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## Religious Rituals of War in Medieval East Central and Northern Europe (c.900-c.1500)

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Warfare in traditional cultures had much in common with religion. In this respect, medieval Christianity was not very different from pagan beliefs. Its acceptance did not lead to the “secularization” of military activity, but rather caused a significant transformation for the indigenous culture of war, influenced by ecclesiastical customs derived from Roman, Biblical, and liturgical traditions. A key role in this transformation was played by ritual, as from its origins, Christianization meant that one set of rites was exchanged for another. But pragmatically, in its basic sense, the difference was hardly noticeable, as the new rites were to serve the same need – to secure communication with the divine and obtain supernatural support. Such a perspective indicates the need for in-depth, comparative investigation, all the more fascinating that the Christian idea of war, being itself a carrier of unorthodox notions, did not result in complete eradication of older traditions, but rather merged with them. It also gives an opportunity to abandon one of the still widely shared misconceptions that in the Middle Ages, the connection between religion and warfare found its “full” and “proper” shape only with the advent of crusading ideology.

The issue of war rituals in East Central and Northern Europe, in contrast to ancient Greco-Roman, Middle Eastern, Byzantine and western Latin cultures, is underexplored, and hitherto debates usually did not go beyond the regional scholarly circles. The aim of this project, therefore, is to fill this gap with an edited volume that will provide a wide international discussion on this issue.

Proposals for articles on the role and nature of war rituals in both practice and representation (in any of its forms) from across the span of the medieval period are welcome, as are contributions that deal with varying regions of Central, East Central, Eastern and Northern Europe. Comparative and interdisciplinary pieces as those dealing with individual ritual practices are especially welcome. This means those proposals aimed for holistic presentation of broad spectrum of rituals practiced within an individual political community should be avoided.

*Potential subjects include, but are not limited to:*

- Pagan war rituals’ persistence. Christian rites in pagan societies. Christianization of war rituals;
- Religious preparation for combat. Rituals of *profectio bellica* type and purification rituals. Votive offerings, grants to the churches, pledges to secure victory, acts of piety, *humiliatio*;
- Priestly service during military operations. Prayers, blessings, preaching and harangues. Exhorting warriors to deeds of valor. Confession while serving in the field. Holy Masses and communal prayers. Holy Communion and the *viaticum*;
- Holy artifacts taken to the field of battles. Effigies of gods, relics of saints, icons and war banners. True Cross and holy spears. Using magic, divination, and sorcery;
- Postwar rituals of return and social reintegration. Purification of warriors, captives, and booty;
- Ritual thanksgiving for victory. Triumphant *adventus*. Grants offered to divine for support. Trophy monuments. Holy places as memorials of victories. Religious landscapes of warfare;
- Symbolic response to military failure. Lamentation and penance. Rituals of surrender;
- Public religious rites on the “home front”. Liturgy of war. War in liturgical sources;
- Dealing with the dead warriors. Preservation and religious commemoration of the battlefield;
- Religious song as ritual before, during, and after the combat. Calling for supernatural aid through prayer, invocation, singing, and music. Expressing emotions as ritual act.

To submit a proposal please send an abstract of 200-300 words, with about 150 words biographical information to Radosław Kotecki: [radoslaw\\_kotecki@ukw.edu.pl](mailto:radoslaw_kotecki@ukw.edu.pl) (for inquiries, please email at the same address). The deadline for the submission of abstracts is **December 31, 2019**; for the first draft of the article, the deadline is **October 30, 2020**. The final articles are due by **January 10, 2021**. An outcome of the project will be a workshop held in Bydgoszcz, which will serve the discussion over drafts of accepted contributions.

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