

**The first "culture turn":  
ethnographic knowledge in the Romano-Byzantine military tradition.**

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**Abstract:**

The use of ethnographic knowledge by military organizations has been a topic of intense interest and debate in recent years. Despite extensive discussion of its use in World War II, Vietnam and, to a lesser degree, during the inter-war period, there has been little examination of the deep historical roots of the practice inside Western culture. The purpose of this paper is to provide an initial survey of the development and use of ethnographic knowledge as an applied tool within the political-military practice of Greece, Rome and the Byzantine Empire. The paper tracks the development of "ethnography" from the early (7th century bce) logographers through to its formalization as a practice, its application in the military and political world of the Roman empire, to its final formalization as a standard component of professional military education in the Byzantine Empire. This development of ethnography and its integration into formal military education is situated within a broad evolutionary framework that aims to explain why "culture turns" happen.

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## 1 Introduction

These days, it is fashionable to speak of the “culture turn” in professional military education; something that we recognize as “new” and “exciting” while, at the same time, a re-establishment of the historical connections between Anthropology on the one hand and the military on the other. As Montgomery McFate noted in 2005,<sup>2</sup>

Something mysterious is going on inside the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD). Over the past 2 years, senior leaders have been calling for something unusual and unexpected-cultural knowledge of the adversary.

The article goes on to describe the current perceptions of the “curious” relationship between Anthropology and Counterinsurgency, and notes that

Why has cultural knowledge suddenly become such an imperative? Primarily because traditional methods of warfighting have proven inadequate in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But her narrative, while it does match general understandings of the relationship in current North American discourse, suffers from the same problem as that general understanding: it is missing our earliest experience of integrating ethnographic knowledge with military education. This is not meant as a slur on McFate's work in the area by any means. After all, how many Anthropologists read Herodotus, Thucydides, Tacitus and Arrian, let alone the *Strategikon* of Maurice or the *Periplus* of the Erythraean Sea? It is not part of our universe of discourse. But, if we wish to examine the relationship between ethnographic knowledge and military education, it should be. These works, and many others, deal with the earliest Western attempts to integrate ethnographic knowledge into professional military education and, if we wish to examine the current “culture turn”, it would be well for us to look at the first one.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 Situating Professional Military Knowledge

scientia potentia est  
Francis Bacon<sup>4</sup>

Plausibility is more important than belief. Plausibility depends on enough people

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2 Montgomery McFate, *Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship*, *Military Review*, March-April 2005, available at [http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume3/august\\_2005/7\\_05\\_2.html](http://www.army.mil/professionalwriting/volumes/volume3/august_2005/7_05_2.html) [dl Oct. 31, 2008]

3 It is important to note that this is the first Western attempt to integrate ethnography and military education. There is a Chinese work from the 7<sup>th</sup> century bce called the *Book of Barbarians* [or *Barbarian Kingdoms*] that apparently is a work of military ethnography. According to sources inside Chinese academia, the book currently exists only in 5 manuscripts in a rather obscure dialect, none of which have been translated into modern Chinese let alone English.

4 “Knowledge is power”, from *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597)

wanting to believe in the theory, and this depends on enough people being committed to whatever moral principle it protects.

Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky<sup>5</sup>

Knowledge may be power, as Bacon opined, but it is also potentially dangerous to individuals, institutions and societies. Every society and every culture has ways and means of containing such “dangerous knowledge” whether that is by professionalizing it, stigmatizing it or outlawing it. But such dangerous knowledge is often crucial to meeting the immediate needs of individuals and institutions within cultures and societies. Consider the example of “medicine” - if you know how to cure, you also know how to kill, but “curing” is a constant requirement of the human species.<sup>6</sup>

I would suggest that ethnographic knowledge is, by its very nature, potentially “dangerous knowledge”. Its danger comes from the observation that when people know that other forms of culture and society are not only possible but workable and, in some cases, “better” (i.e. more comfortable) than their own, they will start to question why this should be so. And no culture or society can easily permit its axiomatic assumptions – its “ground of being” - to be openly questioned and compared without having that process increase the potential for social disorder.

Let us first of all start with a simple definition of knowledge based on Bateson’s definition of information as “a difference that makes a difference”. If that is the case, then “knowledge” may be defined, loosely, as the definition, processing and subsequent prescribed actions based upon information. In effect, “knowledge” tells you how to parse out sensory data, how to process it and what to do with the result.

In general, the social organization of “knowledge” tends to be based on two structural / perceptual questions, which give rise to the answer to the third question:

1. What amount of risk/danger is ascribed to the holding and/or practice of that knowledge?
2. What is the risk/danger to society of having the knowledge wide or narrowly spread?
3. Who has the social right or obligation (or both) to know and/or practice a given cultural taxon of knowledge?<sup>7</sup>

The final question needs further examination. The first part is the distinction between “the

5 Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture*, University of California Press, 1982, page 38

6 This parallels Durkheim’s argument in “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life” (George Allen & Unwin, 1964) pp. 37-38; “dangerous knowledge” is inherently “sacred” rather than “profane”, and its sacrality arises from its nature as “dangerous”.

7 This model derives from Mary Douglas “How Institutions Think” (Syracuse University Press, 1986) and Andrew Abbott “The System of the Professions” (University of Chicago Press, 1988) placed within the larger theoretical framework of Bronislaw Malinowski (cf “A Scientific Theory of Culture”, Oxford University Press, 1960[1944]); see Marc W.D. Tyrrell “At the Cusp of the Information Age” (unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Carleton University, 2000).

social right or obligation” to knowledge. As an example, driving is a skill (knowledge) but the social right to practice it is dependent on holding a drivers licence in most places.

In most cultures, the social right and obligation to hold and/or practice a particular taxon of knowledge is usually granted, or restricted, based on an ascribed attribute such as age, gender, class (or caste), “race” (in a minority of cultures), etc. It is only with the relatively recent rise of “modernity” that we find these ascribed attributes being (partially) replaced with educational credentials - a bureaucratization of knowledge rights as it were. Despite this partial replacement, there are still ascribed expectations operating in all cultures, and we still see restrictions on the holding / practice of knowledge based on them.

These restrictions / expectations are often based around current answers to the second question “What is the risk to society of having the knowledge wide or narrowly spread”. In many cases, the actual risk is only loosely associated with the rhetorical risk (i.e. the dominant socio-cultural perception of the risk). Sticking with the driving example for now, consider the social cost of driving - estimated at 62.7 billion dollars annually in Canada based on 2004 data - and yet driving is still considered as “normal”.<sup>8</sup>

Returning to the first question - “What amount of risk is ascribed to the holding and/or practice of that knowledge” - we do find certain commonalities across cultures. Anything to do with “religion”, loosely construed, tends to be seen as “high risk” (although there are exceptions). Health, is almost always a high risk area, as are the primary foci of the cultural socio-economic system (e.g. hunting, farming, ship navigation, computer security, etc - the socio-economic “critical areas”). And, of course, warfare in any form is always “high risk”.

Taxons of knowledge that are categorized as “high risk” tend to be formalized by a culture; surrounded by social conventions, rules, obligations, etc. In many cases, there may also be a restricted component in both knowledge and the right to practice that knowledge. For example, basic sanitary practices are a part of “health” in the Western taxonomy of knowledge, but surgery is a restricted taxon as is the prescription of “drugs” (but not many “supplements” or herbs).

There are many explanations for why taxons of knowledge become restricted, but one of the effects of such restrictions is to shift the balance of social power within a culture. I would suggest that, following Andrew Abbott<sup>9</sup>, taxons of restricted knowledge, and especially “new” knowledge, are formalized and linguistically differentiated from their more commonplace relatives, in such a manner that entry into the social right to practice is restricted. Part of this formalization process involves the creation of a distinct definition of “us” (practitioners) vs. “them” (non-practitioners) that is manifested, in part, by creating a specialized “language”. Another part of the formalization process, after a separation into “us”

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8 On the social costs of driving, see “Analysis and Estimation of the Social Cost of Motor Vehicle Collisions in Ontario (2007 Report), Transport Canada available at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety/tp/tp14800/menu.htm>. Joel Best has argued that the social construction of knowledge or action is almost exclusively constructed via social rhetoric. See Rhetoric in Claims-Making, *Social Problems*, 34(2), 101-121, 1987

9 Andrew Abbott, “The System of Professions”, *op. cit.*

and “them” has been created, is a process of maintaining the perception of the area as both “high risk” and, also, something that only “we” can do (the social restriction on practice).

Now, going back for a second, let me note that this is how groups evolve / emerge around “new” taxons of knowledge. In the sociology literature, this is called the process of professionalization. The maintenance of a taxon of knowledge as a profession and, hence, of restricted practice and social power, is a different matter. As I noted earlier, this maintenance requires a continuing perception of the taxon as being “high risk” and, also, that the ability to use the area can only be done by those who are members of the group.

But the ability to use knowledge is different from the right to practice knowledge; a point that is crucial to the professions. The distinction relies on the media of storage and communication in which the knowledge is “held”, and the general accessibility of that “knowledge”. Or, put simply, how easy is it to get the knowledge, learn it and use it? The more that knowledge is “professionalized” (i.e. socially restricted), the harder it will be to access that knowledge, and the barriers to accessing it will be based on one or more facets of the communicative media.

### **3 Greek, Roman and Byzantine Professional Military Knowledge**

Soc. And have you troubled your head at all to consider how you are to secure the obedience of your men? for without that not one particle of good will you get, for all your horses and troopers so brave and so stout.

Hipparch. That is a true saying; but how, Socrates, should a man best bring them to this virtue?

Soc. I presume you know that in any business whatever, people are more apt to follow the lead of those whom they look upon as adepts; thus in case of sickness they are readiest to obey him whom they regard as the cleverest physician; and so on a voyage the most skillful pilot; in matters agricultural the best farmer, and so forth.

Hipp. Yes, certainly.

Soc. Then in this matter of cavalry also we may reasonably suppose that he who is looked upon as knowing his business best will command the readiest obedience.

Hipp. If, then, I can prove to my troopers that I am better than all of them, will that suffice to win their obedience?

Soc. Yes, if along with that you can teach them that obedience to you brings greater glory and surer safety to themselves.

Xenophon, *The Memorabilia*, Book 3, III.<sup>10</sup>

In a recent article, Barry Strauss noted that "To the ancients, war was too serious to leave to the military—or to the professors. Instead, war belonged to everyone. The whole city taught war."<sup>11</sup> But the "teaching" of war used a format that was radically different from modern military forms of formal pedagogy. It relied, instead, on a combination of cultural immersion and, later, on the existence of universal (for all citizens) training in a vibrant, professional oral culture, only parts of which were ever written down in military manuals. Even in the written forms which have survived, there is a rather striking tension between the use of *exempla* (illustrative stories) and *praecepta* (theoretical instruction).

Strauss' observations about the pervasiveness of military "training" in the Greek city states and early Republican Rome highlight its importance to their societies, cultures, politics and social structures and, also, lays the foundation for future training once warfare moves into a professional endeavour. For both the Greeks and the Romans, skill with arms and appropriate soldierly virtues were cultural necessities; core components of what it meant to be a "Citizen" in much the same way as we now view the ability to use a telephone, read a street sign or drive a car.

If we look at the communicative media involved, we can isolate four distinct areas:

1. Knowledge gained by "doing". All male citizens between the ages of 17 and 57 were trained and expected to be able to fight in formation when and as needed.
2. Knowledge gained by "ordeal". Initial training (usually for 1-2 years at age 17, but it varied from city state to city state) served as a ritualized basis for inculcating "tribal gnosis" (to use Victor Turner's terms<sup>12</sup>) by exposing the soon-to-be "initiates" to "tribal myth" and then putting them through an "ordeal" to "fix" that knowledge.<sup>13</sup>
3. Family knowledge. Since all male citizens were expected to be able to fight, "war stories" would be passed on within families, kinship groups and peer groups.
4. Formal knowledge. While relatively rare in oral cultures, certain types of knowledge would be passed on in a "formalized" setting ranging from didactic conversations (e.g. Socrates' conversations) to written works. Note that in order to access this formal knowledge, you must have access to either the teacher or the written work.

If you examine this list, you will note that the first three items are all communicated by *exempla* – illustrative stories – while it is only the final type that might be communicated by *praecepta* (theoretical precepts).

What is important to note, at least for this paper, is that these cultural necessities ("tribal gnosis"), relied on a relatively stable environment in which conflict would take place. This is not to say that the conflictual environment was "unchanging" but, rather, that it was relatively unchanging within the immediate span of human perceptions; being gradual and predictable rather than sudden and radical. Perhaps most importantly, this tribal gnosis had

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11 Strauss, Barry Military Education Models from Antiquity, *Acad. Quest.* (2008) 21:52–61, page 53.

12 Victor Turner, "The Ritual Process", Aldine de Gruyter, 1969. The term means tribal "experiential knowledge".

13 In much the same manner as Boot Camp operates in modern militaries.

to prove itself by surviving and prospering.

The existence of a relatively unchanging conflictual environment within a culture area allows for the emergence of several important formalizations of cultural knowledge: the formalization of conventions that limit the damage of conflict and the development of formal models of that environment and operations within it. While the latter is readily apparent in the development of various sets of *praecepta*, the former is not quite as apparent since it relates to face to face interactions. Where we do find it recorded is in the form of stories of events and in the stories of stories about events or, in other words, in the *exempla*.

The tension between *exempla* and *praecepta*, which is apparent in many areas and not just military manuals, is not too surprising in light of two conditions. First, the period under discussion (ca. 500bce to ~1200ce) was a period of limited functional literacy<sup>14</sup>, where the definition of "functional literacy" was quite different from today's usage. Despite writing having existed in the culture area since at least 3000bce, the Greeks and Romans lived in cultures that were halfway between oral and written; a situation that sprang, in part, from the technology of writing (by hand) and the limited availability and great expense of long works.

The second condition, noted by Gregory Bateson, is that at the population level, people remember an explanation best if it is given in a story form<sup>15</sup>. Put simply, we, as a species, evolved in an oral setting and our brain structures are best suited to store information in this format. In part, this is because "stories" (*exempla*) include not only explanatory and factual components but, also, emotional valuations, which increases the likelihood of us both storing and re-remembering the "story" regardless of which memory tracks we use<sup>16</sup>.

These two conditions also gave rise to a third condition which had a strong effect on education: with limited data, it is very hard to produce a theoretical model that has more than a limited form of predictive validity. In fact, I would argue that such a predictive model did not exist until Lucian's *de res natura* which placed the descriptive categories of Herodotus into a temporal model that was capable of predicting future change based on both current conditions and past comparative data.

This third condition is especially important for professional military education for a number of reasons. First, by changing the temporal focus from past to future, intentional change is viewed as possible. This allows one to learn from the past and to apply that learning to constructing a possible future by, in effect, transcending some parts of one's own culture<sup>17</sup>. Second, this creates a certain amount of "objectivity" that allows one to draw additional insights from *exempla* beyond the specifics of the story. Third, it allows the individual to integrate the interactions of various descriptive characterizations ("stereotypes" if you will),

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14 William V. Harris, "Ancient Literacy", Harvard University Press, 1989

15 Gregory Bateson, "Steps to an Ecology of Mind"

16 Bandler and Grinder, "From Frogs to Princes".

17 This also allows you to reflexively examine parts of your own culture and society if and when its "traditional" forms no longer work, a situation that applied in Rome after the fall of the Principate and the Year of the Four Emperors.

into a manipulable whole.

#### **4 Early ethnography and the quest for universal laws**

The earliest form of Greek “ethnography” we have is in the form of mythological stories, exemplified in Homer's Iliad and Odyssey, which were clearly the product of an oral, epic story-telling tradition – “ethnomythography” rather than “ethnography”.<sup>18</sup> As the Greek world recovered from the dark ages of the 11<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> centuries bce, trade, exploration and colonization gradually increased and, along with them, the need for geographic and ethnographic knowledge.

The earliest form of prose ethnographic knowledge from the Greeks that we have is the work of the logographers – literally “writers of stories” - starting with Hecateus of Miletus in the mid-late 6<sup>th</sup> century. Hecateus appears to have been traveled to Egypt where his “assumed reality” of being descended from a God was exploded and he proceeded to systematically analyze Greek traditions and myths.<sup>19</sup> While Hecateus' work was certainly inspired, in part, by his travels, it is also probable that his decision to attempt to rationally analyze ethnographic knowledge stems from the rising tensions between Miletus and the Persian Empire that led to the Ionian Revolt and the Greco-Persian Wars of the 5<sup>th</sup> century bce.<sup>20</sup>

##### **4.1 The Eastern Mediterranean**

If the start of the Greco-Persian Wars spurred a shift towards a non-ethnocentric analysis, their conduct created modern history and laid the basis for ethnography in the work of Herodotus. Herodotus, as with many 19<sup>th</sup> century ethnographers, used certain basic categories as foundational for his ethnographic vignettes: common descent, language, religion, dress, food, dwellings and tools & weapons. And, in keeping with the oral culture bias of his audience, he tended to use both “fabulous” elements as well those that merely appeared so.<sup>21</sup> This latter point is especially important, since one of the characteristics of ethnocentric analysis is a presumption of a “normality” which automatically excludes variations amongst others that cannot appear within their own cultural matrix.

Herodotus' work was later expanded by Thucydides, and we see the beginnings of formal theoretical models – *praecepta* - showing up in Aristotle.<sup>22</sup> Aristotle's *praecepta* were to be

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18 While there is significant debate on when the two works were “constructed”, it is generally accepted as being between the 9<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries bce. Given the archaeological accuracy of some parts of it, component stories must have been maintained in the oral culture from the time they happened.

19 This was in his *Genealogiai* of which we only have a few fragments, including part of the Introduction: “Hecataeus of Miletus thus speaks: I write what I deem true; for the stories of the Greeks are manifold and seem to me ridiculous.” (James T. Shotwell, “The History of History”, Columbia University Press, 1939: 172.) For the actual event, see Herodotus II, 143.

20 Cf Herodotus 5.36, 125.

21 Consider, by way of example, his recounting of the founding of the Sauromatai (Book IV, 110-117) and of the Egyptian circumnavigation of Africa (Book IV, 42).

22 *Politics*.

tried out in practice by Alexander during his conquest of Persia, and found to be flawed. In particular, Alexander used an integrated political-military-economic model developed by his father, Phillip, that was similar to that used by the Persian Empire combined with the planting of Greek colonies throughout his newly conquered empire. This model relied on tribal/ethnic stereotypes and involved holding a tribally relevant position along with a treaty. In actuality, what both Phillip and Alexander were drawing on was an old concept of the “High King” or leader of a tribal confederacy, a model understood by almost all polities in the area conquered by them.

While Alexander's empire did not last, it did give an extra impetus to Greek exploration and trade, and this was reflected in an increase in both long distance exploration and in the development of written travel information. Unlike the earlier records of trips circumnavigating Africa (Herodotus, Book IV, 42) or the African expedition of Hanno of Carthage<sup>23</sup>, we start to see two distinct forms appearing: detailed voyages of exploration (e.g. Pytheus of Massilia<sup>24</sup>) and the development of detailed trade/travel guides (e.g. the *periplus of pseudo-Scylax*<sup>25</sup>).

Certainly by the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century bce, the “known world” stretched from the arctic circle to Africa, and from Britain to India and the eastern half of the Mediterranean and the successor states were linked by the existence of a common trade language (koine Greek) and relatively similar coinage<sup>26</sup>. The western half of the Mediterranean and Europe, however, were not. In fact, the West was in a position similar to that of the East at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century bce – a competition between different cultural groups for dominance.

## 4.2 The Western Mediterranean

Unlike the East, the competition in the West was between three different cultural groups; the Carthaginians, the Romans and the Celts, each of which was organized in a quite dissimilar manner.<sup>27</sup> The Celts were centered around tribal divisions and had little ability to organize as a group. While they were powerful fighters and capable of fielding large armies, they tended to fight against each other and to conquer areas more as a result of population growth than from strategic policy.<sup>28</sup>

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23 See The Voyage of Hanno, available at <http://www.livius.org/ha-hd/hanno/hanno02.html> (dl Oct 15, 2008).

24 “On the Ocean”, no lost. See Cunliffe, Barry (2002). *The Extraordinary Voyage of Pytheas the Greek: The Man Who Discovered Britain* (Revised ed.). Walker & Co, Penguin and, also, the excellent Wikipedia article at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pytheas>

25 For a modern, interim, translation see Shipley, Graham, “The Periplus of Pseudo-Scylax: An Interim Translation”, 2002, pdf draft available at [http://www.le.ac.uk/ar/gjs/skylax\\_for\\_www\\_02214.pdf](http://www.le.ac.uk/ar/gjs/skylax_for_www_02214.pdf) (dl Oct. 12, 08)

26 In effect, the area of Greek colonization and Alexander's successors had become a *de facto* culture area for trade, economics, diplomacy and warfare.

27 There were also various Greek colonies and Leagues, the Etruscians, various North African tribal groups, etc. but, by the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century, these were relatively minor players.

28 In this, they resemble the Zulus of a latter era who would split tribal groups and move into new areas as a way of avoiding civil wars inside a tribe. This leads to a form of conquest that is more along the lines of a *volkeswanderung* than for any strategic goal.

Organized along the lines of a commercial oligarchy, Carthage had a powerful fleet, but relatively few ground forces relying, instead, on the use of mercenaries and tributary levies. The Carthaginians gradually gained control of all the Phoenician colonies in the West after the conquests of Tyre and Sidon and, in 509 bce, signed a treaty with the Roman Republic. Over the next 200 years, they gained general dominance in trade throughout the Western Mediterranean and open control over Corsica, Sardinia, the Balearic Islands, North Africa and southern Spain.<sup>29</sup>

Strategically, Carthage was motivated by control over sea routes, natural resources and the elimination of sea-borne competition. This brought them into conflict with the Greek colonies in the West and, especially, in conflict with those in Sicily. Between 480 and 307 bce, Carthage gradually focused its attention on gaining control over Sicily, engaging in two long running wars (410-340 and 315-307) against the Greek cities dominated by Syracuse. Their interest in Sicily was to bring them into conflict with Rome.

Unlike Carthage, the Roman Republic was a land based power whose strategic aims were to gain control over the Italian peninsula. The final act of Italian conquest, the Pyrrhic War against the Italiote League (280-275), which produced the third treaty between Carthage and Rome against Pyrrhus of Epirus, might have been scripted by the Keystone Cops. In a multi-cornered war, Rome managed to not only decisively solidify control over the Italian peninsula, but to also eliminate the Etruscans once and for all as a regional power and show that their Legions were the equal or better of any Greek troops. The final tragi-comedic act took place in Messina, which had fallen under the control of a group of mercenaries called the Mamertines (“Sons of Mars”), where different factions ended up calling on both Rome and Carthage as “allies” leading to the First Punic War.

Throughout the period from the founding of the Republic to the end of the Third Punic War, “ethnographic knowledge” was strictly in the form of stereotypes; little else was needed and change was quite gradual. Furthermore, the Republic operated in a “total war education” manner, similar to that of the Greeks.<sup>30</sup> This situation did not substantially change until the Marian Reforms of the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

#### **4.2.1 The end of the Republic and the Principate**

Marius' reforms were crucial for the future of Rome in three respects. First, he did away with the property requirements for joining the Army and, hence, for full citizenship. Second, he transformed the military from one loyal to the Senate and Republic to one that, ultimately, owed its loyalty to its commanding general. Third, he “professionalized” the army by making it a separate and distinct “career” from being a civilian. These reforms, along with a continuing series of wars of conquest, led to a series of civil wars that, effectively, separated the military totally from the general citizenry.<sup>31</sup> By the end of this cycle of civil wars,

29 This also gave them control over the sea based distribution of amber from the Baltic and Tin from Britain.

30 cf. Barry Strauss, *Military Education Models from Antiquity*, *op. cit.*

31 See Yong-Ling Ow's excellent essay on Marius and Sulla for a precis of events, available at

marked by the Battle of Actium and the establishment of the Principate under Augustus, the character and social place of the Roman military had changed irrevocably.

This same time period, the first century bce, also produced what might be called the first scientific form of social theory – the *de res natura* of Lucian.<sup>32</sup> I use the term “scientific” advisedly, and for three primary reasons. First, Lucian's model is emergentist with complexity emerging from simplicity; the opposite of the degenerationist models of Plato.<sup>33</sup> Second, his model is based on inductive logic rather than the deductive models produced by Aristotle, Plato and the Greek tradition of social philosophy. Third, he use the same categories of inquiry established by Herodotus and ties them together into a coherent whole.

While we have no real indications that Lucian's work was used by or for the military during the Principate (27bce - 69ce), we can see that a number of his categories are used by Caesar in his Gallic Commentaries (Book VI, XIII-XXVIII). We can infer that some form of ethnographic knowledge was in use as early as 10ce due to the specific types of manipulations of the German tribes being used by Augustus.<sup>34</sup> This was in direct response to the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (9 ce) where three legions were annihilated by a coalition of German tribes; an even that brought Roman expansion practically to a halt.

We also have some interesting indications that Lucian's work influenced economic ethnographies, specifically the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* (~50-60ce). While earlier *periplus*'s, such as that of Pseudo-Scylax, were almost exclusively sailing directions and times, the *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* contains quite large amounts of ethnographic data.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4.2.2 The Silver Age

The Principate allowed Rome a “breathing space” after 80 years of cycling wars of conquest and civil wars and served to limit both external conquest and civil wars. Unfortunately, it also highlighted three problems: succession of the Imperium, loyalty amongst the now professional army, and serious problems of governance in the provinces. These three problems were clearly shown in the year 69 ce -the Year of the Four Emperors – with a resurgence of the earlier civil wars. While they were stopped quickly with Vespasian's ascension, they spurred a serious examination of all three problems.

One of the key tools brought to bear on these problems was “History”, specifically, “History”

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<http://janusquiritinus.org/essays/Apollo/Background/MS1.html>

32 Lucian's model was, in fact, so powerful, that it was adopted by Turgot in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and, later, by Comte and also by Christian Jürgensen Thomsen as the foundation of the Three Age System in archeology.

33 “Emergentist” models are based on the assumption that order and complexity emerge from simpler forms, while “Degenerationist” models postulate that current conditions result from a degeneration from an initial, “perfect”, start. While related to inductive vs. deductive models (respectively), these are primarily metaphysical positions with epistemological implications.

34 cf. Edward Luttwak, “The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire”, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979.

35 Most of which is related to what may be bought and sold in a given town, however there is also quite a bit of general cultural data included. See “The Periplus of the Erythraean Sea”, Wilfred H. Schoff, Longman Green & Co., New York, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1974.

in the sense of examining the recent past in order to identify and fix these problems. Much of the work we have from this period comes from Tacitus, and it is with his work, specifically the *Germania* and the (now lost) *Britannia* that we find the first, modern ethnographies as ethnographies using Lucian's model and categories. We also see snippets of this type of applied "History" (Anthropology?) in the works of Tacitus' friend and contemporary, Pliny the Younger.

By the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century ce, a clear set of applied principles had developed for what we would now call "military education", "ethnography" and their intersection. "Military education" was divided into several parts with different learning strategies based on class. For "enlisted personnel", loosely construed as the Centurionate and lower and generally of the Plebeian class, "military education" was centered around the concept of "learning by doing", with an emphasis on drill. "Ethnographic knowledge", from what clues we have, appears to have been based on a form of stereotyping, and most of the knowledge would have been acquired via personal experience and "stories" (i.e. oral history).

For "officers", again loosely construed and, generally, of the Equites and/or Senatorial classes<sup>36</sup>, "military education" included both "learning by doing" plus an expectation of knowing large amounts of historical *exempla* from which *praecepta* could be adduced<sup>37</sup>. And, where "learning by doing" was not an option, certain explicit manuals existed covering a broad range of organizational and tactical issues.<sup>38</sup>

"Ethnographic knowledge", for "officers", appears in two forms. First, in the strictly military manuals, it appears in the form of stereotypes of equipment, tactics and organization (usually quite limited). The second form, however, relies on a general literacy in "History" and other literature. Probably the best example of an officer in this tradition is Lucius Flavius Arrianus - "Arrian" - who works span order of battle reports<sup>39</sup>, tactical organization and training of Cavalry<sup>40</sup>, the life of Alexander, and the writing of a *Periplus of the Pontus Euxine* (Black Sea)<sup>41</sup> amongst other things. While not "ethnography" in the modern sense, Arrian's work

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36 "Class", however, was somewhat mutable and both it and rank depended at times on property holdings. Cf Pliny the Younger's letter to Romanus Firmus, Letter XIII, available at

<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/ltpln10.txt> The origin of the Equites as people able to support themselves as cavalry troops had, by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century ce been de facto lost. It is important to note, however, that Tribunes and Generals were still primarily of the Senatorial class. See Brian Campbell, "War and Society in Imperial Rome, 31BC to AD 284", Routledge, 2002, especially pp 32-34.

37 Cf Frontinus, "Strategemata", especially Books I – III; Book IV derives certain principles of "character". The entire work is available at <http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Frontinus/Strategemata/home.html>

38 e.g. *De Munitionibus Castrorum*, author unknown but commonly referred to as "pseudo-Hyginus", available at [http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/hyg\\_mun.html](http://www.forumromanum.org/literature/hyg_mun.html) See also Arrian's "Ars Tactica" [Τέχνη τακτική] and "Aeneas Tacticus, Asclepiodotus, Onasander", Harvard University Press, 2007.

39 Arrian, *Array against the Alans* translated by Sander van Dorst available at [http://members.tripod.com/~S\\_van\\_Dorst/Ancient\\_Warfare/Rome/Sources/ektaxis.html](http://members.tripod.com/~S_van_Dorst/Ancient_Warfare/Rome/Sources/ektaxis.html)

40 See Philip A. Stadter, *The Ars Tactica of Arrian: Tradition and Originality*, *Classical Philology*, Vol. 73, No. 2 (Apr., 1978), pp. 117-128 and Ann Hyland, *Training the Roman Cavalry: From Arrian's "Arstactica"*, DIANE Publishing Company, 1998.

41 An 1805 translation by William Falconer is available at

blends aspects of history, geography, ethnography, politics and military science together to produce a coherent, applied, manner that becomes the model for later authors.<sup>42</sup>

Table 1: Sources of Roman Professional Military Education ~140 ce

	<b>Plebian</b>	<b>Equites</b>	<b>Senatorial</b>
Learning by doing	√	√	
Oral “histories”	√	√	(√)
Exempla	(√)	√	√
Formal “histories”		(√)	√
Technical Manuals (TTPs)		(√)	√
Formal <i>praecepta</i> <sup>43</sup>			(√)
“Formal” ethnographies <sup>44</sup>			(√)

The core of the Silver Age PME relating to ethnography lies in ethno-historical vignettes; “stories” which were shared across class lines and encapsulated specific stereotypical “knowledge” about specific groups. These vignettes appear in the oral culture of the Legions, in the formal manuals (as *exempla*) and in the Histories and ethnographies, albeit with varying degrees of detail.<sup>45</sup> They also have several crucial benefits to them:

1. They operate across class lines.
2. They are infinitely expandable.
3. They are much more “memorable” than *praecepta*.
4. They contain a “moral” or “ethical” component.<sup>46</sup>

Perhaps most importantly, these vignettes met all of the minimum requirements for the military operations of the Empire, at least until the 4<sup>th</sup> century.

### 4.2.3 Decline and Fall

What they did not do, however, was to meet the socio-political requirements, in particular, the dangers of Caesarism and the problem of Imperial and Provincial governance; a lack that became clear after the fall of the Silver Age (192ce), the constant bouts of civil war and the eventual division of the Empire. Indeed, it may be possible that the use of these vignettes

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[http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Periplus\\_of\\_the\\_Euxine\\_Sea](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Periplus_of_the_Euxine_Sea) The most recent version is Aidan Liddle (ed.), “Arrian: Periplus Ponti Euxini”, Bristol Classical Press, 2003

42 On Arrian's place in the Greek military writing tradition, see Stadter, *The Ars Tactica of Arrian op. cit.*

43 The distinction between “Technical Manuals” and “Formal Praecepta” is roughly analogous to a distinction between modern “How To” manuals (e.g. “Tactics, Techniques and Procedures” [TTPs] manuals) and Doctrine / Formal Theory.

44 “Formal ethnographies” refers to specific writings that use Lucian's model to analyze a specific culture. They are distinct from the category of Formal Praecepta in that they are aimed at the a specific socio-cultural group, whereas the Praecepta are aimed at formal theories.

hastened the downfall the Western Empire simply because, with one exception (Cannae), all noted that a force of heavy infantry would always defeat cavalry. As Ammianus Marcellinus notes (Book XVI, 12:22):<sup>47</sup>

For they knew that a cavalry soldier, however skilful, if fighting with one of our men in complete armour, while his hands were occupied with shield and bridle, so that he could use no offensive weapon but the spear which he brandished in his right hand, could never injure an enemy wholly covered with iron mail; but that an infantry soldier, amid the actual struggles of personal conflict, when nothing is usually guarded against by a combatant except that which is straight before him, may crawl unperceivedly along the ground, and piercing the side of the Roman soldier's horse, throw the rider down headlong, rendering him thus an easy victim.

This received wisdom was put to the test by the Emperor Valens on 9 August, 378 ce at Adrianople (Hadianopolis) against the Goths, which ended up as the greatest loss for Rome since the Tuetoburg Wald.<sup>48</sup> Adrianople marked a significant shift in the general perception of what type of force would dominate the battlefield: infantry or cavalry.<sup>49</sup> This shift, however, was problematic for the Empire (or what was left of it) since Rome had relied heavily on its allies and foreign mercenaries to make up its cavalry contingents,<sup>50</sup> and it was not until the 6<sup>th</sup> century under Belisarius that the Empire would field its own cavalry armies.

While Adrianople led to a massive shift in military practice, it does not, however, appear to have led to any reformulation in the use of ethnographic knowledge by the military *per se*. There are, however, indications that the collection, organization and use of ethnographic knowledge were shifting out of the control of the “military” and into the hands of bureaucrats. For example, both Procopius of Caesaria and Ammianus Marcellianus discuss fairly extensive intelligence gathering procedures,<sup>51</sup> and there is some limited suggestion

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45 Good modern examples of this type are T.E. Lawrence's “27 Articles”, *The Arab Bulletin*, 20 August, 1917, available at [http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/lawrence\\_27\\_articles.htm](http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/lawrence_27_articles.htm) and David Kilcullen, “Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency” available at [http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/pdf/kilcullen\\_28\\_articles.pdf](http://www.d-n-i.net/fcs/pdf/kilcullen_28_articles.pdf) [both dl October 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008].

46 See Blockley, Roger *Ammianus Marcellinus's Use of Exempla*, *FLORILEGIUM* 13, 1994.

47 Ammianus was speaking of the Battle of Strasburg in 357 ce. Ammianus Marcellinus, “Roman History”, London: Bohn (1862) available at <http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/index.htm> [#Ammianus\\_Marcellinus](#) (dl, October 26, 2008).

48 Cf Ammianus Marcellinus, “Roman History”, *op. cit.* Book XXXI: 12-13.

49 This shift may have happened for a number of different reasons, however within 100 years of Adrianople, heavy cavalry was the dominant force on the field

50 As a note, Rome had deployed heavy cavalry as early as the reign of Hadrian (117 – 138 ce), but no significant forces of them until the reign of Gallienus (253 - 268 ce). Even then, they were quite expensive to maintain in proportion to their actual combat power. Furthermore, heavy cavalry are generally incapable of successfully breaking heavy infantry formations until the deployment of stirrups (the exact date of whose introduction is debatable).

51 See Arthur D. Lee “Information and Frontiers: Roman foreign relations in late antiquity”, Cambridge University Press, 1993, especially pp 170-182. On intelligence in the earlier Roman period, see N.J.E. Austin and N.B. Rankov, “Exploratio : military and political intelligence in the Roman world from the second Punic War to the Battle of Adrianople” Routledge, London, 1995.

that the *Skrinion Barbaron* (“Bureau of Barbarians” or “Office of Barbarians”), the Byzantine Empire's highly capable foreign intelligence service, may have been operating as early as the 530's.<sup>52</sup>

This shift of ethnographic knowledge, at least in the sense of applied ethnographic knowledge, from the military to the bureaucracy appears to take place over a 300 year timespan (~300 to 600 ce) as part of an ongoing attempt to resolve problems of governance. For the military ethnographic knowledge becomes more “current”<sup>53</sup> and more focused in on strictly military applications with any “non-military” knowledge being primarily of operational use.<sup>54</sup>

The exemplar of this type of military ethnography appears in chapter 11 of Maurice's *Strategikon*.<sup>55</sup> As the author notes (p. 113)

The purpose of this chapter is to enable those who intend to wage war against these peoples to prepare themselves properly. For all nations do not fight in a single formation or in the same manner, and one cannot deal with them all in the same way.

In this chapter, each of the major opponents of the Byzantines are listed out in their own sections:

1. The Persians
2. The Scythians (Avars, Turks, etc.)<sup>56</sup>
3. The Light-Haired Peoples (Franks, Lombards, etc.)<sup>57</sup>
4. The Slavs, the Antes etc.<sup>58</sup>

Each section focuses in on campaign tactics and commentary on “national character” which has a battlefield influence. It is interesting to note that this focus on “national character” is quite similar to the Culture at a Distance school of Anthropology from the 1940's – early 1960's. While much shorter and more limited than the work produced in this school, we can

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52 Dating its start is almost impossible. The Master of Offices, a position created by Diocletian (284 – 305 ce), was certainly in charge of the *agentes in rebus* (“Imperial Messengers”, actually some form of special agent) before 359 ce (see Fred H. Blume, “Annotated Justinian Code”, Book 1-31 available at <http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/blume&justinian/Book%20I.asp>) and is later noted as being the head of the *Skrinion Barbaron*.

53 i.e. there are fewer references to “classical” ethnographic information and ore attention paid to current groups. It is also important to note that in Maurices' *Strategickon* (~595 ce), the word *ἔθνος* (ethnos or “people”) is used rather than the generic “barbarian”.

54 In this focus, it is similar to the current Human Terrain System.

55 George T. Dennis (trans.) “Maurice's Stragetikon”, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984. On the use of ethnographic knowledge in chapter XI, see John Wiita, “The Ethnika in Byzantine Military Treatises”, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1977.

56 The term “Scythian” is a generic term for the pastoralist tribes north of the Black Sea and of central Asia).

57 Again, a generic term for the Germanic and Celtic peoples (mainly Germanic tribes). It is interesting o note that no distinction is made between the pastoralist tribes and the horticultural tribes and no economic information on them.

58 This section in particular includes quite a bit of ethnographic (and economic) detail.

certainly identify components of it as prototypical of the latter school.<sup>59</sup>

### 4.3 Governance and Ethnographic Knowledge

The crises of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> centuries ce illustrated one very clear problem for Roman society; the social risk of having combined political, military and ethnographic knowledge outside of the control of the emperor. Diocletian appears to have made a start to dealing with this problem by concentrating certain parts of political, ethnographic and intelligence functions into a non-military post: the Master of Offices. This process appears to have been completed under Justinian (527 – 565 ce), with ethnographic knowledge divided into what we might term “operational” and “grand strategic” components.<sup>60</sup> Certainly, the material included in Maurice's *Strategikon* is “operational”, while “grand strategic” components (i.e. long term manipulation via diplomacy, intelligence operations and economics) became increasingly under the control of the bureaucracy.

As second shift that happened during Diocletian's reforms was a restructuring of the class system with the Senatorial class *de facto* splitting in half between civil and military. This increasingly strict division came about as a result of attempting to split civil and military power, thereby reducing the ability of any single general to successfully revolt but, also, destroying the last remnants of the *cursus honorum* which bound the senatorial class to the good of the Republic. In effect, the social elites were now required to learn either civil or military knowledge, but not both. One offshoot of this was that, increasingly, Roman military power came into the hands of mercenaries and *foederati* – barbarian tribes who had settled in the Empire.

This trend of civil and military knowledge being held apart lasted until the mid 7<sup>th</sup> century and the Arab conquests. Reorganization efforts in response to the Arab incursions start with the Emperor Heraclius but appear to have been formalized under Constans II<sup>61</sup>, with the establishment of integrated civil-military districts called “Themes” (pl. θέματα s. θέμα) commanded by a strategos.<sup>62</sup> Military units were settled on land in the Themes but, instead of owning the land, it was still held by the State and rent was paid via military service.

While the Thematic system certainly helped in stemming the invasions of the Empire and in stabilizing it, it also served to increase the division between civil power (especially financial), centered in the bureaucracies of Constantinople and military power, which was increasingly centered in provincial aristocracies.<sup>63</sup>

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59 The classic work produced in this school was Ruth Benedict's “The Chrysanthemum and the Sword”, Mariner Books, 2006. This similarity is, perhaps, not surprising given the similarity in immediate needs grounded in combat.

60 The term “operational” is used to cover everything from tactical to theatre/campaign strategic, while “grand strategic” refers to longer term campaigns that integrate diplomacy, intelligence, military campaigns (or the threat of them) and economics.

61 See John Haldon, *Byzantium in the seventh century*, Cambridge, 1990,

62 Wikipedia has an excellent introductory entry on the Thematic system available at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thema> (dl. Oct. 28, 2008).

63 An ironic consequence of the original attempt to reintegrate civil and military power.

Over the next four centuries, this divide would increase with the aristocracies developing private “armies” and the bureaucrats hiring mercenaries while not funding “national” units. Increasingly, the generation of ethnographic knowledge was under the control of the Master of Offices, the *Skrinion Barbaron* and, in general, a province of the politicians and bureaucrats in Constantinople rather than of the military.<sup>64</sup> This situation was to last until the end of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 ce.

## 5 Dangerous knowledge

The perception of risk is a social process. All society depends on combinations of confidence and fear.

Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky<sup>65</sup>

The most important cultural form for counterinsurgents to understand is the narrative. A cultural narrative is a story recounted in the form of a causally linked set of events that explains an event in a group’s history and expresses the values, character, or self-identity of the group. Narratives are the means through which ideologies are expressed and absorbed by members of a society.

FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*<sup>66</sup>

The social perception of risk is, as with all social perceptions, communicated and maintained through “stories”. Today, we call these stories “narratives”, while to the Romans, they were *exempla* (and what they exemplified). Stories, by whatever name they are called, define by context what we should and should not know and, also, what the dangers of knowing and not knowing are. Stories are also interpretive interjections (or, rather, the record of such interjections) in what Laughlin calls the Cycle of Meaning.<sup>67</sup>

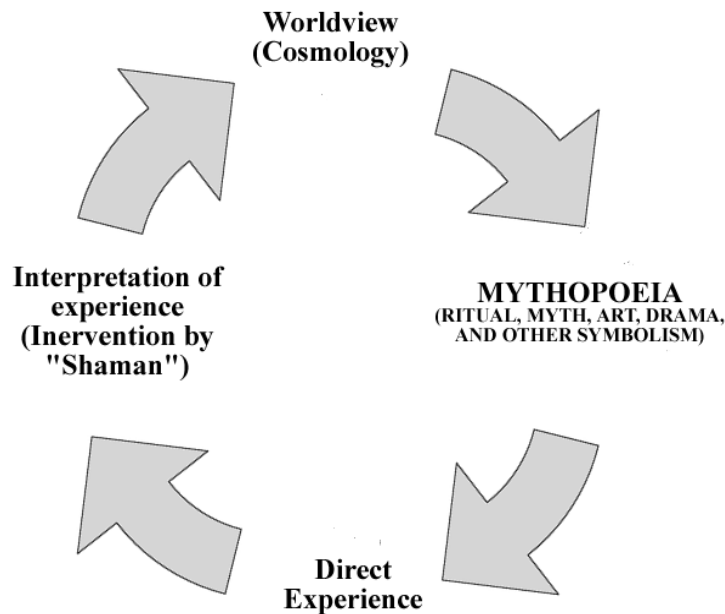
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64 Indeed, the entire professional military education system appears to have remained practically unchanged from the time of Maurice, if not “regressed”. For the bureaucrats and politicians of Constantinople, however, the use of applied “grand Strategic” ethnographic knowledge appears to have become increasingly sophisticated (cf. Anna Comnena, “The Alexiad”, Penguin Classics, 2004). On the general trends, see Michael Psellus, “Fourteen Byzantine Rulers” [the Chronographia], Penguin Classics, 1979.

65 Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, *op. cit.* page 6

66 Department of the Army, FM 3-24 (MCWP 3-33.5) Counterinsurgency, 2006, #3-50, page 3-8.

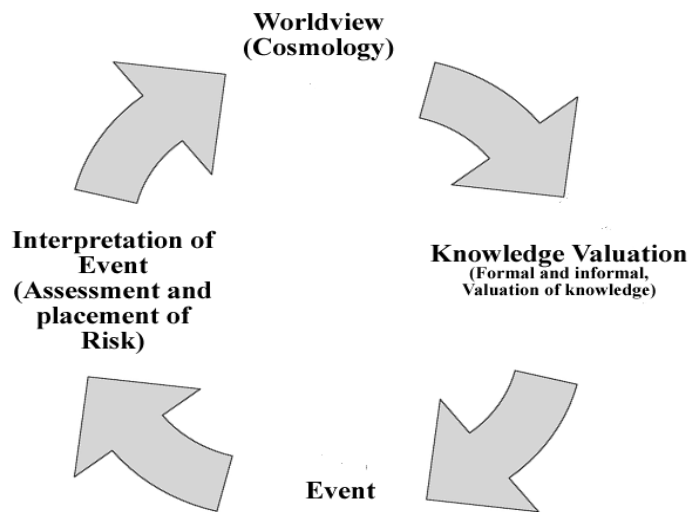
67 See Charles Laughlin, *The Cycle of Meaning: Some Methodological Implications of Biogenetic Structural Theory in Anthropology of Religion: Handbook of Theory and Method* (ed. by Stephen Glazier). Greenwood Press, 1997, Pp. 471-488. available at <http://www.biogeneticstructuralism.com/docs/cycle.rtf>



*Illustration 1: The Cycle of Meaning after Laughlin (1997)*

Laughlin's Cycle of Meaning (see above) nicely portrays the sense-making process at both individual and cultural levels. For our purposes, the crucial linkages come at the “interpretation of experience” part of the cycle; this is where explanatory mechanisms are produced along with moral evaluations and interpretation. This is also where “risk” and “knowledge” are assessed, plausibility is constructed, and perceptual values of “confidence” and “fear” are attached to the component objects of the “direct experience”. In short, this is where the cultural “learning” and valuation of the “story” is built.

When we look at the placement of ethnographic knowledge throughout the Greco-Roman world, we find that it is intimately entwined with two other types of knowledge: “Military” knowledge and what we might call Civil-Military “Integration”. All three of these types of knowledge overlap and present differing risks depending on the time (See Appendix A for a synopsis). Furthermore, the locus of the risk changes over time, acting as a boundary condition on the development and deployment of ethnographic knowledge. Using Laughlin's Cycle of Meaning as a basis, we can reconstruct this relationship as follows.



*Illustration 2: The Cycle of Risk Perception*

The character of the “Event” is, however, crucial for the entire process. Certain types of events will be assessed as “normal” and/or “potentially expected”; the cultural equivalent of what Kuhn called “normal science”.<sup>68</sup> These types of events will trigger an interpretation that looks for “solutions” within the worldview and, as a result, tend to assign both blame and risk within the existing framework. The event, however, may also be outside of the “normal”; a breach in the worldview, that requires components of that worldview to be totally reassessed; what Kuhn referred to as a “paradigm shift”.

I would suggest that there were 10 such “events”, broadly construed to include “normal science” periods, during the time period under consideration that had a crucial impact on the assessment of ethnographic knowledge.

1. The fall of the Medes, conquest of Lydia and expansion of the Persian Empire (along with a general increase in sea-borne trade) sparked an initial shift in the form of ethnographic knowledge amongst the Greeks from a mythic, poetic and “fabulous” form into one dealing with actual observations, in prose. This was the initial development of logography, and its conditions should be seen as marking a “breach” in the worldview.  
Type: Paradigm shift  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): Low  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Low (-): Medium
2. The Greco-Persian Wars and the concomitant development of “History” under

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68 See Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, University of Chicago Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1970.

- Herodotus and Thucydides, along with the development of praecepta of politics and government (e.g. Aristotle).  
Type: normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): Medium  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Medium (-): High
3. The conquest of Persia by Alexander, and the concomitant attempts to govern his empire acted as a breach, but did not initiate a paradigm shift in ethnography simply because an adequate interpretation already existed – human greed and frailty – within the worldview. Furthermore, the social conditions within the Successor States (i.e. a shared worldview) mitigated against the development of ethnography.  
Type: normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Medium (-): Medium
4. In the West, the earliest crucial events take place more gradually – a “vector” rather than a specific event. The critical time period is from roughly 280 – 241 (the Pyrrhic War and the first Punic War). This firmly establishes a new relationship between Carthage and Rome as they fight for control of the Western Mediterranean. It also marks the shift of Roman perceptions (in the sense of necessary territorial acquisition) beyond the Italian peninsula.  
Type: normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Medium (-): High
5. The next “event” dates to the latter half of the second century bce – the end of the Third Punic War and the follow up wars of conquest. This is composed of three key risk perceptions. First, the “Evil Empire” (Carthage) is gone. Second, the expansion by conquest placed an unacceptable burden on the Roman citizenry, requiring a military paradigm shift (the Marian Reforms). Third, the growing expansion introduced too many changes and too much wealth into Rome itself which induced a series of “identity crises” about what a “Citizen” is and should be. These three risk perceptions interacted together to produce new events.  
A. Massive civil wars, the initial rise of Caesarism (social chaos), and a redefinition of “Roman” (e.g. the Social War). This was “solved” within the worldview by the establishment of the Principate.  
B. Problems in governance brought on by attempts to administer conquered territories. While “solved” within the worldview, it also marks the emergence of the first new attempts at ethnography (e.g. Lucian's *de res natura*).  
Type: paradigm shift  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Medium (-): Medium
6. The Principate and The Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 ce which brought Roman expansion practically to a halt. This battle highlighted the risk of a lack of knowledge of external enemies. The Year of the Four Emperors (69 ce), acted as a breach in the worldview and spurs the development of both “applied history” and ethnography by placing extreme risk on problems of governance (“How did this happen?”) and the lack of ethnographic knowledge (“How can we integrate our conquests and make

- them 'Roman'?" and "How can we manipulate external groups such that we don't risk either another Teutoburg Forest or civil war?"). The Silver Age (70 ce – 192 ce), following the Year of the Four Emperors i significantly expands ethnographic and applied historical knowledge (e.g. Tacitus, Pliny the Younger, Arrian, etc.).  
Type: catastrophic / normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): Medium (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Low (-): Medium
7. The Barracks Period (~192 ce – 378 ce)<sup>69</sup> in many ways recapitulates the problems of the post Punic Wars period, once again placing extreme risk on Civil-Military integration and, a the same time, on ethnographic knowledge (if you know "them", then "they" become a potential resource for "you" to lead a revolt).  
Type: paradigm shift  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): High (-): Medium  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Low (-): High
8. The Battle of Adrianople marks a crucial event which shifts the risk of having ethnographic knowledge (potential resources for a revolt) to the risk of not having ethnographic knowledge (lack of knowledge led to the Gothic Revolt) and the concomitant military intelligence (assumed knowledge led to the disaster at Adrianople). The reconstruction period following Adrianople (~378 ce – 650 ce) is marked by extreme danger associated with not having ethnographic knowledge and the advantages of having it. The fall and dissolution of the Western Empire served as a clear and constant reminder of this danger, as did the attempts at reconquest. This period marks the greatest integration of ethnographic knowledge into military knowledge and education (e.g. the Strategikon of Maurice).  
Type: catastrophic / normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): High (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): High (-): High
9. The next key event is the Arab conquests in the 640's-50's which acted as breach to shatter the beliefs that the Empire could be fully reconstructed. The next five and a half centuries (to 1204 ce) are marked by a gradual reduction of ethnographic knowledge in military education, but a radical expansion of it intelligence and diplomatic / political operations, along with a growing rift between the military aristocracy and the bureaucratic factions. This growing rift led inevitably to the civil wars of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, the defeat of Byzantium at the Battle of Manzikert (1071 ce), the Crusades and, final, the conquest of Constantinople by the "Franks".  
Type: catastrophic / normal science  
Danger/Risk – Internal (+): High (Military) Low (State) (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Low (-): High
10. The final period, the Paleologos dynasty (1261 ce -1453 ce) reintegrated the factions in the Empire and deployed considerable ethnographic knowledge in military, political, intelligence and diplomatic operations but, ultimately they no longer had the resources to maintain the state and were eventually conquered by the Turks.  
Type: catastrophic / normal science

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69 I am conflating the two periods of the Barracks Emperors and the Tetrarchy here.

Danger/Risk – Internal (+): High (-): High  
Danger/Risk – External (+): Low (-): High

## 6 Conclusions

What then can we say about the integration of ethnographic knowledge in Romano-Byzantine professional military education? First, ethnographic knowledge only appears and/or changes when there is a high risk from not having it and a lower risk to having it. Second, since “risk” is socially constructed rather than objectively determined, changes in its appearance and development, its “boundary conditions”, show up only under two situations: a catastrophic event (e.g. the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest, the Year of the Four Emperors, the Battle of Adrianople, etc.) or when its deployment does not constitute a threat to the basic perceptions of the military and/or the state (e.g. Arrian, Maurice's *Strategicon*, etc.).

Second, it is apparent that ethnographic knowledge was, in general, socially construed as “dangerous”. In part, this was because ethnographic knowledge has a spin-off effect; people who have it tend to be less “believing” in their particular social ideologies and, hence, less amenable to indirect social control.<sup>70</sup> Another part of the danger, at least for the Romans, stemmed from the potential for people with such knowledge to gain access to and support from foreign groups making a successful revolt both much more likely and, at the same time, giving any revolt a greater chance of succeeding.

Finally, I would like to take these observations from the first “culture turn” and use them to situate the current one. If we look at the modern development of ethnography, we can easily find similar patterns and constraints operating. Modern ethnography first flourished as an adjunct to issues of governance in both the United States, Britain and France. The social risk associated with holding ethnographic knowledge was significantly lower than the risk of not having it (e.g. colonial revolts, etc.). In the World War II and post-war period, again the risk of having such knowledge outweighed the risks of having it; at least until the late 1960's when it becomes an increasing danger to the moral principles underpinning US, French and British society. Increasingly, ethnographic knowledge is detached from military education (although it still resides in Intelligence circles) until a catastrophic event happens – the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center. Reactions to this event lead to direct military confrontations with groups who just don't “play by the rules”, once again making the lack of ethnographic knowledge more risky than having it.

Nowadays, it is common for both Anthropologists and the military to talk about the historical associations between the two, or to call Anthropology the Handmaiden of Empire.<sup>71</sup> What is not often considered is that this is not the first time this has happened, and we would do well to consider how such an engagement played out before.

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70 Consider, for example, the constant complaints about “foreign” practices (especially Greek) subverting Roman youth made by many authors during the period between 60 bce and 20 ce.

71 See Montgomery McFate, *Anthropology and Counterinsurgency: The Strange Story of their Curious Relationship*, *op. cit.*