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978-0-521-13089-9 - The Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479: A Contribution to the History of  
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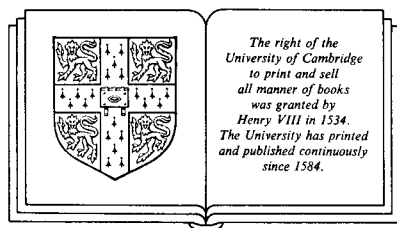
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# THE DESPOTATE OF EPIROS 1267–1479

A contribution to the history of  
Greece in the middle ages

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Map : Epiros in the fourteenth century</i>	xiii
Introduction	i
1 The restored Despotate – 1267–85	9
2 Epiros between Italy and Byzantium – 1285–1306	35
3 French, Byzantines and Venetians in Epiros – 1294–1318	63
4 The Italian inheritance: the Orsini family – 1318–37	81
5 The Byzantine restoration – 1337–48	107
6 The Serbian occupation – 1348–59	123
7 The Serbian Despotate of Ioannina and the Albanian Despotate of Arta – 1359–84	139
8 The Italian restoration: Esau Buondelmonti and Carlo Tocco – 1384–1411	157
9 The reunited Despotate – 1411–29	179
10 The Turkish conquest and the end of the Despotate – 1429–79	197
11 The administration and the economy	217
12 The church and cultural life	233
Epilogue	249
<i>Genealogical tables</i>	252
<i>Bibliography</i>	259
<i>Index</i>	281

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[More information](#)

## Preface

The Fourth Crusade and the capture of Constantinople by the Latins in 1204 irreparably shattered the structure of the Byzantine Empire. One of the most enduring by-products of the disaster was the establishment of a separatist state in Epiros in the north-west of Greece. It began as a centre of resistance and a haven for refugees from the Latin invaders. It developed into a powerful political and military force whose rulers for a time claimed the title of emperors in exile. Constantinople was recovered from the Latins in 1261 and the Byzantine Empire was restored. But the rulers of Epiros stubbornly refused to recognise the new regime. Greek at first, then Italian, Serbian and Albanian, they perpetuated the autonomy of their province well into the fifteenth century, striving to maintain its identity against the competing claims of the emperors of Constantinople, the Angevin kings of Naples, the merchants of Venice and finally the Ottoman Turks. At least since the nineteenth century this defiantly independent fragment of the Byzantine world has been known as the Despotate of Epiros. In 1957 I published a work under that title in which I attempted to put together its political and ecclesiastical history from 1204 to 1267. It has long been my intention to pursue the matter to its end in the fifteenth century, when Epiros together with the rest of Greece and Eastern Europe were swept into the Ottoman Empire. This I have now tried to do and the results are set forth in the present volume.

It may be thought that I should first have corrected the faults and filled the gaps in my earlier volume on the subject, or that I should have rewritten that volume to take account of new material and research published since 1957. The latter course I considered and rejected, mainly because our knowledge of the history of Epiros in the period between 1204 and 1261 has not been substantially enriched by the discovery of new source material in the past twenty-five years. The most important addition to the literary sources for that period has been the publication of a number of previously unedited letters of John Apokaukos, metropolitan of Naupaktos. These cast some new light on the church and society of Epiros in the 1220s. Art historians have given some welcome attention to

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Preface*

the monuments of the district and numismatists have advanced the classification of the coinage of Epiros and Thessalonica in the early thirteenth century. But the most important corrections have been made by reassessment of the existing evidence about the origin of the so-called Despotate of Epiros and about its early form and development. These new interpretations were mainly the work of Lucien Stiernon, Božidar Ferjančić and the late Père Raymond-Joseph Loenertz, O. P.; and I have attempted to incorporate them into an introductory chapter recapitulating the outlines of the history of Epiros between the years 1204 and 1267.

The empire of Nicaea, the Byzantine government in exile in Asia Minor after the Fourth Crusade, has been re-examined in a valuable study by Michael Angold; and a history of Thessaly in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was published by Ferjančić in 1974. But no one has so far rewritten the history of the rival government in exile in Epiros; and there is no substantial study of its survival as an independent administration after 1261. The only monograph carrying the history of Epiros from the thirteenth century to its conquest by the Turks remains that published in 1895 by the Greek scholar Ioannes Romanos, entitled *A Historical Treatise on the Despotate of Epiros*. Romanos, like every subsequent historian of mediaeval Greece, relied heavily on the encyclopaedic and gothically monumental *Geschichte Griechenlands* of Karl Hopf, published in 1867. Hopf frequently loses sight of the wood in his faithful contemplation of the trees. But in one respect at least he supplies information about the history of Epiros which can no longer be either checked or challenged. For he had access to the now lost registers of the Angevin Kingdom of Naples, which were destroyed in the Second World War. The kings of Naples claimed suzerainty over Epiros in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and their archives were no less important than those of Venice, whose interests in Epiros were of a different nature.

Among recent new editions of or commentaries upon the literary sources for the period from 1267 to 1479 special mention should be made of the work of Leandros Vranousis on the Chronicles of Epiros. There are also helpful commentaries on the first books of the History of George Pachymeres by Albert Failler; and a commentary, with German translation, on the History of Nikephoros Gregoras by Jan Louis van Dieten. The Chronicle of Ioannina, which narrates the history of that city for most of the last fifty years of the fourteenth century, was only imperfectly known to Hopf and Romanos. Neither knew of the existence of the Chronicle of the Tocco family, which relates the exploits of Carlo Tocco, Despot of Epiros in the first half of the fifteenth century, and which was edited by Giuseppe Schirò in 1975. The topography of

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

### *Preface*

Thessaly and Hellas is admirably illuminated in the first volume of the *Tabula Imperii Byzantini* published in Vienna in 1976; and an indispensable compendium of the topography and historical geography of Epiros is the third and companion volume in the same series, entitled *Nikopolis und Kephallēnia*, which appeared in 1981.

I have interpreted the word Epiros in its literal sense of ‘the mainland’ and the word Despotate in its strict sense of the territory ruled by the Greek Despots and their successors. The history of the offshore Ionian Islands, which were for most of this period under Italian rule, is therefore treated only in so far as it influenced that of the mainland. Likewise, the history of Albania, which lay beyond the northern frontiers of the Despotate, is treated only in so far as the Albanians penetrated into and dominated the original territory of the Despots in northern Greece.

It is my pleasant duty to record my sincere thanks to the Society for Epirotic Studies in Ioannina, and particularly to its remarkable President, Constantine Phrontzos, for their generous help and hospitality during two extended sojourns in Epiros in recent years. My thanks are also due to my friends and colleagues at the University of Ioannina who afforded me every facility for completing my work.

*London*  
1983

D.M.N.

# Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used for periodicals, collections of sources and reference works:

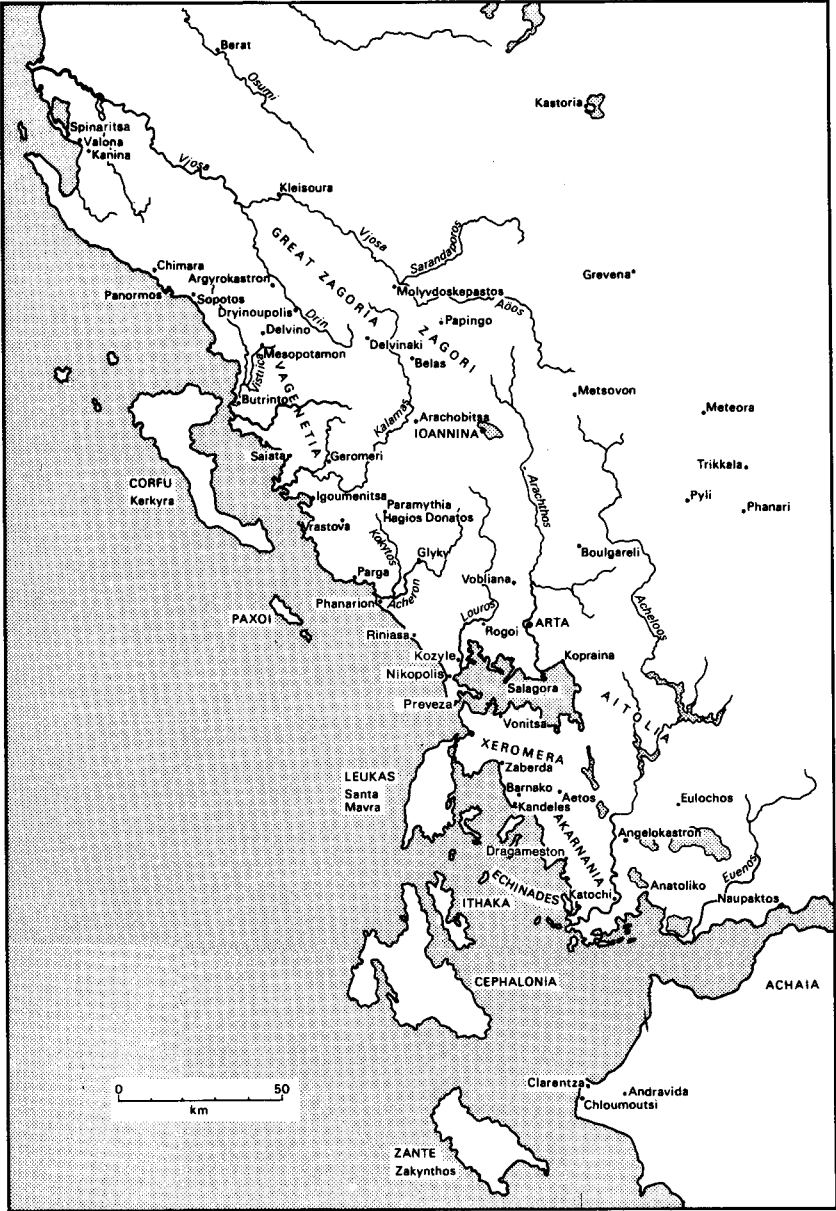
<i>AAA</i>	Ἀρχαιολογικὰ Ἀνάλεκτα ἐξ Ἀθηνῶν
<i>ActAlb</i>	<i>Acta et Diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia</i> , ed. L. de Thallóczy, C. Jireček, E. de Šufflay
<i>ActAlbVen</i>	<i>Acta Albaniae Veneta Saeculorum XIV et XV</i> , ed. J. Valentini
<i>AD</i>	Ἀρχαιολογικὸν Δελτίον
<i>AFP</i>	<i>Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum</i>
<i>ASI</i>	<i>Archivio Storico Italiano</i>
<i>ASPN</i>	<i>Archivio Storico per le Province Napoletane</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BFG</i>	Loenertz, R.-J., <i>Byzantina et Franco-Graeca</i> , I–II
<i>BHG</i>	<i>Bibliographia Hagiographica Graeca</i> , ed. F. Halkin
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Byzantinisch-neugriechische Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Byzantinoslavica</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CSHB</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>DIEE</i>	Δελτίον Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας Ἑλλάδος
<i>DVL</i>	<i>Diplomatarium Veneto-Levantinum</i> , ed. G. M. Thomas and R. Predelli
<i>EEBS</i>	Ἑπετηρίς Ἑταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν
<i>Ep. Chron.</i>	Ἑπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά
<i>Ep. Hest.</i>	Ἑπειρωτικὴ Ἑστία
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>JÖBG</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der österreichischen byzantinischen Gesellschaft</i>



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MM	Miklosich, F. and Müller, J., <i>Acta et Diplomata graeca medii aevi sacra et profana</i>
MPG	Migne, J. P., <i>Patrologiae cursus completus. Series graeco-latina</i>
NH	Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
PLP	<i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , ed. E. Trapp
REB	<i>Revue des Etudes Byzantines</i>
RHSEE	<i>Revue historique du sud-est européen</i>
RSBN	<i>Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neoellenici</i>
ThEE	Θρησκευτική και Ἡθική Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια
TIB	<i>Tabula Imperii Byzantini</i> , ed. H. Hunger
TM	<i>Travaux et Mémoires</i>
VV	<i>Vizantijskij Vremennik</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta</i>



Epiros in the fourteenth century