Winfried Kumpitsch: "Adiuta! – Deus!" Die Christianisierung des römischen Heereskultes im 4.–6. Jahrhundert. Rahden/Westf.: Leidorf 2024 (Pharos 51). 399 p. € 59.80. ISBN: 978-3-86757-279-8.

As the largest imperial institution in terms of resource consumption and distribution of bodies across the Mediterranean, the armed forces were a potent representation of the imperial regime to audiences across and beyond the empire. The actions soldiers could, and did, perform naturally reflected back on the commander-in-chief, who was thus invested in ensuring his armed followers obeyed the imperial court's commands and behaved in a manner which agreed with communicated imperial ideologies. To this end, the religious beliefs of the troops were of paramount importance to late antique rulers, who from the fourth century increasingly sought to ensure that all imperial subjects, in particular direct representatives such as the civil and armed services, followed what the court identified as 'correct' Christian convictions. However, owing to the separation between emperors and most of their servicemen, especially those stationed far from imperial centres, soldiers were not always fully in-step with their leaders. For this reason, the growing pervasiveness of Christianity, the adaption or omission of traditional ritualised practices, and the inclusion of new religious customs in the imperial armed forces have all attracted significant attention over the past half century.[1]

It is to this scholarship that the monograph under review looks to contribute. Mostly focusing on the fourth to sixth centuries CE, Winfried Kumpitsch assembles considerable evidence for the beliefs and practices of imperial soldiers in this revision and expansion of his 2020 PhD thesis, completed between the Universität Graz and the Universität Erfurt. Following a brief foreword, introduction, and preliminary remarks, the book is divided into five chapters of unequal length, each subdivided around core themes, contexts, and sources. A synthesising conclusion, which essentially summa-

1 In particular: D. Woods: The Christianization of the Roman Army in the Fourth Century. PhD Diss. Belfast 1991; M. Whitby: *Deus nobiscum*: Christianity, Warfare, and Morale in Late Antiquity. In: M. Austin/J. Harries/C. Smith (eds.): Modus Operandi. Essays in Honour of Geoffrey Rickman. London 1998 (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies. Supplements 71), pp. 191–208; K. L. Noethlichs: Die Christianisierung des Krieges vom spätantiken bis zum frühmittelalterlichen und mittelbyzantinischen Reich. In: JbAC 44, 2001, pp. 5–22.

rises the preceding chapters (pp. 323–329) and a bibliography subdivided according to source type (pp. 330–399) close the discussion. As will become evident throughout this review, there are considerable merits to Kumpitsch's exploration but there are also a few puzzling decisions which impede full appreciation of the material brought to the discussion. One such decision is the omission of an index, perhaps by the choice of the publisher rather than that of the author. Indices would have been of enormous help for readers seeking to draw thematic strands across all chapters, and, perhaps more importantly, locate individual items of evidence amidst the large corpus of material examined. Nevertheless, it becomes clear from the outset that Kumpitsch has assembled a significant range of sources in one place and has thus done military historians a great service.

The introduction (pp. 9–14) wastes no time in noting that the study of late-antique military cultic practices is somewhat inhibited by the nature of our sources, in particular the historical accounts which provide most of our evidence. Owing to constraints of genre, the interests of their audiences, and their limited personal knowledge of quotidian military life, ancient authors rarely give us detailed accounts of these rituals. There are exceptions, such as the descriptions of ritualised destruction of enemy weapons after victories.[2] Nonetheless, anyone who has attempted to piece together the development of any ancient ritual, let alone one limited to a single context, will be all too familiar with this problem. Here Kumpitsch raises another issue: in both ancient evidence and modern scholarship, there is sometimes a tendency to conflate or confuse military and non-military practices. While the author does not really substantiate his claims about this tendency and solely bases this argument on the *Feriale Duranum*, the general point is sound. To give just one late-antique example – and one not discussed by the author – Ammianus Marcellinus describes a ceremony in which Julian's followers offered allegiance to him at Castrum Rauracense (modern-day Kaiseraugst) in 361. Despite Ammianus stating that the soldiers swore the loyalty oath to their leader as was typical military practice, Julian's civilian advisors "strengthened their loyalty with a similar ritual" (*fidem simili religione firma-*

2 I. Östenberg: Staging the World. Spoils, Captives, and Representations in the Roman Triumphal Procession. Oxford/New York 2009 (Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation), pp. 24–26; J. Rich: Roman Rituals of War. In: B. Campbell/L. A. Tritle (eds.): The Oxford Handbook of Warfare in the Classical World. Oxford/New York 2013 (Oxford Handbooks), pp. 542–568, at p. 551.

runt).[3] As I have noted elsewhere, scholars often ignore Ammianus' pointed distinction between these two sets of promise.[4] While it is significant that the late-antique historian himself makes this distinction between typical military practice and a comparable yet different civilian ritual, Ammianus, with his first-hand experiences of military life, is hardly representative of how other ancient authors viewed similar instances. It is a shame Kumpitsch did not develop these thoughts further, nor bring in additional evidence to support his interesting claim.

To deal with the problems he adduces, Kumpitsch emphasises his aim of examining the impact of Christianity on Roman military cultic practices through the lens of Resonance Theory. To support this approach, the author justifies the monograph's temporal boundaries – the reigns of Constantine I in the fourth century and Heraclius in the seventh – as chosen owing to the changing nature of rituals during these periods. Despite the stated aim of holistically comparing literary sources with archaeological, epigraphical, and papyrological items, the discussion is in large part centred around consideration of historical and hagiographical accounts. As many rituals did not leave behind or require physical components, many such practices are only known to us through literary narratives. Kumpitsch's overall approach is unsurprising.

The subsequent preliminary remarks (pp. 15–23) are essentially an addendum to the introduction and define the two core definitions of the book. The first is the author's preference for "army cult" ("Heereskult") instead of the more traditional 'army religion' ('Heeresreligion'), owing to the latter's anachronistic meaning and the diversity of practices the former covers. Once more, the general point is sound but needs further substantiation. The sources drawn on to support this assertion are temporally quite distant: Kumpitsch begins with Cicero then jumps to Lactantius and Augustine, and then to the seventeenth century to point out that religion in the modern sense is not fully co-extensive with *religio*. As there is no real consideration of how these concepts developed until the discussion reaches the seven-

3 Amm. 21.5.10.

4 M. Wuk: *Religionibus firmis iuramenta constricta*? Ammianus and the *sacramentum militiae*. In: M. Hanaghan/D. Woods (eds.): Ammianus Marcellinus from Soldier to Author. Leiden/Boston 2022 (Historiography of Rome and Its Empire 16), pp. 170–203, at pp. 174, 196.

teenth century, this section risks suggesting that there was no diversity in perceptions and interpretations of "religion" throughout antiquity. Of course, as Kumpitsch acknowledges, the monograph's constraints prevent a comprehensive exploration. Nevertheless, some comment that the thoughts of Cicero, Lactantius, and Augustine were not necessarily representative of all individuals in antiquity at the least is needed to nuance the picture. Kumpitsch does, however, assert that military contexts harboured numerous diverse practices and beliefs, and that we need to approach military religious praxis not as a codified, systematic belief system so much as a patchwork of cultic activities. In this respect, the author is in step with current scholarly thought.

Kumpitsch then moves onto Resonance Theory (pp. 21–23) and its utility for studying Roman military rituals. In short, the theory is a sociological consideration of social relations as mutual exchanges, whereby a person interacting with some aspect of society impacts on that aspect of society, which in turn then impacts on the same person. Kumpitsch persuasively identifies why this approach is particularly suited to his subject. This mutual impact was effectively the basis of both military (self-)identifications, through which soldiers approached and located their places in the wider world, and also rituals, intended as they were to change some element of the participants' lives. As such, Resonance Theory can provide a way of considering why soldiers and commanders continued to structure their existences around cultic practices, even when these practices were condemned as inappropriate in subsequent centuries. Despite the brief acknowledgement that we cannot know the internalised perspectives of ancient servicemen and thus we are missing one component of the theory's framework, Kumpitsch does a good job of justifying the application of this modern sociological approach to the pre-modern evidence. It is a shame that the theory is not applied more consistently throughout the monograph. While the book's main body briefly gestures towards the approach once or twice, it is not until the conclusion (pp. 327–328) that the evidence and arguments are overtly filtered through the lens of Resonance Theory. Most of the discussion therefore does not make clear which conclusions have arisen directly from this sociological approach.

The first chapter ("Quellenlage und Forschungsüberblick", pp. 24–38) offers a review of the ancient evidence and modern scholarship. Kumpitsch uncontroversially notes that the 'decline of the epigraphic habit' means we

have comparatively few late-antique military inscriptions, and that the remains of cult buildings often provide no indication of their precise use. There are also few surprises in the literary sources emphasised as particularly important, with the mainstays of Ammianus, the fifth-century church historians, Procopius, Agathias, Theophylact, and the *Strategikon* all being mentioned. Comparatively irregular is the inclusion of Corippus, whose epic poem, the *Iohannis*, includes various descriptions of battle and warfare. The subsequent review of scholarship is mostly up-to-date, with some notable, largely Anglophone exceptions. These exceptions would have greatly benefitted the author's approach if consulted. For instance, Kumpitsch's use of Corippus as a historical source would have been helped by considering Andy Merrills' recent analysis of the *Iohannis*' historical value, although perhaps Merrills' work was published too recently for this monograph to take into account.[5] On a related note, Kumpitsch overstates the degree to which religious and ritual changes in the late-antique armed forces have been overlooked. The author claims that most scholars have stopped their analyses at the third century, but then cites works of Roger Tomlin and Doug Lee which have extended the discussion up to the fourth and sixth centuries respectively.[6] Kumpitsch acknowledges that this state of affairs has changed over the past few decades, but then neglects to mention several important studies which devote considerable space to the impact of Late Antiquity's circumstances on military ritual practices.[7]

The second chapter ("Der Kult im römischen Heer", pp. 39–97) is pitched as a summary of military cultic practices prior to the fourth century, but is predominately another scholarship review, without much direct engagement

5 A. Merrills: War, Rebellion and Epic in Byzantine North Africa. A Historical Study of Corippus' *Iohannis*. Cambridge 2023.

6 R. Tomlin: Christianity and the Late Roman Army. In: S. N. C. Lieu/D. Montserrat (eds.): Constantine. History, Historiography and Legend. London/New York 1998, pp. 21–51; A. D. Lee: War in Late Antiquity. A Social History. Malden, MA/Oxford 2007 (Ancient World at War), pp. 178–188.

7 Most importantly: M. Hebblewhite: The Emperor and the Army in the Later Roman Empire, AD 235–395. London/New York 2017, pp. 140–179; M. Emion: Les *protectores Augusti* (IIIe–VIe s. p. C.). 2 vols. Bordeaux 2023 (Scripta Antiqua 167). However, Kumpitsch does cite one of Hebblewhite's other publications, which is an earlier version of one section of his book: M. Hebblewhite: *Sacramentum Militiae*: Empty Words in an Age of Chaos. In: J. Armstrong (ed.): Circum Mare. Themes in Ancient Warfare. With a Foreword by L. L. Brice. Leiden/Boston 2016 (Mnemosyne. Supplements 388), pp. 120–142.

with the ancient evidence under discussion. Kumpitsch does distinguish between categories of religious praxis, in a sense providing a catalogue of the rites associated with Roman military service. The author devotes space to parades and processions, spoken rituals (oaths, prayers, and vows), sacrifices, and dedicatory inscriptions. A slight diversion on sacrifices in Christian thought is included ["Exkurs: Das Opfer in der (christlichen) Spätantike", pp. 44–52, but the focus is broadened beyond military contexts to think about wider trends. Here, Kumpitsch relies on the traditional presumption that blood sacrifices declined in social relevance predominately owing to Christian sensibilities, thus missing the equally important trend of some non-Christians preferring spiritual and less tangible sacrifices to those of victims.[8]

The discussion then moves onto "Spezielle Kulte" (pp. 54–77), effectively the major themes around which these rites were structured. Again, there are no surprises here: the major focuses are the standards, emperors, and circumstances relating to war, victory, or disaster. Kumpitsch's separation of these themes makes sense but risks imposing artificial divisions which did not exist in reality. For instance, as the author himself notes, imperial images often bedecked unit standards, while acclamations intended to summon divine support for future victories could also feature emperors. Some comment that these organising principles were not mutually exclusive would have helped to tie together these themes and demonstrate their interconnection in the frameworks of military cultic praxes.

The next section introduces one of the book's most important running arguments. Kumpitsch examines the roles played by officers in cultic behaviours, engaging closely with the primary evidence ("Die Rolle der Offiziere im Kult", pp. 78–81).[9] Given that military rituals relied on commanders acting as officiants, the soldiers who followed these authorities naturally fell into the customs fed down to them by the chain of command and thus came to understand these practices as integral components of military service. There is then a strangely placed interlude to discuss Christians serving in the pre-Constantinian armed forces ("Christen im römischen Heer", pp. 81–97).

8 Once more, an important item of scholarship would have helped here: S. Bradbury: Julian's Pagan Revival and the Decline of Blood Sacrifice. In: Phoenix 49, 1995, pp. 331–356.

9 The author has already published some of these points elsewhere: W. Kumpitsch: The Late Antique Roman Officer as a Religious Functionary in the Christian Roman Army. In: Nuova Antologia Militare 3 fasc. 10, 2022, pp. 449–470.

The conclusion is very much in agreement with the *communis opinio*: Christians were not always opposed to military service, with many seeing no problem in sacrificing and performing other activities theologians thought were unacceptable, and thus often co-existed with non-Christians in military contexts without issue. We then return to the question of officiants, in the form of ritual specialists in the armed forces ("Kultische Spezialisten im Heer", pp. 85–97). This section would have worked much better in tandem with that on officers' involvement in cultic practices, not least as the evidence for the widespread existence of stand-alone military priests prior to the fourth century is uncertain. In fact, it is unclear how necessary dedicated religious specialists actually were at this point, given that commanders were on hand to lead these rites.

Apart from the section on Christian thought regarding sacrifices, this chapter does not really offer any sense of development, with the result that these rituals seem static and monolithic across time and space. Military contexts certainly did have a sense of practical conservatism, where some things could be preserved owing to a resistance to change, but rituals existed in a state of flux, changing according to contact with developing trends and local preferences. Besides the decreasing popularity of blood sacrifice in both Christian and non-Christian thought mentioned above, the imperial cult also saw important changes, with sensibilities evolving from Augustus' reign to, for instance, that of Aurelian, who issued coins openly advertising his self-representation as *deus et dominus natus* ("born god and master").[10] While Kumpitsch does acknowledge differences in eastern and western practices, it would have been helpful to have a more nuanced consideration of how changing norms impacted on the military rituals examined. Given the later discussion of cult practices, the sections on the specific processes and themes identified in this chapter deserve further development. For instance, I expected to see some (even brief) mention of Mithraism here, as well as a larger discussion of the cult actions performed before the standards beyond the customary sacrifices and prayers.[11]

10 A good example is RIC 305, discussed in J. Wienand: Deo et domino: Aurelian, Serdica und die Restitutio orbis. In: JNG 65, 2015, pp. 63–99.

11 In particular, the reverential crowning of standards with roses, which the *Feriale Duranum* suggests occurred twice annually via a distinct ceremony: *P.Dura* 54, col. 2, lines 8, 14; A. S. Hoey: *Rosaliae Signorum*. In: HThR 30, 1937, pp. 15–35.

Taken together, the introduction through to the second chapter are essentially the contextual background to the monograph's focus. The third chapter ("Heereskultreform", pp. 98–135) is centred on the reign of Constantine I and, as is indicated by its title, the changes in military cultic praxes in this period. Kumpitsch begins by reviewing the Constantinian evidence for religious changes in the armed forces ("Heereskultreform Konstantins", pp. 98–124). While not solely focused on military contexts, the author explains that this broader focus reflects the general difficulty of separating Constantine's efforts to change military practice from his wider religious policies. Thence follows an extended discussion about Constantine's Christian convictions, his conversion, and how both impacted on the famously misnamed Edict of Milan in 313 and imperial efforts to introduce Christian elements into military life. After summarising and challenging traditional interpretations, Kumpitsch suggests that Constantine was not seeking to prioritise Christian belief in the armed forces so much as offer toleration of all. While this argument has been made before, the author does nuance his conclusions by suggesting that the emperor was seeking a return to the co-existence of religious beliefs present in military contexts prior to the issuing of Diocletian's anti-Christian edicts.

The discussion progresses onto the imperial cult, albeit again not focused solely on armed service ("Der Kaiserkult", pp. 124–130). As above, the main point – the imperial cult offered a form of middle ground, through which Christians could participate in non-Christian activities by interpreting the latter via Christian frames of reference – is important, if not entirely novel. Immediately following on the heels of this section is a crucial discussion of the roles played by officers in the diffusion of Christian ideas ("Die Rolle der Offiziere bei der Kultreform", pp. 130–135). Tying into the earlier section on the involvement of commanders in cultic rituals, here Kumpitsch emphasises that rituals only changed through the willing compliance of military leaders, whom rank-and-file soldiers would obey in the hope of boosting unit camaraderie and their chances of promotion. This argument is convincing and points towards the fundamental ritual structures of military service not changing themselves, but instead facilitating the occurrence of changes in practice. While Kumpitsch acknowledges that these efforts represent only 'top-down' aspirations and so do not accurately reflect circumstances across the entire empire, further consideration of whether these changes could even take place universally within Constantine's reign would

have been war-ranted.[12] As things stand, the monograph takes the early fourth century as the definitive turning point, after which the pervasiveness of Christianity in military ritual customs increased dramatically.

The subsequent effects of Constantine's measures are the subject of the fourth chapter ("Der Kult im Heer im 4.–6. Jahrhundert", pp. 136–257), which tackles cult practices from the fourth to sixth centuries. Kumptisch begins by considering the impact of structural reforms on the armed forces, in particular the greater recruitment of northern European peoples and the often-debated influence of so-called "barbarisation" ("Strukturreformen und die sogenannte 'Barbarisierung' des Heeres", pp. 137–144). Issues of negative conduct and perceptions of cultural superiority are considered, as well as the different customs and beliefs of those being recruited, although none of these circumstances are consistently or systematically used to think about changes in cultic practice. Kumpitsch then considers the short-lived reign of Julian. Kumpitsch (especially on p. 153) takes the traditional view by suggesting that Julian's reign was simply too short to have any real effect on the soldiers and to turn the tide away from the increasingly widespread adoption of Christianity. However, the evidence presented also suggests a general military apathy for the precise religious changes of the fourth century: the soldiers switched to non-Christian expressions of belief under the emperor and then switched again to Christian practices on his death without any apparent issue. Perhaps this apathy could relate to perceptions of military cult acts as changeable in orientation, if not neutral ground entirely. It is a shame that this thread is not considered further here.

The chapter ("Entwicklung des Heereskultes", pp. 145–200) proceeds with sections which deliberately mirror those in earlier chapters to provide some sense of development in the themes around which rituals were structured. After a brief exploration of the imperial cult in this period, Kumpitsch devotes considerable space to the rituals used prior to, during, and after wars and battles. We are shown that many rituals, such as the summoning of divine aid and the consultation of omens, continued to be used, albeit with new Christian points of reference, alongside the gradual introduction of new

12 See, for instance, Eusebius' suggestion that Constantine made a limited number of soldiers communally offer a prayer every Sunday, but seemingly only those stationed in Constantinople: vita Const. 4.19–20, cited and briefly discussed without reference to the relatively small group of soldiers involved by Kumpitsch on p. 134.

rites, such as the parading of Gospel books and the public recitation of prayers. The inclusion of Corippus alongside the other expected sources is welcomed, as is the collection of this material in one place. Overall, there is not much with which to disagree in these sections, and some arguments are very interesting, such as in the suggestion (on p. 197) that non-imperial celebration rites could have developed from local practices, rather than solely through parallels with imperial practice. However, as these points are not fully substantiated or grounded in the evidence, it is hard to judge the plausibility of these suggestions.

The next two sections are this chapter's most important and pick up the theme of religious officials from earlier in the monograph. While officers ("Die Rolle der Offiziere nach der Heereskultreform", pp. 200–208) continued to play leading roles in many rituals, Christian clergymen ("Christliche Kleriker im Heer", pp. 208–250) were often required to perform specialised tasks, in particular those relating to liturgy and blessings. We then are confronted with the long-standing debate of whether Christian priests typically accompanied armies on campaign from the fourth century. Kumpitsch rightly suggests that the earliest plausible date for the more common utilisation of military chaplains is the late fourth/early fifth century, with considerably more reliable evidence coming from the sixth century. Although the digression on the development of the presbyterate is not really needed here, the collation of the evidence is very helpful, not least as the well-known accounts of historical writers such as Sozomen are put in dialogue with lesser-known papyrus documents and inscriptions. The discussion on the integration of clergy within units, not just as contractors approached when required but as fundamental elements of detachments and armies, is excellent, not least for its consideration of how this integration affected issues of ecclesiastical stability and episcopal authority. If anything, I wish this section was longer, as some issues and sources raise further questions. For instance, one of the documents quoted in full (*CPR* 24.15) lists the attendees of a sixth-century *dux Thebaidis*, seemingly in a report to a higher authority. While not complete, most of those mentioned are either junior officers who form the retinues of important generals (*domestici* and *protectores*, *draconarii, circitores*), or priests. Besides indicating the value of clergymen to senior commanders, this report could suggest that high-ranking military officials were expected to retain churchmen within their official retinues, whether by drawing on local ecclesiastical networks or by bringing in priests they already knew. Although

Kumpitsch comes back to the document (pp. 243–244), much more could have been done with this interesting item. The same is true of much of the evidence discussed in this section.

After a brief diversion on "Arian" soldiers ("Situation der arianischen Soldaten", pp. 253–257) – and skipping over the issues of the descriptor "Arian" – we arrive at the final chapter, on military martyr cults ("Die Soldatenmärtyrer als Adressaten der Verehrung", pp. 258–322). Kumpitsch starts by summarising at surprising length the development of early Christian martyr cults as a phenomenon, on which there is significant scholarship, much of which is cited here ("Christlicher Märtyrerkult", pp. 260–270). Following a clarification of what made a martyr specifically a "soldier martyr" and the difficult of the pertinent narratives, which were often revised and supplemented long after the protagonists had deceased, the author examines the evidence for the cults of the usual suspects ("Ausgewählte Soldatenmärtyrer", pp. 271–301): namely, Andrew the Commander, Demetrius of Thessalonica/Sirmium, George of Lydda, Martin of Tours, the Theban Legion, Mercurius, Sergius and Bacchus, Theodore the Recruit, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste. From this foundation, Kumpitsch explores the presence of these 'military saints' in military life, as actors in warfare, personal protectors, guardians of beleaguered cities and groups, and defenders of Christian society ("Die Soldatenmärtyrer in kriegerischen Kontexten", pp. 302–319).[13] Drawing these strands together ("Auswertung", pp. 319–322), the author acknowledges that this examination can only provide "ein[en] begrenzte[n] Einblick" (p. 320). While this is true, the conclusions that follow – despite differences between eastern and western cults, soldiers thought of "military martyrs" at times of heightened stress, owing not to 'top-down' emphases of their cults but rather through personal devotion and association – are important, if unsurprising. Again, more could have been done with some of the interesting materials and conclusions brought to the discussion here.

As I hope I have made clear, there is much to appreciate in this monograph. Barring a few exceptions,[14] the arguments made are largely sound. Few will

13 But note that many city-protector saints had no military associations: (most recently) B. Ward-Perkins: From Soldier Martyr to Warrior Saint: The Evidence to AD 700. In: P. Booth/Mary Whitby (eds.): Mélanges James Howard-Johnston. Paris 2022 (Travaux et Mémoires 26), pp. 491–516.

14 See, for instance, p. 322: "Es zeigt sich also, dass bereits in der späten Antike die Grundlagen für die Formierung der Soldatenheiligen gegeben war und sie nicht erst

disagree with either the general conclusions or the more specific minutiae of most of Kumpitsch's points, which are in keeping with scholarly *communes opiniones*. The discussion of religious specialists in military service are the highlight and will feed into further explorations of how clergymen and officers interacted in the sphere of cultic activities. The author has clearly done a lot of work to seek out evidence beyond the historiographical staples, especially inscriptions, some of which may be less known to military historians. The final chapter also makes heavy use of the excellent "Cult of Saints Database"[15] and thereby indicates the untapped utility of this Open Access resource for studying military cultic praxes.

At the same time, more could have been done with some of the sources examined. For instance, further attention could have been paid to the role of poetic and classicising tropes in describing certain practices, cultists, and officiants, and what these tropes mean for the pictures drawn for us by authors like Corippus and Procopius. I would also have liked to have seen more overt links drawn between the expressions of belief the monograph examines with military interventions in religious conflicts outside specifically military contexts. There has been significant scholarship on these interventions, especially concerning the deployment of units to regulate conciliar discussions, install imperially favoured religious authorities, and control or shut down areas in which religious non-conformists gathered.[16] There are further missed opportunities in this line of inquiry, such as the distinction between the beliefs and behaviours of 'rank-and-file' soldiers and more senior com-

ein Produkt des postherakleianischen-byzantinischen Reiches waren." This argument is effectively a 'straw man': few scholars would date the formation of cults around military saints to the seventh century, given how much earlier evidence there is for the veneration of these figures prior to Heraclius' reign. Kumpitsch presumably means to call back to the monograph's titular evocation of *Strategikon* 12.B.16.39–42 and Heraclius' silver hexagram, both of which gesture towards military chants for God's help: D. C. Whalin: A Note Reconsidering the Message of Heraclius' Silver Hexagram, circa AD 615. In: ByzZ 112, 2019, pp. 221–232.

15 http://csla.history.ox.ac.uk/search.php.

16 G. Greatrex: Moines, militaires et défense de la frontière orientale au VIe s. In: A. S. Lewin/P. Pellegrini (eds.): The Late Roman Army in the Near East from Diocletian to the Arab Conquest. Proceedings of a Colloquium held at Potenza, Acerenza and Matera, Italy (May 2005). 2007 Oxford (BAR International Series 1717), pp. 285–297; Lee (note 6 above), pp. 193–205; S. Janniard: Les empereurs chrétiens et l'usage de l'armée pour réprimer les déviances religieuses aux IVe et Ve siècles. In: T&MByz 22, 2018, pp. 399–413.

manders, who were much more visible and so more subject to imperial pressure to conform to accepted religious customs. Equally, generals and other military leaders were more influential than those lower down the chain of command, and so could have greater freedom of expression than most other servicemen.[17] It would have been interesting to explore to what extent these differences impacted on martyr narratives, many of which place officers of various ranks in key roles as protagonists and antagonists, and how these effects may have in turn impacted on perceptions of Christian military service held by military and non-military individuals.

Somewhat related to this missed opportunity is the treatment of the armed forces as a monolithic, singular institution. Despite repeatedly noting the aim of demonstrating developments in practice alongside brief gestures towards differences in martyr cults between the eastern and western Mediterranean, Kumpitsch represents 'the army' as essentially the same in all places. This issue is all too common in traditional studies of imperial soldiers.[18] While the surviving evidence rarely allows us to determine which customs and beliefs were unique to specific units, a greater sensitivity to the diversity of cultural prisms through which military beliefs were filtered would have been beneficial. At least one effort to break through the monolithic image of 'the army' could have been made possible by exploring doctrinal divisions more thoroughly. In fact, besides the brief excursus on Homoian soldiers, conflicts over 'orthodoxy' hardly feature in the monograph. Again, considering the differences across the spectrum of personnel between 'rank-and-file' soldiers and *magistri militum* could have helped: just how much did sectarian debates play into military understandings of Christianity? Some generals, such as Vitalian, certainly cared enough about doctrinal issues to rebel against their rulers in furtherance of their religious convictions, but what about 'ordinary' soldiers?[19] How did pre-existing sectarian sympathies or those gained later

17 Compare Lib. or. 30.53, who claims that Theodosius permitted certain high-ranking officials to swear non-Christian oaths. Libanius does not specify whether these officials, who are identified only as being given office and the honour of eating with the emperor (ἀρχὰς ἔδωκας καὶ συσσίτους ἐποιήσω), were military personnel or civil servants.

18 On this issue, see the comments of P. Rance: The Role of the Military in the Late Roman Empire. In: CR 68, 2018, pp. 523–526, at pp. 525–526.

19 H. Elton: Fighting for Chalcedon: Vitalian's Rebellion against Anastasius. In: J. H. F. Dijkstra/C. R. Raschle (eds.): Religious Violence in the Ancient World. From Classical Athens to Late Antiquity. Cambridge/New York 2020, pp. 367–388.

when stationed in strongholds of particular doctrines impact on the personnel ordered to intervene in local religious disturbances? Or did most soldiers instead view the armed forces' religious orientation as generally 'Christian', with sharp doctrinal lines deliberately or circumstantially blurred? Exploring such questions can help to uncover underappreciated diversities of experience.

Alongside these larger issues are a few minor problems. While Kumpitsch has read quite widely, perhaps more so than might reasonably be expected for a monograph of this length, several items of scholarship have been overlooked. I have highlighted some of these throughout the review, but a case in point is the surprising omission of two key works by Geoffrey Greatrex, on Homoian soldiers serving the Chalcedonian emperor, Justin I, and senior commanders' involvement in doctrinal affairs.[20] While no monograph could, or should, claim to be truly comprehensive in citation of prior scholarship, many of these instances could have dramatically strengthened the arguments made or allowed Kumpitsch room to develop other ideas further. Additionally, significant space is taken up by summaries and extensive quotations of prior scholarship. These sections, which are staples of PhD theses, add little to the overall analysis and could easily have been omitted, once more leaving room to expand the arguments made to a fuller extent.

Despite these reservations, it is worth reiterating that this book is a valuable resource for the study of religious customs and beliefs expressed by members of the late antique armed forces. Military historians will get the most out of this monograph, which can function as an up-to-date starting point for further explorations into the ritualised frameworks of military life under which most soldiers served between the fourth and sixth centuries CE. Those wanting to undertake research into the growing presence of Christianity in military life over this period will thus have reason to be thankful for Kumpitsch's guide to the surviving evidence.

20 G. Greatrex: Justin I and the Arians. In: Studia Patristica 34, 2001, pp. 72–81; id.: Moines (note 16 above).

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Empfohlene Zitierweise

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