

# Лев VI Мудрый, Włażej Cescota

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## "Тактика Льва. Leonis imperatoris Tactica", Лев VI Мудрый, Санкт-Петербург 2012 : [recenzja]

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Studia Ceranea : journal of the Waldemar Ceran Research Centre for the History and Culture of the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe 4, 292-295

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2014

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

*Narnia nad Bosforem* [*Narnia at the Bosphorus*] (p. 181–225), Anna Kotłowska takes up the subject of the presence of legendary and mythical animals in Byzantine literature. The author presents here the demythologization process of the dragon / snake, and analyses the range use of passes relating to sirens by Byzantine artists.

The work is enriched with the list of the names of animals in Byzantine literature (p. 229–230), a several dozen-page list of sources and bibliography (p. 231–255), as well as a summary in English (p. 257–259).

The work was written with the use of a rich source base and multilingual scientific literature.

The author freely and with profound knowledge of her topic moves among the Byzantine (and not only) works, which were created over more than thousand years ago. Her arguments are clear and conclusions well-reasoned.

The described book will be of interest to both Polish and foreign experts, not only to historians dealing with the history and culture of Byzantium, but also to classical philologists, literary scholars, etc. It is worth noting that the work was written in pleasant, fluent Polish, consequently everyone will read it with great pleasure.

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**ЛЕВ VI МУДРЫЙ. Тактика Льва. *Leonis imperatoris Tactica*, изд. подгот. В.В. КУЧМА, ed. Н.Д. БАРАБАНОВ, Алетейя, Санкт-Петербург 2012, pp. 368 [= Византийская библиотека. Источники].**

Among contemporary Byzantinists one will not find a researcher of the Byzantine military who would not know the name of Vladimir Vasilevič Kučma. This outstanding Russian scientist was famous for, among others, excellent critical translations of Byzantine military treatises into Russian, such as *Strategikon* of Maurice or writings of Byzantine commanders from the tenth century<sup>1</sup>. His work is a source of inspiration for future generations of researchers studying the Byzantine army<sup>2</sup>. We are happy to learn that

publishing house Aletheia has published *Tactica* by Leo VI the Wise, translated by V.V. Kučma. This work is like a clamp fastening together the life and academic achievements of this Volgograd researcher. His academic career began with this work – it was the topic of his candidate dissertation, defended in 1966 under the supervision of Mikhail Yakovlevich Syuzyumov, founder of the Ural Byzantological school<sup>3</sup>. V.V. Kučma died while preparing *Tactica* for print on 15 May 2011. He spent the last months of his life on comparing his work with an English translation by George T. Dennis, which was published

<sup>1</sup>The following translations by V.V. Kučma should be mentioned: *О стратегии. Византийский военный трактат VI века*, СПб 2007; *Стратегикон Маврикия*, СПб 2004; *Два византийских военных трактата конца X века*, СПб 2002; *Византийский военный трактат „De castrametatione“*. Вводная статья, перевод с греческого, комментарий, ВВ 61, 2002, p. 279–312; *Трактат „Об охоте“*. Введение, перевод с греческого, комментарий, АДСВ 33, 2002, p. 48–58.

<sup>2</sup>A selection of the most important author's publications: *Принципы осады и обороны городов в письменной полемиологической традиции*, ВВ 69, 2010, p. 95–113; 70, 2011, p. 7–24; *Принципы организации боевых передвижений (маршей) по „Тактике Льва“*, АДСВ 39, 2009, p. 123–141; *К вопросу о научно-теоретическом уровне трактата „De velitatione bellica“*, Bsl

56, 1995, p. 389–396; „*Стратегикос*” Онасандра и „*Стратегикон Маврикия*”: опыт сравнительной характеристики, ВВ 43, 1982, p. 35–63; 45, 1984, p. 20–34; 46, 1985, p. 109–123; „*Византийский Аноним VI в.*”: основные проблемы источников и содержания, ВВ 41, 1980, p. 78–91; *Византийские военные трактаты VI–X вв. как исторические источники*, ВВ 40, 1979, p. 49–75; „*Тактика Льва*” как исторический источник, ВВ 33, 1972, p. 75–87; *ΝΟΜΟΣ ΣΤΡΑΤΙΩΤΙΚΟΣ (к вопросу связи трех памятников византийского военного права)*, ВВ 32, 1971, p. 278–284.

<sup>3</sup>Dissertation title: *Военное дело в Византии по „Тактике Льва“*.

in 2010<sup>4</sup>. Because of the death of V.V. Kučma, the text received its final edit from the members of the Volgograd research center, among which one should, above all, mention S.J. Guzhov. The translation of *Tactica* by Leo VI the Wise was based on the edition contained in volume 107 of *Patrologia Graeca* by Jacques Paul Migne (Paris 1863), and was informed by, above all, the critical edition of part of the work by a team of Hungarian classical philologists under the leadership of Rezső Vári<sup>5</sup> and the aforementioned translation of George T. Dennis.

The discussed book is opened with an introduction consisting a dozen pages, on which V.V. Kučma presented first the manuscript tradition of the translated work, the existing editions and translations, focusing primarily on the uncompleted critical edition prepared by the Hungarian Byzantinists led by R. Vari (p. 8–12). Discussion on the authorship of *Tactica* was analyzed on the following pages, including Zachariae von Lingenthal's arguments for assigning the work to Leo III and evidence excluding it (p. 12–14). V.V. Kučma also expressed his opinion on the issue of dating *Tactica*, acceding to the proposals formulated by A. Dain, who believed that it is impossible to accurately date *Tactica* due to the parallel occurrence of numerous manuscripts, different in terms of the arrangement of contents. Russian researcher presented here several historical arguments (i.e. concerning the – supposedly essential for Leo VI – Arabic threat), which seems to be sufficient to rebut the other proposals of dating (J.A. Kulakovski's, 890–891; G. Rechenkron's, around 900; and R. Vári's, 904–908). In the rest of this introduction (p. 17–22) the author analyzed the question of Leo employing the achievements of his predecessors, both ancient and Byzantine, among whom he mentioned, for example, Onasander, Elian, Arrian, Polybius and Maurice. It should be noted that these considerations are

based primarily on earlier findings made by A. Dain and a team of R. Vari. The problem of Leo's independence as a researcher of peace and conflict stems directly from this question, solved by V.V. Kučma in an original way (p. 22–30). He emphasized above all a tremendous organizing work, done at the request of the emperor. The structure of *Tactica* is distinguished from the previous Byzantine works on peace and conflict, and above all from the *Strategikon* of Maurice, with the logic of its content and clarity of its arguments. The Russian scholar proved that Leo made a very detailed review of the content of the works of Byzantine military theorists and tried in his work not to include texts that were not valid. He was able to perform additional queries which allowed him to clarify and modernize the terminology used in the parts of the predecessors' works. Finally, he rejected the views according to which Leo VI was limited only to the mechanical copying of the earlier achievements.

In the following part of the introduction, the Russian scientist presented and commented on the content of *Tactica*. Pages 31–32 are devoted to the concept of just war. V.V. Kučma demonstrated here that this idea was based not only on religious and ethical grounds, but also on physical ones, resulting from the understanding of a ruler's duties as the one who is to protect the lives and property of his subjects, without their unnecessary exposure to losses resulting from aggressive foreign policy. The following pages of the work (p. 33–34) are devoted to the comparison of the Chapter XVIII of *Tactica*, which included descriptions of Byzantines' enemies, such as Arabs, Slavs, Bulgarians, Franks and Longobards, with a fragment dedicated to the issues discussed in *Strategikon* of Maurice. On pages 35–40 the Russian Byzantinist discussed the part of Leo's work dedicated to logistics, preparation of military expeditions, the management of the enemy territory, the use of the "scorched earth" tactic, the use of prisoners and distribution of goods gained from the enemy. Here he formulated a hypothesis that the passages of *Tactica* on dealing with booty prove that financial benefits ceased to be an important element of the

<sup>4</sup> *The Taktika of Leo VI*, text, translation and commentary by George T. DENNIS, Washington 2010.

<sup>5</sup> *Leonis imperatoris Tactica*. Ad liborum mss. fidem edidit, recensione Constantiniana auxit, fontes adiecit, praefatus est R. VÁRI, Budapestini 1917.

objectives for which the war was conducted, and their loss was understood as natural and acceptable in the name of protecting the combat capabilities of the Byzantine army. Another fragment (p. 43–52) is devoted to the organization of the Byzantine army in the final period of its operation and the importance of Leo's work as a source for research on this subject. V.V. Kučma discussed here, among others, the status of *stratiotis*; organization of army units in *tagmas*, *miras* and *meras*; duties of a strategist as a chief of military-civilian administration and a commander-in-chief of the army; challenges facing commanders of middle (*merarch*, *mirarch*, *comes* – whose nominations were accepted by the emperor) and lower ranks (*centarch*, *decarch*, *pentarch*, *tetrarch*, whose determination remained in the sole discretion of a strategist); armament of individual cavalry and infantry units, as well as recommendations on the way to handle weapons and wise use of full armor during marches. There is also information relating to the presumed size of the Byzantine army in the analyzed period.

Subsequently, V.V. Kučma proceeded with the discussion of *Tactica* fragments on such issues as the proper conduct of a march, arrangement of troops in the camp and maintaining order when stationed, camp security against enemy attack (p. 53–58) and the principles according to which one should prepare troops for battle, such as the selection of a suitable location, execution of earthworks (e.g. digging a ditch or wolf pits), setting the right formation, carrying out reconnaissance and providing food for the army (p. 58–63). On the following pages (p. 64–69) the author discussed the specific combat maneuvers recommended by Leo VI. According to V.V. Kučma, the supreme principle of the emperor was the avoidance of frontal attacks, even in case of large numerical superiority over the enemy, which was explained by the need to avoid unnecessary losses. Therefore, the descriptions of flanking and encircling maneuvers, as well as organization of ambushes and skillful arrangement of reserves are described in detail. A part of this section is devoted to the analysis of activities reducing the enemy's morale, such as the night attack on the enemy camp.

The next fragment (p. 69–76) constitutes a discussion on the defense and capture of fortified locations, including cities and fortresses. V.V. Kučma did not limit himself to the description of military operations (including directing fire, and the security of particularly "sensitive" places of a fortress, such as gates), but also discussed, as specified by the emperor, rules of conducting negotiations with the besieged and the treatment of the inhabitants of a captured city.

One of the most original parts of *Tactica* by Leo VI is certainly the one concerning methods of warfare at sea. As stressed by V.V. Kučma, it does not seem possible to present even one Byzantine military work from which the emperor could benefit during the development of this section. The Russian Byzantinist carefully presented the basics of Byzantine naval warfare (p. 76–68), including: construction of basic types of ships, such as dromons or galleys, composition of a typical crew and a description of each function on the ship, responsibilities of the commander of the fleet, including also elements of his psychological impact on the crew. In addition to the rules on naval combat (including signaling with the help of banners and manual) he also mentioned methods of conducting landings. This part of the introduction V.V. Kučma ended with the analysis of a fragment relating to the maritime traditions of the nations in a permanent state of war with Byzantium, mainly Arabs and Slavs.

In the last part, the Russian researcher discussed the system of rewards and punishments in the Byzantine army and the use of stratagems proposed by Leo VI, which were supposed to improve the morale of soldiers, such as the deliberate placement of the most motivated warriors among uncertain ones, presenting the army with only those prisoners whose appearance and general condition could be considered miserable, and avoidance of meeting with a more numerous army until direct confrontation – so that the soldiers did not have the chance to see the real advantage of the enemy (p. 82–86). Fragments devoted to the religious motivations of the Arabs, which, according to Leo, were one of the most important reasons for their gaining the victory over the

Byzantines and the description of the “holy war” system, which was supposed to be developed by the emperor, ought to be mentioned (p. 86–88).

The introduction is ended with the notes on the impact of *Tactica* on the understanding of military issues in modern times: description of inspirations which can be found in the army of the Habsburgs, Prussia during the times of Frederick the Great, Russia during the times of Peter the Great, in whose times the first attempts to translate the work into Russian were taken. Publication of *Tactica* in the translation of V.V. Kučma was enriched with bibliography (p. 351–359) and an index of personal names, geographic locations and ethnographic names (p. 361–365).

The translation was supplemented with a critical commentary, consisting mainly of ethnographic and prosopographic information

and chronology of major military events. The main purpose of the extended translator’s notes was to find relationships and differences between the text of *Tactica* and the earlier monuments of Byzantine polemological studies. The comment was also necessary because of the assumptions made by V.V. Kučma – he tried to keep the original Byzantine military terminology, and thus avoided translation of many Greek terms.

As was highlighted in the introduction to this discussion, this new publication of Aletheia Publishing House should be considered a work that closes a certain important period in the development of Russian reflection on the Byzantine military. A high level of knowledge, presented by the translator and commentator of *Tactica*, suggests that the discussed edition will soon become one of the most important texts for followers of V.V. Kučma’s work.

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**АРСЕН К. ШАГИНЯН, *Армения и страны Южного Кавказа в условиях византийско-иранской и арабской власти*, Алетейя, Санкт-Петербург 2011, pp. 511.**

Due to its geographical location, Armenia was for centuries a valuable asset for empires competing for primacy in the Middle East and in Caucasus. From the 5<sup>th</sup> until the 7<sup>th</sup> century, the country of Mount Ararat was the subject of a dispute between Sassanid Persia and the Byzantine Empire. The history of this rivalry, as well as the importance of Armenians in the history of Byzantium and Persia, has been fairly well described in the literature<sup>1</sup>. Polish scholarship, too, can take pride in its successes in this field<sup>2</sup>.

Unfortunately, the research on the history of Armenia during the time of the Arab invasions and the existence of the Caliphate, first of Umayyads and later of Abassids has remained beyond the mainstream of researchers’ interest. This has been gradually changing for several years now, thanks to the efforts of Arsen K. Shahinyan, a researcher from the Institute of History at the State University in Saint Petersburg. He has devoted three books<sup>3</sup> and several articles<sup>4</sup> to the

<sup>1</sup> It is sufficient to mention the achievements of such researchers as Peter Charanis, Nina G. Garsoïan, Robert W. Thomson.

<sup>2</sup> The following researchers should be mentioned: Krzysztof Stopka from the Jagiellonian University (the most significant work to date being: *Armenia christiana. Unionistyczna polityka Konstantynopola i Rzymu a tożsamość chrześcijaństwa ormiańskiego (IV–XV w.)*, Kraków 2002) and Teresa Wolińska from University of Łódź (eg: *Armeńscy współpracownicy Justyniana Wielkiego. Dezerterzy z armii perskiej*

*w Bizancjum*, PNH 1.2, 2000, p. 5–32; *Armeńscy współpracownicy Justyniana Wielkiego. Wielka Kariera eunucha Narsesa*, PNH 4.1, 2005, p. 29–50).

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the ones discussed in this review, these were: *Армения накануне арабского завоевания*, СПб 2003; *Закавказье в составе Арабского Халифата*, СПб 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Among others: *Арабские наместники и правители Арминии при “Умайядах”*, В(О) 3, 2009, p. 52–59; *Государственные налоги Арминии*, ИФЗРА 2 (181), 2009, p. 1–10; *Формирование Великого княжества*