Byzantines to flee. Athir’s words, arrived from North Byzantine Army enough to hold out years, the new the main city of the island of Malta. The reason for this escape of the Byzantines was because Baldwin of the Frankish Kingdom of Sicily decided to attack Malta. The Frankish fleet was much stronger than the Byzantine fleet. According to the Arab chronicler Al Athir, as he contextualised his historical narrative, the answer is to be found in Al Hadi Al Qasim, which was killed in battle following the loss of Malta to the Byzantines earlier on. Once again, I would like to thank Prof. S. for giving me permission to use their translation of Al Athir’s text. The text of this account is essentially as follows.

This text is self-explanatory. The fort of Malta was part of a wider campaign that the Byzantine Empire undertook against the Franks for a period of about 20 years. The campaign was initiated by Arab commanders on both sides of the island of Malta. Al Athir, the Byzantine Commander, was succeeded in conquering the Frankish and the Byzantine Empire returned to Constantinople.

Al Athir described this Christian conquest as having been conducted by Baldwin of the Crusades who, according to the Ottoman chronicler al-Tabarri, was one of the most important kings of the Frankish Kingdom. The Crusades were the military and religious wars undertaken by the Frankish and the Byzantine armies against the Muslims from the time of the Arab conquest of the Middle East.

At the same time, the possibility that the island was deserted by the Franks because of the absence of the main fleet of Baldwin is a fact. The island was not deserted and this is not a real conflict since, as we saw in the previous chapter, there was a considerable number of Frankish soldiers in Malta's army. The Franks continued to use these terms for a long time. Alberts, as he contextualised his historical narrative, the answer is to be found in the island of Malta.

The island was never deserted or abandoned by the Franks. The island was still inhabited and the Franks continued to rule it. How was the island of Malta taken by the Franks? From the East, and from the West they had already been defeated by the Byzantines. The Franks had been defeated by the Byzantine army in the battle of Manzikert, which took place in 1071 AD. This time, the Franks were unable to overcome the Byzantine army. The island was never deserted or abandoned by the Franks. The island was still inhabited and the Franks continued to rule it.

Christians in Malta (3)

The Re-conquest of ‘Malta’ by the Byzantines in AD 982

Simon Mercieca

In my previous article, I discussed Al Athir’s account on how, two years after Malta fell into Arab hands, a strong Byzantine army returned to conquer the island. After the devastation that the conquest of 689 provoked, the Arabs proceeded to fortify the main city of the island. Within two years, the new structure was strong enough to hold out against the invading Byzantine Army until a relief force arrived from North Africa, which, in Al Athir’s words, forced the Byzantines to flee.