Panel from a Box with Scene of Jousting Knights
The Metropolitan Museum of Art

**INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

Rituals of War in Byzantium, the Islamic World and the Latin West

**13 – 15 February 2025
University of Cyprus, CeMAR
Centre for Medieval Arts & Rituals**
*"Ioannis Taifacos" A106
Conference Room
Kallipoleos 75, Nicosia 1678
University of Cyprus (Old Campus)*

University
of Cyprus

CeMAR
Centre for
Medieval Arts &
Rituals

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PROGRAMME

09.00-09.30 **Welcome and Introduction**
Johannes Pahlitzsch and Stavroula Constantinou

09.30-11.00 **Rituals of War Departure**
Chair: Andria Andreou

Radosław Kotecki
Master Vincentius' Narrative on Bolesław III's Nakło Campaign (1109): A Comparative Analysis of the Profectio Bellica *Ritual in High Medieval Poland*
Bart Peters
Swords and Speeches: Battle Orations in Medieval Southern Italian Narratives
Discussion

11.00-11.30 **Coffee/Tea Break**

11.30-13.00 **Rituals in Battle**
Chair: Johannes Pahlitzsch

Angel Nicolaou-Konnari
Rituals of War in the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus in the Thirteenth Century: The Testimony of Philip of Novara, a Man of Arms and Letters
Jörg Rogge
With the Help of God, Saints and Bravery: Sacral-Military Practices on British Battlefields in the Fourteenth Century
Discussion

13.00-14.30 **Lunch Break**

14.30-16.30 **Rituals of Triumph and War Ending**
Chair: Dionysios Stathakopoulos

Maria Parani
Performing Victory: Imperial Triumph at the Time of the Komnenoi

Deanna Pellerano
Sound and Meaning in the French Triumphal Entries of the Early Italian Wars (1494-1515)
Discussion

16.30-17.00   **Coffee/Tea Break**

17.00-18.30   **The Historiography of War Rituals**
Chair: Angel Nicolaou-Konnari

Thomas Scharff
Ending War in the Carolingian Period
Gowaart Van Den Bossche
Histoire Bataille, Memory and the Events of Universal History: Remembering the Rituals of War in Late Medieval Islamic Historiography
Discussion

19.00   **Dinner for Speakers**

Friday, 14 February

09.30-11.00   **Soundscapes, Combat Training and Money Rituals**
Chair: Stavroula Constantinou

Marie-Emmanuelle Torres
Sound and Combat Training in Middle Byzantium Warfare
Dionysios Stathakopoulos
Rituals Concerning the Use of Money in War in Fourteenth-Century Byzantium: A Reading
Discussion

11.00-11.30   **Coffee/Tea Break**

11.30-13.00   **Relics and War Rituals**
Chair: Sabine Reichert

Holger Klein
Relics and the Rituals of War in Byzantium and Beyond: A Comparative Analysis
Barbara Henning
The Sancak-ı Şerif in War and Peace: Insights into the Object Biography of the Banner of the Prophet in Ottoman History
Discussion

13.00-14.30 **Lunch Break**

14.30-16.00 **Arts at War and their Ritual Uses**
Chair: Maria Parani

Joaquín Serrano del Pozo
Sacred Images at War: The Ritual Use of Acheiropoietic Images of Christ in Military Contexts in Byzantium and Rome (6th-8th c.)
Stavroula Constantinou
The Arts and Rituals of War in Byzantine Romances of the Troy Matter
Discussion

16.00-16.30 **Coffee/Tea Break**

16.30-17.15 **Contemporary Perspectives of Medieval War Rituals**
Chair: Stavroula Constantinou

Abbès Zouache
Rethinking War Concepts and Rituals from Islamic Perspective: The Vocabulary of "Jihadocentrism"
Discussion

17.15-17.45 **Closing Session and Final Remarks**

19.00 **Dinner for Speakers**

Saturday, 15 February

(optional for conference participants)

09.00-12.00 Guided Tour of Nicosia

13.30-16.30 Excursion to Kiti and Larnaca

ABSTRACTS

Stavroula Constantinou, *The Arts and Rituals of War in Byzantine Romances of the Troy Matter*

Byzantine romances of the Troy matter abound with arts and rituals of war. This paper concentrates on the so-called *War of Troy* (13th c.), an anonymous verse romance that constitutes a Byzantine adaptation of Benoît de Sainte-Maure's famous romance *Roman de Troie* (12th c.). The undertaken analysis focuses on some artistic rituals and ritual arts that are enacted and produced for the death of the most important Troy warrior, Hector, in an attempt to bring to the fore the strong interrelationships between war arts and rituals and how these constitute important aspects of the examined text's aesthetics.

Joaquín Serrano del Pozo, *Sacred Images at War: The Ritual Use of Acheiropoietic Images of Christ in Military Contexts in Byzantium and Rome (6th-8th c.)*

Theophylact Simocattas' *History* describes how the *magister militum* Philippikos displayed an *acheiropoieton* of Christ in the Battle of Solachon (AD 586) against the Persians. This image of miraculous origins has been traditionally identified with the so-called *Camuliana*, first mentioned in the chronicle of Pseudo-Zachariah Rhetor, as the same one used later by Heraclius in his offensive campaigns against Persia, and by patriarch Sergios during the siege of AD 626. Moreover, a few scholars identified this image as the same one that – according to the *Liber Pontificalis* – pope Stephen II paraded in a supplicatory procession in AD 752, and allegedly kept in the Lateran Basilica. A later passage of Simocattas' *History* describes how Priskos unsuccessfully tried to use the same holy image displayed by Philippikos to calm some angry troops, a passage which has rarely been considered by scholars. The present paper examines the uses of this acheiropoietic image – or images – in war and military contexts, the different narratives where these uses are mentioned and the descriptions of rituals associated with them – uncovering, display, prayers and processions – and the performative function and meaning of these rituals. Additionally, the paper considers the possible connections between Byzantine and Roman miraculous images. Furthermore, the paper analyses the literary function of the image episodes in their respective narratives, and the general military and sociocultural role of these holy items, introducing the concept of "charismatic object" that provides an

understanding of the way in which relics and sacred images worked in these contexts. Finally, the paper proposes to frame the ritual and military use of the examined objects as a practice related to the Christianisation and "liturgification" of early medieval Euro-Mediterranean societies.

Barbara Henning, *The Sancak-ı Şerif in War and Peace: Insights into the Object Biography of the Banner of the Prophet in Ottoman History*

This paper traces the history of the *Sancak-ı Şerif*, the banner of the Prophet Muhammad, throughout Ottoman History, examining when and how it was referenced in contexts of war and utilised during campaigns and on the battlefield. Believed to be closely connected to early Islamic history and thought to carry the blessing power of the Prophet Muhammad himself, the *Sancak-ı Şerif* played a crucial role in legitimising Ottoman rule and expansion in the broader Arab-Islamic world from the sixteenth century onward. By investigating the Ottoman acquisition, appropriation and application of this mobile object and inquiring about rituals, ceremonial contexts and narratives associated with it, as well as the actors involved in its handling, the present paper explores the symbolic significance of the banner for concepts of Ottoman sovereignty. The trajectory of the object indicates that it was not only used in warfare but also displayed during periods of public unrest or perceived threats to the unity of the Islamic community, suggesting a multilayered symbolic context where ideas about war, solidarity and communal identities intersect. The discussion applies the lens of object biographies to contextualise the banner's shifting meanings over time.

Holger Klein, *Relics and the Rituals of War in Byzantium and Beyond: A Comparative Analysis*

The use of relics of Christ's Passion, the Virgin and certain saints in military campaigns is well attested in the Byzantine Empire from the sixth century to the middle Byzantine period and beyond. However, the practice of carrying relics into battle is by no means limited to the Byzantine world, but is also known in medieval Europe and the Crusader kingdoms of Outremer. This paper explores the types of relics (and their containers) carried into battle and the rituals and practices involved in using them as powerful tokens to fend off or defeat enemies during wars, sieges or other moments of crisis. By using a comparative approach to the study of relics and rituals of war in the Eastern Mediterranean and Europe, the present

paper attempts to uncover common elements, as well as differences in approaches and practices across the medieval world.

Radosław Kotecki, *Master Vincentius' Narrative on Bolesław III's Nakło Campaign (1109): A Comparative Analysis of* Profectio Bellica *Ritual in High Medieval Poland*

The *profectio bellica* ritual (departure for war) is primarily known from the studies of Michael McCormick on early medieval Western Europe and Byzantium. This ritual involved the ceremonial preparations of a commander before marching out, including prayers in key churches of the capital seeking supernatural aid for the upcoming campaign, particularly angelic assistance, followed by a formal procession through the city and an orderly departure. Several sources show that relics of the True Cross played a crucial role in this ritual, carried at the head of the procession by a specially appointed cleric. It is evident that this rite was mainly practised in the early Middle Ages. From the eleventh century onwards, traces of its use become increasingly difficult to find, possibly due to the development of chivalric and standardised crusading rites at the time, which emphasised Holy Mass and receiving Holy Communion before departure. The question of whether the *profectio bellica* continued in its traditional form during the High and Late Middle Ages requires further in-depth and comparative research. The present paper aims to demonstrate that the rules of this ritual left a distinct mark on a work written at the turn of the thirteenth century by the Polish chronicler, Master Vincentius (d. 1223), in the framework of the story about the great campaign of Bolesław the Wrymouth against Nakło, a stronghold of pagan Pomeranians (1109). By using comparative material from Georgia and France from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, this paper intends to show that the traditional form of the *profectio bellica* was still known in Poland and some other regions. In seeking an answer to why this ritual persisted in certain monarchies, it is important to note that all instances point to the use of a sacred object in the ritual, perceived as the cornerstone of royal authority, a symbol of communal identity and a powerful talisman capable of destroying enemies. While the comparative examples clearly identify these objects, Vincentius only cryptically mentions a certain spear, necessitating the need for its identification.

Angel Nicolaou-Konnari, *Rituals of War in the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus in the Thirteenth Century: The Testimony of Philip of Novara, a Man of Arms and Letters*

Through blood ties, social, legal and economic structures, religion, language, art and ceremonial, the French dynasty of the Lusignans founded on Cyprus a crusader kingdom that was fashioned after that of Jerusalem and other independent Western kingdoms. Its character was feudal in nature and Frankish in origin, but, at the same time, it incorporated many Byzantine and Eastern traits that reflected its multi-ethnic and multicultural composition. Accordingly, feudal rituals of war were observed and, depending on the type of war (holy war, civil war, raids and piracy, defensive war on Cyprus or aggressive expeditions outside Cyprus, etc.), crusader and local customs were also adopted; they certainly evolved throughout the centuries following political and ideological mutations. Although evidence is sparse, gleaned from a variety of sources, since no relevant official text has survived, the thirteenth century is better represented thanks to the information found in the legal, historical and literary work of Philippe de Novare (*c.* 1200-after 1269). A statesman and a soldier, a jurist and a history writer, a poet and a moralist, Philippe dominated the intellectual life of the Cypriot and generally the Latin Eastern society in the first half of the thirteenth century. His testimony is valuable in as much as he was an active participant in battles or an eyewitness of sorts. In the absence of official texts, his work is a kind of unauthorised, albeit valid, version of the war rituals during the first century of the existence of the Lusignan Kingdom of Cyprus. Using his testimony, this paper intends to recover rituals of war that correspond to different types and phases of a battle, as well as the political and ideological partiality and/or propaganda involved.

Maria Parani, *Performing Victory: Imperial Triumph at the Time of the Komnenoi*

In his classic study on imperial triumphs in Byzantium down to the eleventh century, Michael McCormick spoke in passing of the "new and innovative victory celebrations" of the Komnenoi, which he identified as "a subject worthy of a specialised study" (*Eternal Victory*, 1986, p. 184). Almost forty years later, this paper seeks to explore how the dynamics of war and peace, couched in terms of traditional Byzantine imperial ideology, were performed in imperial Komnenian triumphs within the context of the political, social and military realities of the twelfth century. In trying to evaluate the claim of novelty, special attention is given to the

setting and the material trappings of the Komnenian imperial victory celebrations, as well the participants and their intended audience, be they the inhabitants of imperial Constantinople or those of crusader Antioch.

Bart Peters, *Swords and Speeches: Battle Orations in Medieval Southern Italian Narratives*

One of the most explicit examples evoking the drama of warfare revolves around a commanding officer addressing their troops before the outbreak of battle. Despite their prevalence in modern cinema, their occurrence in medieval narrative texts received less attention. This paper seeks to zoom in and discuss narrated depictions of battle orations from early medieval Southern Italy. The Latin, Byzantine and Islamic worlds often violently interacted in this contact zone. By attaching speeches to a bellicose scenario, the chroniclers offer a construed perspective, granting a glimpse into the stakes of battle and what narrative appeals were employed to stimulate medieval combatants to put their lives at risk. The trope of the battle speech allowed authors to indirectly comment on the ruler's presence as a warrior in the performative dimension by directly putting words in their mouths. This would give their words additional weight and increase the drama because their general or even their ruler dramatically tried to inform and boost the morale of their soldiers and, indirectly, the source's intended audience. They served as climactic instruments for authors attempting to clarify conflict and heighten the narration's drama for their intended readership.

Deanna Pellerano, *Sound and Meaning in the French Triumphal Entries of the Early Italian Wars (1494-1515)*

The early Italian wars (1494-1515), undertaken personally by French kings Charles VIII, Louis XII and Francis I, were punctuated by triumphal entries into numerous Italian cities, for which abundant descriptions in both French and Italian sources exist. These accounts reveal that sound, including cries, bells, gunfire, instruments, and singing, played an instrumental role in the construction of festive descriptions and at times the articulation of political identity. This paper investigates the manner in which sound is employed in such descriptions, it investigates the musical forces that would have produced them, and it theorises the manner in which authors embraced and manipulated the semiotic value of sonic description.

Jörg Rogge, *With the Help of God, Saints and Bravery: Sacral-Military Practices on British Battlefields in the Fourteenth Century*

In this paper, sacred military practices are analysed in the context of two battles fought during the Anglo-Scottish conflict (War of Independence 1286-1347), which were won once by the Scots and once by the English: the Battle of Bannockburn (near Stirling) in June 1314 and the Battle of Neville's Cross (near Durham) in October 1346. The paper focuses on the sacred aspects (prayers, carrying relics, the intervention of saints) in the accounts of the two battles, which the authors cited to explain the respective battle outcomes.

Thomas Scharff, *Ending War in the Carolingian Period*

This paper deals with forms and representations of the ending of wars in the Carolingian period. In their narratives, Carolingian authors used a terminology strongly orientated towards Roman usage, in which it is often not entirely clear when and why a conflict becomes a war (*bellum*) and when it does not. In these wars, the authors usually let their rulers win, but it can happen that after a "victory", the fighting starts all over again the following year with equal vigour. The successfully concluded war then turns out to be a permanent conflict, which is repeatedly "ended" with religious rituals or ritualised punishments of the "finally" defeated opponents. An examination of these representations leads directly to the question of the character of early medieval wars, which can be better understood – so the assumption of this paper – if they are viewed from their supposed or actual end.

Dionysios Stathakopoulos, *Rituals Concerning the Use of Money in War in Fourteenth-Century Byzantium: A Reading*

"Money is the sinew of war" – this phrase (attributed, probably wrongly, to Pindar), enjoyed wide currency in Byzantium. The links seem obvious: money pays for soldiers and weapons, can pay off enemies, attract allies, finance the building of fortresses and so on. But how money is given matters, and this paper suggests that ritual is a fruitful way to explore the use of money in war. Taking the Histories of John Kantakouzenos as a case study, the paper discusses aspects such as disguising payments as gifts and publicly handing out, accepting or rejecting money.

Marie-Emma Torres, *Sound and Combat Training in Middle Byzantium Warfare*

The performance of war is not an easy job, since it is full of physical, psychological and aural violence. Combat generates deafening chaos, where the sonic violence of shouting adds to the physical violence. Soldiers have to stay focused on the commands and signals, but also prevent themselves from being overwhelmed by fear or sleep deprivation. They also have to find meaning and motivation in these deadly battles. They must be able to accept extreme discipline, a rigorous lifestyle, the idea of death, and also the idea of killing a human being. Strategists have long developed techniques and tips to prepare soldiers to cope with the violence, emotions and danger that await them on the battlefield. The strategists of the tenth and eleventh centuries, such as Leo VI, Nikephoros Ouranos and pseudo-Nikephoros Phokas, gave a great deal of advice on how to deal with aural violence, how to motivate troops and how to increase their aggressiveness on the battlefield. The acoustic violence of battle alone justifies ear training, as soldiers must be able to endure it and hear orders in the surrounding chaos. Military songs and harangues help to rally the group together and motivate them towards a common objective. Silence helps to enforce discipline but also to assimilate all the pep talks. Lastly, the battle cry unites the collective, concentrating its energy and aggressiveness before suddenly releasing it. In fact, strategists have developed a whole aural ritual for physical and mental training. Some periods are devoted to listening, others to singing and others to shouting, but they are all part of the soldier's mental preparation. This paper considers the different rituals of sonic coaching for warfare and the sounds they use. Sound is examined both as a violence and as a tool for protecting from it.

Gowaart Van Den Bossche, Histoire Bataille*, Memory and the Events of Universal History: Remembering the Rituals of War in Late Medieval Islamic Historiography*

Scholarship has long moved on from the *histoire événementielle* of the nineteenth century, which tended to focus overly on the political actions of "great men", wars and battles. At the same time, it cannot be gainsaid how central accounts of warfare and the deeds of great mean are in our surviving corpora of historiography. It thus remains important to understand how such accounts function in these texts and why they were foregrounded as the most important events to be remembered by later generations. This paper zooms in on a set of Arabic chronicles produced

in early fourteenth-century Egypt by the historians Ibn al-Dawādārī (d. ca. 1335) and Baybars al-Manṣūrī (d. 1325). It examines how these texts of extended chronological scope and great size used reports of war and battles as patterning elements in their presentation of salvation history. The paper focuses on practices of remembering and rewriting, in which the omission and selection of reports become meaningful authorial acts. The hypothesis is that certain rituals of war continued to be reproduced, while others fell victim to summary or outright forgetting. Focusing on such events and comparing them to these authors' accounts of military endeavours shines a light on how historians created meaningful pasts in relation to their present.

Abbès Zouache, Rethinking War Concepts and Rituals from Islamic Perspective: The Vocabulary of "Jihadocentrism"
This paper outlines the need to rethink war concepts commonly used by academics to study warfare from an Islamic perspective – especially the Crusades. Examining war concepts, such as "religious war", "jihad", "holy war" or "counter-crusades", along with rituals related to these concepts, the paper aims to bring to the fore their ideolological and emotional uses. As will be demonstrated, these war concepts and rituals support Orientalism's tendency to approach Eastern societies through the prism of religion. However, the medieval practice of warfare was not governed only by religious-related issues.

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Plate with the Battle of David and Goliath
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