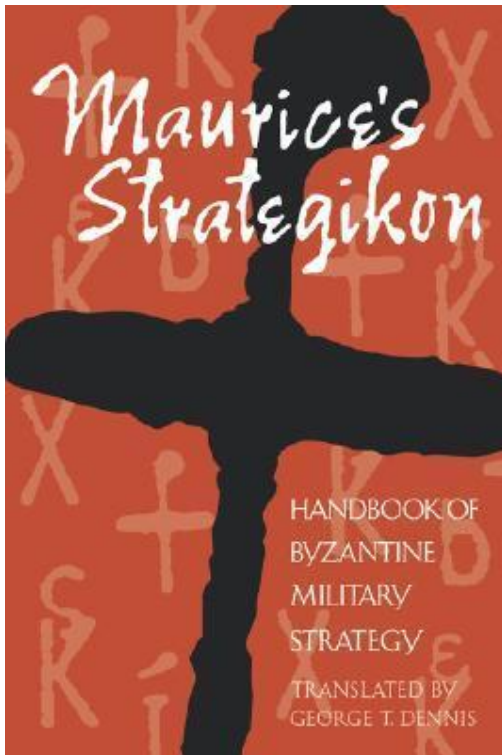


Maurice's Strategikon

Review by Rob Morgan

I came upon this fascinating volume by chance in a distant library. It may be better known to US early medieval, and classical wargamers, having been first published by the University of Pennsylvania Press in 1984, the full title being 'Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy'. A straightforward 170-page translation of a Greek text written by the Emperor Maurice (582-602 AD) who was deposed in that latter year and spent the rest of his life writing this work.



Marvelous! The book provides an introduction to warfare in the centuries after the Western Roman Empire vanished, and provides the reader with a sound background to military terms and elaborate, usually successful tactics. It's made for the table top enthusiast! Maurice, and this is a hint, was especially interested in Hannibal, and it shows. ISBN is 0-8122-1772-1 by the way.

The book divides into 12 sections, each considering an aspect of warfare. Among them are cavalry battle formations, everything from scouting and spying to battle cries; ambushes, the 'Scythian' ambush is interesting; baggage trains -- guarding and cautious use of them; surprise attacks, in specific terrain and at night! Sieges (an excellent piece!) as well as mixed formations, military camps and even hunting. Crammed with material of use to the wargamer. I've met many a wargamer who would gain an insight into how to fight a battle from reading Maurice's 'General Instructions for the Commander'. They'd make

decent umpire-enforced rules and will certainly transpose to warfare in other eras. Try, 'We should place our hopes of victory in our weapons, not in our fortifications alone.' He provides 101 Maxims for leadership in battle which I suspect Robert E. Lee, history's greatest general, must have learned by heart!

I can't recommend this book too highly, Maurice deals with the tactics and characteristics of various enemies, Scythians, Avars, Turks, Huns, Slavs, Franks and Lombards among them; while he finishes with a very sound and tremendously interesting 40-page section on training, equipping, and using infantry in battle. These 'drills' for want of a better term, would suit the Crusader era. He provides numerous illustrations, one of a fortified camp has potential for a small game, others on mixed and single-unit formations are very neatly detailed, useful diagrams. A better title for the Emperor Maurice's text might be, 'How to Build an Army, to Fight with it, and Win.'

10 out of 10 Maurice!