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INTRODUCTION

The Frankish conquest of Greece

In 1204, the imperial city of Constantinople was captured by the troops of the Fourth Crusade, a collection of forces gathered from the states of western Europe with the ostensible aim of the liberation of Jerusalem. It was a momentous event for the citizens and subjects of the 'Byzantine' empire ruled from Constantinople, as their city had never before fallen to any enemy in its nine centuries of history. Having taken the capital city, the crusaders from the west went on to conquer most of the empire, although Constantinople was eventually won back fifty-seven years later, and what we now generally call the 'Byzantine' empire did manage to survive into the fifteenth century before its final irrevocable conquest by the Ottoman Turks. Nevertheless, this first conquest by the western Franks of the Fourth Crusade is often seen as the beginning of the end, and its impact on the state of mind of the subjects of the empire was immense. For the next 200 years – and beyond – various parts of what had historically been the Byzantine empire were to be ruled, for varying lengths of time, by these crusaders and their descendants. For centuries, the emperors of Constantinople had held these territories, but now, remarkable quickly, they changed hands and the peasants and local lords of the conquered areas had to become accustomed to new masters who, at least at the beginning, spoke little or no Greek, had some startlingly different ways of arranging society and everyday life and, not least, had a church and religion which was Christian but very different from the 'Orthodox' Christianity of the empire.

There had been a history of, if not animosity, then at least ill-ease between the Byzantine empire and the kingdoms of western Europe long before the shock of the taking of Constantinople. In the east, the Byzantines saw themselves, with justification, as the heirs and continuators of the ancient Roman empire. Their emperor was the 'emperor of the Romans', and the people of the empire by and large thought of themselves as 'Romans' in a

usage that survived beyond the term of the empire and into modern times in parts of Greece and Turkey. Further, the eastern Roman, Byzantine, empire was the empire of Constantine the Great, who had founded Constantinople in the fourth century and had made Christianity the religion of his empire. The Byzantine Romans of the eastern empire were thus not just the heirs of *the* pre-eminent state of the ancient world but also, in their view, the heirs of the true and original Christianity. In contrast, the west had sustained and survived the break with the ancient Roman world. It had its own brand of Christianity which had survived in Rome itself, and it had started to rediscover the ancient world as a political model. By the second millennium after Christ, the east and west of Europe did not really know each other and were in many senses rivals in their different versions of historical and religious validation. Their mutual incomprehension was manifested and reinforced in 1054 when the patriarch of Constantinople, head of the eastern Orthodox church, and Cardinal Humbert of the church of Rome mutually excommunicated each other.

Nevertheless, how did an army bent on religious liberation end up subjugating a city and state of their fellow Christians?

The Fourth Crusade has been an object of controversy ever since it went so curiously awry. On his accession to the papal throne in 1198, Innocent III had immediately started urging the need for a fresh crusade to regain Jerusalem from the Saracens, and forces gathered at Venice in the spring of 1202. The Venetians were ready to provide sea transport to the Holy Land, but they drove a hard bargain with the military pilgrims in return for this help. Innocent may with justification already have felt that the crusade was slipping from his control when the expedition began with a diversion to Zara, on the eastern coast of the Adriatic. This Christian city had revolted from Venetian rule, but now the crusading army paid off a part of their debt to Venice by attacking and regaining it for them. However, things only got worse with the intervention of the Byzantines.

Alexios Angelos was the son and heir of the deposed Byzantine Roman emperor Isaak II Angelos, who had been forcibly ousted by his brother Alexios in 1195. In 1201, the younger Alexios had fled to the west to try and gather help to restore his father to the throne. Despite a specific papal prohibition on any intervention in Constantinopolitan affairs, a substantial section of the crusading force now agreed to go to Alexios' assistance, largely at the urging of the Venetians. Debate has raged on Venetian motivation: certainly, the Venetians present themselves in the accounts of the conquest and its aftermath as a discrete and well-organised faction within the larger crusade, both highly motivated and efficient in accruing

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all the potential mercantile gain from the expedition. Although not all the crusaders assented to this radical redirection of their holy pilgrimage and many continued to Syria, nevertheless a substantial crusading army arrived outside Constantinople in July 1203 and was swiftly able to effect the restoration of Isaak and Alexios Angelos. The young Alexios had promised financial reward and military assistance in the continuing campaign to the Holy Land, but, with the agreed payment not forthcoming and unrest growing within the city, the patience of the crusaders finally ran out and they took the city by force on 13 April 1204. Many of the inhabitants were put to the sword and the city was comprehensively pillaged.

The crusaders and Venetians had already come to an agreement on the division of the empire: a new emperor would be elected, who would personally hold one fourth of Constantinople and one fourth of the rest of the empire, including eastern Thrace, the essential buffer for Constantinople. Venice would hold one fourth of Constantinople and three eighths of the rest of the empire; the rest would be divided between the leading knights of the crusade.¹

All in all, this was a vision of prosperity and power that few on the crusade can have dreamt of. Surely, only Doge Enrico Dandolo and his Venetians had a clear programme; certainly, after the conquest Venice swiftly organised its apportionment, handing over mainland and inland territory in exchange for islands and ports to the effect that the Republic would exclusively control the sea routes between Constantinople and the west and operate an effective monopoly on trade. Venice also held sway more indirectly in the Aegean: the duchy of the Archipelago was created by the Venetian Marco Sanudo, who was a nephew of Doge Enrico Dandolo and had been present on the crusade. Sanudo regularised his conquests by acknowledging the suzerainty of the Latin emperor (Baldwin of Flanders had been elected emperor in Constantinople in May 1204), and several other Venetian families ruled other islands in the Aegean, thus maintaining Venetian influence in the region while remaining at arm's length from the Republic.²

In contrast to Venice's well-planned and effective assumption of power, the Latin empire was weak from the start because the lands granted to the knights of the empire first had to be secured by them; this took much of the fighting arm away from Constantinople and out of the army which

¹ For the Fourth Crusade see especially Queller and Madden 1997, Brand 1968: 222–69. For the division of the empire cf. Carile 1965, also Nicol 1980: 141, 148–50 and Lock 1995: 40–3, 45–50.

² Lock 1995: 142–55, Nicol 1980: 148–65.

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should have been consolidating and defending the capital. The result was that, in the end, the Latin empire of Constantinople ended up just one of several Latin states carved out of the erstwhile Byzantine Roman empire, being joined by the kingdom of Thessaloniki, the lordship of Athens, the principality of the Morea, the above-mentioned duchy of the Archipelago and finally the lordships of Evia.

In 1204, however, Latin Constantinople stood alone, with the rest of the empire awaiting conquest. There was considerable pressure from the Bulgarian tsar Kalojan, the local population around Constantinople was far from reliably loyal, and in Anatolia the Byzantine Roman aristocrat Theodore Laskaris was on his way to establishing a significant power base at Nikaia. Laskaris' creation would eventually become the reborn eastern empire that regained Constantinople in 1261, while other Roman nobles established viable alternative successor states in Epiros in western Greece and in Trebizond in northern Anatolia. Back in Constantinople, the Latin empire needed a vigorous and dedicated defence at its heart, but many knights had other priorities; Baldwin was left to defend Constantinople and Thrace against the Bulgarians and, a mere year after the taking of Constantinople, the unfortunate emperor was captured by them. He died in captivity. Fortunately for the Franks, Baldwin's brother Henry proved a more effective ruler who was able to assert imperial suzerainty over the Latin states in the Balkan peninsula, repel the advances of Epiros, push back the Bulgarians in Thrace, and enlist Turkish aid against Laskaris of Nikaia. Henry's death in 1216 brought in a less successful period. His brother-in-law and heir, Peter of Courtenay, was captured and killed by the Epirots before he even reached Constantinople. Peter's widow, Henry's sister Yolande, ruled as regent for the baby Baldwin II for two years until her death in 1219, and her elder son Robert of Courtenay ruled as emperor from 1221 to 1228. Baldwin II then took the throne, assisted by John de Brienne as co-emperor in the 1230s. The Latin empire was now under almost continual threat, yet conflict amongst its enemies allowed it to stagger on: Baldwin II reigned until the eventual retaking of Constantinople by the emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos of Nikaia in 1261.³

Of the other Latin states, some lasted only a handful of years while others proved far more durable. Having wrested Thessaloniki from the reluctant emperor Baldwin, Boniface of Montferrat set out to conquer the western lands of the empire. His armies met very little resistance in

³ Longnon 1949; Wolff 1969; Nicol 1966.

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Thessaly, Boiotia and Attica, and the local population suffered little at his hands. Boniface assigned the important island of Evia (with the exception of its major town, Negroponte, which was under the Venetians) to three Lombard knights; these lordships are generally known as the triarchies of Evia. The lordship of Athens and Thebes went to the Burgundian knight Othon de la Roche, and this rule over Attica and Boiotia came to be known as the duchy of Athens. By early 1205, Boniface had won through to the Peloponnese, where he met up with Geoffrey de Villehardouin the younger, who together with Guillaume de Champlitte went on to establish the principality of the Morea in the Peloponnese, again under the auspices of Boniface of Montferrat. While the states which Boniface oversaw in Evia, Athens and the Peloponnese all achieved lasting security, Boniface's more personal conquests were not to last long. He was captured and killed by the Bulgarians in September 1207, and his kingdom of Thessaloniki was then largely absorbed by the Byzantine Roman state based in Epiros.

The momentous victory of 1204, then, marked a new phase in the history of the eastern Aegean and heralded a period when westerners of French, Flemish, Hispanic or Italian origin ruled in that part of the old eastern Roman Empire which we now call Greece. This book examines and illustrates various developments in the identity of the Greeks – or, as the subjects of the empire tended to call themselves, the 'Romans' – during this period of western rule. Chronologically speaking, the period under study is, roughly, the two centuries following the conquest of Constantinople by the Frankish troops of the Fourth Crusade in 1204, but preceding the Ottoman domination and eventual conquest of the fifteenth century.

This investigation rests on the fundamental hypothesis that the conquest by the westerners was an event with extreme implications for group identities among the Byzantine Romans. Such a major alteration in the quality of their relationship with westerners, and such a blow to their imperial self-esteem as the taking of Constantinople, inevitably brought about changes in the ways they viewed themselves as a group – in their sense of ethnic identity. This central hypothesis can be further elaborated, thus:

- There was no single uniform sense of ethnic identity among the Romans (that is, the inhabitants of the territory under the rule of the emperor in Constantinople in the period preceding the conquest of 1204 and the descendants of those inhabitants).
- Ethnic identities among the Romans were not static during this period but developed in response to major political changes.

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- The phenomenon of Frankish conquest and rule was the single most critical impetus for developments in the senses of ethnic identity among the Romans during this period.

Until recently, the vast majority of histories of the period of western rule have made the assumption that the ethnic division between the westerners (often referred to as the ‘Franks’) and the Greeks (or as they will be called here the ‘Romans’) conditioned political and social developments and that there was no true assimilation between these ethnic groups. This well-established position has emphasised the history of the religious schism between the eastern and western churches and pointed to the repeated and ill-fated attempts at church union in this period as indicative of ethnic hostility. However, this book challenges this position by means of a systematic analysis of sources from both ends of the social spectrum in the Byzantine Roman world. Employing a model of ethnicity as an aspect of interaction between social groups, it will further be shown that the conquests by the Franks in fact effected a significant shift in the relationship between the Byzantine Romans and their western neighbours that was more about rapprochement than any ethnically conditioned hostility.

Finally, a preparatory note on naming. As discussed above, this study looks at the sense of ethnic identity among a particular set of people – those people resident in the Byzantine empire at the time of the Frankish conquest of the empire in 1204, and their descendants. These people will generally be called ‘Romans’ or ‘Byzantine Romans’, and this may need some justification or at least explanation. Most modern historians make reference to either ‘Byzantines’ or ‘Greeks’, but the first of these is anachronistic for the period, while the second is a term of limited use within the empire, and typically a term used by outsiders about the empire and its people. In a discussion of identity in which names are so important, it seems appropriate to use the self-identifying term favoured by the people themselves, and this was, overwhelmingly, *Ῥωμαῖος* – *Rhomaïos*, ‘Roman’. However, to use simply ‘Roman’ would inevitably be confusing for the English-speaking reader, so I have for the sake of clarity often qualified the basic name with ‘Byzantine’.

Naming is such a fundamental part of the expression of ethnic identity that any choice of ethnonym is laden. However, ‘Byzantine Roman’ hopefully goes some way to give the people of the empire their own name while being clear for a modern readership. Nevertheless, it has proved impossible to be entirely consistent in this usage. At some points, for example, it has been necessary to use ‘Byzantine Roman’ with a limited application so that it relates only to the state ruled by the emperor and to the subjects of that

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state – this is mostly when a group or groups who are clearly ethnically Roman need to be contrasted with the Byzantine Roman state because they are in some way opposed to it, or not limited to it. In such cases, a distinction is drawn between Byzantine Romans (being those politically loyal to the imperial Roman state) and ethnic Romans (those identifiable as Romans in ways other than the political). Again, when referring directly to the writings of any particular Byzantine Roman author, it has been on most occasions simplest and most accurate just to echo their own usage of *Rhomaioi*, unqualified in any way.

IDENTITY AND THE FRANKISH CONQUEST: THE STORY SO FAR

In his *The Latins in the Levant*, published in 1908 and still the most comprehensive overall account of the rule of the Franks in Greece, William Miller tended towards a romanticised portrayal of the Frankish lords of Greece, thereby portraying them as generous to the conquered Greeks while maintaining fixed ethnic divisions. His focus was on the Franks and he presented no thesis on Greek ethnic identity beyond holding it to be strong and in opposition to an equally well-defined Frankishness. Rennell Rodd's *The Princes of Achaia and the Chronicles of Morea* is broadly similar in approach. Of post-war writers, Jean Longnon and Antoine Bon in, respectively, *L'Empire latin du Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* and *La Morée franque* were not concerned with presenting the Greek (Roman) point of view. Peter Lock's *The Franks in the Aegean 1204–1500* is the most thorough modern account of Latin rule, also covering as it does Venetian and Genoese involvement in the region. Lock argues that ethnic divisions were always strong between incomers and the local populations and that there was no true symbiosis between the different cultures.⁴

The Frankish period is also covered in general crusade histories; see, for example, in Kenneth Setton's six-volume *History of the Crusades*, Jean Longnon's 'The Frankish States in Greece 1204–1311' in volume two, and Peter Topping's two chapters on 'The Morea' in volume three, alongside Setton's own accounts in the latter volume of the Catalans and Florentines in Greece, which supplement his *The Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311–1388*.⁵ The crusade focus precludes any detailed consideration of Roman cultural identity, and the model of ethnic distinction is generally preserved.

⁴ Miller 1908; Rodd 1907; Longnon 1949; Bon 1969; Lock 1995.

⁵ Setton 1969–89; Setton 1948; Mayer 1988; Houseley 1992.

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Turning from a crusade focus to Byzantium, most general histories of the later Byzantine period give some attention to the impact of 1204, for example Donald Nicol's *The Last Centuries of Byzantium* and Nicholas Cheetham's *Medieval Greece*, while Jonathan Harris' *Byzantium and the Crusades* straddles the Byzantinist and crusade divide to provide the ideological background to Byzantium's relationship with the crusaders. Dimiter Angelov's *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium* skilfully analyses the reactions and accommodations made by the political elite of the empire as a result of the loss – and eventual recapture – of Constantinople. Michael Angold's *A Byzantine Government in Exile* concentrates on the social and cultural effects of 1204 in the Byzantine Roman 'successor state' of Nikaia, while Donald Nicol considers Nikaia's rival in his two works on *The Despotate of Epiros*. Dionysius Zakythinis has provided the most detailed account of later Byzantine Roman rule in the Peloponnese in his *Le despotat grec de Morée*. The emperors have attracted plenty of attention with Deno J. Geanakoplos' study of *The Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West*, Angeliki Laiou's *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II*, John W. Barker's *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425): A Study in Late Byzantine Statesmanship* and Donald Nicol's *The Reluctant Emperor* and *The Immortal Emperor*, on John VI Kantakouzenos and Constantine XI Palaiologos respectively.⁶ The collection of essays edited by Benjamin Arbel, Bernard Hamilton and David Jacoby, *Latins and Greeks in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, examines inter-ethnic interaction during the period of western rule in more depth, and other relevant collections include those of David Jacoby, Robert Wolff, Peter Topping and, again, Donald Nicol.⁷ There is a general consensus among Byzantinists as well as crusade scholars that the ethnic lines were firmly drawn in this period and that ethnic hostility was a given factor in foreign policy.

The Frankish period has also been given considerable attention in the work of Greek nationalist historians. This vigorous trend in the historiography of the period concentrates not so much on its importance to the history of the crusading movement or as a backdrop to the end of the Byzantine Roman empire, but as constituting a vital stage in the national history of the Greek people. In this school, the Frankish conquest and occupation which shook the Constantinopolitan empire to its roots were of major

⁶ Nicol 1957, 1972a, 1984, 1992 and 1996; Zakythinis 1975; Cheetham 1981; Harris 2003; Angold 1975a; Geanakoplos 1959; Laiou 1972; Barker 1968.

⁷ Arbel, Hamilton and Jacoby 1989; Jacoby 1975 and 1979; Topping 1977b; Wolff 1969; Nicol 1972b and 1986.

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importance in redefining the Byzantine sense of identity away from the universalism of the ancient imperial Roman ideal, and towards a narrower Greek orthodox nationalism. Moreover, it might even be said that in this movement the Greeks rediscovered themselves, returning to and giving new value to the geographical heartland of ancient Hellas. In this context and argument, the apparent return by late Byzantine writers to the use of the ancient 'Hellene' as ethnic signifier in preference to 'Roman' – which had been the overwhelmingly dominant signifier in the eastern empire – is seen as being of crucial significance in confirming a basic continuity of self-identification as Hellenic on the part of the Greeks.⁸

Here, then, there is a more direct concern with issues of ethnicity than can generally be seen in the histories of the crusades or of Byzantium cited above. This approach has been pervasive among Greek historians, of whom one might particularly cite Deno J. Geanakoplos and Apostolis Vacalopoulos. Cyril Mango, however, has eloquently argued against the general thesis, which indeed rests on fundamental misunderstandings of the nature of ethnic identity.⁹ The ethno-nationalism that propelled into being so many states in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries proclaimed a belief in peoples as fundamentally unchanging and tied by hereditary right to a certain patch of land; this was certainly very much the case with modern Greece, where great ideological weight was placed on the mission to recreate ancient Hellas.¹⁰ The modern nationalist position on any medieval Greek ethnicity says more about modern Greece's quest for legitimisation in the past than about the past which is ostensibly under examination.

More recently, an alternative and more convincing model of ethnicity has emphasised its mutability and negotiability under the constraints of circumstance, and this is the model that will be utilised in this study. Both the Greek nationalist historians and, with a few exceptions, the crusade and Byzantinist historians have taken it as a given that the ethnic divide between the Byzantine Romans and the Franks of this period was fundamentally unbridgeable and that relations between the two groups were predominantly driven by ethnic hostility. Such a position is now seen as increasingly outdated, and more recent work has emphasised instead the fluidity of ethnic boundaries. Thus, Sally McKee's *Uncommon Dominion: Venetian Crete and the Myth of Ethnic Purity* exploded the thesis of ethnic

⁸ Vacalopoulos 1970; Vryonis 1991 and 1999; Xydis 1968; Geanakoplos 1976.

⁹ Mango 1968. ¹⁰ Cf. Herzfeld 1986.

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irreconcilability in one corner of the Frankish Aegean, while Aneta Ilieva's *Frankish Morea (1205–1262): Socio-Cultural Interactions between the Franks and the Local Population* emphasised considerable acculturation at the higher social levels in the Peloponnese of the thirteenth century, and Teresa Shawcross's recent work on the *Chronicle of the Morea* has similarly pointed towards cross-ethnic identities in the Peloponnese.¹¹ Again, articles such as Sharon Gerstel's 'Art and identity in the Medieval Morea' have drawn attention to artistic symbiosis in Frankish Greece as representative of more complex ethnic interactions.¹² Most recently, there have appeared several collections of articles on the interpretation of the Greek past, many of which include valuable material on ethnicity in the Byzantine era.¹³

More broadly, as we shall see, the substantial body of recent work on the nature of ethnicity in the pre-modern era offers considerable insights for the study of medieval Greece. In the light of current thinking on pre-modern ethnic identity, there is the opportunity for a fresh look at medieval Greece, its ethnic formulations and its ethnic interactions in the new world after the Fourth Crusade.

¹¹ McKee 2000, Ilieva 1991, Shawcross 2006.

¹² Gerstel 2001, see also the currently unpublished work by Grossman 2004 and Hirschbichler 2005.

¹³ Brown and Hamilakis 2003; Hokwerda 2003; slightly earlier Ricks and Magdalino 1998.