

# Szymon Wierzbński

---

## Normans and Other Franks in 11th Century Byzantium: the Careers of the Adventurers before the Rule of Alexius I Comnenus

---

Studia Ceranea : journal of the Waldemar Ceran Research Centre for the History and Culture of the Mediterranean Area and South-East Europe 4, 277-288

---

2014

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

Szymon Wierzbiński (Łódź)

## NORMANS AND OTHER FRANKS IN 11<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY BYZANTIUM: THE CAREERS OF THE ADVENTURERS BEFORE THE RULE OF ALEXIUS I COMNENUS

It is clear that Byzantium was one of the most powerful empires during the Middle Ages. Due to its wealth and prestige it tempted representatives from various nations. Many of them came to Byzantium with the aim of making a career and some of them managed to do so. Among these newcomers most notable group were the mercenaries. Thus, it is not a secret that in the Empire one could meet warriors from all corners of known the world. In this paper I will focus on the Franks, i.e. knights from Western Europe. When we speak about the mentioned group we should bear in mind that the term in question embraced many ethnic groups<sup>1</sup>. The meaning of the word *Frankoi* changed with the time passing as well. While in the 10<sup>th</sup> century it rather referred to Germans, less than 50 years later it applied to all western nations. One should also remember that Byzantines used also other names for western knights, such as Normans<sup>2</sup>. What is more, at the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a new name for mentioned mercenaries appeared, i.e. *Latinoi*<sup>3</sup>. Identification of ethnicity is even more difficult when one attempts to compare sources. Western chroniclers, such as Amatus of Monte Cassino, describing the Norman conquest of south Italy, saw differences even between Normans, French and Burgundians<sup>4</sup>. One cannot say this about Byzantine authors, who generally use one term, i.e. Franks, to name all westerners in Byzantium. On top of that,

<sup>1</sup> R.B. HITCHNER, A. KAZHDAN, *Frankoi*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, ed. A. KAZHDAN, Oxford 1991, p. 803.

<sup>2</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Normans*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 1493–1494.

<sup>3</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perceptron and Realisty from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries*, [in:] *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, Washington 2001, p. 86–89.

<sup>4</sup> *Storia de Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, I, 5, trans. G. SPERDUTI, Cassino 1999, p. 187–188 (cetera: AMATUS). One should stress that about third part of warriors participating in conquest of southern Italy were not Normans, but inhabitants of Brittany, Aquitaine and Burgundy: L.R. MÉNAGER, *Pesanteur et etologie de la colonisation Normande de l'Italie*, [in:] *Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo tempo. Relazioni e comunicazioni nelle prime giornate normalno-sueve*, Bari 1973, p. 202–203, 368–386.

eastern chroniclers often archaize ethnicity of Normans and other Franks, by calling them Celts<sup>5</sup>.

The topic is by no means new. There is number of publication concerning Frankish contribution to the history of Byzantium in certain aspects of later part of the 11<sup>th</sup> century. However, it seems that the impact of the Franks on the history of Byzantium and its relations with the West is still underestimated. This applies particularly to the time before the rule of Alexius I Comnenus, who reshaped the role of mercenaries in Byzantium. I will start with determining the background of contacts between Franks and Byzantines, before the 11<sup>th</sup> century. After that, I will study the changes that took place in the following century. Then, I will list most important ways of career, which allowed the westerners to promote in the Byzantine army or at court. I will also focus on those Franks, who managed to earn recognition and wealth on the East in the 11<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium. Finally, I will try to determine, whether the westerners raised families on the East in the relevant period, before the rule of Alexius I Comnenus.

It is obvious that the people from Western Europe visited Byzantium long before the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Western chroniclers such as Ademar of Chabannes and Rodulf Glaber stress that the Southern Italy was a starting point not only for the Normans but also for other Franks willing to visit the Holy Land<sup>6</sup>. In fact the way to Jerusalem via Italy had a long standing tradition, since already in the year 724 the Anglo-Saxon Willibald took it<sup>7</sup>. From the 9<sup>th</sup> century we have an interesting example of penance-journey, undertaken by two Franks to repent killing their relative. As the anonymous author of *Gesta sanctorum Rotonensium* points out, the two brothers reached as far as Armenia<sup>8</sup>. It is likely, that at least a part of the stream of pilgrims, floating to Jerusalem, visited Constantinople on their return journey. As J. Richards points out, Fulk Nerra visited the Holy Land three times during his life and it is obvious, that he had chance to visit the capital of the Byzantium<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it is likely, that some of the Franks might have well served in Byzantine army, even

<sup>5</sup> *Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis Historiarum*, ed. I. THURN, Berlin–New York 1973, p. 490 (cetera: SKYLITZES); MICHAEL PSELLUS, *Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976–1077)*, VII, 24, v. 22–36, ed. E. RENAULT, Paris 1926–1928, p. 97 (cetera: PSELLUS); *Nicephori Bryennii Historiarum Libri Quattuor*, ed. P. GAUTIER, Bruksela 1975, p. 269 (cetera: BRYENNIOS); *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, I, 4–5, ed. H.G. BECK, A. KAMBYLIS, R. KEYDELL, Berlin 2001, p. 29–30 (cetera: ALEXIAS).

<sup>6</sup> *Chronicon Aquitanicum et Francicum*, ed. J. CHAVANON, Paris, 1897, p. 177–178; *Rodulfi Glabri Historiarum Libri Quinque*, III, 2, ed. M. PROU, Paris 1886, p. 52. Both authors point out that it was a well know route to Jerusalem.

<sup>7</sup> *Vita Willibaldi*, XV, [in:] *MGH.SS*, ed. O. HOLDER-EGGER, Hanover 1887, p. 87. It shows that the route was a widely known, not only in France but also among Anglo-Saxons from heptarchic kingdoms.

<sup>8</sup> *Gesta sanctorum rotonensium*, [in:] *Acta Sanctorum ordinis sancti Benedicti*, t. III, ed J. MABILLON, Paris 1668–1701, p. 8. Though there is no indication that the brothers visited Constantinople, the description of their journey shows that there were no technical obstacles from undertaking even longest travel.

<sup>9</sup> J. RICHARD, *The Crusades 1071–1291*, Cambridge 1999, p. 17.

in 10<sup>th</sup> century. Of course the eastern sources leave no doubt that such employment was a scarce case. However, one of these examples was given by Liutprand of Cremona, who was sent to Constantinople with a diplomatic mission in 969. The mentioned bishop left an interesting and vivid account of his stay in the capital of Byzantium. Liutprand mentions that in the year 969 Nicephorus II Phokas sent reinforcements to the Southern Italy<sup>10</sup>. It is rather interesting, that apart from Byzantine fleet there were also two ships with Frankish soldiers. The contacts between the West and the East took place between the elites as well. Some of them decided to serve the Byzantine emperor, in return for posts and court-favour. Such was the case of Peter, the relative of German emperor, who came to Constantinople during the reign of Basil II (circa 980), and served as *spatharios* and *domestic of excubites*<sup>11</sup>. What is more, the elites of Franks, i.e. inhabitants of France, Italy and Germany, enjoyed a possibility of marriage-consent with the descendents of Byzantine emperors<sup>12</sup>. This was of course a source of great prestige, desired by representatives of new dynasties, like Capetians in France. As K. Ciggaar remarks the splendor of being connected to Byzantine rulers was a probable reason for Hugh Capet's and Ottonian diplomatic actions<sup>13</sup>. Thus, when it comes to presence of the Franks in Byzantium, one can chiefly divide them into a few groups. The first are pilgrims and adventurers, who interacted with Byzantium during their journey. The second are the rank and file soldiers, serving as infantrymen or cavalry mercenaries. The third group is the Franks of noble birth, who went to the East as diplomats who, after more or less turbulent period of time, managed to make a career in the army or administration during their lifetime. The descendants of these form the last category, i.e. acknowledged families of West origins.

As we can see, there were Frankish mercenaries in Byzantine army during the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Still, the golden age for them was yet to come. The first encounters between the Franks and the Byzantines took place at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century and had rather hostile character. The adventurous bands of knights from different regions of France (especially from Normandy) found employment in south Italian lands of Lombard nobility. Most of them were hostile toward Byzantine power, which occasionally led to confrontations. That was the case in 1018, when Basil Boioannes defeated the army of Meles, the rebel Lombard<sup>14</sup>. Among his war-

<sup>10</sup> LIUTPRAND, *Relatio de legatione Constantinopolitana*, 29, [in:] *Liutprandi Cremonensis Opera Omnia*, ed. P. CHIESA, Turnholti 1998, p. 199.

<sup>11</sup> *Sovety i rasskazy Kekaumena*, 81, ed. G. G. LITAVRIN, Sankt Peterburg 2003, p. 281–282.

<sup>12</sup> CONSTANTINUS PORPHYROGENITUS, *De administrando imperio*, 13, ed. GY. MORAVCSIK, R.J.H. JENKINS, Washington 1967, p. 70–73. As Constantine VII stressed, the permission comes from the Roman tradition of these western lands.

<sup>13</sup> K. CIGGAAR, *Western Travelers to Constantinople, the West and Byzantium, 962–1204: Cultural and Political Relations*, New York, 1996, p. 168.

<sup>14</sup> *Storia de' Normanni di Amato di Montecassino*, I, 22, trans. G. SPERDUTI, Cassino 1999, p. 191–192; *Chronicon rerum in regno Neapolitano gestarum*, a. 1019, [in:] *MGH.SRLI*, ed. G.H. PERTZ, V, Hanover 1844, p. 57.

rriors were 250 Normans. Though sources differ when it comes to the leadership of the Franks, it is doubtless that the Byzantines were victorious<sup>15</sup>. However, this was not the only group that served Lombards at the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> century. According to a document included in *Syllabus Graecorum Membranarum*, the same Basil Boioannes employed another group of Franks and set them in Troia fortress in the year 1019<sup>16</sup>. What is especially interesting is that, the mercenaries must have lived in Italy for some time before they pledged allegiance to Basil, they served the counts of Ariano (*ton areianiton kometon*). These two events prove, that the Franks earned the reputation of brave soldiers very quickly and that gave them a chance to serve in Byzantine army. The contingent of mercenaries from Troia proved not only to be useful but also faithful. To argue this thesis one can invoke the document, concerning the same Franks, issued in 1024, by the same Basil Boioannes<sup>17</sup>. This proves that the mentioned soldiers served for considerable period of time (as for mercenaries) and some of them might have been promoted.

Another opportunity for a career in Byzantine military and civil state apparatus came in the period during 1035–1038 first of the two notable events, that provided the Franks with a chance to serve Byzantium in the mentioned period was the visit of Duke of Normandy, Robert I the Magnificent to Constantinople. As Rodulf Glaber points out, the duke came with numerous entourage<sup>18</sup>. Both K. Ciggaar and E.M.C. van Houts suggest that at least some of the knights took advantage of the opportunity and entered Byzantine service<sup>19</sup>. Others might have established contacts, enabling them to send their sons to Byzantium, as in the case of Odo I Stigand. The anonymous author of the Chronicle of *Saint-Barbe-en Auge* leaves no doubt, that Odo II Stigand and his brother Robert served in Constantinople as mercenaries around the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>20</sup>. A few years later, the Empire essayed another attempt to re-conquer Sicily from the hands of Muslims. The expedition was led by George Maniaces during 1038–1041 and it was described in different sources, which proves that it was a loud enterprise<sup>21</sup>. Both western and

<sup>15</sup> Amatus states that it was Gilbert Drengot (AMATUS, I, 19–20, p. 190–191), Orderic Vitalis points to Osmund (*Orderici Vitalis Ecclesiasticae Historiae Libri Tredecim*, III, 3, ed. J. RENOARD, Paris 1838–1855, p. 53), while Rodulf Glaber states that it was Ralf/Rodulf (*Rodulfi Glabri Historiarum Libri Quinque*, III, 2–4, ed. M. PROU, Paris 1886, p. 52–55 – cetera: GLABER).

<sup>16</sup> *Finium agri Troiani descriptio faeta a Basilio Boiano Prol Ospdthario Catapano Italiae*, a. 1019, XVIII, [in:] *Syllabus Graecorum Membranarum*, ed. F. TRINCHERA, Neapol 1865, p. 18 (SYLLABUS).

<sup>17</sup> SYLLABUS, a. 1024, XX, p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> GLABER, p. 108.

<sup>19</sup> K. CIGGAAR, *Byzantine Marginalia to the Norman Conquest*, ANSt 9, 1986, p. 44; E.M.C. HOUTS, *Normandy and Byzantium in the Eleventh Century*, B 55, 1985, p. 544.

<sup>20</sup> *La Chronique de Saint-Barbe-en Auge*, ed. R.N. SAUVAGE, Caen 1907, p. 57–58. The first of the two brothers probably served as *tagmatophylax* and *protospatharius*.

<sup>21</sup> Among many sources one should list the following: GUILLAUME DE POUILLE, *La geste de Robert Guiscard*, I, ed. MARGUERITE MATHIEU, IV, Palermo 1961 [ST, 4], p. 108–115 (cetera: WILLIAM OF APULIA; *De Rebus Gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae Colitis, et Roberti Guiscardi Ducis fratris eius*, I, 7, ed. F. CIOLFI, Cassino 2002, p. 36–39 (cetera: MALATERRA); SKYLITZES, p. 403, 425, 484; *Georgius Cedrenus Ioannis Skylitzae Ope (Synopsis historiké)*, t. II, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1839, p. 517 (cetera: CEDERENUS).

eastern sources confirm that a significant number of the Franks participated in the expedition. According to Geoffrey Malaterra, the prince of Salerno and Capua, i.e. Gaimar, send 300 Normans from Aversa to assist the Byzantines<sup>22</sup>. Yet, that was not the only contingent of Franks taking part in the expedition. As George Cedrenus points out, the Byzantines recruited 500 Franks *from behind the Alps*<sup>23</sup>. The invasion is famous not because of its aim, but because its outcome. As we know, many Franks eventually deserted the Byzantines because of unjust division of war spoils and mistreatment of their leaders<sup>24</sup>. The desertion of the Franks proved very costly for the Byzantines, since the mercenaries decided to compensate the lack of pay by plundering south Italian lands, belonging to the Empire<sup>25</sup>. However, it is clear that not all of the Frankish soldiers were so displeased with the employment in Byzantine military sources. J. Shepard argues, that the desertion was neither that common within the contingent, nor it happened before the time of Michael Dokeinannus' governance<sup>26</sup>.

One of the Franks, who certainly remained loyal to the Byzantines was Hervé, known in the eastern sources as Frankopoulos<sup>27</sup>. In fact, we have a reason to believe that the mentioned knight served Byzantium, probably with a number of other Franks, during the period between circa 1038–1056 John Skylitzes, speaking about Hervé's revolt in 1056, states that *he fought alongside Maniaces on Sicily and claimed there many victories, staying openly the enforcer of the Romans from that moment until now*<sup>28</sup>. The mentioned Frank is also a proof that the Byzantines recruited at least two groups of Franks for the expedition<sup>29</sup>. One should remember that the first contingent came from Gaimar of Salerno and these soldiers stationed in Aversa for some time. On the other hand, Cedrenus states that the Franks came directly from France. K. Ciggaar favors the possibility that it might have also been Hervé's case<sup>30</sup>. Also P. Marquand notices that the knight's name was popular rather among Bretons, who of course formed a significant part of the adventurous

<sup>22</sup> MALATERRA, I, 7, p. 36–39. Since Rainulf of Aversa was the first Norman to hold notable lands in Italy, this was the place most of the newcomers tried to reach, in order to enter mercenary service. One should stress that the Normans and other Franks increased in numbers quickly, since the adventurers started to conquer Apulia within a decade: J.-M. MARTIN, *La Pouille du VI<sup>e</sup> au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Rome 1993, p. 520–526, 715–743.

<sup>23</sup> CEDRENUS, II, p. 545.

<sup>24</sup> MALATERRA, I, 8, p. 38–41; WILLIAM OF APULIA, I, 206–209, p. 110: *Cumque triumphato remeans Dochianus ab hoste, praemia militibus Regina solveret urbe, Graecis donatis, nihil Ardoinus habere, donorum potuit, miser immunisque remansit.*

<sup>25</sup> J.-C. CHEYNET, *Pouvoir et contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*, Paris 1996, no. 52, p. 53.

<sup>26</sup> J. SHEPARD, *The uses of the Franks in eleventh-century Byzantium*, ANSt 15, 1993, p. 283; IDEM, *Byzantium's last Sicilian expedition: Skylitzes testimony*, RSBN 14/16, 1977, p. 152.

<sup>27</sup> C.M. BRAND, *Hervé Frankopoulos*, [in:] ODB, vol. II, p. 922.

<sup>28</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 484.

<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, J. Shepard argues that the Byzantines recruited only one group and these were the Normans send by Gaimar.

<sup>30</sup> K. CIGGAAR, *Byzantine marginalia...*, p. 45. See also: G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Deus chefs Normands des armées byzantines au XI siècle*, RH 16, 1881, p. 294.

Franks<sup>31</sup>. Whatever the case, Hervé was the first of many known Franks who made a career as a foreigner in Byzantium.

During the rule of Constantine IX Monomachus a period of prosperity for the Frankish mercenaries began. The knights from Western Europe saved the emperor during the revolt of Leo Tornicius in 1047<sup>32</sup>. Also William of Apulia confirms that Constantine had a very positive attitude toward Franks and he wanted to use them against the Turks, who were raiding the eastern border of Byzantium<sup>33</sup>. For the knights from Western Europe this was to become the main place of service. Even before Tornicius' revolt Franks were probably used during campaigns against Turks and Armenians, as in the case of annexing Ani in 1045<sup>34</sup>. This explains why the contingent couldn't help during the siege of Constantinople in 1047<sup>35</sup>. Five years later Hervé and his men were transferred to the west, in order to fight the Petchenges and they may have been reinforced with the knights who came to suppress the revolt<sup>36</sup>. It is clear, that by the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the number of Franks serving in Byzantium increased substantially. However, we have a number of sources, allowing us to believe that, at this stage, there were two kinds of westerners in the East. The first group was the knights who came to Constantinople (and stationed there) and other big cities of the Empire. The second were the rank and file soldiers grouped around commanders like Hervé, serving probably for different periods of time.

Let's start with the first group. According to William of Jumièges, when Yves of Bellême, bishop of Sees, came to Constantinople in 1049/1050, he received generous donations from Normans and other Franks, who lived there<sup>37</sup>. We have no

<sup>31</sup> P. MARQUAND, *Cultural connections between Brittany and Aquitaine in the Middle Ages (10<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries): The Matter of Britain' and the 'Chansons de Geste, [in:] Mythes, littérature, langue, I, Des Mythes a la Litterature*, ed. H. LE BIHAN, Rennes 2008, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> SKYLITZES (p. 439–442) mentions only Leon's revolt. However, we have a poem of John Mauropous, praising Emperor's actions against the usurper, i.e. employment of mercenaries from the West: *Iohannis Euchaitorum metropolitae quae in codice vaticano graeco 676 supersunt*, ed. I. BOLLIG, P. DE LAGARDE, Göttingen 1882, p. 178–195. See also: J.-C. CHEYNET, *op. cit.*, no. 64, 65, p. 59. J. Shepard also argues that the poet speaks about the Franks (J. SHEPARD, *The uses of the Franks...*, p. 285).

<sup>33</sup> WILLIAM OF APULIA, II, 39–54, p. 135.

<sup>34</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 435–436; *Histoire d'Arménie, comprenant la fin du Royaume d'Ani et le commencement de l'invasion des Seldjoukides par Arisdaguès de Lasdiverd*, 10, trans. E. PRUD' HOMME, ed. B. DUPRAT, Paris 1864, p. 66–67 (cetera: ARISTAKES); A. TAYLOR, N. G. GARSOIAN, *Ani*, p. 98–99; R. BEDROSIAN, *The Armenian People from Ancien to Modern Times*, ed. R. G. HOVANNISIAN, New York 1997, p. 243–245; J. DUDEK, *Pęknięte zwierciadło. Kryzys i odbudowa wizerunku władcy bizantyńskiego od 1056 roku do ok. 1095 roku*, Zielona Góra 2009, p. 24, 58.

<sup>35</sup> PSELLUS, VI, 121, 3–6, p. 28; CEDRENIUS, II, 561–562; J.-C. CHEYNET, *op. cit.*, no. 64, p. 59.

<sup>36</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 467, 484–485.

<sup>37</sup> *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum of William à Jumièges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*, VII, 15, ed. E. M. C. VAN HOUTS, Oxford 1995, p. 116–119 (cetera: WILHELM OF JUMIÈGES): *Igitur Apuliam et inde Constantinopolim perrexit, et a divitibus cognatis ac amicis suis multum pecunie congessit, donoque imperatoris de ligno Dominice Crucis karum minus deportavit. Reuersus autem Sagium ecclesiam cepit tam magnam edificare, ut successors eius Rodbertus et Girardus ac Serlo nequiverint eam per .xl. annos consummare.*

information allowing us to precise who these *amicis suis* were<sup>38</sup>. Still, their wealth must have been significant and it is unlikely that they served as rank and file mercenaries. In fact, we can assume that the Franks in question gained a degree of influence at the court. The earlier mentioned pair of brothers, i.e. Odo II Stigand and Robert Stigand, is a good example for this. The relevant passage in the *Chronicle of Saint-Barbe-en Auge* has already been investigated by E. Amsellem and K. Ciggaar<sup>39</sup>. According to the anonymous author, the first of the brothers earned not only a position among other mercenaries (*tagmatophylax* – commander of mercenaries) but also a court dignity (*protospatharius*), during his stay in the imperial palace<sup>40</sup>. As E. Amsellem and K. Ciggaar point out, the brothers served one after another between 1057/8–1065<sup>41</sup>. The existence of numerous Norman/Frankish groups in Constantinople is further confirmed by the work of Lampert of Hersfeld<sup>42</sup>. According to the author of the *Annales*, Robert I of Flanders (known also as Robert the Frisian) was persuaded by the *legationibus Northmannorum, qui sub imperatore Constantinopolitano militabant* to enter Byzantine service<sup>43</sup>. It is clear that all Byzantine soldiers served the Empire, however it is also obvious that author's aim was to stress that soldiers in question were of higher rank and stayed in the capital of Byzantium. As K. Ciggaar argues, this might have taken place during 50ties or 60ties of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. during count's early years<sup>44</sup>. Finally, we have a Skylitzes' relation concerning Byzantine civil war between Michael VI and the usurper, emperor-to-be, Isaac Comnenus. The author of the source points out that on Michael's side certain Randolph (along with his men) fought, a Frank in the rank of *patricius*<sup>45</sup>. This is also the earliest example of a Norman/Frank who managed to achieve such a distinction on the Byzantine court<sup>46</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> M. ANGOLD, *Knowledge of Byzantine History in the West: The Norman Historians (Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries)*, ANSt 25, 2003, p. 29.

<sup>39</sup> E. AMSELLEM, *Les Stigand: des Normands à Constantinople*, REB 57, 1999, p. 283–288; K. CIGGAAR, *Byzantine marginalia...*, p. 49–55.

<sup>40</sup> *La Chronique de Saint-Barbe-en Auge...*, p. 57–58: *In tempore ipsius Guillermi Nothi, gallice Bastart, ducis Normannorum, ipse autem Odo cujusdam Romanorum imperatoris consanguineus fuit, necnon a regibus Francorum et Anglorum nobilitatem accepit. Communioni, Constantinoque Ducillo, imperatoris Constantinopolitani tribus annis in palacio prothopataris et thamatephilatus servivit.*

<sup>41</sup> K. CIGGAAR, *Byzantine marginalia...*, p. 54–55; E. AMSELLEM, *op. cit.*, p. 285–287. The Normans might have stayed long enough to see abdication of Isaac Comnen and the ascension of throne by Constantine X Ducas: J.-C. CHEYNET, *op. cit.*, no. 82, p. 70.

<sup>42</sup> *Lamperii monachi Hersfeldensis Annales*, XIII, ed. W.D. FRITZ, A. SCHMIDT, Berlin 1973, p. 138.

<sup>43</sup> See the full passage: *Dehinc assumpto plebeito habitu inter eos qui Ierosolimam causa orationis pergebant Constantinopolim ire parabat, vocatus eo crebris legationibus Northmannorum, qui sub imperatore Constantinopolitano militabant, quique ei, si illuc veniret, tocius Graeciae principatum pollicebantur (ibidem, p. 138).*

<sup>44</sup> K. CIGGAAR, *Byzantine marginalia...*, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 494–495, 495–496.

<sup>46</sup> His is even more striking when one thinks that only 21 years passed since Robert I the Magnificent came to Constantinople to the moment we hear about Randolph's rank.



The second group of Franks in Byzantium was rank and file soldiers, led by ambitious commanders. It seems probable that only the latter were of noble birth and came to Byzantium with some resources<sup>47</sup>. A good example of such adventurer is, already mentioned, Hervé Frankopoulos. Unlike Franks serving in the capital for some time, Hervé lived in Byzantium for many years<sup>48</sup>. During that time, he managed to become a wealthy man, with land and his own residence in Dagarave, in Armeniakon *theme*<sup>49</sup>. Needless to say, the Franks subordinate to him didn't have such luxuries, having to live in barracks or camps<sup>50</sup>. The fact that Hervé stayed at the province doesn't mean that he lacked ambitions to promote within the social hierarchy. Apart from being rich, Hervé also aspired to titles and court dignities. The decline of Michael VI to honor him with the title of *magister* was the very reason of the ambitious Frank's rebellion<sup>51</sup>. However, we know that Hervé eventually acquired what he wanted. With the ascension of Isaac Comnenus, the military aristocracy of the East regained power within the Empire<sup>52</sup>. The new emperor not only favored great families, but also rewarded those of the commanders, who were loyal to him during the revolt<sup>53</sup>. We have a strong basis to assume that one of these was Hervé Frankopoulos. A proof for this is a preserved lead seal, belonging to the mentioned warrior, naming him *magister*, *vestiarites* and *stratelates*<sup>54</sup>. Apart from acquiring the desired title of *magister*, Hervé gained a court dignity, i.e. *vestiarites*. If A. Kazhdan was right, stating that these courtiers promoted within the hierarchy to the closest companionship of emperor during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, this was great honor for a foreigner like Hervé<sup>55</sup>. The mentioned mercenary was just the first from a long string of Franks, who made a career in Byzantium.

After execution of Hervé in 1063, to which he was sentenced for treason, the leadership of Frankish contingent in Byzantium was granted to Robert Crispin<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>47</sup> However, we have little information concerning social structure of these mercenaries. It is clear that most of the Franks in question served as cavalry, so they have to be wealthy enough to pay for the upkeep of mount.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, in case of Hervé we can be sure that he served in the East from 1038 (from the Maniaces' campaign) till 1063 when he was executed for treason: SKYLITZES, p. 484; *The Chronicle of Matthew of Edessa. Translated from the Original Armenian with a Commentary and Introduction by Ara Edmond Dostourian*, 17–19, Lanham–New York–London 1984, p. 99–101 (cetera: MATTHEW OF EDESSA).

<sup>49</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 484–485; CEDRENIUS, II, p. 616–617.

<sup>50</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 485, 490–491; J.-C. CHEYNET, *op.cit.*, 80, p. 68.

<sup>51</sup> SKYLITZES, p. 484.

<sup>52</sup> A. CUTLER, C. M. BRAND, *Isaac I Komnenos*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, p. 1011–1012; J. DUDEK, *op. cit.*, p. 49–52.

<sup>53</sup> Isaac might have tried to buy the support of most influential leaders of mercenaries, and Hervé was certainly one of these.

<sup>54</sup> G. SCHLUMBERGER, *op. cit.*, RH 16, 1881, p. 295. Więcej na temat wspomnianej pieczęci czytaj także w innej pracy wspomnianego badacza: G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Sigillographie de l'empire byzantin*, Paris 1884, p. 656–660; A. KAZHDAN, *Magistros*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, p. 1267; A. KAZHDAN, *Vestiarites*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 2163; A. KAZHDAN, *Stratelates*, [in:] *ODB*, III, p. 1965; C. M. BRAND, *Hervé Frankopoulos*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, p. 922.

<sup>55</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Vestiarites*, p. 2163.

<sup>56</sup> MATTHEW OF EDESSA, 19, p. 101.

Unlike in the case of his predecessor, we have quite a lot of information about Robert. It is rather certain that he was a Norman. His father was Gilbert Crispin of Tillières, who died circa 1045<sup>57</sup>. Unlike his two brothers, Gilbert and William, the lord of Neaufles, Robert left for Spain, where he participated in the siege of Barbastro<sup>58</sup>. The mentioned Frank was leading the contingent for a considerably long time, since he served Byzantium from around 1063 until his death in 1072<sup>59</sup>. We don't know what functions or dignities he enjoyed, but it is probable that he acquired some, if not all, honors of Hervé. In our only source concerning the career of Robert we hear, that Michael VII gave him many presents and court honors, in order to buy his loyalty in the upcoming war against Roman IV Diogenes<sup>60</sup>. After Robert's death in 1072, the contingent was led by Roussel of Bailleul, who was the last leader commanding all the Normans and other Franks serving in Byzantium<sup>61</sup>. The seal belonging to the mentioned mercenary gives him the title *vestes*<sup>62</sup>. It is important to say that the rank of the title in question was a bit lower than *magister*<sup>63</sup>. Thus, either the seal belongs to the period before Roussel was at the height of his career, or he simply didn't earn as prestigious a rank as Hervé. However, both Franks were wealthy enough to have a rich private residence and Roussel could afford paying a ransom for himself, after he was taken captive during battle against the Turks<sup>64</sup>.

Apart from the mentioned three, who evidently influenced Byzantine policy during the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, there were other Franks, who managed to promote within the eastern hierarchy much higher than mentioned Odo II (*tagmatophylax* and *protospatharios*). Among them one should list certain William (Geleelmos)<sup>65</sup>. According to W. Seibt and M.L. Zarnitz, the two preserved seals (one dated 1050–1060, second dated circa 1068–1085) belonged to the same person. The first seal names William *hypatos* and *strategos*, while the other one gives him the title of *magister* and *strategos*. The knight in question must have been successful as, even the lower of his court dignities (*hypatos*), acquired around the

<sup>57</sup> L.-R. MÉNAGER, *Inventaire des familles normandes et franques émigrées en Italie méridionale et en Sicile (XI<sup>e</sup>-XII<sup>e</sup> siècles)* [in:] *Roberto il Guiscardo e il suo tempo: atti delle prime giornate normanno-sveve*, Bari 1991, p. 380–381.

<sup>58</sup> M. CRISPIN, *On the Origins of the Crispin Family*, [in:] *The Normans in European History*, ed. E.M.C. VAN HOUTS, Manchester 2000, p. 84–85; AMATUS, I, 8, p. 188.

<sup>59</sup> PSELLUS, VII, 39, 1–17, p. 169–170; MIGUEL ATTALIATES, *Historia*, Madrid 2002, p. 93–95, 126–127 (cetera: ATTALIATES [= NR.BGLAP, 15]; *Excerpta ex Breviario historico Ioannis Scylitzae Curopalatae*, II, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn 1839, p. 691, 708 (cetera: SKYLITZES' CONTINUATION); J. BONAREK, *Bizancjum w dobie bitwy pod Mantzikert. Znaczenie zagrożenia seldżuckiego w polityce bizantyńskiej w XI wieku*, Kraków 2011, p. 138–139, 158.

<sup>60</sup> ATTALIATES, p. 126.

<sup>61</sup> BRYENNOS, II, 4, p. 146–149.

<sup>62</sup> J. - C. CHEYNET, *Sceaux de la collection Khoury*, no. 20, RN 159, 2003, p. 436–437.

<sup>63</sup> N. OIKONOMIDÉS, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IX<sup>e</sup> et X<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Paris 1972, p. 292.

<sup>64</sup> The ransom was paid by his wife: ATTALIATES, p. 146.

<sup>65</sup> W. SEIBT, M. L. ZARNITZ, *Das Byzantinische Bleisiegel als Kunstwerk*, Wien 1997, p. 92.

middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was still higher in the hierarchy than *protospatharios*, given to other Franks in Byzantium<sup>66</sup>.

Finally, we should add that among western courtiers in Byzantium one could find not only Franks, but also Germans<sup>67</sup>. Occasionally one can mix the two nations, for even the Byzantines happened to treat them as a single group<sup>68</sup>. We know that they were serving in Byzantium at least since 1069<sup>69</sup>. They were still present in Constantinople during Alexius I Comnenus rebellion against Nicephorus III Botaniates in 1080<sup>70</sup>. Though little is known about representatives of this group, it is certain, that at least some of them managed to find a place at the court. One of such people was probably an anonymous German courtier, responsible (according to Attaliates) for Robert Crispin's banishment to Abydos<sup>71</sup>. The accusations were either true, or the instigator was reliable to Roman IV Diogenes, since the Frankish commander was arrested before any proof was given<sup>72</sup>. This all shows that Frankish/German presence in Byzantium during the 11<sup>th</sup> century was much more intense than one could think.

According to a popular view, the 11<sup>th</sup> century was a good period for the westerners in Byzantium. Apart from promoting in the social hierarchy or building considerable wealth, some of the Franks also managed to enter into marriage notable Byzantine families. However, most of the scholars, such as A. Kazhdan, J. Nesbitt or A. Gambella, point out to those of the westerners, who came to Byzantium considerably late in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Alexius I Comnenus<sup>73</sup>. It is clear that this view is generally true. However, there is at least one example of a Frank who managed to raise a notable family on the East much earlier. The mercenary in question is, of course, Hervé. It is striking that written sources don't mention anything about his life in Byzantium, despite the fact, that he lived there for almost 25 years<sup>74</sup>. There is also no information, whether or not he raised a family, as in the case of Roussel of Bailleul<sup>75</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> N. OIKONOMIDÉS, *op. cit.*, Paris 1972, p. 294.

<sup>67</sup> R.B. HITCHNER, *Alemanni*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. I, p. 56; compare with: R.B. HITCHNER, *Germanoi*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. II, p. 845.

<sup>68</sup> The author points out that the Germans was sometimes also called the Franks: SKYLITZES' CONTINUATION, p. 691–692.

<sup>69</sup> What is interesting we know that due to written sources, not the chrysobulls: *Ioannis Zonarae Epitome Historiarum libri XIII–XVIII*, XVIII, 13, ed. T. BÜTTNER-WOBST, Leipzig 1897, p. 696; ATTALIATES, p. 94–95; SKYLITZES' CONTINUATION, p. 691.

<sup>70</sup> ALEXIAS, II, 9–10, p. 79–81.

<sup>71</sup> ATTALIATES, p. 94–95. The author of the source stress that Crispin was unjustly accused (κατηγορηθῆναι σφοδρῶς).

<sup>72</sup> SKYLITZES' CONTINUATION, p. 679–680.

<sup>73</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Latins and Franks in Byzantium: Perceptron and Reality from the Eleventh to the Twelfth Centuries* [in:] *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, ed. A.E. LAIOU, R. PARVIZ MOTTAHEDEH, Washington 2001, p. 83–100; J. NESBITT, *Some observations about the Roger family*, NR 1, 2004, p. 358–368; A. GAMBELLA, *Le origini latine della famiglia bizantina Petralifa*, ASMV 1999, p. 75–76.

<sup>74</sup> During the period between 1038–1063.

<sup>75</sup> ATTALIATES, p. 146.

However, there is one seal which allows casting some light on this matter. It belonged to a certain courtier or commander in the rank of *protospatharios*, whose name was Nicephorus Frankopoulos (*Phraggopoulos*)<sup>76</sup>. As J. C. Cheynet points out, the seal comes from the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century<sup>77</sup>. It is clear that its owner bore a Byzantine name. However, the fact that he was nicknamed Frankopoulos allows us to assume, that either he was descended from a knight from Normandy or France, who served the Empire, or he was a Frank himself<sup>78</sup>. The eastern provenience of the name suggests that its owner was born in Byzantium though. The fact that Nicephorus was *protospatharios* indicates that either he himself was of noble birth or his father, living on the East for some time, had connections allowing him to acquire the court dignity for his son. In the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century the only Frank in position to do so was Hervé Frankopoulos. Though the mentioned knight was executed in 1063, it is possible that he left a child/children, who in time raised their own family/families.

We know that such house did exist. What is more, it is agreed that later in the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> century the *Phraggopouli* was an influential family, who traced its origins from the West. Among them one should list Nicholas Frankopoulos, who achieved the title of *protonobelissimohypertatos*<sup>79</sup>. As V. Laurent points out, the courtier in question lived around the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>80</sup>. Another known Frankopoulos was Constantine. As R. Janin proves, the descendent of the mentioned family was a fleet commander during the reign of Alexios III Angelos<sup>81</sup>. There is no doubt that both Nicholas and Constantine belonged to one family, whose founder was probably Hervé. Thus, it seems that Nicephorus might have been the missing element of the genealogy. It is clear that *Phraggopouli* couldn't match with other Byzantine families of western descent, like Petraliphai, Raoul or Rogerioi<sup>82</sup>. Still, it seems that this was the first Frankish-Byzantine family of significance raised on the East.

Summing up, the Franks maintained contacts with Byzantium long before the 11<sup>th</sup> century. It is certain, that at first the westerners visited Constantinople on their return journey from pilgrimage. The scarce written evidence show that during the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Franks were rather of German/East Frankonian provenience. However, in the following century the situation changed. Many French/West Frankonian nobles, such as Fulk Nerra or Robert I the Magnificent visited

<sup>76</sup> J.C. CHEYNET, D. THEODORIDIS, *Sceaux byzantins de la collection D. Theodoridis. Les sceaux patronymiques*, Paris 2010, p. 178.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>78</sup> A. KAZHDAN, A. BUTLER, *Phrangopoulos*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 1671.

<sup>79</sup> V. LAURENT, *Légendes sigillographiques et familles byzantines*, EO 34, 1931, p. 468.

<sup>80</sup> This is the latest date, since after 1150 the title wasn't in use any more: V. LAURENT, *op. cit.*, p. 470.

<sup>81</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. I.A. VAN DIETEN, Berlin–New York 1975, p. 528–529; R. JANIN, *Les Francs au service des "Byzantins"*, EO 29, 1930, p. 71.

<sup>82</sup> A. KAZHDAN, *Petraliphai*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 1643; IDEM, *Raoul*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 1771; IDEM, *Rogeros*, [in:] *ODB*, vol. III, p. 1802. Representatives of mentioned houses managed to marry into royal family and some of theirs representatives held such prestigious court titles as *caesar*.

Byzantium as well. On this occasion, some sort of diplomatic or personal ties with the Byzantine court might have been built (which the story of Stigand family seems to suggest). At the same time, the Normans and other Franks migrated to Southern Italy where they strived to acquire land and wealth, which, in turn, resulted in confrontation with Byzantines. Both processes gave the Empire a chance to notice that the westerners were capable soldiers and could be used against Byzantium's enemies. After their participation in the Sicilian expedition (*circa* 1040) the Franks loyal to Byzantium were directed to the East, in order to fight off Seldjuk's threat. Because the western knights served best as cavalry formations, their commanders gained broad power over the contingent, which strengthened their own position, granted court dignities and titles, as well as enabled acquiring wealth. In the same time, Franks of noble birth served in Constantinople, but it is difficult to determine whether they served as *tagmata* (elite) cavalry or courtiers only. Though both groups of Franks were promoted within Byzantine social hierarchy, only the commanders of Eastern contingent, such as Roussel or Hervé, gathered sufficient resources to show political aspirations and raise notable families. As a result of Turkish takeover of Asia Minor and an internal war in Byzantium, these commanders eventually perished and they families lost significance. From the relevant period only Hervé's family managed to rebuilt their position.

**Abstract.** The paper examines the Frankish presence in Byzantium during 11<sup>th</sup> century. It was stressed that the mentioned period was the time of a great influx of westerners to the East. At first, most of them visited Constantinople as pilgrims during return journey from the Holy Land. The author points out that the term Franks (*Frankoi*) was basically attributed to the Eastern Franks/Germans, while in the course of time the Byzantines started to use it to identify rather Western Franks (i.e. French, Normans, Burgundians etc.). The author studies the circumstances in which the new mercenaries and adventurers meet the Empire, trying to define the reason of their success. Another issue investigated in the text is the extent to which Franks got promoted within the social hierarchy in Byzantium during the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Finally, the author argues that before the presence of great families such as *Petraliphai*, *Raoul* or *Rogerioi* there was at least one house of Frankish descent, which was raised significantly earlier and whose founder was Hervé Frankopoulos.

**Keywords:** Franks, Normans, Byzantium, mercenaries, genealogy

Szymon Wierzbiński  
ul. Pisankowa 9  
94 – 281 Łódź  
Polska  
szymonwierzbinski@op.pl