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NORMANDY AND BYZANTIUM IN THE ELEVENTH CENTURY

I should like to discuss Duke Robert the Magnificent's pilgrimage to Jerusalem and his alleged visit to the Byzantine emperor in 1035 (*). The story of his pilgrimage can be found in contemporary sources, whereas his visit to Constantinople is only told by the author of the so-called B-redaction of the *Gesta Normannorum Ducum* (*GND*)⁽¹⁾, the official chronicle of the ducal house of Normandy. Neither the date nor the provenance of this fairy-tale like story are known. Although its legendary elements have been discussed by scholars, a very important passage of the narrative has escaped their attention. I propose to reexamine the contents of the story, to reconstruct its background and to place it in the wider context of Norman-French relations with Byzantium in the eleventh century. Information about Byzantium in Norman and French sources is scarce; but an inventory of what was known about this country may help to fill in the gaps existing in modern historiography on this subject.

According to the anecdote in the B-redaction of the *GND* Duke Robert went to Constantinople on his way to Jerusalem. Upon his arrival at the imperial capital he ordered his mule to be shod with gold. Not one of his men dared to pick up the golden horseshoes once the mule had shaken them off. By behaving as he did, Duke Robert wished to teach the Greeks a lesson. For they considered the Franks greedy for gold – gold they stole from other people.

(*) Papers representing earlier versions of this article were given in 1984 to the Byzantine Seminar in Cambridge and the Medieval Society in Cardiff. The author wishes to acknowledge the financial support of the Netherlands Organisation for the Advancement of Pure Research (Z.W.O.).

(1) GUILLAUME DE JUMIÈGES, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, ed. J. MARX, Rouen-Paris, 1914, pp. 112-113.

Watching the duke on his mule, the Greeks were surprised to see how the Franks despised their own gold and did not seem to care about the precious metal at all.

The tale about the golden horseshoes is pure fiction. In Scandinavian sagas we find the same story told about Harold Hardrada, one of the Varangians in Constantinople in the 1040s, and about Sigurd the "Jerusalemfarer" who came to visit the Byzantine emperor in about 1108⁽²⁾. In a late 12th-century text written in the German monastery of Werden a similar story occurs concerning Manigold of Werden who visited Constantinople in the 1020s⁽³⁾. The B-redaction of the *GND* in existence in about 1100 is the oldest witness for the golden horseshoes-tale.

The anecdote continues by narrating that Duke Robert after arriving at the emperor's palace sat next to him without being invited to do so. The emperor looked at him and asked him whether he was Robert, king of the Franks, who having so generously and royally gathered military troops, was eager to visit the Holy Sepulchre. The duke answered that he was not the king, but one of his most distinguished magnates. He had come to him to see and worship the relics of Christ's Passion as well as those of his saints who were venerated in Constantinople. He had also come lest he be blamed for arrogance by making the journey through Asia and disdaining to ask for the emperor's authorisation and permission to do so⁽⁴⁾.

(2) G. PARIS, *Sur un épisode d'Aimeri de Narbonne*, in *Romania*, IX (1880), pp. 515-546, esp. pp. 524-534; R. LOUIS, *À propos du pèlerinage de Robert le Libéral à Constantinople et Jérusalem : les ducs de Normandie dans les chansons de geste*, in *Byzantion*, XXVII (1958), pp. 391-419, esp. pp. 394-396; S. BLÖNDAL, *The Varangians of Byzantium. An Aspect of Byzantine Military History* translated, revised and rewritten by B. S. BENEDIKZ, Cambridge, 1978, pp. 134-139; C. H. HASKINS, *Norman Institutions*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1918, pp. 264-276.

(3) BERTHOLDUS WERDENSIS, *Quomodo portio sanctae crucis Werdeam pervenerit*, ed. O. HOLDER-EGGER, *MGH, SS*, XV, pp. 767-770.

(4) GUILLAUME DE JUMIÈGES, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113: *Veniens ante imperatorem, iniussus sedit iuxta eum. Ille itaque imperator, considerans et admirans honorabilem uultum ipsius et elegantem formam, per interpretem requirit si ipse Francorum rex Rodbertus esset, qui tam liberaliter et regaliter militares agens turmas, sepulcrum Domini Iesu uisitare studebat. Responsum est non eum regem esse, sed de summis Francorum principibus seu optimatibus unum singularem existere et ideo illuc eum uenisse, ut Christi patrocinia et sanctorum eius merita,*

This passage contains several points of interest, although some arouse suspicion. It shows the duke sitting next to the emperor, which contravened Byzantine notion of protocol. No one was allowed to sit next to the emperor, let alone without being asked to do so. The emperor, whose name is not given, but who must have been Michael IV (1034-1041), then confused Duke Robert of Normandy with King Robert the Pious of France (996-1031). This poses a problem of chronology, because King Robert died in 1031, four years before Duke Robert went to the East. There is no other source which suggests that King Robert or his successor Henry I (1031-1060) ever supplied troops to go to Jerusalem, if that is what the passage means, or went to visit the Holy Sepulchre⁽⁵⁾. The duke went on to say that he was one of the king's magnates who had come to visit Constantinople as a pilgrim. He also gave a second and probably more important reason for his arrival at the imperial capital, namely to ask the emperor permission to cross his country on his way to Jerusalem. If true, and referring to 1035, it is a rare reference in 11th-century literature to people asking permission to travel through the imperial lands.

According to the tale, the emperor then allowed Duke Robert to stay in Constantinople as long as he wished. He offered him precious gifts which the duke declined for fear of seeming a beggar. The emperor reacted very indignantly by taking away from him the right to buy or sell anything in the town. The result of this was that the duke's servants could not even obtain any firewood to cook a meal. And so Duke Robert ordered his men to collect almonds and walnuts for fuel. The emperor was then moved by compassion and withdrew his prohibition declaring that the Franks were skilled in every enterprise and that no one could match their shrewdness.

The last part of the story, like the first, contains a well-known literary theme: no firewood to light a fire in order to cook meals and the use of nuts as fuel instead. It is, again, found in Scandinavian and Old French sources about Harold Hardrada, Sigurd the "Jerusalemfarer", Manigold of Werden and others. And,

que apud Constantinopolim uenerantur, posset ipse uidere et uenerari et ne arrogantie culpa notaretur, si transitum et iter per Asiam faciens licentiam tanti itineris et alloquium habere dedignaretur imperatoris.

(5) Ch. PFISTER, *Études sur le règne de Robert le Pieux (996-1031)*, Paris, 1885.

once again, the B-redaction of the *GND* is the oldest version of this itinerant folktale. These legends are the two elements which up until now have received most attention from scholars studying this particular interpolation in the *GND*. Pointing out links between this tale and similar stories about the Scandinavian kings Harold and Sigurd and even later French princes, Gaston Paris and René Louis have suggested that the combination of those tales with Duke Robert goes back to a now lost *chanson de geste* about Duke Robert's pilgrimage to Jerusalem which was modelled on the famous, but fictitious, story of Charlemagne and his journey to the Holy Sepulchre⁽⁶⁾. The lost Norman *chanson de geste* would have included itinerant basically Scandinavian literary material, which later was copied from the *chanson de geste* into the sagas about Harold and Sigurd and still later into the German story from Werden and the Old French sources. According to Paris en Louis the *chanson de geste* was composed in Normandy shortly after the death of Duke Robert in 1035. The main elements of the lost *chanson*, they argued, survive in the B-redaction and even more fully in Wace's *Roman de Rou* composed between c. 1160 and c. 1174. Wace gives more details pointing to an epic source, e.g., the story about Duke Robert sitting on his cloak and leaving it behind when he took leave of the emperor. Asked by the emperor why he did not take his cloak with him, the duke answered that he never took away the seat on which he had sat⁽⁷⁾.

In concentrating on these passages scholars have overlooked the lines about Robert being taken for King Robert the Pious who wanted to visit the Holy Sepulchre and gathered military troops in order to do so. Not until we have tried to reconstruct the historical background of the B-interpolation, can we succeed in dating this particular passage and thus, I think, the story as a whole.

It is a well attested fact that Duke Robert the Magnificent went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem in 1035. He entrusted his infant son

(6) G. PARIS, *Sur un épisode d'Almeri de Narbonne*, p. 534; R. LOUIS, *loc. cit.*, pp. 396-399. See for Charlemagne's alleged pilgrimage to the East: R. FOIZ, *Le souvenir et la légende de Charlemagne dans l'Empire germanique médiéval*, Paris, 1950, pp. 134-142.

(7) *Le Roman de Rou de Wace*, ed. A. J. HOLDEN, Paris, 1970, I, pp. 275-276; R. LOUIS, *loc. cit.*, p. 393.

William to the care of his magnates and set off. Contemporary sources all tell about his journey to the Holy Sepulchre, the gifts he bestowed in Jerusalem and finally his illness and death in Nicaea in Asia Minor, while travelling back to Normandy⁽⁸⁾. The *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni* (c. 1060) adds that Robert was buried in the church in Nicaea, a privilege which was only granted to him and no one else⁽⁹⁾. This source, along with William of Malmesbury who wrote in the first quarter of the 12th century, states that Duke Robert was poisoned⁽¹⁰⁾. Not one of the contemporary Norman or French sources, however, refer to the duke's visit to Constantinople. It is not even mentioned in the original version of the *GND* composed by William of Jumièges in c. 1070/71. This is all the more remarkable because William's account of Duke Robert's reign is the fullest we have⁽¹¹⁾. It seems reasonable to conclude that William of Jumièges would have mentioned the meeting between the emperor of Constantinople and the Conqueror's father, if it had occurred.

The earliest reference to the duke's visit is the B-redaction of the *GND*. This version differs from the original text of William of Jumièges in that it contains four anecdotes concerning Duke Richard II and Duke Robert the Magnificent⁽¹²⁾. Two of the three

(8) M. FAUROUX, *Recueil des actes des ducs de Normandie*, Caen, 1961, no. 90, p. 231; RAOUL GLABER, *Les cinq livres de ses histoires (900-1044)*, ed. M. PROU, Paris, 1886, p. 108; *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni*, ed. J. LAPORTE, Rouen, 1938, p. 41; *Translatio sancti Vulgani*, in *Analecta Bollandiana*, XXIII (1904), p. 269.

(9) *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni*, ed. LAPORTE, Rouen, 1938, p. 41: *quod nulli alii mortalium concessum est*. See also C. H. HASKINS, *Norman Institutions*, p. 266. This St. Wandrille-tradition seems to be very reliable, for one of Duke Robert's companions was Gerard Fleitel, who later became monk at this monastery, see L. MUSSET, *Actes inédits du XI^e siècle: V. Autour des origines de St-Étienne de Fontenay*, in *Bulletin de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie*, LVI (1961-62), pp. 18-19 and *ib.*, *Les actes de Guillaume I^{er} le Conquérant et de la reine Mathilde pour les abbayes Caennaises*, Caen, 1967, p. 2.

(10) *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni*, ed. LAPORTE, p. 41; WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *Gesta regum Anglorum*, ed. W. STUBBS, London, 1889, I, pp. 211-212.

(11) GUILLAUME DE JUMIÈGES, *op. cit.*, pp. 97-114.

(12) E. M. C. VAN HOUTS, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum. Een studie over de handschriften, de tekst, het geschiedwerk en het genre*, Groningen, 1982, pp. 98-102; *EAD.*, *The Gesta Normannorum Ducum: a History without an End*, in

anecdotes concerning Duke Robert are said to have originated with Isembert, the former chaplain of the duke. As Haskins pointed out, they are of contemporary value⁽¹³⁾. Unfortunately, the source for Robert's meeting with the Byzantine emperor is not given. The fifth interpolation, which is peculiar to the B-redaction, is the short text known as *De Obitu Willelmi* most probably composed shortly after 1096/7⁽¹⁴⁾. I have argued elsewhere that the different elements of the B-redaction were written separately and inserted in the *GND* by one person shortly after 1100⁽¹⁵⁾. This, however, does not provide much help for dating the anecdote which concerns us here. Apart from Wace who wrote in the third quarter of the 12th century, we find a reference to Duke Robert's visit to Constantinople in the *Gesta Comitum Andegavensium*, which date from about 1150⁽¹⁶⁾. It is said that Count Fulk Nerra of Anjou during his pilgrimage to Jerusalem met Duke Robert of Normandy in Constantinople. None of the fairy-tale like elements however are mentioned in this Angevin text.

What was known in Normandy and France about Byzantium in the 11th century? And what were the lines of communication along which news from the East reached France and in particular Normandy?

Diplomatic relations between the French kings and the Byzantine emperors before the First Crusade hardly existed. The earliest reference we have for the late 10th and early 11th century is a letter written by Gerbert of Reims for the French king Hugh Capet⁽¹⁷⁾.

Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies, III (1980), ed. R. ALLEN BROWN, Woodbridge, 1981, pp. 106-118.

(13) GUILLAUME DE JUMIÈGES, *op. cit.*, p. 108; C. H. HASKINS, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

(14) L. J. ENGELS, *De Obitu Willelmi ducis Normannorum regisque Anglorum: Texte, modèles, valeur et origine*, in *Mélanges Christine Mohrmann. Nouveau recueil offert par ses anciens élèves*, Utrecht-Anvers, 1973, pp. 209-225. For the date see E. M. C. VAN HOUTS, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, pp. 102-106.

(15) E. M. C. VAN HOUTS, *Gesta Normannorum Ducum*, p. 106.

(16) *Chroniques des comtes d'Anjou et des seigneurs d'Amboise*, ed. L. HALPHEN and R. POUPARDIN, Paris, 1913, p. 50. For the unreliability of this source see L. HALPHEN, *Le comté de l'Anjou au XI^e siècle*, Paris, 1906, pp. 216-218.

(17) *Lettres de Gerbert (983-997)*, ed. J. HAVET, Paris, 1889, no. 111, pp. 101-102; *The Letters of Gerbert with his Papal Privileges as Sylvester II*, transl. by H. P. LATTIN, New York, 1961, pp. 151-153.

The letter can be dated between January and April 988 and was addressed to the Emperor Basil II (976-1025) and his brother Constantine VIII (1025-1028). In it King Hugh of France sought for the hand of a Byzantine princess for his son King Robert. It is extremely doubtful whether the letter was actually sent to Constantinople, for in April 988, shortly after the document was composed, Robert married Rozala, the widow of Count Arnulf II of Flanders. Obviously following the example of the German emperor Otto II, the first Capetian king had sought for a member of the imperial Byzantine family as future wife for his son. If the letter was sent at all, nothing is known of an answer from Constantinople to this proposition⁽¹⁸⁾.

The next official contact between France and Byzantium occurred at the end of the reign of King Robert the Pious, shortly before 1028⁽¹⁹⁾. According to the well-informed Raoul Glaber, Bishop Odelric of Orléans went on pilgrimage to Jerusalem and paid a visit to Constantine VIII on his way back. The French king had not sent the bishop empty handed to the East and Odelric presented the emperor with a golden sword-hilt covered with precious stones. In return he received a relic of the Holy Cross as well as many precious clothes for King Robert⁽²⁰⁾. About twenty years later another French bishop, the Norman prelate Ivo of Séz, while staying in Constantinople was remunerated with a similar Holy Cross relic given to him by the emperor. These are the only known contacts between France and Byzantium before the First Crusade.

Official state visits were not the only source of information about the Byzantine emperor, his court and his rich gifts. The pilgrim route to Jerusalem via the Balkan and Asia Minor led through the capital of the Byzantine Empire, and we know of several French and Norman pilgrims staying in Constantinople on their way to the Holy Land⁽²¹⁾.

(18) Ch. PFISTER, *op. cit.*, note 5, pp. 42-44; A. VASILIEV, *Hugh Capet of France and Byzantium*, in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, VI (1951), pp. 229-251; T. C. LOUNGHIS, *Les ambassades byzantines en Occident depuis la fondation des états barbares jusqu'aux Croisades (407-1096)*, Athens, 1980, p. 216.

(19) Ch. PFISTER, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

(20) RAOUL GLABER, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.

(21) Ch. PFISTER, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-350.

According to Adémar of Chabannes a group of French pilgrims left France in 1026⁽²²⁾. Among them were William Taillefer of Aquitaine, Odo of Déols, Abbot Richard of Saint-Cybar and Azenaire later abbot of Massay. They travelled to Constantinople and there Azenaire participated in the celebration of Mass in the Hagia Sophia⁽²³⁾. A second group of pilgrims led by Richard of St. Vannes set off from France about the same time⁽²⁴⁾. A particularly detailed account of this pilgrimage is given by the early 12th-century chronicler Hugh of Flavigny⁽²⁵⁾. His reliable source of information was Goscelin, the son of a certain Gauzfridus from Bayeux who together with his father Hubert took part in the expedition. Goscelin was a monk in the monastery of St. Bénigne at Dijon where he told Hugh of Flavigny what he had heard from his father and grandfather. The group of pilgrims was large. According to Hugh more than 700 participants accompanied Richard of St. Vannes. Duke Richard II of Normandy paid the costs of this enormous expensive enterprise. Although Hugh's account is rich in details, the relevant section, namely the pilgrims' visit to the emperor in Constantinople, is unfortunately all too short: "We will not tell with how great an honour he (Richard of St. Vannes) was welcomed by the emperor and how lavishly he was bestowed with many gifts, because we wish to relate other things"⁽²⁶⁾. Hugh then continues his story with their journey to Jerusalem and their stay there. On their way back Simeon of Mount Sinai joined the pilgrims and accompanied them to Rouen.

The existence of Simeon of Sinai, later Saint Simeon, is attested by contemporaries like his biographer Eberwin of Trier and the

(22) ADÉMAR DE CHABANNES, *Chronique*, ed. J. CHAVANON, Paris, 1897, p. 189; Ch. PFISTER, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

(23) *Acta concilii Lemovicensis II (anno 1031)*, PL 142, col. 1356: *Nam olim antequam monachi habitum suscipere, dum Hierosolimam proficiscens, apud Constantinopolim in basilica sanctae Sophiae, sabbato Pentecostes, solemniter interesset officio.*

(24) Ch. PFISTER, *op. cit.*, note 5, pp. 348-349.

(25) HUGH OF FLAVIGNY, *Chronicon*, ed. G. PERTZ, *MGH, SS*, VIII, pp. 393-399.

(26) HUGH OF FLAVIGNY, *ibid.*, p. 395: *Constantinopolim veniens, cum quanto honore exceptus ab imperatore sit, dignisque muneribus et obsequiis honoratus, dicere supersedemus, quia ad alia properamus.*

historian Raoul Glaber⁽²⁷⁾. Both relate how Simeon came to Normandy to ask Duke Richard II for money or gifts for his monastery Mount Sinai. Having arrived at Rouen, however, he was told that the duke had recently died. Thereupon he left the duchy and went to Trier, where he spent the rest of his life as a recluse. The generosity of Duke Richard II towards the pilgrims led by Richard of St. Vannes and the monks of Mount Sinai is mentioned in the *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni* written in the monastery of Saint-Wandrille in c. 1060. Indeed this is the oldest Norman reference to contemporary Greeks. The author tells about the fame of Duke Richard II, who attracted among many ecclesiastical persons also Armenians and Greeks. The latter are referred to even as the duke's Greeks (*suis Greciis*), who were invited to look upon the land of the Normans. According to the monk of St. Wandrille the delegates of Mount Sinai were begifted with gold and silver⁽²⁸⁾.

Shortly after 1049 Ivo of Bellême, bishop of the Norman diocese of Séez, who has been mentioned above, went to Southern Italy and Constantinople. This journey was undertaken as penance laid upon him by Pope Leo IX (1049-1054) during the Council of Reims. The bishop was condemned for setting fire to the church of St. Gervase at Séez during his struggle with the rebellious Soreng-brothers. In the course of the fighting the church, unfortunately, burnt down. To collect money for the rebuilding of the church Ivo of Bellême went to his wealthy relatives and friends who were living in Italy and Constantinople. In the Byzantine capital he was welcomed by the emperor who gave him a relic of the Holy Cross, a similar present to that given to Bishop Odelric of Orléans some twenty years before. Having gathered enough money Ivo returned to Normandy and restored the church of St. Gervase. The only source for Ivo's journey

(27) EBERWIN OF TRIER, *Vita sancti Symeonis*, ed. AASS, Junii I, pp. 86-91, esp. p. 91; RAOUL GLABER, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

(28) *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni*, *op. cit.*, p. 29: *Quamobrem factum est ut ad eum undique catervatim confluerent pontifices et clerici, abbates et monachi, quos mira semper liberalitate studebat munerari. Huius rei testes idonei Greci sunt atque Armenii quos eo tempore fama tanti viri suis a sedibus eduxit, quosque sola illius liberalitas relictis suis Greciis ad intuendum patriam Normannorum invitavit. Nam et a monte Syna legatos frequenter habuit per quos sanctis caelestem illic degentibus vitam, plurima in auro et argento munera direxit.*

to the East is Orderic Vitalis in his interpolations of the *GND* written in the period c. 1109-c. 1113⁽²⁹⁾.

These Norman and French sources thus testify that in the 11th century Normans went to Constantinople and were received by the emperor and that the Norman dukes were well known for their generosity in Byzantium. What other references to Byzantium and Greeks, however scarce, can be found in Norman literature and is it possible to corroborate their trustworthiness by independent reliable sources?

Constantinople is mentioned three times by William of Poitiers, the biographer of William the Conqueror, who wrote his *Gesta Guillelmi* in about 1077. The first occurrence is in connection with Count Baldwin of Flanders, Duke William's father-in-law, who is said to have been related to the kings of France and Germany and even to the nobility of Constantinople⁽³⁰⁾. This is an enigmatic remark, for nothing is known about the count of Flanders having bloodrelations in Byzantium. Praising William the Conqueror, William of Poitiers tells us that the King-Duke was so famous that even Constantinople wished him to be its neighbour and friend in order to spurn the threatening power of Babylon (the Turks)⁽³¹⁾. The same implication – Norman assistance to the Greeks against the Turks – is found in the third reference to Byzantium. Again exalting William the Conqueror, William of Poitiers writes: "... his Norman knights have conquered Apulia, subjugated Sicily, defended Constantinople and frightened the Turks of Babylon" ⁽³²⁾. As a matter of

(29) GUILLAUME DE JUMIÈGES, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

(30) GUILLAUME DE POITIERS, *Histoire de Guillaume le Conquérant*, ed. R. FOREVILLE, Paris, 1952, p. 46: *Nam uti a satrapis Morinorum, quos moderni Flandros appellant, sic a regibus Galliae atque Germaniae natales deducebat, nobilitatis etiam Constantinopolitanae lineam attingentes*. See also F. BARLOW, *William Rufus*, London, 1983, p. 9.

(31) GUILLAUME DE POITIERS, *op. cit.*, pp. 144-146: *Ejus enim adhuc pueri nomen clarissimum per gentes ferebatur. Sed de magnitudine viri disseram. Optabat hunc vicinum et amicum nobilis et ampla, multisque regibus dominans Constantinopolis, quo propugnatore sperneret gravem potentiam Babylonis*.

(32) GUILLAUME DE POITIERS, *op. cit.*, p. 228: *Hujus milites Normanni possident Apuliam, devicere Siciliam, propugnant Constantinopolim ingerunt metum Babyloni*. It may be noted that my translation of *propugnant* differs from that given by FOREVILLE ("attaqué"), see also GUILLAUME DE POUILLE, *Geste de Robert Guiscard*, ed. M. MATHIEU, Palermo, 1961, p. 339.

fact the *Gesta Guillelmi* is the only 11th century Norman history to mention the existence of warriors in Constantinople belonging to the same race as the Normans in Normandy and Southern Italy. William of Poitiers speaks here of Norman soldiers – in the sense of men coming from Normandy – as mercenaries in the Byzantine army. His statements are corroborated by St. Anselm in his letter 117. Between 1079 and 1093 Anselm, abbot of Bec, wrote to one of the younger novices of the monastery, called William, to dissuade him from travelling to Byzantium in order to assist his brother who was evidently one of the emperor's soldiers⁽³³⁾.

Who were the Normans referred to by William of Poitiers and St. Anselm? Three of them are known by name: Hervé, Roussel of Bailleul and Robert Crispin who all three took service with the Byzantine emperor and had a remarkable career in his army. It is commonly assumed that they were Normans because of the fact that they were the leaders of the French-Norman contingents. There is no doubt about the Norman origin of Robert Crispin, whereas definitive proof for Hervé and Roussel is lacking⁽³⁴⁾. These two have received the closest attention in modern historiography⁽³⁵⁾.

(33) SANCTI ANSELMI *Opera Omnia*, ed. F. S. SCHMITT, Edinburg, 1946, III, p. 253: ... *et per tot et tantas itinerum difficiles asperitates, per marium turbines et procellosas tempestates in bellicosam confusionem curris ad fratrem tuum ut videas eum – ut multum dicam – tenentem regnum Graecorum...*; p. 254: ... *Moneo, consulo, precor, obsecro, praecipio ut dilectissimo, ut dimittas illam Ierusalem, quae nunc non est visio pacis sed tribulationis et thesauros Constantinopolitanos et Babylonios cruentatis manibus diripiendos...* See for Anselm's attitude to the crusade and the defense of the Eastern Empire R. W. SOUTHERN, *Saint Anselm and his Biographer. A Study of Monastic Life and Thought 1059-c. 1130*, Cambridge, 1963, pp. 122-123.

(34) Roussel is identified as Roussel of Bailleul by GEOFFREY MALATERRA, *De rebus gestis Rogerii Calabriae et Siciliae comitis et Roberti Guiscardi ducis fratris eius*, ed. E. PONTIERI, Bologna, 1927-28, p. 43.

(35) The most fundamental studies about Hervé and Roussel still are G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Deux chefs normands des armées byzantines au XI^e siècle*, in *Revue Historique*, VI (1881), pp. 289-303 and L. BRÉHIER, *Les aventures d'un chef normand en Orient au XI^e siècle: Roussel de Bailleul*, in *Revue des Cours et Conférences*, XX (1912), pp. 172-188. Their accounts are mainly based on the Italian historian Amato of Montecassino and the Greek historians like George Cedrenus, Johannes Skylitzes, Michael Attaleiates, Michael Psellus and Nicephorus Briennius. Recently Roussel of Bailleul received attention from J. HOFFMANN, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten in byzantinischen Reich (1071-1210)*, München, 1974, pp. 13-20 and 80-82; and S. BLONDÄL, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-116.

Both occupied eminent positions in the Byzantine army. Hervé was *magister, vestiarite* and *stratilate*, while Roussel only had the title of *vestiarite*. As part of their payment they held land in fief of the emperor, which was situated in Armenia. Their early career had started in Italy where Hervé was a mercenary in 1038 and Roussel fought in the early 1060s. From Southern Italy they crossed to Byzantium. Slow remuneration and payment led to great dissatisfaction on the parts of the two western army-leaders. They deserted from the emperor's service and at different occasions they even betrayed Byzantine troops to the Turks. Finally this untrustworthy behaviour led to both their fall. They died in Byzantine custody: Hervé's death must be dated after 1057-1059; Roussel lived until shortly after 1081. 11th-century Byzantine historians are unanimous in their verdict that these barbarians were utterly unreliable⁽³⁶⁾.

Robert Crispin belonged to the well known Norman family of Crispin. He was the third son of Gilbert I Crispin. The only glimpse we have of him in Normandy before he went to Spain in 1064 to fight against the Saracens, is his attestation of a ducal charter for Saint-Ouen at Rouen which can be dated between 1050 and 1064⁽³⁷⁾. Not only did he participate in the Battle of Argasto, but he also was one of the leaders of the Christian army besieging the city of Barbastro in 1064-1065⁽³⁸⁾. After the victory over the pagan enemy Robert left Spain for Italy where he turned up a year later. As *fidelis* of Richard I of Capua he occurs in a charter for the monastery of Montecassino, which proves that in June 1066 he was

(36) JOS. M. M. HERMANS, *The Byzantine View of the Normans. Another Norman Myth?*, in *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies*, II (1979), ed. R. ALLEN BROWN, Woodbridge, 1980, pp. 78-92, esp. p. 86.

(37) M. FAUROUX, *op. cit.*, no. 193, pp. 375-376. The *terminus ante quem* of this charter should be changed in 1064 instead of 1066.

(38) AMATO OF MONTECASSINO, *Storia de' Normanni*, ed. V. DE BARTOLOMAEIS, Roma, 1935, pp. 13-16. See for the battle against the Saracens in Spain P. BOISSONADE, *Cluny, la papauté et la première grande croisade internationale contre les Sarrasins d'Espagne. Barbastro (1064-1065)*, in *Revue des Questions historiques*, CXVIII (1932), pp. 257-301, esp. pp. 276-278; M. DEFOURNEAUX, *Les Français en Espagne aux XI^e et XII^e siècles*, Paris, 1949, pp. 132-139; C. ERDMANN, *The Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, translated by M. W. BALDWIN and W. GOFFART, foreword and additional notes by M. W. BALDWIN, Princeton, 1977, p. 139.

in Italy⁽³⁹⁾. Some time during the next three years he must have gone to Byzantium, where, because of non-payment of his salary, in 1069 he rebelled against the emperor. With his troops he deserted and wandered around in Asia Minor plundering the country⁽⁴⁰⁾. In 1071, however, we find him fighting together with Roussel of Bailleul for the emperor against the Turks during the Battle of Manzikert. According to Psellus and Bryennius Robert died in 1073 whereafter Roussel of Bailleul took over his command of the French-Norman contingent within the emperor's army⁽⁴¹⁾. This statement implies that like Hervé and later Roussel, Robert Crispin also held the leadership of this very important part of the Greek military force. Milo Crispin, writing at the abbey of Le Bec in the mid 12th century, states that Robert Crispin died because of poison given to him by envious Greeks⁽⁴²⁾. No confirmation of this can be found in Greek sources. Apart from these three, no Norman mercenaries are known by name to have been fighting in Byzantium.

This survey of Norman and French contacts with Byzantium leads to the conclusion that all through the 11th century pilgrims and mercenaries and occasionally ambassadors travelling through the Balkan or Italy to and fro Constantinople formed the main source of information about the Greeks. Nonetheless it is highly unlikely that Duke Robert paid an official visit to the emperor in

(39) G. A. LOUD, *A Calendar of the Diplomas of the Norman Princes of Capua*, in *Papers of the British School at Rome*, XLIX (1981), pp. 99-143, esp. pp. 121-122.

(40) MICHAEL ATTALIOUAE *Historiae*, ed. I. BEKKER, Bonn, 1853, pp. 122-125 and 170-175; *Excerpta ex breviario historico IOANNIS SCYLITZAE CUROPALATAE*, ed. B. G. NIEBUHR, Bonn, 1849, pp. 678-679; MICHAEL PSELLOS, *Chronographie ou histoire d'un siècle de Byzance (976-1077)*, ed., transl. E. RENAULD, Paris, 1928, pp. 169-170; NICEPHORE BRYENNIOS, *Histoire*, ed., transl. P. GAUTIER, Bruxelles, 1975, pp. 134 and 146-148.

(41) MICHAEL PSELLOS, *op. cit.*, pp. xxxix-xl; NICEPHORE BRYENNIOS, *op. cit.*, p. 134, n. 2.

(42) *De nobili genere Crispinorum*, ed. MIGNE, PL 150, col. 737: *Robertus Crispinus minor frater Northmannia egressus plurimas peragravit regiones donec Constantinopolim veniret et ab imperatore cum honore susceptus magnique nominis apud omnes effectus ibi ut fertur invidia Graecorum veneno periit*. See also A. PORÉE, *Histoire de l'abbaye du Bec*, Évreux, 1901, I, pp. 178-182; J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON, *Gilbert Crispin, Abbot of Westminster*, Cambridge, 1911, p. 14.

1035. If he had done so contemporary sources undoubtedly would have mentioned the occasion. We have seen that shortly before 1028 the French king, Robert the Pious, sent bishop Odelric of Orléans on a mission to the Emperor Constantine VIII. In contrast the author of our anecdote does not name the emperor, nor does he seem to know that, when Duke Robert was supposed to meet the emperor, King Robert had been dead for almost four years. Nothing is known about a Capetian king having gathered troops either to protect pilgrims going to Jerusalem or accompanying the king himself on a visit to the Holy Sepulchre. The author also shows himself ignorant of Byzantine court protocol. These weaknesses combined with the legendary fairy-tale material it contains, suggests a non-contemporary origin of the story. The textual tradition and the manuscript tradition of the B-redaction of the *GND* indicate that the anecdote must have been in existence by about 1100. Several elements in it fit with features which occur in other literature of the second half of the 11th century. References to Greeks, Byzantium and Constantinople start appearing in the surviving sources in Normandy from c. 1060: the *Inventio et miracula sancti Vulfranni*, William of Poitiers' *Gesta Guillelmi* and letter 117 of St. Anselm.

This evidence roughly coincides with the pontificate of Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) during which, especially in 1074, propaganda was made in order to gather troops and mercenaries to fight against the Turks, to assist the Byzantine emperor and to drive the Turks out of Jerusalem. Letters by the pope were sent to William of Aquitaine and Emperor Henry IV asking for mercenaries. Reunion of the Eastern and Western Churches as well as protection of the Christians in the Holy Land formed the main objectives⁽⁴³⁾. Dr Cowdrey recently drew fresh attention to Pope Gregory's plans and pointed to similar ideas in the writings of Bishop Albanus I of Salerno and Bishop Benzo of Alba⁽⁴⁴⁾. He concluded that: "... even

(43) *Das Register Gregors VII.*, hrg. von E. CASPAR, Berlin, 1920 (*MGH, Ep. Sel.* 2), Letter I, 46 (pp. 69-70) to William of Burgundy in February 1074; Letter I, 49 (pp. 75-76) to all Christians in March 1074; Letter II, 18 (pp. 150-151) to William of Aquitaine in November 1074; and finally Letter II, 31 (pp. 165-1678) to Emperor Henry IV in December 1074. For a commentary and interpretation of these letters see C. ERDMANN, *Origin of the Idea of Crusade*, pp. 274-275.

(44) H. COWDREY, *Pope Gregory VII's "Crusading" Plans of 1074*, in *Outremer. Studies in the History of the Crusading Kingdom of Jerusalem presented to Joshua Prawer*, ed. B. Z. KEDAR, a.o., Jerusalem, 1982, pp. 27-40.

before the First Crusade men were beginning to envisage political and military actions on an international scale having the Holy Sepulchre in some way among their objects" (45). It would seem reasonable to place the composition of our anecdote against the background of this pre-crusade movement. The reference to an armed force gathered in France combined with a visit to Jerusalem fits in better with what happened in the last quarter of the 11th century than in the 1030s. All pilgrimages mentioned above were unarmed enterprises and even the huge German one from Bamberg, comprising more than 3000 people, to the Holy Land in 1064 was an unarmed expedition (46).

In searching for possible occasions in Normandy when the anecdote could have been composed, a passage of William of Malmesbury comes to mind. According to this chronicler, William the Conqueror at the end of his life ordered a messenger to go to Niceae to recover the bones of his father Robert and to bring them back to Normandy (47). This must have happened shortly before 1087, the year of the Conqueror's death, and may be connected with the capture of Niceae by the Turks in 1086 (48). William of Malmesbury continues his story by telling that on his way back the messenger heard of King William's death in Apulia and decided to bury Duke Robert's remains there (49). Unfortunately nothing is known about the precise place of the duke's new grave. It is however conceivable that the concern of William the Conqueror for

(45) H. COWDREY, *loc. cit.*, p. 39.

(46) JORANSON stressed the fact that the great pilgrimage to Jerusalem from Bamberg in 1064-65 was an unarmed expedition, see his *The Great German Pilgrimage of 1064-5*, in *The Crusades and other Historical Essays presented to Dana C. Munro by his Former Students*, New York, 1928, pp. 3-43, esp. p. 15. A contemporary record of this pilgrimage is the *Annales Altaichenses* written in c. 1075 in Altaich (ed. E. OEFELE, Hannover, 1891 - *MGH, in usum scholarum*, pp. 66-67).

(47) WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *op. cit.*, II, p. 333: *Patris memoriam quantis poterat occasionibus extollens, ossa, olim Niceae condita, sub extremo vitae tempore per legatum transferebat...*

(48) L. BRÉHIER, *The Life and Death of Byzantium*, Amsterdam, 1977 (orig. Paris, 1946), p. 216.

(49) WILLIAM OF MALMESBURY, *op. cit.*, II, p. 333: *... sed ille prospere rediens, audita morte Willelmi, apud Apulia resedit, sepultis ibi illustris viris exuviis*. See also R. LOUIS, *loc. cit.*, pp. 398-399.

his father's remains, perhaps encouraged by the recent conquest of Niceae, ties in with the composition of the anecdote about Duke Robert's pilgrimage to Constantinople and Jerusalem. The remark about the gathering of military troops for Jerusalem reflects a pre-crusade spirit. The tales of the golden horseshoes and the nuts as fuel are typical legendary material which could have been interpolated at any date in the 11th century. The balance of the evidence suggests the origin of the fictitious tale ought to be sought in the last quarter of the 11th century in Normandy, rather than in a lost *chanson de geste* written shortly after the death of Duke Robert the Magnificent in July 1035.

Girton College, Cambridge.

Elisabeth M. C. VAN HOUTS.