There is a considerable literature on the question of ‘knighthood’ in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, particularly with regard to various debates on the nature and evolution of the knightly class and whether, indeed, it is correct to see knights as forming a class. The incontestable spread of the use of the term *milites* from the ninth to the thirteenth centuries, so that it came to be applied to emperors, kings and princes as well as less distinguished soldiers, has created a debate of a very important and wide ranging nature. A typical topic of this debate would be the issue of whether the change in the usage of *milites* was a reflection of the growth of a rising social class of knights from lowly soldiers into an aristocracy, or whether the sources are indicating not so much change in material social conditions but an ideological change in the concept of knighthood and the evolution of the term *milites*. In other words, was the change in the usage of *milites* sociological or...
philological? Or, if there was an interaction between the two, what was its nature?

Such questions are wide-ranging and complex. They are not the subject matter of this book, deserving book-length investigation in their own right. This study of the social vocabulary of the early crusading sources can, however, at least shed some light on the usage of the term *milites* for this particular group of historians. Two closely related themes arise from an examination of the use of the term *milites* by the early crusading authors; did these historians understand the *miles* to be a member of a certain social rank? Was that rank one of nobility? Or did they employ the term simply to indicate a person performing a particular function, a soldier? Secondly, the sources reflect a major concern among the *milites* of the First Crusade for their horses. All the historians comment on the loss of horses during periods of hardship during the First Crusade and many state that because of this there were *milites* who became *pedites*. This warrants close examination. Were they reporting a loss of social status or a change in military function?

Before examining these issues a preliminary investigation is necessary concerning the terms *equites* and *equestres*. Were they synonymous with the term *milites* for the early crusading sources? The term *equestres* was used above all by the most consciously classicist author, Guibert of Nogent. At issue is whether Guibert was using the term to indicate *milites* or a broader body of mounted soldiers. Among the passages in which Guibert used the term was the report that many *equestres viri* died during the harsh passage of the First Crusade through the desert terrain of Anatolia in July 1097. Here Guibert was making a minor alteration to a passage in his *fons formalis*, the *Gesta Francorum*, which referred to *milites*. This was the important passage discussed below in which the anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* described *milites* becoming *pedites* through the loss of their horses. Guibert used this information about knights becoming footsoldiers for his description of a later part of the difficult journey through Anatolia, after the expedition had passed through Coxon, October 1097. In Guibert’s account hardship converted *equestres* into *pedites*. These two examples suggest that Guibert saw the term *equestres* as interchangeable with *milites*.

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3 GN 161.
4 GF 23.
5 See below pp. 180–1.
6 GN 168.