

Lugovyi O.M. Rhos and Varangians in Byzantium during the 10-12-th Centuries: the Formation and Structural Role of a Mercenary Contingent.

Dissertation for the Candidate of Historical sciences degree, speciality 07.00.02 – world history. Was defended at Odessa I.I. Mechnikov National University in 2009.

The process of forming a mercenary contingent from Eastern and Northern Europe in the Byzantine army during the 10-11th centuries, the structural features for its functioning, and its role in the domestic and foreign policy of Byzantine Empire are analyzed in the dissertation.

The origins and semantics of the terminology used for designating foreign contingent (*Rhos*, *Varangians*, *Koulpings* etc.) are investigated. This material gives possibility to inquire into a question of their ethnical determination by the Byzantine authors and their self-determination in different episodes. Among such episodes are differences between *Rhos* and *Tauroscythians* cases, isolating *Varangians* from them, *Koulpings* problem etc.

Alternative hypothesis about βάραγγοϛ origin is formulated. It traveled a long way of semantic metamorphosis from *Wargus*-werewolf of *leges barbarorum* through stranger as in Longobardian Italy to the man-at-arms *Wargeng/Waregango*. Constant contacts between Italy and Byzantium gave way for new concept to proceed through Greek and to be attached to Scandinavian part of *Rhos*, now with Scandinavian root *vár* – “contract”. Accepting the contract person etymology and changing ending into more suitable northern –ing, they introduced *Væringr*, while Greek language of 11-12th preserved more close to Langobardian form βάραγγοϛ.

To the end of 11th cent. *Rhos* almost disappeared from Byzantine texts. Scandinavian *Varangians* are partly substituted by English *Varangians*. Such mixture of different northern ethnic groups in one military contingent caused in 12th cent. changing their name to the neutral *Pelecyporoi* (*Battle-axe bearers*), sometimes added by geographically uncertain determinative *from Thule*.

Problems of soldiers' recruiting to the Byzantine army were observed in the context of the international relations of the X-XII centuries. The significance of the military mercenary contracts with Byzantium on the policies of Rus', the Scandinavian and the British states is shown.

There were four known to sources typical forms of the hiring process organization: accepting of the ready-to-war military detachment on the basis of alliance treaty, forming of a mercenary unit by emperor emissary at the territory and by authority of the allied state (*donor state*), individual joining the existing detachments in the Byzantine army that was possible thanks to previous treaty and detention of the pilgrims and crusaders for the military service.

Every donor country had its own interests, that urged it to the participation in the Byzantine forces manning. The main reason were always some changes in political and social structure of that countries, depriving part of local population, especially youth, of their centuries-old connections with land and clan. Close correlation between the situation inside the donor countries and intensity of recruiting system is often obvious. So the question of complex investigation of processes in social, economical, political, cultural structures that could affect the popularity of the idea of entering Byzantine service among the population of donor countries has to be examined.

Rus' stood unusually in the international system, created by Byzantine diplomacy. During 10th and the first half of 11th century it secured and provided the soldiers transit from the Scandinavian countries to Byzantium and also played a role of the filter for this stream. Russian princes received large benefits from that, using liquid Scandinavian force for their political aims, increasing their power and indirectly controlling Byzantine army efficiency. Byzantine Empire gained from this role of Rus' as well, because it's army was not able to accept every willing recruit from all over the Northern Europe.

Constantinople authorities refused to man their *ethnikoi* detachments from countries, with which rulers they had no agreements providing legal ground for hiring. Also they haven't hired a man, if every single case of recruitment wasn't confirmed by the ruler of donor country. That's why Rus' played such a big role, being since the treaties of 911 and 944 till the end of 11th century actually the only official donor country for all Northern Europe region.

Other European countries were also involved in the Byzantine recruiting, that is England, German lands and Italy. Every of these directions has to be carefully investigated. Anglo-Saxon role in Byzantine army is well (thought not without puzzles) illuminated by written sources, while later reinforcement from Norman England much less detailed. It is certain, that English knights of that time kept connection with their motherland and were not only descendants of the Anglo-Saxon refugees. German presence in Byzantine army mostly reflect periods of friendly relations between two Empires, but not always. As in the case of Rus', Scandinavian countries or England, it also had it's own diplomatic prehistory in negotiations that prepared Second Crusade in 1143-1145. But not all facts can be explained from this diplomatic correspondence.

Some factors providing stability for the preservation of the contingent are examined, among them: the functions of the units, the system of subordination, the legal position of the units, their quartering, payments to the troops and other material inducements, spiritual influences exerted by the Byzantine church, and the perception of the mercenaries among the inhabitants of the Byzantine Empire.

From the very first mentioning in the Byzantine army in Xth cent. *Rhos* were subordinated to the common military administration structures. They entered two arms – field *tagmas* and palace guard. The same was Varangian position in the next century. Theory about *akolouphos* as a whole Varangian corps commander isn't found to be reasonable enough. There are some signs of legal proceedings in Varangian detachments, independent from Imperial judicial system.

The most successful *ethnikoi* representatives received possibility of making serviceman career, even of officer rank in Emperor guard that needed paying a huge entrance fee in the ordinary case. Such a prospect along with guaranteed property rights for mercenaries created favorable conditions for gathering wealth by means of military service in Roman Empire providing in turn constant motivation for volunteers and requiring mentioned above limitations.

According to the general Empire policy mercenaries, as every other group in Byzantine army, had to be baptized in orthodox way and even had their own churches. Mercenary groups were first to bring Christianity to Rus' and Sweden massively. Instead Scandinavian and English Varangians of the XIIth century worshiped their national Latin saints. They acquired in Constantinople the right to build temples, consecrated in the names of St. Olav and St. Augustine of Canterbury, for instance.

It is proved, that the Byzantine emperors especially cared about the fighting capacity of this foreign contingent in particular, which was used both as a field army and as border garrisons from which were recruited guard units.

Stages of the activity of the *Rhos'* and *Varangians'* contingent are delineated according to changes in its ethnical and structural composition.

Result of investigation was reconstruction of the ways of forming and structure role of the *Rhos* and *Varangian* contingent, and also some other *ethnikoi* detachments in Byzantine army from 910 to 1204. Evolution of all structural features and status of contingent give material for periodization of the Byzantine mercenarism history.

During the period of 910-988 the mercenary *Rhos* detachments usually, though not constantly, took part in the Byzantine military campaigns. There are evidences of engaging them into regular military formations, such as fortresses garrisons and emperor guard. Kievan Rus was at that time the only country-donor of the military force in Europe. This was legally based on the series of international treaties. Such a cooperation became one of the foreign policy priorities for Byzantium and an important mean of the statehood maintenance for Rus'. Therefore *Rhos* was the only name, under which were known all northern mercenaries in Byzantium, no matter what was the country of their real origin.

The second period began with the creation of the first numerous constant *Rhos* contingent in 989. Later it was known under the name *Rhosike moira*. Crew multiplicity caused ethnical partitioning of the contingent in few structural units: *Rhos*, *Varangians* and *Koulpings*. Kievan Rus still played the main role in the solders delivery, but Scandinavians now obviously more independently active. To the end of the period we can see also German knights for the first time in Byzantine service.

In the beginning of the third stage (1071-1204) *Rhos* presence in Byzantium decreased. But new ethnos came into service – solders of Anglo-Saxon descent, Ἴγγλινοι. Later on the same stage Byzantine forces had to invite Scandinavian parties from the Crusading armies staff. Effective results were shown by ambassadors being simultaneously recruiting agents. When Empire had lost such partner as Rus', it had to chose much more flexible way of foreigners recruiting. Ethnical composition of Byzantine *tagmas* became more heterogeneous. German and Normandian (from Southern Italy) knights replaced vacant places in imperial army. Varangian contingent proper consisted now of Scandinavian and English solders together. It have lost juridical autonomy, but received more religious liberty. Danish volunteers and crusaders in 1190-s were last considerable aid to the contingent before Constantinople became the capital of Latin empire. In the sequel Scandinavians disappeared absolutely, Varangians were associated only with Englishmen. But they very rarely took part in actual acts of war.