

not seek deeper religious meanings in linguistic phenomena. Of all these treatises, the *DA* proved the most successful. One of the keys to its success could be that it had cast the essentials of Priscian's theory of letters, sounds and accents in a more digestible form, which better suited school teaching.

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A Tenth-Century Byzantine Military Manual: The Sylloge Tacticorum. Birmingham Byzantine and Ottoman Studies. Translated by GEORGIOS CHATZELIS – JONATHAN HARRIS. Routledge, New York 2017. ISBN 978-1-4724-7028-7 (hbk); 978-1-315-56531-6 (ebk). 170 pp. GBP 120. USD 149.95.

The present work is the first complete English translation of the Byzantine military manual known as *Sylloge Tacticorum*. It is indeed only a translation, based on Alphonse Dain's edition *Sylloge Tacticorum, quae olim "Inedita Leonis Tactica" Dicebatur* (Paris 1938). The Greek text is not included. There can be numerous reasons for this, but it would have been helpful for scholarly purposes if the original text had been running alongside, particularly as the edition of Dain is not the easiest to access. There are, for example, no copies of it in the Finnish university libraries, although there is one at the Finnish Institute in Rome. The present translation nevertheless frequently includes the original terminology in the text, notes, and glossary, which helps to verify the interpretations.

The first translator, Georgios Chatzelis, wrote a PhD dissertation about *Sylloge Tacticorum* at Royal Holloway University of London in 2017. The other, Jonathan Harris, is one of the professors of the institution. Now, Routledge has published the analysis of Chatzelis as a monograph, *Byzantine Military Manuals as Literary Works and Practical Handbooks. The Case of the Tenth-Century Sylloge Tacticorum* (New York 2019), but it was not at my disposal when writing this review. The introductory part of the translation of *Sylloge Tacticorum* summarizes the main issues in it.

The genre of Greek military manuals emerged at the latest in fourth century BC and continued to Byzantine times, and numerous works were produced in the tenth century. This was the era of the so-called Macedonian renaissance when the Byzantine empire underwent a cultural renewal and took back several lost regions. The opening of the surviving text of *Sylloge Tacticorum* gives the date of composition as the year 6412 (903/904) under emperor Leo (VI, r. 886–912). There have, however, been doubts regarding this claim as *Sylloge Tacticorum* differs markedly from Leo's *Taktika*.

The translators adopt Gilbert Dagron's method of determining the dates of military manuals based on military innovations, enemy tactics, and administrative and socio-political context. However, a large part of the information we have about these matters is derived from the manuals themselves and risks circular argument. For example, Ilkka Syväne has defended the view that differences between *Sylloge Tacticorum* and *Taktika* do not justify dismissing the authorship of Leo. ["The New Cavalry Formations of the Sylloge Tacticorum, AD 904", https://www.academia.edu/39251194/The_New_Cavalry_Formations_of_the_Sylloge_Tacticorum_AD_904. The original article was published in *Saga Newsletter* 112, 2008 (p.36ff.) and republished in *Slingshot* (November–December 2013, pp. 7–13). The comments on the translation of Chatzelis (and Harris) are added to the beginning of the version on academia.edu.]

The dating in the translation based on the work of Chatzelis nevertheless sounds reasonable. Among manuals, *Sylloge Tacticorum* fell most likely between Leo's *Taktika* and *Praecepta Militaria* attributed to Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–969). It would fit to the reign of Romanos I Lekapenos (r. 920–944). He reigned on behalf of the young Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos (r. 913–959, alone 944–959). Romanos I suffered *damnatio memoriae* when Constantine VII took power and the authors of the translation suggest that thus *Sylloge Tacticorum*, which probably had something to do with Romanos, was put in the name of the earlier emperor.

Byzantine military manuals are usually divided into those which mainly copy earlier ones, perhaps with slight updates, and those which show more originality and reflect contemporary practices to a greater extent. *Sylloge Tacticorum* includes sections representing both categories. It makes frequent use of ancient authors, but on the other hand presents a detailed description of a new style of battle formation that was evidently introduced at this time and is to be found in a refined form in *Praecepta Militaria*.

According to the authors of the translation, *Sylloge Tacticorum* can be divided into three sections. The first gives instructions on various military matters, the second on “war by other means”, and the third contains stratagems used by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Part of the text seems to have been lost. The first section is the one that includes the most material for which *Sylloge Tacticorum* is the earliest known source. The second is mainly about poisons and the like, which are claimed to be dishonorable and not something to be used by Christians, but a general should guard his troops against the possibility that the enemy employs them. One can nevertheless doubt whether many of these plans would have worked in practice at all. The third section is a version from the second century CE *Stratagems* of Polyaeus but is claimed to represent an independent textual tradition.

Numerous loans from ancient authors and the idea that *Sylloge Tacticorum* was a continuation of Leo's *Taktika* are plausible reasons why the text has not previously received attention to the extent it deserves. The significance of military manuals for warfare and their value as sources can be debated, but they offer information which is not in other sources. Besides, they represent cultural tradition interesting for its own sake. Providing a complete English translation is a valuable contribution to the study of Byzantine history, military history, classical tradition, and numerous other fields. Unfortunately, many persons and even institutions interested in the subject may find the price of the book painful.

As always, some issues concerning the translation and occasionally the complex syntax or terminology, require a heavy amount of interpretation. In particular, the translation of chapter 53.5 is problematic. It deals with siege technology, a field in which vocabulary is indeed notoriously tricky. It is nevertheless a mystery to me why βύρσας νεωδόρων βοῶν, which protect the walls against siege-engines, are translated as “newly stripped-off buffalo hides”. Why buffaloes and not oxen which would be the simplest translation? This is not explained in the notes, where John Haldon's commentary on Leo's *Taktika* pp. 264–265 is cited, although these are the lines of the commented work and the information is on pp. 302–303 (J. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on The Taktika of Leo VI*. Washington D.C., 2014). Haldon actually cites this sentence from *Sylloge Tacticorum* and translates it as hides of newly flayed oxen. In general, I find this translation trustworthy and accurate.

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