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A SIXTH-CENTURY STORY IN A NINETH-CENTURY TRACT? *TORNA, TORNA, FRATER REVISITED*

Abstract. This article focuses on the Latin words *torna* and *frater*. According to the accounts of Theophylact Simocatta and Theophanes the Confessor, the words were used by soldiers participating in the Byzantine-Avar war campaign in the Haemus mountains in 587. Relying mainly on the passage from the chronicle of Theophanes, Romanian scholars have interpreted the words as an early form of a Balkan Romance idiom spoken by the local population. The two words would not be strong enough evidence to support the view that this is a sample of early Balkan Romance language in the sixth-century Thrace. The analysis of the words, as well as of the context in which they were used, links the phrase “*torna, torna, frater*” to Vulgar Latin and *sermo castrensis*. The author also argues that the chroniclers dramatized the accounts of the episode where the words were used. Additionally, the form *fratre*, which is found in two manuscript copies from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, seems to be an interpolation from a medieval Western Romance language, likely early Italian, and should not be identified with any language used in the Balkans. “*Torna torna fratre*” should be viewed as indicating a grasp of Italianate Latin within the Middle Byzantine context. This view contradicts the earlier assertions on the subject.

Keywords: Theophylact Simocatta’s *Universal History*, Theophanes Confessor’s *Chronicle*, *torna*, *torna*, *frater*, Late Latin, genesis of Romance languages

Taking place near Thracian Beroe (Stara Zagora in modern Bulgaria) in 587¹, one of the episodes of the Byzantine-Avar war campaign in the Haemus Mountains has sparked off a lengthy academic debate, as accounts of it seemed to provide proof of the existence of a Romance-speaking population in Thrace

¹ Michael Whitby dated this event to 587, linking it with a two-year military campaign of 586–587; M. WHITBY, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian. Theophylact Simocatta on the Persian and Balkan Warfare*, Oxford 1988 [= OHM], p. 145–150. The view that Beroe was where the episode took place was expressed by Whitby in his article: *Theophylact’s Knowledge of Languages*, B 52, 1982, p. 426.

in the late sixth century². Burden carriers from the army of General Comentiolus provoked a trivial incident that caused a disturbance among the soldiers who thus failed to carry out a successful attack on the Avar army. The first to recount the episode was Theophylact Simocatta who wrote in his *Universal History* (c. 610–638) that as one of the baggage animals shook its load loose, burden carriers called for the animal's master to go to the rear and adjust the baggage. The carriers' words

² The majority of historians and linguists considered the words to be a sample of spoken language. However, they were divided in their views on whether the accounts of this episode demonstrated evidence of a vulgar Latin idiom or a spoken Proto-Romance language, specifically an early form of Aromanian or Romanian. Beginning with Konstantin Josef Jireček, the key phrase that appears in these accounts was linked with a common military command in Latin; K.J. JIREČEK, *Über die Wlachen von Moglena*, ASP 15, 1893, p. 98–99. The bibliography of the subject is large: J. THUNMANN, *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte der östlichen Europäischen Völker*, Leipzig 1774, p. 342; G. ȘINCAI, *Hronica românilor și a mai multor neamuri* (1st ed. 1853), [in:] *Opere*, vol. I, *Hronica românilor*, trans. et praef. F. FUGARIU, București 1967, p. 178–179; O. DENSUȘIANU, *Histoire de la langue roumaine*, vol. I, Paris 1901, p. 390; N. IORGA, *Geschichte des rumänischen Volkes im Rahmen seiner Staatsbildungen*, vol. I, Gotha 1905, p. 106; D. RUSSO, *Elenismul în România*, București 1912, p. 20; A. PHILIPPIDE, *Originea românilor*, vol. I, Iași 1923, p. 504–508; P. PAPAĞAGI, *Quelques influences byzantines sur le macédo-roumain ou aroumain*, RHSEE 2, 1925, p. 187–190; H. ZILLIACUS, *Zum Kampf der Weltsprachen im oströmischen Reich*, Helsinki 1935, p. 130; Γ. ΚΟΛΙΑΣ, *Τόρνα – επιχώριος γλῶσσα*, ΕΕΒΣ 14, 1938, p. 295–299; G. POPA-LISSEANU, *Limba română în izvoarele istorice medievale. IV. Arătările cronicarilor bizantini: torna, retorna și fratre*, AAR.MSL series III, 9, 1940, p. 284–295; G.I. BRĂȚIANU, *Une énigme et un miracle historique. Le peuple roumain*, Bucharest 1942, p. 67–68; M. GYÓNI, *Az állitológos legrégebb román nyelvelmlék*, EphK 66, 1942, p. 1–11; G. NANDRIȘ, *The Development and Structure of Rumanian*, SEER 30.74, 1951, p. 7–39; A. ROSETTI, *Istoria limbii române*, București 1956, p. 592; P.Ș. NĂSTUREL, *Torna, torna, fratre. O problemă de istorie și de lingvistică*, SCIV 7, 1956, p. 179–186; G.C. LEPSCHY, *Giusto Lipsio e il volgare nel VI secolo (torna torna, frater et l'Instrumentum plenariae sententiae)*, SMV 8, 1965, p. 296–307; P.Ș. NĂSTUREL, *Quelques mots de plus à propos du «torna, torna fratre»*, de Théophylacte et de Théophane, BBg 2, 1966, p. 217–222; A. ROSETTI, *Despre torna, torna, fratre*, [in:] *Omagiu lui Constantin Daicoviciu*, ed. E. CONDURACHI, D. PRODAN, M. MACREA, București 1960, p. 467–468; I. GLODARIU, *În legătură cu «torna, torna, fratre»*, AMN 1, 1964, p. 483–487; G. MIHĂILĂ, *Studii de lingvistică și filologie*, Timișoara 1981, p. 178; E. COȘERIU, *Theophylactus, II, 15. Ein Beitrag zur Deutung von torna, torna, frater*, AUAIC.L 28–29, 1982–1983, p. 21–27; I. FISCHER, *Latina dunăreană. Introducere în istoria limbii române*, București 1985, p. 21–22; M. AVRAM, *Torna, torna, fratre*, in *Enciclopedia limbilor romanice*, ed. M. SALA, București 1989, p. 310–311; V. BARBU, *Vechi mărturii despre limba română. I. Torna, torna, frate (I)*, LR 39.1, 1990, p. 29–35 (I); 39.2, 1990, p. 143–148 (II); A.B. ČERNJAK, *Vizantijskie svidetel'stva o romanskom (romanizirovannom) naselenii Balkan V–VII vv.*, BB 53, 1992, p. 97–105; H. MIHĂESCU, *La romanité dans le Sud-Est de l'Europe*, București 1993, p. 420–429; N.-Ș. TANAȘOCA, *«Torna, torna, fratre» et la romanité balkanique au VI^e siècle*, RRL 38.1–3, 1993, p. 265–267. Lately, the idiom has been identified as part of a vulgar Late Latin: M. WHITBY, *Theophylact's Knowledge of Languages...*, p. 426–427; or as a Late Latin idiom arguably on the point of turning into a Balkan Romance language: B. BALDWIN, *Torna, torna, frater: What Language*, B 67.1, 1997, p. 264–267; G. MIHĂILĂ, *Contribuții la etimologia limbii române*, București 2002, p. 9–10, 105; N. SARAMANDU, *Torna, torna, fratre et la romanité orientale au VI-e siècle*, RESEE, 40.1–4, 2002, p. 41–60; IDEM, *Romanitatea orientală*, București 2004, p. 93–111; K. DUMITRAȘCU, *Torna, torna, fratre – precizări bibliografice*, [in:] *Studii și articole. Contribuții filologice*, vol. I, ed. IDEM, A. IORGULESCU, M. MARCU, Craiova 2006, p. 20–24.

were interpreted by the nearby soldiers as *torna*, a military signal for troops to change direction during a sudden attack. Confused, the soldiers began to cry out to one another “turn, turn”, and “run”.

[...] ἐν τι τῶν ὑποζυγίων τὸν ἐπικείμενον παραπέριψε φόρτον. συνέτυχε δὲ τὸν κεκτημένον εἰς τὸ πρόσω βαδίζειν. οἱ δὲ παρεπόμενοι καὶ ὀρώντες τὸ νωτοφόρον ζῶον τὰ ἐπικείμενά πως αὐτῷ ἐπισυρόμενον ἀκοσμότερον εἰς τοῦπίσω τραπέσθαι τὸν δεσπότην ἐκέλευον, τὸ τε σκευοφόρον ζῶον ἐπανορθοῦσθαι τοῦ πλημμελήματος. τοῦτό τοι τῆς ἀταξίας γέγονεν αἴτιον καὶ τὴν εἰς τοῦπίσω παλίρροιαν αὐτοματίζεται· παρηχείται γὰρ ποῖς πολλοῖς ἢ φωνή, καὶ παράσημον ἦν τὸ λεγόμενον, καὶ φυγὴν ἐδόκει δηλοῦν, ὡς οἶα τῶν πολεμίων ἐπιφανέντων ἀθρόον αὐτοῖς καὶ παρακληψάντων τὴν δόκησιν. μεγίστου δὲ συμπεσόντος τῷ στρατεύματι θρύλου, θροῦς παρ’ αὐτῶν πολὺς ἐπανίσταται, παλλινοστεῖν τε ἐβόα πᾶς γεγωνῶς διασπρῦσιον, ἐπιχωρίφ τε γλῶττη εἰς τοῦπίσω τραπέσθαι ἄλλος ἄλλω προσέταττεν “τόρνα, τόρνα” μετὰ μεγίστου ταραχῶν φθεγγόμενοι, οἶα νυκτομαχίας τινὸς ἐνδημούσης ἀδοκίτως αὐτοῖς.³

one of the baggage animals shed the load it was carrying. It happened that the animal’s owner was marching in front; those following behind saw that the beast of burden was dragging in some disarray its intended load and ordered its master to turn to the rear and to rectify the baggage-beast’s miscarriage. This in fact became the cause of disorder and produced a spontaneous backward rush to the rear. For the utterance was incorrectly repeated by the majority, the word was distorted, and it appeared to indicate flight, as if the enemy had suddenly appeared before them and cheated their expectation. The army fell into tremendous uproar, a great outcry arose among them, with piercing shouts everyone cried out to return, and one man ordered another in native parlance to turn to the rear, amidst utmost confusion, shouting “Turn, turn, as if a night battle had unexpectedly come upon them.”⁴

Theophanes the Confessor, who retold the episode in his *Chronicle* (c. 810), offered an account of it that seems even clearer than the one provided by Simocatta. As a result, interpreters have been led to conclude that Theophanes relied on the same source as Simocatta in describing the Balkan campaign of Emperor Maurice⁵.

[...] ἐνὸς γὰρ ζῶον τὸν φόρτον διαστρέψαντος, ἕτερος τὸν δεσπότην τοῦ ζῶου προσφωνεῖ τὸν φόρτον ἀνορθῶσαι τῇ πατρώα φωνῇ · “τόρνα, τόρνα, φράτερ”. καὶ ὁ μὲν κύριος τῆς ἡμίονου τὴν φωνὴν οὐκ ἤσθάνετο, οἱ δὲ λαοὶ ἀκούσαντες καὶ τοὺς πολεμίους ἐπιστῆναι αὐτοῖς ὑπονοήσαντες εἰς φυγὴν ἐτράπησαν, “τόρνα, τόρνα” μεγίσταις φωναῖς ἀνακράζοντες.⁶

³ *Theophylacti Simocattae Historiae*, II, 15, 6–9, rec. C. DE BOOR, Lipsiae 1887 (cetera: THEOPHYLACT, ed. C. DE BOOR), p. 100.

⁴ *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, II, 15, 6–9, ed. et trans. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY, New York–Oxford 1997 (1st ed. 1986) (cetera: THEOPHYLACT, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY), p. 65–66.

⁵ A. PHILIPPIDE, *Originea românilor...*, vol. I, p. 506; P.Ș. NĂSTUREL, *Torna, torna, fratre...*, p. 184; M. WHITBY, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source for the Reigns of Justin II, Tiberius and Maurice (A.D. 565–602)*, B 53, 1983, p. 328; *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Oxford 1997, p. 383 n. 18, p. 384, n. 26, 28 and 29.

⁶ *Theophanis Chronographia*, AM 6079 (AD 587), 14–19, vol. I, rec. C. DE BOOR, Lipsiae 1883 (cetera: THEOPHANES, ed. C. DE BOOR), p. 258.

For when the load on one animal had slipped, a man called to the animal's master to put the load right, speaking in his native tongue, '*Torna, torna, frater*'. The driver of the mule did not hear the words, but the army heard them and suspecting that the enemy was upon them, turned to flight shouting '*torna, torna*' in loud voices.⁷

There are indeed some significant differences between the account of Theophylact and that of Theophanes. According to Simocatta, when burden carriers saw that one of the loads had become loose and was being poorly carried by the animal (τι τῶν ὑποζυγίων, ζῶον), they told the animal's master to proceed to the rear and fix the problem. However, Simocatta did not report the actual words that were uttered. In turn, Theophanes reported that one of the burden carriers, upon seeing that the load on one of the mules (ἡμιόν) had slipped, called to his driver to set it right, allegedly using words from his native tongue: *torna, torna, frater*. Simocatta further explains that the soldiers mistook the carriers' words for the command "retreat" and began to rush to the rear, ordering one another to *torna, torna*, as if they had been suddenly attacked from the front. Theophanes briefly recounts that upon hearing the carriers' words, the soldiers thought they were facing defeat and turned to flee, shouting *torna, torna*.

Historians have discussed at length the multiple meanings that the Latin word *torna* seems to have in the two texts (to turn to the rear, to turn about, to change direction, to turn back, possibly also to overturn the load)⁸, trying to answer whether it bears any traces of an incipient Balkan Romance language⁹. Earlier in the text we are told that Comentiolus assembled his army at Anchialus in Thrace (present-day Pomorie, in the Gulf of Burgas on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast), relying probably both on ordinary inhabitants and on soldiers who were part of the Eastern Thracian system of military forts. Of the 10,000 soldiers assembled by Comentiolus, 4000 were poorly prepared and were thus given the task of transporting the baggage. The army was then grouped into three divisions¹⁰. While assembling his troops at Anchialus, Comentiolus held the position of Magister Militum Praesentalis, and his force likely comprised a combination of praesental units and provincial units. The men responsible for managing the baggage train

⁷ THEOPHANES, AM 6079 (AD 586–587), 258, [in:] *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor. Byzantine and Near Eastern History, AD 284–813*, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Oxford 1997 (cetera: THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT), p. 380–381.

⁸ P. PAPAĞAGI, *Quelques influences byzantines...*, p. 187–190; I. GLODARIU, *În legătură cu «torna, torna, fratre»...*, p. 487.

⁹ An extensive discussion in E. COȘERIU, *Theophylactus, II*, 15..., p. 21–27.

¹⁰ THEOPHYLACT, II, 10, 8–9, ed. C. DE BOOR, p. 90. *In this particular year Comentiolus came to Anchialus, assembled the army, carefully reviewed the bravest of the throng, and separated them from the ineffectual force. He arranged three divisions and dispersed these separately against the barbarians. He appointed Martin brigadier of the right flank, while he made Castus captain of the other wing; the general took charge of the centre of the force. The number of the fighting force was six thousand; for four thousand were non-combatant because of feebleness of spirit, and these the general ordered to stand guard over the rampart, as it is called, along with the baggage* (ed. M. WHITBY, p. 57).

were usually long-standing aid servants and as such would have been familiar with the ways of army units¹¹. The *Strategikon*, the manual of war of Emperor Maurice, completed by the late 590s, prescribed that *on the march when the enemy is nearby, the baggage train must always be in the middle, so it may not be subject to harassment for lack of protection. Troops on the march should not be mixed in or confused with the train, but they must be kept apart*¹². The manual prescribes the marching pattern known as *agmen quadratum*, when the army is divided into four units. The formation featured cavalry and infantry at the front and rear and on both wings. In the centre, there was the baggage train and military equipment. The square configuration enabled rapid combat readiness on all sides, while safeguarding the legion's assets, but demanded precise organization. However, this does not appear to be what Comentiolus organized. When he saw that the chagan idled a short distance away, he *marshalled the army, arranged it into a single formation, and permitted it to march*¹³. It seems he used the more common line array. The baggage train and troops moved together in a single line, with the supply carriers probably marching among troops in the convoy, which put them in confusion that quickly spread to the soldiers.

Details regarding the origin of the people forming this army remain unknown. Evagrius Scholasticus mentions in his *Ecclesiastical History* that Comentiolus, who himself had a Latin name, was Thracian by race (Θράξ γένος)¹⁴. By the times of Justinian, the Byzantine armies could include many provincials like Illyrians, Thracians, Armenians, Isaurians, Lycaonians, as well as various barbarian groups like the Heruls, Gepids, Goths, Lombards, Moors, Vandals, Persians, and others. However, during the reign of Maurice, the situation changed because of the Avaro-Slavic incursions into the Balkan Peninsula. These invasions virtually eliminated Illyricum (the Illyriciani were the most significant Latin-speaking military group within the Eastern Roman Empire¹⁵) as a source of recruits and reduced Thrace's military potential¹⁶. Consequently, the region constituted a poor military resource.

¹¹ I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for providing clarifications regarding the composition of the army, as well as invaluable insights and suggestions that have allowed me to enhance the overall quality of this article.

¹² *Maurice's Strategikon. Handbook of Byzantine Military Strategy*, III, 5, ed. et trans. G.T. DENNIS, Philadelphia 1984 (cetera: MAURICIUS, ed. G.T. DENNIS), Book V, 'On Baggage Trains', p. 58sq. For the *terminus ante quem* date of the *Strategikon*, see M. WHITBY, *The Strategikon of Maurice*, [in:] *Military Literature in the Medieval Roman World and Beyond*, ed. C. WHATLEY, Leiden–Boston 2024 [= RMS, 8], p. 151–173, in 152.

¹³ THEOPHYLACT II, 15, 4.

¹⁴ *The Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius Scholasticus*, trans. et praef. M. WHITBY, Liverpool 2001 [= TTH, 33], p. 307; N.-Ş. TANAŞOCA, «*Torna, torna, fratre*»..., p. 266.

¹⁵ D. DZINO, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat. Identity Transformations in Post-Roman and Early Medieval Dalmatia*, Leiden–Boston 2010 [= ECEEMA, 12], p. 66.

¹⁶ See P. CHARANIS, *Ethnic Changes in the Byzantine Empire in the Seventh Century*, DOP 13, 1959, p. 31–32; M. WHITBY, *Recruitment in Roman Armies from Justinian to Heraclius (ca. 565–615)*,

Because the peasantry became scarce, the soldiers garrisoning forts built by Justinian on the Thracian limes had a hard time securing food for themselves, which twice led to rebellion against Maurice¹⁷.

Based on the similarity between *torna* and Aromanian second person singular imperative form / third person singular indicative form *toarnă* (turn, return, also respond, and pour, or overturn, as in “mula toarnă”, the mule overturns [the baggage]), some scholars have suggested that these “local carriers” came from the Balkan mountainous area and can be seen as the precursors of the Vlachs (Aromanians) who spoke an incipient Aromanian¹⁸. Although Theophylact only tells us about Captain Castus (on the left flank) heading for Haemus (Beroe, via Aquae Calidae) and General Comentiolus following him (which of course took place after the army was raised on the seashore at Anchialus)¹⁹, the presumption that the troops were gathered from the populace of the Eastern Haemus can be sustained²⁰, provided it is accepted that the Byzantine defence line extended along the Eastern Stara Planina (Haemus) and less so along the Black Sea coast²¹. However, this does not necessarily mean that the soldiers and servants stationed in these *castra* were of local origin²². It seems that there was a division between the militarized and probably local population inhabiting the fortified settlements (*limitanei*) and the regular army (*comitatenses*) serving in fortresses²³.

Torna was a Latin military command that meant “to change direction”, which was still used by the sixth-century Byzantine army and was included in the *Str-*

[in:] *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. III, *States, Resources and Armies*, ed. A. CAMERON, Princeton 1995, p. 61–124.

¹⁷ F. CURTA, *Peasants as ‘Makeshift Soldiers for the Occasion’. Sixth-Century Settlement Patterns in the Balkans*, [in:] *Urban Centers and Rural Contexts in Late Antiquity*, ed. T.S. BURNS, J.W. EADIE, Ann Arbor 2001, p. 212.

¹⁸ The idea is first put forward by J. THUNMANN, *Untersuchungen über die Geschichte...*, p. 342, with P. Papahagi and P.Ş. Năsturel among its supporters. A thorough literature review can be found in V. BARBU, *Vechi mărturie despre limba română...*, p. 29–35 and N. SARAMANDU, *Torna, torna, fratre...*, p. 41–57.

¹⁹ THEOPHYLACT, II, 10, 10; 11, 4, ed. C. DE BOOR.

²⁰ Nicolae-Şerban Tanaşoca suggested that Comentiolus *avait recruté cette armée sur place, pas précisément en Thrace, mais plutôt dans la région montagneuse de l’Haemus, c’est-à-dire dans la zone de langue latine de la Péninsule Balkanique*, from locals who must have known the paths of the mountains and the proper places for ambush; N.-Ş. TANAŞOCA, «*Torna, torna, fratre*»..., p. 266.

²¹ В. ДИНЧЕВ, *Ранновизантийските крепости в България и съседните земи (в диоцезите Thracia и Dacia)*, София 2006, p. 78–79; see also V. DINCHEV, *The Fortresses of Thrace and Dacia in the Early Byzantine Period*, [in:] *The Transition to Late Antiquity on the Danube and Beyond*, ed. A.G. POULTER, Oxford 2007 [= PBA, 141], p. 479–546.

²² The current map of Romance-speaking population spread in Bulgaria do not contain an eastern group, but only south-western and southern ones related to groups from Gramos and Macedonia; N. SARAMANDU, *La carte des parlers aroumains et mégléno-roumains de la péninsule balkanique*, RESEE 39.1–4, 2001, p. 118–119.

²³ В. ДИНЧЕВ, *Ранновизантийските крепости...*, p. 79.

*tegikon*²⁴. The words cited from the passage in *Strategikon* III.5, the interjection *Torna, mina!* meant “about-turn [and] charge”²⁵. On this command, soldiers were to reverse the direction they were facing in and attack. The standard order to retreat was ‘*Cede* (give way)’²⁶. Other commands for turning during a sudden attack were *Transfurma* and *Transmuta*: *If a small enemy force suddenly attacks from the rear, the command is given: ‘About face (Transforma)’. [...] If a large enemy force appears behind them, the order is: ‘Change place (Transmuta)’. And the unit marches about by bandon*²⁷. All of these verbs were invariably in second person singular imperative form, similar to the word *torna* cited in the two chronicles²⁸.

The faulty understanding of the *torna* command among the locally assembled troops seems to indicate their diverse origin. Some of the carriers may have been locals, while some of the soldiers might have come from outside the local population. The differences could not only be ethnic but also professional, related to occupation or education. Two communication codes overlapped: a non-military one and a military one, which inevitably shared common words. Simocatta specifies that the soldiers ordered *torna, torna*²⁹ and Michael and Mary Whitby translated the words ἐπιχωρίω τε γλώττη as “in native parlance”³⁰. However, the two translators point out that this imprecise adjective is widely used throughout Theophylact’s work to convey the simple meaning of Latin, e.g. τοῦτον ἐπιχωρίω Ῥωμαῖοι φωνῆ

²⁴ K.J. JIREČEK, *Über die Wlachen von Moglena...*, p. 98–99; *Maurice’s Strategikon...*, p. 39; MAURICIUS, *Arta militaria*, III, 5.8, ed. Greek text et trans. H. MIHĂESCU, București 1970 (cetera: MAURICIUS, ed. H. MIHĂESCU), p. 108–109; H. MIHĂESCU, *Les éléments latins des Tacticala-Strategica de Maurice-Urbicius et leur écho en néo-grec*, RESEE 7.2, 1969, p. 278; H. MIHĂESCU, *Termes de commandement militaires latins dans la Strategicon de Maurice*, RRL 14, 1969, p. 269; H. MIHĂESCU, *La langue latine dans le sud-est de l’Europe*, Bucarest–Paris 1978, p. 11. See also M. WHITBY, *Theophylact’s Knowledge of Languages...*, p. 426–428; IDEM, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source...*, p. 327–328; P. RANCE, *The De Militari Scientia or Müller Fragment as a Philological Resource. Latin in the East Roman Army and Two New Loanwords in Greek: Palmarium and *Recala*, Glo 86.1–4, 2010, p. 63–92, with treatment of *Torna* on p. 90–91 n. 56.

²⁵ The passage explains that these manoeuvres should be made repeatedly in different directions (not only forward or backward) so as to enable soldiers to exercise a rapid response; see MAURICIUS, III, 5, 3.8–10, ed. H. MIHĂESCU, p. 108–109. When the commander shouts: ‘Turn. Threaten’. They then wheel around as though to face the enemy. They should practice this manoeuvre frequently, not only charging forwards, but also to the right and to the left, and as though they were heading toward the second line; MAURICIUS, ed. G.T. DENNIS, p. 39.

²⁶ MAURICIUS, ed. G.T. DENNIS: *to fall back a bit and then to wheel about, when the commander wants to fall back in open order he shouts: ‘Give way’.*

²⁷ MAURICIUS, ed. G.T. DENNIS, p. 39; cf. MAURICIUS, III, 5, 3.10, ed. H. MIHĂESCU, p. 108–109.

²⁸ B. BALDWIN, *Torna, torna, frater...*, p. 266.

²⁹ *Torna*, in Vat. gr. 977, tenth century, the only authoritative manuscript of Theophylact’s History; *retorna*, in its much newer copies; THEOPHYLACT, ed. C. DE BOOR, p. 100 and n. 20. For dating Vat. gr. 977, see P. SCHREINER, *Die Historikerhandschrift Vaticanus Graecus 977: Ein Handexemplar zur Vorbereitung des konstantinischen Exzerptenwerkes?*, JÖB 37, 1987, p. 1–29.

³⁰ THEOPHYLACT, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY, p. 66.

ἀποκαλοῦσι κυαιστόρα (= quaestor)³¹, where ἐπιχωρίω φωνῆ obviously means “Latin” and has nothing to do with either a locality or a Romance language. Another example is provided by a “sandy canal”. In the language spoken across the narrow passes and upland valleys of the Eastern Haemus, the counterpart of the phrase in question is rendered as *Sabulente Canalion* (Σαβουλέντε δὲ Κανάλιον ὁ τόπος ὠνόμασται ἐπιχωρίω προσηγορίᾳ τινί)³². However, the toponym is a vulgarized and Graecized form of the Latin syntagm *sabulensis/sabulens canalis* and, given that it may very well have been adapted by the chroniclers themselves, it is difficult to discuss it as presenting traits of an incipient Aromanian language. Thirdly, ἦν σύνθητες Ῥωμαίοις τῇ ἐπιχωρίω φωνῇ τοῦλδον³³ also refers to the Vulgar Latin or *sermo castrensis*.

The *sermo castrensis*, as used by the local army, was not simply spoken Latin but rather a fusion of official nomenclature, technical terminology, military slang, and foreign words that the soldiers had to familiarize themselves with during their cantonment preparation³⁴. Theophylact specified that soldiers shouted to one another an order (προσέταττεν) *torna, torna*; in his text the word is understood as designating the military command to “turn about”. As Barry Baldwin notes, the word *torna* is not documented for Latin in any period in the main Latin dictionaries³⁵. Therefore, the Aromanian verb “toarnă” could be equally attributed to the regional influence of *sermo castrensis* or to the dialectal evolution of a close Latin term (*retorna, detorna*).

Michael Whitby has concluded that the seventh-century historian knew little about the Balkans and was unfamiliar with military campaigns conducted there. Simocatta’s account follows the patterns of late classical historiography, relying on a sophisticated and florid literary style that masked information gaps³⁶. It is believed that Simocatta drew on a chronicle by a partisan author who, while writing his work during Phocas’s reign, was sympathetic to General Priscus (magister militum for Thrace and a key combatant in the Byzantine-Avar war) and unfavourable to Maurice and Comentiolus. Known as “the military source”, or “the Priscus

³¹ THEOPHYLACT, I, 1, 3, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY.

³² THEOPHYLACT, II, 11, 4, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY, p. 58; THEOPHYLACT, ed. C. DE BOOR, p. 92.

³³ THEOPHYLACT, II, 4, 1, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY. See M. WHITBY, *Theophylact’s Knowledge of Languages...*, p. 427 and n. 17. Τοῦλδος (or -ον) “baggage train” is a military term (see Book 5 of Maurice’s Strategicon ‘On the τοῦλδος’ which may come from a Vulgar Latin *toltum, from tollere, to lift, to raise, or to remove; V. NEDELJKOVIĆ, *Justinian’s πάτριος φωνή*, Balç 47, 2016, p. 64, n. 42).

³⁴ M.G. MOSCI-SASSI, *Il sermo castrensis*, Bologna 1983, p. 27–28; P. RANCE, *Simplicitas militaris: Ammianus Marcellinus and sermo castrensis*, [in:] *Ammianus Marcellinus. From Soldier to Author*, ed. M. HANAGHAN, D. WOODS, Leiden–Boston 2022 [= HRE, 16], p. 83–139, which includes a general “status quaestionis” on *sermo castrensis*.

³⁵ B. BALDWIN, *Torna, torna, frater...*, p. 267.

³⁶ See, for instance, the description of the luxurious Sabulente Canalion valley in the Haemus, inspired by the rhetor Aelian, THEOPHYLACT, II, 11, 4–8 (see p. 58, n. 32 in ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY).

source”, this first-hand and probably eye-witness account of the Byzantine-Avar war³⁷ was an official campaign journal of which Theophylact made use in writing this part of his chronicle. However, this was not the only source on which he drew. Whitby maintains that his account of the episode in question was based on a different source, a Constantinopolitan chronicle devoted mainly to imperial actions, natural disasters, and minor military events. Whitby argues that the compilation of the second source by an anonymous author known as the *Great Chronographer* was independently used by Theophanes the Confessor. There are only a few important fragments in Greek that survive from this compilation. These, however, do not include the one that specifically concerns us here³⁸. Following Whitby, scholars tend to support the view that both Theophylact and Theophanes drew in their account of the episode in question on this Constantinopolitan chronicle³⁹.

M. Whitby has also argued that although Simocatta was possibly one of the last secularly educated historians of Late Antiquity⁴⁰, he did not seem to have a good command of Latin, as this was a skill which, by 600 AD, was no longer essential to pursue a career in administration⁴¹. Similarly, neither Theophanes, a self-educated monk, nor George Syncellus, whose chronicle Theophanes continued⁴², seem to have been familiar with Latin to the point of being able to use Latin sources⁴³. These chroniclers, like the author they relied on, were Greek speakers. Despite using a refined rhetoric, Simocatta was ambiguous about the exact words that were actually uttered by the burden carriers. In his view, it “resembled in sound” (παρη-
 χεῖται) *torna*, and so was “marked falsely” (παράσημον)⁴⁴ by the soldiers. It is not

³⁷ THEOPHYLACT, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY, Preface; M. WHITBY, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian...*, p. 92–93, 105–108, 138.

³⁸ M. WHITBY, *The Great Chronographer and Theophanes*, BMGS 8, 1982–1983, p. 1–20; IDEM, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source...*, p. 312–345; IDEM, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian...*, p. 105–108, 121–124, 355.

³⁹ M. WHITBY, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source...*, p. 318. Although C. Mango flatly rejects the view that Theophanes made use of the Great Chronographer (THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Introduction, p. LIV) he admits that in writing this passage, the Confessor did not rely on Theophylact but on some other source; THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, p. 384 n. 26, 28 and 29.

⁴⁰ M. WHITBY, *The Emperor Maurice and his Historian...*, p. 105, 353.

⁴¹ IDEM, *Theophylact’s Knowledge of Languages...*, p. 427–428.

⁴² See C. MANGO, *Who Wrote the Chronicle of Theophanes?*, [reprinted in:] C. MANGO, *Byzantium and its Image. History and Culture of the Byzantine Empire and its Heritage*, Burlington–London 1984, p. 9–17; P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les vicissitudes historiques de la Chronique de Théophane*, B 70.2, 2000, p. 527–553; THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Introduction, p. XLIII–LXIII. For Syncellus, see the more recent W. TREADGOLD, *The Life and Wider Significance of George Syncellus*, TM 19, 2015 (= *Studies in Theophanes*, ed. M. JANKOWIAK, F. MONTINARO), p. 9–30.

⁴³ W. TREADGOLD, *The Middle Byzantine Historians*, Basingstoke 2013, p. 68.

⁴⁴ THEOPHYLACT, ed. M. WHITBY, M. WHITBY, p. 65. This syntagm was curiously omitted by older Romanian translators: A. PHILIPPIDE, *Originea românilor...*, vol. I, p. 505; G. POPA-LISSEANU, *Limba română în izvoarele istorice...*, p. 312. H. Mihăescu abreviates and adapts it: H. MIHĂESCU, G. ȘTEFAN, R. HÎNCU, V. ILIESCU, V.C. POPESCU, *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae*, vol. II, București 1970, p. 539.

clear from his account if the word uttered by the burden carriers was *torna*, or whether it was a different word that was similar in form, such as *retorna*, *detorna*⁴⁵. Simocatta's paraphrase for it was εἰς τοῦπίσω τραπέσθαι, "to turn to the rear"⁴⁶.

The words actually spoken by the carriers are quoted only by Theophanes, who reports that a peasant carrier addressed his comrade "in his native tongue" (τῆ πατρῴα φωνῆ) using the words *torna*, *torna*, *frater*. The chronicler does not say anything about the military command *torna*, of which he seemed unaware. He seems more interested in giving details about the carriers. Focusing his account only on two drivers, he specifies that they were muleteers⁴⁷, and reproduces words from their native tongue. He even introduces a paregon, which helps him dramatize the event. We are told that the muleteer apparently did not hear the words, τὴν φωνὴν οὐκ ἤσθάνετο, which B. Baldwin has chosen to translate as "did not understand these words"⁴⁸. The translation is open to debate, as αἰσθάνομαι is primarily intended to convey the meaning of 'perceiving with the senses' (hearing, in this case), and it only denotes 'perceiving with the mind' (that is, understanding) as a secondary meaning. None of these details are found in Simocatta.

Born to an aristocratic family from Constantinople⁴⁹, Theophanes lost his father at a young age, and according to his biographer, Patriarch Methodius, his mother saw to his formal education at home⁵⁰. From 18 to 21 years of age, he worked in the imperial stables as *strator* (groom)⁵¹. In the year 780, at the age of 21, he became a monk and entered the Polychronius Monastery (probably located near today's Kurşunlu, on the southern shore of the sea of Marmara) and he

⁴⁵ Perhaps this is why the much later copyists felt the need to correct the word *torna* to *retorna* (a clearer lexical form which, however, does not convey the connotation of military command); THEOPHYLACT ed. C. DE BOOR, p. 100 and n. 20.

⁴⁶ Some historians have considered the words uttered by the carriers and those used by the soldiers to refer to the same thing, i.e. the demotic Late Latin spoken in the sixth-century Balkans; Γ. ΚΟΛΙΑΣ, *Τόρνα – επιχώριος γλωσσά...*, p. 295–299; H. MIHĂESCU, *Torna, torna, fratre*, Βυζ 8, 1976, p. 28.

⁴⁷ Earlier Romanian editors translated ἡμίον (mule) as "animal"; A. PHILIPPIDE, *Originea românilor...*, vol. I, p. 505–506; G. POPA-LISSEANU, *Limba română în izvoarele istorice...*, p. 314; at H. MIHĂESCU, mule (H. MIHĂESCU, G. ȘTEFAN, R. HÎNCU, V. ILIESCU, V.C. POPESCU, *Fontes Historiae...*, vol. II, p. 605).

⁴⁸ B. BALDWIN, *Torna, torna, frater...*, p. 265.

⁴⁹ Theophanes was born in 759, probably on the island of Chios, when his father Isaakios, a drungarios, served as the governor of the Aegean thema; P. YANNOPOULOS, *Le lieu et la date de naissance de Théophane le Confesseur*, RÉB 68, 2010, p. 225–230.

⁵⁰ *Methodii Vita S. Theophanis Confessoris*, [in:] *Mémoires de l'Académie de Russie*, 8th series, vol. XIII–XIV, ed. V. LATYSEV, Saint-Petersburg 1918, p. 4–5, 22.

⁵¹ THEODORE STOUDITE, *Laudatio Theophanis*, 3, [in:] S. EFTHYMIADIS, *Le Panégyrique de S. Théophane le Confesseur par S. Théodore Stoudite (BHG 1792b)*. *Édition critique du texte intégral*, AB 111.3–4, 1993, p. 271. He must have clearly understood the incident he wrote about, as his biographer Methodius reports that he had a passion for riding horses when he was young; METHODIUS, p. 6. For his biography by Theodore the Studite, see THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Introduction, p. XLIV. His constant attitude toward his former appointment is revealed in a joke about the imperial horses that he discretely slips into the account of Justin II; THEOPHANES, AM 6065, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, p. 364 and n. 4, p. 365.

then served as abbot of Megas Agros in Bithynia. After being imprisoned for two years for his iconodule beliefs, he was banished to Samothrace, where he died in 818⁵². The fact that Theophanes seems to have been unfamiliar with the old military command *torna* would, therefore, not be difficult to explain. By the time he wrote his chronicle, the imperial chancellery had not used Latin for about 200 years⁵³. Its use had decayed to such an extent that in the mid-860s, Emperor Michael III was referring to it in his letter to Pope Nicholas I as a “barbarous and Scythian tongue”⁵⁴. Middle Byzantine patriographers noted that those who understood Latin in Constantinople in the ninth century were few and far between⁵⁵. In sixth-century Byzantium, Latin remained in official use, as there were still many native speakers of the language. This was, however, no longer the case in the ninth century, as, by that time, Latin had completely lost its former prominence. Southern Italy and the areas that stretched over the north-western borders of the empire – coastal Dalmatia⁵⁶, Moesia, and Dacia (i.e. the land of the “Scythians” that Michael III linked with the use of Latin) – were closest to the empire where Latin was still used as a mother tongue.

However, there were some everyday words, as well as administrative, military, and judicial terms, of Latin origin that had been preserved in the Byzantine vocabulary⁵⁷. The Greek language also contained many terms with the same root as the Latin *tornare* (to turn, to round off, and make round), like *τορνέω* (to turn), *τορνέσις* (turning), and *τορνευτής* (turner)⁵⁸. *φράτηρ* was also part of ancient

⁵² More on his life and work in P. YANNOPOULOS, *Théophane de Sigriani le Confesseur (759–818). Un héros orthodoxe du second iconoclisme*, Brussels 2013.

⁵³ The Latinization of the Eastern Roman Empire began with Emperor Constantine and gained momentum between the fourth and sixth centuries. Between the seventh and ninth centuries, the use of Latin became generally discontinued in all the main areas of Byzantine civilization. It first ceased to be spoken at the imperial court. Latin had to surrender its position as the main language of the army and administration, once the Eastern Roman Empire had lost Illyricum, its most important Latin-speaking region. See bibliography on military usage of Latin in P. RANCE, *The De Militari Scientia...*, p. 64–65, n. 1–2. Generally, see the numerous contributions, with bibliography in *Latin in Byzantium*, vol. I, *Late Antiquity and Beyond*, ed. A. GARCEA, M. ROSELLINI, L. SILVANO, Turnhout 2019 [= CC.SL, 12].

⁵⁴ *Nicolai I pontificis romani Epistolae et decreta*, [in:] *PL*, vol. CXIX, ed. J.-P. MIGNE, repr., Brepols 1992, col. 932.

⁵⁵ *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople. The Patria*, 3.30, ed. A. BERGER, Washington, D.C. 2013 [= DOML, 24], p. 154–155: *In the reign of Leo [VI, 886–912], the son of Basil, a Roman came to pray in the churches of the city, and when he saw Latin letters in stone on the pier, he understood their meaning and revealed it to the emperor, and he gave him properties and made him an illustrious, giving him thirty pounds of gold coins.*

⁵⁶ D. DZINO, *Becoming Slav, Becoming Croat...*, p. 161–162.

⁵⁷ H. MIHĂESCU, *La littérature byzantine, source de connaissance du latin vulgaire*, RESEE 16, 1978, p. 195–215, and 17, 1979, p. 39–60; B. BALDWIN, *Latin in Byzantium*, [in:] *From Late Antiquity to Early Byzantium*, ed. V. VAVRÍNEK, Prague 1985, p. 237–241.

⁵⁸ P. CHANTRAINE, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, fasc. IV.1, Paris 1977, p. 1126–1127, s.v. *τόρνος*; E. TRAPP et al., *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.–12. Jahrhunderts*, fasc. 1–8, Vienna 2001, s.v., <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lbg/#eid=1> [20 II 2023];

Greek⁵⁹. Originally a synonym of ἀδελφός, it was often used in a political sense, indicating a member of a φράτρα, a clan, or, more broadly, a citizen⁶⁰. Theophanes's *Chronicle* contains several other Latin terms, such as *scala*, *porta*, *sella*, *furca*, *familia*, *numeros/numerus*, *laccos/lacus*, *campos/campus*, *castron/castrum*, *armata/arma* etc., that had been adopted into Greek and then served as bases from which new words were derived⁶¹. Latin seems to have penetrated the colloquial language in Byzantium. It can also be found in popular texts⁶². The words *torna* and *frater*, cited by Theophanes, but unattested in other Middle Byzantine Greek texts, probably did not sound strange to cultivated Byzantines, even if unfamiliar with Latin.

However, the evidence drawn from the manuscripts of Theophanes's *Chronicle* helps us clarify the Latin origin of the word *frater*. The dating of the earliest surviving manuscripts of the *Chronicle* remains a topic of debate. The translation by Anastasius Bibliothecarius (c. 871–874) employs *frater*⁶³, but the phrase may have been adopted into Latin. Nonetheless, all other ninth-century manuscripts, the BnF gr. 1710, Oxon. Christ Church Wake 5, and Vat. gr. 155⁶⁴, utilize the Latin spelling φράτερ instead of the Greek φράτηρ (see fig. 1), which suggests that Theophanes did not invent the phrase himself (to do so, he would have had to be familiar with Latin phonetics) but derived it from a source which he used in writing his own work.

Thesaurus Linguae Graecae, ed. M. PANTELIA, s.v., <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/index.php>; <https://logeion.uchicago.edu/torna> [20 II 2023].

⁵⁹ *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, ed. M. PANTELIA, s.v. φράτηρ.

⁶⁰ P. CHANTRAINE, *Dictionnaire étymologique...*, fasc. IV.2, Paris 1980, p. 1226, s.v. φράτηρ; *LSJ*, p. 1953–1954, s.v. φράτηρ.

⁶¹ G. POPA-LISSEANU, *Limba română în izvoarele istorice...*, p. 300–301. See derivatives in E. TRAPP et al., *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität...*, <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/lbg/#eid=1> [20 II 2023].

⁶² G. DAGRON, *Aux origines de la civilisation byzantine: langue de culture et langue d'état*, RH 241, 1969, p. 55.

⁶³ *Anastasii Chronographia tripartita*, vol. II, ed. C. DE BOOR, Leipzig 1885, p. 158.

⁶⁴ P. Yannopoulos considered BnF gr. 1710 to be the earliest of them and the source for Anastasius's translation. For dating these manuscripts, see: N.G. WILSON, *A Manuscript of Theophanes in Oxford*, DOP 26, 1972, p. 357–360; Б.Л. ФОНКИЧ, *О датировке и происхождении Парижского списка «Хронографии» Феофана (cod. Paris. gr. 1710)*, [in:] *Византийские очерки. Труды российских ученых к XIX Международному конгрессу византинистов*, ed. Г.Г. ЛИТАВРИН, Москва 1996, p. 183–186, 258–265; P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les vicissitudes historiques...*, p. 550; ИДЕМ, *La question théophanienne et la langue de la Chronique de Théophane*, [in:] *Thesaurus Patrum Graecorum. Thesaurus Theophanis Confessoris. Chronographia*, ed. B. COULIE, P. YANNOPOULOS, Turnhout 1998, p. XXVII–LVIII; F. RONCONI, *La première circulation de la «chronique de Théophane»: notes paléographiques et codicologiques*, TM 19, 2015 (= *Studies in Theophanes...*), p. 121–148; B. NEIL, *Theophanes Confessor on the Arab Conquest: the Latin Version by Anastasius Bibliothecarius*, TM 19, 2015 (= *Studies in Theophanes...*), p. 149–157.

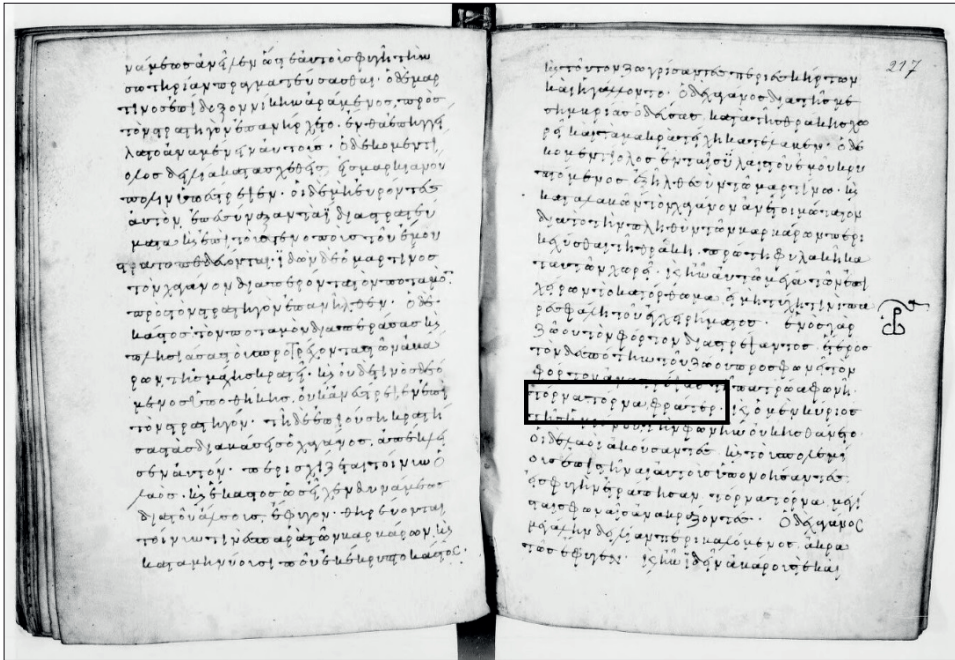


Fig. 1. BnF gr. 1710, p. 217 (photo source: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

Before discussing whether the words *torna* and *frater*, as used by Theophanes, were intended to convey some specific local meaning, or whether they can be considered to have had a general Latin character, it is worth noting that from the late third century onward, Thrace was subject to continuous invasions and wars. As a result, it was characterized by a mixed population and a constant military presence. What could Theophanes have possibly known about the Romance populations of the empire? He was a historian, a supporter of the icons and – arguably – a participant at the Seventh Ecumenical Synod in Nicaea⁶⁵, which was conducted in Greek. By the time the iconoclast dispute arose, the Byzantine Church had lost most of its bishoprics in Moesia and Scythia Minor (former provinces of the diocese of Thrace⁶⁶), having been cut off from them by the Bulgar invasions. Apparently, none of the bishops from the occupied territories were able to participate

⁶⁵ Following his biographer Methodius's explicit statement, most historians believe that Theophanes was a participant at the Synod of Nicaea in 787. However, some scholars express doubts as to his or George Syncellus's attendance at the synod, as their names do not appear either among the attendees or among the signatories; P. VARONA, Ó. PRIETO, *Three Clergymen against Nikephoros I. Remarks on Theophanes' Chronicle (AM 6295–6303)*, B 84, 2014, p. 493.

⁶⁶ For the hierarchy of the provinces of the diocese of Thrace, see R. JANIN, *La hiérarchie ecclésiastique dans le diocèse de Thrace*, RÉB 17, 1959, p. 136–149.

at the Council. Of all the six former provinces of the diocese of Thrace, only southern Thrace was represented. Philippoupolis and Marcianoupolis had no representatives present at the Council's meetings. The Archbishopric of Tomis in Scythia Minor had already been lost for over a century⁶⁷. However, the suffragan bishops of Haemimont were in attendance⁶⁸.

There is a story from the late seventeenth century, believed to have originated in a ninth-century source, regarding the Athonite Monastery Kastamonitou and focusing on both the Slavs as well as Vlachs from southern Macedonia. During the era of iconoclast emperors, families belonging to the tribes mentioned above got to Mount Athos, where they were introduced to Christianity by the monastery's monks⁶⁹. It is recounted that they soon took the side of the iconoclast rulers, and the monks encountered a great deal of trouble from the iconomachs and barbarians. The story confirms the widely shared view that some of the Romanized Illyrians, Thracians and Macedonians retreated from the occupied regions into the mountains in order to avoid being assimilated by the occupants. They then engaged in animal husbandry (breeding sheep and mules in particular) and continued to speak Latin. However, their Latin evolved, resulting in the rise of Vlachs (between the tenth and the eleventh centuries), a group of people who spoke a number of distinct Romance dialects⁷⁰.

Some historians have maintained that Theophanes used the word *frater*, as it was a common Latin military term, a synonym of *commilito*⁷¹. The term "brother" also had Christian connotations, and it could thus be used as a common nomenclature by the local Latin-speaking Christians⁷². It is more likely, though, that Theophanes,

⁶⁷ J. DARROUZÈS, *Listes épiscopales du concile de Nicée (787)*, RĚB 33, 1975, p. 11, 13; E. LAMBERTZ, *Die Bischofslisten des VII. Ökumenischen Konzils (Nicaenum II)*, München 2004, p. 18, 21, 22, 42, 45.

⁶⁸ J. DARROUZÈS, *Listes épiscopales...*, p. 54–55; E. LAMBERTZ, *Die Bischofslisten...*, p. 74–75.

⁶⁹ ПОРФИРИЙ УСПЕНСКИЙ, *История Афона*, vol. III, Київ 1877, p. 31. During that period the Byzantine administration managed to build two important churches in the region, trying in this way to strengthen the Balkan population's ties to the Byzantine state: the Saint Sophia Cathedral in Thessaloniki which probably began to be built by Constantine V but was finished under Empress Irene (by 790) and the Saint Sophia church at Vize (Thrace), which was at the time the northernmost Byzantine city. Its construction is dated by C. Mango to after 833; C. MANGO, *The Byzantine Church at Vize (Bizye) in Thrace and St. Mary the Younger*, ЗРВИ 10, 1968, p. 9–13. Dendrochronology has recently confirmed Mango's dating; R. OUSTERHOUT, *Reconstructing Ninth-Century Constantinople*, [in:] *Byzantium in the Ninth Century. Dead or Alive?*, ed. L. BRUBAKER, Hampshire 1998 [= SPBSP, 5], p. 127–128. Empress Irene also rebuilt Beroe (Stara Zagora) – the place where the *torna, torna, frater* episode happened – and renamed it Irenopolis; F. CURTA, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 500–1250*, Cambridge 2006 [= CMT], p. 110.

⁷⁰ P.Ș. NĂSTUREL, *Les Valaques balkaniques aux X–XIII siècles. (Mouvements de population et colonisation dans la Roumanie grecque et latine)*, BF 6, 1979, p. 89–112.

⁷¹ IDEM, *Torna, torna, fratre...*, p. 184; H. MIHĂESCU, *Termes de commandement militaires...*, p. 269; B. BALDWIN, *Torna, torna, frater...*, p. 265. They mainly extended Franz Dölger's observations to this term; F. DÖLGER, *Die Familie der Könige im Mittelalter*, HJb 60, 1940, p. 410.

⁷² A.-M. BURSUC, *De la latinul frater (REW) la protorom. */Φρατρ-ε/ (DĒRom)*, D (New Series) 20.1, 2015, p. 31, 34.

who used the word and dramatized the scene in question, understood the term *frater* in its Greek usage. In Greek, φράτηρ designated specifically a member of a φράτρα, a clan, which was a subdivision of a φυλή, a tribe. It was also meant to convey a broader meaning of a “member of an ethnos” or simply a “citizen”⁷³. This meaning related to clan seems to be in keeping with the view held by some scholars about the seventh-century Balkan population. It is believed that especially after succumbing to the Slavic invasions, it regressed to a society concentrated on hilltops and promontories, with groups coalescing in a tribal fashion around particular individuals⁷⁴. According to the archaeological evidence, this situation did not improve during the seventh to tenth centuries⁷⁵.

In conclusion, one is not justified in considering the phrase τόρνα, τόρνα, φράτερ to be a sample of a sixth-century Balkan Romance idiom. This holds even more true for the phrase τόρνα, τόρνα, φράτρε (see the discussion of this form in the Appendix). The words were part of *sermo castrensis*, and there is not enough evidence to suggest that Aromanian form “toarnă” did not develop from *sermo castrensis* “torna” but emerged as a dialectal form of *retorna/detorna* by the sixth century already. Words from the Latin *tornare* evolved in all Romance languages, both Western and Eastern, with some of them manifesting unstressed vowel *o* reduction to *u*: Aragonese *tornar*, Aromanian *turnari*/indicative *tornu*, Asturian *tornar*, Catalan *tornar*, Dalmatian *tornuar*, Franco-Provençal *tornar*, French *tourner*, Friulian *tornâ*, Galician *tornar*, Istriot *turnà*, Istro-Romanian *turnă*, Italian *tornare*, Norman *touônner* (Jersey), Occitan *tornar*, Piedmontese *torné*, Portuguese *tornar*, Romanian *turna*/indicative *torn*, Romansch *turnar*, *turner*, *tuornar*,

⁷³ LSJ, p. 1953, s.v. φράτρα.

⁷⁴ W. BOWDEN, *Epirus Vetus. The Archaeology of a Late Antique Province*, London 2003, p. 180. Some of the population took refuge in *kastra*, that is, in fortified settlements on hilltops that gradually replaced ancient *poleis*. For the settlement pattern of the Dark-Age Balkans, which can, to some extent, be compared to the Italian medieval *incastellamento*, see F. CURTA, *Southeastern Europe in the Middle Ages...*, p. 100.

⁷⁵ M. VEIKOU, *Byzantine Epirus. A Topography of Transformation. Settlements of the Seventh-Twelfth Centuries in Southern Epirus and Aetoloacarnania, Greece*, Leiden–Boston 2012 [= MMe, 95], p. 307sq. The process of integrating the Slavic tribes within the imperial administration was quite similar to that of (re)incorporating the Vlach ones within that administration – the *slavinias* and the *vlachias*. Like Slavs’ rulers, the Vlachs’ *archon*, their clan leader, became an imperial official who had mainly military duties, but who also exercised some authority over civil jurisdiction; M. CVETKOVIĆ, *The Slavs and Vlachs in the Byzantine System of Provincial Organization in the Southern Balkans until the 11th century. Similarities and Differences* (in Serbian), ЗРВИ 49, 2012, p. 19–41. Over time, the Vlachs will serve the empire as border guards; A. MADGEARU, *Vlach Military Units in the Byzantine Army*, [in:] *Samuel’s State and Byzantium. History, Legend, Tradition, Heritage. Proceedings of the International Symposium “Days of Justinian I”, Skopje, 14–18 October 2014*, ed. M.B. PANOVIĆ, Skopje 2015, p. 47–55. However, certain forms of their self-organization as well as their constant, traditional resistance to attempts to assimilate them within the empire led the Byzantines to express negative views of the population; P. LEMERLE, *Prolégomènes à une édition critique et commentée des “Conseils et récits” de Kekauménos*, Bruxelles 1960, p. 74; *O City of Byzantium. The Annals of Niketas Choniates*, ed. et trans. H.J. MAGOULIAS, Detroit 1984 [= BTT], p. 205.

Sardinian *torràe*, *torràì*, *torrare*, Sicilian *turnari*, Spanish *tornar*, Venetian *tornar*, Walloon *tourner*, and Proto-West Germanic **turnnēn* (with further descendants in English *turn*, Scots *turn*, and German *turnen*)⁷⁶. The polysemous nature of the word *torna* cited in the two Byzantine texts, a singular second-person active imperative form derived from *torno*, *tornare*, bearing, in various lexical contexts, meanings such as “turn” (about, back, around), to the rear and “overturn” certainly existed in Vulgar Latin, as it was transmitted later on in the Romance languages and dialects. The carriers could have shouted the words possibly with distorted grammatical forms, as Theophylact’s account suggests: *the utterance was incorrectly repeated... the word was distorted*.

One also needs to exercise caution in trying to date the phrase and determine the phrase’s author. The figurative and classicizing language used by Theophylact was somewhat inconsistent with a plain annalistic chronicle, and Theophanes frequently rewrote his accounts. He also tried to enliven his own narrative with short passages of direct speech and inserted words that could only be inferred from the general sense of Theophylact’s account but were not actually found in it⁷⁷. The meaning of the text could, of course, be distorted, in the process of rewriting⁷⁸. P. Yannopoulos has suggested that Theophanes was a rather passive compiler of the work prepared by George Syncellus and made little or no attempt to rewrite it. Consequently, the content should be attributed to Syncellus⁷⁹. This, however, seems to be too far-reaching a conclusion. M. Whitby supports the view that the account of the Romans’ night attack on the Avars, where the load on one of the baggage animals slipped, alerting the soldiers and causing both Roman and Avar troops to flee from each other, is indebted to another source (the Great Chronographer). According to Whitby, Theophanes’s account is fuller than that of Theophylact⁸⁰, and it is unlikely that it would be based on the latter’s vague version. It is thus reasonable to assume that both writers relied independently on a third source⁸¹. The noun φράτερ spelled in Latin and not Greek (cf. φράτηρ) shows that Theophanes almost certainly drew on a source different from Theophylact in writing this passage. Even though in Whitby’s view *most of Theophanes’ information and phraseology are taken over directly from his sources [...]* [and] *Theophanes found the narrative style of the Great Chronographer more acceptable and so tended to preserve his language more closely*⁸², in recounting this episode, he also gave details and parerga

⁷⁶ See *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (REW), ed. W. MEYER-LÜBKE, 1st ed., Bonn 1911, s.v. *tornare*, p. 666.

⁷⁷ M. WHITBY, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source...*, p. 314–315.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 326 and n. 64.

⁷⁹ P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les vicissitudes historiques...*, p. 530–531.

⁸⁰ M. WHITBY, *Theophanes’ Chronicle Source...*, p. 327–328.

⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 328.

⁸² IDEM, *The Great Chronographer...*, p. 9.

that are absent from Theophylact's account. This difference (although Simocatta's account is much more florid in style) is easy to explain. Theophanes failed to recognize *torna* as a military command and offered a misguided interpretation of it as a "flight". An attempt to resolve the issue in question is further complicated by the tendency of both Theophylact and Theophanes to engage in imaginative extrapolation from their sources. Insertions of fictive quotes by historians was – as Warren Treadgold puts it – a well-known practice. It was considered legitimate as long as the invented speech seemed plausible and consistent with "what actually happened"⁸³. The phrase τόρνα, τόρνα, φράτερ reveals the features of a stylistic construction. This stylistic effort can be found in the repetition of the word *torna* first by the burden carrier and then by shouting soldiers. Both Theophylact and Theophanes, and probably also the source on which they drew, resorted to disguising information gaps through rhetorical discourse. Dramatizing events in a narrative manner was a way in which they tried to fill those documentary gaps⁸⁴.

Appendix

In his edition of Theophanes Confessor's *Chronicle* (1883), Carl de Boor mentions both forms, i.e. φράτρε and φράτερ, the former as a variant found in the manuscripts BnF. gr. 1711 p. 202, 11th cent. (see fig. 2) and Vat. gr. 978, f. 140v⁸⁵ (11th–12th cent.) and stemming from the now lost common source⁸⁶. The early bilingual editions of the *Chronicle* by Jacopus Goar (1655) and Johannes Classen (1838), which are based mainly on BnF gr. 1711, contain the form φράτρε in the Greek text⁸⁷. De Boor opted for φράτερ, which is found in most of the surviving manuscripts.

⁸³ W. TREADGOLD, *The Unwritten Rules for Writing Byzantine History*, [in:] *Proceedings of the 23rd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Belgrade 22–27 August 2016. Plenary Papers*, ed. S. MARJANOVIĆ-DUŠANIĆ, Belgrade 2016, p. 278, 292.

⁸⁴ See the rhetorical discourse used by Theophylact in sections where we find the tribune and the veteran addressing the troops of General Comentiolus, in THEOPHYLACT II, 13, 2–14 and 14, 1–12.

⁸⁵ I express my gratitude to Vladimir Agrigoroaiei from Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale, Poitiers, for verifying the phrase in the manuscript and for the valuable comments on this article.

⁸⁶ THEOPHANES, ed. C. DE BOOR, vol. I, p. 258. English edition, THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, p. XCVI, 381. A newer reconstruction of the manuscript tradition, at P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les vicissitudes historiques...*, p. 536sqq.

⁸⁷ *Theophanis Chronographia. Leonis Grammatici vitæ recentiorum Imp̄p.*, ed. R.P.J. GOAR, Venetiis 1729, p. 173; *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. J. CLASSEN, Bonn 1838 [= CSHB], p. 397.

Some have even argued that φράτρε is simply a mistake made by one of the later copyists of Theophanes' *Chronicle*⁸⁸ and therefore must be ignored⁸⁹. Indeed, in Vat gr. 978, a manuscript full of Latin marginal annotations, the phrase in question is accompanied by the following note: “NT. torna torna frater”, which appears to be a later correction in chancellery Latin⁹⁰. However, recent research conducted as part of the European project *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman (DÉRom)* has demonstrated that in Romance languages the nominative/vocative singular “brother” has evolved from both Latin nominative/vocative singular *frater* and accusative *fratrem*. The Romance languages in the south-east of Europe evolved through distant dissimilation, while the others, more compact groups, including French, Old Spanish, and Old Italian, were not dissimilated and the root *fratre* remained visible⁹¹. The process of dissimilation began in the fourth-century Late Latin⁹².

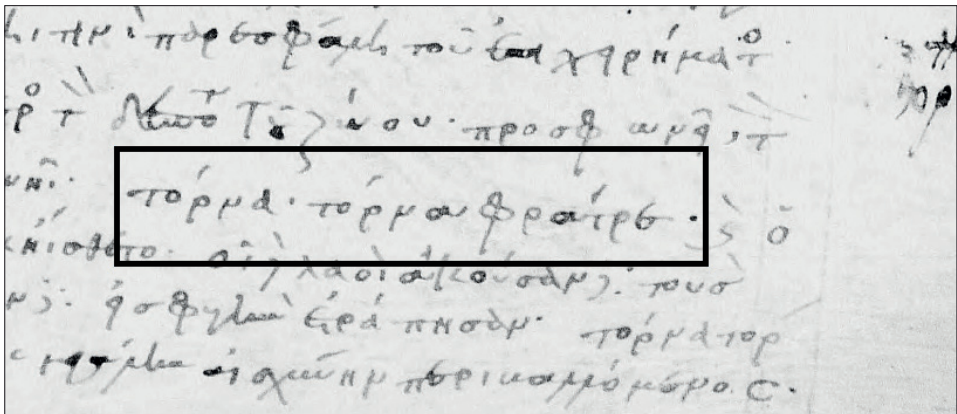


Fig. 2. BnF gr. 1711, p. 202 (photo source: Bibliothèque nationale de France).

⁸⁸ The alteration of the *Chronicle* at the hands of the copyists began as early as the mid-ninth century, when the text began to be widely popularized (post 843); THEOPHANES, ed. C. MANGO, R. SCOTT, Introduction, p. LXIV, XCVII–XCVIII.

⁸⁹ V. BARBU, *Vechi mărturii despre limba română...*, p. 145–147 (I thank Andrei Mirea from the “Nicolae Iorga” History Institute in Bucharest for bringing this article to my attention and for the discussions on the draft of this paper); P. ZUGUN, *Glose și comentarii la torna, retorna și fratre*, LR 60.2, 2011, p. 152–155.

⁹⁰ The manuscript contains additions by John Santamaura, a Cypriot familiar with Latin who was *scriptor graecus* at the Bibliotheca Vaticana in the late sixteenth century. However, the manuscript has many Latin annotations from different periods.

⁹¹ *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman (DÉRom)*, vol. I, *Genèse, méthodes et résultats*, ed. É. BUCHI, W. SCHWEICKARD, Berlin 2014, s.v. *'Φρατρ-ε/ (A.-M. BURSUC et al.), p. 440–444; online at: <http://www.atilf.fr/DERom/> [20 II 2023]. DÉRom replaces the outdated *Romanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch* (REW), 1911 (s.v. *frater*, p. 260). See, discussion of the accusative hypothesis in A.-M. BURSUC, *De la latinul frater...*, p. 33.

⁹² See the form “frate” (year 361 CE), in *CIL*, vol. VIII, *Inscriptiones Africae Latinae, Supplementum III. Inscriptiones Mauretaniae*, ed. T. MOMMSEN, Berlin 1904, p. 2061, no. 21728. Cf. *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman (DÉRom)*, s. v. *'Φρατρ-ε/ s.m.

| */Φratr-e/ non-dissimilated type | /ʰΦrat-e/ dissimilated type |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Logudorese Sardinian <i>fratre</i> | Campidanese Sardinian <i>fràde</i> |
| Vegliot Dalmatian <i>frutro</i> | Romanian <i>frate</i> |
| Old Italian <i>fratre</i> | Istroromanian <i>frâte</i> |
| Friulian <i>frari</i> | Meglenoromanian <i>frati</i> |
| Retoromanian <i>frar</i> | Aromanian <i>frate</i> |
| French <i>frère</i> | Istriot <i>fra</i> |
| Franco-Provençal <i>frare</i> | Italian <i>frate</i> |
| Occitan <i>fraire</i> | Ladin (Judeo-Spanish) <i>frè</i> |
| Gascon <i>frai</i> | Asturian <i>frade</i> |
| Old Catalan <i>frare</i> | Galician-Portuguese <i>frade</i> |
| Old Spanish <i>fradre</i> | |
| Spanish <i>frare</i> | |

After *Dictionnaire Étymologique Roman (DÉRom)*, vol. I, *Genèse, méthodes et résultats*, ed. É. BUCHI, W. SCHWEICKARD, Berlin 2014, p. 440–444, s.v. */Φratr-e/ (A.-M. BURSUC et al.).

Φράτρε is found in two related manuscripts, Paris. gr. 1711 and Vat. gr. 978⁹³, and very likely did not exist originally in Theophanes' text. However, it is likely that the form *fratre* was actually in use at the time when the manuscript copies of the eleventh and the twelfth centuries were produced. *Fratre* looks to be a vestige of an eleventh-century Western Romance language, most probably early Italian. It is attested to in thirteenth-century Italian texts⁹⁴. The eleventh-century copies of the Theophanes manuscript, BnF gr. 1711 and Vat. gr. 978, which contain the early Western Romance form φράτρε, add another layer to the story, testifying to language contacts between Byzantium and the Romance peoples in the era of their formation (the eighth to twelfth centuries)⁹⁵. It can be seen that the Byzantines, who saw themselves as the true “Romans”, separated the term (Romans) from the Latin language, linking the language with Western Romance speaking peoples whom they referred to as “Latins”⁹⁶. The view that the form *fratre* was used

⁹³ P. YANNOPOULOS, *Les vicissitudes historiques...*, p. 536sqq.

⁹⁴ See *Tesoro della lingua italiana delle origini*, ed. P.G. BELTRAMI, L. LEONARDI, Florence 1998, s.v. *frate*, <http://tlio.ovi.cnr.it/TLIO/> [20 II 2023].

⁹⁵ The twelfth-century poet and grammarian, Joannes Tzetzes recounted some of his encounters with the “Latins” in the Byzantine capital and the conversation he held with them in the Latin of the times: *Bene venesti domine, bene venesti frater, unde es et de quale provincia venesti? Qomodo frater venesti in istan civitatem?*, H. HUNGER, *Zum Epilog der Theogonie des Johannes Tzetzes*, BZ 46, 1953, p. 305; H. KAHANE, R. KAHANE, *The Western Impact on Byzantium: The Linguistic Evidence*, DOP 36, 1982, p. 150.

⁹⁶ More on this topic, at H. HUNGER, *Graeculus perfidus – Italos itamos. Il senso dell'alterità nei rapporti Greco-romani ed italo-bizantini*, Rome 1987, p. 32–33, 40–42. I express my gratitude to

by contemporary Romance-speaking people scattered in former Thrace is highly questionable, since it can be assumed that by the eleventh century, the process of dissimilation, which began as early as the fourth century, would have generated the form *frate* in the Balkans. In the eleventh-century copies of the chronicle, in line with the Middle Byzantine perception of Latin language as characteristic of the West, the two terms noted by the copyists – who likely lacked a thorough understanding of Latin but were familiar with some Medieval Italian terms – became conflated with Italian itself. The two manuscripts necessitate a more detailed examination to further clarify their place of origin.

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