

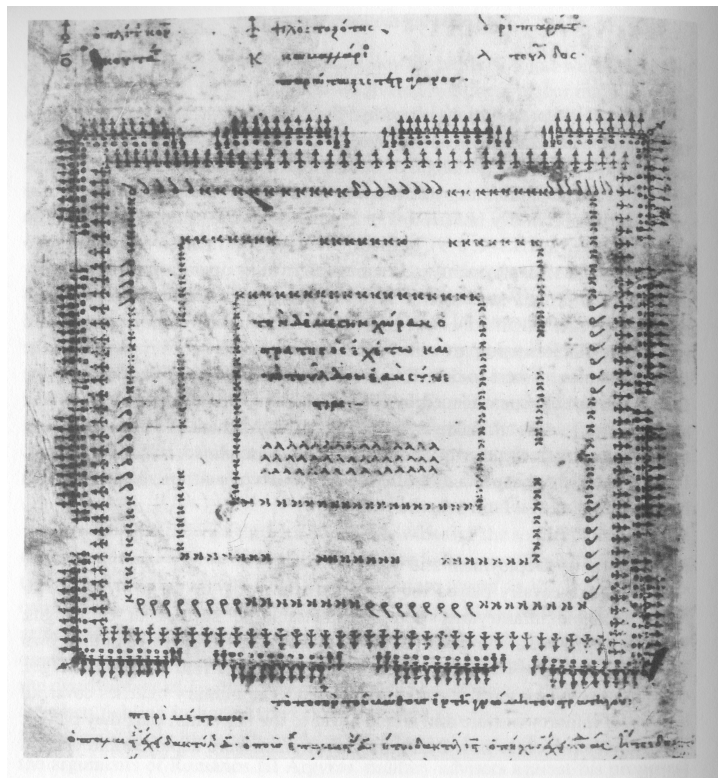
The Byzantine Army



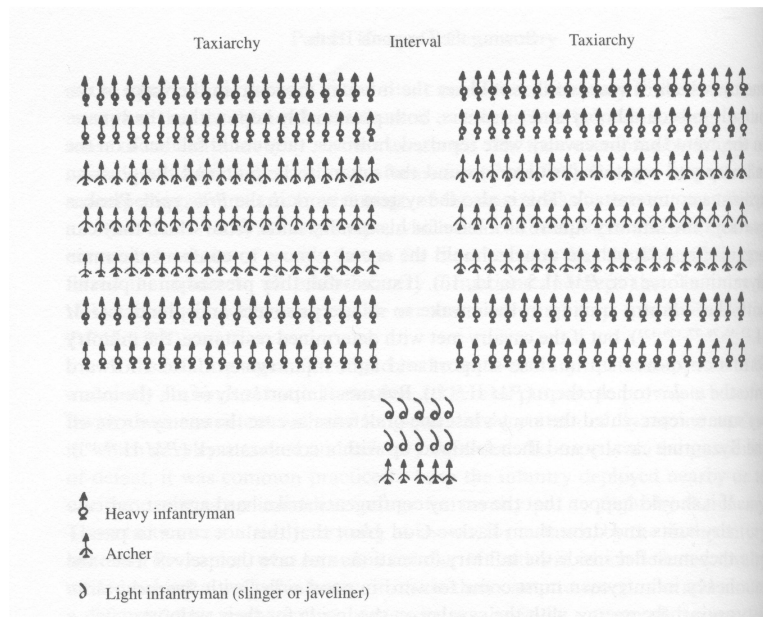
Rome in 395 AD and 1025 AD, respectively.

Timeline:

- 395 Death of Theodosius, lasting partition of the empire
- 565 Death of Justinian, largest extent of the eastern empire
- 634 Muslim conquests of southeastern territories begin
- 1025 Death of Basil II
- 1071 Battle of Manzikert
- 1180 Death of Manuel Komnenos
- 1204 Fourth Crusade sacks Constantinople and partitions the empire
- 1453 Turks conquer Constantinople



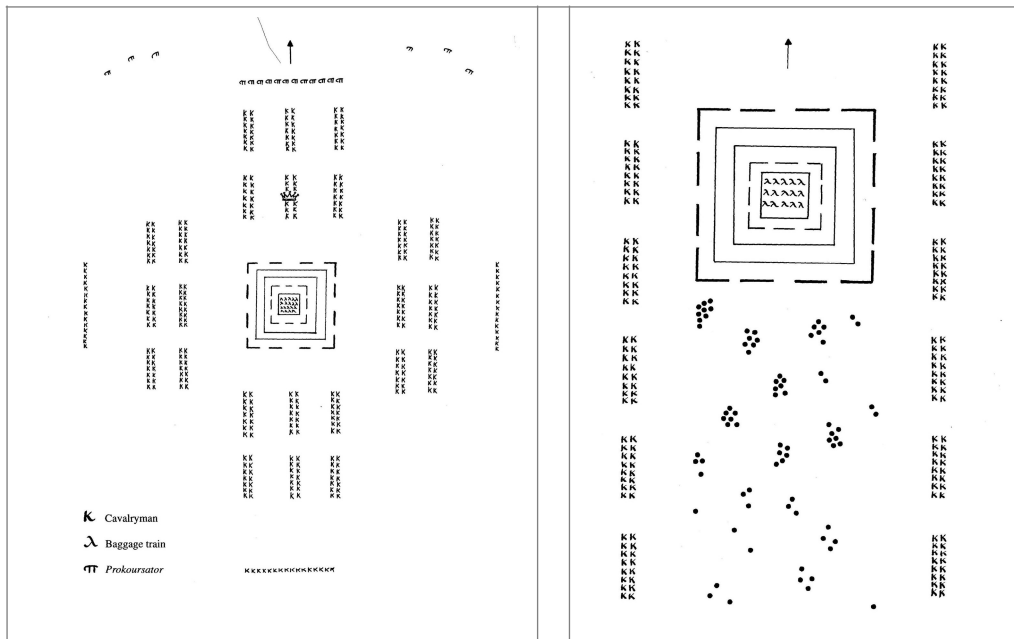
An idealized field formation



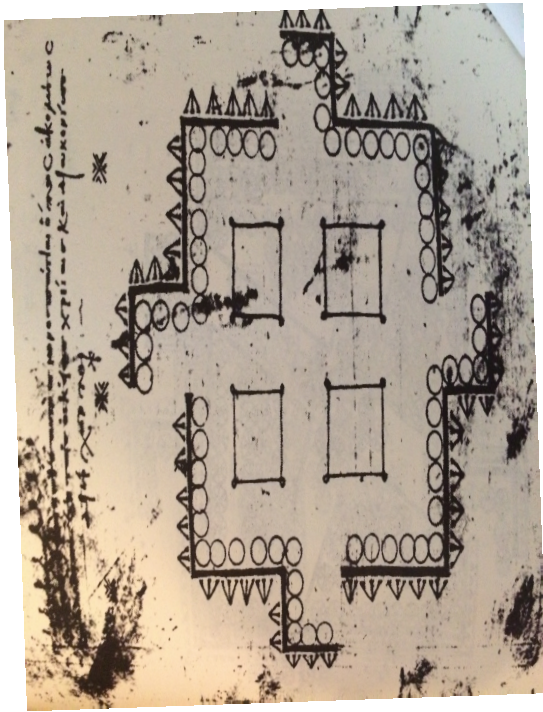
Each taxiarchy is arrayed in seven lines of hundred soldiers. (The width of the line may change as circumstances dictate.)

An idealized tenth-century expeditionary army of 25,000 soldiers consists of:

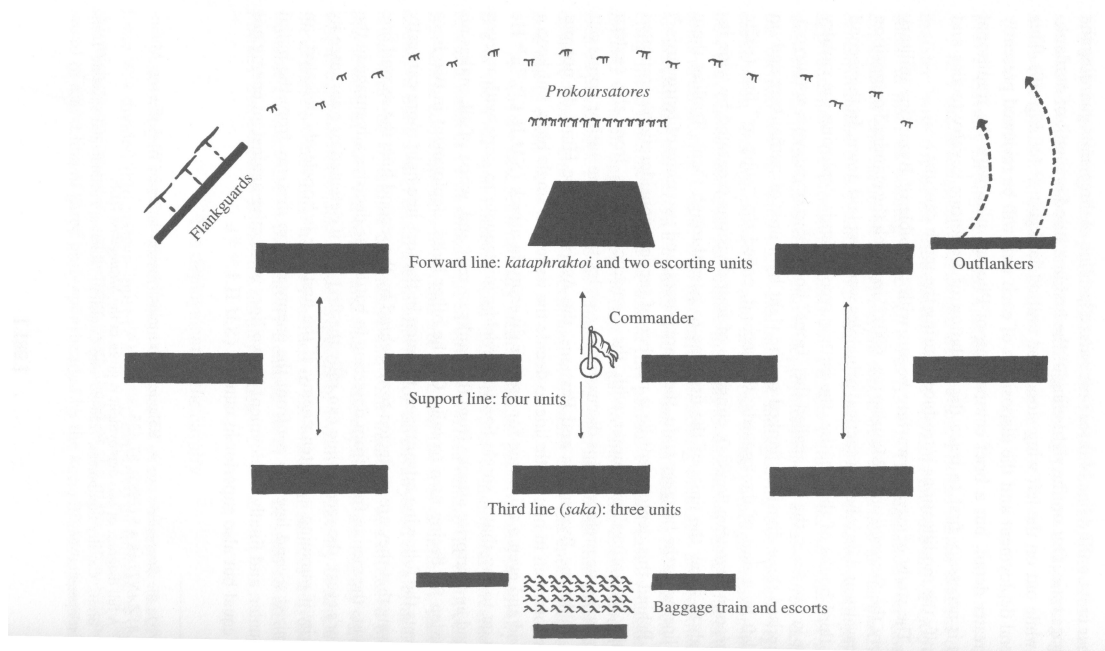
- 12000 infantry, organized into 12 *taxiarchies* of 1000 men each: 400 heavy infantry, 300 archers, 200 light infantry, and 100 *menavlotoi*.
- Another 5200 heavy infantry and 1200 archers.
- 500 light cavalry (*prokoursatores*).
- 500 heavy cavalry (*kataphraktoi*).
- 5500 regular cavalry, including about 2000 archers.
- Supernumeraries.



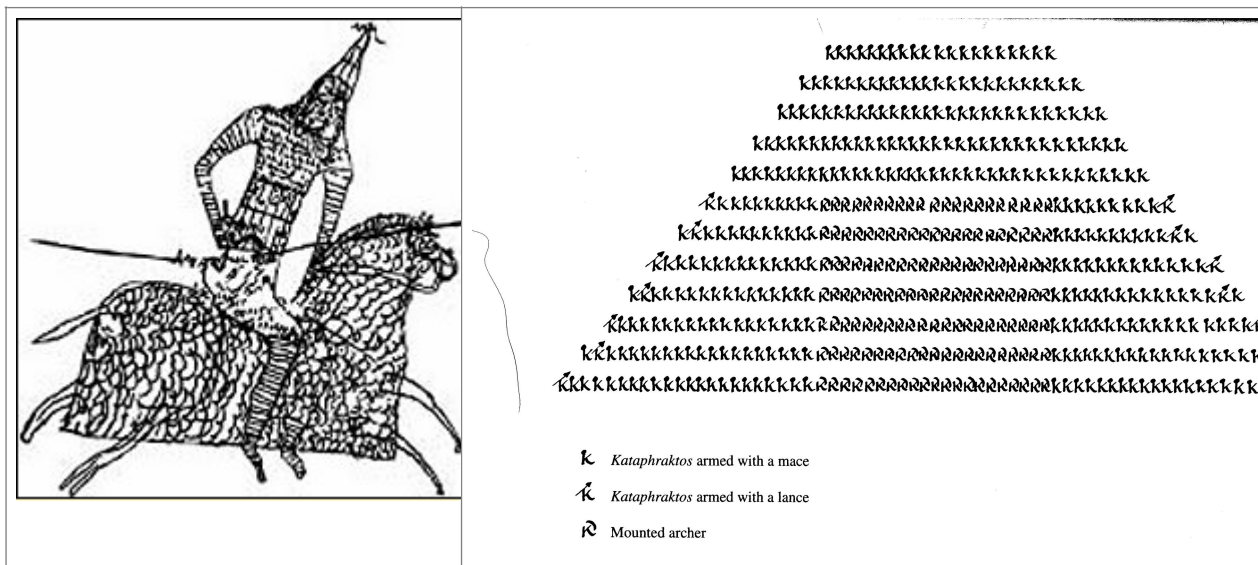
Marching Order



Camp Layout



Cavalry formation for offense



Full horse armor. (This depiction is actually Parthian.)

The cataphract wedge

Two thousand regular soldiers should be assigned to each quarter and should be stationed about a meter apart¹ along the front. Behind them, to the inside, should form the javelin men and the archers. (Anonymous Byzantine treatise)

The number of infantry should come to 11,200, apart from the light infantry. Short tunics reaching to the knees are to be required, made of cotton or coarse silk.... If possible, let them also have short footwear folded up to the knees or unfolded up to the thighs, or else sandals, that is *mouzakia*... They must have thick caps of felt... (Preceptia Militaria)

The men of old, in their conduct of siege warfare, constructed many devices such as rams, wooden towers, scaling ladders with various features, as well as toroises and all kinds of other things which our generation has never even seen. (Taktika of Nikephoros Ouranos)

They must have sturdy horses covered in armor, either of pieces of felt and boiled leather fastened together to the knees so that nothing of the horse's body appears except its eyes and nostrils. (Preceptia Militaria)

[The] *Arabitai* will encircle our four-sided formation in a swarm, as they usually do, confident in their horses. There is no need for the cavalry to head off in pursuit because of the speed of their horses, for when pursued they are not overtaken and, aided by the speed of their horses, they quickly counterattack and strike against our men. It does no good at all to go chasing after them. (Perceptia Militaria)

But even with the salary and the monthly allowance, these men are not very likely to perform the sentry duty well, for, after all, they are still Armenians. We must, then, rely on spies for information about the movement of the armies. Select some good, courageous *trapezites*... (Skirmishing)

Still, instead of confronting the enemy as they are their way to invade... get them as they are returning from our country to their own. They will then be worn out and much the worse for wear after having spent such a long time in the Roman lands. They are likely to be burdened with a lot of baggage, captives, and animals. (Skirmishing)

If any wine or bread happens to be found there, do not readily attempt to drink or eat it unless you first test it by giving it to prisoners. ...water from wells or cisterns or ponds or any other containers will often have been ruined and rendered lethal by poison. (Taktika of Leo VI)

Since the Bulgarians, however, have embraced the peace of Christ.... we are not eager to describe their battle formation against ours or ours against theirs. We will now speak about the disposition of the Turks and their battle formation, which differ from the Bulgarians a little or not at all. (Taktika of Leo VI)

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 a few days. We strongly advise any general against even thinking of doing this. It is an extremely difficult thing for anyone to bring off. Nobody makes a habit of immediately retrieving a defeat, except the Scythians, and it is particularly foreign to the Romans. (Maurice's Strategikon)

The average person thinks that fighting at night is a simple notion, not calling for any special concern or precision. But such is not the case. (Anonymous Byzantine)

¹ Two soldiers to an orguia.

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Images

The type-set diagrams in this handout come from McGeer. (The detailed diagram of a field army is taken from *Syntaxis armatorum quadrata*, c.950).

The modern reconstructions of an infantryman’s equipment and an archer using a recurve bow with a solenarion come from Dawson.

The map showing the partitioned Roman Empire in 395 AD is from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Ancient_Rome. The map showing the Eastern Roman Empire in 1025 is from <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=6662428>.

The cataphract/clibanus image is Persian, not Byzantine, but I wanted examples of the “full skirt” horse armor. The graffito is 3rdC Parthian, from Dura Europos, and the image comes from <http://antiquity.ac.uk/ProjGall/Pre2003/McCarthy/mccarthy.html>. See also <http://www.allempires.com/article/index.php?q=cataphracts>.

The 14th-century (not 11th) soapstone icon depicting of Saint Demetrios as an archer belongs to the Louvre (OA11219). The image was taken from http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Icon_Saint_Demetrios_Louvre_OA11219.jpg.