Worship and War:

Sacred Space in Byzantine Military Religion

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Worship and War: Sacred Space in Byzantine Military Religion

Introduction

> Immediately, without delay, he ordered that a church be built [in the camp] in honor of the all-immaculate Lady and Mother of God....When the inhabitants of the city heard the sound of the church gong...they were filled with concern and commotion, as they surmised that the island would become part of the Roman domain.[1]
> Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*.

Michael Attaleiates' account of the 961 Byzantine reconquest of Saracen Crete provides us with a curious story of a Christian church being built directly in a place of combat in order to guarantee a military victory. During an assault on the Fort of Chandax (modern Heraklion), Emperor Nikephoros Phokas "suggested to everyone that their first line of defense, their invincible courage, and most secure anchor was to seek refuge with the Mother of God, the All-Pure Lady, and plead with her," and subsequently constructed a church for his soldiers to do their pleading in. This episode, strange as it is, indicates that there existed a potential in Byzantine spaces dedicated to warfare for conceiving of, and even architecturally actualizing, qualitatively distinct places of worship. In this case, a place of military activity exhibited particular links to the sacred that a church could embody. However, the infrequency of church-building on active battlefields in contrast to the similarity of liturgical and ritual practices in Byzantine military religion to those of church practices brings up questions about the exact nature of Byzantine military religious experiences. As I will demonstrate in this paper, military religious practices and interactions with the divine in military contexts make clear that this potential for sacred space centered around the imperial host as a mobile body, manifesting with marked differences to church space. Furthermore, the actualization of this space was facilitated by emperors, who

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[1] Michael Attaleiates, *Historia*, trans. Anthony Kaldellis and Dimistis Krallis (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 411-13.

customarily conducted the building programs of sacred architectural spaces such as temples and tombs, and supported by developing narratives in Byzantine Orthodox Christianity.

The question arises, then, of how the sacred was constituted in the Byzantine military. The variations of the sacred in the Christian imaginary are of course too numerous to address in this paper, but to understand one of medieval Christianity's primary mechanisms of experiencing the sacred, it is necessary to look at the phenomenon of the cult of saints. Though never referred to as such by contemporaries, the idea in both the Western and the Eastern kingdoms that holy figures could be invoked to intercede with God on the behalf of Christian supplicants permeated every level of the public and private lives of medieval individuals. The cult of saints originally centered around the burial places of martyrs, or men and women who died as a consequence of their refusal to denounce their Christian faith under the Roman Empire.[2] The bodies of these martyrs and the objects with which they interacted in life were understood themselves to contain some of the presence of the martyr, and to maintain divine powers in their vicinity. In his seminal book *The Cult of the Saints*, Peter Brown describes the model of the medieval universe that made this the case: a cosmic division was believed to exist between the sphere of the eternal stars and the earth, and the upward movement of these martyrs into heaven necessitated leaving behind the physical body.[3] Describing the tombs of the patriarchs of the Holy Land, Rabbi Pinhas ben Hama in the time of Julian the Apostate (361-363) noted that "it is when they died and the rock closed on their tombs here below that they deserved to be called 'saints';" essentially, their holiness became localised with their internment, and created a point of congruence between heaven and earth.[4] At the tomb of Saint Martin of Tours, an inscription

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[2] David Rollason, *Saints and Relics in Anglo Saxon England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 9.
[3] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1981), 2.
[4] Ibid., 3, in reference to a midrash on Psalm 16:2.

likewise reads: "Interred here are the relics of the bishop Martin whose spirit is in the hand of God, but who is completely present here, manifest with every grace of virtue."[5]

By the end of the sixth century, the centralisation of tombs as a part of ecclesiastical life led to such activities as the exhumation, translation, and dismemberment of holy bodies. With Christianity's new legitimacy in Rome, bishops moved bodies from cemeteries– the cities of the dead– into cities of the living and paraded them as objects imbued with the presence of holy figures in processions throughout city streets. Miracles at shrines transformed from private to public events, and the clergy became part of the link between the invisible patron of the shrine and the congregation– as well as a shield against idolatry.[6] The focus on both the corporeal remains of holy figures and their possessions became a staple of the Holy Roman Empire.

Significantly, a development occurred in Eastern Christianity that had very few equivalents in the West: the eventual association of images, alongside remains and possessions, with miraculous holy presence. One of the most significant aspects of these miraculous icons and relics in Eastern Christianity is the role they played in the creation of sacred spaces.[7] Early Byzantine acceptance of icons as mediators came from the principle of the Incarnation: when the body of the Virgin Mary, or the *Theotokos,* gave earthly flesh to the divine *Logos,* it validated the manifestation of the divine in human form and legitimised the "discovery" and veneration of images. Early forms of icons were *acheiropoietoi*, images created from the earthly imprint of a divine body and "made without human hands" much in the same line as the Sudarium and the

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[5] Edmond Le Blant, *Les inscriptions chrétiennes de la Gaule*, (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1856), I: 240. "*Hic conditus est sanctae memoriae Martinus episcopus cuius anima in manu Dei est, sed hic totus est Praesens manifestus omni gratia virtutum.*"

[6] See Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 3: Augustine, in *City of God*, 22.8, expected the recipient of a cure to publicise the miracle in public; and in *Miracula sancti Stephani* 1.14, 2.1: crowds are inundated with stories of miraculous cures.

[7] Alexei Lidov, "Relics as a pivot of Eastern Christian Culture," in *Eastern Christian Relics (Восточно-христианских реликвий)*, (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya, 2003), 11-15.

Shroud of Turin. Often they, like relics, became focal points for churches and shrines, and in this way imbued the space in which they resided with their particular sacral nature.

The traditional understanding of sacred space, on the other hand, is that of an autonomous entity situated out of normal time and space which accrues sacredness through an association with the sacred, whether it be relics, graves, icons, or apparitions.[8] Both natural phenomena such as caves and rivers and manmade spaces in the form of temples and churches have the potential to obtain sacral natures, and where they exist, as David Torevell notes, they are initiatory, resting on and producing tradition.[9] Sacred spaces generally contain multiple dimensions of sacredness, both in terms of "natural" or historical sacredness and sacralised objects or buildings.[10] In Eastern Christian church spaces, icons and relics, in conjunction with ritual gestures and sensory additions such as lighting and incense, often provided the fundament for forming concrete spatial environments.

In 2001, Alexei Lidov proposed a new sub-field within the study of sacred space called "hierotopy," asserting that "the widespread term 'sacred space' did not function well because of its general character [in that it described] almost the entire realm of the religious." Hierotopy, a compound term formed from the Greek words *hieros* ('sacred') and *topos* ('place', 'space'), generated a great deal of interest when it came to more widespread attention in 2006; as of yet the theory has not met with any substantial opposition. It specifically addresses the creation of sacred spaces as a unique form of creativity, and is dedicated to revealing and analyzing

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[8] Herman de Dijn, "The Scandal of Particularity: Meanings, Incarnation, and Sacred Places," in *Loci Sacri*, ed. T. Coomans et al. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2012), 43.
[9] David Torevell, *Losing the Sacred: Ritual, Modernity, and Liturgical Reform*, (London: T & T Clark International, 2001), 177.
[10] de Dijn, "The Scandal of Particularity," 43.

particular examples of this creativity.[11] As a consequence, it allows for a form of cultural history

that draws heavily from the historical, art historical, and anthropological fields, but encompasses

methodologies and evidence from a much wider range. Hierotopy is found in performance, in

place, in object, in signs, and in the psychological state of the participant; it is an epistemological

structure that is created, maintained, and experienced through interactions that offer an identity

between the sacred and the viewer.[12] This approach recognises that essentially all objects of

medieval religious art were conceived as elements of a hierotopical project and as part of a

network of concrete sacred space, and looks to elucidate the immaterial, non-positivist space that

is constructed through an overlap of a narrative of sacred power and a personal narrative.

Documentation for the conception of such constructions of space is unique in medieval

Byzantium, with a special system of notions in place to describe performative paradigms. One

such notion is the *chōra,* reflected for example in Theodore Metochites' iconographic program

for the Chora Monastery in Constantinople.[13] The monastery bears over its entrance the

inscription "*chōra tou achōrētou,*" "container of the uncontainable," or "the space of what exists

beyond the space."[14] The *chōra* – the space– is both a reference to the Incarnation, where the

Virgin Mary circumscribed the divine Word in flesh, and to the spatial being of God. Nicoletta

Isar's treatment of this topic highlights the importance of the *chōra* in the defense of the icon

during Iconoclasm (A.D. 730- 843).[15] The icon, as described by the Patriarch Nikephoros, is a

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[11] Alexei Lidov, "Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacral Spaces as a Form of Creativity and a Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia,* ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya, 2006), 32.

[12] Jacquelyn Tuerk, "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets," in *Hierotopy. Comparative studies of sacred spaces,* ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2008), 79.

[13] Built in the early fourth century, and decorated by Metochites in the 13th.

[14] "Χώρα του αχωρήτου." See Nicoletta Isar, "Chorography (Chora, Choros)– A performative paradigm of creation of sacred space in Byzantium" in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia,* ed. A. Lidov 56-90, (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya, 2006).

[15] Iconoclasm was a period in the eighth and ninth centuries where the use of icons in the Christian religion came under violent dispute; a common reference on the part of the iconoclasts, or those who opposed icon use, was

trace in the visible of the *chōra* space, which reveals a dynamic relationship between the container and content.[16] Theodore Metochites' hierotopical approach to this church, which included images of Christ and the Virgin and inscriptions denoting the "*chōra tōn zōntōn*" or "space of the living" in the naos and narthex, represented an interest in the symbolic presentation of spiritual phenomena not uncommon among many other medieval thinkers.[17] For icon worshippers during Iconoclasm, the concept of this spatial being in imagery became the basic argument separating the icon from the idol– the icon, like Christ, was eternally spatial or heavenly but also corporeal and concrete. In light of this, proposals for the deliberate construction of divine space by Byzantine aristocrats find a basis in contemporary theology.

As a very young field, much of the work done with hierotopy from the mid-2000s to the present day has been a continual development of its scope, revealing and examining instances of such activity both in the Middle Ages and beyond. Lidov has published both a framework for this sort of cultural history and a great deal of groundwork for the field, demonstrating the wide applicability of hierotopy in terms of geographic and topical scale: from pervasive image-paradigms, such as the "New Jerusalem," that span the imaginaries of several empires, to the use of single icons such as the Flying Hodegetria in local rituals.[18] A number of additional scholars in the art historical field have also contributed to the theory. Among them Bissera Pentcheva, in her book *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium,* as well as in her work on the

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Exodus 20:4, "You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below." There were two iconoclastic controversies, the first beginning in 730 with Emperor Leo III and ending in 787 under Empress Irene with the Seventh Ecumenical Council, and the second beginning in 814 upon the ascension of Leo V and ending in 843 under the widow of Emperor Theophilus.

[16] Isar, "Chorography," 64.

[17] "Χώρα των ζώντων." Alexei Lidov takes note in "The Creation of Sacral Spaces" of the term '*hieroplastia*' in the texts of Pseudo-Dionisius Arepagite, which refers ostensibly to the visual presentation of spiritual phenomena; in his view *hieroplastia* could very well be the creation of spatial imagery. In G. W. H. Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexikon,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 670.

[18] Alexei Lidov, *Hierotopy: Spatial Icons and Image-Paradigms in Byzantine Culture,* (Moscow: Theoria, 2009); and "New Jerusalems: Transferring of the Holy Land as a Generative Matrix of Christian Culture," in *New Jerusalems,* ed. A. Lidov, (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), 8-10.

performative icon, engages with the textual and material history of Marian imagery and firmly establishes the importance of the Virgin Mary to the rise in prominence of icon-worship and the use of icons in battle in Byzantium.[19] Jacquelyn Tuerk's "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets" further fleshes out the basic framework of hierotopy by establishing the importance of the congress between divine narratives and personal narratives in the creation of sacred space.

It is as part of these efforts that I propose to examine Byzantine performance of religion in military affairs and to elucidate manifestations and creations of sacred space in Byzantine military preparations and engagements before the year 1204. I have chosen to address military religion in general rather than one or two sources in isolation because of the patchwork nature of military narratives in extant Byzantine sources and the time-dependent developments of religious narratives in the military. For the same reason I have elected largely to narrow the chronological scope of my analysis to the Middle Byzantine military and its relevant preceding contexts. Groundwork has been laid by Lidov, Tuerk, Anna Lazarova, Elka Bakalova, Nicoletta Isar, Peter Brown, and Irina Sterligova on the application of hierotopy outside of the architectural– in cultural icons such as holy men and heavily symbolic objects such as grave coverings, for instance– but the topic of the battlefield is as of yet untouched.[20] It seems straightforward to discuss religious experience and belief in intercession in the military by means of contemporary literary explanations of divine power attributed to the emperor and imperial military endeavours, but this cannot itself explain why a majority of the infantry was ostensibly prepared to accept the battlefield as a milieu of the miraculous.

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[19] Bissera Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), and "The Performative Icon," in *The Art Bulletin* 88, no.4 (2006): 631-655.

[20] See Anna Lazarova and Elka Bakalova, "Communicative Aspects of Sacred Space: Messages to the Saint," in *Spatial Icons: Performativity in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* 52-74, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Indrik, 2011); Peter Brown, "Chrotope: Theodore of Sykeon and His Sacred Landscape," in *Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. A. Lidov, 117-125 (Moscow: Indrik, 2011).

Hierotopical creativity made use of a system of interaction between what Lidov calls the 'static place-matrix' and 'flying space' (respectively, the original physical or geographic monument, and moving or transitory space), both of which were ultimately translatable and greatly performative. The beholder, or the worshipper, was an integral part in the construction of the spatial image. In conjunction with lights, gestures, sounds, and smells, and with his or her individual and collective memory and spiritual knowledge, the beholder spontaneously created the spatial icon.[21] Further, just as the materials and elements that constructed a sacred space could be moved, so could the sacred space itself. As Lidov demonstrates in his 2004 essay on the Flying Hodegetria icon in Constantinople, miraculous icons themselves were capable of bearing sacred space with them as they were translated to different locales.[22] Byzantine religious liturgy, marches, and relic and icon use in military situations as part of both an imperial program of Byzantine military ideology and an Orthodox piety are unique in their constant mobility. These included personal icons brought by emperors on campaign to reliquaries of the True Cross carried in military processions, to mass prayer and the recitations of liturgy on the eve of battles reminiscent of Roman customs. The military as a subject thus presents difficulties in its collective but non-static nature, which precluded both hierotopic techniques that relied on the fixed, three-dimensional enclosing structures found in the building programs of churches, tombs, and pilgrimage sites, as well as techniques that aimed to encourage the formation of sacred space around a central object or figure.

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[21] Alexei Lidov, "Hierotopy: The Creation of Sacral Spaces as a Form of Creativity and a Subject of Cultural History," in *Hierotopy. Creation of Sacred Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. A. Lidov (Moscow: Progress-Traditsiya, 2006), 33-58.

[22] Alexei Lidov, "The Flying Hodegetria; The Miraculous Icon as a Bearer of Sacred Space," in *The Miraculous Image in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Analecta Romana Instituti Danici, Supplementa 35, ed. E Thunoe and G. Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschnieder, 2004).

An examination of records of religious practice and phenomena on and off the battlefield up until the beginning of thirteenth century demonstrates that, through rituals, icons, miracles, and other forms of religious engagement, Byzantine emperors gradually as well as spontaneously created a mobile form of sacred space in war that recalled church spaces but did not include a fixed architectural milieu. In the process of this examination, it is important to ascertain: What particular forms of the sacred contributed to hierotopy on the battlefield? How were these spaces developed in the history of Byzantine warfare? What narratives of the sacred became associated with traditional narratives of war?

Background

The middle Byzantine era (A.D. 843-1204) was characterised by protracted warfare, succeeding a period within which the pagan Roman approach to religion and the military shifted towards an all-encompassing Christian rhetoric. An increasingly religious model of military ritual found in military and historical writings throughout the rise of the Christian Roman Empire accompanied an evolution in the drive for warfare. Religious war, or war for the sake of religion, was not a familiar concept to the Romans; the Empire's pagan predecessors did not go to war for their faiths, viewing gods as third-party moral authorities who contributed to a sense of group identity.[23] In the first century A.D., for instance, Livy was able to accuse the king Numa Pompilius of inventing religion in order to keep the *plebes* in line outside of wartime. This criticism reflected the reality that, much of the time, religious rituals performed to coax gods to the aid of the armies were for a great part done in the interests of discipline.[24]

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[23] John Helgeland, "Roman Army Religion," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II. 16 no. 2 (1988): 1472.

[24] Sara Elise Phang, *Roman Military Service: Ideologies of Discipline in the Late Republic and Early Principate,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 89; and Helgeland, "Roman Army Religion," 1471. See also

The Christian Roman Empire, on the other hand, began to consider warfare as having religious significance in itself as early as the rule of Constantine the Great, rather than under the auspices of the emperor or a particular deity.[25] The Christian religion became the official *raison d'être* for Roman warfare, as the struggle for the preservation and expansion of the Roman Empire had become a struggle for the defense and propagation of the Christian religion.[26] In this manner, Christian warfare, following the fall of Rome in the west, became its own unique sort of 'holy war': morphologically separate from the familiar holy wars of the Crusades and of Islam in its all-encompassing nature, but also containing a rhetoric of divine providence.[27] For decades after Constantine's 313 edict ending Roman persecution of Christianity and consolidating the Christian God with state rituals, the new Christian state treated religion much in the same way as did the pagan state. While the army was required to carry out state rituals in the state religion, soldiers were allowed private worship of their own deities.[28] Most military rituals and oaths remained largely the same, with sacralized tenets of discipline, such as the protection of the army camp, expanded upon and processed for a Christian veneer.[29] In the late fourth century, however, Emperor Theodosius I (AD 379-395) changed this dichotomy and mandated the universal worship of the Christian God: soldiers became defenders of the faith. The Christanization of the army was by no means comprehensive, with a significant number of pagan troops and officers, including the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, serving under Christian emperors. The public

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Ramsay Macmullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 174-5; the development of fixed rituals, usually religious, seemed to relieve anxiety in the army

[25] Monica White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus 900-1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 36.

[26] White, *Military Saints,* 45.

[27] Of course, the concept of the 'fall' of Rome is greatly disputed in modern scholarship, but for expediency I use the term here to refer to the late fifth-century decline of the cohesive governance of the Roman Empire in Antiquity. John Haldon, *Warfare, State, and Society in the Byzantine World 565-1204* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 17. See also Nicolas Oikonomedes, "The Concept of 'Holy War' and Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis,* ed. Timothy S. Miller et al. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 62-68.

[28] Haldon, *Warfare,* 14-15.

[29] David Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215,* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 8.

liturgies enacted during his reign, however, represent the first extant mention of an entirely Christian program of military ceremonies.[30] In the late sixth century, under the emperor Herakleios (AD 610-641), a change occurred yet again in the religious expectations of the military: in addition to merely performing religious duties as prescribed by the state, soldiers were now expected to routinely shed tears to purify themselves, to participate in communion, and to feel genuine contrition.[31] If they did not, the fate of the whole army hung in the balance.

From the beginning of the Middle Byzantine period, extant military manuals written by aristocratic observers or generals– known as *taktika*– which before had kept almost exclusively to logistics and strategy became suffuse with Christian propaganda, and turned a significant amount of their collective attention towards prayer services and proper liturgy.[32] The steady infusion of Christian religious considerations into these treatises indicates a change in regard amongst the upper class concerning 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. In contrast to later *taktika*, Maurikios's sixth-century *Strategikon* simply invokes "our Lady, the immaculate, ever-virgin, Mother of God, Mary, and of all the saints," and then at once switches gears to discuss the "state of the armed forces" and the proper training of the individual soldier.[33] Jean-René Viellefond likewise notes that "in the *Strategikon*... religion is present in military life,

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[30] 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; and for Christian public liturgies, 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.
[31] Stephenson, "Religious Services," 28.
[32] Haldon, *Warfare*, 24.
[33] George T. Dennis, trans., *Maurice's Strategikon: Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 8.

but without exaggeration, and there is nothing tyrannical about the cult: the army is simply a Christian group."[34]

The *Strategikon* remained extremely influential in the genre of military manuals for several centuries, and the major deviations in subsequent treatises are, for the greater part, religious in nature. In treatises of the tenth and eleventh centuries, following the Iconoclast Controversy of the eighth and ninth centuries, religion took on a visibly preponderant role, and Islam came to be seen as a major threat to the continued existence of the Empire.[35] The first major treatise to have been written after the *Strategikon,* Leo VI's tenth-century *Taktika,* insists for example that on the day of a battle the general must "ensure first of all that his whole army is pure and... offer fervent prayer through the [previous] night."[36] where before the *Strategikon* advised that the general "should not exert himself too much...and overlook some really essential matters."[37] Inheriting a literarily-inclined empire from Basil I (867-886), who had rekindled the Empire's pushback in the West against the Arabs after hemorrhaging lands and tributes over three centuries, Leo VI (866-912) was confronting issues in the Empire that traditional aristocratic educations likely did not address; his decision then to write a military manual and to modify its adherence to religion is not surprising. A later treatise written by Emperor Nikephoros II Phokas in the late tenth century, the *Praecepta militaria,* also supplies proper protocol for daily rituals.[38] The importance attributed to the disciplined execution of such protocol can be glimpsed through the great weight put on the two daily calls to prayer: "If, once the time of the prayer has been sounded, a man is found engaged in other things, and fails to speak the Lord's

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[34] Jean-René Viellefond, "Les Practiques Religeuses dans l'Armée Byzantine d'après les Traités Militaires," *Revue des Études Anciennes* 37 (1935): 324.
[35] Shaun Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886-912): Politics and People* (New York: Brill, 1997), 170.
[36] Stephenson, *Religious Services,* 35.
[37] Dennis, *Maurice's Strategikon,* 69.
[38] Viellefond, "Les Practiques Religeuses," 324-5.

prayer, filled with fear of God, standing and without interest in other things, this man will be whipped and tonsured and subject to public scorn, and relieved of his rank and demoted."[39] The same treatise speaks also of prayers upon engagement in the battlefield. Amongst entreaties for strength and intercession, one line succinctly reveals the Byzantine drive and justification for warfare: "Lord Jesus Christ, our God...make us capable of standing up and fighting to the death for our faith."[40] These paradigms for military conduct and expectations for liturgy and ritual created a cult and performance of religion within the army distinct from those found in regular civilian services.

On the other hand, although the promises of Islamic ideologies were particularly concerning to the Byzantine military élite, it was hardly the sole reason for the increasing religiosity of the military. In contrast to rhetoric about dying for the Christian faith, the Empire did at some points engage in warfare with other Christians, justified by imperial narratives of divine rulership; this added a further facet to the mechanisms of military religion. This aspect of Byzantine warfare is best explained by the Empire's consideration of itself as the sole legitimate Christian state, in that the "faith" for which Phokas exhorts his soldiers to die in his *Praecepta militaria* refers to a concept of God and Christianity that is inseparable from the Empire. Thus was it possible for Basil II to entreat an icon of the Virgin Mary in preparation for battle against the rebel Bardas Phokas, a member of the Byzantine aristocracy, and thus was it permitted for

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[39] Nikephoros Phokas, *Praecepta militaria*, trans. Eric McGeer, in *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 57. Also referred to as "Presentation and Composition on Warfare of the Emperor Nikephoros." Soldiers were expected to stand where the bell signalling prayer came upon them and to weep in repentance as they prayed.
[40] Ibid., 45.

John I Tzimiskes to wage war against the Christian Bulgarians on the grounds of a divine right to rule.[41]

Performance of religion in the military after Iconoclasm thus occurred during a period both of renewed warfare against the Empire's Muslim neighbors and of re-emerging icon use in all forms of religious ritual. These political circumstances greatly facilitated the development of imperial religious programs within the military and the public consciousness on greater levels, making available a series of instruments and narratives by which sacred space could be effectively constructed in the Byzantine military on campaign.

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[41] Michael Psellos, *Chronographia*, trans. W. Stark, in *The Chronographia of Michael Psellus* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 16; and Leo the Deacon, *Historia,* trans. Alice-Mary Leo, in *The history of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine military expansion in the tenth century* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 36.

Part I: Sense material

As Walter Kaegi notes in his review of the Byzantine armies, inadequate sources and incomplete knowledge about the Byzantine military impede meticulous review of military participation in religion. This was true both in the sense that the sources on general Byzantine military customs are not exhaustive, and that sources on regional religious customs too are minimally available. The Byzantine army in its entirety did not take up consistent positions on religion, and even before Iconoclasm had exhibited distinct separations of loyalty among *themes*, or frontier military districts. In contrast to the state narrative of loyalty to imperial divinity, Kaegi describes them as having been "volatile, particularistic corps which placed their own interests and those of their commander...above the welfare of the army and the state as a whole," who might throw their support behind a challenger to the throne to enrich their individual themes.[42] However, this is not to say that there were not standard religious practices in the military before and after the period of Iconoclasm that were exercised to a large degree of consistency.

Jean-René Villefond's 1935 article "Les practiques religeuses" provides an excellent overview of *taktika* and their accounts of religious practices in the Byzantine army as prescribed by the military élite, but beyond this there does not seem to be a consolidated collection of accounts of religious practices in the military found in Byzantine textual sources. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to attempt such an undertaking, but in addressing the spiritual consequence of combined martial religious practices as a single whole it becomes necessary to describe the various manifestations of such practices, both inside and outside of *taktika*. I look closely at Leo VI's ninth-century *Taktika* and Nikephoros Phokas's tenth-century *Praecepta militaria* in

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[42] Walter Kaegi Jr., "The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm," in *Army, Society, and Religion in Byzantium* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1982), 49-50.

particular, which provide information about ideal troop formations, military preparations, and prescribed approaches to military prayer and ritual.[43] I also examine historical accounts of religious rites and icon usage in Michael Attaleiates' *Historia* and Michael Psellos' *Chronographia* (both late eleventh-century texts), and to a lesser extent Theophanes the Confessor's ninth-century *Chronographia* and Leo the Deacon's tenth-century *Historia*.[44]

I will furthermore attempt to point out how particular elements of military campaigns replicate or imitate conditions found within hierotopical spaces such as churches in anticipation of Parts II and III of this thesis. The following section is divided into three parts, each of which addresses different aspects of religious sense experience: 1) individually engaging ritual practices such as prayer and exhortation, 2) physical paraphernalia such as icons and crosses, and 3) spiritual phenomena both visible and invisible, such as miracles and apparitions.

I.1 Prayers, exhortations, and on-site services

Religious activities in which every soldier personally engaged were an important part of life on campaign. These include routine activities such as prayer and programs of hymns and invocations, events such as feast days and the celebration of the Passion, and exhortations by the emperor or general in which a call for intercession by the Theotokos is often found. The significance of these acts in hierotopy come from their programmatic execution in the institutional setting of the military, much as daily routine is performed in modern armies. This subsection is further divided to address ritual and prayer both outside of and on the battlefield.

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[43] With John Haldon's recent critical edition of the *Taktika– A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo the Wise–* and Erik McGeer's excellent commentary of Nikephoros Phokas' *Praecepta militaria* in *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century.*

[44] Critical edition of Attaleiates' *Historia* by Kaldellis and Krallis; of Psellos' *Chronographia* by W. Stark; of Theophanes the Confessor's *Chronographia* by Mango and Scott; and of Leo the Deacon's *Historia* by A.-M. Leo.

Unfortunately there are not many replications of exact prayers and rituals in texts other than *taktika*, as the religious practices of the army were often not relevant to larger narratives. Given distinct congruencies noted between strategy formulae in *taktika* and descriptions of strategy execution by Byzantine historians such as Leo the Deacon, it is very likely that ritual activities that are not mentioned in favor of conveying more relevant or interesting information were nevertheless carried out in a fashion similar to those described in *taktika*.[45] Chroniclers also supply valuable contemporary information on what was considered to be an acceptable or even preferred exhortation or prayer, in that events are often described second-hand and speeches cannot always be considered to have been witnessed by the author or recorded verbatim.

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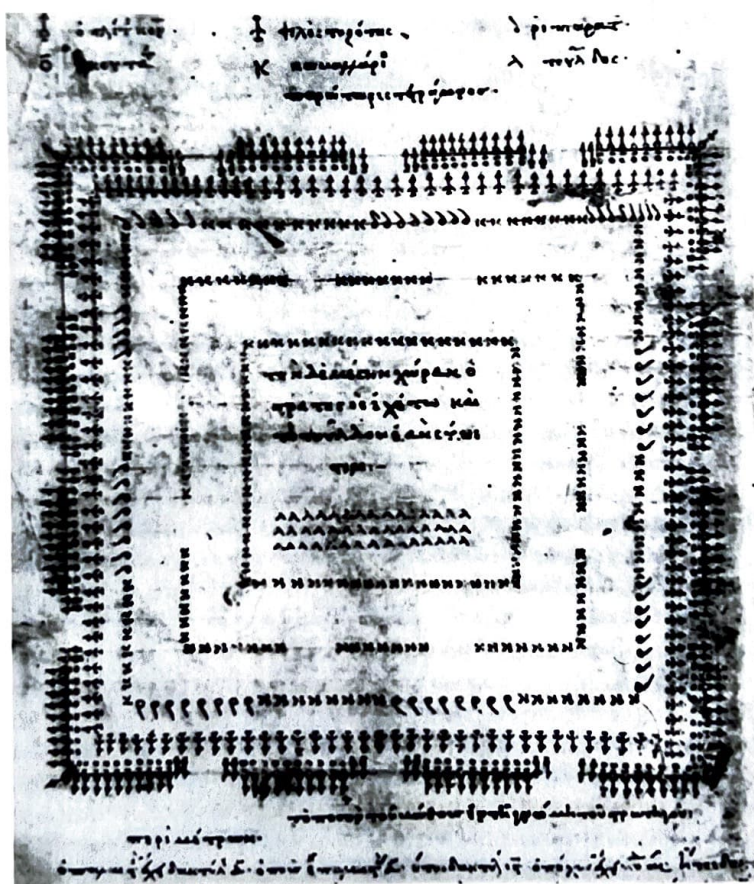
[45] Alice-Mary Leo, *The History of Leo the Deacon*, 36. See McGeer, *Warfare*, 217-221 on drilling.

Figure 1. Byzantine square infantry formation. *Parisinus Graecus* 2442, folio 23, eleventh century. Part of a work known as the *Syntaxis armartorum quadrata* depicting "a square infantry formation keeping the cavalry inside."

I.1.i Camp space and ritual

The Byzantine army maintained a sacralized view of the pitched camp, around which daily life in an expedition would revolve if the troops were not in transit.[46] Fixed rituals, which gave the camp religious significance, underpinned army discipline and also served to alleviate anxiety among soldiers.[47] Importantly, from the tenth century onwards soldiers were quartered "exactly as they are set to deploy in battle formation, so that in the event of a sudden report of the enemy, they [would] be found ready as though in battle formation."[48] This particular version of the infantry square had no parallel among formations discussed by classical tacticians.[49] The Byzantine camp formed a concentric square, with heavy infantry on the outside arranged in twelve brigades, cavalry in the middle layer, and the baggage train and noncombatants protected within (Figure 1). A mobile chapel was situated in the center of the camp, in which priests would drape the altar and conduct regular services. One or more sets of roads bisected the square from east to west and north to south in the shape of a cross. As Vegetius, the author of *De re militari,* explains, "if the camp is laid out in a square....in battle it cannot easily be encircled by the enemy, for they will have to attack it on one side or two. If they decide to make an assault on three sides or even four, their forces will be dispersed and weakened, easy to repulse."[50] The

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[46] David Bachrach, *Religion and the Conduct of War c. 300-1215,* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2003), 8.

[47] Ramsay Macmullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 174-5.

[48] Phokas, *Praecepta militaria* V 23-26, trans. McGeer in *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth,* 52.

[49] McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth,* 259.

[50] Vegetius, *De re militari,* I.18-24.

square formation had the additional effect of supporting troop morale, as soldiers would not be

outflanked or attacked from behind.[51]

As a result of largely practical reasons, symbolic parallels were constructed between the

sacred space of the camp and the similarly disciplined space of the muster. For the infantrymen

in particular, the association of the camp with the battlefield would have been particularly strong,

as their positions in its formation would not have changed in the process of the battle while the

cavalry would have entered and exited the infantry square for refuge or for preparation.[52]

Soldiers were likewise instructed to defend the camp, which would have contained resources for

the entire contingent as well as noncombatant allies, loot, and prisoners, with their lives.[53] The

standard Byzantine camp therefore imitated the stages of a controlled battlefield engagement in

spatiotemporal structure and lent a syllogistic quality to prayer and invocations performed as part

of camp routine. There is additional significance in the association of the camp and its ritual with

positive battle sequences, as the infantry formation would change in the event that the cavalry

was routed.[54]

However, while the camp usually served as a secured rest and preparatory space away

from which battles were fought, engagements could also occur directly adjacent to or in the

encampment, thus absorbing the space of the camp and all of its associations into that of the

battlefield.[55] As a result of these formulations of camp space– of the camp's physical imitation of

the battlefield and the potential for camp space to overlap with engagement space– it is difficult

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[51] McGeer notes that the formation would also have prevented Byzantine infantry from fleeing the battle; for this and the above reasons, the Byzantines "preferred the square to all other infantry formations and kept their infantry in this deployment whenever possible on the march, in cap, and in battle" (*Sowing*, 264).

[52] Phokas, *Praecepta militaria*, II.5-6, 11, 13.

[53] Ibid., 53-55.

[54] McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, 265. See also McGeer, "Infantry versus Calvalry: The Byzantine Response," *REB* 46 (1988): 135-145.

[55] Battles fought by the camp could be strategic and not reactionary: Romanos IV in his 1071 eastern campaign is described at one point as wanting "to bring the fighting to an immediate and decisive conclusion by engaging in close combat right in front of the encampment" (Attaleiates, *History*, 20.287).

to divorce the ritual significance of the camp from that of the battlefield. An enemy victory furthermore often included the violation and sacking of the camp space to the effect that both secular and religious material were taken as spoils, and so the encampment embodied the line between victory and defeat, for the contingent as well as for the Christian faith, as well as ritual, routine, and preparation.[56]

In terms of camp routine, prayer was essential to maintaining morale and was by far the most regular ritual undertaken in military camps. Troops prayed twice a day: once in the morning "at sunrise, before undertaking any exercise, and once in the evening after dinner."[57] The communality and strictness of morning and evening prayers marked a distinct departure from the execution of the household prayers in civilian life. On prayer as part of camp life, the section concerning spies in Nikephoros Phokas's tenth-century *Praecepta Militaria*, recently emended by Eric McGeer, shines some light:

> It is necessary that the commander of the troops concern himself with the generals, the officers, and the troops, in order that, in the camp in which the army is situated, at the time of the doxology and of the hymns of evening and morning, the priests accompanying the host recite the Litany after finishing the hymns, and the whole of the army repeats the *Kyrie eleison* one hundred times, with diligence and fear of God and tears. Let no one dare, in the hour of prayer, to engage himself in any other way whatever. But if anyone is found doing such a thing...[he must] stand in the place in which he was found, turn towards the east, and utter the Lord's prayer, filled with fear.[58]

Punishment for failing to adhere to these rules included whipping, tonsure, demotion, and public display. Soldiers notably performed these prayers outside of the mobile chapel set up in the middle of the camp, wherever the hour found them.

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[56] In Theophylactes of Simocatta's *Historia* a gem-studded gold cross captured by Chosroes (531-579) a century earlier is returned to the Byzantines (*History,* 13.1); Leo the Deacon reports similar instances with the recovery of 'lost' military crosses and relics such as the sandals of Christ and the hair of John the Baptist (*History*, IX.12).

[57] Leo, *Taktika*, XII, 115, who on this point copies Maurice, *Strategikon*, VII.

[58] McGeer, "Presentation and Composition on Warfare of the Emperor Nikephoros," 57-59. I have supplied a more literal English translation based on the emended Greek and Viellefond's French than the one that is provided by McGeer. McGeer's Greek text emends the version originally edited by J. Kulakovsky in *Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de Saint-Pétersbourg*.

Performance of liturgy and the recitation of sacred texts also occurred regularly in camp space, allowing soldiers to fulfill their general liturgical requirements. No particular recorded protocol for camp readings of the Gospel and other religious services survives, but these practices often occurred during feast day celebrations or co-occurred with exhortations. Priests customarily accompanied armies on campaign, a practice retained from the earlier Roman army; although they are rarely mentioned in histories and tactical manuals, the seventh-century historian Theophylactes of Simocatta for example mentions that the general Philippicus celebrated the Passion with priests ready at hand.[59] In a camp formation they would have been situated centrally in the square with the baggage train. The inwardly focused construction of the camp square would have imitated that of Byzantine central- and cross-plan churches, in the sense that the liturgy would be performed in the middle of the host rather than at its head (as would be customary for churches in the Latin West). *Akolouthia* may have been performed; one tenth- or eleventh-century text calls to "Our lord Jesus Christ, to the mother of God most pure, to the angels, to the apostles, and to the martyrs" to deliver "favorable outcomes for the army on march and in combat."[60] John Mauropous, the bishop of Euchaïta, prays to the Virgin Mary in a rogational service attributed to him: "Powerful in strength and strong in battles, fight together with us with your powerful hand against enemies who wage war against us... Annihilate now...the barbarians surrounding us...against them we move you, oh pure one, to the battle line for you are the chief general of the Christians!"[61] Priests played an active role in maintaining military discipline by performing religious rituals, and their presence contributed to the conception of the camp as a sacralized space. Attaleiates, describing priests signaling among

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[59] Theophylactes of Simocatta, *Historia*, 3.4., 107.

[60] Laurentianus LXXV.6, fol. 120 vo-124. The hymns have not been dated, but Viellefond notes that their style and form are late tenth century.

[61] *Euchologion to mega*, ed. N. Papdopoulos (Athens: Michael I. Saliveros, 1927), 426-30.

themselves to read the Gospel during the ill-fated eastern campaign of Romanos IV Diogenes (1068-1071), strikingly writes that the soldiers "believed deep in their hearts that the verses to be recited would indicate the outcome of their present undertaking."[62]

Exhortations, while not religious rituals in themselves, were employed to boost morale and to encourage soldiers to pray for intercession.[63] The exact text of speeches as recorded by contemporary authors is considered in modern scholarship to be for the most part rhetorical flourish; nevertheless the topic and tone would have been similar, and it is certain that religious invocations were included.[64] Regarding methods of execution, the *Strategikon* advises the general to address troops "by *meros* (brigade) or *moira* (division), not all at once in one place," and to give speeches of encouragement and promises of imperial compensation. Attaleiates writes in his *History* that on his 961 Cretan expedition, Phokas declared to his troops before battle that "their first line of defense, their invincible courage, and most secure anchor was to seek refuge with the Mother of God, the All-Pure Lady, and plead with her."[65] The anonymous author of a text entitled *Strategika parangelmata* describes an additional endeavor to guarantee moral fortitude before battle: he suggests that the general in charge choose the most acclaimed soldiers and officers in the company to say to their peers that "victories fulfill the prophecies and predictions of the saints," and to predict "the rout of the enemy according to the sacred texts."[66] This undertaking demonstrates a conscious effort to psychologically prime soldiers on the one

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[62] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 20.281.

[63] On the feasibility of exhortations and their use outside of literary motifs, see Edward Anson, "The General's Pre-Battle Exhortation in Graeco-Roman Warfare," *Greece & Rome* 57, no.2 (October 2010), 305.

[64] Elizabeth Carney writes, "We need not believe a word of any of the speeches included in our surviving sources...like most speeches preserved in ancient historical sources, these deserve little credence," "Macedonians and Mutiny: Discipline and Indiscipline in the Army of Philip and Alexander," *Classical Philology* 91 (1996), 33.

[65] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 28.411. Most research done on the viability and effect of mass exhortations has focused on Graeco-Roman warfare in Antiquity, splitting evaluations of camp and pre-battle exhortations based on troop arrangement. From remarks found in the anonymously-authored military encyclopedia *Sylloge taktikorum* (ca. 950), it is clear that the square formation described by Phokas for the Byzantine army both in transit and in encampments was a fairly recent development (*Sylloge Taktikorum*, 47.1).

[66] *Codex Barberinianus*, 276, fol.126 rº.-130 rº, §36. Digital Vatican Library.

hand to be confident in inevitable victory, and on the other hand to be more receptive to religious interpretations of the battle ahead. Thus could religious fortitude be encouraged in an army numbering in the thousands.[67]

I.1.ii Battle preparations

Beyond questions of morale, prayers and purification of the army in immediate anticipation of battle were certainly believed to have efficacy in influencing the ultimate outcome of the confrontation. In the *Strategikon's* section on pre-battle preparations, Maurice's first instruction is that division generals must have the flags of their tagmas blessed and to present them to their standard bearers.[68] Attaleiates, when comparing the Roman troops of his day to the pagan Roman army of old, laments that current leaders "thoughtlessly and recklessly lead Roman forces into great wars and dangers without having conciliated God in advance, and so suffer grievous harm and are soundly defeated." The shared sentiment was that for a general or emperor to fail to consult God before a campaign was irresponsible and arrogant.

The proper and paradigmatic leader would "purify the army of any injustice and pollution, for...it [is] better to endanger oneself for the good of one's country after such a purification." Purification was accomplished by eating once a day in the evening and practicing xerophagy, or the exclusive consumption of dry foods.[69] Much like fasting and other food-related rituals, to break from this restriction was to make an offense against food purity, and thus to

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[67] Edward Anson, "The General's Pre-Battle Exhortation in Graeco-Roman Warfare," in *Greece & Rome* 57, no.2 (October 2010), 305. This sort of pass-along system of motivational speech adds another technique by which the motivation of a large host could be managed, which has its parallels with the Spartan practice of passing along words of encouragement throughout the battle formation.

[68] Maurice, *Strategikon,* 65; Tagmas, or battalion-size military units, were led by division generals known as merarchs.

[69] "Xerophagy is also the name for the first six days of Easter, because everyone during this time eats dry things: observers do not eat apart from the evening meal and partake only in bread, salt, and water" (Saint Epiphanus, *Expositio fidei,* XXII; Patrologia Graeca, col. 828; see also the *Constitutiones apostolorum* V, xviii).

invite pollution and to endanger the prospects of the upcoming battle.[70] In the *Praecepta Militaria* Nikephoros Phokas gives specific instructions that "the commander must...prescribe that [the generals, officers, and the troops] purify themselves...three days before the battle," and Leo VI in his *Taktika* requires that the general must "ensure first of all that his whole army is pure and... offer fervent prayer through the [previous] night."[71] The *Praecepta Militaria* furthermore instructs that the day before the battle, the chaplains must perform the Eucharist and on completion of the liturgy the army must participate in "the communion of the divine and immaculate sacraments."[72]

On the day of the battle, more rituals were carried out: the *Praecepta Militaria* instructs that as the front line of the enemy approaches, "the entire contingent of the host, every last one of them, must say the invincible prayer proper to Christians, 'Lord Jesus Christ, our God, have mercy on us, Amen,' and in this way let them begin their advance against the enemy." An additional part of the prayer reads: "'Come to the aid of us Christians, making us worthy to rise up and fight to the death for our faith and our brethren by fortifying and strengthening our souls, our hearts, and our whole body, the mighty Lord of battles, incomparable in power, through the intercession of the Mother of God Who bore Thee, and of all the saints, Amen.'"[73] *En marchant,* the soldiers were to continue invoking God and the Virgin Mary. Maurice's *Strategikon* also instructs that while standing to attention in the battle line, soldiers should engage in an alternating form of invocation much like that of modern day armies, with one soldier calling to

[70] Allen J. Frantzen, *Food, Eating, and Identity in Early Medieval England* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2014), 178.
[71] Stephenson, *Religious Services,* 35.
[72] Phokas, *Praecepta Militaria,* V.42-48, trans. McGeer, 59.
[73] Viellefond, "Les pratiques religeuses," 328.

God, "Help us," and the rest of the soldiers following with a simple cry of "O God." A similar ritual most probably was carried out in the Middle Byzantine army.[74]

The act of contemplating God and saintly intercession was a repetitive and constant activity in which soldiers were required to engage, and which was programmatically escalated up until the point of engagement. Great emphasis should be put on the procedural nature of prayers and exhortations, as the controlled practice of religion here in the Byzantine army is comparable to other everyday activities such as mealtime and sleep that customarily become supervised and penalized in collective, conformist institutional settings. Importantly, the wording of prayers such as these, which framed Byzantine war as a battle for the Christian faith, contributed to the developing conception of soldiers as potential martyrs. The saturation of these reminders, of a spiritual duty and heavenly reward in addition to fidelity to the emperor and their own financial interests, would have been far greater in frequency and consistency than the religious practices in which they participated in everyday civilian life. Participation in crowd events within a particular social and religious schema has been shown in modern psychological studies to encourage shared identity and collective emotion, allowing for deindividuation and positive experiences.[75] The occurrence of military rituals in a large communal atmosphere, with unchanging structure and inflexible strictures of performance, imitated in many ways the environment of a church– the prototypical environment for collective experience. In much the same manner as the architectural and religious program of a monastery, such ritual served to heighten soldiers' experiences of religion in a distinctly military context.

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[74] Maurice, *Strategikon*, XI.24.

[75] Fergus Neville and Stephen Reicher, "The experience of collective participation: shared identity, relatedness and emotionality," *Journal of the Academy of Social Sciences* 6, no.3 (2011): 377-396.

I.2 Icons, crosses, and relics

In addition to praying and participating in religious rites such as the Eucharist while on campaign, the army would also carry with it material objects considered to be central to intercession. What is significant about these objects– generally speaking, paraphernalia such as icons, *typoi* or copies of the True Cross, and relics– is that typically they were housed in churches as part of a larger hierotopical program. Portable icons, battle crosses, and reliquaries containing fragments of the True Cross were tactile objects that were routinely removed from stationary structures and transported, carrying with them a form of the sacred space and performative experience that they projected and facilitated in their customary resting places. They provided physical links between the religious space of the Byzantine church and traditional Christian narratives and that of the expedition. Lidov writes extensively on the centrality of relics and venerable icons to concrete spatial environments in Byzantium. They formed part of a concrete milieu of man's connection with the transcendental world, which also included "visible architectural forms and various pictures as well as changing liturgical clothes and vessels, lighting effects and fragrance, [and] ritual gestures and prayers."[76]

Of these three categories of religious object, icons in particular were central to the sensual experience of civilian worshippers. The tradition of the Marian icon can be traced back to the seventh-century *Life of Saint Mary of Egypt*, in which a courtesan, Mary, supplicates an icon of the Mother of God when she is prevented from entering the Basilica of Constantine the Great lest she see the relic of the True Cross. Her sins are forgiven, and after she leaves the icon directs her to a hermitage in the Jordanian wilderness.[77] This icon in Jerusalem was translated to

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[76] Alexei Lidov, "The Creator of Sacred Space as a Phenomenon of Byzantine Culture," in *L'artista a Bisanzio e nel mondo cristiano-orientale*, ed. Michele Bacci (Pisa: Scuola Normale Superiore, 2007), 137.

[77] *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca* 1042, ed. F Halkin, II (Brussels, 1957), 80-82. For the life in English, see "Life of St Mary of Egypt," trans. M. Kouli, in *The Holy Women of Byzantium. Ten Saints' Lives in English*

the Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, bringing with it its historical and religious connotations and marking Constantinople as the New Jerusalem. Pre-iconoclastic defenders of icon veneration such as John of Damascus argued that the icon was earthly matter imbued with *pneuma*, or spirit, much in the same way the stylites housed the Holy Spirit in their bodies and the Incarnation wedded the human and the divine in Christ.[78] Post-iconoclasm, the Council of Nikaia in 787 justified icon veneration through parallelism based on the theories of Theodore Stoudites (759-826). Just as crosses manifested as an imprint *(typos)* of the prototype and recalled the True Cross in form *(morphe)* and likeness *(homoioma)*, so the icon, rather than containing the essence of the holy figure, encouraged veneration by bearing an imprint– the figure's identical likeness– and recalling the acts of Christ.[79]

A civilian worshipper's interaction with an icon in the process of veneration would include eye contact with the portrait and physical contact in the form of a kiss; it is less likely that each soldier would have been able to physically touch the icon as it accompanied the host on campaign, but it was clearly customary for the commander to carry one with him for the entire army.[80] Icons of Mary on the battlefield were linked ideologically with the iconographic program of the Great Church of Constantinople, and the Great Church was likewise identified with the most sacred shrine in Jerusalem. The shift from painted to metal relief icons in the ninth century allowed the illusion of animation and a roving gaze, affected by the changes in light refracted

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Translation, ed. A. M. Talbot (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1996), 65-94.

[78] John of Damascus, *Contra imaginum calumniatores orationes tres,* I.8.

[79] From Mansi XIII, col.377 D; repeated in *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum Generaliumque Decreta,* 314-15. For a translation in English, see *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils,* ed. Norman P. Tanner (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press), 135-136.

[80] Acts of the Seventh Oecumenical Council of 787, ed. J.D. Mansi in *Sacrorum Conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio,* Florentia 1759-1798, and Zosima the Deacon, *Xenos,* ed. George P. Majeska, in *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984), 182-183.

across the crests and valleys of a metallic surface.[81] The importance of light as the material

indication of the holy, or theophany, has its roots in the Book of Exodus, in which the skin of

Moses's face glows after he speaks with God on Mount Sinai, and in the Book Of Matthew, in

which Jesus's face shines during his Transfiguration on top of Mount Tabor and God appears as a

bright cloud.[82] Precious gems, enamel, and gold were used across the entirety of the icon surface

in the same fashion as the late eleventh-century icon of the archangel Michael shown in Figure 2.

Inside of a church, moving air and flickering candlelight could be employed to heighten the

appearance of movement and life, charging the space between viewer and viewed and pulling the

worshipper into a singular "dance" based on agitation and response.[83] The capability of soldiers'

memories of such performativity, attached to the presence of the holy icon on the battlefield, to

elicit strong emotion and feelings of individual connection with the divine– or *pathema*– would

have been significant.[84] On campaign, however, the shine and shimmer of precious metals and

gems in the sunlight could also recall metaphorical associations between the coruscating figure

and the fires of judgement. A twelfth-century epigram written for a mixed-media icon of Mary

likewise describes gold, pearls, and gems enhancing "the pure one (Mary) under the rays of the

sun" and recalling the "fire of Judgement" in the gilded copper– surely an encouraging

recollection, for soldiers on campaign.[85]

Attaleiates specifies that it is the icon of "our glorious Lady, the Mother of

Blachernai...which usually accompanies the faithful emperors on their campaigns as an

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[81] Bissera Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon: Space, Ritual, and the Senses in Byzantium* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 121.

[82] For a discussion on Byzantine depictions of divine light in Byzantine art, see Slobodan Ćurčić, "Divine Light: Constructing the Immaterial in Byzantine Art and Architecture," in *Architecture of the Sacred: Space Ritual, and Experience from Greece to Byzantium,* ed. Bonna Wescoat and Robert Ousterhout (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 307-337.

[83] Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon,* 122-23.

[84] On *pathema* and the dynamics between viewer and object, see Pentcheva, *The Sensual Icon,* 155.

[85] Venice, Marc. Cod. Gr. 524, fol.37, edited in Spyridon Lampros,"Ο μαρκιανὸς κῶδιξ 524," *Neos Hellenomnemon* 8 (1911): 48-49.

invincible weapon."[86] This icon type was heavily associated with imperial victory and military intercession, but icons of Jesus or of military saints such as Theodore Stratelates or Theodore Teon were not unusual. Icons ranged in size, from personal handheld images to paintings (before Iconoclasm) or metal repoussé (after Iconoclasm) several feet in length. In his *Chronographia,* Michael Psellos provides us with the first instance in which a specific Marian icon is said to have traditionally been carried into battle, writing that Emperor Basil (976-1025) when confronting the 989 rebellion of Bardas Phokas clasped "the image of the Saviour's mother, thinking this *ikon* the surest protection against his opponent's terrific onslaught."[87] When the army was stationary, the icon would be kept inside of the commander's tent or, as Attaleiates at one point describes, "held aloft" in full sight of the camp.[88] Niketas Choniates additionally records that whenever "the Roman phalanxes were hard pressed by the enemy falling furiously upon them," Emperor John II Komnenos (1118-1143) would "look upon the icon of the Mother of God, wailing loudly and gesturing pitifully, [shedding] tears hotter than the sweat of the battle."[89] If not simply rhetorical, this would suggest that the larger icons were transported near the battlefield to watch over Christian soldiers and to provide support.

Crosses on the other hand signified victory, pursuant to the tradition of Constantine's vision of the cross, in which a voice proclaimed to him, "In this you will be victorious."[90] Theophanes Continuatus calls the cross "victory-bringer" and records that a customary call for battle declared, "The cross has become triumphant!"[91] The cross gained a military association with Constantine and developed a cult in the late sixth century, intensifying with the translation

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[86] Attaleiates, *Historia,* 20.279. For a similar description, see Psellos, "Romanus III," *Chronographia,* 10.

[87] Psellos, "Basil II," *Chronographia,* 16.

[88] Theophylact of Simocatta, 3.11; Attaleiates, *Historia,* 20.279.

[89] Niketas Choniates, *Historia,* ed. Jan Louis van Dieten (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1975), 15.

[90] "ἐν τούτῳ νίκα." Eusebius of Caesarea, *Vita Constantini,* in *Eusebius Werke,* v.1 ed. F. Wilkelmann (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1975), 30. John Malalas provides the first complete record of the myth: John Malalas, *Chronographia,* LXIII, ed. Thurn, 243.

[91] Theophanes Continuatus, V.42, Bonn ed., 274, V.3.

of the True Cross from Jerusalem to Constantinople in 629.[92] It rose in prominence both as a symbol on battle standards and as a standard in its own right from the seventh to the tenth centuries, during the period of the Byzantine-Arab wars. A prayer from the eleventh century invokes the Constantinian vision, beseeching God "through the power of the cross...now [to] give victory, strength, and divine might to your army....Bestow upon the emperors victories against the barbarians, protecting your state through the cross."[93] Crosses were quite large, comparable with Byzantine processional crosses such as the one housed at the Lavra on Mount Athos.[94] Marble crosses from Justinian's time are reported by Niketas Choneiates, and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos in his treatise on imperial campaigns describes a reliquary containing wood of the True Cross and a standard-bearer with a bejewelled gold cross (for an approximation, see Figure 3).[95] Crosses themselves may also have exhibited connections to the Archangel Michael, such as in Attaleiates' description of a 1078 miracle, or Marian iconography, combining the power of Virginal motherhood with the symbolism of the Cross; however, only one example of such a cross is known to exist.[96]

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[92] H. Klein, "Niketas und das Wahre Kreuz: Kritische Anmerkungen zur Überlieferung des Chronicon Paschale ad annum 614," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 94/2 (2001): 580-587.

[93] From A. Heisenberg, "Kriegsgottesdienst in Byzanz," in *Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Sprachgeschichte vornehmlich des Orients: Ernst Kuhn zum 70. Geburtstag am 7. Februar 1016 gewidmet von Freuden und Schülern, München 1916* (Breslau: Verlag von M. & H. Marcus, 1916), 244-257. Also find a similar prayer in *Akolouthia II*, ed. Agostino Pertusi. "Una acolouthia militare inedita del X secolo," *Aevum* 22, 2/4 (March-December 1948):155, 157.

[94] A. Grabar, "La précieuse croix de la Lavra Saint-Athanase au Mont-Athos," *Cahiers archéologiques* 19 (1969): 99-125; John Cotsonis, *Byzantine Figural Processional Crosses* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1994), 11-14; and Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, "When the Emperor is About to Go on Campaign," in *De ceremoniis*, trans. Moffat and Tall (Canberra: Australian National University, 2012), 485.

[95] Nikeophoros Phokas likewise carried gold and jewel encrusted crosses on campaign (Niketas Choneiates, *Historia*, 19).

[96] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 483. The metal finial of a military standard from thirteenth-century Georgia is the only known example of this approach to cross decoration or icon/cross combination in military paraphernalia (Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 74).

Left: Figure 2. Icon of the archangel Michael, late eleventh to twelfth centuries, gems gold, and cloisonné enamel. Treasury of the basilica of San Marco, Venice, no.6. Right: Figure 3. Silver gilt processional cross, late eleventh to twelfth centuries, obverse. Réunion des musés nationaux/Art Resource, New York.

As representations of the Empire's power and divine support, as well as objects of great material value and craftsmanship, icons, relics, and crosses were often taken as loot by enemies; throughout the course of Choneiates' and Leo the Deacon's histories, the Byzantines are described as recovering military crosses and relics such as the sandals of Christ from enemies, either by conquest or by treaty.[97] Psellos, describing the rout of Romanos III Argyros's army and the sacking of his camp in a 1030 expedition against the Saracens, relates that, "more important than the emperor still being alive," someone found the *ikon* of the *theometor* alone untouched by

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[97] For example, Leo the Deacon, *Historia,* 129.7-8; Niketas Choneiates, *Historia,* 31. Leo the Deacon frequently mentions the "standard of the cross," which he notes regularly preceded the army.

the enemy.[98] Few accounts directly reference the presence of icons, crosses, or relics when recounting battlefield miracles, likely because their efficacy was already understood to have contributed to the milieu of the miraculous. Among those few instances, however, Niketas Choniates writes that the emperor John Komnenos was able to rout Patzinak, or Pecheneg, battalions in his 1133 campaign by gesturing to the icon for intercession just as Moses had "turned back the troops of Amalek by raising his hands," thanks to the assistance of the icon of Mary and "the power from on high."[99]

The significance of these icons, and likewise the relics that Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos describes as part of the imperial retinue, was their perceived efficacy in facilitating battlefield intercession and their ability to physically mark sacred space through their connection to other hierotopical constructions. The visualisation of the process of prayer forms the core of the canonical type of the Marian icons brought onto the battlefield. Pentcheva explains that rather than motherly love, the "*hodegetria*" type, where Mary gestures with her right hand towards the infant Jesus in her left, is based on the theological concept of the intercession of Mary and the benevolent response of Christ. This image type "confirmed the efficacy of prayer, strengthened by material intercession." Furthermore, the gesture of prayer that Mary makes invokes the standard *Deesis*, or the iconographic model of Mary and John the Baptist supplicating Jesus for the salvation of Man.[100] Depictions of military saints in the late tenth century similarly followed the *Deesis* model, where saints surround Mary in place of Jesus in the act of intercession.[101] The icons thus worked in the same way as images of miracle stories

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[98] Psellos, "Romanus III," *Chronographia*, 10.
[99] Choniates, *Historia*, 15.
[100] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 111.
[101] Ibid., 84.

in the entrance of Byzantine churches, bringing intercession to the minds of those standing

before the pictures.[102]

I.3 Apparitions, visions, miracles, and omens

This final portion deals with battlefield intercession and other miracles reported in battles

and in the process of military campaigns. Perhaps most importantly, the narrative tradition of

sighting apparitions, experiencing miracles, and interpreting omens extends far before the rise of

the icon in Byzantine intercession. The phenomenon of repetitive miracles and apparitions

contributed to the construction and perception of an invisible milieu present within the space of

combat, much as repeating miracles at the main entrance to the Hagia Sophia during its

reconstruction under Leo the Wise contributed to a new spatial program.[103] The boundaries of

such milieus were marked by the zone in which specific miracles occurred, which is significant

in battlefield circumstances in that battlefield miracles did not occur in one fixed physical space

but rather wherever the army roamed, a space given definition by the general's directives.

Apparitions on the battlefield were commonly of Mary, in her role as the Byzantine

strategos, or of the warrior saints. Existing models of Athena in war contributed to models of

Mary; in the seventh-century *Chronicon Paschale* for instance the enemy leader of the Avars

during the Avar Siege of Constantinople sees an apparition of Mary as "a woman with august

bearing running along on the walls," mimicking Zosimus's 501 account of the 396 siege of

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[102] Lidov, "Leo the Wise and the Miraculous Icons in Hagia Sophia," in *The Heroes of the Orthodox Church. The New Saints, 8th to 16th Century*, ed. E. Kounroura-Galaki (Athens 2004), 395.
[103] Ibid., 393-432.

Athens.[104] Leo the Deacon, describing the battle of 971, writes that the Theotokos sent Saint

Theodore Stratelates to aid the emperor John Tzimiskes:

> The entire camp of the Romans saw a man riding a white horse, who went ahead of the Romans and encouraged them to advance against the Scythians; and he broke through the enemy regiments in a wondrous fashion, and threw them into disarray... A great suspicion was aroused that he was one of the Theodoroi, the triumphant martyr saints, whom the emperor always used as vanguards and champions against the enemies. For indeed it happened that this battle took place on the day on which we traditionally celebrate the memory of Saint Theodore Stratelates. [105]

This vision, he says, was moreover confirmed by a nun in Constantinople, who saw in a dream

that Mary, escorted by men in the form of flames, said to a soldier, "Lord Theodore, your John is

in critical circumstances. Hurry to his help! If you are not in time, he will be in great danger."

Apparitions, especially those that interacted with the physical world, were visible manifestations

of divine aid that served to change the qualitative experience of an engagement and could boost

morale at crucial points of a battle.

Dream visions and omens as future sight or visitations from the divine had their roots in

ancient literature and mythology, such as Penelope's vision of Odysseus's homecoming or

Herodotus's account of the death of the Lydian king Croesus.[106] Eusebius of Caesarea's famous

account of Constantine's vision of the cross in the sky and subsequent dream of Christ before the

Battle of the Milvian Bridge sets one of the first precedents for military intercession on an

imperial scale, and it is not surprising that the Byzantines made frequent reference to this

episode.[107] Emperors took with them a veritable library of books on topics such as the

interpretation of dreams, divining by occurrences, good and bad weather, and "supernatural"

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[104] Zosimos, *New History*, trans. R. T. Ridley, in *Byzantine Australiensia* 2 (Sidney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies, 1982), 101.

[105] Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, IX.9, trans. Talbot and Sullivan, 197.. The same story appears in Skylitzes, *Synopsis historiarum*, ed. Thurn, 308-309.

[106] Homer, *Odyssey*, XIX; Herodotus, *The Persian Wars*, I.1-94.

[107] See, for instance, Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos's protocol record for when the emperor goes on an expedition (*De ceremoniis*, 445).

phenomena such as storms, lighting, thunder, and earthquakes.[108] Some authors were openly

sceptical of divination and the interpretations of portents, as such practices were of debatable

orthodoxy according to church doctrine. Nevertheless, it is very common to see descriptions of

bad omens, such as the retinue's most regal horse dying, preceding unsuccessful armed

confrontations.[109] The tone of omens could have a great effect on the morale of the army and

likewise were consulted by generals and emperors. They were certainly believed by emperors

and Byzantine élites to have an effect on troop morale, and could prime soldiers to believe or

disbelieve accounts of supernatural aid.

An intriguing instance where other intercessory sense material is layered with a dream

vision can be found in Choniates. Preceding the disastrous battle of Myriokephalon in 1176, a

man tells the emperor Manuel Komnenos that he has had a dream in which he entered a church

named after Saint Cyrus, and after having made his offering heard a voice emanating from an

icon of the Theotokos:

> "The emperor is now in the utmost danger; who will go forth in my name to assist him?"
> The voice of one unseen answered, "Let Saint George go." "He is sluggish," came the
> reply. "Let Saint Theodore set forth," then suggested the voice, but he was also rejected,
> and finally came the painful response that no one could avert the impending evil.[110]

Here Mary manifests through an icon, within the sacred space of a church, within a dream, while

the dreamer is on campaign. Interestingly, it is possible that the bearer of this news, a certain

Mavropoulos, had come with the intention of undermining the morale of the emperor and his

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[108] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, "When the emperor is about to go on campaign," in *The Book of Ceremonies*, 467.

[109] Niketas Choniates derides the decision of the army to stay inactive on an "unlucky" day, complaining that the emperor "obeyed astrologers as if they were judgements from God's throne" (*Historia*, 154). See also Maria Mavroudi, "Astrology, Byzantine," in *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History* (Wiley Online Library, 2012). For some mentions of bad omens in military circumstances, see Attaleiates, *Historia*, 123, 385; Theophylactes Simacotta, *Historia*, 1.11.13, 2.2.2; Choniates, *Historia*, 96.

[110] Choniates, *Historia*, trans. Magoulias, 107-108.

soldiers: according to the *oneirokritikon* of Ahmet, an icon was less auspicious than the personal appearance of a saint, and Mavropoulos himself was a bilingual of uncertain allegiance.[111]

General miracles, finally, focused mostly on reversals of fortune for the enemy. Contemporary chroniclers seem to have been greatly inclined to call every political intrigue that benefitted the Byzantines a "miracle." Whenever someone among the enemy switches allegiances to aid the Byzantines, for instance, Attaleiates and Choniates declare an act of Divine Providence.[112] A soldier who understood to some degree the myriad personal circumstances under which a general or someone of lesser rank might defect would not be likely to consider the action essentially supernatural, but perhaps guided by a heavenly hand.

Other miracles, generally of seemingly supernatural feats, were explanations for specific, circumstantial events that reflected historical natural disasters. These often called upon a literary motif of the emperor as the mortal being through whom God exercised some of his power– as a facsimile of a biblical figure or as having accomplished a biblical miracle. Theophanes the Confessor recounts an incident during the Arab Siege of Constantinople in the early eighth century, where a storm with fiery hail and boiling water destroyed the Arab fleet; volcanic activity occurred off of the coast of Turkey during the time of the siege, which likely accounts for the flaming precipitation and boiling waters.[113] In one instance in 1078, without reference to any particular intercessor, the emperor Michael VII Doukas (1071-1078) survives an ambush by the forces of Nikeophoros III Botaneiates, a contestant for his throne. Just as the "Red Sea parted

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[111] An oneirokritikon is a guide to dream interpretation. *The Oneirocriticon of Achmet: A Medieval Greek and Arabic Treatise on the Interpretation of Dreams*, tr. S. M. Oberhelman (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1991), 152-53; and Mavroudi, *A Byzantine Book on Dream Interpretation: The Oneirocriticon of Achmet and its Arabic Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 269-285.

[112] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 381, 413-15, 439, 465-7, 489, 492; Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, 442, 489-90; Choniates, *Historia*, 15, 76.

[113] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, 550. This episode is also mentioned in a contemporary homily by Patriarch Germanus; see "Homélie de saint Germain sur la délivrance de Constantinople," ed. Venance Grumel, *Revue des études Byzantines*, 16 (1958): 197.

with the waters standing like a wall both to the right and the left, so that [the Israelites] could

cross on dry land without getting wet, such a miracle occurred," in that "the enemy flowed in a

stream from all sides and walled him in, but did not dare to touch him or brave battle with

him...[and] accepted defeat as if struck by an irresistible force."[114] These motifs are particularly

important in the context of hierotopy, in that they provide parallels between sacred narratives and

concrete present events that often had bearing on individual soldiers' lives. Anna Komnene offers

her father the emperor Alexios I's victory against Scythian troops near ancient Choerobacchi as

the embodiment of Deuteronomy 32:30: "How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten

thousand to flight?"[115] The implication here in reference to Deuteronomy 32-43, or the Song of

Moses, is that God forsook the enemy and guaranteed Alexios's stunning victory.

Attaleiates offers an example of instances where the emperor himself seems to encourage

the occurrence of the supernatural by means of his connection with God. In 974, while battling

enemy troops, the emperor Botaneiates and his men endure a forced march lasting "eleven days

and nights, something never before accomplished or even attempted," from an area near Great

Preslav (modern-day Veliki Preslav) to the outskirts of Adrianople (modern day Edirne in

Turkey, a distance of about 200 miles). The significance, Attaleiates explains, is that while

"battle...exhausts the warrior and makes him weak...to walk on foot many days while fighting

and not have any rest at night" could only have been accomplished "through supernatural

assistance."[116] It is highly unlikely the army marched 24 hours out of each day. Considering that

Byzantine armies were trained in the model of ancient Roman armies, it was completely possible

for regular infantry using mixed marching styles, even while fighting, to have accomplished the

distance indicated by Attaleiates in eleven days and nights. Julius Caesar was able to move his

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[114] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 481-83; see also Psellos, *Chronographia*, 261.
[115] Anna Komnene, *Alexiad*, trans. Elizabeth A.S. Dawes (London: Penguin Classics, 2004), 8.2.
[116] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 75.

entire army by forced march from Rome to Lake Geneva, a distance of about 560 miles, in eight days.[117] This accomplishment was a result of an imperial program of military training, and could not be used frequently; however, in instances where speed or surprise was strategically necessary, the accomplishment itself could be portrayed as superhuman, and qualify as the stuff of miracle. Further contributing to the mythologizing of feats such as these was the fact that many chroniclers were not themselves career military men, and so the bar for what was considered 'supernatural' was likely lowered both for them and those influenced by their texts.

These miracles then most likely continued both narratives of divine aid associated with the rule of a particular emperor, as they did in Attaleiates' recollection of the usurper Nikephoros III Botaneiates, and the general narrative of divine guidance and intercession that permeated all levels of social life in medieval Christian society. They established a narrative importance of supporting the correct, divinely-ordained emperor in order to experience such miracles, which were a "definitive and fitting sign of...appointment by [God]."[118] While they occurred lightly in terms of frequency, public recognition of these sorts of miraculous incidences would have had a significant effect over time and in combination on the overall narrative of Byzantine warfare.

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[117] Julius Caesar, *De Bello Gallico*, 1.7.
[118] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 493.

II Foundational narratives of sacred space

This section argues that the "creative action" occurring in military hierotopy was often an imperial activity and identifies long-term or cultural narratives that affected the construction and perception of spontaneous sacred space in individual military engagements, especially as they changed the popular understanding of military intercession and in turn themselves changed under the pressure of contemporary religious politics. It is important to note that imperial narratives and traditions, which determined the formal construction of military sacred space, could be quite different from the general cultural narratives that underscored the experiences of those who engaged with such space; however, it is clear from *taktika* that generals were expected to deeply consider the psychology of infantrymen for the all-important reason of morale.

II.1 The emperor as architect

The concept of hierotopical creativity presupposes some creator of sacred space. Lidov demonstrates the role of such a creator through the example of Abbot Suger and his remodelling program of the Cathedral of Saint-Denis in 1140. In describing the cathedral project, Suger communicates his interest in creating "*aliqua extranea orbis terrarum plaga*," a space outside of that of the earth, based on models in Jerusalem and Constantinople.[119] His interest, Lidov explains, was in "the concept of spaces created by outstanding rulers"– that is to say, Byzantine imperial paradigms.[120] In the *Story of the Construction of Saint Sophia,* Procopius likewise provides a semi-mythological account of a creator of a unique sacred space, describing Justinian's deep participation in the construction of the church beyond mere financial support.[121] This distinct model of the emperor as the conductor of architectural sanctuary space had its roots

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[119] Abbot Suger, *Liber de rebus in administratione sua gestis*, XXIV-XXXIV.
[120] Lidov, "The creator of sacred space," 41.
[121] Procopius, *De aedificiis*, 67.

in Constantinian building projects, but found inspiration also in the detail of program established by Justinian.[122]

Church patronage and the erection of civic buildings, such as the building programs for the Church of the Blachernai and of Christ Pantokrator in the Byzantine capital of Constantinople, thus became a tradition for aristocratic and imperial families who wished to show their piety and to lay claim to the tradition of founding religious and civic spaces.[123] However, Lidov rightly warns against the deification of an individual "maestro." Rarely did a space remain static in its hierotopical program, and rarely did one single person effect the ultimate construction of a sacred space.[124] Rather, every project had a prime mover of sorts, and others changed or improved upon this foundation over a period of time.[125] In Byzantium, emperors such as Justinian, as frequent church founders and religious donors, and as figures who relied on the intersection of religious and imperial programs to support their own legitimacy, most prominently acted as successive directors of hierotopy. They controlled both general spatial imagery and the multi-layered links between various arts, subordinated in a single spatial whole. Not every emperor created sacred space; Basil I for example focused on building projects but did not himself conduct any distinct program of religious space. Emperors such as Leo the Wise, however, could look back on the legends of their predecessors and introduce new religious programs, both in newly founded buildings and in spaces in which previous emperors had already made their marks.[126] A manuscript illumination in the Chronicle of St Sophia (fig. 4) depicts a model of this perceived relationship between "creators" and "masters" which existed in medieval minds: the Lombard prince Arechis, sitting upon his cushioned seat and holding a staff

[122] Lidov, "The Creator of Sacred Space," 174.
[123] Ibid., 144.
[124] Ibid., 173.
[125] Ibid., 141.
[126] Ibid., 174.

of office, directs the work of a builder who adds to the structure of Saint Sophia in Benevento, Italy.[127]

Figure 4. Manuscript illumination of Duke Arechis II instructing a builder, *Vat. Lat.* 2939.

Crucially, however, sacred space is not necessarily architectural. This point is perhaps obvious but nevertheless critical to the establishment of sacred space in military environments. In his influential 1991 book *The Production of* Space, Henri Lefebvre for instance argued for the discovery of different formulations of space in literary texts– "enclosed, described, projected, dreamt of, speculated about"– and it is not difficult to see how spaces such as these existed in the dictates and geographical descriptions of military texts.[128] In combination with narratives of the

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[127] Vat. Lat. 4939.
[128] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space,* trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992), 15.

sacred and physical imitations of the sacred in the form of paraphernalia and apparitions, an abstract approach to "space" provides a general idea of what could constitute sacred space in the Byzantine military. Jaquelyn Tuerk explains that, fundamentally, sacred space "develops within the participant's psychological state," where it is an "interpretation [that is] both created and received." Crucially, she notes that the effectiveness of sacred space is limited by whether or not and to what degree it engages with the believer's "desires, needs, expectations, and ways of knowing."[129] Military hierotopy, or the creation of such sacred space in military contexts, expresses several parallels to more traditional architectural forms of establishing sacred space but finds its pillars and pylons in epistemological structures. Just as the attention to detail in the hierotopical programs of buildings such as the Kosmosoteria monastery is recorded in extant texts, the precise structure and conduct of the army is found in *taktika* and contemporary histories.[130] As architecturally-delineated sacred space is a concrete subject from which generalizations concerning Byzantine hierotopy have already been drawn, and extant texts describe clear ideological associations of camp space with church space, I frequently draw parallels between the crafting of sacred spaces in churches and the construction of sacred military space. One major difference between architectural and military traditions, however, is that while hierotopy could occur in multiple separate architectural projects, the military presented a single structure upon which successive emperors and generals built. Furthermore, military hierotopy depended on the presence of an army, while architectural hierotopy was linked to a stationery building. As a consequence, rather than prescribing the precise placement of

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[129] Tuerk, "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets," 1.

[130] The *Typikon* of the Kosmosoteira monastery in Pherrai demonstrates the degree to which all details in the spatial environment were carefully established, including the display of marble plates, a cast bronze railing, and an icon stand with a likeness of the donor Issak Komnenos and of his parents. "Typikon of the Sebastockrator Isaak Komnenos for the Monastery of the Mother of God Kosmosteira near Bera," trans. N. Sevcenko, in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, II (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000), 782-858; and N. Sevcenko, "The tomb of Isaak Komnenos at Pherrai," in *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XXIX, 2 (1984): 135-139.

images and relics within a stationery spatiotemporal structure, military treatises dictated the relative positions of troops and religious paraphernalia within the general boundaries of the army and the precise timing of rituals, regardless of locale.

Emperors and the literate military élite were for the most part the exclusive authors of surviving Byzantine etiquette, processional, and tactical manuals, providing foundations for later commanders that followed a particular structural program. Imperially authored *taktika* express approaches to constructing military space similar to those describing architectural programs, with precise "measurements" provided for various formations, detailed descriptions of proper armor, instructions of the timing of movements in a military confrontation, and indications of at what point in military proceedings particular prayer actions should be undertaken.[131] Although accounts of building programs were largely celebratory texts and historical records, they, like *taktika*, consciously contributed to a repository of literature and subsequently fostered traditions that future donors or generals would follow. Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos's *De administrando imperio* and *De ceremoniis*, for instance, are excellent examples of such programmatic texts passed directly from one emperor to the next. Both were written for Constantine's son and successor, Romanos II, and respectively convey lessons in diplomacy and protocol for an enormous variety of imperial ceremonies and processions, both contemporary and historical. Ample evidence exists in these works alone to establish a contemporary imperial program of sacred ceremonial and processional space, but included among them are two treatises on military expeditions and campaigns, one of which dictates how "in the middle of the *praipositoi* proceeds a *koubikoularios* carrying the holy and life-giving wood of the Cross, with the reliquary around his neck," and how "in front of the *kouboukelion* proceed the emperor's men, and in the middle of them a standard-bearer proceeds carrying a bejewelled gold cross"

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[131] See for example the section on the cavalry in Phokas's *Praecepta Militaria*, 39-45.

when the host is in motion.[132] No doubt this processional program intentionally sought to bring to mind the symbolic place of Christ as the leader of Byzantine armies, as well as to mirror familiar civilian processional practices such as the Tuesday *litaniai* at the church of the Hodegon in Constantinople.[133]

II.2   Shared narratives

The position of the battle cross specifically at the head of the campaign party also evoked images and interlocking narratives beyond the fundamental role of Christ and reminiscences of civilian rituals. They referenced anecdotal accounts of miraculous visions of the cross leading the imperial host such as that of Constantine, the reciprocal loyalty that God symbolically demonstrated through this sign, and the Archangel Michael as the Supreme Commander of the Lord's armies.[134] The practice furthermore mirrored Western military customs, recognizing the standard of the cross as characteristic of a proper Christian army. For example, Pope Gregory II wrote in a letter to Patriarch Germanos in 729 that Germanos "led the front line of the battle as God himself demonstrated, by ordering the truly glorious and esteemed cross (*labarum*) to lead Christ's soldiers: the life giving cross, the great trophy of his majesty against death, in which he marked the four ends of the world, covering the cross with examples of his victories (e.g. miracles and the Passion)."[135]

Shared narratives between a sacred past event and a present personal experience also contributed to the power of accounts such as those in which the emperor, vanquishing his foes, is

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[132] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, "When the Emperor is About to Go on Campaign," in *De ceremoniis*, 485. The relic and cross bearers were noncombatants from the imperial household, and not military personnel.

[133] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 43.

[134] Attaleiates, *Historia*, 483.

[135] G. Mansi, ed., *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio* XIII (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1960-61), 98, cols. 147-56. The authenticity of the letter has been questioned (J. Guillard, "Aux origines de l'iconoclasme: Le témoignage de Grégoire II?" in *Travaux et mémoires* 3 (1968): 243-307) but it the letter seems generally to be considered genuine.

likened to various stories of Moses in the book of Exodus. Scenes of Moses parting the Red Sea, such as the painting in Cubiculum O in the Via Latina Catacombs, transferred biblical narratives of salvation to personal narratives of death and individual salvation.[136] Moses, particularly as a figure who communicated with God personally and led and delivered God's chosen people from a more powerful Egyptian enemy, was an ideal likeness for describing miraculous events where the Byzantine army triumphed over great odds.[137] The equivalence of the emperor to such a figure in aristocratic histories, in addition to traditional literary and artistic portrayals of the emperor as the wise king Solomon or righteous David, solidified the emperor's image and imagined efficacy as God's instrument of salvation.[138] This was reflective of a strong Byzantine self-identification with the Israelites as God's Chosen People, fashioning Constantinople into a new Jerusalem and the emperor into a new King David. It was for these reasons that the language of war against human enemies was elevated to a moral or spiritual level, in which the empire's enemies could be equated to the sinners whom Jesus reveals all belong to Satan.[139]

Importantly, immediate narratives of success or failure would have been incredibly difficult for generals to control in real time, necessitating control over other targeted narratives to which officers might refer should a battle go awry. Experiences of the sacred in the military can be understood on the level of the foot soldier to have been purely religious in nature, and on the level of more learned participants as a conglomeration of religious dedication and good strategy— that is to say, the matrix by which sacred space in the military functioned was less nuanced and more phenomenological for the foot soldier than it was for the officer. Significant basis for hierotopical activity in the Byzantine military can be found in the psychological difficulties of

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[136] Choniates, *Historia*, 15; Attaleiates, *Chronographia*, 481-83; Psellos, *Chronographia*, 261.
[137] For instance, Choniates, *Praecepta militaria*, 15; and Komnene, *Alexiad*, 8.2.
[138] Lidov, "The Creator of Sacred Space," 143.
[139] 1 John, 3:8.

warfare. Smail in his study of Crusader warfare explains the difficulty of controlling units during an engagement and subsequently what additional factors impacted victory:

> Before battle a commander could make a plan, in accordance with which he could draw up his troops and send them into action. But once he had launched them into the battle, he had little or no control over them, and the limitation applied especially to the most effective troops, the mailed mounted knights...The result of the battle must then be left to *the interplay of morale, individual prowess, and good fortune.* It was these conditions which made doubtful the outcome of medieval battles and in that age the decision to give battle was usually the conscious acceptance of risk.[140]

Unsurprisingly, *taktika* particularly imparted to each successive emperor the singular importance of morale. The intense connection between the experiences of the sacred and morale on the battlefield make it clear that in the military, the creation of sacred space had immediate utility outside of religious connection. A great part of skilled Byzantine warfare consisted of guerrilla and delaying tactics in combination with in-depth study of enemy engagement strategies. Commanders relied on ruses and ambushes to chip away at the enemy's resources and morale before engaging in a decisive confrontation.[141] Nikphoros Phokas's lifelong experience as a soldier, preserved in his *Praecepta militaria* and *De velitatione*, provides a useful account of the psychological considerations taken into account in preparation for battle. Among precautions taken regarding military intelligence, which could affect the success of successive confrontations and thus the morale of the troops over time, and water supply, which was crucial to sustaining heavily-armoured Byzantine troops especially in the arid Eastern regions of the Empire, commanders necessarily kept a close eye on the general disposition of soldiers. These considerations extended to localised narratives of battle; for example, Maurice's *Strategikon* describes the caution a general must take when applying troops after a blow to morale, and for what reasons:

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[140] R.C. Smail, *Crusading Warfare, 1097-1193* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 12-3. Italics mine.
[141] McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth*, 255.

If the first day of battle ends in a defeat, it is, in our opinion absolutely undesirable and useless to try to get those same troops who have been beaten in the field to go back into actual combat around the same time or within the next few days...For even if the general understands the mistake he has made and hopes to remedy it by means of a second battle, the soldiers as a whole are unable to grasp the reason for deliberately going right back into the fighting. They are more likely to look upon what happened as God's will and completely lose heart.... It is better to rely on stratagems, deception, carefully timed surprise moves, and the so-called fighting while fleeing, until the troops forget their discouragement, and their morale picks up once more.[142]

Each host would carry with it a narrative of its successive triumphs and failures in the process of each campaign, a fact which stresses the relevance of advice such as that of Phokas in this passage.

Two large narratives of great relevance to the experiences of the Byzantine army in particular were that of the Virgin Mary as the general of the Byzantine military, and that of soldier martyrdom. Accompanying gradual religious changes in *taktika* were the rise of the Marian cult and the cult of military saints in Byzantine warfare, both of which were tied to an imperial ideology of power and legitimacy.

II.2.i The Virgin Mary

The association of Mary with Byzantine victory had its roots in her *acheiropoietoi* image's famous defense of Constantinople during the seventh-century Avar Siege and her association with the former patron goddesses of the city, while military saints were increasingly co-opted throughout the early Byzantine period to stand alongside the *Theotokos* as patrons of imperial victory.[143] In the unstable theater of Byzantine imperial succession, especially in the tenth century when hereditary rulers often shared the throne with military generals, both were enlisted as patrons of the emperor. The Virgin Mary marked those born "in the purple"– the

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[142] Maurice, *Strategikon*, 72.

[143] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 5-12; 68. Pentcheva traces the gradual association of Mary with Constantinople's patron goddesses Tyche and Nike, the former of which promised fortune and prosperity, and the latter victory.

porphyrogennetoi– and promised them victory, and the military saints bolstered an image of the emperor as a martial leader to an élite that tolerated little military weakness in the emperor.[144] Mary furthermore overtook symbols of imperial legitimacy represented by Christ, such as images of crowning: in the *Book of Ceremonies*, an acclamation spoken over the feast of the Ascension describes Mary marching "in battle as a fellow fighter on the side of the emperors," crowning emperors, and bringing victory in battle.[145] She drew her power from the miracle of her virgin birth, able "to conquer nature, first by birth and then by battle," and imparted her power to all icons brought onto the battlefield– whether it was one of the revered palladions of the city, or private icons or amulets.[146] Martyrs such as the well-known saints Theodore, George, and Demetrios were "courted" by emperors to relocate to Constantinople, transformed into soldier-saints regardless of whether or not their earthly lives were connected with the military, and worshipped together as a cult.[147] This rise in public popularity of the victorious Theotokos and the military saint corresponded with the solidification of the military rhetoric of "martyr-warriors," or soldiers promised non-traditional martyrdom through their deaths on the battlefield.

The association of the divine with cities or institutions as a part of particular narratives in the cultural memory of the Byzantines thus found a paradigmatic representation in the Theotokos as the protectress of Constantinople and the general of the Byzantine armies. The power of contemporary practices of veneration on historical narratives concerning intercession can be seen in the gradual change of her specific role in the defence of Constantinople from apparition to iconic intercession. So central did the icon become in Byzantine image philosophy and so large did the Marian cult grow that, by the eleventh century, retellings of the Avar Siege narrative had

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[144] Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 14-29.
[145] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De ceremoniis*, 54-55.
[146] George of Pisidia, *Bellum Avaricum*, in *Poemi*, ed. Agostnio Pertusi, 176, vv. 1-9.
[147] White, *Military Saints*, 17.

completely replaced the original account of Mary's apparition running along the walls of Constantinople with a story of the patriarch carrying her icon along the walls and praying for intercession.[148] The first reliable instance in which a specific Marian icon is actually said to have been *traditionally* carried in battle was an account of Romanos III Argyros's 1030 expedition against the Saracens near Aleppo; by the eleventh century, the palladion housed in the Church of the Blachernai– the Theotokos Blachernitissa– and the Hodegetria became the customary icons for pious emperors to take into battle.[149] The presence of captured Marian icons in imperial triumphal processions in the centuries preceding the rise of icons in popular worship, such as Emperor John I Tzimiskes' display of a Marian panel taken from the Bulgarians in 971, also bestowed on her icons associations with divine right of rulership: God would not have allowed the icon to be taken from its home.[150] George of Pisidia likewise recorded in the seventh century that Heraklios, who had won his throne by means of a coup, "did not destroy [Emperor Phokas] as Persius did, with deceit, but placed against the corrupter of virgins the awesome image of the pure Virgin; for [he] had her icon as a helper."[151]

II.2.ii Martyrdom and warrior saints

Likewise, the narrative of soldier martyrdom, or what Paul Stephenson more accurately calls 'neomartyrdom,' is of particular significance. Where the Marian narrative promoted imperial military triumph and legitimacy, her retainers the soldier saints and their martyr narratives held more personal connections for soldiers in the Byzantine military. Found in early and middle

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[148] Pentcheva, *Icons and* Power, 56-57.
[149] Attaleiates, *Chronographia*, 279.
[150] Leo the Deacon, *Historia*, 158. For a discussion of the development of the use of the Marian icon, see also Pentcheva, *Icons and Power*, 53. She points out that Skylitzes, describing the same incidence, calls the icon *poliouchos* or 'protector of the city', marking a developing link between Marian icons and city defense.
[151] George of Pisidia, *Heraklias*, in *Poemi*, ed. Pertusi, 252.

Byzantine warfare and intensely connected to such issues of individual combatant morale, neomartyrdom celebrated the protection of Christians by means of battle, distinguishing itself from the earlier understanding of martyrdom as the resistance to Roman state rituals.[152] This narratives too deals with a congruence between sacred narratives of martyrdom and personal narratives of the same among soldiers in contemporary Byzantine armies, but is of unique significance in the sense that the neomartyr narrative both was very new in the same way Marian veneration in the military was new, and introduced to soldiers a substantial heavenly reward for dying in the line of battle. Emperor Heraklios in the mid-seventh century is largely considered to have been one of the first emperors to have called his soldiers martyrs, as the phenomenon is unprecedented in historical writing.[153] Copying earlier texts, Theophanes the Confessor wrote that, in 625, Heraklios exhorted his troops: "Let us sacrifice ourselves for the salvation of our brothers. May we win the crown of martyrdom so that we may be praised in the future and receive our recompense from God."[154]

Paul Stephenson and Nicolas Oikonomedes both suggest that the fascination with martyrdom that followed Heraklios's reign in the upper echelons of the military culminated in the neomartyr as something of a counter to the spiritual rewards promised to their Muslim adversaries.[155] The parallels and potentiality between soldiers and martyrs were not promoted during the time of the Iconoclast emperors in the seventh and eighth centuries, but they did not disappear. In his ninth-century *Taktika*, Leo, observing that the Muslims congregated for war voluntarily and shared in the rewards of warfare collectively, suggests that the Byzantines model

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[152] Paul Stephenson, "Religious Services," 29. For a thorough treatment of the tradition of soldier suicide in the Byzantine army, which is not addressed here, see David Woods, "The Good Soldier's End: From Suicide to Martyrdom," in *Byzantinoslavica* 66 (2008): 71-86.

[153] Carl de Boor, ed. *Theophanes Chronographia* (Bonnae: Impensis E. Weberi, 1839-1841), 307-328, quoted in White, *Military Saints*, 49.

[154] Theophanes the Confessor, *Chronographia*, 442.

[155] Stephenson, *Religious Services*, 36; and Oikonomedes, "The Concept of Holy War," 65.

their efforts off of the Muslims and exhorts the reader to "fight for spiritual salvation," and to

receive perpetual blessedness as a reward for one's sacrifice.[156] As Stephenson points out, the

term Leo uses to describe such perpetual blessedness– *makários diēnekōs*– was employed in

patristic writings to mean "martyrdom."[157] The prevalent implication in subsequent texts is that,

just as the Empire engaged in wars for the Christian faith, "so the men who fought them gained

some degree of holiness through their undertakings."[158] Those who had "died in battle with the

infidel" became "celebrated alongside tortured prisoners of war" in camp military services,

harangues, and military treatises, which– as I have earlier established– all influenced the

phenomenological space in which soldiers lived their lives on campaign.[159] Christian soldiers

who died in wars against Muslims or in Muslim captivity, having been made martyrs, became

exemplars of honor and loyalty for their comrades. On a spiritual level, the consideration of

Byzantine enemies as agents of Satan made the celebration of soldiers fallen in battle as martyrs

even more understandable. Neomartyrdom also served to mythologize emperors and their

relatives as reflections of the divine on the battlefield; for instance, Michael Botaneiates, the

grandfather of Emperor Niketas Botaneiates, is described as having died protecting Thessaloniki,

"covered in his own martyrial bloody gore."[160] The treatment of the fallen soldiers as martyrs

seems to have become relatively standard practice in the military until the reign of Nikephoros

Phokas in the late tenth century, when an attempt by the emperor to legitimize the practice and

integrate recognized martyrs into traditional celebrations was refused by the reigning patriarch.

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[156] Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI*, 484-85.
[157] Stephenson, *Religious Services*, 36.
[158] White, *Military Saints*, 58.
[159] Stephenson, *Religious Services*, 28.
[160] Attaleiates, *Chronologia*, 425.

Nevertheless, the sentiment that dying in battle was the precursor to entry into the celestial army persisted.[161]

Soldier martyrdom furthermore functioned as a direct ideological parallel between Byzantine soldiers and their revered warrior-saints, accomplishing metaphorically what was often delineated in ceremony or artistic depiction. For example, pilgrims' souvenir flasks, such as the ones found in the Treasure of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist in Monza, Italy, depicted pilgrims themselves as actors in well-known holy scenes. One, which Gary Vikan describes, pictures pilgrims at the foot of the cross at Golgotha in place of the original soldiers, and Jesus as a bust floating above the cross rather than a body hanging from it– in some ways privileging the pilgrim's experience of the cross over the Biblical narrative, as pilgrims would have only seen the cross itself.[162] Mythologized accounts of soldiers dying in Saracen captivity and in battle became facsimiles of saintly sacrifices– and, in the same way the aforementioned pilgrims were inserted into a representation of the crucifixion of Christ, the fellow infantrymen of neomartyrs themselves became actors in holy scenes.

The typological attachment the army and the aristocratic ranks of the military had to warrior saints predictably increased in strength as the narrative of soldier martyrdom became more popular. Hippolyte Delahaye was possibly the first scholar in all research done on saints to have distinguished warrior saints as a category; in his seminal work on the topic, *Les légendes*

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[161] See Patrick Vicuso, "Christian Participation in Warfare," in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, ed. Timothy S. Miller et al. (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 37-39 and White, *Military Saints*, 60. Nikephoros II Phokas (963-9) attempted to have the church officially recognize fallen soldiers as martyrs and to include them in traditional celebrations. The Patriarch, Polyeuktos, avoided approving his request by falling back on Basil's 13th canon, which suggests those who have killed in war might avoid communion for three years because they are 'unclean'. The sentiment was that killing– however necessary– was by no means something that should be rewarded with the honor of martyrdom. As historical evidence shows that Basil's 13th canon was nominally adhered to sometimes and most times not at all, it seems likely that Polyeuktos's avoidance stemmed from a disagreement with the emperor more personal than canon law (Vicuso would disagree). Nevertheless, his denial altered the recognition of martyrs in following centuries.

[162] Gary Vikan, "Pilgrims in Magi's Clothing: The Impact of Mimesis on Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art," in *The Blessings of Pilgrimage*, ed. Robert Ousterhout (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 97-107.

greques des saints militaires, at the turn of the twentieth century, he describes the essential

characteristics of Saints Theodore Teron, Theodore Stratelates, Demetrius, Procopius, Mercurius,

and George, specifically named *stratelatai,* or "commanders," by the Byzantines. It was not

uncommon in Late Antiquity for emperors to seek the cooperation of powerful saints in addition

to invoking the aid of the Virgin Mary; Saint Demetrios, for instance, accrued an association

with warfare through his protection of the city of Thessalonika and was successfully lured to

Constantinople by Emperor Leo VI.[163] Beginning with Leo, imperial cooption of warrior saints

could be accompanied by imperial reconfiguration: Leo envisioned Demetrios as a soldier,

although Demetrios was almost never depicted in armor, and understood this military aspect of

the saint to be perpetual, rather than incidental.[164] This essential rebranding of Demetrios and the

subsequent historical erasure of Demetrios's veneration as anything other than a military

intercessor demonstrates the ideological sway Leo, and likewise other emperors, had over the

creation and integration of narratives in military religion.[165] Soldier martyrdom, then, was a

pervasive narrative that accompanied soldiers throughout every stage of a campaign. In fact, and

importantly so, it also accompanied them outside of campaigns, in the form of civilian

veneration.

II.3 Civilian interaction with military narratives

Practices performed outside of military circumstances, on the other hand, also contributed

to shared narratives of saintly intercession that were carried with soldiers when they went on

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[163] Hippolyte Delahaye, *Les Légendes Greques des Saints Militaires* (Paris: A. Picard, 1909), 104. See also White, *Military Saints,* 17.

[164] White, *Military Saints,* 68.

[165] In the ninth century, the *Acta Sanctorum* provides an altered saint's life for Demetrios that describes him as having been a proconsul and consul in the Roman army, when originally his history had no military connections (Delahaye, *Légendes Grecques,* 105).

campaign. The rise in popularity of the warrior saints was very much encouraged by popular

piety. Amulets, material holdovers from pagan superstitions regarding magic and demons on

which characters and symbols were inscribed, became one of a few canvasses that maintained

the Antique heroic imagery unrepresented in monumental art into Christian iconography.[166] Seals

and coins also depicted these saints performing the special functions for which they were

known– spearing beasts, for instance, or killing tyrants such as Diocletian or Maxentius.[167]

Church dedications to a particular saint, especially in large cities such as Constantinople, were

indicators of the relative popularity and power of any particular saint; Saint Demetrios, for

instance, had no less than ten churches dedicated to him in the capital.[168]

After Iconoclasm, the Virgin Mary and the warrior saints entered the public sphere in

connection with military intercession with imperial triumphs and ceremonies preceding military

expeditions. Cults for military saints were not a strictly military phenomenon– though their

efficacy was perhaps more personal for soldiers– as they proved popular in civilian populations

as well. The production of homilies, acclamations, encomia, and other texts for performance in

civilian settings focused on Marian victory and invincible power also helped to develop the

growing reputations the Theotokos alongside the warrior saints. The seventh-century *Akathistos*

hymn, which is still in use today, addresses the Theotokos as "our leader in battle and defender"

to whom "victory [is] ascribed," and describes her as "invincible in power."[169] Likewise, in an

acclamation recorded in the *De ceremoniis* for the Feast of the Ascension, participants from

political factions in Constantinople must chant for the Virgin to "fight alongside the rulers in the

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[166] Christopher Walter, *Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), 33-37.

[167] Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 53.

[168] Raymond Janin, *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1975).

[169] Akathistos, *prooimion* II, in L. M. Peltomaa, *The Image of the Virgin Mary in the Akathistos Hymn*, The Medieval Mediterranean: Peoples, Economies, and Cultures, 400-1500 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 35.

purple" and to "favour them with the wings of your intercession, for they have in [her] the strength that brings victory against enemies."[170] In this way, military intercession was solidified as a primary function for Mary and for warrior saints in Byzantine cults, building upon a collective narrative that soldiers would have been exposed to on leave or generally in cities and towns.

Because of time constraints, I have not been able to provide a more thorough analysis of the role that civilian worship had in the promotion of Mary-as-general and the military saints. However, I hope this has demonstrated the establishment of the cult of warrior saints in popular piety and the connection of this establishment to the production of literary and religious material regarding military saints and the evolution of their perception in the Empire.

III Spontaneous constructions of sacred space

Having addressed the larger ideological narratives which contributed to the construction of sacred space on the battlefield, this brief final section brings the sense materials and experiences of the first part of this thesis and the narratives of the second together to consolidate the spontaneous experience of the sacred on the battlefield. To repeat from the introduction of this paper, hierotopy is an epistemological program, and as such is found in performance, place, object, signs, and the psychological state of the participant.[171] The spontaneous manifestation and experience of a program of sacred space in the Byzantine military relied on its moving parts; descriptions of icon and cross usage as "traditional" and the assignment of military epithets to the Virgin Mary, the Archangel Michael, and the warrior saints indicate their consistent place in Byzantine campaigns. While military treatises provided some explicit structure to the religious items and practices brought on campaign, they also voiced the implicit assumptions of their

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[170] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De ceremoniis*, 55.
[171] Tuerk, "Hierotopy, Narrative, and Magical Amulets," 79.

authors for how this milieu was meant to work in the host. The effect of the religious program, according to the *Praecepta militaria,* is that, with God's "love and compassion is stirred by the intercession of the all-celebrated Mother of God, when She secures Her people's victory for the third time," the army "need not flinch or recoil in fear, be the enemy twice the number of our host."[172] Notably, this section of the *Praecepta militaria,* which deals with strategic engagement, stresses the necessity of avoiding general engagements until the enemy has "fled once, twice, or three times and are crippled and fearful." Phokas writes here that Mary will secure the army's victory for the *third time,* indicating that in the course of a series of battles, intercession was considered to occur and succeed with every victory. In describing battle against an unmovable enemy, Phokas warns that the men "must persevere in fighting with no thought of flight until the hand of God intervenes and the enemy recoils."[173] Here divine intervention is posed as an eventuality, rather than a possibility.

This brings us back to the case of the Cretan expedition mentioned at the very beginning of this paper. Nikephoros Phokas, during his reconquest of Crete in 961, had a church of some substance constructed in order to facilitate the intercession of the Virgin Mary.[174] Phokas's impromptu display of piety was clearly efficacious, as fortuitous events followed the construction of the church: two Saracens deserted to the Romans, saving the Byzantines from an early morning surprise offensive by the enemy, and Phokas was ultimately successful in conquering the city. All of this, as Attaleiates would have it, was made possible by God, who has been successfully "entreated by those pious works."[175] Important also, however, was the function

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[172] Phokas, *Praecepta Militaria,* 51. Although it is not clear in the text that Phokas specifically means "third time" in terms of the numbers of battles the host has won, it is possible that he is referring to some Biblical or other theological reference for a particular metaphorical sequence of Christian victories. However, I was not able to find any such reference, and have interpreted it to refer to a succession of regular battles.

[173] Ibid., 29.

[174] Attaleiates, *Chronographia,* 411.

[175] Ibid., 413-17.

of this church as a spontaneous structure of worship for Phokas's army– Phokas "suggested to everyone that their first line of defence, their invincible courage, and most secure anchor was to seek refuge with the Mother of God, the All-Pure Lady, and Plead with her," and once the church was built, "ordered the wooden gong to be struck that called everyone to prayer." Although it is tempting to say, based on this incident, that the religious programs of the Byzantine military were attempts to approximate churches on the battlefield, it would actually be more accurate to describe the structure that Phokas orders built as yet another "item," like icons or crosses, that was meant to contribute to soldiers' experiences of the divine. The differences between sacred spaces in the military and in churches point towards a more nebulous prototypical concept of how sacred spaces could be constructed, allowing for the symbol and object of the church itself to enter the ranks of paraphernalia. The image of a church on the battlefield is very striking, and in way equivalent to the visual brilliance of a metal icon in the sunlight, or a shining cross at the front of the army; similarly to the function of the Marian icon as a marker of the divine right to rule, the church marked the land it stood on as "reconquered" for God. As the soldiers advanced and recited their prayers in anticipation of battle, the church would stand at their backs as part of the milieu recalling their performances and experiences of the sacred.

The character of sacred space in the military then matches the different environments and instruments by which it is crafted, but also dictates what environments and instruments are appropriate for its construction. In summary, a standard religious program for a campaign might progress in the following manner: on an imperial campaign, the Emperor, leaving Constantinople, would make the sign of the Cross three times over the city and pray for its protection.[176] This both reflected general concerns about leaving the capital undermanned when on campaign and reminded whoever could see the emperor on his ship of their roles as protectors

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[176] Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *De ceremoniis*, 475.

of the Empire. On land, camp would be made in a square formation with roads forming crosses through the interior; priests accompanying the host would read verses and perform the liturgy from the center, replacing the microcosmic central plan and dome of the church for the central plan of the camp and the dome of the sky. An icon of the Virgin Mary and a bejeweled battle cross would be situated in sight of most of the troops. The priests would recite litanies and the entire host would rise in unison twice a day to sing *Kyrie eleison* one hundred times. During this time, news of enemy desertions or changes in allegiance would be promoted as the results of intercession. On the eve of a battle, platoon leaders would have their flags blessed and the general would spread reassurances of spiritual and monetary compensation, victory, and intercession. The army would undergo purification to encourage their chances of victory, the chaplains would perform the Eucharist, and the army would participate in communion. On the day of the battle, soldiers would pray to God and the Virgin Mary before advancing the battle line with the icon of Mary watching at their backs; during the confrontation, adrenaline highs and the accumulation of religious experiences and second-hand stories leading up to the battle would make the chances of each individual soldier feeling a connection to a larger religious whole very high. Upon returning to camp, personal narratives of religious experience would be spread, prayers performed, and the battle entered into an immediate military narrative for this war and for general morale.

Conclusion

I stated in the introduction that sacred space in Byzantine military religion was distinct from both architectural forms of hierotopy and hierotopy constructed around individual relics. In

fact, the observation can be made that, instead of forming sacred space around a central object or figure, military hierotopy ultimately formed around the institution of war itself. Miracles where the Virgin Mary and her warrior saints vanquished the Empire's enemies could only have occurred in battle, in the presence of an army and of imperial military conflict. The mere fact that some forms of religious experience in Byzantine Christian history could only be encountered on the battlefield highlights the importance of what this paper addresses. In conclusion, campaign spaces and battlefields can be categorized as particular milieus for the experience of the sacred, and emperors can be readily identified as the architects of such sacred spaces. Although consideration of war as a holy institution appears to be ideologically contradicting– pursuant to Byzantine theological beliefs about the impurity of the military profession– as in many other areas of life and governance, literary and theological dictates hardly ever formed the bottom line for actual practices.[177] Byzantine imperial mythology of a war for religious survival and legitimacy formed a very strong basis for religious engagement in war. Imperial programs of sacred space in the military encouraged the confirmation of interactions with the divine as an integral part of good strategy, in that it maintained troop morale and boosted Byzantine chances of victory.

This treatment of sacred space in the middle Byzantine military has been by no means exhaustive; for instance, because of time and space constraints, the sources which I have consulted here represent only some of the military narratives which shine light on programmatic details in military hierotopy. Although one of the military manuals examined, Leo VI's *Taktika*, was written for provincial generals, the narrative material examined focused mostly on descriptions of religion in imperial campaigns. However, it is my hope that this paper has set

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[177] St. Basil, "Canon 12," ed. Philip Schaff, in *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers II.14* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publisher, 1994), 28. See pages 28-29 of the same for commentary on the acceptance of military involvement in the Christian Empire.

some groundwork and consolidated important sources for further exploration of the construction of religious experience, both in the Byzantine military on campaign and in other similar institutions. I have established historical markers that point to the deliberate construction of sacred space in the military and the reasons for which such constructions were important in terms of utility, but have not addressed questions concerning the relationship this sort of religious space might have had with the variable factors of each campaign. In addition, to what degree was the collective identity of the military recognized and manipulated by emperors and generals? How did creators account for the effects of hierotopy on the heterogeneity that Kaegi observes in regional militaries?[178] Additional analysis is also needed on qualitative differences in performative experiences of religious paraphernalia outside of architectural programs, in the changing environs of a campaign.

I hope that this concept of deliberately crafting sacred space in the military further facilitates the application of the theory of hierotopy to expressions of the institutional where there is the potential for collective uniformity of experience, especially circumstances like the ones in this paper where there is a particular secular utility to the experience of the sacred. The difference between aristocratic experiences of religion and aristocratic ideas of common experiences of religion uncovered by the creator-experiencer dichotomy demonstrate, at the very least, that socioeconomic stratifications were acknowledged in phenomenology. The indefinite nature of the sacred and general historical prestige of involvement in religious works and practices allows for extensive implementation of hierotopy, and I am very excited to see what will be produced in this field in the future.

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[178] Kaegi Jr., "The Byzantine Armies and Iconoclasm," 49-50.

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