

## CHAPTER I

*The Reign of Leo VI*

Leo VI the Wise, emperor of the Byzantines 886–912, broke with three centuries of tradition. He was not a general or even a soldier, as his predecessors had been, but a scholar – a second son who became heir apparent through the untimely death of his older brother on the battlefield and gained a throne taken by his father Basil I (r. 867–86) after murdering Michael III (r. 842–67). It was the religious education he gained under the tutelage of the famous and influential Photios (patriarch from 858–67 and 877–86 CE) that was to distinguish Leo VI as an unusual ruler. The argument of this book is that Leo's Christian Orthodox worldview coloured every decision he made; the impact of his religious faith, traced through his extensive literary output, transformed Byzantine cultural identity and influenced his successors, establishing the Macedonian dynasty as a 'golden age' in Byzantium until the early eleventh century.

Leo's father, Basil I, also known as Basil the Macedonian, was forcibly married in 865 to Eudokia Ingerina, the mistress of the emperor Michael III (r. 842–67). Thus upon Leo's birth in September of 866, his parentage was cast under suspicion, a problem that his older brother Constantine, the son of Basil's first wife Maria and the original heir to the throne, did not have.<sup>1</sup> Contemporary chronicles record that Leo was likely the son of Michael, but modern scholars are divided. Either way, the truth cannot be known. The fact that Leo was born under a cloud of uncertainty is the relevant point, because it meant that this unexpected emperor had to contend with issues of legitimacy, yet was unable to rely upon the tradition of imperial strength through military service. The only possibility available to him was the power of religion, and he used it brilliantly to reinforce his authority over the Byzantine *oikoumene*.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of Leo's childhood and educational formation, see A. Vogt, 'La jeunesse de Léon VI le Sage', *Revue Historique* 174 (1934), 389–428. See also S. Tougher, *The Reign of Leo VI (886–912): Politics and People* (Leiden, 1997), 110–21.

His reign has mostly been remembered by scholars as one characterized by the appalling moral failure of his tetragamy, particularly hypocritical in that his third and fourth marriages explicitly violated his own legislation. However, this somewhat lopsided view focuses on the sensational at the expense of one of the distinctive aspects of his rule – that is, its theological character. The advice written to Leo by his father after his promotion to heir apparent in 879 indicates that his education was intended to be based largely on the traditions of the Church, because it does not deal with how to be a good emperor so much as it addresses issues of religion.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, scholars have identified Leo as an important ecclesiastical poet, putting him in the same company with John of Damascus and others of a decidedly theological bent.<sup>3</sup> Although Leo cannot be considered a theologian, strictly speaking, because he was not a churchman writing about doctrine as such, his literary output shows that he was interested in spiritual matters. Thus his writings may properly be classified as theological, because they are concerned with the practical application of religious ideals.

Leo was unique because he was unafraid to address areas in which one might normally think he had no business, like military science and preaching, for example. As a non-campaigning emperor with no training or background in military affairs, one would not expect Leo VI to write a military manual, nor might one expect him to write and deliver homilies, since no emperor before (or after) engaged ecclesiastical practice to this degree. Yet his activity as an emperor reveals a canny mind employing a consciously ideological programme of propaganda, a strength of will that when tested against the Church came out the victor, and a dedication to dynasty-building combined with a solid faith in the sovereignty of God and the teachings of the Church. The writings attributed to Leo VI illustrate his notion of his role as emperor; that is, as a legislator, a spiritual leader, and an organizer concerned with right order. They also reveal a

<sup>2</sup> The two parainetic texts, dated to 879 and 886, have been published in the *Patrologia Graeca* 107: cxi–lvi, lvii–lx. For a critical edition of the first text, see K. Emminger, ‘Studien zu den griechischen Fürstenspiegeln. II. Die spät-mittelalterliche Übersetzung der Demonicea. III. Βασιλείου κεφαλαία παραινετικά’, dissertation (Munich, 1913), 23–73. For a modern scholarly discussion of both texts, see A. Markopoulos, ‘Autour des *chapitres parénétiques* de Basile 1<sup>er</sup>’, in *Eupsychia: mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1998), 2: 469–80; reprinted in *History and Literature of Byzantium in the 9th and 10th centuries* (Aldershot, 2004), cxi, 469–79. See also the conclusions of Antonopoulou on the theological character of Leo’s education in T. Antonopoulou, *Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI* (Leiden, 1997), 5.

<sup>3</sup> See the discussion in Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of Leo VI*, 19–20. See also N. G. Попов, *Императоръ Левъ VI. мудрый и его царствование въ церковно-историческомъ отношеиіи* [The emperor Leo VI the Wise and his reign, from a historical-ecclesiastical point of view] (Moscow, 1892, reprinted 2008), 228–32.

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creative mind that thought deeply about the survival of the Byzantine polity and the promotion of his own family 'mythology', both priorities that were also clearly visible in the extensive literary activities of his son, Constantine VII.

Most important, Leo was a ruler who was convinced of the importance of strong imperial authority, but it is difficult to discern whether his religious convictions were the source or the result of his views on rulership. In any case, this monograph intends to show how these two commitments were intertwined in the philosophy and activities of this unusual emperor.

### Leo's Literary Output

Leo's erudition found expression in the great number of writings he produced – orations, military texts, legislation, epistles, homilies, hymns, poetry, and even a work intended for the pastoral care of ascetics.<sup>4</sup> The question of whether the emperor wrote the literary works attributed to him remains difficult to prove definitively; his *modus operandi* as an author is even more obscure and must therefore remain largely conjectural. Indeed, no scholarly commentator on Leo's writings has attempted to describe it. However, the contours of the corpus – the choice of vocabulary and subject matter – indicate that this unusual emperor had a clear influence in shaping the literature attributed to him. In any case, there is little doubt that he engaged in scholarly pursuits, including calligraphy.<sup>5</sup>

For example, his consistent use of Θεός rather than τύχη in the *Taktika* reveals his prioritizing of Christian vocabulary over pagan, even when the sense might be similar. Conversely, in a show of erudition he chooses sometimes to use classical Greek words in homilies in places where one might expect perhaps a more biblical word, like using the classical word for 'errors' (ἀμπλακήματα) instead of 'sins' (ἁμαρτία) in his religious poetry. Even the lost collection of Leo's epistolography is, similarly to his other works, described in Skylitzes' chronicle as extremely didactic and written in an archaic manner, perhaps to reflect his sophistication.<sup>6</sup> Leo sometimes inserted himself into his writings in innovative ways, making

<sup>4</sup> A good and comprehensive summary of Leo's literary output can be found in Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of Leo VI*, 16–23.

<sup>5</sup> *Life of Blasios*, 666D–E in H. Delehaye, ed., *Acta Sanctorum Novembris Tomus IV* (Brussels, 1925), 656–69. For Leo's interest in books, see A. Markopoulos, 'Ἀποσημειώσεις στον Λέοντα ΣΤ του Σοφο', in *Θυμίαμα στη μνήμη της Λασκαρίνας Μπούρα*, vol. 1 (Athens, 1994), 193–201.

<sup>6</sup> Skylitzes 34 in J. C. Cheynet (ed.), *Jean Skylitzes, Empereurs de Constantinople*, tr. B. Flusin (Paris, 2003), 162.

himself the focus of the piece, by, for example, relating his own story or personal reactions in his orations for the feast day of Elijah and the funeral of his parents.<sup>7</sup> For these reasons, among others, Kazhdan has called Leo a ‘controversial’ and ‘innovative experimenter’ in his literary endeavours; it is this quality across the Leonine corpus that perhaps best indicates his authorial signature.<sup>8</sup> The present study will highlight Leo’s distinctive articulation of his religious worldview through his literary output, with a particular focus on his *Novellae* (or new laws), some homilies, and pre-eminently, his military manual.

Between Justinian I (r. 527–65) and Leo VI, every Byzantine emperor had personally faced Byzantium’s enemies on the field of battle. Since the defeat of Heraclius’s forces at the Yarmuk River in 636, every Byzantine emperor had been forced to reckon with the formidable threat of Muslim aggression. Until Leo, none of them had ever thoughtfully considered in any extant writing how to counter that threat. His riposte was in the form of a military manual entitled τῶν ἐν πολέμοις τακτικῶν σύντομος παράδοσις, or more commonly, *Tactical Constitutions* (hereafter *Taktika*). This book is long, comprising a prologue, 20 chapters or constitutions (διατάξεις) and a lengthy epilogue.<sup>9</sup> A modern critical edition and English translation was published in 2010; the accompanying commentary appeared in 2014.<sup>10</sup>

Why did Leo VI, a non-campaigning emperor, write an innovative military manual? The answer suggested in this book is that he did it not only to bolster morale and revivify military science, as he understood it, but to strengthen the motivation of his generals in terms of their Christian faith commitments, particularly when fighting against the armies of the caliphate. It is nonetheless curious that he would choose to revive an apparently defunct genre of imperial writing, and even more surprising that he would introduce innovations, which Byzantines characteristically and explicitly denigrate.<sup>11</sup> Despite the usual protestations that he was

<sup>7</sup> For more on the homilies, see Chapter 8.

<sup>8</sup> A. Kazhdan, *A History of Byzantine Literature (850–1000)*, ed. C. Angelidi (Athens, 2006), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Leo’s text appears to use only three sources: the first-century *Strategikos* of Onesandros, mostly in the first part; the early second-century *Taktike theoria* of Aelian for definitions; and the late sixth-century *Strategikon* of Maurice for the arrangement of the material. All three are edited into a manual that reflects Leo’s ideological worldview. The most original and interesting constitutions are the final three on enemies (including for the first time ‘Saracens’), naval warfare, and collected maxims.

<sup>10</sup> G. T. Dennis, *The Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC, 2010). J. Haldon, *A Critical Commentary on the Taktika of Leo VI* (Washington, DC, 2014).

<sup>11</sup> On the Byzantines’ horror of νεοτερισμός, see H. Hunger, ‘On the Imitation (μίμησις) of Antiquity in Byzantine Literature’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23–4 (1969–70), 15–38.

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merely compiling ancient documents to restore a lost body of knowledge, Leo presents a fresh interpretation of Byzantium's ongoing military difficulties.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, he gives an unprecedented solution that involves the employment of Orthodox Christian beliefs and language. His focus was on religion in addition to strategy, and this combination was effective because it reanimated Byzantine Orthodox identity and articulated a blueprint for Christian soldiers in battle. Chapters 2–4 explore these prescriptions for Byzantine warfare and the perspective of Leo's *Taktika*.

Leo's judicial writings indicate an emperor concerned with organizing, codifying, and properly applying wisdom – both his and that of his predecessors – to improve the Byzantine empire. Although Justinian (r. 527–65) promulgated more laws than any other Byzantine emperor (c.600), from Justinian to the fall of Constantinople in 1453, emperors established only about 300 new laws.<sup>13</sup> Leo VI wrote 113 of those, making him the most active imperial legislator of the empire's final eight centuries. Not since Justinian had an emperor addressed such a wide range of contemporary issues with a view to improving the functioning of the state. By far his greatest contributions are the legal works. The most encyclopaedic endeavour of his reign, the six-volume *Basilika* was a revision of the Justinianic code, begun by Basil I. Leo also wrote 113 new laws, the content of which reveal his earnest desire to 'cleanse' government and society of the corrupt and obsolete.<sup>14</sup> Chapters 5 and 6 address the content, scope, and significance of Leo's legislative output in the *Novels*.

In the homilies, Leo's view of his role as the spiritual leader of the empire is plainly evident. Antonopoulou observes that the epilogues 'always call for God's protection on the chosen emperor and his people and . . . the emperor conceives himself as responsible for the people's spiritual guidance'.<sup>15</sup> The *Book of the Eparch*, a manual for the prefect of Constantinople, details the administration of urban guilds and is conventionally attributed to Leo

<sup>12</sup> On the Byzantines' combination of mimesis and innovation, see H. Hunger, 'The Reconstruction and Conception of the Past in Literature', in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress. Major Papers* (New Rochelle, NY, 1986), 510.

<sup>13</sup> M.-Th. Fögen, 'Legislation in Byzantium: A Political and a Bureaucratic Technique', in A. Laiou and D. Simon, eds., *Law and Society in Byzantium: Ninth–Twelfth Centuries* (Washington, DC, 1994), 54.

<sup>14</sup> The title of Leo's book containing the 113 novels reveals his purpose: Λεόντος ἐν Χριστῷ ἀθανάτω παντῶν βασιλεὶ εὐσεβοῦς βασιλέως Ρωμαίων αἱ τῶν νόμων ἐπανορθωτικαὶ ἀνακαθάρσεις. Literally: 'Leo, in Christ the immortal king of all, pious emperor of the Romans, The purifications for correcting the laws.' For further discussion, see J. Shepard, 'Byzantium in Equilibrium, 886–944', in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 7 vols. (Cambridge, 1999), 3: 553.

<sup>15</sup> Antonopoulou, *The Homilies of the Emperor Leo VI*, 43.

VI.<sup>16</sup> Of the many lists that detail relative status in the Byzantine empire, only the *Kletorologion* of Philotheos, promulgated under Leo VI, carried the weight of law by imperial decree – no other such text known to modern scholarship has received such a firm confirmation.<sup>17</sup>

The diversity of his literary production reveals Leo the scholar, a man who fittingly earned the epithet ‘the Wise’ even during his own lifetime. Wisdom, in the biblical worldview of the Old Testament, is closely allied with law-giving. The wisdom of Solomon, for example, was granted as a gift from God and is illustrated by his wisdom in adjudicating legal disputes.<sup>18</sup> It has been argued that the Macedonian dynasty, in attributing wisdom to Leo, was presenting him as a new Solomon to Basil I’s David.<sup>19</sup> Most Byzantine emperors embraced the role of David, a military man whose kingship was based on victory in warfare as well as divine blessing.<sup>20</sup> Basil I drew the parallel based on his rise from obscurity (David the shepherd boy, Basil the stable boy), his accession to the throne after an unpopular king (Saul, Michael III), and the death of his firstborn as an expiation for murder (Uriah, Michael III), leaving his second son to succeed him as ‘the Wise’ (Solomon, Leo).<sup>21</sup> Like Solomon, Leo was a lover not a fighter, and embraced the role of Solomon as equally biblical, equally powerful, and equally kingly.

As a wise king in the mould of Solomon, therefore, Leo exemplified the role of legislator. This is how he presents the *Taktika* as well. Leo himself did not view this work as a book to be read with mere theoretical interest, but rather as a set of binding regulations, a manual with prescriptive and legal force. In the prologue, he states clearly that the military leaders addressed

<sup>16</sup> The text is formally attributed to Leo in the prologue, calling it Διοτάξις Λέοντος. J. Koder, *Das Eparchenbuch Leons des Weisen* (Vienna, 1991).

<sup>17</sup> N. Oikonomides, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles: introduction, texte, traduction, commentaire* (Paris, 1972), 28.

<sup>18</sup> Solomon asked for ‘a discerning heart to distinguish between right and wrong’ which is essentially wisdom for administering justice (1 Kings 3:9).

<sup>19</sup> C. Jolivet-Lévy, ‘L’image du pouvoir dans l’art byzantin à l’époque de la dynastie macédonienne (867–1056)’, *Byzantion* 57 (1987), 441–70. See also P. Magdalino, ‘The Bath of Leo the Wise and the “Macedonian Renaissance” Revisited: Topography, Iconography, Ceremonial and Ideology’, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 42 (1988), 97–118.

<sup>20</sup> A classic example is Leo’s grandson, Basil II, as depicted on the frontispiece of his psalter in the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice (Cod. Marc. gr. 17). A. Cutler, ‘The Psalter of Basil II [part 2]’, *Arte Veneta* 31 (1977), 9–15.

<sup>21</sup> On Basil’s identification with David, see A. Markopoulos, ‘Constantine the Great in Macedonian historiography’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), 159–70. On Leo’s identification with Solomon, see S. Tougher, ‘The Wisdom of Leo VI’, in P. Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), 171–9.

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in the book are not free to choose which constitutions to apply and which to disregard; the entire work is to have the force of legislation.<sup>22</sup> Predictably, everything Leo writes is to be accepted as imperial instruction, not suggestion, and the language of obligation that he uses makes this clear.<sup>23</sup>

### Scope of Argument

Leo VI's innovative focus on religious motivation emerged from a ninth-century context in which Islam continued to present a challenge to Byzantium. By the mid-tenth century, momentum had shifted towards a Byzantine advance.<sup>24</sup> The main objective of this study is to explore the development, uses, and limits of Christian religion as a vital force in Byzantine cultural identity, highlighted in part by changing relations with Muslims. In this light, it is concerned with intellectual history, with militarized politics and an analysis of the viscera of behaviour between Christianity and Islam, and in particular, the development of a consciously Christian political identity in Byzantium. The body of scholarship which approaches Byzantine–Arab relations by taking account of religion has traditionally done so retrospectively, through the lens of the Crusades, viewing the Byzantine use of religious language as a kind of holy war, but this conclusion rests on assumptions that one might argue are not borne out by the Byzantine understanding of Christian faith and practice.<sup>25</sup> Nowhere does a political or military leader in Byzantium call the adherents of Orthodox Christianity to rise up against unbelievers, to forcibly convert them, or to kill them if they do not convert, so that they might gain a spiritual benefit as a result of engaging in this sort of armed conflict.<sup>26</sup> Although religion was employed

<sup>22</sup> *Taktika*, prooimion, *Patrologia Graeca* 107, 677C. "Ὅσπερ οὖν ἄλλον τινὰ πρόχειρον νόμον ὑμῖν, ὡς εἴρηται, στρατηγικὸν τὴν παροῦσαν πραγματείαν ὑπαγορεύοντες προσεχῶς τε καὶ ἐπιπόνως ἀκούειν ὑμῶν παρακελεύομεθα. Dennis, *Taktika*, 6, lines 60–4.

<sup>23</sup> P. Magdalino, 'The Non-Juridical Legislation of the Emperor Leo VI', in S. Troianos (ed.), *Analecta Atheniensia ad ius Byzantinum spectantia I* (Athens, 1997), 169–82; J. Grosdidier de Matons, 'Trois études sur Léon VI' *Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1973), 229.

<sup>24</sup> E. McGeer, *Sowing the Dragon's Teeth: Byzantine Warfare in the Tenth Century* (Washington, DC, 1995). J. D. Howard-Johnston, 'Studies in the Organisation of the Byzantine Army in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries' (University of Oxford, unpublished DPhil thesis, 1971), 188.

<sup>25</sup> The most recent example here would be the latter half of the excellent volume edited by J. Koder and I. Stouraitis, *Byzantine War Ideology Between Roman Imperial Concept and Christian Religion* (Vienna, 2012), especially Kolia-Dermitzakis's contribution.

<sup>26</sup> In fact, whenever Byzantine rhetoric approached this, they quickly reversed themselves out of an unwillingness to be like their Muslim enemies in this way. J. C. Cheynet, 'La guerre sainte à Byzance au Moyen Âge: un malentendu', in D. Balou and Ph. Josserand (eds.), *Regards croisés sur la guerre sainte. Guerre, religion et idéologie dans l'espace méditerranéen latin (XI–XIIIe siècle)* (Toulouse, 2006), 13–32.



to serve political and military goals, it was shown ultimately to have a clear limit in the Byzantine *mentalité* that stopped short of true holy war.<sup>27</sup>

As one would expect of a state engaged in continual warfare on various fronts, the early medieval Byzantine empire was highly militarized. The consensus of scholars has been that this militarization was undertaken for the primary purpose of protecting Byzantium from conquest by eastern Arabs, themselves newly inspired by the rise of Islam.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the tsunami of Islam in the seventh century resulted in removing Byzantium as a regional superpower and relegated it to ‘a medium sized regional state based on Constantinople, fighting a dour battle for survival’.<sup>29</sup> Most historians have stressed mainly that Byzantium adapted tactical and governmental structures from late antiquity to meet the threat. The cultural factors that kept the army and indeed the Byzantine state from disintegrating in the face of repeated Arab raids have not been as closely examined. Byzantium was a culture steeped in the Orthodox Christian religion, which harnessed both people and emperor to the service of a distinctively Christianized Old Testament deity. It is their religious orientation that was most influential in their culture; war was always seen as a necessary evil. Religion was not a tool in making war. Rather, war was suffused with religious ideas, just like daily life. The role of faith in Byzantine political thinking has been underestimated, and particularly its influence in warfare.<sup>30</sup>

### Features of Leo's Reign

At the accession of Leo VI in 886, the Byzantine empire enjoyed peace with all their neighbours except the Arabs.<sup>31</sup> To the north, the Bulgars were ruled by Boris-Michael (r. 852–89), who had converted to Christianity in

<sup>27</sup> Holy war is here defined as offensive warfare proclaimed by a religious authority and undertaken for the purpose of effecting not only a physical or political change, but also a spiritual change in either those practising it or in their opponents.

<sup>28</sup> A. Pertusi, ‘La formation des thèmes byzantins’, in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, 1 (Munich, 1958), 1–40 (Reihenfolge); G. Ostrogorsky, ‘Korreferat zu Pertusi, La formation des thèmes byzantins’, in *Berichte zum XI. Internationalen Byzantinisten-Kongress*, 1 (Munich, 1958), 1–8 (Korreferate).

<sup>29</sup> M. Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600–1025* (London, 1996), 96.

<sup>30</sup> See for example, A. Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome* (Cambridge, MA, 2015); A. Cameron, *Byzantine Matters* (Princeton, 2014); J. Herrin, *Margins and Metropolis: Authority Across the Byzantine Empire* (Princeton, 2013); D. Krueger (ed.), *Byzantine Christianity* (Minneapolis, 2006).

<sup>31</sup> For more on the historical background of the reign of Leo's predecessor, see Basilikè N. Blysidou, ‘Ἐξωτερική πολιτική καὶ ἐσωτερικὲς ἀντιδράσεις τὴν ἐποχὴ τοῦ Βασιλείου Α΄. ἔρευνες γιὰ τὸν ἐντοπισμὸ τῶν ἀντιπολιτευτικῶν τάσεων στὰ χρόνια 867–886 [Ἱστορικὲς Μονογραφίαι 8] (Athens, 1991).



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the 860s and inaugurated a new era of peaceful relations with Byzantium. In the west, Italy and Sicily were still nominally under the authority of Constantinople, but trouble was brewing in the form of ascendant Arab sea power. To the east, continual skirmishing with the Arabs along the frontier became increasingly characteristic of the region. But for the first decade or so of Leo's reign, relations with the Arabs were a minor irritant, as his attention and military resources were in demand elsewhere, to the north and west.<sup>32</sup>

The Balkans were to prove troublesome for the first decade of Leo's reign. In 889, Boris-Michael, the Bulgarian king, abdicated, leaving a vacuum of leadership until his younger son, Symeon, took power in 893. Destined to become the greatest ruler of the medieval Bulgarian kingdom, Symeon was driven by a restless ambition. Shortly after he came to power, hostilities broke out between the Bulgars and the Byzantines, ostensibly over a commercial dispute involving a decision made by Leo's highest-ranked advisor, Stylianos Zaoutzes.<sup>33</sup> What followed was a 'disastrous and humiliating war'.<sup>34</sup> Leo recalled distinguished general Nikephoros Phokas from Calabria to take command of the Byzantine defences. Symeon invaded Byzantine territory in 894 but was thwarted by rearguard attacks from Magyars answering the cry for help from their Byzantine allies. Symeon was forced to concede a truce, but subsequently enlisted the aid of the Pechenegs from the steppes north of the Black Sea and decisively defeated the Byzantines, led by Leo Katakalon, in 896 at Bulgarophygon in Thrace, 160 kilometres west of Constantinople. As terms of the peace thereafter (which was to last only 17 years), Byzantium was under obligation to the Bulgarians to pay annual tribute.<sup>35</sup> It was only after this that Leo was able to turn his attention to the east, and indeed, he did not compose his main treatise on military affairs, the *Taktika*, until after the peace with the Bulgars had been finalized.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> For a fuller discussion of general relations between Byzantium and its neighbours, see Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*; Tougher, *Reign of Leo VI*; and A. A. Vasiliev, *Byzance et les Arabes*, vol. 2, part 2, tr. and rev. M. Canard (Brussels, 1968).

<sup>33</sup> Ostrogorsky summarizes: 'Two Byzantine merchants had been given the monopoly of the Bulgar trade ... and had removed the Bulgarian market from Constantinople to Thessalonica and very much increased the duty.' G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1999), 256. J. Shepard, 'Bulgaria: The Other Balkan "empire"', in T. Reuter (ed.), *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, 7 vols. (Cambridge, 1999), 3: 567–85.

<sup>34</sup> P. Magdalino, 'Saint Demetrios and Leo VI', *Byzantinoslavica* 51 (1990), 200.

<sup>35</sup> For a general discussion of relations between Constantinople and the Bulgars, see Whittow, *Making of Byzantium*, 270–98.

<sup>36</sup> The *Taktika* mentions the war with the Bulgars, but no other Byzantine battles after that, providing a *terminus post quem* for the manual of 896 or 897. See Haldon, *Commentary*, 59–60, who discusses

The eastern frontier legacy Leo inherited from his father Basil I was generally one of weakness, with a few bright spots. From 860 onwards, Arab raids on Byzantine lands were joined by the Paulicians, a Christian sect of Armenian origin – considered heretical by Chalcedonian Christian Byzantines – who had established themselves in the 840s on the Upper Euphrates. They raided as far as Ephesos on the west coast in 867 and were not decisively defeated until 872.<sup>37</sup> The Armenian Bagratuni princes were somewhat easier to persuade, despite their earlier participation in the sack of Amorion in 838.<sup>38</sup> In August of 884, Ashot I was crowned king of Armenia (albeit with a crown given by the caliph) and declared to be a ‘beloved son’ of Basil I.<sup>39</sup>

Basil I also personally led several campaigns against the Muslims in the east, achieving a few limited victories. In 873, he led an expedition that brought victories over Samosata and Zapetra but failed at Melitene.<sup>40</sup> In 878, he led the army to victories at Germanikeia and Adata, and oversaw the final defeat of the Paulicians at Tephrike. These were duly celebrated in Constantinople with celebrations that perhaps outweighed their importance. He attempted to spin his patchy successes on the eastern frontier into more significant triumphs, celebrating victory parades on at least two occasions, with the 879 parade featuring the display of Muslim captives, various liturgical chants at ten different stations along the triumphal route, and a ceremonial greeting from the patriarch.<sup>41</sup>

McCormick has noted that both celebrations included the obligatory entry through the Golden Gate and a procession from there to the Forum of Constantine, punctuated by acclamations from the people. At the Forum, the emperor (accompanied by his son Constantine) changed from military garb

evidence for original composition no later than 904. See also Dennis, *Taktika*, 452. Cf. P. Karlin-Hayter, ‘La mort de Théophano (10 nov. 896 ou 895)’ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), 13–19; reprinted in P. Karlin-Hayter, *Studies in Byzantine Political History* (London, 1981), ch. 11.

<sup>37</sup> A. Lesmüller-Werner and H. Thurn (eds.), *Iosephi Genesisii regum libri quattuor*, *Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae* 14 (Berlin, 1978), 86.

<sup>38</sup> *Genesios, On the Reigns of the Emperors* 111.13, 47, tr. A. Kaldellis (Leiden, 2017). Greenwood says this was a ‘rare instance of active service by Armenian forces against Byzantium’. T. W. Greenwood, ‘Armenian Neighbours (600–1045)’, in J. Shepard (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, ca. 500–1492* (Cambridge, 2008), 349.

<sup>39</sup> Greenwood, ‘Armenian Neighbours’, 353.

<sup>40</sup> *Theophanes Continuatus*, 268, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1838); P. Lemerle, ‘L’histoire des Pauliciens d’Asie Mineure’, *Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1969), 108.

<sup>41</sup> J. F. Haldon (ed.), *Constantine Porphyrogenitus: Three Treatises on Imperial Expeditions*, *Corpus fontium historiae byzantinae* (Vienna, 1990), Text C, lines 724–807 (pp. 140–7). See the extended discussion in M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1986), 212–26.