Almost all surviving examples of ancient military manuals in Greek are preserved today via six manuscript prototypes (here P, M, A, V, N-E, P-B). These codices were produced between c. 925 and c. 1040 in scriptoria in Constantinople, in five, and possibly all, cases at or in association with the imperial court.1

1 A brief chronological summary will assist in elucidating the tradition. The multi-period composite codex Parisinus suppl. gr. 607 or so-called Mynas codex (= P) contains a corpus of classical poliorcetic texts copied in the second quarter of the tenth century, and is thus the earliest witness to the genre. Although its Constantinopolitan origin cannot be doubted, the circumstances of its production remain uncertain. See Wescher (1867) xv–xxiv, xxxviii; Dain (1933) 19–20, Dain and de Foucault (1967) 383–381 (also 347–349 with further bibliography); Gatto (2010) 121–123; Németh (2011). A later dating accepted by Schindler (1973) 194–195 relies on a palaeographical assessment of a sample text by Rochefort (see infra n. 35). Mediceo-Laurentianus gr. LV-4 (= M), compiled c. 950, was almost certainly an officially sanctioned project of the palace scriptorium at Constantinople. As the unique witness to the complete text of Aineias’ Poliorketika, it will be discussed in detail below (pp. 302–310). It has been convincingly argued that Ambrosianus gr. 139 (B 119 sup.) (= A) also emanated from court circles c. 959 (see infra nn. 18–19). Three other closely related codices were produced in an unidentified monastic scriptorium in Constantinople: two, Vaticanus gr. 1164 (= V) and a codex now split and separately bound as Parisinus gr. 2442 and Barberinianus gr. 276 (II 97) (= P-B), were copied from a common hyparchetype c. 1020. A third codex, similarly now divided into Neapolitanus gr. 284 (111 c 26) and Scorialensis gr. Y-III-11 (281) (= N-E), dates to c. 1040. The relationship of N-E to V and P-B has been disputed, but the prevailing view of scholarship holds that N-E is a direct copy of V; owing to lacunae in V, however, N-E is often a primary witness (see infra n. 100). The existence of a fourth, lost manuscript of this family, apparently an eleventh-century sibling of V and P-B, is evidenced by the chance survival of two folios reused as endpapers in Parisinus Coislinianus 101, see Wescher (1867) xxviii, xxxviii; Dain (1946) 234–235; Gatto (2010) 107–108. In addition, there is evidence that at least one other manuscript containing classical poliorcetic texts survived into the late Byzantine period: extracts in fourteenth-century Vindobonensis phil. gr. 120 (olim 113)
They contain varying collections of Greek, Roman and Byzantine texts, which were broadly classified as works relating to tactics and generalship (taktika, strategika), siegecraft (poliorketika) or artillery (belopoiika), even if these labels are sometimes loosely applied and rarely exhibit precise equivalence to modern categorisations. In most of the manuscripts individual works are grouped into several corpora, which to some extent reflect contemporary notions of genre and/or periodization, although in certain cases the evidence suggests that two or more texts had been bound together and transmitted collectively from a much earlier date. Overall, the guiding principle of Byzantine editors appears to have been inclusiveness rather than the application of any obvious selective criteria.

The scholarly enterprise invested in assembling, editing and copying the military literature of antiquity followed an era traditionally characterised as the Byzantine ‘Dark Age’, now more narrowly dated from c. 640 to c. 780, during which there was a sharp decline in all aspects of book production. The causes and nature of this major cultural dislocation cannot be examined here, but a crucial factor was the contraction and evolution of the educated municipal élites of the Eastern Roman Empire, with concomitant changes to their traditional schooling, tastes and perspectives. This transformation was apparent in the lapse of certain categories of literature that were hitherto essential components of Greek literary culture, notably classicizing historiography, philosophy, philology, epigram and panegyric. This did not amount to a general cessation in the writing and copying of books; indeed other genres persisted and even flourished, including doctrinal and liturgical literature, homiletics, hagiography and

were copied from an unknown and now lost exemplar, a collateral descendant of the same tradition as p, see Wescher (1867) xxx–xxxii; Dain (1933) 19–21 (misdating Vindob. phil. gr. 120 to the sixteenth century); (1946–1947) 35; Gatto (2010) 111–112, 150–153 (repeating Dain’s dating error). The only classical military treatise to be transmitted independently of these six codices is Polyainos’ Strategemata (or Strategika), of which the unique prototype is Mediceo-Laurentianus gr. lvi-1, a composite codex of diverse content, dated to the late thirteenth/early fourteenth century; purchased in Crete around 1450, its original provenance is unknown. See Bandini (1764–1770 [1768]) 11 col. 290–294; Dain and de Foucault (1967) 389 (with older bibliography); Schindler (1973) 15–18. The most comprehensive overview of the manuscript evidence remains Dain and de Foucault (1967) 376–390, which assembles the older bibliography, although the analysis is in parts outdated and suffers from errors and inconsistencies arising from posthumous publication. Subsequent studies of individual works or codices offer supplements and correctives, see especially Mazzucchi (1978); Dennis (1981) 19–24, 28–42; Dagron and Mihăescu (1986) 13–25 (though the stemma of Dennis [1981] 33–36; [1985] 5–6 is preferred here); Haldon (1990) 38–39, 47–53; McGeer (1995a) 3–10, 81–86; Rance (2007a) 733–737; (forthcoming a); (forthcoming b).