss this further in the section on the gnomology in Chapter 2.

⁵⁰ Pseudo-Basil, *Kephalaia Parainetika* (PG 107).

⁵¹ Markopoulos, “Autour des Chapitres parénétiques de Basile 1er,” 470.

seeing his proscriptions become reality. The reason I am suggesting that the *Taktika* fits within the genre of the *Fürstenspiegel* is because the boundaries between such advisory handbooks are very indistinct, and there is significant overlap between topics of advice. The only major differences are the position of the addressee, the reflection of this position in the advice presented in such handbooks, and the range of topics addressed. Classical scholars too have noted strong parallels between Onasander's *Strategikos* and Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft*; in the Byzantine era, furthermore, these two separate forms of *mirrors* merge in Constantine VII's tenth century *De administrando imperio*, which deals with how the emperor should conduct himself as a general on campaign.⁵²

Military manuals and “usefulness”

So far I have made a number of statements about the didactic function of the manual and Leo's interest in crafting an ideal general. In line with this, I would like to examine the fundamental supposition that military manuals are inherently practical didactic texts, meant to instruct generals either on practicable military knowledge or on theoretical military considerations, within the context of the genre. Haldon, based on Leo's personal inexperience, is hesitant to claim that Byzantine manuals were meant to be applied in real-life military situations, emphasizing the *Taktika* as a political exercise with strong theological underpinnings; Riedel on the other hand presents it as a novel solution to the empire's long-standing problem with Islam by means of close reading of the text of the manual, arguing for the importance of the ideological program of the handbook over the practical.⁵³ I would like to suggest that Leo's choice of genre also provides clues for the purpose of the manual. Given the eruption of war in the Balkans and Arab military power encroaching in both the East and the

⁵² Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 162-183.

⁵³ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 33-34.

West during Leo's reign, I think that the idea that Leo chose to write a military treatise partially to provide the beginnings of an instructional canon for the rehabilitation of the military as part of his self-representation as the caretaker of the Roman people under Christ is another, perfectly reasonable layer of interpretation of the project of the *Taktika*.⁵⁴ In this section I will discuss the didactic nature of military manuals in particular through the question of their inherent "usefulness."⁵⁵

A recurring question in the historiography of the study of military manuals concerns the actual applicability of their contents in real military situations—whether they discuss the character of the general, siege engines, or infantry armor—which effects both our understanding of the nature of such texts and our ability to mine them for historical and technical information. When a manual claims to deliver "useful" information for the enrichment of its audience, is it actually useful? Ancient and medieval military manuals balance between modern concepts of documentary sources and literary sources, Byzantine manuals especially; this inevitably leads to a debate on factual information versus literary flourish or formula.

In scholarly discussion, there have been two distinct approaches to usefulness. The first deals with the authority of the author and presumes that personal military experience is necessary to write a handbook that is appropriate for application in real life circumstances. The other, which corresponds more closely with manual authors' own ideas of usefulness, deals with the relevance of the information presented within the handbook and asserts that 'usefulness' is inherently tied to precise directions in the management of the army and the battlefield in contemporary circumstances.

⁵⁴ In light of this, I demonstrate later in Chapter 2 that despite Leo's personal inexperience on military subjects, the *Taktika* was meant to teach, and as such is structured in a way to do so.

⁵⁵ I recognize that what is taught does not necessarily have to be useful, but given the insistence of manuals that they impart "useful" (χρήσιμος) information to their audiences, I connect didactic intent in the manuals with the communication of useful knowledge.

Brian Campbell, in the first introductory attempt to examine the ancient Roman heritage of military manuals, determined in 1987 from a survey of selected manuals that writers of these manuals had no personal experience with warfare with the exceptions of Frontinus and Arrian; in his eyes, this impacted the legitimacy—indeed, the practical ‘usefulness’— of these military manuals to their audiences. It is possible, he suggested, that Roman writers simply accepted the theoretical precepts of Greek military writers, whom Romans held as the superior military theorists.⁵⁶ Catherine Gilliver returned to the topic in her 1993 PhD dissertation to modify Campbell’s analysis, although she arrived at roughly the same conclusion about the connection between usefulness and personal experience. She demonstrated in fact that, taking lost works with known authors, neglected artillery manuals, and fragmentary treatises into account, the majority rather than the minority of authors had military experience. Authors lacking experience, she noted, were primarily Greek philosophers situated within a strong Greek literary and philosophical tradition; engagement in military writing was seen as an illustration of the author’s wide-ranging repertoire.⁵⁷ The vocal doubts of ancient authors themselves likely did not help their cases in modern scholarship—Aelian, for instance, admits his anxiety to his patron, the emperor Hadrian, over both his own military experience and the relevance of the undertaking of his second-century *Tactics* in the *praefatio* of the treatise: “Weighing my own ignorance of the science and practice of arms so esteemed by the Romans, I felt some apprehension at the thoughts of writing on this half-dead branch of the military arts [of the Greeks], which some might deem obsolete [since the invention of Roman tactics].”⁵⁸

There are a number of issues with tying practical use with personal experience. First, the strength of the manual tradition—exemplified by the tradition of writing about Greek

⁵⁶ Campbell, “Teach Yourself How to Be a General,” 19.

⁵⁷ Catherine Gilliver, “The Roman Art of War: Theory and Practice. A study of the Roman Military Writers.” PhD diss. (London, University College, 1993), 18. For a list of known treatises from the Roman period in the rough order of dating, extant and lost, see *ibid.* 12-17.

⁵⁸ Aelian, *Tactics*, Pref. 3.

tactical precepts—makes the personal experience of authors largely immaterial to the “accuracy” of a tactical text in some circumstances, inasmuch as they refrain from modifying tactical teachings to fit contemporary circumstances.⁵⁹ Furthermore, the inclusion of outdated or contextually useless information, retained in the interests of presenting a ‘complete’ and sufficient treatise, is for instance usually customary in the tradition and not a marker of inexperience or ignorance.⁶⁰ Second, as a consequence of writing about obsolete tactical topics, many “experienced” manual authors provided exempla in their antiquarian manuals mostly with equally ancient examples—for instance, Frontinus, a campaigning general and the author of the late-first-century *Strategems*, used his personal experience in Germany as a commander under Domitian only sparingly to supply examples for older Greek and Roman military material, preferring borrowed literary examples instead. Third, there are authors like Onasander, who admit to having no military experience, but whose manuals enjoy long traditions of practical application.⁶¹ Finally, there is also the fundamental issue in assuming the readership of these handbooks, given a general lack of relevant extant testimonies—if such manuals were distributed as entertainment, then criteria by which scholars judge their ‘usefulness’ may be entirely misplaced. The question of the practicality of these manuals lay not in the experience of their authors but in the authority of their faithfully reproduced contents; as literary productions, written in high style and directed towards emperors and the court literati, the substance was in the re-treatment of established military authorities.

The second approach—the association of “usefulness” with instructions appropriate for contemporary military circumstances—judges the practicality of the manual not by its

⁵⁹ That is not to say that the personal experience of authors of military tactics has no use at all; in fact, most scholarly treatment of military writing in the Roman era has been in the interests of mining historical information, rather than engagement with the texts as parts of a genre in themselves.

⁶⁰ Aelian, for instance, includes information on chariot and elephant warfare that he explicitly acknowledges is useless. Aelian, *Tactics*, 27.1.

⁶¹ Up to Maurice of Saxony in the eighteenth century.

author, but by its contents. This assumes to some degree that we have the means to determine what information in treatises, tactical or otherwise, would have been useful to their audience at the time it was written. Ancient and Byzantine manuals differ greatly on this matter as an inherent characteristic of the genre. As mentioned above, ancient manuals tend towards the theoretical, with their focus on Greek and Roman “schools” of tactics; Byzantine manuals on the other hand, beginning with Maurice, emphasize practicality. The *Strategikon*—a rupture that divides ancient and medieval manuals in the Greek tradition—has been long acknowledged in military manual scholarship as the first of a new type of military manual.⁶² The late 6th century treatise splits from its predecessors in several respects: it uses straightforward, uncomplicated language rather than high literary register, including professional jargon and idioms comprehensible to educated officers; it employs a prolific amount of documentary sources outside of the military manual tradition; and it focuses on the practical maintenance of an army, rather than on strategy and tactical theory.⁶³ The linguistic changes alone point to a different intended readership and effect, and reflects a new turn in the writing of tactical manuals—that is, a turn towards contemporary practicalities. The inclusion of non- or sub-literary texts is not based on any existing literary tradition, and while Maurice shows awareness of the military manual tradition, antiquarian texts appear mostly in the structure and argumentation styles of the *Strategikon*.

The *Taktika* imitates the *Strategikon* in these ways: it employs a more accessible register; it finds information from sources previously unused in the military manual tradition; and it concerns itself with the execution of advice provided in its contents.⁶⁴ Leo’s emphasis in

⁶² Most recently, in Philip Rance in his study of Maurice’s reception of Aelian and Arrian: Philip Rance, “Maurice’s *Strategikon* and ‘the Ancients’: the Late Antique Reception of Aelian and Arrian,” in *Greek Taktika: Ancient Military Writing and its Heritage*. Proceedings of the International Conference on Greek *Taktika* held at the University of Toruń, 7-11 April, 2005, edited by Philip Rance and Nicholas Sekunda (Gdańsk: University of Gdańsk, 2017), *passim*.

⁶³ Rance, “Maurice’s *Strategikon*,” 217-9.

⁶⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue, 6: “After devotedly giving our attention to the ancient, as well as to the more recent, strategic and tactical methods, and having read about further details in other accounts, if we came across anything in those sources that seemed useful for the needs of war, we have collected it. Those things that we have learned

the prologue on the usefulness (τὸ χρήσιμον) of the manual and how this usefulness derives from recording what has been put into practice by ancient authorities (αὐτοῖς ἔργοις παρὰ τῶν παλαιῶν ἐγγυμνασθεῖσαν) corresponds with adjustments and updates in the content of the *Taktika* itself. Leo was also a non-campaigning emperor, and as such the *Taktika* has suffered from certain dismissals in scholarship based on the presumption that Leo's inability to apply personal military experience invalidated the possibility that he might have meant to affect and direct real military affairs through the *Taktika*.⁶⁵ This assumes first that Leo needed personal experience to contribute tactical content applicable to real-life situations, second that Leo himself would take his own lack of personal experience as an indication that he had no authority over such matters, and third that the circumstances did not demand it of him regardless. I believe that there is no reason that Leo's inexperience in the field might prevent him from seriously attempting to give advice on the matter, especially given the importance of the provincial military to the administration of the empire as a whole.⁶⁶ Much of his advice is taken from established military authorities, and the manual itself exhibits extensive research and editing.⁶⁷ At least some of the advice that he preserved and added to existing military knowledge was considered by active generals following him to be useful— Nikephoros II

from our own limited experience of active duty....we now pass on to you as best we can... We have paid no heed to the strictures of good diction or fine sounding words. Our concern, rather, has been with practicality, clarity of expression and simplicity of style. We have frequently clarified the ancient Greek tactical terms and we have translated Latin ones into Greek equivalents. We have also employed certain other expressions in common military usage to make it easier for the reader to understand them." Dennis, trans., *The Taktika of Leo VI the Wise*, 7-9.

⁶⁵ With regards to the tactical information, Haldon asserts that the *Taktika* could not have been seriously meant to instruct field commanders on the minutiae of campaign realities, who would have had much more experience than Leo, a non-campaigning emperor. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 25.

⁶⁶ Anthony Kaldellis, in a private communication, reminded me that there existed— and still exist— plenty of serious armchair generals; for a more in-depth discussion, see Meredith Riedel, *Leo VI and the Transformation of Byzantine Christian Identity: Writings of an Unexpected Emperor* (Cambridge: CUP, 2018), 56-58. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 25. For more on the significance of Leo as the first in a series of non-campaigning emperors, see Shaun Tougher, "The Imperial Thought-World of Leo VI: The Non-Campaigning Emperor of the Ninth Century," in *Byzantium in the ninth century: dead or alive?: Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1996*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 51-60, *passim*.

⁶⁷ Memorably in one account, by sending the *magistros* Leo Katakylas to dig up historical records in Sigriane monastery; such material must not have been readily available in the capital. See John Haldon, *Constantine Porphyrogenitus, Three Treatises on Imperial Military Expeditions*, CFHB 28 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1990).

Phokas, for instance, a campaigning emperor, takes liberally from the *Taktika* in his own *Praecepta Militaria*, and references it again in his treatise on skirmishing.

The *Taktika*, then, is able to be applied as a teaching text, which corresponds to claims within the text that the purpose of the manual is didactic. Given this, I think it is reasonable to argue that Leo genuinely meant for the *Taktika* to function as instructional material of some sort of up-and-coming military officers.

The model of the general in the *Taktika's* direct lineage

Onasander's *Strategikos*

Onasander's *Strategikos* is an outlier within the corpus of ancient military manuals, inasmuch as it discusses what the person of the general should be like and what overall options are available for a general to influence the outcome of a war, rather than what particular military manoeuvres the army should perform in combat. Consisting of 42 short chapters, the main body of the work focuses on ruses available to the general to use before and during a battle, with subthemes of the general's courage and of just war. His work is the earliest in a sub-genre of military writing that focuses on generalship, or as I call them, "mirrors for generals."⁶⁸ Out of the various sources from which Leo drew for the *Taktika*, the *Strategikos* contributed the most to Leo's explicit depiction of the ideal general.

Onasander was a Greek philosopher writing in the mid-1st century AD, but not much else is known about him; a reference in the Suda attributes to him a lost commentary on Plato's Republic. He dedicated the *Strategikos* to the consul and governor Quintus Veranius. Modern scholarship seems to agree that Onasander had no military experience—which is supported by

⁶⁸ I will not enter an extended discussion on genre here. For more on military writing as a genre, see footnote 4. On *Fürstenspiegeln* as a Byzantine genre, see Herbert Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* (Munich, 1978), 157-164, and Hana Coufalová Bohrnová, "Mirrors for Princes: Genuine Byzantine Genre or Academic Construct?" *Graeco Latina Brunensia* 22.1 (2017): 5-16.

his own oblique admission to unoriginality and inexperience—despite writing what would become a highly influential military text throughout the Byzantine period up to the Renaissance.⁶⁹ Philip Rance describes the *Strategikos* as a philosophical treatise addressed to well-born aspirants to high command, rather than a specimen of scientific literature.⁷⁰ A moderate amount of scholarly work has been done on the *Strategikos* as a text; an article by Christopher John Smith in 1998 however is the most recent treatment that directly addresses ideas of the ideal general.⁷¹

In focusing on the general's character rather than on battlefield technicalities, the *Strategikos* reflects the attitude that moral virtue is the starting point for technical expertise, parallel to Cicero's claim that a good commander should both know military science and also possess *virtus*, *auctoritas*, and *felicitas*. Smith finds connections to Xenophon in Onasander's focus on the psychological qualities of leadership, citing 5th and 4th century developments in literature towards more realistic depictions of human behaviour; indeed Aeneas Tacticus—whose work contributes to Aelian, from whom Leo in turn draws—exhibits also a similar focus on psychological analysis. What distinguishes Onasander even more in this respect is his orientation towards reflections on moral activity at the expense of exempla in his treatise; as Smith notes, the *Strategikos* is the only ancient manual that does not either use exempla or provide detailed information on military manoeuvres.⁷²

⁶⁹ Onasander, *Strategikos*, Praef. 8.

⁷⁰ Philip Rance, "Introduction," in *Greek Taktika: Ancient Military Writing and its Heritage*. Proceedings of the International Conference on Greek *Taktika* held at the University of Toruń, 7-11 April, 2005, edited by Philip Rance and Nicholas Sekunda (Gdańsk: University of Gdańsk, 2017), 20-21.

⁷¹ Christopher Jones Smith, "Onasander on How to Be a General," in *Modus Operandi: Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman*, edited by Michael Austin, Jill Harries, and Christopher Smith, 151-166. BICS supplementary series 71. London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 1998. See also Campbell, "Teach Yourself How to Be a General," 13, and Catherine Gilliver, "The Roman Art of War: Theory and Practice. A study of the Roman Military Writers." PhD diss. (London, University College, 1993), 13. To my knowledge, Conor Whately and James Chlup are the two classical scholars currently working directly on the *Strategikos* and the question of the military manual genre.

⁷² Smith, "Onasander on How to Be a General," 163-164.

The general in Onasander is elucidated in a number of different sections: first, in the description of how a good general should be chosen, in the first three chapters of the treatise; then in considerations about just war in Chapter 4.⁷³ In the remaining chapters, another facet of the ideal general arises from descriptions of general tactics and ruses that the general might use, as well as tactics and ruses that the general should watch out for in the enemy. This latter part of the work focuses particularly on the dichotomy between fear and courage in the general, aligning with the Aristotelian idea that equates courage with knowledge.⁷⁴

Onasander's general must be "temperate, self-restrained, vigilant, frugal, hardened to labour, alert, free from avarice, neither too young nor too old, a father of children if possible, a ready speaker, and a man with a good reputation."⁷⁵ The first chapter stresses self-control, especially regarding envy and the demands of the body, and an orientation to hard labour rather than luxury; eloquence, for the morale of soldiers and of non-combatants; and, interestingly, a certain caution with regard to wealth and family standing, which Onasander spends some time rationalising for the reader.⁷⁶ The second chapter describes a good general as someone who is "trustworthy, affable, prompt, calm, not so lenient as to be despised, nor so severe as to be hated, so that he may neither through favours loose the bonds of discipline, nor estrange the army through fear."⁷⁷ The theme of balance and restraint is quite strong both in expectations for the general's approach to his own person and for the general's management of the army. Onasander adds in the third chapter that the general must also be balanced in terms of taking advice: he cannot be "so undecided that he entirely distrusts himself," nor can he dismiss advice from others because of his belief in his own superiority.⁷⁸

⁷³ On this, see James Chlup, "Just War in Onasander's ΣΤΡΑΤΗΓΙΚΟΣ," *JAH* 2 no.1 (2014): 37-63.

⁷⁴ James O. Urmson, *Aristotle's Ethics* (Oxford: OUP, 1988), 63-67.

⁷⁵ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 1.1.

⁷⁶ An interesting footnote to the advice on avarice and envy can be found in Diodorus Siculus 31.26—the Romans at this time were reputed among the Greeks for their greed.

⁷⁷ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 2.2.

⁷⁸ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 1.3.

In the next section Onasander dictates that a general should fight defensive wars and make clear that he engages in war as a matter of necessity. The portrait of the general here is one that reflects the temperance and oratory skills of Chapter 1, as well as the trustworthiness in Chapter 2. A perfunctory instruction in Chapter 5 on the purification of the army furthermore requires from the general a sense of piety, duty to the gods, and acceptance of the whims of Fate.⁷⁹ From Chapter 6 on, Onasander begins to deal with general military maxims, especially on the direction and control of the army; the point that emerges most strongly from the treatise is that the ideal general engages in a bloodless form of warfare. By accurately reading the enemy, by maintaining morale among one's own soldiers, by making use of deserters and tricks, and by reading omens carefully, the general should indeed never actually have to engage in physical battle, as the conflict will be decided rather by which army is thoroughly frightened first. In light of this, the general's courage has more to do with appearing calm and collected to his army in order to allay fears of impending disaster than with battlefield bravery—"the general must inspire cheerfulness in his army, more by the strategy of his facial expression than by his words," Onasander explains, as the army may be suspicious of speeches crafted for an occasion.⁸⁰ In the middle chapters, especially 32-34, the role of the general takes on a supportive dimension that relies specifically on the wisdom of the general and his satisfaction with intellectual success; the warning that the general himself should not enter battle in Chapter 33 stresses that the knowledge of the general is far more important than his physical strength or acts of daring. In this sense the general should have a strong sense of his duty and place as the leader of the army, and not become distracted by the pursuit of glory. Final notes on the character of the general are found in the last eight chapters, which focus on the general's

⁷⁹ Why Onasander's instructions on this point are so short are not certain, but the delegation of the task of purification itself to priests, in an area where the commander had less authority, may be the answer.

⁸⁰ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 13.2-3.

conduct after a battle—particularly relevant are the maxims that the general must restrain his soldiers from indiscriminate looting and treat surrendering cities with trust and humanity.

The focus on the inner qualities of the general in the first three chapters finds numerous parallels in Plutarch's treatise on statecraft, and Onasander's focus on the human nature and psychology of soldiers is likewise reflected in the psychological focus of Plutarch's *Moralia*. Smith, in fact, suggests that Onasander's general ideally read Plutarch, and finds an additional parallel in the audiences of their works—a number of Plutarch's dedications were to Q. Sosius Senecio, a Roman consul, and C. Minicius Fundanus, the proconsul of Asia.⁸¹

Maurice's Strategikon

The *Strategikon* is the other main source of Leo's *Taktika*. Although many of the ideas regarding the character and conduct of the general in the *Taktika* come from Onasander, Maurice introduces a number of new characteristics—including, significantly, that of Christian piety—which are found also in the *Taktika*.⁸² My attention to Maurice's *Strategikon* is precisely because of this new religious turn in the genre, which reflects the contextual circumstances of the early Byzantine army. Despite a vague treatment in the handbook, Maurice's general is a Christian one, and somewhat of a middle step between the pagan model of the *Strategikos* and the deeply religious model of the *Taktika*.

The *Strategikon* is a sixth-century manual attributed to the emperor Maurice (AD 582-602), possibly written as an effort to codify contemporary imperial military reforms.⁸³ Maurice was a campaigning emperor with extensive military experience; his reign was one of protracted warfare, fighting against the Sassanid Persians and in the Balkans against the Avars. A

⁸¹ Smith, "Onasander," 164-165.

⁸² Vladimir Kučma's comparison of the *Strategikon* and Onasander's *Strategikos* is the only other detailed study on Maurice's interaction with a classical military author. Vladimir Kučma, "'Стратегикос' Онасандра и 'Стратегикон Маврикия': Опыт сравнительной характеристики", *VizVrem* 1, no. 43 (1982) 35-53; 2, no. 45 (1984) 20-34; 3, no. 46 (1986) 109-123.

⁸³ Most significantly, the creation of the office of exarch, which merged the civil powers of the *praetorian prefect* with the military authority of the *magister militum*.

significant amount of scholarship exists regarding the historical context and technical military aspects of the treatise, especially towards reconstructing an image of the Byzantine armies in the 6th century, but to my knowledge nothing has been published regarding aspects of generalship that appear in the text. As discussed previously, in language, scope, and purpose, the *Strategikon* differs greatly from ancient manuals.⁸⁴ The linguistic changes alone point to a different intended readership and effect, and reflects a new turn in the writing of tactical manuals—that is, a turn towards contemporary practicalities. Maurice’s two main conceptual sources were Onasander’s *Strategikos* and Aelian’s *Tactics*, from which he mostly drew ideas and structural directions; otherwise the text is generally unreceptive to *Quellenforschung*.

The majority of the twelve books of the *Strategikon* is dedicated to routine procedures, including such considerations as disciplinary regulations, uniform specifications, bureaucratic processes, equipment allocations, and training regimens. The sheer amount of operational minutiae has led Philip Rance to liken the *Strategikon* to modern field service regulations, or a demonstration of ‘best practice’ in campaign management.⁸⁵ Generally, changes made by Maurice to his borrowings from Onasander can be contextualised by the drastically different military situation of the Byzantine empire in the sixth century, especially in the composition of the military.⁸⁶ In addition to this, however, Maurice also presents the figure of a general who seems drastically different from Onasander’s in one aspect: Christian piety. The preface, while engaging in a standard eisagogic *topos* lamenting the loss of military knowledge and the decline of the army, also emphasises the necessity for the general to love God (and, subsequently, justice).⁸⁷ The general succeeds, according to Maurice, first with the favour of God, and then by virtue of his martial skills.⁸⁸ Character traits from Onasander follow: he should appear calm

⁸⁴ Rance, “Maurice’s *Strategikon*,” 217-8.

⁸⁵ Rance, “Maurice’s *Strategikon*,” 219.

⁸⁶ Куцма, “‘Стратегикос’ Онанандра,” 108, 116.

⁸⁷ Maurice, *Strategikon* Preface.

⁸⁸ Maurice, *Strategikon* 2.1, 7.1.

and untroubled; he should not indulge in luxury or ostentation; he should be dutiful and persistent; he should not delay in dealing with problems; he should not be a coward or lenient with cowards. Following this in the more practical chapters of the treatise is an emphasis— again from Onasander— on balance in the administration of corrections, on fear, on discipline, and on justice.

In general, the psychological focus in Onasander's *Strategikos* on the behaviour of the army and the duty of the general to anticipate the reactions of the army is retained, but the moral character of the general is mostly visited in the preface, in Book 7 on strategic concerns, and in the gnomology of Book 8. Here, more borrowings from Onasander are evident, among maxims possibly taken from other writers such as Polybius, Polyaeus, and Cicero: the general should be seen working alongside soldiers; again, he should be moderate in punishment; he should be temperate and vigilant in all things; wise enough to prefer ruses over direct confrontation; eloquent; self-controlled; he should engage only in just wars; and he should not be avaricious. Maurice often adds a concrete program of practical actions for the general to take to advice that he borrows from Onasander.⁸⁹ Above all, the general must recognise that victory comes from a combination of God's favour, tactics, and generalship.⁹⁰ Maurice contradicts Onasander somewhat in advising the general to trust his own judgement in making decisions, and other novel characteristics include the new emphasis on piety and faith; tactical innovation; good judgement under pressure; careful deliberation; and being lucky, rather than brave.

In comparison to the religiosity of Leo's *Taktika*, however, the emphasis on Christian religion in the *Strategikon* seems a bit half-hearted; in the very first few lines, the *Strategikon* invokes the Trinity and the Virgin, and then at once switches gears to discuss the "state of the

⁸⁹ For instance, Maurice, *Strategikon*, 7.1-8.

⁹⁰ Maurice, *Strategikon*, 7.1-12.

armed forces" and the proper training of the individual soldier.⁹¹ Maurice's inclusions of practically all of Onasander's ideal character traits—generally in line with Christian teaching, requiring few substantive corrections—makes it clear that while Maurice considered the religious character of the general to be important, it was really his practice of classically documented norms of leadership and his knowledge of tactics and strategy that mattered. The treatise is not really concerned with the moral character of the general to the same degree as the *Taktika*.

What this reflects is an expectation for the general to express piety as the leader of a Christian imperial army, but a thinly hidden lack of interest in the general's personal orientation towards religion. Only in the late fourth century did Emperor Theodosius I (AD 379-395) mandate the universal worship of the Christian God in the empire, complete with an entirely Christian program of military ceremonies; even so, pagan soldiers remained in the Roman military for a significant time afterwards.⁹² A century later, Maurice only minimally involved himself in theological controversies, occupied as he was during his reign by constant warfare. His reign, however, very closely preceded what Paul Stephenson has identified as a key point in the religious expectations of the Byzantine military under Herakleios (AD 610-641), who appeared in his writings to express a considerably developed connection between Christian piety and victory: he expected soldiers to routinely shed tears to purify themselves, to participate in communion, and to feel genuine contrition, lest they jeopardise the military endeavours of the empire.⁹³ The steady infusion of Christian religious considerations into treatises produced after Maurice indicates a change in regard among the upper class concerning

⁹¹ George T. Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 8.

⁹² On Christian public liturgies, see Paul Stephenson, "Religious Services for Byzantine Soldiers and the Possibility of Martyrdom, c.400-c.1000," in *Just Wars, Holy Wars, & Jihads*, ed. Sohail H. Hashmi, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27. On the number of ranking pagan officers in the fourth- and fifth-century Roman army, see Raban von Haehling, *Die Religionszugehörigkeit der hohen Amtsträger des Römischen Reiches seit Constantins I: Alleinherrschaft bis zum Ende der Theodosianischen Dynastie* (Bonn, 1978), 511.

⁹³ Stephenson, "Religious Services," 28.

the relevance of Christianity to the day-to-day affairs of the military, especially in the face of the Empire's escalation of conflict with Muslim enemies. The general of Maurice's *Strategikon*, then, features characteristics independent from those of Onasander's *Strategikos* which appear also in the *Taktika*, establishing not just the general of the *Strategikos*, but also that of the *Strategikon*, as Leo's models.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Another of the parallels that Maurice also has with the *Taktika* is the minor substitution of the vagaries of fate (τύχη) in Onasander with the favor of God, which can be seen in the *Taktika* as Leo's prioritization of the Christian over the pagan in military matters, despite his use of classicizing language elsewhere in his other literary works.

Chapter 2

In this chapter, I analyze the ideal general of the *Taktika* in the context of the handbook's various literary frameworks and intellectual history, in particular Leo's theory of virtues. I first discuss the text itself and its intended audience; then I describe the communicative frameworks within which the ideal general is presented. Finally, I focus on the ideal general through the virtues of temperance, justness, prudence, paternal nature, and piety, with attention to how they are received and altered from their source texts.

The *Taktika*

The *Taktika* consists of a formal prologue, twenty chapters (called 'constitutions'), and an epilogue. The introduction explains the context and purpose of the text, outlining the contents of the treatise. Constitution 1 discusses fundamental concepts of war, including the meaning and importance of tactics, strategy, and generalship; Constitution 2 deals with the ideal character of the general. Constitutions 3 through 8 covers the preparation of the army itself, including internal structure, training, weaponry and armament for different units, and discipline. Constitutions 9 through 11 discuss practicalities of life during a campaign, while 12-14 discuss immediate preparations before and on the day of battle. The remaining constitutions do not constitute connected sections—Constitution 15 discusses poliorcetics; 16, post-battle concerns; 17, surprise attacks; 18, fighting styles of different foreign peoples; and 19, naval warfare. Constitution 20 is a diverse collection of military sayings, often referred to as the handbook's parainetical gnomology. Constitution 18 has drawn attention because of its ethnographic discussion of different peoples and their military styles, as well as for its focus on the contemporary Islamic threat.

The project of the *Taktika* was likely developed directly from a shorter arrangement of question-and-answer style extracts of the *Strategikon*— the *Problemata*— composed by Leo at an earlier point.⁹⁵ The completed version of the handbook as it has come down to us draws heavily from the *Strategikon* and the first-century *Strategikos* of Onasander, as well as the second-century *Taktike theoria* of Aelian and the *Rhetorica militaris* of a certain Syrianos *magistros*. In comparison with the narrower focus of the *Strategikon*, which dealt primarily with sixth-century cavalry warfare, the *Taktika* attempted to provide a more comprehensive guide for generals, including such topics as military organization, armament, tactical administration, leadership, and the ethics of Christian warfare. Contemporary additions and revisions of material were sourced secondhand from Leo's own generals, from imperial dispatches, and from his father's records.⁹⁶ The handbook was conceived of as an official document and intended for distribution, and in light of what we know about its contemporary use and reception, it was certainly well-circulated and read.⁹⁷

Intended Audience

The *Taktika* was, importantly, addressed to imperial generals, which at this point were drawn from an ever-more-powerful Byzantine social élite. A brief discussion of the development of the “Byzantine aristocracy” and its place within the Byzantine state is important here to contextualize the historical processes underway during Leo's reign. In scholarship on early Byzantine politics it is not common to speak of a “noble” class, as from the fourth to the seventh centuries the Senate was composed of roughly two thousand families

⁹⁵ Sections of Constitution 12 retain the question-and-answer format; see Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 41, and Dain, “Les stratégistes byzantins,” 354.

⁹⁶ Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue, 6, 9.14, 11.21, 15.32, 17.65, 18.95.

⁹⁷ At least 6 copies were available in Constantinople by 1020, and over 100 copies survive today; see Dennis, *Taktika*, xi-xii, and John Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 69. It is also borrowed from directly in the *Sylloge Tacticorum*, a mid-tenth century military handbook. In the words of George Dennis, it was “copied more than any other Byzantine military work;” Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon*, xix.

whose positions were not determined by right, but were dependent on the favour of the emperor; this contributed to the constant circulation and renewal of membership among of the highest level of Byzantine society.⁹⁸ High office tended to be awarded to individuals with extensive—often familial—connections, wealth, and learning, but the system of promotion in the early Byzantine administration also allowed for those from more humble origins to reach positions of great power and responsibility. Cheynet demonstrates that the entrenchment of aristocratic families in the eighth century originated in Asia Minor—the locus of Byzantine-Muslim conflict—where the military exploits of soldiers and generals alike led to the glorification of particular lines of descent.⁹⁹ Simultaneously, transformations in the administrative, economic, and military structures of the Eastern empire from the sixth to the eighth centuries reduced the high turnover among military offices, where the customary practice had been to rotate officials between similar positions to prevent them from becoming embedded in a province. Under the Isaurians (717-802) high officials began to establish connections to particular provinces through the investment of wealth, marriage, and inheritance; thematic generals such as Artabasdos were able to remain in their administrative positions for decades. From the ninth century, the emerging aristocracy adopted hereditary naming systems which, at the end of the tenth century, were established enough in extant sources to allow scholars such as Alexander Kazhdan to examine politics in terms of a Byzantine aristocracy.¹⁰⁰ By the time of Alexios Komnenos's coup in 1081, blood relations determined membership in the higher aristocracy.

What I do not really see acknowledged directly in scholarship surrounding the origins of the later Byzantine aristocracy is the impact of the systemic changes of the seventh and

⁹⁸ Jean-Claude Cheynet, "L'aristocratie byzantine (VIIIe-XIIIe siècle)," *Journal des Savants* (2000): 282.

⁹⁹ Cheynet, "L'aristocratie byzantine," 288-289.

¹⁰⁰ Evelyne Patlagean, "Les débuts d'une aristocratie byzantine et le témoignage de l'historiographie: système des noms et liens de parenté aux IXe-Xe siècles," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy. IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold, BAR international Series 221 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 23-43.

eighth centuries on the configuration of systems of power in the empire. When a governing system is restructured, customary systems of power must also be restructured in some way, in particular because some methods of retaining and propagating power are lost or introduced. Basil and Leo's normative publications took advantage of this stage in the transition of the Byzantine administrative system to forcibly introduce such methods: they established imperial opinion on topics that governed social action and interaction—and through this, newly developing relationships of power. The Byzantine élite furthermore traditionally relied on social capital and the retention of the approval of the imperial household to maintain its power in the imperial system, both in Constantinople and the provinces. As a consequence, the emperor had a general advantage in controlling competition between high office-holders and the state over resources and provincial power, and Byzantine élites invested heavily in social status and esteem within the bureaucracy despite the lack of strictly financial return.¹⁰¹

In addition to the context of the administrative restructuring, Leo was also the first emperor to have been forced to deal with the rising power of élite provincial families of Asia Minor—among whom stood the Phokades, Argyros, Kourkouas, Skleros, and Doukai—who, as part of the rising officer class, posed a threat to imperial control over the military.¹⁰² Under Basil's reign, John Kourkouas gathered enough momentum to launch a failed coup in 886, while Niketas Skleros in 894 was appointed to head a military alliance with the Magyars. Leo himself survived conspiracies in 894 and 897, an assassination attempt in 903, and the defection of Andronikos Doukas to the caliphate in 907; the proliferation under Leo's reign of Byzantine renegades and the sting of betrayals from generals such as Andronikos as well as Constantine Doukas, with whom the emperor had some sort of friendship, may have acted as

¹⁰¹ Haldon, "Bureaucracies, Elites, and Clans," 166.

¹⁰² Anthony Kaldellis, *Streams of Gold, Rivers of Blood: The Rise and Fall of Byzantium, 955 AD to the First Crusade*, Onassis Series in Hellenic Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 13-20. For the older view refuted by Kaldellis that discusses the rise of a Byzantine "landed aristocracy" rather than of an officer class, see Michael Angold, "Introduction," in *The Byzantine Aristocracy IX to XIII Centuries*, ed. Michael Angold, BAR International Series 221 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 2; and Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 203.

encouragement for Leo to propagate a message of moral uprightness and fidelity among thematic generals, whose distance from Constantinople, personal influence, and close contact with imperial enemies—Christian or non-Christian—were a constant source of suspicion for the emperor.¹⁰³ The perennial Byzantine concern with the power and influence of generals on their armies and the ease with which they might turn part of the military, especially the provincial armies, against the emperor dovetailed with both the increasing recognition of lineage as a factor of social status and the strengthening of the patron systems and administrative customs under which provincial officials accumulated power.¹⁰⁴ The intended audience of the *Taktika*, then, was not necessarily only generals of élite origin, but figures in the process of establishing themselves and their families in the new bureaucratic structure of the post-eighth-century empire.¹⁰⁵

The *Taktika* in this sense might be seen as a tool of social control aimed towards high officials in general, who often cycled in and out of military positions: it functions both as a clarified imperial standard of conduct that takes advantage of as-of-yet undefined channels of power and the dependence of the emerging military élite on social status, and as a form of influence available to the emperor to exert control over the current lynchpins of the imperial administration. In political as well as economic terms, it was in Leo's best interest to encourage

¹⁰³ Regarding renegades, prominently, Leo of Tripoli, who led the Sack of Thessaloniki, and Damian of Tarsus, as mentioned in the introduction. Regarding the loyalty of generals, Constantine Doukas refused to submit to the emperor's wishes at a 905 inquiry to protect the emperor's favorite eunuch Samonas, and in 906 Andronikos Doukas deserted; Leo was likely distraught over Andronikos's desertion, given the efforts that he expended trying to retrieve him, as well as the lamentative poem he wrote on the occasion—see Paul Maas, “Literarisches zu der Vita Euthymii”, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 21, no. 2 (1912): 437, as well as Shaun Tougher, “The Thought-World of Leo VI: The Non-Campaigning Emperor of the Ninth Century,” in *Byzantium in the ninth century: dead or alive?: Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1996*, ed. Leslie Brubaker, 51-60 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 57. On the relative influence of the Byzantine aristocracy, see Gioacchino Strano, “Potere Imperiale e γένη aristocratici a Bisanzio durante el regno de Leon VI”, *Bizantinistica. Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Slavi*, s.2, 4 (2002): 79-99. The balance of power with the rising aristocratic families is perhaps related to the discussion on the rise in profile of eunuchs in Leo's court—see Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 203.

¹⁰⁴ For a discussion of Byzantine administration and balance of power, see John Haldon, “Bureaucracies, Elites, and Clans: The Case of Byzantium, c.600-1100,” in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, edited by Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons (Cambridge: CUP, 2016), 161-163.

¹⁰⁵ Hence, I believe, Leo's heavy emphasis on character over birth and wealth in Constitution 2.

a totally loyal and dependent governing class, identified entirely with the interests of the central establishment; what better way to do this, than to establish imperial opinion on imponderabilia such as moral conduct?¹⁰⁶

Communicative frameworks

The moral elements of the *Taktika* should be seen within a number of overlapping influences: Leo's imitation of the Justinianic legal program, his interest in the religious underpinnings of Byzantine war, and the didactic purpose of the *Taktika*. The contents and structure of the *Taktika* itself are arranged in a way that elucidate the nature of these influences in the construction of the moral framework of the handbook. The prooimion, which establishes a legal tone, and the epilogue, which contains the *Taktika*'s theological framework, have been described before in this way by Riedel; in addition to these, I present Constitution 20 as the platform for a didactic framework.¹⁰⁷

The importance of these frameworks to the process of "building" an ideal general, and why I discuss them here, is that Leo's construction of the general in the *Taktika* is much more complex than that of his predecessors. Modern scholarship seems torn between general dismissal; reading the *Taktika* as a time-sensitive (or belated) response to the contemporary dangers of Islam; and asserting that the *Taktika* was originally meant to legislate military affairs as an activity that fell under imperial supervision and authority.¹⁰⁸ In addition, the manual takes the form of a textbook or handbook, and professes that it both records useful knowledge for

¹⁰⁶ Haldon, "Bureaucracies, Elites, and Clans," 152. Anthony Kaldellis pointed out to me that similar claims about social control are made also by Christopher Kelly in his discussion of the informal power structures of Roman Empire in *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁷ Riedel, *Leo VI*, Chapters 3 and 4.

¹⁰⁸ Modern commentators have noted explicit reference to the Islamic threat in Constitution 18 and the epilogue, and some have extended this attention to Islam to the rest of the contents of the *Taktika*. Haldon asserts that this reference, added to the text after a first version had already been completed, does not reflect the original intentions of the text. On the nature of this constitution as a later addition to the main text and on the limits of its relevance to the rest of the text, see Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 22-23, 332-333; for an argument for the *Taktika* as a response to the Islamic threat and its place in the *Taktika* as a whole, see Riedel, *Leo VI*, Chapters 2 and 3.

posterity and should be applied towards the revival of the contemporary Byzantine military. The multifaceted natures of the *Taktika*— military, legal, didactic, theological, literary, practical— indicate that the model of the general portrayed in the handbook, despite looking similar on the surface to those of Onasander's *Strategikos* and Maurice's *Strategikon*, is being filtered through a variety of different emphases. The frameworks give extra dimensions to the virtues which I discuss afterwards, although they do not always interact directly with proscriptions in the contents of the handbook.

Legal framework

Paul Magdalino has demonstrated a strong legalizing trend in the program of Leo's non-juridical writings, particularly in his efforts to improve the affairs of the state.¹⁰⁹ A connection between Leo's and Justinian's models of rulership has been made by a number of scholars on the grounds of the similarities between their activities and lifestyles: elements of Leo's self-presentation, including his close relationships with his generals and his lack of direct involvement in military activity, find distinct parallels in those of Justinian's.¹¹⁰ Characteristic of Justinian's legal programs was the extent to which affairs in the empire became legislated to some degree in codified law; Leo's iteration subsumed church affairs as well as secular administration, and furthermore encompassed the *Taktika*, as an official guidebook of sorts for upper echelon military affairs, into the sphere of topics upon which there was an established imperial opinion.¹¹¹ Leo, in his *Novellae*, also refers to Justinian directly and imitates proems in Justinian's Digest in structure.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Magdalino, *Non-Juridical Legislation*, *passim*.

¹¹⁰ See Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, Chapter 8 *passim*, and Michael McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal rulership in late antiquity, Byzantium, and the early medieval West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 125.

¹¹¹ His interest in religious affairs, of course, led to his deposition of the patriarchs Photios and Nikolaos and his interference in synodic issues; see Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 117. Haldon suggests that many of these 'legal' texts were published in the context of heightened tensions surrounding the establishment of a western Roman empire under Charlemagne in 800, apparently spurring the reaffirmation of the eastern empire as the legitimate Roman empire through imperially sponsored codifications of law. The famous September 865 letter from Pope Nicholas I to the patriarch Photios (writing for Emperor Michael III), and the 871 letter from Anastasius

The *Taktika* thus belongs with Basil I and Leo's other civic-minded publications—the *Procheiros Nomos*, the *Eisagoge*, the *Basilika*, the *Book of the Eparch*, and the *Novellae*—as a part of an overall program of imperial codification.¹¹² In fact, the *Taktika* presents the clearest demonstration of the extension of law and legislation beyond the realm of the *Corpus Iuris*, for a number of structural reasons. The *prooemion*, or introductory section, is structured like an imperial *novella constitutio*, and its twenty chapters are in fact directly referred to as “constitutions” (διατάξεις). The structure of the definition of strategy and tactics in 1.1-6 and of the ideal general in 1.9-12 follow the same aims-purpose-characteristics (σκοπός/τέλος/ἴδιον) format in the description of the roles and duties of the emperor and patriarch in the *Eisagoge*.¹¹³ The legal character of the treatise is furthermore emphasized in the *prooemion* by an explicit comparison to the *Procheiros nomos*, a legal manual compiled by Basil in the ninth century (“ταῦτα ὑμῖν κατὰ τὸ δυνατόν σύντομόν τε καὶ ἀπλὴν τὴν ὠφέλειαν ἐπὶ τῶν πραγμάτων ἔχοντα ὡς ἄλλον πρόχειρον νόμον παραδιδόαμεν”), as well as in the text of the acrostic found in Constitution 20.¹¹⁴ This program appears also in Leo's identification of the implementation

Bibliothecarius to Basil I on the behalf of Louis II, call into question Byzantium's claim to Roman-ness and religious authority. Based on these letters, Marie Theres Fögen suggests that the outstanding and characterising feature of ancient Roman culture was not so much language or territorial holdings but Roman law, and as such, the reanimation of Roman law during the reign of Basil I was in part the Byzantine response to such accusations (rather than re-learning Latin). While an attractive idea, there is little evidence that the Byzantine emperors would have felt threatened by Western insults, at least not to the degree that they might have some sort of institutional response. For arguments in support of this view, see Marie Theres Fögen, “Reanimation of Roman law in the ninth century: remarks on reasons and results,” in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?: Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1996*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) 17-22, and Christopher Wickham, “Ninth-Century Byzantium through Western Eyes,” in *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?: Papers from the Thirtieth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, Birmingham, March 1996*, ed. Leslie Brubaker (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998) 253-254.

¹¹² Although each of these texts had variable circulation, the *Taktika* was well-known, as can be seen both in the number of extant manuscripts and in references to it in later military writings. The *Book of the Eparch*, for instance, was unpublished and likely never distributed as a document with full legal force; see Andreas Schminck, “‘Novellae extravagantes’ Leons VI”, SG 4 (1990): pp. 195- 209.

¹¹³ On this, see George Vernadsky, “‘The Tactics’ of Leo the Wise and the Epanagoge,” *Byzantion* 6 (1931): 333-34.

¹¹⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, Prologue, 6.60-61; and again in 9.94-96. The acrostic reads: “ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος τῆς ἁγίας καὶ ὁμοουσίου καὶ προσκυνητῆς τριάδος τοῦ ἐνὸς καὶ μόνου ἀληθινοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν λέων ὁ εἰρηνικὸς ἐν χριστῷ αὐτοκράτωρ πιστὸς εὐσεβὴς εὐμενὴς ἀεισέβαστος αὐγουστος καὶ τοοθπννιοα βασιλεὺς ῥωμαίων,” “In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the holy, consubstantial, and worshipful Trinity, our one and only true God, Leo, peaceful autokrator in Christ, faithful, pious, kindly, ever revered Augustus and ***** emperor of the Romans.” The nonsense formulation has been shown by Grosdider de Matons to have once been the name of Leo's brother and co-emperor Alexander, likely effaced by

of good order (τάξις/εὐταξία) in the empire—a term which appears in many of his texts, as well as in the successor texts of Constantine VII—with imitation of God as the one who has “harmonized the universe in decorum and good order.”¹¹⁵ In Constitution 2, Leo explains that this constitution, and later constitutions in the *Taktika*, are dedicated to summarizing—indeed, legislating—important points of a general’s conduct and practice.

This legalizing ideology, as well as the imported language of obligation, extends to the text’s discussion of the character and conduct of generals and overlaps with the strong didactic intentions of the handbook. In parallel, Leo’s own legislative program in the *Novellae* has been noted to have parainetic dimensions as well.¹¹⁶ While not quite “military law” *per se*, the legal tone of the *Taktika* nevertheless contributes a normativising dimension to discussions throughout the handbook on conduct—especially, for instance, in the gnomology. By establishing on one level the expected behavior for thematic officers, Leo provides a guide for those seeking to advance in the Byzantine administration according to his favor.

Didactic Framework: Constitution 20

While it may seem strange to skip immediately to the end of the *Taktika*, I would like to discuss the didactic intentions of the treatise by demonstrating normative elements in Constitution 20 that do not reflect the legal flavour of the introduction. Constitution 20 is a parainetical gnomology consisting of 221 sayings largely collected from Maurice’s *Strategikon*, Polyaeus’s *Strategika*, and Onasander’s *Strategikos*. The chapter—*Περὶ διαφορῶν γνωμικῶν κεφαλαίων*—is aptly named, given the diversity of its contents; the

Constantine VII, whom Alexander had once attempted to have castrated. José Grosdidier de Matons, “Trois études sur Léon VI,” *TM* 5 (Paris: 1973): 231. On the legal dimension of the acrostic, see Riedel, *Leo VI*, 61.

¹¹⁵ The *prooemion* of the Book of the Eparch describes God as “ἐν κόσμῳ καὶ εὐταξίᾳ τὸ πᾶν συναρμόσας”: Johannes Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen*. Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae 33: Series Vindobonensis (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1991): 72; this is similar also to the preface to *De ceremoniis*. See also Paul Magdalino, *Non-Juridical Legislation*, 172, 178.

¹¹⁶ Peter Pieler, “Byzantinische Rechtsliteratur,” in *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner* II, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft* XII.5.2 (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1978): 341-480.

majority of the aphorisms are directly borrowed from their sources and deal with such concerns as moral conduct and the treatment of troops. Many of the borrowings are paraphrases of earlier direct quotations in the *Taktika*, a sort of middle path in *sylloge* style between the paraphrasis of the *Bibliotheca* of Photius and the preservation of original wording in Constantine VII's *Excerpta*.¹¹⁷ In terms of structure and place within the handbook as a whole, the chapter reflects the inclusion of a collection of general instructions and maxims in Book VIII of Maurice's *Strategikon*, from which the majority of references to the *Strategikon* in the gnomology are taken. The gnomology also features an acrostic, which, besides functioning as a mnemonic device and reinforcement for the legal formula in the prologue, or *prooemion*, follows the genre rules of one of Dimiter Angelov's two sub-groupings of *Mirrors for Princes*.¹¹⁸

Early treatment of this chapter in historiography, particularly under Alphonse Dain, dismissed the gnomology as a "servile reproduction" of Leo's sources that failed to produce any logical coherence.¹¹⁹ José Grosdidier de Matons returned to the gnomology in further detail almost a decade later to temper this judgement—the lack of logical order was, he noted, somewhat of a rule of genre of *Kephalaia*, with similar examples found in Basil's *Mirror* for Leo (the *Kephalaia Parainetika*) and in the theological treatises of Symeon the New Theologian.¹²⁰ However, the question still remains of what purpose the gnomology has as part of the *Taktika*, if Leo's imitation of his sources is not slavish. Likewise, Riedel notes that Grosdidier de Matons does not address the religious significance of its acrostic.

Structurally, as Dain and de Foucault have noted, there is no logical progression to these maxims other than the concentration of *Strategikon* references in the first half and of Polyaeus

¹¹⁷ On the significance of prefatory language in separating *σύννομις* from *οικείωσις*, see Paolo Odorico, "Cadre d'exposition/cadre de pensée— la culture du recueil", in *Encyclopedic Trends in Byzantium? OLA 212*. Edd. Peter van Deun and Caroline Macé (Leuven, 2011): 89-107.

¹¹⁸ As discussed in Chapter 1. Angelov, *Imperial ideology and political thought in Byzantium*, 185. For the acrostic, see footnote 113.

¹¹⁹ Dain, "Les stratégistes byzantins," 355.

¹²⁰ Grosdidier de Matons, "Trois études sur Léon VI," 231, and Jean Darrouzès, *Syméon le Nouveau Théologien: Chapitres théologiques, gnostiques, et pratiques*. Sources chrétiennes 51 (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1958): 29.

in the second; at 221 sayings in total, they do not summarize the ideas of the previous chapters of the *Taktika* with any sort of succinctness. Despite Leo's indication that the chapter is meant to act as a synopsis of the *Taktika* (συνόψεως χάριν τῶν εἰρημένων ἐνταῦθα), Grosdidier de Matons suggests that the function of the chapter is not to encompass the points of the preceding chapters, but, relying on these chapters, to highlight key maxims in the customary format of the genre and to carry the signature of its author by means of an embedded acrostic of imperial titulature.¹²¹

I would add the observation that the gnomology is not so much a summary of the information of the *Taktika* as it is a reflection of Leo's didactic intentions for the handbook. The gnomology, as a deliberate re-representation of information already cited earlier in the *Taktika*, solidifies Leo's preferred presentation of these concepts and, importantly, acts as a mnemonic device for his audience. This is accomplished specifically through paraphrasis and original additions to borrowed sayings and exemplars, ultimately reinforcing one of the *Taktika*'s themes of orthodox Christian belief.¹²² Riedel furthermore notes that the acrostic formed by the sections of the gnomology—customary to liturgical poems, parainetical literature, mirrors for princes, and gnomologies—in its function as the signature of the book solidifies Leo's position as the imparter of this knowledge, as it implies that the manual originated in the Trinity, and then was delivered through the Trinity's earthly representative, the emperor.¹²³

The gnomology's instructional function is outlined in the prologue, where Leo expresses his expectation that his generals will learn the contents of the gnomology specifically

¹²¹ 20.1.5-6, "as a summary of what is written here [in this book]." Quoting Darrouzès on compilers, "L'écrivain a mis de côté des notes sur des points capitaux de doctrine, sans qu'il y ait un plan ou un développement logique." Grosdidier de Matons, "Trois études," 231.

¹²² For more on moralising themes in Byzantine warfare literature, see Stamatina McGrath, "Warfare as Literary Narrative," in *A Companion to the Byzantine Culture of War*, edited by Yannis Stouraites, 160-195 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), *passim*.

¹²³ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 61.

in order to elevate their martial competencies (ἐπὶ τὰς μείζονας πράξεις τῆς τακτικῆς θεωρίας).¹²⁴ In line with the presentation of the *Strategikon*, the *Taktika* professes its aim to preserve ancient and contemporary military knowledge, citing the neglect of tactical and strategic training in the modern army and the danger of the loss of this learning.¹²⁵ Leo's additions here act as explanatory additions which modify the lens through which such maxims are read, in many cases inserting or emphasising religiosity and Christian morality where it is lacking in the source text. Given the strong emphasis on religiosity and the reliance on God for victory throughout the rest of the handbook, the gnomology reflects these didactic interests inherent in the *Taktika*, not simply as a handbook preserving and legislating how generals are expected to conduct warfare, but also how Christian generals might become better Christian generals.¹²⁶

Leo's original additions to the gnomology reveal his intentions for the chapter as a reinforcement of moral, as well as military, knowledge, especially regarding Christian religiosity. There are a number of contradictions between the teachings of the previous chapters and the reiteration of these teachings in the gnomology, often as a result of direct copying from Leo's sources, but most of these contradictions are concerned with battlefield tactics and diplomatic strategy, rather than with character or conduct.¹²⁷ While it would be demonstrably false to suggest that Leo did not care as much about battlefield practicalities in comparison to topics of character or conduct, it is interesting that the attention with which he approached the emendation of borrowings in earlier chapters does not appear here.¹²⁸ The majority of additions

¹²⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.1.7, "on to greater applications of tactical theory."

¹²⁵ Prominent examples of military incompetence during Leo's reign include the defeats of the Byzantine-Bulgarian wars, especially Leo Katakalon's total failure at the Battle of Boulgarophygon in 896, and the communications disaster between the Byzantine generals Petronas, Leo Chitzilkes, and Niketas that contributed to the Sack of Thessaloniki in 904. For a handy list, see Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 164.

¹²⁶ On moral and religious instruction in the preceding chapters of the *Taktika*, see Constitution 2 of the *Taktika*, as well as John Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 28-31.

¹²⁷ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.19 vs 8.20-21; 20.39 vs 15.15-16, 17.8-63; 20.167 vs 18.36.

¹²⁸ Leo took considerable pains to situate much of the technical information of the *Taktika* within the concerns of the contemporary empire—updating, reformulating, or excising older material, and incorporating information on the structure of the provincial military. Despite some areas where it is clear that he is hopelessly confused, this

and expansions in the gnomology furthermore adapt references— both pagan and Christian—to the *Taktika*'s Christian framework, and emphasize the importance of the general's moral character.¹²⁹

Rather than finding a conflict between the gnomology and the legalizing introduction, I would like to suggest that the combination of the didactic and legislative character of the *Taktika* when taken as a whole emphasizes Leo's seriousness with regards to how he meant for his generals to behave. The argument might be made that the didactic character, as I describe it here, is merely a reflection of the literary tradition within which Leo writes; however the clear shift in the practical purpose of such manuals with Maurice's *Strategikon*, as discussed in Chapter 1, moves me to believe that the *Taktika* was intended to impact real world military affairs, and as such the didactic elements are not simply a question of formal structure or a debt to tradition.

Religious Framework: The Epilogue

To continue to the end of the *Taktika*, the epilogue provides the reader with the overarching religious framework of the treatise. The theoretical and abstract frameworks of the manual act as book-ends: the prologue and Constitution 1 establish a legalising tone; Constitution 20 underlines Leo's didactic intentions and provides advice on conduct; and the epilogue, which I will discuss here, reveals the theological ideas that underpin the moralising injunctions in Constitutions 2 and 20.

As Riedel notes, the epilogue is also technically a gnomology of sorts. Given its style of address and compositional differences with Constitution 20, I believe it is more useful to

has been taken as an indication of his interest in providing advice relevant to the actual issues impacting the empire. See Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 166 and Chapter 7 in general; and Haldon, *Critical Commentary*, 42-43.

¹²⁹ The *Kephalaia Parainetika* should be mentioned here as an influential preface to Leo's personal contributions to the gnomology, as noted in Chapter 1.

refer to it as a collection of exhortations.¹³⁰ The major literary difference it has with Constitution 20 is that the epilogue directly commands the reader, while the gnomology in Constitution 20 largely speaks about “the general” in the abstract. The same sort of advice is given in the first section, but here Leo acknowledges directly that the reader is meant to be either an excellent general, or an excellent-general-to-be.¹³¹ Structurally, Sections 1-17 of the epilogue deliver an almost sermon-like treatment of the political theology of the empire and the foundations for the general’s reliance on God—in other words, the ‘why’ of the *Taktika*’s moral prescriptions. Sections 18-67 to some degree continue the tactical and strategic teachings of Constitution 20, with some repetition of character descriptions from Constitution 2 and Onasander’s *Strategikos*; sections 54-68 deals with organisation, with an interesting subsection on different “tasks” (ἔργον)—including such things as architechtonics, astronomy, and logistics—necessary to maintain an army.

The final sections, appropriately, reinforce the themes of the handbook. Section 69 extends the legal tone of the *prooemion* and Constitution 1 and establishes the contents of the *Taktika* as the “laws and models for generals” (νόμοι στρατηγικοὶ καὶ τύποι); furthermore, it repeats the didactic formula from Constitution 20 and advises the general to “meditate on the contents with attention and great sobriety, for [he] will derive great profit from this book and it will prove very helpful.”¹³² Sections 72-73 interestingly establish faith in God as the structural resolution to the unpredictability of the future or the preparation of the enemy; devotion to God and observation of the commandments are equated directly with outsmarting the enemy, protecting subordinates, and receiving salvation and glory. Section 73 concludes

¹³⁰ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 90.

¹³¹ Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 1—“ἐξ ὧν, ὡς εἴρηται, καὶ αὐτὸς στρατηγὸς ἀναδειχθεὶς ἀγαθός.”

¹³² Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 69—“χρή σε τοῖς ἐνταῦθα ἐγγεγραμμένοις μετὰ προσοχῆς τε καὶ νήψεως πλείστης ἐμμελεῖν. μεγάλα γὰρ κερδήσεις ἐκ τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου, καὶ λίαν ὠφέλιμα.”

the *Taktika* with a formulaic invocation to Christ and a prayer, ending the treatise with the same legal tone with which it began.

In terms of the political concepts expressed in sections 1-17, in recent scholarship on the *Taktika* there has been an emphasis on the authorial presence of Leo and his self-presentation as the correct interpreter of God's will, with the suggestion that Leo meant for his instructions in the *Taktika* to be seen as the path through which the general might earn the favor of God (εὐμένεια Θεοῦ).¹³³ This idea is not explicit in the text, but seems to be the natural conclusion—the handbook advises the general strongly to revere and rely on God in order to achieve victory, and then describes how exactly the general should revere and rely on God in the epilogue.¹³⁴ By proximity one may assume that accompanying moral injunctions too contribute to attracting God's favour. This has the potential to contribute an additional dimension to the model of the general by requiring the recognition of such a spiritual role in the emperor and necessitating a sort of fidelity that extends beyond secular loyalty.

Elsewhere, Leo is portrayed by contemporaries as a mediator between God and the general, a claim that has strong cosmological implications; while this concept may not cross over as readily to the contents of the *Taktika*, it can nevertheless provide a wider context for the contemporary reception of Leo's military writing.¹³⁵ In the epilogue, Leo has the tendency to portray himself as analogous to God or Christ, rather than as the mediator; in section 7, for instance, Leo references Proverbs 8:15, a common cosmological invocation in Byzantine texts, in order to make a connection to the appointment of generals: "[God] it is who sets up emperors, for he says: It is by me that emperors reign. It is also by him that a general is promoted." The

¹³³ Paul Magdalino, "The Bath of Leo the Wise and the 'Macedonian Renaissance' Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial, Ideology," *DOP* 42 (1988): 114; Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI*, 117; see also the quote from Niketas David in Bernard Flusin, "Un fragment inédit de la vie d'Euthyme le patriarche?," *Travaux et Memoires* 9 (1985): I, 125. 43-45, where Leo purportedly asks David, "Do you wish to find salvation without my majesty, my prayer or mediation?"

¹³⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue 2-17.

¹³⁵ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 27.

analogy does not quite fit, as the right of the emperor to his rulership is not really analogous to a general's career advancement. Of course, it is also not God who promotes Byzantine generals, but the emperor, and as I have discussed earlier, the systems of social prestige and advancement in the contemporary empire put much more emphasis on one's standing with the emperor than with God. While stressing the need for the general to consider God, Leo subtly equates the will and favour of God here to his own will and favour.¹³⁶

Furthermore, despite the emphasis that Leo puts on the uncompromising reverence of God and priests, there is one line in section 8 of the epilogue that subverts this, directly reflecting his concerns with control over his administration and establishing the hierarchy of authority that he has in mind in religious as well as secular matters. Section 8, which instructs the general to honor priests and to maintain temples as places of asylum, repeats sentiments voiced in 20.70. Here, however, Leo qualifies the command—generals are not to violate the sanctuary of temples *without the authorization of the emperor*. Haldon has described at length contemporary events that may have spurred Leo to include these two mentions of asylum—the only ones in the *Taktika*—but he does not note that Leo here seems to guarantee the inviolability of ecclesiastical asylum only on the level of local civil and military authorities.¹³⁷ Given our knowledge of contemporary issues concerning asylum in Byzantine law, whether or not this is a theological statement or a question of administrative realities is not clear.

In general, the religious framework put forth here in the epilogue stresses the place of God at the beginning of all things; as God is responsible for the authority of the emperor, so is he also responsible for the success of the general. Riedel demonstrates that the epilogue corresponds with sections of Constitutions 2 to provide further religious explanations for certain prescribed behaviors.¹³⁸ Notably, however, Leo is not concerned in the epilogue with

¹³⁶ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, *Taktika* 2.21.

¹³⁷ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 425-426, 445-446.

¹³⁸ Meredith Riedel has examined the correspondences and interplay between the epilogue and Constitutions 2 and 20; Riedel, *Leo VI*, 92-94.

the Roman virtues that he describes in Constitution 2; nearly half of every direct piece of advice concerns the general's piety, his recognition of his reliance on God for victory, his place in the cosmology of the Byzantine empire, his respect for priests and temples, and recognition of his loyalty to the emperor.¹³⁹ The framework of the epilogue, then, aids us in understanding the religious reasoning behind Leo's insistence on the ideal general's piety.

Examination of the ideal general in the *Taktika*

The model general in the *Taktika* is discussed throughout Constitutions 2 and 20 and in the epilogue, with other brief references scattered throughout the intervening chapters. Constitution 2 consists largely of borrowings from Onasander, with some additions from the preface of the *Strategikon*, while Constitution 20 is an imitation of sorts of the gnomology in Chapter 8 of the Maurice's *Strategikon*. The epilogue, on the other hand, does not seem to come from any of Leo's sources, but nevertheless shows influence from a mirror for princes—the *Kephalaia parainetika*—that the patriarch Photius wrote for Leo's younger self on behalf of his father, Basil I. Another source which appears frequently in sections discussing the character of the general is the Bible itself, which Leo uses somewhat liberally to reinforce his injunctions. Onasander's classical virtues and precepts, available to Leo both in their original form and filtered through Maurice, are referenced more directly in the *Taktika* and elaborated upon through historical exempla and Leo's own additions.¹⁴⁰ The most prominent difference is, as in Maurice, in religiosity; Leo alters borrowings from Onasander as well as Maurice in order to reframe certain virtues or considerations, stressing especially the necessity of the general's reliance on God. The *prooemion* likewise advises that the "ultimate objective of the highly esteemed general is to enjoy in all things the divine and imperial favor," reflecting—in

¹³⁹ There are numerous ideological parallels to the *Kephalaia Parainetika* here, especially chapters 3, 14, and 19. See Markopoulos, "Autour des Chapitres parénétiques de Basile 1er.," 469-479.

¹⁴⁰ And, to a lesser extent, through the *Rhetorica Militaris*.

contrast to the *Strategikon*— the heavy emphasis on heavenly intervention in Leo’s portrayal of warfare.¹⁴¹

In the following analysis, I will take a closer look at altered motifs about the moral qualities of the general, and at details regarding the general’s Christian conduct. Although Meredith Riedel has to some degree addressed Leo’s interaction with scriptural language and biblical references in the *Taktika*, her treatment is largely descriptive. There are some details which are revealed in close reading which I hope to contribute to her discussion on biblical references, in addition to general analysis. I will pay particular attention to any changes or lack of change in sections dealing with other virtues or religious topics inherited from the *Taktika*’s predecessors, and to the structuring and the sourcing of religious invocations and language. In this way I hope to demonstrate what particular character Leo’s tenth-century model of the general is meant to have in comparison to his antecedents.

Modified moral qualities

Motifs on the general’s moral qualities in the *Taktika* correspond to the well-known categories of temperance, justness, and prudence, with additional emphases reflective of Leo’s own interests on piety and a paternal demeanor. While these motifs are not new in Byzantine military writings, Leo’s attention to them in the *Taktika* are not mere repetition; in fact, the fourth virtue that normally accompanies the first three, courage, seems to be missing as a central element in the model general.¹⁴² The layers of presentation and re-presentation in the manual constitute Leo’s attempt to make these virtues central to the conduct of his own commanders, responding to both the explicit threat of the empire’s barbarian enemies and the implicit threat of the growing power of the Byzantine aristocracy to Christian dutifulness and

¹⁴¹ Leo, *Taktika*, 1.13. Magdalino, “Non-Juridical Legislation,” 176.

¹⁴² The connection between military success, loyalty, and piety are found first in Maurice’s *Strategikon*, and the importance of fidelity and paternal responsibility are expansions of advice he received from his own father, Basil, and of sections of the *Rhetorica militaris*.

loyalty to the emperor.¹⁴³ Leo's particular treatment of such virtues provides his conception of the ideal senior officer, and provides a moral and political model against which his generals might be judged.¹⁴⁴ The emphasis on replicating these virtues in particular is girded in the *Taktika* with the reminder of professional promotion—“truly great virtue,” Leo explains, “does not permit a man to remain unnoticed for long.”¹⁴⁵

The most striking characteristic of these motifs, including Leo's independent religious exhortations, is in how they appear respectively in Leo's text and its hypertexts. There are numerous instances where, instead of simply copying a passage verbatim from his sources, Leo makes minor but significant changes or additions, as I will demonstrate below. Constitution 2 delineates the ideal qualities of a general in abstract terms of virtues and disposition; Constitution 20 describes them in the penumbra of recommendations and exemplars; and the epilogue adds to these by exhorting the general directly on proper behaviors. References to temperance, justness, and prudence are drawn from Onasander's *Strategikos*, which in turn are present in Maurice's *Strategikon* and somewhat in Syrianos' *Strategy*; these are listed briefly in 2.1, then elaborated on throughout Constitutions 2, 20, and the epilogue, with some reference in tactical constitutions.¹⁴⁶ The emphasis on piety and paternal care, on the other hand, shows parallels with the list of virtues given to Leo in the *Kephalaia parainetika*.¹⁴⁷ The choice to include this modified review of leadership virtues in the *Taktika*, drawn as they are in their majority from earlier models, emphasizes the particular understanding of the connection between Christian conduct and success which Leo meant to impart to his audience.

¹⁴³ Gilbert Dagron, “Lawful Society and Legitimate Power,” in *Law and Society in Byzantium*, edited by Angelike E. Laiou and Dieter Simon, 27-52 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994) 39, 46.

¹⁴⁴ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 132

¹⁴⁵ Leo, *Taktika*, 2.13, “ἢ γὰρ τοσαύτη ἀρετὴ ἄσημον ἄνθρωπον διαμένειν ἐπιπολὺ οὐ καταλιμπάνει.” Perhaps a comment towards generals in his audience looking to rise quickly in the ranks.

¹⁴⁶ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 131.

¹⁴⁷ Kurt Emminger, *Studien zu den griechischen Fürstenspiegeln III. Βασιλείου κεφάλαια παραινετικά*. (Munich: J.B. Lindl, 1913) 57 section 22; 61-62 section 34. See also 50 section 2.12-22 on faith in God, 51 section 3.1-13 on respecting priests, 54 section 14.8-16 on humility, 56 section 19.7-18 on purity. The *Rhetorica militaris* also stresses the general's paternal relationship with his subordinates.

Temperance

One of the major character traits in Onasander's *Strategikos* is temperance and self-control, a virtue that features also in the *Strategikon* and thus, unsurprisingly, in the *Taktika*. Constitution 2 discusses the general's self-control in terms of physical and material indulgence and avarice, adopting language from Onasander that implies that such character traits are innate. The very first injunction of Constitution 2 establishes the capable general as someone who does not succumb to physical pleasures, and takes word-for-word from the *Strategikos* with an interesting exception:

Taktika 2.2: "Let him be temperate, so that he might not be *dragged down* by physical pleasures so as to neglect the consideration of necessities and diligence."¹⁴⁸

Strategikos 1.2.: "Let him be temperate, so that he might not be *distracted* by the pleasures of the body so as to neglect the consideration of matters of the highest importance."¹⁴⁹

This is one of the most basic types of qualitative adjustments in the *Taktika*. Leo's replacement of "distract" (ἀνθέλκω) here with "drag down" (κατασύρω) emphasizes, albeit mildly, the seriousness of the danger that bodily pleasures pose to the general; κατασύρω, or "to drag down," "to lay waste," or "to ravage," has a dimension of violence and force to it, and is used to describe a crowd of things or people exerting force on an object. On the other hand, ἀνθέλκω is much softer, with the sense of interference or a pull in the opposite direction.¹⁵⁰ A further independent reference to the Biblical story of the seduction of Israel in Constitution 20 on the same topic of succumbing to bodily pleasures reinforces the point that such licentiousness is unchristian, as well as a potential source of deceit and destruction.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁸ Italics mine. "Σώφρονα μὲν, ἵνα μὴ ταῖς τῆς φύσεως κατασυρόμενος ἡδοναῖς ἀπολείπῃ τὴν περὶ τῶν ἀναγκαίων φροντίδα καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν."

¹⁴⁹ Italics mine. "Σώφρονα μὲν, ἵνα μὴ ταῖς φυσικαῖς ἀνθελκόμενος ἡδοναῖς ἀπολείπῃ τὴν ὑπὲρ τῶν μεγίστων φροντίδα."

¹⁵⁰ According to the TLG's statistical tools, both words were in relatively similar levels of use in the sixth century and in the tenth century in similar literary contexts, so the switch is not due to ἀνθέλκω falling out of usage.

¹⁵¹ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.148 references the Numbers 25, where Israelite men began to worship the Baal of Peor through relations with Moabite women. They are redeemed when Phinehas kills an Israelite man and his partner in the act of copulation.

Sections 3-7 deal with self-control and again copy Onasander verbatim.¹⁵² Section 8, however, which discusses the importance of being free from avarice, bears interesting revisions (in italics):

“Let him be free from avarice. In particular, the commander’s freedom from avarice is tested and proven whenever he presides over affairs in an incorruptible and magnanimous manner *and makes appointments to positions of command in his theme freely and on the basis of virtue alone*. For many men, even if they are courageous in spirit and strong of body in facing the enemy, whenever they gaze upon gold, *they become blind and their sight is darkened*. Avarice is a terrible weapon *when used against the general* and very effective in *defeating and overthrowing him*.”¹⁵³

The first addition, referring specifically to the themes, situates Onasander’s original warning about the influence of money clearly in the contemporary Byzantine administrative context. It is a clear rebuke towards thematic generals who sold offices under their authority or filled them by nepotism, a deep administrative concern reflected repetitively in Roman law.¹⁵⁴ The original passage in Onasander furthermore describes avarice as distasteful and corrupting but useful against the enemy; Leo alters the phrase to emphasize that avarice is useful *to the enemy against the general*, and inserts a biblical reference to the Lamp of the Body in the Book of Matthew with the metaphor of blindness and darkened vision. The reference is interesting not simply for the religious filter it gives to the description of the corrupting influence of avarice, but also for the ultimate message of the Lamp of the Body: the pursuit of wealth and the pursuit of Christian faith are incompatible. “No one can serve two masters: either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² These are rephrased in Constitution 20; for instance, cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 20.7.

¹⁵³ “Ἀφιλάργυρον δέ· καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀφίλαργυρία τοῦ στρατηγοῦ δοκιμάζεται, ὅτ’ ἂν ἀδωροδοκῆτως καὶ μεγαλοφρόνως προΐσταται τῶν πραγμάτων καὶ δι’ ἀρετὴν μόνην δωρεὰν προβάλληται τὰς ἀρχὰς τοῦ ὑπ’ αὐτὸν θέματος. πολλοὶ γάρ, κἂν ἀνδρεῖοί εἰσι τῇ ψυχῇ καὶ ῥωμαλέοι τῷ σώματι κατὰ τῶν ἐχθρῶν, ἀλλ’ ὅτ’ ἂν ἀντιβλέψωσι πρὸς χρυσόν, ἀμαυροῦνται καὶ σκοτίζονται. δεινὸν γὰρ ὄπλον κατὰ στρατηγοῦ ≤ή≥ φιλάργυρία καὶ δραστήριον εἰς τὸ νικῆσαι τοῦτον καὶ καταβαλεῖν.”

¹⁵⁴ See, for instance, Justinian, *Novel* 8.

¹⁵⁵ Matthew 6:22-24: “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your vision is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your vision is poor, your whole body will be full of darkness...No one can serve two masters: either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

The addition of a Christian “flavor” to such an admonition—admittedly a convenient occasion—is a reflection of an opportunistic program of acculturating sources to a Christian moral framework, more examples of which include Leo’s anonymization of anecdotal borrowings from Polyaeus.¹⁵⁶ It reinforces Leo’s theme of faith and reliance on God in pursuit of victory; not only is avarice a bad quality to have as someone in charge of an entire thematic administration, the duties of which included tax collection, but it turns one away from God’s favor.¹⁵⁷ As he explains in the epilogue, this results in a useless general—for, however mercenary it may seem, God’s favor grants military success.¹⁵⁸

In Constitution 20, finally, Leo references the conduct of Publius Cornelius Scipio in a borrowing from Polyaeus in order to illustrate this ideal self-restraint with a well-respected exemplar. Scipio’s proscriptions in this story would make a Christian ascetic proud—according to Polyaeus, Scipio banned tables, beds, and large drinking vessels, reduced the quality and variety of cooking equipment, ordered that nobody should bathe or anoint themselves with unguents, that slaves should be put to better use tending the camp’s cattle, that only evening meals should be hot and the rest cold, and that officers should not laze around in luxury. Specifically, Leo notes, he “rejected...all those other things that distract a person from the foresight incumbent on a general.”¹⁵⁹ In the sense where victory is equated to

¹⁵⁶ See for instance Leo, *Taktika*, 14.97 and Polyaeus, *Strategika*, 2.1.3; Leo, *Taktika*, 17.19.117-119 and *Strategika*, 2.1.4; Leo, *Taktika*, 17.89.517-533 and *Strategika*, 3.13.1. For a full list, see Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 47.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 20.83: “A general who takes bribes is a terrible thing and can bring destruction down on his army. Two of the greatest evils may result from this. The soldiers, as victims of his greed, are left without resources and become greedy themselves, and cowardly men are promoted to be officers. From first to last, they are marked by the evil of bribe-taking, and as a result, the army is unable to face the enemy with courage.” Thematic generals from the 9th century had supervisory authority over the fiscal, administrative, and judiciary officials of their regions, in addition to their military commands; see Friedhelm Winkelmann, *Byzantinische Rang- und Ämterstruktur im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert : Faktoren und Tendenzen ihrer Entwicklung* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), 72-118.

¹⁵⁸ In the same vein, Leo makes a few comments about how the general should not “be overly fond of engaging in commerce” that mirrors sentiments in *Strategikos* 1.20 at 2.1.8 and 2.14.86-93.

¹⁵⁹ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.80, “ἀπεσεῖετο... τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα τῆς ὀφειλομένης προνοίας τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀναστέλλουσι.”

piety, Leo seems to suggest that generals should approach good order and warfare with the same dedication and reverence that ascetics had for spiritual contemplation.

Justness, prudence, and courage

Another prominent virtue emphasised in the *Taktika* is justness. Although justness is expected as one of the classic virtues, the justness of Leo's general is not an expected innate character trait in the way that temperance is, but rather the prudence and wisdom to recognise a situation that will impact himself, or the troops, negatively in the future; somehow, Leo manages to call this pious behavior. Discussion of both virtues are in part received from Maurice, in particular proscriptions about the general's fairness when disciplining soldiers; Leo addresses also the question of justness in circumstantial decisions to engage in war, which echoes Chapter 4 of Onasander's *Strategikos*. The *Taktika* has been noted for its contribution to our knowledge of Byzantine concepts of just war, specifically in its discussion of when the general does and does not have justification to engage in warfare. What I will examine in this section is Leo's reception of the general's justness (in particular, how much of it is justness, and how much of it is prudence), his insistence on just war in the epilogue as a facet of piety—thus a factor in drawing God's favour— and his interest in identifying soldierly cowardice rather than providing descriptions of courageous generalship.

The first reference to the general's justice (δικαίον) is Leo's independent contribution in 2.26, which advises that the general should always appear even-tempered, and to “go out and meet everyone on an equal basis, as expected of a just man.” The next, 2.28, advises the general on disciplining soldiers, and in its discussion of the most effective recourse— joining fear with justice (κρεῖττον ἐστὶν ὁ μετὰ δικαιοσύνης φόβος)— copies the end of the preface of the *Strategikon* verbatim.¹⁶⁰ The theme of fairness in disciplining soldiers appears numerous times in a similar way— specifically, with the emphasis how the general is *expected to appear*.

¹⁶⁰ Maurice, *Strategikon*, Praef. 65-68.

Leo's concern seems to be about soldiers' morale following what *they* perceive as unjust handling, rather than a question of the just nature of the general himself; given Leo's descriptions, there is almost no dividing line between what is just and what is prudent. "The superiority of a general," Leo explains in Constitution 20, "is shown by his appearing to his soldiers unshakeable and just."¹⁶¹ Interestingly, poor planning is also considered to be a question of justness; if a general has to turn his army back because he has prepared badly, he has shown inability to "arrange matters justly and properly," and the enemy will despise him for his simplicity.¹⁶² Every moral injunction regarding justness is elaborated on not in terms of its importance for the general's character, but in terms of impact on troop morale and diplomacy. In this, the instructions of the *Taktika* are inherently practical; temperance is always advantageous in war, but justness is not.

2.29 and 31, on the other hand, delineate the particular circumstances in which war is licit for Leo's general: when the enemy, "because of their accustomed impiety, have first initiated hostilities and are invading our land."¹⁶³ Leo posits a zero-sum idea of justness—a just war is fought only against an enemy engaging in an unjust war.¹⁶⁴ The general, however, is not given other examples; he is expected to be able to make the judgement himself on whether or not an engagement is "just" within Leo's definition of justness. Haldon here cites the *Rhetorica militaris* in his critical commentary as one of the sources of Leo's just war commentary, without much explanation. Although the *Rhetorica militaris* does discuss motivations for warfare, on the surface it is contradictory to what Leo expects the general to use as justification. What is necessary to acknowledge is that, as a guide to military harangues to be directed towards soldiers, the ideologies presented in the example speeches of the

¹⁶¹ On punishing offenders, see 2.28, 20.4-5. Cf. Maurice, *Strategikon*, 8.1.3.

¹⁶² Leo, *Taktika*, 20.171; this reinforces Leo's emphasis on order in the prooemion and Constitution 1 and connects unpreparedness in a general with injustice.

¹⁶³ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 20.58.

¹⁶⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, 2.31: "If our adversary should act unwisely, initiate unjust hostilities, and invade our territory, then you do indeed have a just cause, inasmuch as an unjust war has begun by the enemy."

Rhetorica militaris do not necessarily contradict Byzantine imperial ideologies, inasmuch as their purpose is to inspire soldiers once the decision to join battle is made, rather than to direct generals.¹⁶⁵ With the exception of an example of how to articulate a convincing justification for fighting—“it is right to punish evildoers”—speeches in the *Rhetorica militaris* discussing motivation for war do so in terms of faith, protecting fellow soldiers, and avenging the homeland.¹⁶⁶ Advice from various sections of the handbook on maintaining the morale of soldiers instruct the general to “appear” to his soldiers to do such-and-such, or to “say to them” certain convictions about religion; for instance, in Constitution 14, “The Day of Battle,” Leo advises the general to bury his soldiers after battle and to “constantly pronounce them blessed, because they have not preferred their own lives over the faith and their brothers; this is a religious act and it greatly helps the morale of the living.”¹⁶⁷ What Leo does not say, curiously, is whether or not the general should himself believe that such fallen soldiers are as blessed as he might promise they are. This dichotomy is reflected also in Leo’s discussion of Islam in Constitution 18, which engages morale—and thus military success—through religious contrast.¹⁶⁸ In Dagron’s interpretation, Leo recommends a Christianized version of the Islamic consideration of military engagement as religious activity.¹⁶⁹

Once the decision is made to engage in warfare, however, all bets are off until a treaty is drawn or an oath made. Leo advises his general that he is “a military commander, employing many means on behalf of [his] people to injure and destroy the enemy;” in fact, Leo outright exhorts his generals to engage in conduct in warfare that he recognises as questionable, directing them to “lead a guileless life in every other respect, but with the sole exception of the

¹⁶⁵ The contrast between the two reveal the separation between the ideology of the military élite and soldiers, as well as the élite conception of soldiers’ priorities and motivations.

¹⁶⁶ Syrianos, *Rhetorica militaris* 7.2., 10-11.

¹⁶⁷ Leo, *Taktika*, 14.31.

¹⁶⁸ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 62-68.

¹⁶⁹ Dagron, “Byzance et le modèle islamique,” 221.

stratagems of war.”¹⁷⁰ If wicked men seek succour with the general, he can accept no matter the moral implications, as long as the Byzantine cause benefits; “giving the impression of not offering favours to wicked men in these circumstances,” writes Leo, “strikes me as foolish.”¹⁷¹ In discussing just conduct in 20.5, he notably removes an instruction in Maurice’s original passage not to harm civilians.

On the other hand Leo seems to struggle to balance pragmatics with ideology in this instance, as these instructions are somewhat contradictory with 20.169, which is tempered by his qualification specifically on the justness of beginning a war:

“Certainly, justice must be at the beginning of every action. More than other actions, the beginnings of war must be just. Not only must it be just but the war must be conducted with prudence. For then God will become benevolent and fight along with our armies.”¹⁷²

Leo makes a significant effort to connect just actions with piety as well as prudence, and to stress that a just war will attract God’s support. 20.169 corresponds in structure to a passage in the epilogue that exhorts the general to begin every action by conversing with God, reinforcing the idea that just actions in war are themselves a form of piety.¹⁷³ This echoes the statement in Onasander that unjust wars are displeasing to heaven.¹⁷⁴ In the epilogue, Leo becomes more explicit about what he means by “justness,” advising the general not to launch unprompted attacks or pillaging raids against people who have not acted against the general first; rather, he should live in piety—and in peace—with his enemy.¹⁷⁵ Likewise, once an envoy is sent in the midst of hostilities, the general should treat them with respect and observe

¹⁷⁰ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.53.

¹⁷¹ Leo, *Taktika*, 15.30. Interestingly, he contradicts himself by copying *Strategikon* 8.1.3 at 20.5: “The superiority of a general is shown by...turning away persons who act unjustly.”

¹⁷² Leo, *Taktika*, 20.169, “Μάλιστα μὲν μετὰ δικαιοσύνης παντὸς ἔργου ἀπάρχεσθαι δεῖ. πλέον δὲ τῶν ἄλλων τὰς ἀρχὰς χρὴ τοῦ πολέμου δικαίας εἶναι, καὶ μὴ μόνον δικαίας, ἀλλὰ καὶ φρονίμως προάγεσθαι τὸν πόλεμον. καὶ γὰρ τότε καὶ Θεὸς συναγωνιέται τοῖς στρατεύμασιν εὐμενὴς γινόμενος.”

¹⁷³ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 2: ““First, everything you intend to say or do should take its beginning from God. Do not begin any word or deed without remembrance of him and conversing with him.” See also 2.31, “You will have the God of justice on your side.”

¹⁷⁴ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 4.1-2.

¹⁷⁵ Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 14; cf. 2.30.

what is “sacred and proper,” because not to do so is unjust.¹⁷⁶ Leo stresses again in Constitution 20 that the general’s dedication to waging a just war will “bring God himself to campaign alongside” the general.¹⁷⁷ The major difference between Leo’s treatment of justness and that of Maurice, from which most of his material comes, is that Maurice’s purpose for focusing on justness is clearly the installation and maintenance of discipline among his troops; Leo, on the other hand, is concerned with both troop discipline and the general’s piety.

I would like to make a note here about Leo’s coherent reception of his sources in his discussion of just conduct. Haldon remarks that the injunction in 20.39, which instructs the general that he should “by no means and on no pretext whatsoever...break a sworn agreement with the enemy,” contradicts 17.5, which states that the general may attack ambassadors from the enemy after receiving them respectfully and sending them on their way.¹⁷⁸ On the surface it is confusing, and Haldon points out in explanation that the passage is “simply repeated” from Maurice’s *Strategikon*.¹⁷⁹ 20.39 also corresponds with the injunction in 20.33 to treat ambassadors well in order to ensure them of their safety, which is also taken from Maurice.¹⁸⁰ However, upon closer examination, these proscriptions do not necessarily contradict each other; as I discussed earlier, once military engagements have begun, Leo is only explicit that oaths must not be broken and that ambassadors must be received well, and does not offer proscriptions for standards of conduct outside of this restriction. An ambassador returning to the enemy is not necessarily an ambassador who has negotiated an agreement, and the implication of 17.5 may be that upon leaving without such an agreement, he has left also the guaranteed safety of Byzantine military hospitality.

¹⁷⁶ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.33.

¹⁷⁷ Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 15-17.

¹⁷⁸ Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, 423.

¹⁷⁹ Maurice, *Strategikon*, 9.1.16-20; 11.3.39-40.

¹⁸⁰ Maurice, *Strategikon*, 8.1.33.

Importantly, Leo's justification for warfare in the *Taktika* is not faith-based. Certain passages in Constitution 18 discussing military action against Arabs give a veneer of religious justification for warfare, but what such passages describe are faith-based motivations for soldiers to succeed in battles *once they have already been begun*.¹⁸¹ What scholars of Byzantine war ideology have noted recently is the focus on territorial control in imperial rhetoric. In discussion on the existence and nature of religious war in Byzantium, Kolia-Dermizaki among others argued in the 1990s for a Byzantine version of "holy war;" scholarship in the last decade, however, has in my opinion convincingly rejected the notion of Byzantine "holy war" and has drawn out the just war discourse underlying the veneer of religious militancy.¹⁸² Leo's presentation of just war here not as a question of eliminating or rehabilitating the impious or the non-Christian, but as a question of territorial invasion, supports this analysis; the dichotomy between instructions for the general in the *Taktika* and exhortations meant for soldiers in the *Rhetorica militaris* further points towards a lack of a robust or official ideology of war for religion among the officer class.

While one might assume that swift and decisive action might fall under the umbrella of ἀνδρεία, or courage, Leo seems to categorize them as a question of justness. 20.12, which warns the general against delaying actions unnecessarily, describes postponing or deferring actions as "not just" (οὐ δίκαιον). Leo's actual discussion on courage and cowardice, on the other hand, is inherently practical, but flies in the face of traditional teachings about bravery and the confrontation of danger. In the general list of qualities borrowed from Onasander,

¹⁸¹ See especially Leo, *Taktika*, 18.105, 18.127; in 18.103, at the beginning of the section on Arabs, Leo notes that the Arabs are "presently troubling the Roman commonwealth," and as such hostilities have begun and are assumed to arise again. Whatever rhetoric follows this is secondary to the fact that the Arabs are encroaching on Byzantine territorial claims, thus justifying a military response from the empire. See also Riedel, *Leo VI*, 94, and Gilbert Dagron, "Byzanz et le modèle islamique au Xe siècle: À propos des conscriptions tactiques de l'empereur Léon VI," *Comptes rendus de l'academie des inscriptions de belles lettres* (1983): 219-43.

¹⁸² For a review of "holy war" as a heuristic term and recent historiographical discussion on the field of Byzantine war studies, see Yannis Stouraites, "'Just War' and 'Holy War' in the Middle Ages: Rethinking Theory through the Byzantine Case-Study," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 62 (2012), *passim*; On Byzantine approaches to the jus in bello, see Evangelos Chrysos, "Nomos polemou," in *Just War in Byzantium (9th -12th c.)*, edited by Nicolas Oikonomides (Athens: Goulandri-Horn Foundation, 1997), 201-211.

courage is listed as an ideal quality, but this is not reflected in the rest of the contents of the *Taktika*. A number of warnings are made about the difference between caution and timidity in decision-making in Constitution 20, but ultimately Leo instructs that "it is safer and more advantageous to overcome the enemy by planning and generalship than by physical force and power and the hazards of face-to-face battle."¹⁸³ He even advises that the general should "keep quiet about the cowardice of soldiers" and not to make public reprimands in order to maintain morale.¹⁸⁴ It seems that the ideal general's interest in cowardice should be the identification of soldiers who should not be assigned to the front lines.¹⁸⁵ On this, Leo takes from Onasander to explain that brave soldiers, which are necessary for successful battles, are the product of a shrewd general, not a brave general; this outlook is quite practical, and reflects the orientation of this text towards generals, rather than soldiers—it does not make any sense to risk the commanding officer.¹⁸⁶

Paternal solicitude

The motif of the paternal demeanor invites a superimposition of Leo's own self-imagining in imperial propaganda as a Christ-figure, which allows some details to be read as part of a larger idea of Leo as the one who "shows the way" and thus instructs his generals on how to win God's favour through the *Taktika*. To some degree it is more appropriate to speak of the general as an example for his soldiers, but the manner in which he is meant to do so according to the *Taktika* is mostly through his rapport with his subordinates. Leo's instructions on this topic are similar in tone to his instructions about justness: the expression of paternal

¹⁸³ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.11, "Τὸ διὰ βουλῆς μᾶλλον καὶ στρατηγίας κρατεῖν τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἀσφαλὲς ἐμοῖ δοκεῖ καὶ ὠφέλιμον ἢ τὸ χειρὶ βιάζεσθαι καὶ δυνάμει καὶ πρὸς τὰς κατὰ πρόσωπον μάχας ἀποκινδυνεύειν."

¹⁸⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.19, "Συγκαλύπτειν σοι προσήκει τὰς δειλίας τῶν στρατιωτῶν καὶ μὴ προχείρως ἐλέγχειν, ἵνα μὴ καταπίπτῃ τὰ φρονήματα αὐτῶν παντελῶς καὶ ταπεινότεροι ἑαυτῶν ἀποδειχθῶσιν."

¹⁸⁵ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.26, 20.30, 20.76, 20.78.

¹⁸⁶ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 8.2.9 and Leo, *Taktika*, 20.57, 20.119,

affection is necessary specifically to maintain discipline in the army, and to guarantee loyalty in life-or-death situations. In addition, however, he also underlines a religious basis for such a paternal relationship in the epilogue, where he equates the bond between soldiers and general to the bond between officials and the emperor, and the bond between all men and God.¹⁸⁷

2.6 provides the first direction for the general's relationship with his subordinates: he should endure toil, to become a model to his soldiers in bearing up under hard labor. This is borrowed from Onasander, but the original passage merely states that the general should be hardened to labor; the instruction that the general should serve as an example to his troops is Leo's own addition. In 2.10, a section that appears to be purely Leo's work and not a borrowing, Leo advises that it is advantageous for a general to be loved by his soldiers, as these soldiers will lay their lives down for him on account of this love (ἀγάπη). The desirability of this love is described in terms of obedience and loyalty:

“We know that a general who is loved by his subjects will be more highly regarded and very helpful to the men under his command. When men love someone, they are quick to obey his commands, they do not distrust his words and promises, and when he is in danger, they will fight along with him. For love is like this: to lay down one's life for the person one loves.”¹⁸⁸

On the surface level, Leo notes prudently that the effectiveness of a general is contingent on the obedience and trust of his subjects, and so a good general must have qualities that inspire such sentiments from his soldiers; supposedly this trust is necessary both on the topic of soldiers' survival and on their compensation. Riedel remarks that Leo, in implying that soldiers die for love, bypasses the generally accepted precept in military science that soldiers obey orders because of their oaths of service.¹⁸⁹ On the other hand, a few strange things happen with

¹⁸⁷ Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 4. “For there is a certain sort of relationship and bond between us and him such as that of children to their father.... We should obey him to the extent that a private soldier obeys his commanding officer, as slaves a good master, and officials the emperor.” Cf. also Epilogue, 7.

¹⁸⁸ “Καὶ φιλούμενον δὲ παρὰ τῶν ὑπηκόων τὸν στρατηγὸν εὐδοκίμωτερον ἴσμεν γίγεσθαι· καὶ γὰρ μεγάλα τοὺς ἀρχομλενοὺς ὠφελήσειεν. ὄντινα γὰρ ἄνθρωποι φιλοῦσι, τούτῳ ἐπιτάττοντι μὲν ταχὺ πείθονται, λέγοντι δὲ καὶ συντιθεμένῳ οὐκ ἀπιστοῦσι, κινδυνεύοντι δὲ συναγωνίζονται. τοιοῦτον γὰρ ἡ ἀγάπη, τὸ τιθέναι τὴν ψυχὴν ὑπὲρ τοῦ φιλουμένου.”

¹⁸⁹ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 80.

the reference to John 15:13, from the story of the Vine and the Branches, at the end of the passage, a section of which I quote here for comparison:

“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” (John 15:9-13)

Leo first alters the idea of sacrifice for friendship in Scripture to sacrifice for love; second, he identifies Christ with the general; but, third, in doing so, he reverses the scriptural message with the context of the preceding lines of the section, implying now that soldiers die for the general, rather than the general for his soldiers. Fourth, he uses this Christ/general parallel to equate love with faith, implying that if the soldier’s love/faith is strong enough, soldiers will die for love/faith as Muslims die for Islam. On the other hand, in several other places in the *Taktika*, as well as outside of it, Leo himself is equated to Christ, and the love which he inserts into the passage is the same sort of love that he expects the general to feel for the emperor. In the metaphor of the passage, then, Leo becomes the Father, the general Christ, and the soldiers his disciples, revealing parts of a fundamental imperial ideology. In order to make the passage work, Leo blithely inverts the scriptural context while still calling upon its authority; this is in no way a standard application of Scripture in contemporary Byzantine writing.¹⁹⁰

2.11 suggests after the *Strategikon* that it is desirable for a general to be a father, both because of the zeal with which he will apply himself to defending the fatherland, and because his grown children may themselves contribute to military efforts; this is taken from the *Strategikon* with no additions. 20.5, which I discussed in the previous section, also advises directly that the general should show fatherly affection towards his soldiers and to share in parts of their lives. This, following the proscriptions in Maurice’s original passage, includes

¹⁹⁰ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 81.

giving advice, discussing essential affairs in person, and keeping soldiers safe and fed. Leo however adds to these points the elimination of injustice from the general's territory, the refusal of unjust persons, and the protection of soldiers and taxpayers, reflecting the structural changes in the empire's administration and the general's responsibilities.¹⁹¹

The syllogism in the epilogue that draws connections between various authority relationships within the Christian cosmology contributes to an image of paternal generalship as a reflection of Leo's concept of good order. The relationship of the general to his soldiers must then be paternal in the way that the emperor's relationship with the general, and God's relationship with the emperor as well as the Roman people, is paternal. Leo's emphasis on the general's control over his subordinates, on the other hand, addresses the issue of discipline in the medieval Byzantine army.¹⁹² Leo takes care to include the training, drilling, and disciplining of soldiers in the *Taktika*, emphasising the necessity of preventing soldiers from lapsing into laziness in winter months and times of rest; however, none of this training is effective if soldiers do not obey their generals.¹⁹³ As touched on in the previous section on justness, prudence, and courage, 20.57 explains that the care and training given to soldiers by intelligent generals results more consistently in courageous and able troops than the reliance of nature to provide appropriate warriors; 20.128 emphasises that the officers must be superior in nature to their subordinates, as the subordinates will model themselves after their commanders.

The *Taktika*, finally, confers upon the general the role of a teacher in his relationship with his subordinates, as well as that of an exemplar. In Constitution 18, Leo adopts certain sections in Maurice that deal with Persian approaches to generalship and strategy, and inverts them to present desirable traits in the model general. The Persians in Maurice's estimation have

¹⁹¹ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 20.71.

¹⁹² Since the late seventh century, the method of training unit discipline among soldiers and the selection of non-commissioned officers had been completely transformed from the Roman model; institutional continuity was not maintained at the same levels.

¹⁹³ See especially Constitution 4, on the division of roles in the army and the appointment of officers, and 6, on training for the cavalry and infantry.

orderly armies because of fear for their leaders, a common Roman topos on enemies; in parallel to 2.10 and its reference to dying for love in John 15:13 above, Leo converts this fear into love and willingness to die for the faith, a love and willingness that is the general's responsibility to inculcate:

“Be well aware, therefore, O general, that it is not you alone who ought to be a serious promoter and lover of the fatherland and defender of the correct faith of Christians—ready, if it so transpires, to lay down your very life; but also all the officers under your command, and the entire body of soldiers, should be ready to do the same...As for those whose training has not led them <to share that ideal>, then, as much as possible, your care and concern <should make sure> that they are not found lacking in this very virtue. Rather, they should become lovers of the fatherland and be very obedient to their officers, either through love or through fear.”¹⁹⁴

Piety

Leo deals with the question of the general's Christian piety in a number of different ways in the *Taktika*. The first is the instruction that the general must recognise that victory comes from God: the general must be prepared to wage war on his own merits, but his piety is what will attract God's favour and guarantee him military success. These recommendations about God's role in victories is extrapolated from Maurice's *Strategikon*, especially from the prologue. The second is the explanation of pious behaviour, the proscription of which reinforces the theme of Leo as the interpreter of God's will. This includes justness, as discussed in the previous section, as well as a certain attitude towards superstitions and respect for priests and temples. The focus in the *Taktika* on the general's piety is specifically geared towards achieving military victory, which Meredith Riedel finds somewhat surprising—in particular, she thinks odd Leo's “bloodless application of scripture, not for the sake of faith or love for God, but for the sake of a political ambition: the winning of battles.”¹⁹⁵ This brings up the

¹⁹⁴ Leo, *Taktika*, 18.16. "Ἴσθι οὖν, ὃ στρατηγέ, ὅτι οὐ μόνον σὺ αὐτὸς ὀφείλεις εἶναι σπουδαῖος καὶ φιλῶν τὴν πατρίδα, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῆς ὀρθῆς τῶν Χριστιανῶν πίστεως ἑτοιμος, εἰ οὕτως τύχει, καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν ψυχὴν τιθέναι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ὑπὸ σε πάντας ἄρχοντας καὶ τῶν στρατιωτῶν ἅπαν τὸ πλῆθος τοιούτους παρασκευάζειν γενέσθαι, ἵνα οἱ μὲν ὄντες ἐπὶ τοῦ αὐτοῦ καλοῦ τοιοῦτοι μένωσιν, τοὺς δὲ μὴ ὄντας, ὅσον ἔχεις δυνάμεως, διὰ τῆς σῆς ἐπιμελείας καὶ σπουδῆς γυμναζομένους μὴ ἀμοιρεῖν τῆς τοιαύτης ἀρετῆς, ἀλλ' εἶναι αὐτοὺς φιλοπάτριδας καὶ εὐπειθεῖς τοῖς ἄρχουσιν, ἢ δι' ἀγάπην ἢ διὰ φόβον." Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 18.19, 20.135.

¹⁹⁵ Riedel, *Leo VI*, 80.

question of the degree to which victory may have been synonymous with pious behavior in Leo's religious framework, given his discourse on the piety of just war. In this section I will discuss observations in addition to Riedel's, including hints of an underlying motive to Leo's stress on piety.

Leo dedicates five sections in Constitution 2 to describing the ideal general's loyalty to God. In 2.18, Leo inserts into a repeated borrowing from the *Strategikos* an additional warning that the general should be especially attentive to divine matters and his relationship with God.¹⁹⁶ He expands on this expectation in an original passage in 2.21, where Leo subtly stresses that the general's relationship to God is also a question of obedience to the crown:

“We hope that the general promoted by Our Majesty will indeed be such a man, and that he will remain such. We hope that he will enjoy the favor of God and our own goodwill, that he will share in our common salvation and be highly regarded by everyone, as well as find happiness in his life. May he find all things in Christ, the only eternal and unchanging emperor of all things.”¹⁹⁷

Beginning in 2.22, however, Leo proceeds from descriptions of the ideal general—what he should *be*—to exhortations and commands, advising his audience on what the proper Christian general should *do*, spiritually. This shift in tone reflects the *Taktika*'s function not simply as a collection of military knowledge and a vehicle for Leo's ideas about warfare but also as an instruction handbook directed towards educating generals.¹⁹⁸ Leo switches his method of address from the third person to the second, directing exhortations to the reader:

“Before everything else, O General, we propose this to you as your very first subject of exhortation and advice: be concerned about the love of God and righteousness in such a manner that you constantly have God before your eyes. Fear him. Love him with all your heart and all your soul, and after him, us. Keep his commandments and, in turn, you will receive his favor, so that— if I may speak rather boldly— in difficult situations you may with confidence and trust pray to our common Lord as a friend to a friend and

¹⁹⁶ “μάλιστα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ περὶ τὰ θεῖα πράγματα ἐπιμελέστατον,” Leo, *Taktika*, 2.18.119.

¹⁹⁷ Leo, *Taktika*, 2.21. “Τοιοῦτον δὲ ὄντα καὶ οὕτω διατηρούμενον τὸν παρὰ τῆς βασιλείας ἡμῶν προχειριζόμενον στρατηγόν, ἐλπίζομεν αὐτὸν καὶ τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀπολαύειν εὐμενείας καὶ τῆς ἡμετέρας καὶ τῆς τοῦ κοινοῦ σωτηρίας καὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸν βίον εὐημερίας ἐν Χριστῷ τῷ μόνῳ τῶν ὅλων αἰωνίῳ καὶ ἀδιαδόχῳ βασιλεῖ.”

¹⁹⁸ This narrator-narratee relationship functions on a meta-literary level as a parallel to the ideal paternal relationship reflected in the parts of the *Taktika*.

you may request the salvation you hope for from him as from a friend. That one is not a liar who said: The Lord will do the will of those who fear him and he will hear their prayer and save them.”¹⁹⁹

The direction to love the emperor as well as God— “Love him with all your heart and soul, and after him, us”— underlines the general’s duty to the emperor as the divinely-sanctioned ruler, just as 2.21 expressed the “hope” that the general might enjoy the favor both of God *and* of the emperor. Leo’s reference in the final line to Psalm 145:19, from the Psalm of Praise, highlights the importance of faith and piety to the general’s moral conduct— especially if he wishes to be able to call on God in difficult times. As Riedel notes, the use of Psalm 145:19 here is very simplistic and draws a demonstrably questionable correlation between prayer and deliverance from death; she takes this first-level scriptural application at face value, but I wonder if more credit should be given to Leo here, considering that the narrative he seems to be building grounds God’s favor in terms of loyalty and obedience to the emperor.²⁰⁰ Leo also recommends elsewhere that the general must prepare himself before expecting God to aid him, and in light of this it is easier to read advice that the general rely first on God not as ignoring reality, but rather recognizing— as Leo states in Constitution 20— that the general must himself be prepared and take action before he can even think about attempting to rely to God.²⁰¹

Continuing this theme in 2.23, Leo links this ideal piety to public duties and real military success, advising that it is not the intelligence of the general or the strength of the army that ultimately decides the outcome of a battle, but God’s favor:

¹⁹⁹ Leo, *Taktika*, 2.22. “Πρὸ μὲν τῶν ἄλλων ἀπάντων, ὃ στρατηγέ, πρώτην σοι ταύτην παρακέλευσιν τε καὶ παραίνεσιν ποιούμεθα, ὥστε θεοφιλείας καὶ δικαιοσύνης ἐπιμελεῖσθαι καὶ οἷον ὁρᾶν διηνεκῶς πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν τὸν Θεὸν καὶ φοβεῖσθαι αὐτὸν καὶ ἀγαπᾶν ἐξ ὅλης τῆς καρδίας σου καὶ ἐξ ὅλης τῆς ψυχῆς σου καὶ μετ’ ἐκεῖνον ἡμᾶς, καὶ τὰς αὐτοῦ ἐκτελεῖν ἐντολὰς καὶ τὴν ἐκείνου εὐμένειαν ἐντεῦθεν προσλαμβάνεσθαι ἵνα—εἰ καὶ τολμηρότερον εἶπω—ἐν καιρῷ περιστάσεως ὡς φίλος φίλῳ τῷ κοινῷ δεσπότῃ θαρρῶν πεποιθότως προσεύχῃ καὶ τῆς σωτηρίας τὰς ἐλπίδας ἔχων ταύτην παρ’ αὐτοῦ φιλίως ἐξαπαιτῇς. ἀψευδὴς γάρ ἐστιν ὁ εἰπών· θέλημα τῶν φοβουμένων αὐτὸν ποιήσει κύριος καὶ τῆς δεήσεως αὐτῶν εἰσακούεται καὶ σώσει αὐτούς.”

²⁰⁰ Riedel herself notes elsewhere that middle Byzantine exegesis often prefers a more contemporary interpretation over the “biblical horizon”—see Meredith Riedel, “Biblical Echoes in Two Byzantine Military Speeches,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 40.2 (2016):107-22. Regarding the efficacy of prayer for deliverance from death, one needs only to look at the example of martyrdom to find demonstrations of the reverse.

²⁰¹ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, 20.77.

“For you must realize that, apart from God’s favor, it is not possible to bring any plan to a successful conclusion, however intelligent you may seem to be; it is not possible to overcome the enemy, however weak they may be thought. Everything lies in the providence of God, that providence that takes care of even those things that appear to be the least.”²⁰²

Similarly, in 2.24 Leo analogizes the work of a general with that of a helmsman, who can make no progress when the winds are against him, but who can often double the ship’s speed when the wind favors him.²⁰³ In the same way, he says, a general with the favor of God—in particular, a general who “is orthodox in his faith and just in his deeds”—will find military success, while without it he will accomplish nothing.²⁰⁴ The ancient motif of the helmsman refers rather to the ship of state, and the analogy here reinforces the general’s nature as second to the emperor and providence.²⁰⁵

Sections 2.32-34 conclude Constitution 2 with reference to the superior example of faith and worship which the general must present for his soldiers, in the way that an emperor must likewise embody a superior example for his subjects. In the final sentence, Leo makes a last tie-in to the authority of the emperor in relation to divine support, exhorting the general to look for imperial as well as divine praise in his pursuit of the virtues listed in the *Taktika*: “Holding fast to these precepts, then, be eager to add to your successes, so that...you might first have God praising your deeds and then our own authority, and, from both, you will receive the rewards merited by your labors.”²⁰⁶ Yet again in the exhortations of one constitution to piety, Leo has managed to fit another oblique reference to general’s loyalty to the emperor as parallel to his obligation to God.

²⁰² Leo, *Taktika*, 2.23. “Ἴσθι γὰρ ὅτι θείας εὐμενείας ἐκτὸς οὐκ ἔστι καλῶς κατορθωθῆναι βουλὴν κἂν φρόνιμος εἶναι δόξης. οὐκ ἔστι πολέμιον περιγενέσθαι, κἂν ἀσθενεῖς ἐκεῖνοι νομίζωνται, διὰ τὸ πάντα ἐν τῇ προνοίᾳ τοῦ Θεοῦ κείσθαι καὶ αὐτὰ τὰ ἐλάχιστα δοκοῦντα τὴν αὐτοῦ πρόνοιαν διοικεῖσθαι.” Cf. also Leo, *Taktika*, 14.23.

²⁰³ On the helmsman metaphor, cf. Onasander, *Strategikos*, 4.5, 32.10, 33.2.

²⁰⁴ Cf. Maurice, *Strategikon*, Prologue, 43-45.

²⁰⁵ For commentary, see Riedel, *Leo VI*, 82-83.

²⁰⁶ “Τούτων οὖν ἐχόμενος αὖξιν καὶ προστιθέναι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἔργοις προθυμήθητι, ἵνα...πρῶτα μὲν Θεὸν ἔξης ἐπαινέτην τῶν πράξεων, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τὸ ἡμέτερον κράτος...”

Leo's discussion on how the general might act piously beyond spiritual dedication is found mostly in Constitution 20 and the epilogue; he writes that the general must wage just war, pray, ensure that proper rituals are carried out among the soldiers, make promised offerings, and protect priests and temples.²⁰⁷ All but the last point are taken from Maurice and Onasander, with minor changes; the last echoes Section 3 of the *Kephalaia parainetika*. There is also an interesting focus on the uses and abuses of omens and signs, on which I will focus here to demonstrate that Leo treats them equally as a question of prudence as of piety. Most importantly, however, he stresses that the general must first of all apply himself zealously to his tasks in order to avail himself of God's aid in his time of need.²⁰⁸

In terms of rituals, 16.2 instructs the general first to "give thanks to the Lord our God, Jesus Christ;" if the general has promised a thank-offering to God for a successful battle and won, he must keep his promise. This is a simplified version of Onasander, who recommends that the general offers sacrifices and festal celebrations to the gods after returning from battle—victorious or not—and to promise the customary thank-offerings when he has a full victory.²⁰⁹ Leo's formulation is less contractual or contingent on circumstances: the general must give thanks to God either way. 20.172 borrows a proscription about the pagan purification of the army also from Onasander, which Leo likewise modifies to fit a Christian context by changing its reference to the κηλὶς (taint) of the army to its ἀμάρτημα (sins), and by replacing Onasander's references to rites, soothsayers, and expiatory sacrifices with the blessings of priests (διὰ τῶν ἱερέων καθαγνῖσαι αὐτὰς δι' εὐλογίας).²¹⁰ Otherwise, Leo simply recommends on multiple occasions that the general must keep certain things inviolate and pray— fervently. What is interesting is that Leo does not proscribe any additional rituals for the general to

²⁰⁷ Cf. Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue 14 again on the connection between just war and intercession.

²⁰⁸ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.77.

²⁰⁹ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 34. "Ἀνακαλεσάμενος δ' ἐκ τῆς μάχης πρῶτον μὲν ἀποδιδότω τοῖς θεοῖς θυσίας καὶ πομπάς, αἷς ἐκ τοῦ καιροῦ χρῆσθαι πάρεστι, τὰ νομιζόμενα χαριστήρια μετὰ τὴν τοῦ πολέμου παντελῆ νίκην ἐπαγγελλόμενος ἀποδώσειν."

²¹⁰ Onasander, *Strategikos*, 5.

perform other than what he has borrowed from his source texts; in fact, he does the reverse, leaving out a number of clearly Christian customs that he might have taken from Maurice: the blessing of tagmatic flags, for instance, and particular religious chants and prayers the army might say before joining battle.²¹¹ In the epilogue where Leo discusses the division of roles in the army, however, Leo points out that the execution of such rituals should be the purview of priests accompanying the army; in light of this, his inclusion of proscriptions from Onasander and Maurice may be rituals that the general specifically must perform, or reinforcement. On the other hand, the *Taktika* emphasises so much the impact of the general's own character upon the outcome of battles that it is strange to read about priests on campaign. Even in the epilogue, Leo minimizes their role, writing that priests' efforts are important specifically because they boost the morale of soldiers— not because they have any effect on attracting God's aid for a military endeavour!²¹² This, I think, is one of the strongest indicators that Leo's emphasis on the general's reliance on God is not necessarily a message of piety for victory *per se* but emphasis on the importance of the person of the general. Here, the general, as the leader of the army and the microcosmic analogue of the emperor, is solely responsible for the outcome of battles— from the training of soldiers to the maintenance of God's favour, and, ultimately, victory for the empire. Riedel calls Leo's references to intercession and God saving the general “naïveté,” but here it seems that these reminders are shorthand for everything that the general must accomplish, and accomplish well, to be worthy of his position and of God's help. Indeed in 18.19, likely reflecting upon the spiritual rewards promised to the empire's Muslim enemies by Islam, Leo writes that the general's labors “gain the rewards stored up for you by God himself and by Our God-given Majesty.”

²¹¹ Maurice, *Strategikon* 7.1, 9.24.

²¹² Leo, *Taktika*, Epilogue, 62: “The priestly task is to deal with divine things properly and incessantly to perform these rites in the army piously and in a manner pleasing to God... They do this by sacred words and sacred actions and by the other prayers and entreaties they fervently address to God and to his wholly immaculate mother and Theotokos and to his holy servants. As a result the Divinity takes pity and by their faith in salvation the souls of the soldiers are made ready to face dangers more firmly.”

Leo's focus on omens, on the other hand, is somewhat more ambiguous in its religiosity. I have placed it in the section on piety because of his references to omens as a pagan practice, but I believe it touches equally on questions of prudence in leading an army. In several instances in the latter half of the gnomology, Leo borrows from the stories of Polyaeus's *Strategika* but anonymizes most of them, removing any identifying aspects of the ancient commanders and battles.²¹³ This approach, found both in late antique Christian use of pre-Christian material and in Byzantine adaptations of classical texts, sanitizes all of the classical stories Leo references— with two exceptions— to present a series of neutral, blank-slate examples that emphasise the moral lesson over the historical figures.²¹⁴ Beyond basic anonymization, however, Leo also makes the effort to further Christianize such stories, as occurs in his discussion on the general's actions with regards to omens.

In 20.156, Leo references the actions of an anonymous general— a certain “σοφός στρατηγός”— when his army was confronted with what seemed to be bad omens. As the army was preparing for battle, it heard a loud thunderclap, which made the soldiers fearful for their own chances of success, “as though it were an evil omen.”²¹⁵ The general reversed the supposed omen by redirecting the target to the enemy: the thunder occurred, rather, because of the enemy. In Polyaeus this is attributed to Epaminondas during his invasion of the Peloponnese.²¹⁶ Leo, in addition to removing references to Epaminondas and the Peloponnese, provides an example of how the general might invoke an appropriate Christian reference to the will of God: “saying,

²¹³ From Leo, *Taktika*, 20.136.

²¹⁴ As Baujke van den Berg brought to my attention, Eustathios of Thessaloniki, for instance, does the same to turn classical myths with moral stories or exemplars into general advice. René Nünlist, “Homer as a Blueprint for Speechwriters: Eustathius' Commentaries and Rhetoric,” *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 52 (2012): 493-509.

²¹⁵ “ὡς ἐπὶ κακῷ αὐτοῖς συμβόλῳ.”

²¹⁶ Polyaeus, *Strategika*, 2.3.4.

‘The thunder did not come because of us, but because of the enemy; God has sent the thunder on them, as our enemies, and order us to march out against them.’”²¹⁷

In this dismissal of the truthfulness of omens, this section, along with a similar anonymized account in 20.98, reflects not only the practicality of Roman military advice, but also Leo’s attempts to caution his generals against putting credence into omens themselves. In an oblique reference to Roman practices, Leo warns in an original addition that “under the influence of certain customary practices the army frequently used to succumb to cowardice because of symbols or certain signs;” the implication here is that unchristian superstitions in the army misled soldiers to believe in meaningless signs. The general should know better, with the knowledge that piety and faith in God grant victory.²¹⁸ In another example, in 20.80, one of the two instances where he does not anonymize the protagonist of the story, Leo presents the example of Scipio as a young commander (as discussed previously in the subsection on temperance). Significantly Leo adds a second, original part to Polyaeus, claiming that Scipio rejected all forms of reading the future for military pursuits.²¹⁹ There seems to be some influence of Polybius’s rationalist version of Scipio here, who manipulated his actions according to auguries and other portents to present himself as having divine support.²²⁰ Nevertheless, I believe that the concentration of references and alterations to ancient stories about the use of prognostications in particular, among the rest of Leo’s borrowings, add to the Christianizing efforts found throughout the gnomology. In 14.101, furthermore, he

²¹⁷ “εἰπὼν ‘οὐ δι’ ἡμᾶς ἡ βροντὴ γέγονεν, ἀλλὰ τοὺς πολεμίους ὁ Θεὸς ὡς ἐχθροὺς ἐμβροντήτους ποιήσας κατ’ αὐτῶν ἡμᾶς ἐπάγεσθαι κελεύει.” Another anonymous story about a general who dissipates the tension of a perceived bad omen is found in Leo, *Taktika*, 20.198: a soldier sneezes at an important moment, but a well-placed joke by the commander—no wonder, given the number of soldiers present, that one person has sneezed (οὐ θαυμαστὸν εἰ τοσούτων περιστώτων εἰς ἔπταρεν)—trivializes the event. In Polyaeus the Athenian general is Timotheus, whose soldiers refuse to set sail when one of the soldiers has a sneezing fit.

²¹⁸ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.78, “ὕπὸ τινος συνηθείας πολλάκις ὁ στρατὸς ἀπὸ συμβόλων ἢ σημείων τινῶν εἰς δειλίαν εἴωθε τρέπεσθαι.” See Magdalino, “Non-Juridical Legislation,” 176.

²¹⁹ “ἀπεσείετο δὲ καὶ ἀστρολογίας καὶ μαντείας καὶ τὰς ἀπὸ συμβόλων ἢ σημείων δηλώσεις καὶ ὀρνεοσκοπίας καὶ δι’ ὀνείρων μαντείας καὶ τὰς ἄλλας τοιαύτας προγνώσεις τε καὶ κρίσεις καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα τῆς ὀφειλομένης προνοίας τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀναστέλλουσι.”

²²⁰ Polybius, *Histories*, 10.2-20.

recommends that the general might himself fabricate signs and omens in order to improve the morale of soldiers on the day of battle. Such a focus reflects both a practical interest in mitigating as well as exploiting the impact of superstitious tendencies present in the Byzantine army and a thematic interest in reminding the general that victory comes from God.

Finally, Leo gives directions on the inviolability of temples and monasteries and the sacrosanctity of priests in Constitution 20 and the epilogue, where he commands the general to respect the right of refugees to maintain asylum in temples and to leave monks and nun untouched.²²¹ As I noted earlier in this chapter, however, he inserts a loophole in the section 8 of the epilogue—the final iteration of this injunction to respect priests and temples—qualifying that the general may in fact violate such sanctity on the authority of the emperor. Likewise, in Epilogue 13, Leo reminds the general that he should “be concerned to observe inviolate, after the divine laws, those of the emperor as well.”

²²¹ Leo, *Taktika*, 20.70; Epilogue, 8-13.

Conclusion

The conclusions of my analysis in this paper are not particularly surprising, but I hope that they demonstrate that different dimensions of the *Taktika* are accessible through literary and conceptual readings of the ideal general. In the introduction of this paper I suggested that, as the ostensible purpose of the handbook, all other readings of the *Taktika*—whether as a theological statement, as a political instrument, or as a textbook—must be filtered through Leo’s efforts to educate his audience. On the most superficial level, Leo’s general is basically the same as that of Onasander or Maurice with regards to character; he exhibits more or less some version of the four classic Platonic virtues, with the addition of Christian piety. Closer examination of Leo’s handling of his source material, however, reveals that the four basic virtues are being handled so that they mutually reduce into Leo’s conception of piety in warfare, an examination of which in turn divulges his ideas about the general’s place in the order of the Christian empire. Such an approach also establishes that Leo’s adoption of virtues and martial knowledge from Onasander and Maurice to the *Taktika*—as well as from the *Kephalaia Parainetika*—are not blind borrowings, much in the same way that military historians have demonstrated that Leo’s tactical borrowings are adjusted for his own particular circumstances and aims.

On the other hand, using genre as an analytical lens, it is possible to establish the *Taktika*’s didactic intentions, which have been somewhat trodden over in the excitement to get to “deeper” levels of the text. This allows us to approach Leo’s description of the ideal general as an undertaking with parainetical intent, revealing details about the supposed place and responsibility of the general in the empire that are not voiced explicitly in the manual. The education of generals based on Leo’s revision of a classical model of generalship is the purpose with which *all* of Leo’s claims must first be read—such as, for instance, his suggestion of

religious difference as a motivation in warfare. In my opinion the lack of consideration for this didactic layer weakens the proposition that the *Taktika* is meant to introduce a new formulation of Byzantine Christian identity to the imperial military, as the image of the general that one eventually uncovers through examination of Leo's expectations is incompatible with the vision of Byzantine Christianity that Riedel describes²²² The lack of scholarship systematically examining the coherence of this fundamental layer also leads to misunderstandings in Leo's ideological consistency and claims that he contradicts himself in his instructions, which, despite claims to the contrary, does not happen in his discussion of the virtuous behaviour of the general.²²³

Reflections

In approaching the *Taktika*, one of my first difficulties was finding a straightforward analytical framework with which to examine both Leo's form of reception and his construction of the general in the text, as so little work has been done on the literary aspects of Byzantine military manuals. Philip Rance's approach to the reception of Aelian and Arian in Maurice's *Strategikon* was very helpful, and in the end I was also able to find a few parallels in New Testament scholarship that provided frameworks that more-or-less served my purposes, although not perfectly. I also had trouble concretely connecting the various ideological superstructures of the *Taktika*— legal, religious, didactic, etc.—to my analysis of the presentation of the general; only way I could think of addressing these overlapping characteristics as influences on the construction of the general was to alert the reader to their place in the ideological structure of the *Taktika*, as it became apparent that it was not possible to distinguish their direct influence through analysis of the model of general itself. I attempted

²²² See my discussion on rituals described in the *Taktika* in Chapter 2.

²²³ See footnote 126. See also Haldon, *A Critical Commentary*, passim.

in the beginning to separate my analysis of reception in Leo's ideal general and my analysis of the intellectual content of the treatise in the interests of clarity, but the analysis of the former often led to conclusions about the latter. As such, they do not constitute two different treatments in this thesis, but have been addressed together in the latter half of Chapter 2.

This treatment is of course by no means exhaustive. Little work has been done on the literary or social aspects of the *Taktika* in general, which leaves many avenues to be explored. One immediate question I was not able to answer is why piety is so strongly stressed in the *Taktika*, in uneasy tandem with the mercenary re-casting of the four moral virtues. Some of the areas of the handbook that I would have liked to work more on include an analysis of the handbook as a standard by which Leo attempted to control the promotion and prestige of the military élite; of its religious invocations; of the character of God's military support; and of the significance of the use of particular contemporary Byzantine generals within Leo's exemplars.

First, as per my discussion on the intended audience in Chapter 2, it is possible to read the *Taktika* as a political tool to manipulate the standards by which the Byzantine élite gained prestige in the new administrative system—a prestige synonymous with imperial offices.²²⁴ In my opinion this is a much more likely deeper reading of the manual, and I would be excited to see this demonstrated. Second, as far as I know, a systematic examination of religious language and invocations within the *Taktika* has not yet been done; other than discussion of religious concepts, there is a high number of what look like formulaic invocations and phrases scattered throughout the handbook. Are they simply formulaic? I believe a comparative view of the textual milieu of these invocations and religious concepts in the *Taktika* would prove interesting, if not fruitful. Third, the nature of God's support is not particularly clear in the *Taktika*, in that references to providence and God's favor do not describe how exactly the

²²⁴ A parallel can be found in Roman imperial control over the administration as described by Christopher Kelley, *Ruling the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004). My thanks to Anthony Kaldellis for this reference.

general might expect to receive aid from God. Leo discusses and refutes the factors his predecessors think will influence the success of a battle, delivering the advice that God, and after him, discipline and strategic knowledge, determines battles.²²⁵ There is however one clear statement in Constitution 14 that, in my opinion, sums up the lack of commitment Leo has made to describing a concrete form of aid or intercession:

“In time of war, the prudent discretion of the general is able to discover many things that are beneficial. I call this a gift of the intervention and good disposition of God above and I know he bestows it upon those whom he deems worthy because of their virtue.”²²⁶

The success of a general, then, demonstrates God’s favor, as well as the virtue that is necessary to attract God’s favor in the first place. Fourth, following on this, one might wonder if Leo had any of his own generals in mind while he wrote, besides what he found in older exemplars. Nikephoros Phokas the elder, for instance, is cited as an example by name multiple times—in 11.21-22, Leo recalls two of Nikephoros’s tactical inventions; in 15.32 he describes Nikephoros as having displayed shrewdness, justice, and goodness a well-organized military operation against the Lombards; in 17.65 he refers to Nikephoros’ successful counter-campaign in Tarsus and Cilicia against the Saracen emir Abulfer as an example of why it is necessary to have superior knowledge of the lay of the land. His naming of Byzantine generals in some way seems to reinforce imperial successes for the same reasons that Leo anonymized the contributions of classical generals.

All in all, I hope that this paper demonstrates the usefulness of a literary and intellectual history approach to both the *Taktika* and the genre of the military manual, as well as the

²²⁵ For instance, 14§32 responds to Maurice 7.B.15, which advises that a dull battle line marks the probable victor, and asserts instead that the shininess of the battle line does not decide the battle, but God, generalship, and discipline.

²²⁶ Leo, *Taktika*, 14.96. “πολλὰ γὰρ ἰσχύει φρόνησις στρατηγοῦ ἐν καιρῷ πολέμου ἐφευρίσκουσα τὰ συμφέροντα ὅπερ τῆς ἄνωθεν τοῦ Θεοῦ ῥοπῆς καὶ εὐμενείας δῶρον ἐγὼ καλῶ καὶ ἐπίσταμαι τοῖς ἀξίοις τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τὴν αὐτῶν ἀρετὴν παρεχόμενον.”

relevance of the uppermost layers of a narrative towards contextualising information further embedded in a text.

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