



The Later History of the Varangian Guard: Some Notes

R. M. Dawkins

The Journal of Roman Studies, Vol. 37, Parts 1 and 2 (1947), 39-46.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0075-4358%281947%2937%3C39%3ATLHOTV%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Q>

The Journal of Roman Studies is currently published by Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/sprs.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE LATER HISTORY OF THE VARANGIAN GUARD : SOME NOTES

By R. M. DAWKINS

The famous Varangian corps of mercenary soldiers in the service of the emperors of Byzantium is well known in its earlier days to have been recruited from the Scandinavian north. Forging their way from their own inhospitable lands the Northmen, first of all from Sweden, reached the Volga and the lands even to the south of the Caspian ; later by the ' East Way ', called also the ' Varangian Way ', they came down through Russia by way of the Dnieper and the Black Sea to Constantinople, first as pirates, then as traders, and finally as the most trusted guards of the imperial person. Later again they ventured on the all-sea route, the ' West Way ', and also opened a path across Europe, either over the Alps or by way of Provence, and so through Italy : this was the ' Southern Way ', otherwise called the ' Way by Rome '.¹ But in the eleventh century, in the first half of which Harald Hardrada, the most famous of all the Varangians, was in the imperial service, there was a certain change ; recruits began to come increasingly from England.

The first actual mention of the English name seems to be in a bull issued by the Emperor Alexios in 1088 to Christodoulos, the Abbot of the Monastery on Patmos.² Among other privileges the monastery was to be excused from the duty of finding quarters for troops, whether of Greeks or of foreigners, and among these latter we find mentioned the Varangians and the English : Βαράγγων, Ἰγγλίνων.

From the *De Officiis* of the Pseudo-Codinus we learn that English was used for certain Christmas acclamations to the emperor.³ The text is of the fourteenth century, but the date cannot be pressed : the book is more that of an antiquary than of a historian. In describing the imperial banquet at Christmas and its attendant ceremonies, the author tells us that before the actual dinner the officials in their several sorts and ranks came to the dining hall to chant their *polychronion* to the emperor—πολυχρονίζουσι τὸν βασιλέα—that is they prayed in ceremonial form that the emperor might live many years. To each party the appropriate official replied : ' Our Lord the Emperor bids you many years.' First came the officials of the palace, each class distinguished by special robes ; then in order, the Genoese of Galata, more functionaries, the Pisan colony, then the Venetians, and after these distinguished foreigners came the Varangians. They gave their greeting in their own language, and this was English—ἤγουν Ἰγγλινιστί—clashing their weapons with a loud noise.⁴ But whether the language was really English, or whether it was Norse, and Codinus says English because there were so many English Varangians, must be left uncertain. To the Greeks all barbarous languages were much the same ; and Freeman judiciously says : ' We must remember that any distinction between English and Danish would disappear in the latitude of Constantinople.'⁵ An acclamation was made by another set of men in the Persian language, a choir sang the Christmas canticle of Romanos, and then the banquet was served.

Although it certainly appears that by the end of the eleventh century this change was coming over the nationality of the Guard, yet very much later Scandinavia was still a traditional area for recruiting. In 1195 Alexios III, Angelos, alarmed by the threats of the emperor Henry IV, sent three Varangians with golden bulls to ask help of each of the three Scandinavian kings : he wanted twelve hundred men for his guard. One of these envoys was Hreidarr Sendimadr, ' the man sent ' ; his orders were to go to the court

¹ For details on these three ' Ways ', see Riant, *Expéditions et pèlerinages des Scandinaves en Terre Sainte*, 62-90.

² Text in Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et diplomata graeca* vi, 44 ff. (p. 47 quoted), and also in Zachariae a Lingenthal, *Jus Graeco-Romanum* iii, 373.

³ Bonn ed., p. 55, 10, *De mensa imperatoris*.

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 57, 10.

⁵ Freeman, *Norman Conquest* iv, 632.

of King Sverrir. Later, in 1209, this same Hreidarr took the Cross and went to the Holy Land; then he entered the service of the Frankish emperor of the east, Henry of Flanders, and died at Constantinople in 1214.⁶

Nicetas tells us of the part played by the Varangians in the defence of the empire. In the reign of the same Alexios the Comans and Vlachs were ravaging the country, and would have reached the land gates of the Queen of Cities had it not been for 'the most Christian Rhos'—τὸ χριστιανικώτατον οἱ Ῥῶς γένος.⁷ This was the oldest name given by the Greeks to the Northmen, and goes back to the earliest times when they came as pirates to attack Constantinople from the Black Sea, and it is from the express use of this name rather than some such looser expression as 'the axe-bearing barbarians' that we may conclude that these Varangians might even at this date be still Scandinavians. Moved by the vigour natural to them and at the entreaty of their leader, these Rhos drove back the foe, 'not enduring to see the people of Christ carried away into captivity by nations who knew not His name.'

But although Northmen were still coming to the service it appears that from the late eleventh century Englishmen played a greater and greater part in the guard. When Anna Comnena speaks of the Varangians as coming from the Island of Thule, τοὺς ἀπὸ τῆς Θούλης νήσου Βαράγγους, Mrs. Buckler thinks that by adding the word 'island' Anna intends to narrow the meaning of Thule, her general word for all the countries bordering on the North Sea, to the Island of Britain.⁸ Cinnamus, too, writing of the time of John Comnenos, says that the axe-bearing barbarians were of British race, of old in the service of the emperor.⁹

A change of this sort was naturally gradual, and there may be considerable differences of opinion as to its rate. In particular there has been a recent paper by Sigfús Blöndal in which he seeks to show that 'the change of nationality of that famous regiment of the *bodyguard* was neither so rapid nor so complete as Vasiliev and some other eminent scholars seem inclined to think'. In particular Blöndal contests the interpretation of Thule as used by Anna Comnena: he thinks that, despite the word 'island', it is used as 'a general term for the Scandinavian countries'. In the absence of any statistical figures caution is certainly needed in reading the evidence. Blöndal has a case, but I think he presses it much too far.¹⁰

From a curious story told by William of Malmesbury we know that earlier than this, even before the Conquest, there were connections between England and Constantinople.¹¹ King Edward the Confessor, we are told, had a prophetic dream about the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, in which he had seen them turn from their right on to their left sides, and so to remain for seventy-four years. He sent to the Greek emperor to inquire into the matter. The king, says the Saga of the Confessor, made a prophecy that they would remain in their new position for eighty-four years and that all this time the world would be beset by apocalyptic terrors.¹² The Saga goes on to say that the Emperor received the English envoys well, and sent them back after verifying at Ephesus that the Sleepers had in fact turned over and were sleeping on their left sides. He also sent the king relics of the Sleepers.

It therefore appears that in the days after the Conquest the guard had ceased to have much substantial connection with the Scandinavian north. The English refugees—Ordericus calls them *pulchrae juventutis flore vernantes*¹³—were favourably received by

⁶ The whole story with references is in Riant, op. cit., 308–13.

⁷ Bonn ed., p. 691, 17.

⁸ Alexios II, 11; Bonn. ed., p. 128, 16; and Georgina Buckler, *Anna Comnena*, 438.

⁹ *Historia* I, 3; Bonn ed., p. 8, 15.

¹⁰ See 'Nabites the Varangian', by Sigfús Blöndal in *Classica et Mediaevalia, Revue danoise* II, 1939, 145. He refers especially to a paper by Vasiliev in the *Annales de l'Institut Kondakov*, IX, 39–70.

¹¹ *De gestis rerum Anglorum*, Rolls series I, 275. The question whether Manichetis in the text is the emperor Michael VII, Parapinakis, or the general George Maniakes, is here of no importance.

¹² *Flateyjarbok* III, 466. Also *Íatvardar Saga*, printed as an appendix to the Rolls edition of the *Orkneyinga Saga*, chap. 3, pp. 391 and in translation volume, p. 419. These are two separate texts of the Saga.

¹³ *Historia ecclesiastica*, pars. II, lib. IV; in Migne, PL 188, col. 309.

the Greeks, and in this way, Vasiliev says, came about the beginning of the Varangian-English bodyguard, which was to be as important in the twelfth century as the Varangian-Russian Company had been in the two centuries previous.¹⁴ Kendrick writes that at this period the guard was composed of Englishmen and Danes who had left England after the Norman Conquest, and of certain disaffected Norman soldiers who had deserted from France or Italy and made their way to Greece : ' so it came about that it was as an English and Norman body that the Guard ended its short but eventful history at the time of the fall of Constantinople to the Latins in 1204.' ¹⁵ We shall see that as to the date of the end of the Guard Kendrick is probably a little too summary.

It has been suggested that the conquest of England was not the only factor at work in this change in the nationality of the Guard ; it was in consequence of some revolt of the Norse Varangians that the Greeks in this later period began to prefer Englishmen as recruits.

It is interesting to note that some of the English who did not find their own country as pleasant after the Conquest as before, and so went to Greece, may in the service of the emperors of New Rome have had the satisfaction of meeting the kinsmen of their conquerors in open battle.¹⁶ This came about when Alexios Comnenos found himself forced to undertake a campaign against the Normans, who under Robert Guiscard had crossed the Adriatic and were attacking the Greek empire. This connection between the Conquest of England and the English revenge upon the conquerors comes to the pages of Freeman from Ordericus Vitalis, who says very plainly that ' ultro in exilium aliqui profugiunt, quo extorres vel a potestate Normannorum sint liberi : vel opibus alienis aucti contra eos ad recidivum certamen revertantur ' : they even exiled themselves ; so that abroad they were free from the Norman power, or even with the support of another nation, the Greeks, they could turn again and fight with them. Ordericus probably goes too far in putting this revenge as a motive and not merely with Freeman as a result of their service with Alexios : no recruit to the Greek armies could have known against what precise enemies his service would bring him.

In this battle with Guiscard we know something of the part played by these English Varangians : on the Norman side from Gaufredus Malaterrae and Ordericus ; on the Greek side from Anna Comnena.¹⁷ Alexios, Ordericus says, set these Englishmen against the Norman hosts. Guiscard was besieging Durazzo ; Alexios with his Varangians came to the rescue ; in them he placed his greatest trust, says Gaufredus, who though on the Norman side gives full credit to their opponents : ' The English, he says, whom they called Warings, demanded of the Emperor that they should lead the fight.' Anna Comnena tells us that the emperor made the Varangians dismount and march in ranks, στοιχηδόν, a short way in front of the army with their leader Nabites : they were carrying shields as well as their famous axes. When the battle began, says Gaufredus, these men with their plumed double axes (*caudatis bipennibus*), their favourite weapon, were at first a great obstacle to us (*nostris admodum importuni primo esse coeperunt*) ; but they had to confess themselves worsted, and then the emperor, seeing the Varangians in whom had been his greatest hopes of victory, beaten, turned with the Greeks to flight. To their bravery on this occasion Anna Comnena testifies : ' The axe-bearing warriors and their leader Nabites had through their inexperience in war and their ardour advanced too zealously and were now some way distant from the array of the Greeks, in their haste to engage in battle with the equally ferocious Normans ; for they are no less warlike than the Normans and even more full of fiery valour, in no way in this manner falling short of them.' But Guiscard caught them when they were tired and out of breath and, says Anna, all the barbarians fell. This passage in which Anna censures the English ἀπειρία, lack of professional military experience, brings out the contrast between the inconsidered dash of the Varangians and

¹⁴ A. A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* II, 155.

¹⁵ *A History of the Vikings* 177.

¹⁶ Freeman, *Norman Conquest* IV, 627.

¹⁷ Gaufredus in Muratori, *Rer. ital. Scriptores* V, 584 ; Ordericus, loc. cit. ; Anna Comnena, *Alexias* IV, 6, in Bonn ed. pp. 208, 20, and 210, 19.

the careful tactics of the Byzantine leaders, skilled for many centuries in the arts of war and always carefully sparing their never too numerous troops. Some of the English retired to a chapel of St. Michael, where, Anna says, the Normans set fire to the place and they were burned. And so, says Ordericus, the English and their descendants faithfully served the imperial majesty and 'even to the present day have been dear to Caesar, to the Senate, and to the People'.

To this period belongs a curious story of the English in the East preserved in the Saga of Edward the Confessor.¹⁸ We read that 'some winters' after the fall of Harald the son of Godwin, that is soon after the Conquest, the English leaders, being by then sure that the Danes would send no help against William, left their heritages and fled away, a great host. They were led by three earls and eight barons: the chief of them all was Sigurd, the Earl of Gloucester, and they had three hundred and fifty ships. The Flat Island Book (*Flateyjarbok*) version of the story says that it was William who sent Sigurd away on these journeyings. They went by Galicia to Gibraltar and sacked a city to the south of the Strait, called Septem, which may well be Ceuta. Then they captured Majorca and Minorca and so went to Sicily. News reached them that there was a great war at Micklegard—for so they called Constantinople: heathen folk were besieging the city both by sea and by land. The great emperor Alexios Comnenos (*stólkonungr Kirjalax hinn mikli*) was newly come to the throne, and this fixes the date to shortly after 1081. This the English thought would turn to their advantage; for the Northmen who had taken service with the Greeks had for many years come to great honour. They came to Micklegard by night. They attacked the besieging fleet and utterly destroyed it. The land armies were so much terrified by this host, from which it seemed that no one could escape, that they fled, and in the morning the people of the city saw that all the besiegers were gone and that in their place there were many ships of quite a different appearance. The emperor asked them to stay as his imperial guards, as had been the wont of the Varangians. But Sigurd and the other earls thought it not enough to grow old thus: they must have some realm to rule over, and for this they asked the emperor. They were told that there was a land which lay to the north across the sea: this had of old belonged to the Caesar of Micklegard, but later the heathen had taken it and were then dwelling in it. This land the emperor granted them, if they could win it. Some of them remained at Micklegard in the emperor's service, but most of them went north over the sea to reach this land.

After six days' sail they came to the land; Sigurd attacked and drove all the people away: his men then settled the country and called it England. They gave English names to the cities there, and also to the new places they built: London and York and the names of other great towns in England. They would not accept the Law of Paul which passed in Micklegard, but sent to Hungary for bishops and for other clerks. There is the best of land and that folk has dwelt there ever since.

The source of this curious tale Vigfusson has been unable to trace.¹⁹ He says that it must be comparatively late, as York is called not Iorvik but Iork: with this he leaves it. The basis of it seems to be that many Englishmen did go to serve in Constantinople after the conquest of their own country. To this there may perhaps have been added some distorted tradition of the Goths in the Crimea. The Icelandic writers might have heard that in the Crimea was a people talking a language akin to their own, even as English was, and in this way the story of an English conquest of the country have arisen. The statement that the land had once been under the emperors but was then in heathen hands, fits in very well with the loss of Kherson to the Russian Vladimir in the year 988, less than a century before this story of the English. The remark about the Law of Paul and so on seems to mean that these English rejected the Orthodox faith of Byzantium and retained their allegiance to the See of Rome. The phrase 'Law of Paul' (*Palsbok*) for orthodoxy,

¹⁸ Rolls edition, *Orkneyinga Saga*, ch. 10, p. 398, and in translation volume, p. 425. Also *Flateyjarbok* III, 470.

¹⁹ *Orkn. Saga* I, XVII.

seems to me to be a reference to the Greek bishop Paul who came to Olaf Tryggvason when he was in Russia after he had been 'prime-signed' in Greece.²⁰

I do not know whether it was this story that made Pears hazard the suggestion that the Goths of the Crimea were 'probably an isolated Waring tribe'.²¹

We have seen that Cinnamus mentions the service of the British : this is in an account of a campaign in Macedonia in 1123.²² Fifty years later we get another glimpse of Englishmen in the Byzantine army in a letter written by Manuel Comnenos to the English King Henry II, in which he recounts the disastrous defeat of Myriocephalon, when in 1176 the Greek army was destroyed near Konia by the Seldjuk Sultan Kilidj Arslan. Manuel recounts his defeat and adds : 'I am glad to think that some of your lordship's great men were with us ; they will tell your lordship at length of everything which befell.'²³

For a few years later Vasiliev quotes an entry in the Great Roll of the Pipe for the year 1184-5, which records a payment of 40 marks to a certain Richard de Limesia, when he was going to serve in Constantinople : *ad eundem in servitio suo ad Constantinopolim*. Vasiliev is of opinion that this Richard was going to serve 'among the English bodyguard of the Byzantine emperors'.²⁴

Coming to the Latin siege of 1204 we have several mentions of the Varangians. Nicetas tells us that when the Latins tried to effect a landing at the imperial pier, ἀπόβαθρα τοῦ βασιλέως, on the Golden Horn near Vlachernai, they were driven back by the great bravery of the allies of the Greeks, the Pisans and the 'axe-bearing barbarians'.²⁵ Villehardouin says that the wall was manned by English and Danes—'li murs fu mult garniz d'Englois et de Danois' ; the fighting was very violent, and there was a hand to hand fight with axes and swords ; the assailants mounted on the wall and prisoners were taken on both sides.²⁶ The point is not made clear, but it may be surmised that the axes were the weapons wielded by these Danes and English. He also tells us that when the Latins sent envoys to the Emperor Isaac, posted at the gate of the city and all along the way to the palace of Vlachernai were Englishmen and Danes, fully armed with their axes.²⁷ So too Robert de Clari in describing the attack on the walls from the ships tells us of the sergeants, English, Danish, and Greek, who were in one of the storeys of a tower, and how they defended themselves with axes and swords.²⁸

Robert de Clari also gives us a glimpse of the Varangian clergy. He tells us that in April 1204, after the flight of Mourtzouphlos, when the Franks entered the city and the Greeks had taken refuge with Laskaris at Nicaea, then 'in the morning the priests and clerks in their vestments—they were English, Danish, and from other nations—went in procession to the Frankish host to make terms, and also to report that the Greeks had fled, leaving no one in the city but the poorer people'.²⁹

In a list of the nations who went on the Crusade to the Holy Land Nicetas mentions 'the prince of the axe-bearing Britons, whom they now call *Inglinoi*' : ὁ τῶν πελεκυφόρων κατάρχων Βρεταννῶν οὗς νῦν φασὶ Ἰγκλίνους. It would therefore seem that when he uses the word 'axe-bearing', πελεκυφόροι, the usual Byzantine word for the Varangians, he probably means English.³⁰

In regard to the faithfulness of these guards there was at this time one very questionable incident. After the flight of Mourtzouphlos, when the Latin danger was imminent, Laskaris went with the Patriarch to the Milion and made an appeal to the Varangians to be faithful : by a change of rule in the city they would lose, he said, quite as much as the Greeks themselves ; they would no longer receive their high pay or hold their distinguished

²⁰ *Olafs Saga Tryggvasonar*, in *Flateyjarbok* 1, 117.

²¹ *The Fall of Constantinople*, 155.

²² Ref. in note 9.

²³ The letter is in the *Chronicle* of Roger de Hoveden, Rolls edition, ed. Stubbs, II, 102. The emperor writes of himself as 'imperium nostrum' ; the English king is to him only 'nobilitas tua'. Cf. also Vasiliev in *BZ* XXIX, 244.

²⁴ *BZ* XXIX, 243.

²⁵ Bonn ed., p. 721, 19.

²⁶ Ch. XXXV, section 171 ; ed. of De Wailly, p. 96.

²⁷ *ibid.*, ch. XXXVIII, section 185, p. 106.

²⁸ Robert de Clari, 'La Prise de Constantinople,' ch. LXXIV, in Ch. Hopf's *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, 59.

²⁹ *ibid.*, ch. LXXX, 63.

³⁰ Bonn ed., p. 547, 3.

position, but would rank simply as mercenary troops. The Varangians promised their support, but only at a high rate of pay: 'scarcely veiling their thievish trick,' as Nicetas bitterly puts it, 'and making the very acuteness of the danger an opportunity for driving a bargain.'³¹ Sir Charles Oman puts it quite bluntly: 'The Varangians . . . chose this moment to demand that their arrears of pay should be liquidated; they would not return to fight without their money.'³² But here on behalf of the Varangians it should be added that Mourtzouphlos had previously won them over to his side, and it may well have been a feeling of loyalty towards this fallen master that now made them hesitate to range themselves on the side of his successors. In times of such rapid vicissitudes of fortune it must often have been no easy matter to see on which side a loyal guard should stand, although it can cause no surprise that Nicetas should have been vexed at any such scruples or hesitation.

For the period of the Palaiologoi, when the Greek empire was restored, we have a few, but only a few, references to the Varangians, and as there is no mention of them in any of the accounts of the Turkish siege in 1454, we may suppose that it was not long after the disaster of 1204 that the guard finally came to an end. It has been suggested above that any historical value of the account given by Codinus of the part they played at the imperial court may be largely discounted, and it is always possible that the name survived in the language of the court, the actual guards having no more connection with the north than the Suisse in a French church has with Switzerland.

In the *Chronicle of the Morea*, written about 1300, we hear that when William de Villehardouin was taken captive after the battle of Pelagonia in 1259 and carried to Constantinople to the presence of the emperor, he was there in the hands of 'the Varangians and the Greeks' (οἱ Βαράγγοι γὰρ κ' οἱ Ῥωμᾶιοι), and this must have been immediately after the restoration of the Greek empire.³³

Then for the reign of Andronikos II we have two references to soldiers armed with axes,³⁴ and for the year 1329 John Katakouzinos mentions 'the Varangians with their axes' (τοὺς πελέκους ἔχοντας Βαράγκους), who were accustomed to guard the keys of any city in which the emperor was staying.³⁵

In a curious fourteenth-century book, *The Book of Fruits*, Διήγησις τοῦ Πωρικολόγου, which describes a lawsuit brought by the Grape before the court of King Quince, we hear of Varangians standing by the side of the king and his lords all through the proceedings. The characters in the piece are all fruits and vegetables, presented with the full titles of the Byzantine Court, on which the book is a satire.³⁶

The medieval chronicler of Cyprus, Leontios Makhairas, writing in the fifteenth century, mentions under the year 1372 a German knight in the service of the emperor sent to Cyprus to arrange a marriage between the emperor's daughter and King Peter II of Cyprus.³⁷ Whether this man was a Varangian or merely a German who casually happened to be in the imperial service, and being a Frank was thought suitable for this employment, we cannot tell.

That even at the time of the Turkish conquest the English were well known at Constantinople appears from a passage in Critobulus, who after 1453 wrote an account of the life of Mahomet II the Conqueror.³⁸ In his preface he says that if the great deeds of Mahomet were written down in Turkish, then only Orientals would know of them, but if in Greek they would be read by everyone, 'by people beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and even by those who live in the Isles of the Britons.' It may well be that the historian's knowledge of the English was from having seen them, or at least heard of them, in the

³¹ Bonn ed., p. 726, 21.

³² *The Byzantine Empire*, 288. See also Sathas, *Bibl. gr. med. aevi*, VII, 444.

³³ Edited by John Schmitt: I. 4319 of the H version.

³⁴ Nicephorus Gregoras, Bonn ed., pp. 303, 22; 398, 20.

³⁵ Bonn ed. I, p. 389, 15.

³⁶ Printed in Wagner's *Carmina graeca medii*

aevi; the passage referred to is on p. 200. Krumbacher (*Geschichte d. byz. Litteratur*, 1891, 463 = ed. 2, 1897, 884) thought that this mention of the Varangians dated the book to the twelfth century. Heisenberg (*Dialekte und Umgangssprache im Neugriechischen*, 44) has pointed out that this is an error.

³⁷ *Leontios Makhairas*, Oxford, 1932, I, 327.

³⁸ In Müller, *Fragmenta historicorum graecorum* V, 52.

city serving as Varangians. I have said that the copious records of the Turkish siege make no mention at all of the Varangians : by this time they had clearly disappeared.

In later years there are a few curious survivals of the Varangian name. One is to be found in quite late Turkish writers. Vilhelm Thomsen quotes a passage from the *Jihan-numa* of the seventeenth century Turkish geographer, Hadji Khalfah³⁹ : 'The German Sea, *Bahr Alaman*, is called in our geographical and astronomical books the Varangian Sea, *Bahr Varank*. The learned Shirazi in his work called *Tohfah* says : "On the coast of it dwells a nation of tall, warlike men," and by these Varank he understands the Swedish people. . . . Now this sea is called the Baltic in the languages of the surrounding nations.' The Varangian land too is mentioned by the mid-seventeenth century Turkish traveller Evliya Chelebi, or Evliya Efendi. In the index to the third volume of the Turkish edition of his travels there is the heading (p. 322) : 'the smaller rivers running into the Danube as far as Germany and Varangia.' This part of Evliya's travels has not been translated, and I owe this reference to my friend Sir Patrick Coghill, who has also given me a translation of the passage. It runs : 'These are the names of the rivers as far as the borders of the Caesar of the Nemtze (*i.e.* the German emperor). There are ten other rivers flowing in as far as Varangia, but as their names are in Aleman (*i.e.* German) I do not remember them'. Which is a great pity. It seems that Evliya went as far west as Dunkirk, and it is interesting to find the name 'Varangia' surviving as a general name for the Teutonic north.⁴⁰ It is tempting to surmise that the name had survived the Byzantine period, and with so much else that was Greek had entered the life and manners of the incoming Turks. But the word is much more likely to have come to them from the Arabian geographers, and it is probably their tradition and not that of the Greeks that the seventeenth-century Turkish writers were following.

A verbal survival almost to the present day is the use of the word Βάραγγοι, Varangians, in ballads of the Acritic cycle recorded among the Greeks who until 1923 lived in the district of Pontos.⁴¹ Of the date of these ballads, which celebrate the exploits of the hero Digenis Akritas, we can only say that they have been current, first in the home of the hero, the eastern parts of Asia Minor, and later in various parts of Greece, from the time he flourished in the twelfth century down to the very recent date when they have been recorded. The ballad here in question narrates how the hero's bride was carried away, and he went to rescue her against great odds. Among his enemies were three hundred Varangians (ἄλλους τριακόσιους Βάραγγους) :—

And then the hero drew his sword from out its golden scabbard ;
A thousand men he slew in front and thousands ten behind him,
Varangians too, three hundred men, there at the bridge of Deva.
He took his bride and fled away, nine nights and days his journey.

The Varangian name is here used for the enemies of the local Greek hero, but the loyalty of the eastern marches of the empire was often more than doubtful, and here in these Varangians we must see a tradition of the champions of the central power against the local interests of the distant province. In any case the ballad carries the Varangian name from its beginnings in the tenth century over a thousand years to the twentieth century and to our own day.

Perhaps the last trace of the Varangians in the city itself is the name *Vlangu*, which is applied to a part of Stamboul lying on the coast of the Marmora.⁴²

If it had not been for a sore stroke of ill fortune, we should have something very much more tangible, in the shape of a collection of tombstones of the Varangians. At one of the towers of the landwall of Constantinople near the Adrianople Gate Pears tells us

³⁹ *The Relations between Ancient Russia and Scandinavia*, 114.

⁴⁰ Although the index to the Turkish edition has for vol. iv these entries : 'Expedition to the Alman Vilayet, Holandia and Isfaj (?). Return from Holandia : the City of Amsterdam, Prandenburgh.'

Here again I am indebted to Sir Patrick Coghill.

⁴¹ The ballad quoted is printed with notes as to its origin in *Ἀρχαῖον Πόντου*, I (1928), 70-3. The lines quoted are 61-4.

⁴² Belin, *Latinité de Constantinople*, 2nd ed 1894, 21.

that ' Dr. Paspatis found many funeral inscriptions relating to the Warings'.⁴³ The English ambassador about 1865 endeavoured to have these removed to the English cemetery at Scutari, but unfortunately without success, and the stones were used by the Turkish government for building. By a second stroke of ill fortune the only two copies which were taken were burnt in the great fire of Pera in 1870. Pears, who knew Paspatis, wrote this in 1885. Belin in 1894 has the same story⁴⁴ : he says that the tower was between the Adrianople Gate and the site called Top Kapou ; and that they were inscriptions relating to ' Foederati, gardes-de-corps des empereurs '. Then he points out that they probably came from the Church of St. Nicholas and St. Augustine, which was built by an Englishman who went as an exile to Constantinople in the time of William the Conqueror, for this church is probably to be identified with the ruined oratory of St. Nicholas, now called the Bogdan Sarai, which lies in the Balat quarter a short way to the east of the Adrianople Gate. This identification of the church makes it likely that the lost stones were of English Varangians.

One sorry fragment of these treasures does seem to have escaped. Some five hundred yards to the east of the Bogdan Sarai is the old church of St. Mary Pammakáristos, and in a vaulted chamber opening on the road close to the church there was found a brick with the inscription INΓBAPF. This was published in 1885 by C. G. Curtis and S. Aristarkhis, and they see in these letters an abbreviated 'Ivy[λίνου] Βαρ[έγγου], ' English Varangian.'⁴⁵ This none too clear fragment is all that seems to have survived of a perhaps rich treasure of Varangian epitaphs which we have lost by so capricious a stroke of ill luck : *Gesta diaboli per Turcos* ! The same writers published with this brick fragments of several epitaphs of *foederati* found in this same neighbourhood.

Belin further tells us that a Varangian tombstone was sent by Dethier to Stuttgart : I know nothing more of it.

⁴³ *The Fall of Constantinople*, 154, note. See also Robert Byron, *The Byzantine Achievement*, 146.

⁴⁴ Belin, *op. cit.*, 20.

⁴⁵ This is published in the periodical of the 'Ελλην. Φιλολ. Σύλλογος, of Constantinople, in the παράρτημα to vol. xvi (1885), 36.