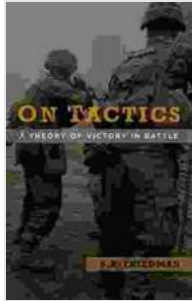


On Tactics: The Enduring Principles of Victory in Battle



On Tactics: A Theory of Victory in Battle by B.A. Friedman

★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English
File size : 2151 KB
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 256 pages



Written by the Byzantine emperor Maurice in the 6th century AD, **On Tactics** is a classic military treatise that offers a comprehensive insight into the principles of warfare and the art of achieving victory in battle. Drawing on his extensive military experience and a deep understanding of Roman and Greek military traditions, Maurice provides a detailed and systematic exposition of the tactics and strategies employed by the Byzantine army, one of the most formidable military forces of its time.

Emperor Maurice: A Military Strategist and Scholar

Emperor Maurice (reigned 582-602 AD) was not only a skilled military commander but also a renowned scholar and writer. He was a student of the works of the great ancient military theorists, such as Vegetius, Frontinus, and Aelian, and he sought to synthesize their ideas with his own practical experience to create a comprehensive guide to warfare.

On Tactics is the culmination of Maurice's military and intellectual endeavors. It is divided into twelve books, each covering a different aspect of warfare, from the organization and training of an army to the conduct of battles and sieges. The work is notable for its clarity, detail, and practicality, providing a wealth of valuable information for military historians, strategists, and practitioners alike.

The Principles of Byzantine Warfare

At the heart of Maurice's tactical thinking is the concept of **synergia**, or cooperation and coordination among different units of an army. He emphasizes the importance of maintaining a cohesive and disciplined formation, with each unit supporting and complementing the others. This principle of synergy is evident in all aspects of Byzantine warfare, from the close cooperation between infantry and cavalry to the coordinated use of siege engines and naval forces.

Another key principle in Maurice's theory is the importance of **initiative and surprise**. He advocates for taking the offensive whenever possible, catching the enemy off guard and exploiting their weaknesses. Maurice also emphasizes the value of reconnaissance and intelligence gathering, arguing that a commander who knows the enemy's plans and dispositions has a significant advantage in battle.

Infantry Tactics

Infantry was the backbone of the Byzantine army, and Maurice devotes considerable attention to infantry tactics in **On Tactics**. He describes in detail the various formations and maneuvers used by Byzantine infantry, from the traditional phalanx to more flexible and adaptable formations. Maurice also emphasizes the importance of training and discipline, arguing

that well-trained and motivated infantry can overcome even superior numbers.

One of the most distinctive features of Byzantine infantry tactics was the use of the **kontarion**, a long spear that could be used for both thrusting and throwing. Maurice provides detailed instructions on the use of the kontarion, emphasizing the importance of close-order formations and coordinated attacks. He also describes the use of other infantry weapons, such as swords, axes, and bows and arrows.

Cavalry Tactics

Cavalry was another important component of the Byzantine army, and Maurice discusses the use of cavalry in both offensive and defensive operations. He describes the different types of cavalry employed by the Byzantines, from heavy cataphracts to lighter and more mobile horse archers. Maurice emphasizes the importance of speed, maneuverability, and shock action in cavalry combat.

One of the most famous Byzantine cavalry tactics was the "**wedge formation**", in which a group of cavalrymen would form a wedge-shaped formation and charge into the enemy lines. This tactic was particularly effective against infantry formations, as it could break through their ranks and cause widespread disorder.

Siege Warfare

Siege warfare was an important aspect of Byzantine military operations, and Maurice devotes a significant portion of **On Tactics** to the subject. He describes in detail the various methods used by the Byzantines to besiege and capture enemy fortresses, including the use of siege towers, battering

rams, and siege engines. Maurice also emphasizes the importance of psychological warfare, arguing that a commander should use every means at his disposal to demoralize the enemy and induce them to surrender.

The Legacy of On Tactics

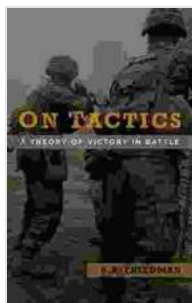
On Tactics has had a profound influence on military thought and practice for centuries. It was widely studied by Byzantine military leaders, and its principles were incorporated into Byzantine military manuals and training programs. The work was also translated into Arabic and Latin, and it became a source of inspiration for military strategists throughout the medieval and early modern periods.

Even today, **On Tactics** remains a valuable resource for military historians, strategists, and practitioners. It offers a unique insight into the principles of warfare and the art of achieving victory in battle, and its lessons continue to be relevant to modern military operations.

Emperor Maurice's **On Tactics** is a classic military treatise that offers a comprehensive and insightful guide to the principles of warfare and the art of achieving victory in battle. Drawing on his extensive military experience and a deep understanding of Roman and Greek military traditions, Maurice provides a detailed and systematic exposition of the tactics and strategies employed by the Byzantine army, one of the most formidable military forces of its time.

The enduring principles outlined in **On Tactics** continue to be relevant to military thought and practice today. Its emphasis on synergy, initiative, and surprise, as well as its detailed descriptions of infantry, cavalry, and siege

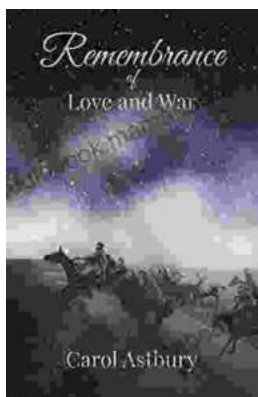
warfare tactics, make it a valuable resource for military historians, strategists, and practitioners alike.



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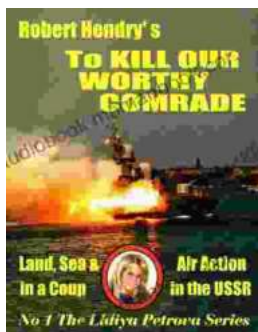
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