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978-1-107-08581-7 - *Imagining the Byzantine Past: The Perception of History in the Illustrated Manuscripts of Skylitzes and Manasses*

Elena N. Boeck

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## Imagining the Byzantine Past

Two lavish illustrated histories confronted and contested the Byzantine model of empire. The Madrid Skylitzes was created at the court of Roger II of Sicily in the mid-twelfth century. The Vatican Manasses was produced for Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria in the mid-fourteenth century. Through close analysis of how each chronicle was methodically manipulated, this study argues that Byzantine history was selectively re-imagined to suit the interests of outsiders. The Madrid Skylitzes foregrounds regicides, rebellions, and palace intrigue in order to subvert the divinely ordained image of order that Byzantine rulers preferred to project. The Vatican Manasses presents Byzantium as a platform for the accession of Ivan Alexander to the throne of the Third Rome, the last and final world-empire. *Imagining the Byzantine Past* demonstrates how distinct visions of empire generated diverging versions of Byzantium's past in the aftermath of the Crusades.

ELENA N. BOECK is Associate Professor in the Department of the History of Art and Architecture at DePaul University. Her research interests broadly encompass cross-cultural exchange, contestation of established cultural narratives, and the function of appropriation in medieval court culture. Her previous publications have explored topics ranging from Byzantine art to Russian engravings in the eighteenth century to the nineteenth-century representation of Byzantium on the Parisian stage.

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*To Brian*

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# Imagining the Byzantine Past

The Perception of History in the Illustrated  
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ELENA N. BOECK



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## Contents

<i>List of plates</i>	[page vi]
<i>List of figures</i>	[viii]
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	[xiv]
<i>Note on the text</i>	[xvii]
<i>List of abbreviations</i>	[xviii]
Introduction	[1]
1 Mystery, history, and materiality	[17]
2 Engaging Byzantium, enraging Byzantium: Sicily, Bulgaria, and the contestation of Constantinopolitan preeminence	[51]
3 Narrative emplotments and patterns of prioritization: analyzing visual codes and structural modes	[87]
4 Amplification as dialogue: the link between design and patronage	[118]
5 Iconoclasm as narrative experiment: religion, politics, and memory	[144]
6 A headstrong case for getting ahead: scrutinizing narratives of decapitation	[182]
7 Constantinople: story spaces or storied imperial places	[219]
Afterword	[250]
<i>Appendix. Crusades and cultural literacy: a Slavonic tale of the Trojan war between Byzantium and the West</i>	[256]
<i>Bibliography</i>	[269]
<i>Index</i>	[310]

## Plates

*Plates are found in between pages 170 and 171.*

- 1 Coronation of king Roger II of Sicily, mosaic. Church of S. Maria dell'Ammiraglio (la Martorana), Palermo, Sicily, Italy. Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY.
- 2 Divinely dispensed coronation of Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria in the presence of Jesus Christ and Constantine Manasses, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 1v. Reproduced from B. Filov, *Les Miniatures de la Chronique de Constantin Manassès à la Bibliothèque du Vatican (Cod. Vat. Slav. II)* (Sofia: Musée national bulgare, 1927).
- 3 Ivan Alexander, his second wife Theodora, and their sons. Frontispiece, the Tetraevangelion (Four Gospels) of Ivan Alexander (London, BL, Add. Ms. 39627), fol. 3r © British Library Board.
- 4 Emperor Basil II (956–1025). Psalter of Basil II (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. Gr. Z 17, fol. IIIr). Photo credit: Erich Lessing/Art Resource, NY.
- 5 The last iconoclast action of John the Grammarian and subsequent punishment, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 64v © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 6 The image of emperor Theophilos embracing Orthodoxy on his deathbed and red scholion about Bulgaria's conversion to Orthodoxy, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 155v © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.
- 7 The Baptism of Bulgars and a red scholion about Rus' conversion to Orthodoxy, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 163v © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved.
- 8a Assassination of emperor Michael III, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 80vb © Biblioteca Nacional de España.

- 8b Ritual punishment and humiliation (*calcatio*) of the rebel Thomas the Slav by the emperor Michael II, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 37r © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 9 Demise of emperor Michael III, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 80v © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 10 Murder of Bardas and elevation of Basil as Michael's co-emperor, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 80r © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 11 Successive visits of the rich widow Danielis to emperor Basil I and Leo VI Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 102r © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 12 Inception of the assassination plot against emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 157r © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 13 Culmination of the plot against emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 157v © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 14a The confrontation between John Tzimiskes and patriarch Polyeuktos outside the Hagia Sophia after the assassination of Nikephoros II Phokas, Madrid Skylitzes Manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 158v © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 14b Consecration of the Abbey of Cluny by pope Urban II. BnF, Ms. 17716, fol. 91r; thirteenth century. Photo credit: Snark/Art Resource, NY.
- 15a Father of a usurper seeks asylum in the Hagia Sophia, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 144b © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 15b Blinding of a former usurper; perpetrators seek refuge in the Hagia Sophia, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 16va © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 16a Assassination of emperor Romanos III Argyros, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 206va © Biblioteca Nacional de España.
- 16b Woman prophesies doom for emperor Michael I Rangabe near the Boukoleon Palace, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 17r © Biblioteca Nacional de España.

## Figures

- 1.1 The Byzantine mission to convert the Rus', Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 103va. Reproduced from N. Kondakov, *Russkie klady: izsledovanie velikokniazheskago perioda* [Russian buried treasures: an investigation of the grand-princely period] (St. Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Imperatorskoi arkheologicheskoi komissii, 1896). [page 20]
- 1.2 (a) Coronation of a co-emperor and elevation on a shield, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 10v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) The emperor Basil I feasting, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 105va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [21]
- 1.3 Scenes from Bulgarian history, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fols. 147 and 175. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [25]
- 1.4 (a) Final page of the continuously illustrated first portion of the manuscript, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 87v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) First page of the first replacement quire, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 88r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [36]
- 1.5 (a) "Ethnographic" representation of Muslims, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 113va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Stylized representation of Muslims, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 47va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [37]
- 1.6 Imperial demise and marginal texts – the death of Leo VI, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 116v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [40]
- 2.1 Christ crowning emperor Constantine VII, 945. Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, Russia. Photo credit: HIP/Art Resource, NY. [71]
- 2.2 Interior view, Palatine Chapel. Palazzo dei Normanni, Palermo, Sicily, Italy. Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY. [73]



- 2.3 View of the heavily restored medieval fortress of Turnovo, Bulgaria. Photo by the author. [78]
- 2.4 (a) Portrait of Ivan Alexander. Fresco, Bachkovo ossuary, Bulgaria, fourteenth century. Photo courtesy Elka Bakalova. (b) Sts. Constantine and Helena. Fresco, Bachkovo ossuary, Bulgaria, fourteenth century. Photo courtesy Elka Bakalova. [80]
- 3.1 (a) Last page of the first replacement quire, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 95v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Change of illustration style, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 96r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [91]
- 3.2 (a) A densely illustrated page, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 145v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Example of uneven density of illustration, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 146r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [92]
- 3.3 Six Roman emperors of the fourth century, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 89r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [94]
- 3.4 Inception of intrigue against Theoktistos, a guardian of the minor Michael III, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 70r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [99]
- 3.5 Murder of Theoktistos and elevation of Bardas, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 70v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [100]
- 3.6 (a) Ancient Near Eastern rulers Nebuchadnezzar, Balthazar, Darius, and Cyrus, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 24r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. (b) Ancient Near Eastern rulers Gigus, Kambius, and Darius, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 27r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [108]
- 3.7 View of Palaiologan “drapery.” Mosaic, Chora monastery, Istanbul. Photo by the author. [109]
- 3.8 (a) Eight middle-Byzantine, imperial predecessors of Ivan Alexander, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 204v © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. (b) Divine blessing of Ivan Alexander, his two living sons and his deceased son in the presence of an angel of the Lord, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 205r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [111]

- 4.1 An omen of imperial predestination for future emperor Basil I, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 82v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [121]
- 4.2 The rich widow Danielis becomes the benefactor of Basil, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fols. 84v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [123]
- 4.3 Basil and the son of Danielis become spiritual brothers, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 85r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [124]
- 4.4 The Martyrdom of St. Maximos the Confessor, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 123v © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [130]
- 4.5 The Sixth Ecumenical Council, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 124r © 2014 Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Reproduced by permission of Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, with all rights reserved. [131]
- 4.6 The First Ecumenical Council, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 86v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [136]
- 4.7 (a) The First Ecumenical Council. Fresco, Dečani monastery, Serbia, fourteenth century. Photo courtesy Ivan Drpić. (b) The emperor John VI Kantakouzenos at council, BnF, Ms. Grec. 1242, fol. 5v, fourteenth century. Reproduced from A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art byzantin: recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'Orient* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1936). [141]
- 5.1 The iconoclast council, Khludov Psalter (Moscow, GIM, Cod. 129 D), fol. 23r © State Historical Museum, Moscow, Russian Federation. [151]
- 5.2 The iconoclast council, Theodore Psalter (London, BL Add. 19.352, fol. 27v) © British Library Board. [155]
- 5.3 Inception of the iconoclast controversy, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 21v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [156]
- 5.4 (a) Ordination of the iconoclast Theodotos Melissenos as patriarch, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 21b © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Ordination of the Orthodox Methodios as patriarch, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 64r, © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [158]
- 5.5 The Triumph of Orthodoxy, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 63v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [160]

- 5.6 Icon of Triumph of Orthodoxy, British Museum © Trustees of the British Museum. [162]
- 5.7 Intrigue against patriarch Methodios and his public exposure, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 66r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [166]
- 5.8 (a) Iconoclasm of the emperor Constantine V, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 139r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. (b) The emperor Theophilos embraces Orthodoxy on his deathbed, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 155v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [171]
- 5.9 (a) The Baptism of St. Paul. The Rockefeller McCormick New Testament (Chicago, University Library 965), fol. 115v, eleventh century. Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. (b) The Baptism of Bulgars, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 163v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [176]
- 5.10 The Baptism of the Rus', Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 166v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [179]
- 6.1 The emperor Nikephoros III, Paris, BnF, Coislin 79, fol. 2r, eleventh century. Reproduced from Grabar, *L'Empereur*. [184]
- 6.2 Histamenon of Isaac I Komnenos, Constantinople, 1057–1059. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, bequest of Thomas Whittemore. [186]
- 6.3 Tetarteron of John I Tzimiskes, Constantinople, 969–976. Harvard Art Museums/Arthur M. Sackler Museum, bequest of Thomas Whittemore. [188]
- 6.4 Assassination of emperor Nikephoros II Phokas, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), detail of fol. 157rb © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [189]
- 6.5 John Tzimiskes orders the head of Nikephoros Phokas to be displayed from the palace window, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 157v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [196]
- 6.6 John Tzimiskes advances his claim to imperial legitimacy, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 158r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [198]
- 6.7 Patriarch Polyektos refuses John Tzimiskes entry into the Hagia Sophia, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2), fol. 158v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [200]
- 6.8 John Tzimiskes exiles his mistress, the empress Theophano, and is crowned emperor by patriarch Polyektos, Madrid Skylitzes

- manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 159r © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [202]
- 6.9 John Tzimiskes appoints new patriarch, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 159v © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [204]
- 6.10 Khan Krum captures emperor Nikephoros I, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 145r. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [214]
- 6.11 Khan Krum feasts following the execution of Nikephoros I, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 145v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [216]
- 7.1 View of the Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. Photo by the author. [220]
- 7.2 (a) Mosaic in the southwest vestibule, Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. Photo by the author. (b) Seal of the *ekklesiēkdikoi* (ecclesiastical judicial officials of the Great Church), Dumbarton Oaks (BZS.1955.1.4913), twelfth century © Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC. [225]
- 7.3 (a) Blinding of a former usurper; perpetrators seek refuge in the Hagia Sophia, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 16va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Bulgarian ruler seated in a tent, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 18va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. [229]
- 7.4 (a) Father of a usurper seeks asylum in the Hagia Sophia, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 144b © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) View of façade, Church of San Nicola, Bari, Italy. Photo credit: Scala/Art Resource, NY. [232]
- 7.5 (a) Assassination of emperor Romanos III Argyros, Madrid Skylitzes manuscript (Matritensis gr. v. 26-2), fol. 206va © Biblioteca Nacional de España. (b) Assassination of emperor Romanos III Argyros, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 188v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [236]
- 7.6 The emperor Justinian beholds his bronze equestrian statue and the nearly finished Hagia Sophia, Vatican Manasses Manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 109v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [239]
- 7.7 View of Constantinople. *Notitia dignitatum*, Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon. Misc. 378, fol. 84r. [244]
- 7.8 Icon of the Elevation of the Cross. Russia, sixteenth century. Reproduced from N. Kondakov, *Ikonoграфия Bogomateri* [Iconography of the Mother of God] (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1914). [246]

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Elena N. Boeck

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

*List of figures*

xiii

- 7.9 Divinely dispensed coronation of Ivan Alexander in the presence of King David, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 91v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [248]
- 8.1 Trojan war, including the “Trojan horse” and the burning of Troy, Vatican Manasses manuscript (Vat. Slav. 2), fol. 62v. Reproduced from Filov, *Les Miniatures*. [260]

Cambridge University Press

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Elena N. Boeck

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

## Acknowledgments

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

---

This book would not have taken its current shape without the constant support, patience, encouragement, and advice of my remarkable husband, Dr. Brian Boeck. He has patiently endured years of listening to Verdi and Wagner while I wrote. I dedicate this book to him and celebrate his role as the rock that anchors and grounds me.



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Elena N. Boeck

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

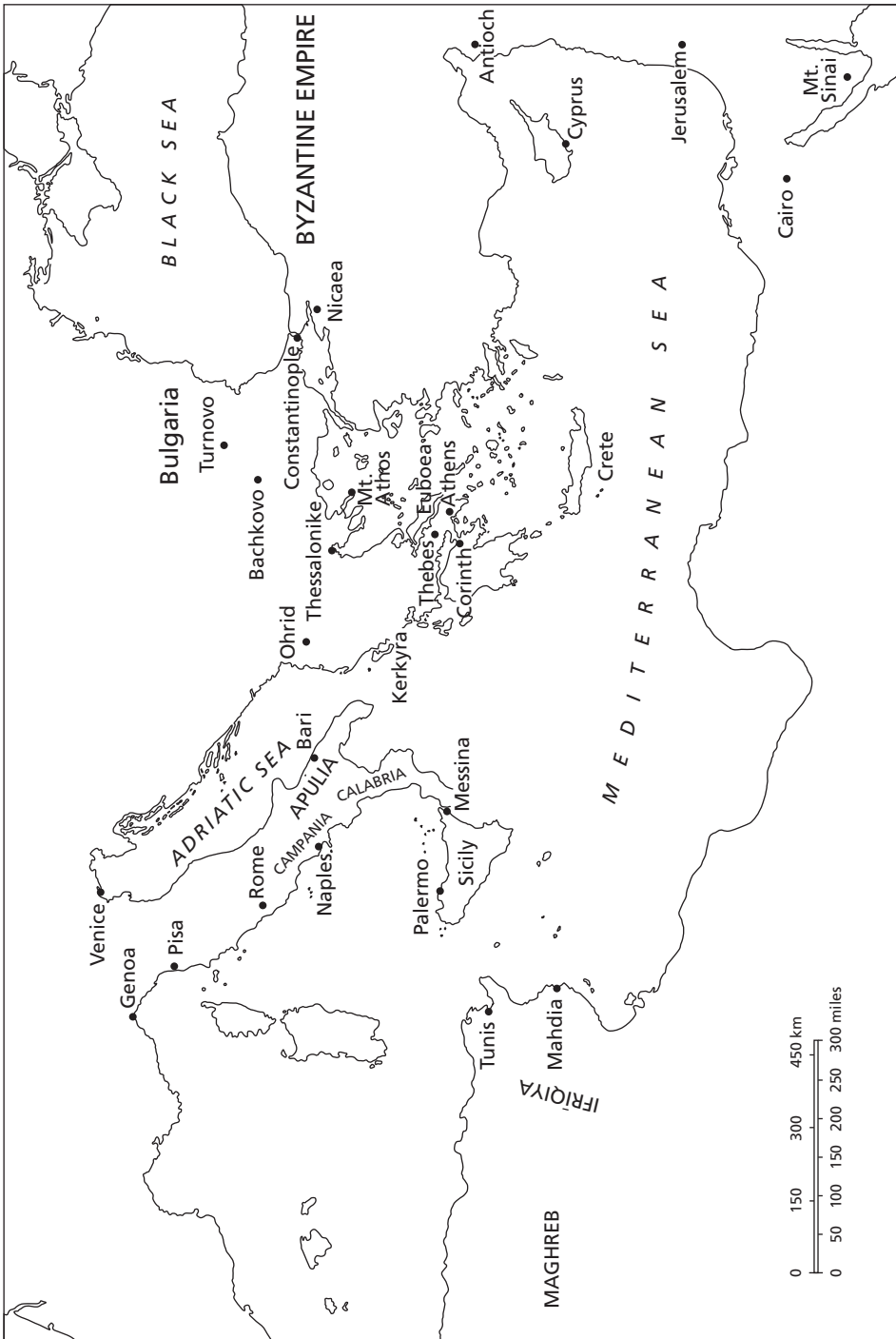
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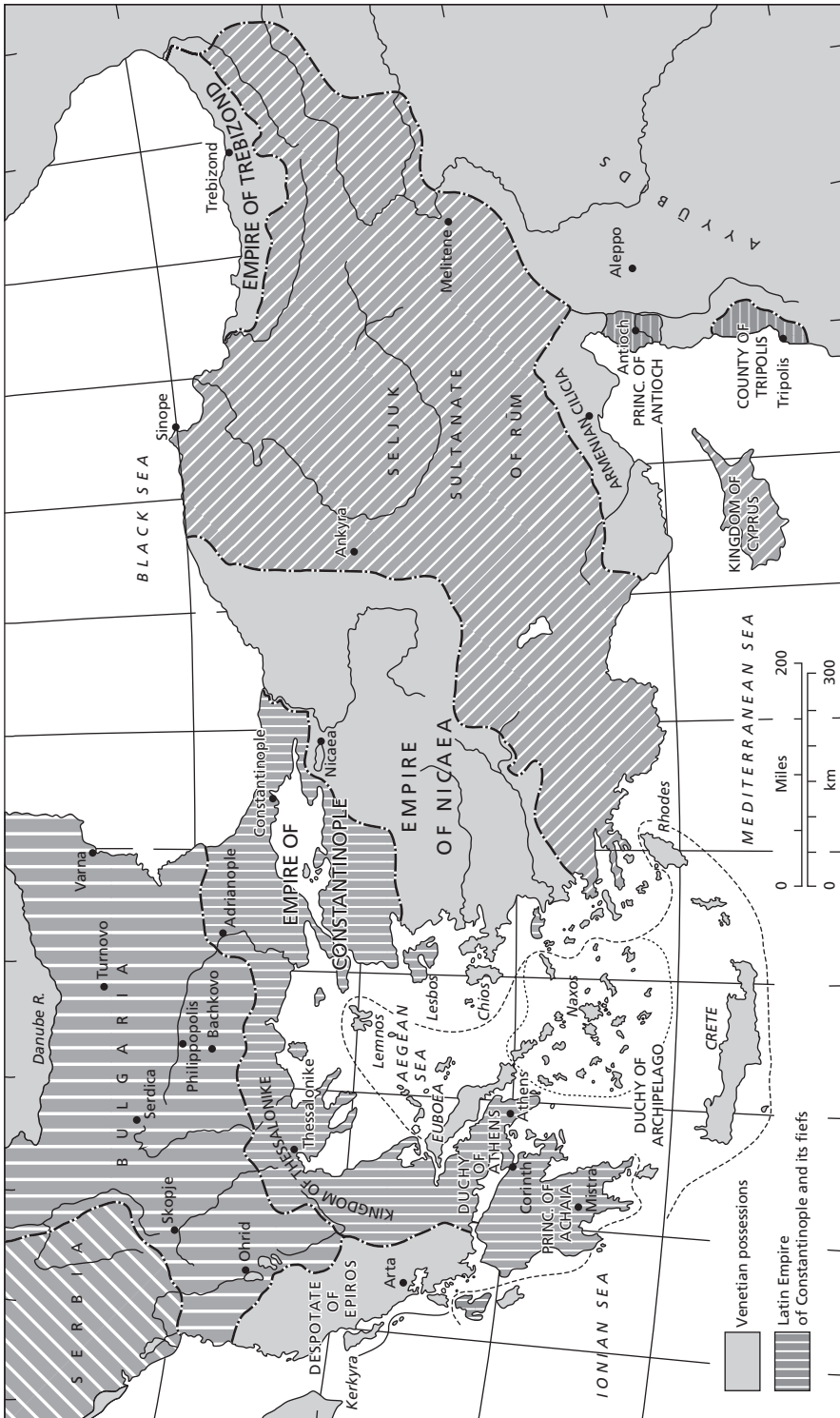
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## List of abbreviations

<i>ArtB</i>	<i>Art Bulletin</i>
<i>JÖB</i>	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
<i>B</i>	<i>Byzantion</i>
Bodleian Library, Ms. Canon. Misc. 378	Notitia dignitatum
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
BnF, Ms. Grec. 1242	Manuscript of theological writings of John VI Kantakouzenos
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CahArch</i>	<i>Cahiers archéologiques</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>EtBalk</i>	<i>Etudes balkaniques</i>
<i>GIM</i>	State Historical Museum, Moscow
London, BL Add. Ms. 39627	Tetraevangelion (Four Gospels) of Ivan Alexander of Bulgaria
London, BL Add. Ms. 19.352	Theodore Psalter
Matritensis gr. vitr. 26-2	Madrid Skylitzes manuscript
Moscow, GIM Ms. Synodal 38	First variant of the Bulgarian translation of the Manasses text, ca. 1345
<i>ODB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , ed. A. Kazhdan, A.-M. Talbot, A. Cutler, T. Gregory, and N. Ševčenko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)
<i>REB</i>	<i>Revue des études byzantines</i>
Vat. Slav. 2	Vatican Manasses manuscript
Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, Ms. Gr. Z 17	Psalter of Basil II
<i>VV</i>	<i>Vizantiiskii Vremennik</i>



Map 1 The Mediterranean at the time of Roger II



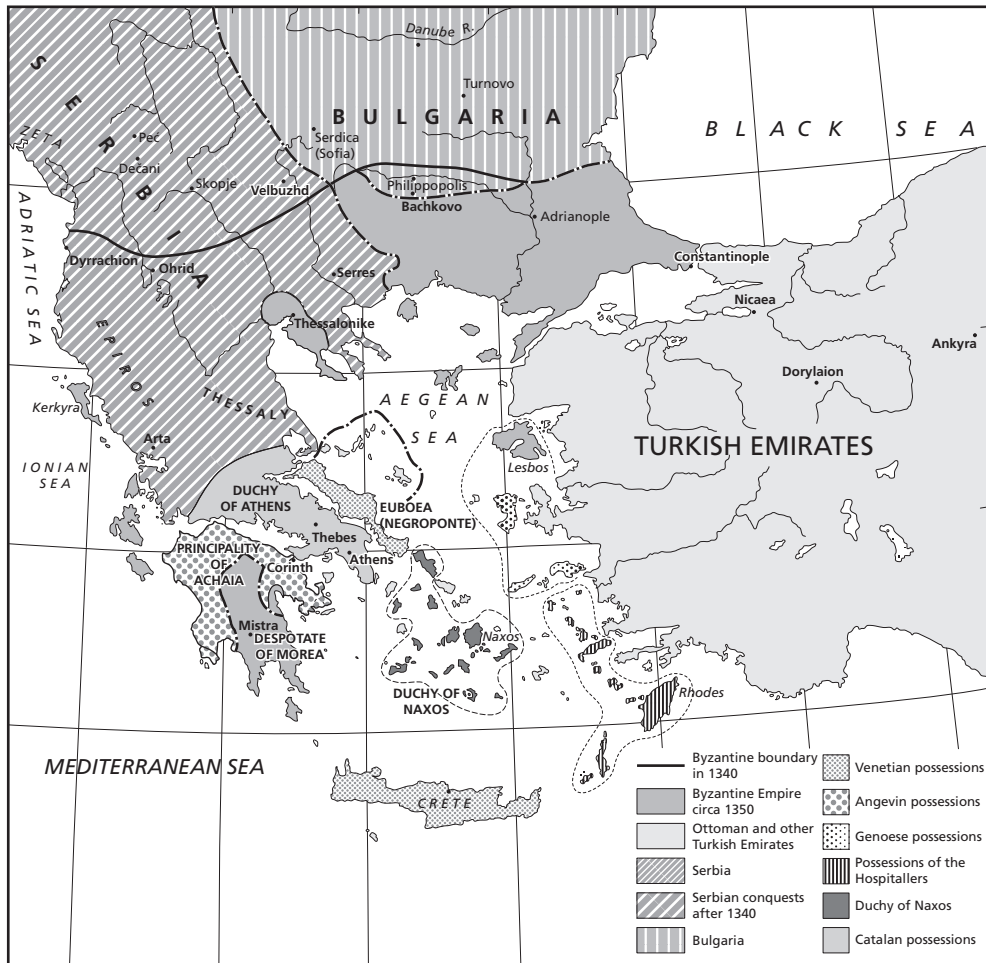
Map 2 The aftermath of the Fourth Crusade, ca. 1214

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Elena N. Boeck

Frontmatter

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Map 3 Byzantium and its neighbors, ca. 1350