JONATHAN HARRIS

# BYZANTIUM AND THE CRUSADES

—*Second Edition*—

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# Byzantium and the Crusades

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## Second Edition

*Jonathan Harris*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Since the first edition of *Byzantium and the Crusades* appeared in 2003, the eight-hundredth anniversary of the Fourth Crusade has produced a particularly rich crop of publications that explore many of the same questions. This new edition aims to take as much of this new scholarship as possible into account. That said, the main theme is unchanged and certainly I do not agree with all the novel arguments that have been advanced in recent years. I remain particularly unconvinced by the theories that Alexios I was intimately involved with the planning and directing of the First Crusade, that Michael Psellos and other Byzantine intellectuals were closet pagans and that the Latin empire of Constantinople was prosperous and stable.

During the rewriting process, the students who took my MA course options provided a constant flow of ideas and criticisms. I am indebted to David Jacoby, Paul Stephenson and a number of anonymous reviewers for pointing out errors and omissions in the first edition, to Eugenia Russell for drawing the maps, to Jonathan Phillips and Károly Szelényi for permission to use their photographs, and to Rhodri Mogford for suggesting and overseeing the new edition with Bloomsbury. A succession of heads of the History Department at Royal Holloway, Nigel Saul, Justin Champion and Sarah Ansari, gave great support and encouragement to me in my work. I should also record my continuing appreciation to Martin Sheppard and Tony Morris of Hambledon Press without whom the original book would never have appeared in the first place.

Finally, I should add that I have adopted a slightly different approach to the spelling of Byzantine names in the text and footnotes from that used in the first edition. In general, I have tried to transliterate them as closely as possible to the original Greek, Tornikios, rather than Tornicius, and Eustathios rather than Eustathius, but where there is a recognized English equivalent of a Greek first name, I have used it, hence Isaac rather than Isaakios, George rather than Georgios. I have done this not because I want to anglicize the Byzantines but because I want their history to be accessible to an international audience who will be more familiar with these versions. I have made certain personal choices such as ‘Porphyrogenitos’ rather than ‘Porphyrogennetos’ for the sole reason that, to my eyes, it looks better.

Royal Holloway
University of London
December 2013

# TIMELINE

969: Byzantine capture of Antioch
975: Campaign of John I Tzimiskes in Syria
1018: Byzantine conquest of Bulgaria
1027: Byzantine treaty with Fatimids; rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre
1031: Byzantine capture of Edessa
1054: Cardinal Humbert excommunicates the patriarch of Constantinople
1071: Battle of Manzikert
1074: Treaty between Robert Guiscard and Michael VII Doukas
1081: Accession of Alexios I Komnenos
1083: Defeat of Robert Guiscard in the Balkans
1089: First embassy of Alexios I to Urban II
1091: Victory of Alexios I over the Pechenegs at Mount Levounion
1095: Second embassy of Alexios to Urban II; preaching of the First Crusade
1096: The crusaders begin to arrive in Constantinople
1097: Capture of Nicaea and Battle of Dorylaion
1098: Crusaders capture Antioch
1099: Fall of Jerusalem; Bohemond seizes Antioch
1106: Tancred captures Laodikeia
1107: Bohemond lands at Avlona
1108: Treaty of Devol
1118: Death of Alexios I; accession of John II Komnenos
1126: John II renews commercial treaty with Venice
1137: First expedition of John II to Antioch
1142: Second expedition of John II to Antioch
1143: Death of John II; accession of Manuel I Komnenos
1147: The Second Crusade passes through Constantinople
1159: Manuel I's expedition to Antioch
1169: Joint Byzantine-Crusader attack on Damietta
1171: Visit of Amalric of Jerusalem to Constantinople; arrest of Venetians
1174: Saladin unites Syria and Egypt under his rule
1180: Death of Manuel I Komnenos; regency for young Alexios II
1182: Andronicus Komnenos enters Constantinople; massacre of Latins
1183: Andronicus crowned as emperor
1185: Overthrow of Andronicus I by Isaac II Angelos

1187: Capture of Jerusalem by Saladin
1189: Frederick Barbarossa in the Byzantine Balkans
1190: Death of Frederick Barbarossa
1191: Richard the Lionheart captures Cyprus
1192: Third Crusade ends without capturing Jerusalem
1196: Emperor Henry VI demands Byzantine finance for the crusade
1198: Pope Innocent III calls the Fourth Crusade
1201: Alexios Angelos arrives in the West
1202: Fourth Crusade captures Zara
1203: Fourth Crusade arrives at Constantinople
1204: Capture and sack of Constantinople
1205: Battle of Adrianople
1208: Imperial coronation of Theodore Laskaris
1216: Death of Henry of Flanders
1218: Fifth Crusade sails for Egypt
1221: Death of Theodore Laskaris; accession of John III Vatatzes
1224: Theodore Angelos takes Thessalonica
1225: Battle of Poimamenon
1227: Launch of Sixth Crusade
1228: Treaty of Jaffa returns Jerusalem to Christian rule
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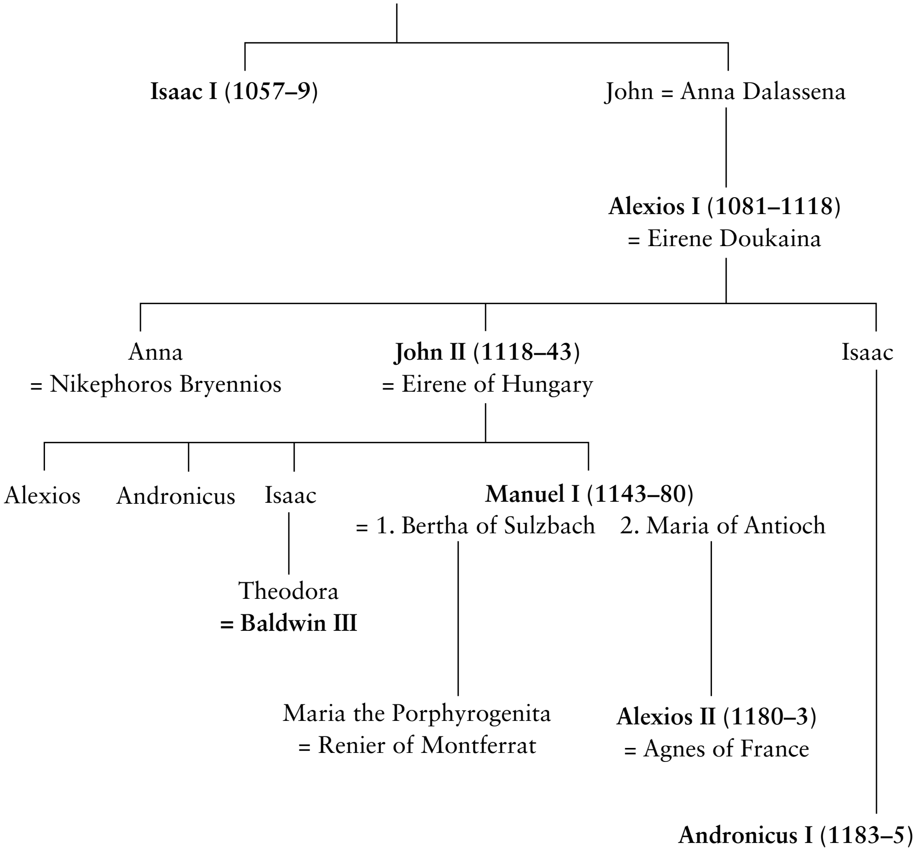
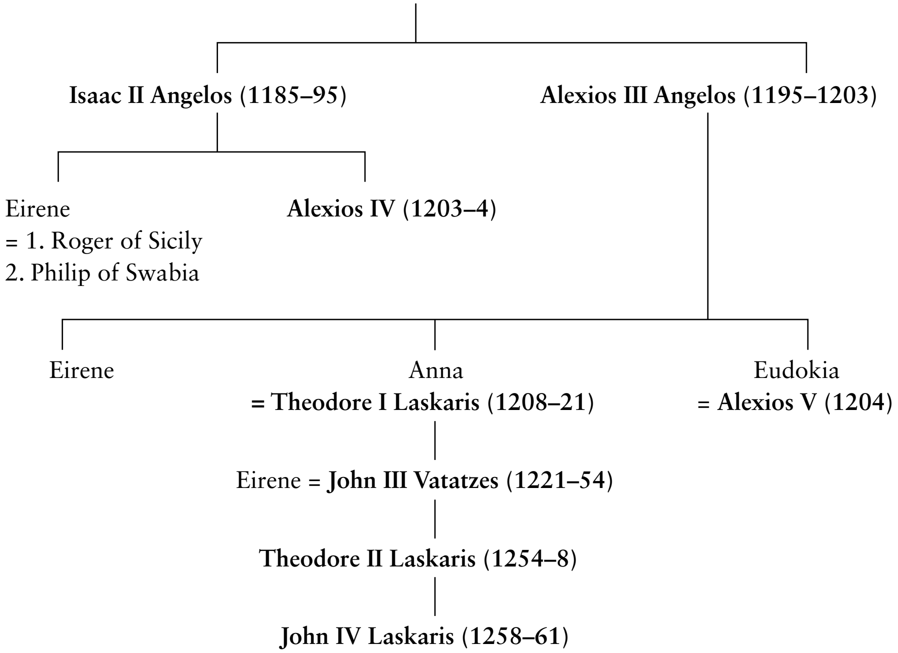
1258: Michael Palaiologos seizes power at Nicaea
1259: Battle of Pelagonia
1260: Mamluks defeat the Mongols at Ain Jalut
1261: Recapture of Constantinople by Michael VIII
1265: Charles of Anjou becomes king of Sicily
1267: Treaty of Viterbo between Charles of Anjou and Baldwin II
1268: Mamluk sultan Baibars captures Antioch
1270: Crusade of Louis IX to Tunis
1274: Council of Lyons
1277: Charles of Anjou becomes king of Jerusalem
1282: Sicilian Vespers; death of Michael VIII
1289: Mamluk sultan Qalawun captures Tripoli
1291: Fall of Acre

# GENEALOGICAL TABLES

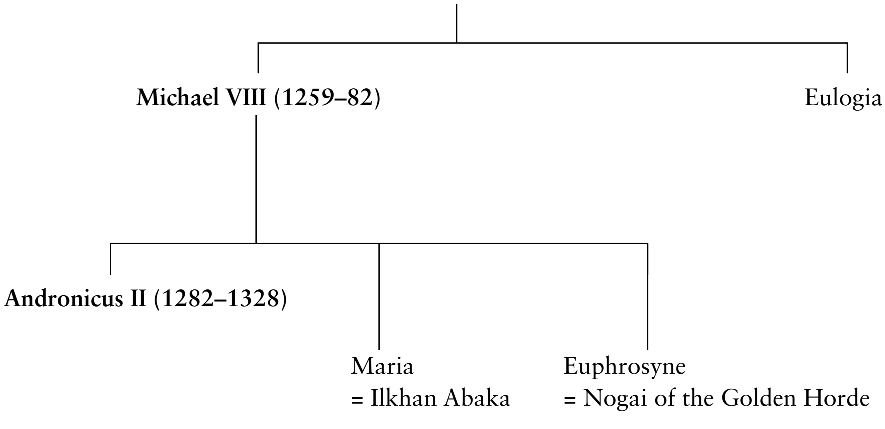
## 1. The Komnenos Dynasty


**Isaac I** (1057–9)
John = Anna Dalassena
**Alexios I** (1081–1118)
= Eirene Doukaina
Anna
= Nikephoros Bryennios
**John II** (1118–43)
= Eirene of Hungary
Isaac
Alexios
Andronicus
Isaac
**Manuel I** (1143–80)
= 1. Bertha of Sulzbach
2. Maria of Antioch
Theodora
**= Baldwin III**
Maria the Porphyrogenita
= Renier of Montferrat
**Alexios II** (1180–3)
= Agnes of France
**Andronicus I** (1183–5)

## 2. The Angelos and Laskaris Dynasties


**Isaac II Angelos** (1185–95)
**Alexios III Angelos** (1195–1203)
Eirene
= 1. Roger of Sicily
2. Philip of Swabia
**Alexios IV** (1203–4)
Eirene
Anna
= **Theodore I Laskaris** (1208–21)
Eudokia
= **Alexios V** (1204)
Eirene = **John III Vatatzes** (1221–54)
**Theodore II Laskaris** (1254–8)
**John IV Laskaris** (1258–61)

## 3. The Palaiologos Dynasty


**Michael VIII** (1259–82)
Eulogia
**Andronicus II** (1282–1328)
Maria
= Ilkhan Abaka
Euphrosyne
= Nogai of the Golden Horde

# Introduction

In May 1204, the newly crowned emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin of Flanders, wrote a letter to the pope, Innocent III. It was not an easy task, for Baldwin was one of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade, which had been launched by Innocent in August 1198. The crusaders had originally planned to conquer first Egypt and then Jerusalem, which had been in Muslim hands since its capture by Saladin in 1187. As it turned out, instead of fighting the infidel, they had turned their weapons on Christians. They had not only attacked and captured Constantinople, the capital of the Christian Byzantine empire, they had systematically looted its palaces and churches, expelled its rulers and crowned Baldwin as a new emperor of their own. Innocent might well have been expected to be furious at this deviation from the ideals of the crusade and to have excommunicated the entire army. That was exactly what he had done two years earlier when it had perpetrated a similar outrage on another Christian city, that of Zara in Dalmatia.

Surprisingly, in spite of the radical turn of events, Baldwin's justification of the army's actions worked. When Innocent replied in November 1204, he accepted Baldwin's version of what had happened and did not even threaten excommunication. On the contrary, he placed the new emperor, his lands and his people under his protection, and commanded that the crusading army, rather than going on to Egypt, should stay to protect Constantinople from any attempt by the Byzantines to retake the city. Nor did he do so grudgingly, but waxed lyrical on what appeared to be a clear indication of divine favour:

> Surely, this was done by the Lord and is wondrous in our eyes. This is truly a change done by the right hand of the Most High, in which the right hand of the Lord manifested power so that he might exalt the most holy Roman Church while He returns the daughter to the mother, the part to the whole and the member to the head.[1]

Baldwin's letter and the readiness of the pope to respond favourably to it, pose an obvious and fundamental question. The First Crusade had been launched in 1095 by Innocent III's predecessor, Urban II, ostensibly with a view to helping the Byzantine empire against its Muslim enemies. Just over a century later, events had come full circle. The soldiers of the Fourth Crusade and the pope himself now considered themselves entirely justified in attacking and annexing the empire's capital city. How had this extraordinary reversal come about?

Many minds have pondered this problem and a multiplicity of theories have come and gone over the years. Historical works written before the mid-nineteenth century, like that of Joseph Michaud (1767–1839), presented the sack of Constantinople as the outcome of a series of accidents. Then the trend shifted to identifying one individual or group who had deliberately plotted the diversion. French aristocrat Louis de Mas Latrie (1815–97) and German academic Carl Hopf (1832–73), for example, placed the entire blame on the Italian maritime republic of Venice and its aged but formidable doge, Enrico Dandolo. Dandolo, so the argument ran, wished to prevent the crusade from attacking Egypt, because Venice had concluded a commercial treaty with the Ayyubid regime there in 1202. The republic's commercial interest dictated an attack on Constantinople instead, because the emperors there had been obstructing Venetian trading activities. The doge therefore cunningly manipulated the crusaders into deviating from their original destination. By tricking them into running up an enormous debt for the hire of Venetian shipping, Dandolo was able to force them to do his will and to capture both Zara and Constantinople. The theory was discredited when the crucial treaty with Egypt, which Hopf dated to 1202, was shown to belong, in fact, to 1208 or 1212, long after the Fourth Crusade had captured Constantinople.[2] Other theories have sought to blame the German imperial claimant, Philip of Swabia, the crusade leader, Boniface of Montferrat, and even Innocent III himself, only to come up against similarly cogent objections.[3]

With the conspiracy theories out of favour, there remain two primary schools of thought in the voluminous literature on the subject in English. The first argues that this was a classic case of the clash of civilizations. The capture and sack of Constantinople was the culmination of mounting incomprehension, intolerance and hostility between the two halves of the Christian world, the Catholic, western European Latins on the one hand, and the Orthodox, Greek-speaking, eastern Byzantines on the other. The theory first appeared in the work of Walter Norden (1876–1937) but it was widely disseminated in the numerous writings of Sir Steven Runciman (1903–2000). For Runciman, the crusades had the unfortunate effect of bringing the two societies, which had little to do with each other in the past, into much closer contact. It was this very contact which opened the way for mutual misunderstanding and mistrust:

> There are idealists who fondly believe that if only the peoples of the world could get to know each other there would be peace and goodwill forever. This is a tragic delusion. It is indeed possible for men and women of education to enjoy the company and customs of foreigners and to feel sympathy for them. But simpler folk who find themselves in a country

> whose language and habits are unintelligible to them are apt to feel at a loss and resentful.[4]

Proponents of the clash of civilizations theory had only to cite the words of contemporaries to uncover what appeared to be indisputable evidence of this deep mutual antagonism. Byzantine writers often described western European crusaders as uncouth barbarians, while their Western counterparts fulminated against the effeminate and treacherous Byzantines, their schism with the Church of Rome and their supposed collusion with Muslim powers.[5] The massacre of Latins in Constantinople in 1182, and the Norman capture and sack of the Byzantine city of Thessalonica in 1185, both seemed to be the inevitable outcome of this growing tension and to stand as milestones on a straight road which was to lead to the catastrophe of 1204.

So compelling was the clash of civilizations theory that it seemed all there was left to discuss was when the tension began, and who was to blame. Some historians saw the process as starting as far back as 1054, when some papal legates had excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople and opened up the schism between the Byzantine and Western Churches. Others saw the arrival of the First Crusade at Constantinople in 1096 as the beginning of the trouble, as thousands of Western knights descended on the Byzantine empire on their way to conquer Jerusalem, raising apprehensions among the Byzantines that these armies might in fact be aiming to conquer Constantinople or other parts of imperial territory. Still others claimed that the accession of the supposedly anti-Latin Andronicus I as Byzantine emperor in 1183 was the real beginning of the mutual antagonism.[6] There was a similar disparity when it came to apportioning the blame. Some saw the wanton aggression of the crusaders towards the sophisticated and cultured Byzantines as the root of the trouble, others the xenophobia and snobbery of the Byzantines towards people whom they considered to be somehow inferior. Regardless of the precise starting point chosen or the exact apportionment of blame, the basic theory remains the same.[7]

Compelling though the clash of civilizations theory is, it suffers from at least three serious flaws. The first is its claim that there was a general and escalating estrangement between Byzantine east and Latin west during the twelfth century. In spite of the frequent harsh words and occasional ugly incidents, the two societies were in fact closely intertwined. Not only did Byzantine emperors of the period of the crusades regularly intermarry with their counterparts in western Europe and the Holy Land, their empire depended on western European manpower. As the Byzantines themselves were quite prepared to admit, Latins made up the most effective and loyal part of the imperial army, and they also served the emperor as ambassadors, translators and counsellors. The notion of two completely divided societies coming into final conflict in 1204 is therefore unconvincing. When the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade first attacked the walls of Constantinople in the summer of 1203, they did so at the behest of a Byzantine prince, Alexios

Angelos, while the stiffest resistance that they encountered came not from the Byzantines themselves but from the western European troops in imperial service.[8]

A second flaw in the clash of civilizations theory is that it assumes not only that a complete east–west hostility had developed during the twelfth century, but also that there was a causal link between that hostility and the sack of Constantinople. Yet when the Western strike against Constantinople came, in the shape of the Fourth Crusade, there was no premeditated plan to attack the Byzantine capital. On the way to Egypt, the crusade diverted at the request of a prince of the ruling Angelos family who needed help to restore his father to the throne. While individual leaders of the army, including Boniface of Montferrat and the doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, may have welcomed the change of objective, most of the rank and file were bitterly opposed to it. A sizeable number left the army and made their own way to the Holy Land. Those who remained only agreed very reluctantly to the diversion when subjected to a mixture of financial and emotional blackmail. Even then, many hesitated before the final attack in April 1204, and had serious doubts as to whether it was legitimate to attack a Christian city in this way.[9]

Finally there is what happened after 1204. If the mutual antagonism was as sharp as supposed, why were some Byzantines prepared to throw in their lot with the new regime and why were Westerners increasingly to heed the pope's summons and to fight to maintain Constantinople under Latin rule?[10] Because only small numbers of volunteers went out to help Baldwin of Flanders and his successors to defend the city, the Latin emperors suffered from a constant shortage of manpower and their hold on Constantinople lasted only 57 years. By 1261 the Byzantines had recaptured Constantinople and recovered a sizeable part of their empire, as it had been before 1204.

In view of these flaws in the clash of civilizations theory, it is hardly surprising that in recent years most scholars have discarded the idea that the Fourth Crusade's sack of Constantinople was the culmination of mounting hostility and have come to the conclusion that no convincing overall theory can be advanced. Instead, stress has been laid on the unforeseen events which prevented the crusade from going on to Egypt as planned: the massive debt which was owed to the Venetians because not enough crusaders came forward to fill the ships that had been hired; the attack on Zara which the crusade undertook to secure a postponement of that debt; and the proposal made by Alexios Angelos that the crusade should accompany him to Constantinople. According to this view, the eventual outcome was the result of an extremely complicated mixture of factors and motives that defy easy categorization.[11]

Thus after a century of endeavour, to the question of why a movement originally launched to help the Byzantines ultimately stormed their capital city and divided up their empire, the existing literature on Byzantium and the crusades has yielded only either an answer which is unsatisfactory or one which avoids the problem and does not really provide an answer at all. In any case, both theories are profoundly unpalatable in their implications. If different cultures are bound to come into conflict whenever they interact closely, there is little hope for the modern world of global communication and multiracial societies. If, on the other hand, the sack of Constantinople came about as the result of factors too numerous and complicated to reduce to any overall theory, then that would suggest that no event in human history can ever be explained.

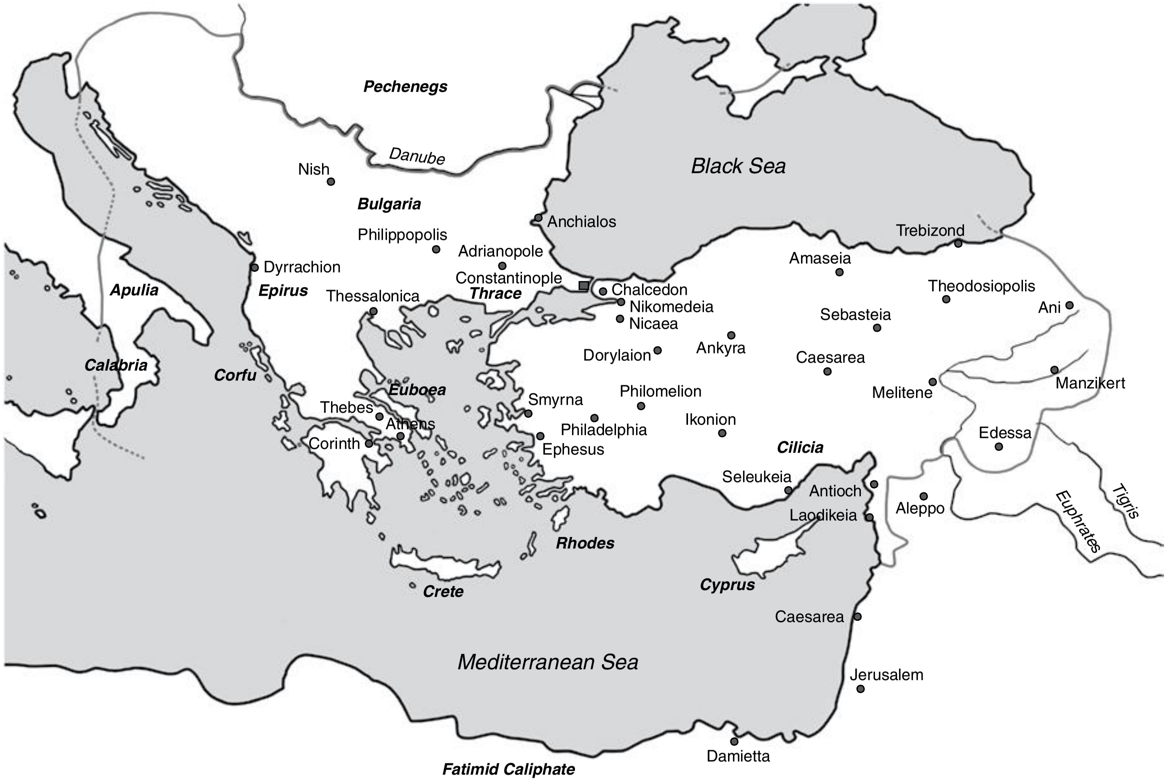
This book aims to advance another view of Byzantine interaction with western Europe, the crusades and the crusader states. It argues that the key, or at least a key, lies not in generalized hostility between peoples or impersonal chance theory, but in the nature of the Byzantine empire and the ideology which underpinned it. That ideology will be examined by looking at the influential group who ran the empire, and the methods and principles they employed in dealing with the world beyond their borders. It will be argued that the disaster of 1204 was the result of an attempt on their part to implement and sustain their ideology and foreign policy in circumstances which left their actions open to misinterpretation. By pursuing very different ends to those of the reformed papacy and the leaders of crusade armies, and by employing methods that were often considered by western Europeans to be dishonourable, the Byzantines succeeded in giving the impression that the empire was failing to participate in the pious cause of defending Jerusalem and the Holy Land from the common Muslim foe. Western attempts after 1187 to extort what they considered to be the rightful Byzantine financial contribution to the enterprise led directly to the capture and sack of Constantinople. That was not the end of the story. Byzantine ideology and methods of diplomacy continued to influence Byzantine relations with the West even after the events of April 1204. By a curious irony, at the moment of supreme crisis in 1282 when it looked as if a crusade fleet was about to be launched from Sicily against Constantinople under the leadership of Charles of Anjou, it was the tried and tested methods of Byzantine diplomacy that saved the day and ensured that the empire would outlive the Latin states of Syria and Palestine that were finally extinguished by the Mamluks in 1291.

# 1

# The empire of Christ

In about the year 1050, the Byzantine empire, known also as ‘Byzantium’, was the largest and most prosperous political entity in the Christian world. On its eastern side, it consisted of Asia Minor or Anatolia, that is to say what is now Turkey, and part of Armenia along with the island of Cyprus. In the west it covered Greece and the Balkans south of the Danube, the Aegean and Ionian islands, and Crete. The empire also retained a few isolated outposts across the Black Sea in the Crimea, most notably the city of Cherson, and part of southern Italy, the provinces of Calabria and Apulia. These borders were the result of a considerable expansion which had taken place over the previous hundred years, especially during the reigns of the emperors Nikephoros II Phokas (963–9), John I Tzimiskes (969–76) and Basil II (976–1025). In the east, the Byzantines had taken advantage of the increasing weakness of their traditional Muslim enemy, the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad. Crete had been taken from the Arabs in 961 and Cyprus in 965. In the autumn of 969, the great city of Antioch, which had been under Arab rule for over 300 years, opened its gates to a Byzantine army, and Edessa was captured in 1031.[1] Further to the east, the Christian rulers of Armenia had been persuaded one by one to yield their territories to the emperor in Constantinople, culminating in the Byzantine annexation of Ani in 1045. The empire had also extended its borders on its western side as it settled old scores with its long-time rival, Bulgaria. In 1018, after many years of intense warfare, Basil II had completed the conquest of the country and incorporated it into the empire. There were plans for further expansion. An expedition to Sicily in 1038 had occupied the eastern side of the island but this foothold was lost within a few years.

One consequence of Byzantine military success was that, especially after 1018, many parts of the empire enjoyed a period of relative peace and prosperity as the threat of foreign invasion, ever present in previous centuries, now diminished. The frontier districts, particularly newly


Pechenegs
Danube
Nish
Bulgaria
Philippopolis
Adrianopole
Anchialos
Black Sea
Trebizond
Amaseia
Theodosiopolis
Ani
Dyrrachion
Epirus
Thessalonica
Constantinople
Thrace
Chalcedon
Nikomedeia
Nicaea
Sebasteia
Apulia
Calabria
Corfu
Dorylaion
Ankyra
Caesarea
Manzikert
Melitene
Euboea
Thebes
Athens
Corinth
Smyrna
Philomelion
Philadelphia
Ephesus
Ikonion
Cilicia
Edessa
Seleukeia
Antioch
Laodikeia
Aleppo
Tigris
Euphrates
Rhodes
Crete
Cyprus
Caesarea
Mediterranean Sea
Jerusalem
Damietta
Fatimid Caliphate

**MAP 1** *The Byzantine empire, c.1050.*

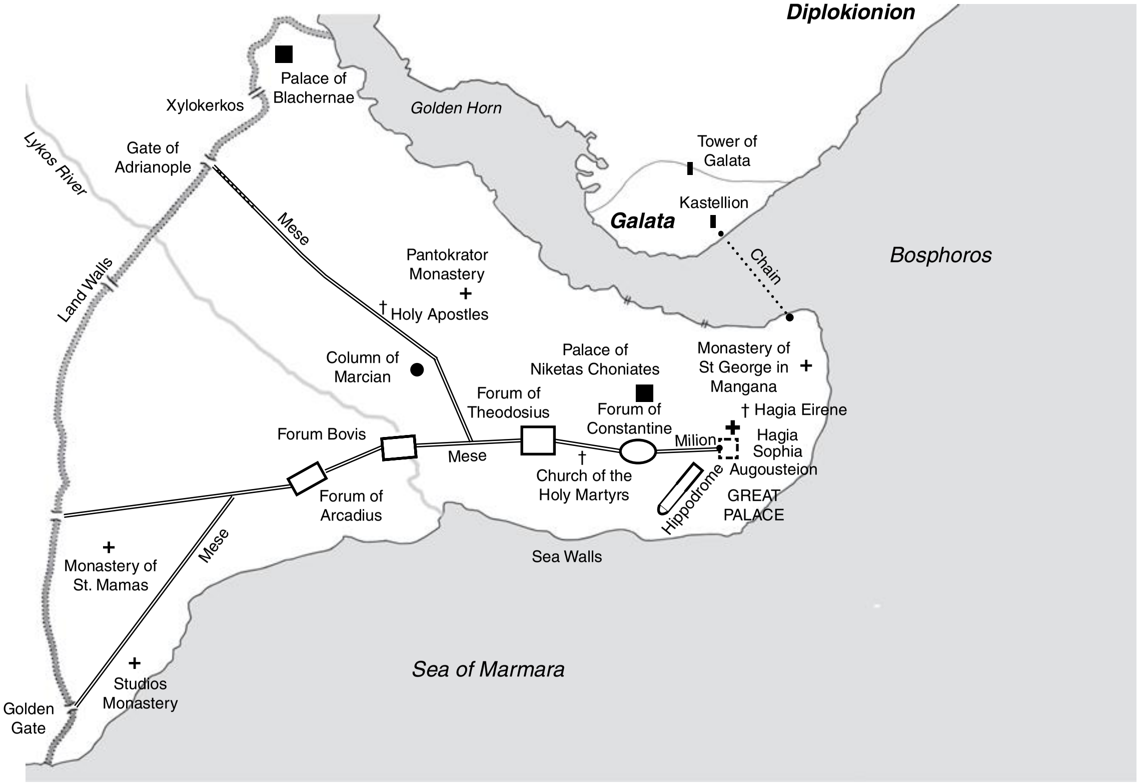
incorporated Bulgaria, Syria and Armenia, remained vulnerable to raids from neighbouring nomads, so many urban centres such as Adrianople, Philippopolis, Antioch and Theodosiopolis retained their military function and garrisons.[2] In the interior provinces, on the other hand, particularly in what is now Greece and western Turkey, towns were flourishing as centres of industry and commerce. Archaeological excavations reveal that areas of Corinth and Athens, which had been deserted for centuries, had now been reoccupied and built over, and important industries had begun to grow up. Corinth produced textiles, cotton, linen and silk, as well as possessing an important glass factory. Athens concentrated on dyes and soap. Thebes was renowned for its high-quality silks, prized above all others for the quality of their workmanship. Thessalonica, the second city of the empire, hosted an annual fair which attracted merchants from all parts of the Mediterranean world, as well as being a centre for the production of silk and metalwork.[3] In Asia Minor, wealth lay in agriculture rather than in commerce or manufactures, as peaceful conditions allowed more land to be brought back under cultivation. Here too there were signs of expansion and renewal in the towns. Ikonion, on the flat Anatolian plain, flourished as a market town and Philadelphia, in the fertile lands of western Asia Minor was described by a contemporary as a 'great and prosperous city'. In the north-west, the chief regional centre was Nicaea, of historic importance as the site of two ecumenical councils of the Church in 325 and 787, but also a staging post on the road east, and a market for agricultural produce and fish from its lake. The new-found wealth of the provinces is reflected in the rich mosaics and interior decoration of the monasteries of Daphni near Athens and Hosios Loukas in Central Greece which bear witness to the availability of wealthy patrons and their readiness to make pious donations.[4]

In general therefore Byzantium was probably a more prosperous and settled society in the mid-eleventh century than the fragmented and localized countries of western Europe. The contrast should not be overstressed. Modern maps showing the empire with wide borders fail to take into account that central authority was not uniform over the whole area. The further one went from the capital, the more power was devolved into local hands. The aristocracy or archons of eastern Asia Minor or the western Balkans enjoyed a great deal of independence, often leading their own armies into battle. On the frontier district local rulers were often allowed to remain in charge provided that they acknowledged the authority of the Byzantine emperor.[5] These everyday realities aside, Byzantium was set apart from other Christian states in the eyes of contemporaries by having a fixed capital city and centre of government. This was Constantinople, the modern Istanbul, strategically situated at the crossing between the empire's European and Asiatic provinces, and founded in the year 330 by the emperor Constantine I (306–37) on the site of an earlier city named Byzantion. The Byzantines themselves took enormous pride in it: so important a place was it in their eyes that they seldom needed to refer to it by name, preferring to use epithets such as the

'Queen of Cities', the 'Great City' or just 'the City'.[6] This was not mere local patriotism for foreign visitors to Constantinople were equally extravagant in their praise. A French priest who arrived with the First Crusade in 1097, gushed enthusiastically about the 'excellent and beautiful city' and an Arab visitor recorded that the place was even better than its reputation. A Jewish physician marvelled at the 'countless buildings'. To the Scandinavians, it was known as Micklagard, the great city, and among the Russians as Tsargrad, the imperial city.[7]

There were a number of reasons for the pride which Constantinople inspired on the part of its citizens, and the awe and astonishment it provoked from outsiders. One was its impregnability. It enjoyed a natural defensive position, placed on a narrow promontory that was bounded by water on two sides, the Golden Horn and the Bosporus to the north and the Sea of Marmara to the south. On the landward side, previous emperors had constructed a colossal, fortified wall stretching from the Golden Horn to the Sea of Marmara, about nine metres high and four and a half metres thick. It was punctuated at intervals by 96 towers, providing broad platforms for archers and catapults. In front of the walls was a wide ditch, which any assailant had to cross while exposed to withering fire from the walls. The fortifications continued along the seaward sides, making assault by sea equally daunting.[8] Thanks to these defences, Constantinople had withstood numerous sieges over the centuries. One of the most serious had been mounted by the Persians and Avars in 626, when they had blockaded the city simultaneously from east and west. The Arabs had tried for four years between 674 and 678, with the support of a powerful fleet. Both sieges had to be broken off in the face of the unyielding defences. In later years, the Russians and the Bulgars were also to make the attempt, with similar lack of success. After the last Russian attack, a naval assault in 1043, some 15,000 enemy corpses were counted, washed up on the shores of the Bosporus. The towering defences of Constantinople were the first thing a visitor would have seen when arriving by land or sea. The French cleric Odo of Deuil, who travelled with the Second Crusade in 1147 and who had little good to say about the Byzantines, poured scorn on the walls, claiming that they were in poor repair. The soldiers of the Fourth Crusade, however, shuddered when they saw them.[9]

The second aspect of Constantinople that marked it out was its size, for by medieval standards it was an enormous city and certainly the largest in the Christian world. Rome, which had once been so vast and powerful, had declined by the eleventh century to a shadow of its former self, with large areas within its walls desolate or uninhabited. London had not yet begun to grow and on the eve of the Norman invasion of 1066 probably had a population of no more than 12,000. Constantinople, by contrast, is believed to have had at least 375,000 inhabitants, making it more 30 times the size of London, and it was estimated at the time that more people lived within its walls than in the whole of the kingdom of England south of the Humber.[10]


Diplokionion
Palace of Blachernae
Xylokerkos
Golden Horn
Tower of Galata
Gate of Adrianople
Lykos River
Kastellion
Galata
Mese
Chain
Bosphoros
Pantokrator Monastery
Land Walls
† Holy Apostles
Palace of Niketas Choniates
Monastery of St George in Mangana
Column of Marcian
Forum of Theodosius
Forum of Constantine
† Hagia Eirene
Forum Bovis
Milion
Hagia Sophia
Mese
†
Church of the Holy Martyrs
Augousteion
Hippodrome
Forum of Arcadius
GREAT PALACE
Monastery of St. Mamas
Mese
Sea Walls
Sea of Marmara
Studios Monastery
Golden Gate

**MAP 2** *The city of Constantinople.*

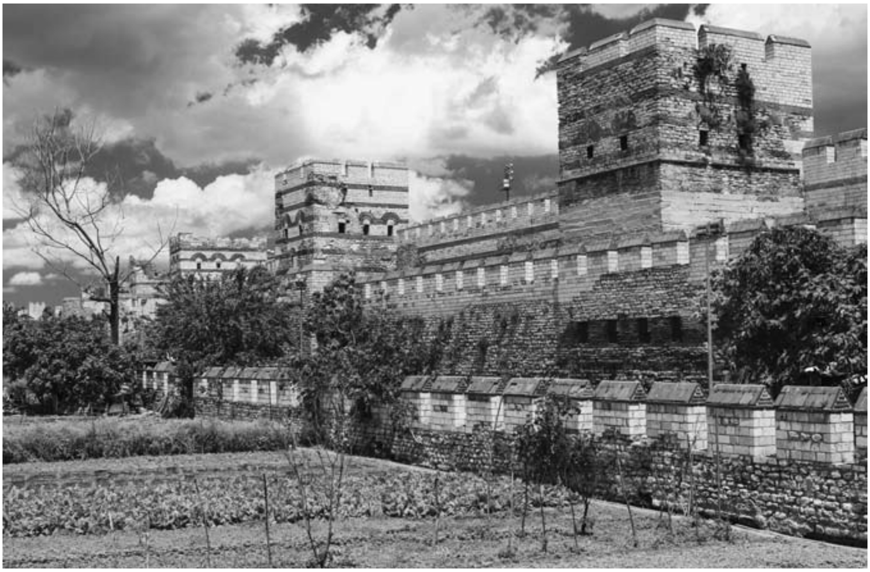


**FIGURE 1** *The Land Walls of Constantinople, as recently restored, showing the outer and inner walls, some of the 96 defensive towers and the site of the moat, now occupied by vegetable plots.* (Vlacheslav Lopatin/Shutterstock.com)

The closest cities of comparable size were to be found in the Islamic world. Cordoba in Spain was probably roughly the same size, while Baghdad was considerably larger. Like many large cities today, Constantinople's population was multiracial, reflecting both the ethnic composition of the empire as a whole and the world around it. While the majority was composed of Greek-speakers, there were large numbers of Armenians, Russians and Georgians. There was a sizeable Jewish community, concentrated mainly in the suburb of Galata on the other side of the Golden Horn, Italian merchants from the trading cities of Venice, Genoa and Pisa, and mercenaries from western Europe and Scandinavia. There was even a small Arab community in Constantinople, mostly merchants, for whose use a mosque was provided. That pattern was repeated in other parts of the empire. While Greek was its official language, Armenian and Slavonic languages were also widely spoken, especially in the frontier districts. There were also pockets of Slavs in Asia Minor, and of Armenians in the Balkans, as a result of the policy of forced resettlement pursued by the emperors over the centuries.[11]

Another aspect of Constantinople frequently commented on by natives and visitors alike was its wealth. It was the boast of Constantinople's citizens that two-thirds of the riches of the world were concentrated in their city, and newcomers were astonished by the sheer opulence that they saw around them, especially the abundance of gold, silver and silk.[12] Part of this was generated by manufacturing for Constantinople was famous for its metalwork. The city's gold and silversmiths had their own area around the main square, the Augousteion, and much of their work was exported, particularly to Italy. Other industries based in the imperial capital were silk dressing and dyeing, manufacture of silk garments, and soap, perfume and candle making. Banking and money lending also flourished, though they were strictly regulated.[13] The main reason for Constantinople's wealth, however, was trade. Thanks to its geographical position between Europe and Asia, Constantinople was an obvious entrepôt where goods from one part of the world could be exchanged for those of another. Merchants gathered in the commercial quarter, along the Golden Horn. The Arabs brought spices, porcelain and jewels, the Italians tin and wool, the Russians wax, amber, honey and fur. These were then sold on or exchanged for products to ship back to their home markets. Although much of this activity was in the hands of foreign merchants, the Byzantine authorities benefited by charging a customs duty, the Kommerkion, of 10 per cent on all imports and exports, and the city as a whole grew rich on the commercial opportunities presented by the influx of merchants, goods and raw materials.[14]

The prosperity of Constantinople was most visible in its buildings, whether public, private or ecclesiastical. It was unusual among medieval cities in being a deliberately planned city, rather than a random jumble of

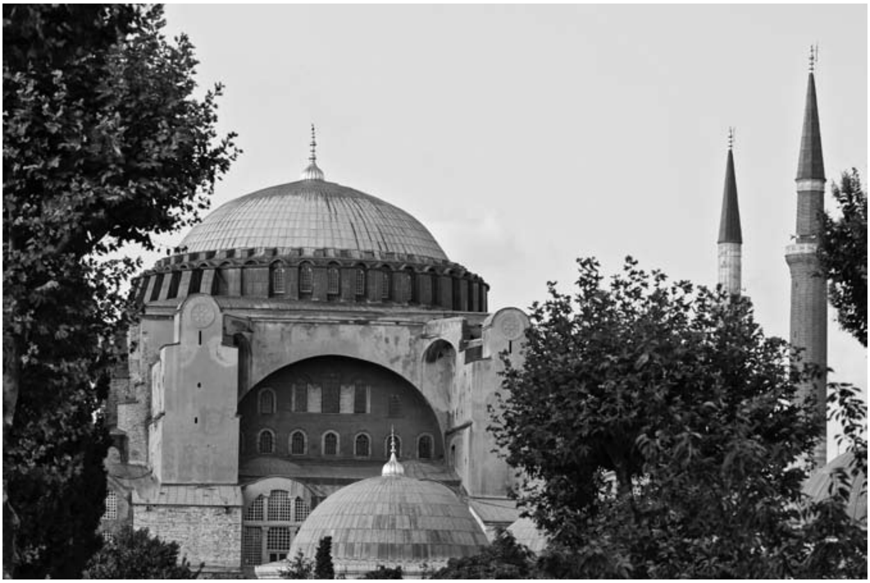


**FIGURE 2** *The cathedral of Hagia Sophia as it is today, with minarets dating from after the Turkish conquest in 1453.* (Saida Shigapova/Shutterstock.com)

buildings, with space set aside for public events and ceremonies. Most of this space was concentrated at the eastern end, but it was linked to the walls in the west by the long main street known as the Mese. The Mese began at the far south of the Land Walls, at the Golden Gate, an imposing entrance surmounted by four large bronze elephants, which was traditionally used to enter the city by emperors returning from a successful campaign.[15] From there the Mese ran east through a series of public squares before terminating at the Augousteion, which was dominated by the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and by a huge bronze equestrian statue of the emperor Justinian (527–65). The figure of the emperor faced east, holding in one hand an orb surmounted by a cross, his other raised in warning to his enemies.[16]

To the south of the Augousteion stood the 400 metre long Hippodrome, which could seat up to 100,000 people. It had originally been designed for the staging of chariot races which a central spine, around which the contestants would career at high speed. The spine was decorated with ancient statues and sculptures brought as trophies by earlier emperors from all over the Mediterranean world, a rich profusion that served no other purpose other than adornment.[17] By the eleventh century, the Hippodrome provided the venue for any public happening, from executions to displays of tightrope walking. The emperor himself watched these spectacles from the imperial box or Kathisma, receiving the acclamations of the crowd before the proceedings commenced. Like a modern football stadium, however, the Hippodrome was prone to accidents. During a horse race in 1184 part of the imperial box collapsed, killing six people in the seats below.

Within this public setting of open squares and spaces there were numerous fine private residences, the homes of the more prosperous citizens, mainly along the Mese and to either side of it. These were complexes of buildings with their own private chapels and bath houses. The courtier and historian Niketas Choniates had two: one, which he described as ‘incomparable in beauty and immense in size’ in the district of Sphorakion, to the north-east of the Forum of Constantine, and another close to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia. Although one observer claimed that mansions such as these overshadowed the street, leaving the poor to live in dirt and darkness, most visitors were favourably impressed and were struck both by their size and their number.[18]

As for the emperors, they resided in two large palaces. The older was the Great Palace, a sprawling complex of buildings rather than a single structure, which extended alongside the Hippodrome down to a small harbour, where the imperial galley was moored. Successive emperors had added buildings to it over the years. The Magnavra was a large basilica with three naves where envoys and dignitaries were received. Then there was the Boukoleon, named for a classical statue of a lion attacking an ox which stood within its precincts and the Porphyra or Purple Chamber which overlooked the harbour and which was set aside as the place where children of the reigning emperor were born. Great care was taken with the gardens of the Great Palace which were mainly given over to wide lawns and terraces and to the internal decoration of those parts that were likely to be seen by visiting ambassadors. The walls were faced with marble of various colours, and the upper walls and ceilings with lavish mosaics, depicting everything from the triumphs of emperors to birds and animals, both natural and mythological.[19] During the later eleventh century, the Great Palace was to fall out of favour and the emperors of the Komnenos dynasty increasingly resided at the palace of Blachernae at the opposite end of the city, by the northern extremity of the Land Walls. Smaller and more compact than the Great Palace, Blachernae enjoyed excellent views over the city, the Golden Horn and the countryside beyond the walls. Inside, it was as glittering as its larger counterpart with long galleries decorated with gold mosaics.[20]

Constantinople was equally well provided with ecclesiastical buildings. Among its hundreds of monasteries, the most famous was that of St John of Stoudios, which had been in existence for some 500 years. There were more outside the walls, such as that of Saints Cosmas and Damian, usually referred to as the Kosmidion, close to the Blachernae palace.[21] While monasteries were remarkable for their number, Constantinople's churches were noted for their size and beauty. Foremost among them was the great cathedral of Hagia Sophia, or the Holy Wisdom, which stood to the north of the Augousteion and the Hippodrome. Built in the sixth century, on the orders of Justinian I, on a rectangular base and topped with an enormous dome 32 metres across, it would have towered above the rooftops of the city, the top of the dome visible from ships far out to sea. In the interior, the mosaic decoration covered the entire space of the dome, and the galleries were supported by columns of different coloured marble, creating an extraordinary effect when suffused by sunlight shining in from the upper windows. The Byzantines themselves were justifiably proud of the cathedral, which they tended to refer to simply as 'the Great Church'. It seldom failed to excite comment from visitors, who were unlikely to have ever seen a building of that size and who were awestruck by the beauty of the liturgical ceremonies performed there.[22]

There were many other churches almost as impressive. The Holy Apostles, consecrated in 550, was situated on a hill at the very heart of Constantinople. It boasted the tombs of many previous emperors, including Constantine the Great and Justinian, and some superb mosaic decoration. Rather than the wide dome used in Hagia Sophia, the square body of the Holy Apostles was surmounted by five smaller domes, a design which was to prove extremely influential on Byzantine ecclesiastical architecture. St George of Mangana, inside the Great Palace complex, evoked a lyrical description from one Byzantine, who extolled 'the size of the church, its beautiful symmetry, the harmony of its parts, the variety and rhythm of its loveliness'. Another contemporary spoke of the 'beauteous form' of the Church of the Forty Martyrs.[23]

Thus strength, size, wealth and buildings were all elements in the prestige which Constantinople enjoyed both at home and abroad. Yet its significance in the eyes of contemporaries went much deeper, for Constantinople was regarded as a holy city. Along with Rome, Jerusalem, Antioch and Alexandria, it was one of five which were regarded as the most prestigious in the Christian world and whose bishops had traditionally carried the title of patriarch. It could not, of course, claim that Christ or the Apostles Peter and Paul had ever been physically present within its walls, as could Jerusalem and Rome, although by the eleventh century it had come to be believed, on rather scanty evidence, that the Church of Constantinople had been founded by St Andrew.[24] That absence did not really matter because the spiritual aura of Constantinople rested not so much on any direct connection with the events reported in the New Testament but on what had happened since then.

For example, the success with which sieges, often by numerically superior pagan or infidel forces, had been beaten off against all the odds in the past had been interpreted as clear evidence of divine favour. The 'God-Guarded City' became another of the epithets used to describe Constantinople, and it was regarded as enjoying the special protection of the Virgin Mary. Chroniclers recorded how her personal intervention had often saved the day. A visible token of her protection, her wonder-working icon of the Hodegetria ('She who Shows the Way'), supposedly painted from the life by St Luke the Evangelist, was housed in one of the city's monasteries. It was brought out in times of danger and paraded on the walls, invariably being credited with the subsequent discomfiture of the enemy.[25]

Constantinople's survival over the centuries, when so many other prominent Christian cities had suffered capture and sack, allowed it to preserve within its walls things which would otherwise have been lost or destroyed, especially relics, items that were supposed in some way to be connected with Jesus Christ and the saints and therefore objects of wonder and veneration. Foremost among these were two sections of the True Cross, on which Christ had hung during the crucifixion. The cross had allegedly been discovered by Helena, the mother of Constantine I, while she was on pilgrimage in the Holy Land. She had brought part of it back with her to her son's newly founded city. Another was the Mandylion of Edessa, an image of the face of Christ imprinted on a cloth which, according to legend, had been sent by Christ himself to the ruler of Edessa. It had been captured by a Byzantine general in Syria in 944 and brought back to Constantinople in triumph. By the eleventh century, the True Cross and the Mandylion were housed in a special chapel inside the Great Palace complex. The same chapel also housed the tunic which Christ had worn at the time of his passion, the Crown of Thorns, the lance which pierced his side, a small phial containing what purported to be some of his blood, part of the robe of the Virgin and the head of St John the Baptist.[26]

There were other such relics scattered throughout the city. In the cathedral of Hagia Sophia visitors could see the stone wellhead where Christ had sat as he spoke to the Samaritan woman. The Holy Apostles boasted the pillar against which he had been scourged as well the tombs of Saints Andrew, Luke and Timothy. The Church of the Virgin in Blachernae, close to the Land Walls, possessed the Maphorion or veil of the Virgin Mary. Smaller shrines could boast some relic of their own, such as part of the beard of St John the Baptist in the Church of the Saviour at Chalke. Others housed icons that supposedly had miraculous powers, such as the portrait of Christ in the Forty Martyrs which had once astonished an emperor by speaking to him and berating him for his sins.[27] The concentration of so many important relics made Constantinople a goal of pilgrimage in its own right, as well as a stopover on the route east to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Similarly, the antiquity and grandeur of many of the monuments of Constantinople had given them a kind of spiritual aura all of their own and many were attributed with miraculous powers. This was particularly so with Hagia Sophia which over the centuries had become the subject of numerous myths and legends. Later generations could not believe that such a structure could have been built without divine assistance and asserted that, during construction, the dome had been supported by a golden chain let down from heaven. Every column inside the cathedral was believed to have the power to cure a particular illness when the sufferer rubbed against it.[28] Quite apart from the specifically Christian sites and relics, many of the ancient statues and columns which were to be found all over Constantinople had acquired mythologies all of their own. The carvings on the bases of the columns, for example, were reputed to depict future events, although the meaning only ever became clear after those events had occurred.[29]

All these elements, its strength, its size, its wealth and its holiness, which contributed to the prestige of Constantinople, were admitted and generally admired by Byzantines and foreigners alike. The Byzantines themselves, however, went further than other Christians, particularly those of western Europe, in believing that Constantinople occupied a supreme place in the Christian world, over and above Rome or Jerusalem. They arrived at that conclusion by the doctrine of *Translatio Imperii*, the transfer of empire. The empire in question was that of Rome, which had a deep spiritual significance in the eyes of the Byzantines. They regarded it as no accident that the reign of the first Roman emperor, Augustus (31 BCE–14 CE), had coincided with the birth of the Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ. Both events were part of God's plan for the salvation of mankind. While the souls of believers were to be saved through faith in Christ, their welfare on earth was also provided for, through the *Pax Romana* that had followed Augustus's acquisition of power. God clearly wished that those who believed in Christ should live in one state, ruled by the Roman emperor. Christ himself was seen to have endorsed that belief when he had instructed his questioners to 'Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, unto God the things that are God's', suggesting that

Christians had a duty to obey the emperor, just as they had to obey God. The same message had been preached by the Apostle Peter, who urged Christians to 'Fear God, honour the emperor'.[30] That injunction became even more binding after 313, when Constantine the Great had adopted Christianity as his religion, the first Roman emperor to do so. Theologians living at the time were quick to take advantage of the change and to integrate the office of emperor into the divine scheme of things, arguing that the empire on earth was an image or *mimesis* of the kingdom of Heaven.[31]

Another of Constantine's actions was considered to be almost as important as his conversion to Christianity. Up to the last quarter of the third century CE, the capital city of the Roman empire had, of course, been Rome. As the pressure on the frontiers had increased, however, Rome proved to be an inconvenient base. The later Roman emperors had therefore tended to reside in cities that were closer to the threatened frontiers: Milan, Ravenna or Trier in the west, Nikomedeia and Antioch in the east. Constantine had chosen the city of Byzantion as just such a forward base and he probably had no intention of setting Constantinople up as a new capital city instead of Rome but that was how later generations of Byzantines chose to interpret his action. At the time of the crusades, Anna Komnene was convinced that 'power was transferred from Rome to our country and the Queen of Cities'.[32]

As a result of Constantine's decision, therefore, Constantinople was seen to have become the most important city in the Christian world, both a new Rome and a second Jerusalem.[33] The emperors who reigned there were by right the emperors whom Christ and St Peter had commanded that all Christians should obey. The exalted nature of the emperor's position was reflected in his official title of 'Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans'. The word used by the Byzantines to describe themselves was *Romaioi* or Romans: the terms 'Byzantine' and 'Byzantines' were applied to them only relatively recently. In the same way, the empire was the Roman empire, the state to which all Christians ought to owe allegiance. It was, however, often referred to by a word which suggested that it was much more than a mere earthly princedom: *Oikoumene*, a virtually untranslatable term but one meaning broadly 'the civilized world'. It made no difference that the empire had contracted drastically since Constantine's day, with the western half of the empire from Italy to Britain lost during the fifth century, and the eastern provinces of Egypt, Syria and Palestine in the seventh. One only has to examine how the Byzantines behaved in the last years of their empire to realize that the ideology was completely unrelated to the physical size of the empire. During the 1390s, when the empire had contracted to little more than Constantinople itself, the patriarch of the city wrote to the grand prince of Moscow to assure him that the emperor was still 'autocrat of the Romans, indeed of all Christians'. Such insistence on the ideal of the universal emperor in a desperate situation has been dismissed as clinging to an outdated ideal in the face of hard reality. The point for the Byzantines, however, was that the ideal was the reality. Just as the loss of territory changed nothing, neither would its acquisition. As a Byzantine monk defiantly declared: 'Our empire is that of Christ'.[34]

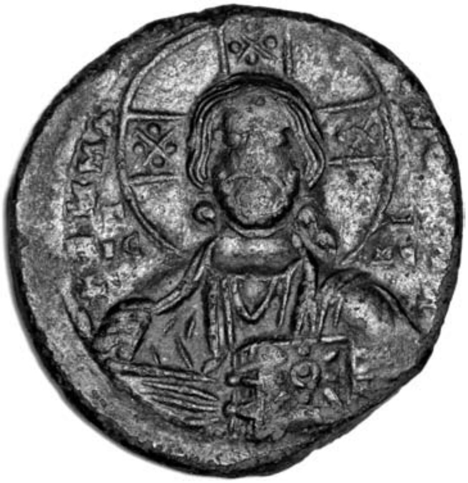


**FIGURE 3** *Tenth-century Byzantine copper coin with portrait of Christ. The reverse bears the inscription: 'Jesus Christ, King of Kings', a public affirmation that God was the ultimate ruler of the empire and the emperor merely his representative.* (I. Pilon/ Shutterstock.com)

# 2

# The power behind the throne

Eleventh-century Byzantium then was a wealthy, powerful state with wide borders but one which did not define itself in terms of those things but rather through a carefully worked out political and spiritual ideology. As in most human societies, however, theory and practice were often at variance in Byzantium and there were plenty of occasions when the ideological stance masked a much more down-to-earth reality. That certainly seems to have been the case as regards the absolute nature of the emperor's power. He was, in theory, nothing less than the vicegerent of God on earth. Such a position, of course, involved awesome responsibility. The emperor was expected to imitate God, displaying appropriate piety and *philanthropia* (love of mankind) in order to fulfil his allotted task of ensuring the temporal welfare of God's people. The emperor was answerable to no one and received his power directly from God, an idea made visual in Byzantine art through portrayals of Christ or the Virgin Mary crowning a haloed emperor. He alone, as an earlier theorist had put it, 'pilots affairs below'. There was no room for majority decision making since 'anarchy and civil war result from . . . polyarchy based on equality'.[1]

Given the theory, it would be reasonable to conclude that the empire was ruled by the emperor and him alone but it is quite clear that in fact this was not the case. An imperial portrait in an eleventh-century manuscript now in Paris, gives an insight into the real state of affairs. The emperor sits on his throne, attended by allegorical figures representing truth and justice but he is not left alone with these manifestations of divine favour. Behind him are four smaller, standing figures, dressed in long robes and with turbans on their heads. To his right stands the Protovestiarios, who played an important role in government and administration. Next to the Protovestiarios stands an imperial secretary, charged with drawing up letters and documents. To the emperor's left stand two more individuals with the title of Proedros. These are the emperor's advisers, the members of the imperial civil service.[2]

The existence of a secular bureaucracy was one of many aspects of Byzantine life that marked it out from western Europe in the same period. In the early medieval West, kings relied on priests to fulfil what administrative tasks there were, few laymen at all having the necessary level of literacy. The more complex and developed nature of Byzantine society required rather more than that: a secular, educated elite, trained to the task of administration. Few emperors ruled without their help; Basil II is said to have done so in the later years of his reign, but his attitude was unusual enough to have invited surprised comment as an exception to normal circumstances.[3] This state of affairs had profound repercussions for the way that political decisions were made in Byzantium. It meant policy was not formulated on the spur of the moment by one individual to meet immediate needs. Rather, it was something that had developed over centuries and was often even committed to writing by a cohesive, administrative group, who preserved, studied and elaborated the fruits of past experience. While emperors came and went, both political aims and methods could be passed from generation to generation, preserving a remarkable continuity.

In discussing the interaction between Byzantium and the crusades, therefore, it is the education and ideology of the imperial civil service, rather than just the characters of individual emperors, that lies at the heart of the question. It is necessary to understand who the members of this political elite were, the ways in which they defined themselves and distinguished themselves from outsiders, the principles they adopted in advising the emperors on foreign policy and the methods they employed to achieve their goals. Only then can any assessment be made as to whether the policies they adopted were sensible and successful or whether they were inherently flawed and ultimately bound to lead to disaster.

A number of factors gave a man entry to the Byzantine political elite and civil service. Strange though it may seem, being castrated as a child was one. Since eunuchs were specifically prohibited from occupying the imperial throne, they were regarded as being more trustworthy. Ten posts at court that involved close contact with the emperor were specifically reserved for them.[4] By no means all Byzantine bureaucrats were eunuchs, however, so in effect entry to the charmed circle came down to two indispensable factors: education and patronage. Both had profound implications for who made up the elite and how they regarded themselves and their office.

Education at a high level had been the key to entry into the higher positions in the imperial civil service throughout the empire's history. Back in the year 360, the emperor had specifically commanded that 'by no means shall any person obtain a post of the first order unless it is established that he excels in the practice and training of the liberal studies, and that he is so polished in the use of letters that words proceed from him without the offence of imperfections . . .' That meant following a traditional course of higher education, based, at least in theory, on the Trivium of poetry, rhetoric and philosophy, and the Quadrivium of sciences, geometry, arithmetic, astronomy and music. In practice, it consisted of the study of the literature of ancient Greece and especially that of Classical Athens, which the Byzantines regarded as embodying the most perfect examples of Greek poetry and prose. Authors studied included the poets Homer and Hesiod, the philosophers Plato and Aristotle, and the orators Demosthenes and Lysias. It was not merely a question of reading these works but of internalizing their language and imitating it. The most common exercise for students, therefore, was to write dialogues in the style of Plato or Lucian, couched in the archaic phraseology of the ancients. This was what the emperor had in mind when he spoke of the 'polished use of letters'.[5]

Many Byzantine bureaucrats during the period of the Crusades were therefore men of high culture. This was certainly true of Michael Psellos, who came to dominate the Byzantine court in the mid-eleventh century. As a young man he was reputed to have learned the whole of the *Iliad* by heart and had studied under the learned John Mauropous in Constantinople. The emperor Constantine IX (1042–55) had been so impressed with his eloquence and fluency that he made him his secretary and one of his closest advisers, thus launching a career that was to last over 30 years. Similarly, Niketas Choniates, who held high office under the emperors of the Angelos family in the period 1185–1204, had been sent as a young man from his home town of Chonai in Asia Minor to Constantinople in order to pursue higher studies and was later to become the author of voluminous theological and historical works. George Akropolites, an adviser to the emperors of the thirteenth century, was a product of the same system, an author and scholar in addition to his role as political adviser.[6]

The higher education in which these men had all been schooled was, before 1204, only available in Constantinople and was enjoyed by a tiny minority of the inhabitants of the empire. It has been calculated that no more than two or three hundred individuals were being educated in this way at any one time in the middle Byzantine period (843–1204).[7] As a result, this group formed something of a closed caste, differentiated from the rest of the population by their superior knowledge. That divide is nowhere better illustrated than in a story told by Michael Psellos himself. One day Constantine IX was walking through the palace accompanied by his mistress and a crowd of courtiers. One of the courtiers, wishing to gain favour with the emperor, murmured softly, but audibly, the words 'It were no shame . . .' That was enough to send a ripple of admiration through his fellow courtiers. They had all been educated and recognized the allusion at once, as coming from the *Iliad*: 'It were no shame that Trojans and well-greaved Achaeans should suffer pain long time for woman such as she', a reference to the fabled beauty Helen of Troy. Unfortunately, the act of gallantry fell flat because its object, the emperor's mistress, could not understand what it meant and had to call for a translation, such was the divide between those who were educated and those who were not.[8]

Erudite as these men were, their careers were, in the last analysis, dependent upon patronage. This might come from some relative already ensconced in an influential position. Psellos was able to purchase the title of Protospatharios for his future son-in-law, Elpidios, for 20 pounds of gold. The uncle of a young man called Symeon no doubt used the same methods to have his nephew appointed as Spatharokoubikoularios, although Symeon later gave it all up to become a monk.[9] The most effective patronage, however, was that of the emperor himself. It allowed the eunuch and chief imperial adviser, Basil Lekapenos, to obtain his position not by virtue of education but because he was the illegitimate son of a previous emperor.[10] By the same token, a change of ruler could mean a dramatic reversal of fortune. Psellos embarked on his successful career because he impressed Constantine IX, but the accession of Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–71) saw him sidelined. One of the first actions of Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118) as emperor was to purge Psellos's pupil, John Italos, on a charge of heresy. The coup which brought Alexios V Mourtzouphlos to power in 1204 was immediately followed by Choniates' dismissal from his post of Logothete of the Sekreta.[11]

As a result of the vagaries of imperial patronage, titles were regarded as extremely important by the Byzantine elite, because they marked very clearly the exact point in the hierarchy that an individual had reached and the level of imperial favour that he enjoyed. During the ninth and tenth centuries, numerous *taktika*, official lists of titles, offices and the duties that went with them, were lovingly drawn up, such as that compiled by the Protospatharios Philotheos in 899. Possibly these *taktika* represented an attempt to codify the whole system. If so, it was labour lost as titles changed their meaning and importance as often as emperors came and went. The function of a Protospatharios had once been military, but by the eleventh century it was a post at court. The Protovestiarios, whose office was of the highest importance by the time of the First Crusade, had originated simply as keeper of the wardrobe. The office of Logothete conferred control of one of the departments of the administration, but the departments, like the titles, waxed and waned in importance. Alexios I introduced a whole new set of titles with which to honour his supporters, and probably to demote those who held existing ones.[12]

With the titles went an annual pension in gold and some kind of silk garment, both proportionate to the importance of the office. Particular robes were attached to specific court offices. The Magistros was entitled to wear a gold embroidered white tunic, the Kouropalates a red tunic and belt. As for the money, a special ceremony was held over seven days during the week before Palm Sunday, when each official appeared before the emperor to receive his due. So lavish were the stipends of some of the higher officials that they brought with them helpers to drag away their heavy sacks of gold.[13]

The importance of education and imperial patronage, expressed through titles and pensions, in bolstering the identity and ethos of the elite is nowhere more apparent than in the outraged scorn which they heaped on rivals whom they believed to lack the essential prerequisites. Psellos, temporarily thrust aside from his position as imperial adviser by Leo Paraspondylas, questioned his rival's fitness for office on the grounds that he did not have 'long-standing qualifications in the realm of literature or oratory'. Choniates fulminated against the judges appointed by Manuel I because they 'spoke broken Greek and drivelled in their speech'. Akropolites was mortified when an emperor bestowed impressive titles on 'pitiful men, worth no more than three obols'. The thing that annoyed them more than anything else was the tendency of their imperial masters to try and cut through the system, by inventing new offices and titles to bestow on their own creatures, while downgrading traditional ones by granting them to all and sundry. It was tantamount to conferring honours 'indiscriminately on a multitude of persons' or selling offices 'as vendors peddle their fruit'.[14]

From this distaste for unqualified outsiders, it followed that the educated elite considered themselves as the people best placed to fulfil the functions of their office. Among the lower ranks these functions included service as tax collectors, governors of provincial cities and judges. Even military leaders were drawn from their ranks: the eunuch Eustathios, who held the office of Kanikleiou, later became admiral of the fleet.[15] They were often entrusted with embassies to foreign courts because education and rhetorical powers were considered to be the quintessential qualifications for the task. John the Grammarian was chosen for a mission to Baghdad in the ninth century because he was 'formidable in debating skills', while, hundreds of years later, Niketas Choniates wrote enthusiastically of how his fellow intellectual Michael Italikos charmed the king of Germany with his eloquence. No doubt the same reasoning was behind the choice in 946 of John Anthypatos as ambassador to Damascus, where he impressed his hosts with his knowledge of history and philosophy.[16]

The most highly placed at court were generally not sent off to lead armies or charm foreign potentates, however. Their main task was to advise the emperor, and to formulate domestic and foreign policy. Of course, some office holders were more influential than others and they were always at pains to trumpet the fact. Psellos claimed that some emperors followed his opinion without hesitation and implied that one even abdicated on his advice. Michael Attaleiates carefully recorded how Emperor Romanos IV had specifically asked him for his views. In reality, of course, various factions at court competed for the imperial ear. Niketas Choniates was part of a group which succeeded in persuading Isaac II Angelos (1185–95) to reverse his policy towards the Third Crusade, presumably overturning the advice he had received earlier. Being in the wrong group could be dangerous: George Akropolites was beaten up on the orders of the emperor over a disagreement about a treaty with the Bulgarians. Nevertheless, whatever the standing of individual officials or factions with particular emperors, as a group the courtiers were seen as the people best placed to advise on policy.[17]

To the modern mind, there is something faintly absurd about the conviction of the Byzantine elite that their classical education gave them all the skills they needed to fulfil this weighty responsibility. Psellos went so far as to claim that the experienced general, Romanos IV, had lost the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 because he neglected Psellos's advice. Psellos had probably never been on a battlefield in his life but he had read up on the subject in the ancient authorities. The same point emerges from a letter sent to the government of Genoa in 1199. Whoever wrote it could not resist throwing in an allusion to Hesiod, no doubt because such a display of erudition would have been thought likely to impress the recipients.[18]

Literary skills nevertheless played a very important role in the participation of the civil elite in government and foreign policy, since it was they who produced the documents which articulated, defended and sometimes even criticized the policy aims of their imperial masters. For example, they drafted letters and treaties with foreign powers. Psellos, as usual, claimed to excel in this task and was entrusted with drawing up letters to be sent to the Fatimid caliph and probably also with that of drafting the treaty concluded between Michael VII Doukas (1071–8) and the Norman duke of Apulia and Calabria, Robert Guiscard, in 1074.[19]

The numerous manuals of military tactics and foreign policy which survive under the names of particular emperors, such as the *De Administrando Imperio* and other treatises associated with Constantine VII (945–59), were probably also ghost-written by members of the elite. These preserved the accumulated wisdom of the centuries, on such matters as the reception of foreign envoys or how to bring about the swift surrender of an invested town, and so helped to bring about a certain continuity in imperial policy.[20] Byzantine courtiers also presented and explained that policy in public, by means of panegyrics, delivered on feast days in formal and archaic Greek, praising the reigning emperor and his achievements. These speeches always heaped hyperbolic praise on their subject, one orator assuring the emperor that there was no one on earth more like God. Behind the sycophancy and stilted phrasing, however, the panegyrics could be used to communicate veiled criticism and to advocate a change of policy.[21]

Perhaps most important of all, there was the writing of history. Michael Psellos, Niketas Choniates and George Akropolites all wrote major histories of their own times, in the archaic, classical Greek in which they had been trained. So did Michael Attaleiates, who served the emperors Romanos IV and Nikephoros III Botaneiates (1078–81), and John Kinnamos, the secretary of Manuel I. There is an almost unbroken succession of historian bureaucrats right down to Nikephoros Gregoras in the fourteenth century. To this list one might add Anna Komnene, who wrote the life of her father, Alexios I. Even though as a princess of the blood she was not part of the elite corps of bureaucrats, she shared their educational background, having first taken lessons secretly with the palace eunuchs, before moving on to the traditional Trivium and Quadrivium. She was well placed to present the aims behind Byzantine policy during the reign of Alexios.[22]

From the point of view of those looking back at Byzantium over the centuries, these histories are particularly important because, unlike panegyrics, they could be openly critical. As Anna Komnene dryly observed, 'all men flatter the current ruler but no one makes the slightest attempt to overpraise the departed'. Most of the histories were written at some remove from the events they describe, giving the authors the freedom and security to say what they wished. This placed Michael Psellos in an embarrassing position when he came to write his history by requiring him to unsay much of the flattery he had once heaped in a panegyric on a now-deceased emperor.[23] It is these literary productions of the Byzantine elite, whether treaties, letters, manuals, panegyrics or histories, which provide us with the evidence for the principles on which the rulers of Byzantium based their dealings with foreign powers and ultimately with the crusades and the crusader states.

In framing foreign policy and advising emperors, the Byzantine political elite were working within the context of a strongly defined political ideology to which all subscribed, whatever their differences in terms of faction or party.[24] The theory, as has already been seen, was that of *Translatio Imperii*. The capital of the Roman empire had been moved by Constantine to Constantinople and as a result, the Byzantine emperor was the Roman emperor, the supreme autocrat of the Christian world by divine permission, and it was the duty of all Christians to recognize that. One can judge how seriously the Byzantine political elite took this ideology by their violent reaction whenever it was challenged by outsiders. In 968, some hapless papal envoys arrived in Constantinople with a letter addressed to the emperor as 'emperor of the Greeks' rather than 'of the Romans'. The Byzantine courtiers present were outraged and threatened that, had they been of higher rank and worthy of notice, the messengers would have been thrown into the sea. As one of them later explained:

> Holy Constantine translated the imperial symbols here, and brought the entire senate and the whole Roman knighthood, and left at Rome nothing, only lowly dependents, that is fishers, food-peddlers, bird hunters, bastards, plebeians, and slaves.[25]

John Kinnamos professed himself to be close to tears when he considered those who 'rashly declare that the empire in Byzantium is different from that in Rome' and a patriarch of Constantinople railed against 'the short-sightedness and folly' of anyone who refused to accept that the empire ruled from Constantinople was the Roman empire and all the claims to divine favour that entailed.[26] When, after 800, various western European monarchs claimed the title of 'emperor of the Romans' for themselves, the Byzantines did their best to avoid having to recognize it. A letter sent from Constantinople to the Frankish emperor Louis the Pious (814–40) cuttingly addressed him as 'the glorious king of the Franks and Lombards' and then tacked on as an afterthought 'who is called their emperor'. The envoy of the German emperor Otto I (936–73) reported angrily to his master that the Byzantine chancellor had 'called you not "emperor", which is *Basileus* in his tongue, but "king", which is *Rex* in ours'.[27]

The unique status of the Byzantine emperor was written into diplomatic correspondence and treaties. Psellos boasted that in his correspondence with the Fatimid caliph, he exalted the office of his master the emperor and subtly denigrated that of the caliph. The treaty he drew up with the Norman duke Robert Guiscard in 1074 is much more than a mere dry enumeration of obligations. It is also a carefully thought-out defence of the office and claims of the Byzantine emperor, assuring the duke that 'the word of a pious emperor is truly a seal of gold, for the purity and integrity of his soul is worth more than material gold'.[28] The emperor's status was even enshrined in Byzantine law, which laid down not only that the emperor should ensure the temporal welfare of his people, but also that he had a bounden duty to 'guard and secure by his ability the powers which he already possesses [and] to recover by sleepless care those that are lost'.

This was no mere empty rhetoric. The ideological stance expressed by Psellos and other courtiers was the key factor in dictating Byzantine foreign policy goals. In practice, these goals were reduced to two overriding concerns. The first was the security of the Roman empire, the *Oikoumene*, which in practice meant that of the all-important city of Constantinople. The second was to secure recognition in the wider world of the claim of the emperor to be the supreme overlord of the Christian world and of the empire to be that unique state endorsed by God.[29]

At first sight the idea that foreign policy could be motivated by a metaphysical ideal appears unlikely: it is sometimes tempting to see Byzantine imperial claims as simply a cloak for 'real concerns' such as the annexation of territory or economic advantage. The very words 'empire' and 'imperial', which are used to describe Byzantium, imply that the larger such a state is, the better it is, and that its sole aim must be physical aggrandisement. Byzantine dealings with the Slav peoples whose lands lay to the north of the empire demonstrate how their foreign policy aims were essentially defensive and ideological rather than acquisitive. While the famous 'Bulgar-Slayer', Basil II, did finally conquer Bulgaria and incorporate it into the empire in 1018, such drastic action was very unusual. The Byzantines were generally content to accept an acknowledgement of the emperor's suzerainty and this they received during the ninth and tenth centuries from the rulers of the small Balkan princedoms to the north. In 874, for example, a Serbian embassy arrived in Constantinople, probably with a view to making an alliance. A court official who recorded the event interpreted it in through the prism of Byzantine ideology. The envoys, he claimed, asked to 'be placed under the humane yoke of Roman authority'. The request was graciously granted and 'the emperor's authority was fully restored over their country'. But that did not mean that Serbia was incorporated into the empire. Instead, the envoys returned with Byzantine priests who set about converting and baptizing the population. The Serbs continued to 'be governed by princes, chosen by them'.[30] The incident and the way it was portrayed by the chronicler are revealing. To the Byzantines, acceptance of Christianity from Constantinople also meant an acceptance of the authority of the emperor. This was entirely logical: if the emperor was God's appointed ruler of the Christian world, all Christians owed him allegiance. The fiction was maintained by the emperor 'allowing' the Serbs to be ruled by their own princes. Such rulers were often designated as the 'sons' of the emperor, an unmistakeable indication of the nature of the relationship, which at the same time fitted them into the hierarchical world order, headed by the emperor in Constantinople. It was set down in the records that henceforth imperial correspondence sent to rulers of the Serbs was to carry a gold seal to reflect their status as obedient sons.[31] The arrangement was also a practical one as it relieved the emperor of the necessity of holding down the Serbs by force of arms.

The Byzantines had similar concerns in their dealings with their eastern, Muslim neighbours, who had long ruled over the lost Byzantine provinces of Syria, Palestine and Egypt. There are plenty of instances of the Byzantines fighting bitter wars against the Muslim powers of the region, whether the Hamdanid emirate of Aleppo or the Fatimid caliphate of Egypt since it was, after all, part of the perceived role of the Roman emperor to protect Christians by fighting against the infidel. In 975 the emperor John I Tzimiskes had led a campaign into Syria and Palestine which had reached as far south as Caesarea. This was, however, no war of conquest: the emperor's main concern was to extort large sums of money from the undefended cities of Syria before withdrawing back across the frontier. John was also interested in acquiring relics to add to the collection in the Great Palace and on this occasion returned with the sandals of Christ and part of the beard of St John the Baptist. Nor was the expedition, by any stretch of the imagination, a crusade. Although the Byzantine army came within striking distance of Jerusalem and the emperor boasted in a letter to the king of Armenia that he hoped to liberate the Holy Sepulchre, no attempt was made to seize the city.[32]

While annexation of Arab territory was not the aim of Byzantine emperors, recognition of his position as the head of the Christian world was and they were as concerned to obtain it from 'infidel' Arabs as they were from Christian Serbs. In 1027 a treaty was made between the emperor and the Fatimid caliph of Egypt, who then ruled southern Syria and Palestine. It permitted the emperor to rebuild the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and to designate the patriarch of Jerusalem. In return the Byzantines promised to repair the mosque in Constantinople, which existed for the use of Arab merchants visiting the city. The mosque would have its own muezzin, and Friday prayers there would be said in the name of the Shi'ite Fatimid caliph, rather than his Abbasid rival in Baghdad.[33] The treaty was renewed in 1035, in 1047 and again in 1063 when the emperor negotiated special juridical status for the patriarch's quarter in Jerusalem and paid for a wall to be built around it.[34] These treaties secured for the Byzantine emperor the role of Protector of the Holy Places and of the interests of Christians under Muslim rule.

The vindication of an ideology therefore lay at the very heart of Byzantine foreign policy. While that may sound like an illogical basis for foreign policy, it was no more so than the aim of the crusades, which was to seize and hold the strategically useless, but spiritually significant, city of Jerusalem.

While Byzantine aims and ideology were fixed, the means used to achieve them were often infinitely flexible. Military force, or at least the threat of it, was certainly an option. In 864, the Byzantines moved an army north through the Balkans and a sent fleet along the western coast of the Black Sea. The purpose was not to annex the neighbouring khanate of Bulgaria but to force Khan Boris to accept Christianity from Byzantine clergy and to acknowledge the authority of the emperor. When he did this, the troops were withdrawn.[35] Nevertheless, the Byzantines had a pronounced reluctance to go to war. Unlike western Europe where prowess in battle was a mark of status and distinction, the Byzantines seem to have regarded war as, at best, a distasteful necessity. Emperor Leo VI (886–912) had insisted that war should only be undertaken as a last resort when forced upon the empire by others. Constantine IX allegedly made peace with the Pechenegs in 1053 because he would not allow Byzantium 'to be cut to pieces from its youth up'.[36] These attitudes should not be confused with pacifism. The main objection to war was the danger of losing. 'You should never be enticed into a pitched battle', warned Leo VI, '. . . success is a matter of luck rather than proven courage'. If there were any other way of achieving your aim, it was to be taken and Leo was in no doubt as to what that way was:

> You will achieve frequent victories against your enemies without actual war by making use of money. When they have other enemies lying in wait for them somewhere, an offer of money should be persuasive in getting this people to wage war on your adversaries.[37]

It was an option that the Byzantine emperors were extremely well placed to take advantage of for they commanded an enviable supply of ready money. Unlike the rulers of western Europe, who drew services in kind from their vassals, the Byzantine emperors presided over a society where coinage circulated widely. They could therefore levy a range of taxes both on their own people and on those passing through to fill their treasury. There was the Kommerkion, already mentioned, which they imposed on trade passing through the port of Constantinople. One twelfth-century visitor to Constantinople reckoned that the imperial fisc profited to the tune of some 20,000 gold pieces a day from these customs dues, as well as from rents from markets and shops. In the provinces, households without land paid a hearth tax, while those with land paid a combined hearth and land tax, all rendered in gold. These sources yielded an estimated annual revenue of some 7 million gold pieces and by 1025 the treasury had a huge surplus, the result of prudent management by Basil II. No wonder that Michael Psellos considered wealth, along with the system of ranks and honours, to be one of the twin pillars of the 'hegemony of the Romans'.[38]

There was no end to the uses to which this seemingly inexhaustible supply of wealth could be put when it came to dealing with the peoples beyond the empire's borders. In emergencies, it could be used simply to pay them not to attack. Alexios I specifically advised his son John to store up valuable goods for the very purpose of 'stopping the greed' of surrounding nations. This practice was not entirely approved of in all quarters, however, and tended to bring criticism for weakness.[39] Gold could also be used to employ mercenaries from outside the empire to complement the Byzantine armies, often Turkic peoples from central Asia such the Khazars or Hungarians, who are attested in the tenth century, and the 'Turcopoles', probably Pechenegs or Cumans, reported in the Byzantine armies in the eleventh.[40] It could also be used to pay one powerful foreign nation to attack another. In 967, rather than bother to do the job themselves, the Byzantines paid the Russian prince Svjatoslav to attack their troublesome northern neighbour Bulgaria. Or, more economically, the Byzantines could merely threaten to do so. In 968 Byzantine officials harangued the envoy of Otto I and warned him that 'With our money, which gives us power, we shall induce all the nations to attack [Otto] and we shall shatter him like some ceramic'.[41]

There were, however, more subtle uses of wealth, aimed not so much to purchase the immediate security of Constantinople but to impress 'barbarian' outsiders with the special nature of the emperor, his city and his empire. One tactic was to overwhelm with sheer magnificence. In the mid-tenth century, Olga, the widow of a Russian prince of Kiev, visited Constantinople and was baptized as a Christian. Eager to encourage her to lead her people in the same direction, the Byzantines treated her and her entourage to a series of lavish banquets in the Great Palace. The visitors were received first by the empress to the sound of organ music before being conducted through a series of magnificent halls into the presence of Emperor Constantine VII. After polite conversation, everyone sat down to dinner during which they were regaled by singers from Hagia Sophia and the Church of the Holy Apostles. Bags of silver coins were distributed to all the guests, although Olga received her 500 on a gold plate, encrusted with precious stones. An Italian bishop, Liudprand of Cremona, experienced much the same treatment on his visit in 949 as the envoy of a Byzantine ally in Italy. He was received in the Magnavra hall of the Great Palace by the emperor and at the end of his stay, he was presented with a pound of gold.[42]

Another use for surplus gold was the diplomatic gift, often with heavy ideological significance attached to it. A gold crown apparently presented by Michael VII to King Géza I of Hungary (1074–7) carried portraits of Michael

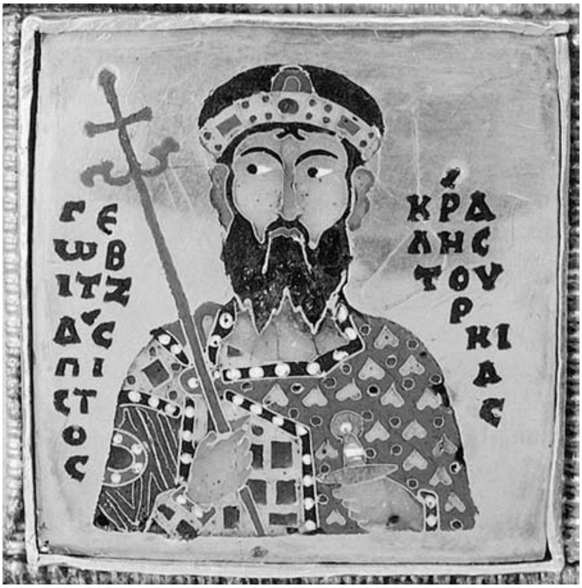


**FIGURE 4** *Byzantine enamel plaque of King Géza I of Hungary (1074–7) from the Crown of St Stephen, now in the Magyar Nemzeti Museum in Budapest.*

and his son Constantine, both bearing the usual nimbus and identified in the inscription as 'emperor of the Romans'. Géza is also depicted, but without a nimbus, his gaze fixed deferentially on the emperor, and identified simply as 'ruler' (*krales*) of Hungary. Thus his place in the order of things was thus made unambiguously clear. Silks were another common gift and Constantine VII recommended that emperors should also take a good supply of them on campaign for this specific purpose. The rarity of such objects in the lands inhabited by their unsophisticated recipients helped to bolster the empire's reputation as a centre of wealth and power. Sometimes the gift took the form of a golden reliquary, housing portions of relics of the saints. These were, for example, sent to the English king Edward the Confessor (1042–66) and the western emperor Henry IV (1056–1106) during the second half of the eleventh century. Again, there was an ideological significance here: the relics connected their donor, the emperor, with the heavenly kingdom, the source of his power and dignity, and thus were a vital element in achieving the empire's foreign policy aims.[43]

While the first of Michael Psellos's 'two pillars' referred to above, that of money, is indisputable, the second, honours, might be thought to refer only to internal matters in Constantinople and to reflect the typical Byzantine civil servant's obsession with rank. Yet gradations of titles and honours were as vital a part of the Byzantine approach to foreign relations as they were to the structure of the court hierarchy. Thus, hard-pressed by the Pechenegs in the 1050s and wishing to make peace with them, the Byzantines invited the leaders of this troublesome steppe tribe to Constantinople where they were given not only gifts but also imperial titles and offices. The 1074 treaty with the Norman leader Robert Guiscard conferred the title of Kouropalates on one of his sons.[44] Just as was the case with Byzantine officials, foreign office holders could expect to receive an annual pension in gold and an appropriate silk garment, which no doubt greatly added to the lustre of the title. The rulers of Byzantium were well aware that, for the granting of such titles and garments to have full effect, both must have a certain rarity. Accordingly they were very careful to make sure that certain types of silk garment did not circulate too widely. Merchants who sold prohibited silks to foreigners were liable to be flogged, and when Bishop Liudprand attempted to take some silks home with him in they were confiscated by imperial officials. Cloths of gold and silk, warned a thirteenth-century cleric, were the 'blood of the Romans'.[45]

The involvement of foreigners in imperial ceremonial was also important. Constantine VII claimed that through ceremonies the power of the empire was made manifest and that the sight of it would incline foreigners to better behaviour. Provision was specifically made for foreign allies and title holders to attend feasts and ceremonies in Constantinople, no doubt to observe and report back on the majesty and wealth of the empire. Like the gifts, ceremonies involving foreigners were imbued with a heavy and unmistakable significance. It was standard practice for visiting rulers to be given a seat carefully placed at a lower level than the emperor's throne. Just in case the message was not clear, the Byzantine emperor had a mechanical throne that could raise him up almost to the ceiling from where he could look down on his humble visitor below.[46]

Apart from their twin pillars of money and honours, the Byzantines also excelled at the type of strategies that diplomats over the ages have employed to manipulate their friends and to neutralize their enemies. For example, on occasion they employed the 'carrot and stick' approach to threatening border tribes. Theophylact, bishop of Ochrid, praised Alexios I in a panegyric because he dealt with the Pechenegs in 1087 by first haranguing them 'with words short and shrill, now offering words soft as flakes of winter snow'.[47] There was the 'divide and rule' principle. Constantine VII advised his son to ensure that the Pechenegs were never on friendly terms with the Russians, in case they combined against Constantinople. The Byzantines fished in the complex affairs of the city states of northern Italy to prevent them from ever uniting against the Byzantines.[48] Lastly, they were adept at using foreigners' own customs to manipulate them to the advantage of the *Oikoumene*. One such tool was that of the oath, which seems to have had little place in Byzantine society, but which was commonly used to secure the loyalty of foreign allies and mercenaries. The Byzantines were flexible enough to allow them to make this vow according to their own customs. When a contingent of Turks pledged loyalty to Nikephoros III, for example, they did so by crossing their hands on their chest which was presumably what they were used to doing. When Alexios I required an oath from some Turks who were enrolled in his army, they duly swore 'after their own fashion'.[49] In short, the Byzantine emperors and their advisers knew what they had been urged to know by Constantine VII in the tenth century: the customs and manners of life of their neighbours and how to turn those to the empire's advantage.[50]

These then were some of the methods that the rulers of Byzantium employed with a view to achieving the two all-important aims of their foreign policy. Next it needs to be established how successful they were in the pursuit of those aims. Looking back over the ninth to eleventh centuries, it has to be said that they achieved them to a great extent, both in their relations with the Slavs to the north and with the Muslim Arabs to the east. Indeed the success of their diplomacy far excelled the ephemeral gains brought about by the military victories of Basil II and the other 'soldier-emperors'. As far as the Slavs were concerned, the Byzantines succeeded not only in neutralizing the threat to Constantinople posed by the Bulgars and the Russians but, by converting them to Christianity, created a 'Byzantine Commonwealth' in eastern Europe, whose peoples looked upon the Byzantine emperor as the head of the Orthodox Christian world.[51] In the case of the Arabs, the Byzantines were dealing with a power that was stronger than their own empire and which had a religion and ideology every bit as compelling as their own. Nevertheless, they succeeded in reversing a situation where the empire was in imminent danger of being overrun in the late seventh century and in establishing a modus vivendi with their powerful neighbours. Moreover, while there was not the remotest possibility of the Muslims recognizing any authority of the emperor over themselves, they were prepared to accept that his empire had a place in the divine scheme of things and that he had some rights as protector of Christians under their rule.[52]

In spite of these successes in the past, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries the Byzantine elite presided over a situation which ultimately led to disaster for their city and empire in 1204. To account for the difference, some modern commentators have suggested that the very nature of the Byzantine ruling class was in some way responsible for the disaster, because they were uniquely unqualified for dealing with foreign relations. Their exclusive educational background has led to their being labelled as possessed of 'a pride bordering on conceit'. As regards foreign policy their 'superiority complex' and their tendency to remain in 'the protective shell of their own traditions', made them despise 'all foreigners as brutal and barbarous'. [53] It is certainly true that in their writings they often referred to foreigners as 'barbarians', and often described them in terms that appear derogatory or contemptuous. Anna Komnene was moved to laughter by the posturing of the Norman Robert Guiscard, and complained that the unpronounceable names of the leaders of the Pechenegs spoiled the tone of her prose. John Kinnamos patronizingly noted that 'in prosperity the barbarian is likely to be exalted and boast beyond measure, but in disaster he is downcast more than is suitable and is immoderately humbled'. They appear not even to have known the names of foreign peoples, referring to them by hopelessly outdated terms: the Turks were called 'Persians', the Normans 'Kelts'.[54] If the rulers of the empire really took this line in their everyday dealings with foreign peoples, it may well have been their exclusiveness and narrow-mindedness that caused the breakdown of relations with the West and led to the disaster of 1204.

But if this really was the case, the long survival of the empire and its successes in earlier centuries is very difficult to account for. In fact, the apparent attitude to foreigners in the literary histories of Anna Komnene and John Kinnamos is misleading. It was not the result of contempt or ignorance. The classicizing literary genre in which these authors wrote demanded that the present be spoken of in the language of the past and that a strict line be drawn between 'them' and 'us', following the ancient Greek division between Greeks and barbarians.[55] There is abundant evidence that in practice members of the elite showed knowledge and understanding of foreign cultures. Manuals like the *De Administrando Imperio* of Constantine VII are full of carefully compiled information about the lifestyles of peoples that dwelt beyond the empire's borders. Even in literary histories, the classicizing masks slips often enough to show that their authors were well informed about particular foreign peoples and sometimes considered them to possess skills superior to those of the Byzantines. Anna Komnene could think of no better way of praising the horsemanship of a Byzantine soldier than by saying that one might almost think he was a Norman.[56]

Even in the case of the Muslim Arabs, with whom the empire had been at almost constant war for centuries, educated Byzantines saw the importance of understanding the language and culture of the enemy. Photios, patriarch of Constantinople (858–67 and 878–86), a typical Byzantine scholar and bureaucrat, exchanged friendly letters with Arab rulers, and John Anthypatos, despatched to Damascus as ambassador in 946, entered into academic discussions with the intellectuals there. As a result the Byzantines were well informed about the Islamic world and, while they were given to penning fierce polemics against Islam, they seldom made the Latin mistake of describing it as polytheism or idolatry.[57]

This knowledge and understanding of foreign peoples can be seen at work in Byzantine diplomatic practice. The creation of the Byzantine commonwealth was to a large extent the result of putting that information to good use, allowing the recently Christianized Slavs to have the liturgy and scriptures in their own language, rather than attempting to impose a foreign tongue as Western missionaries had done. In the same way, when an embassy was sent from Constantinople to the court of Saladin in 1189, the Byzantines were able to provide a fluent Arabic speaker to lead it. In selecting a gift to send to the caliph of Cordoba, Constantine VII chose not the gold trinkets which would have sufficed for unsophisticated northern tribes but a manuscript of the *Materia Medica* of the ancient Greek writer Dioscorides:

he was clearly well aware of the esteem in which Greek medicine was held in the Islamic world and the value that would consequently be attached to the gift.[58]

The idea that conflict between the Byzantines and the crusaders arose because of the narrow-mindedness of the Byzantine ruling class therefore has very little to recommend it. Nevertheless, there are grounds for seeking the causes of the conflict in the nature and ideology of this group, particularly their priorities in making policy, which, as we have seen, were first the security of Constantinople and the *Oikoumene*, and secondly to secure recognition of the claim of their ruler to be the supreme Christian emperor. These aims were considered to be so high and so pure, that almost any action which advanced them was not only legitimate but positively praiseworthy. Back in the tenth century, Leo VI had remarked that it was safer to avoid pitched battles and more profitable to use other methods, harming the enemy 'by deceit, by raids, by hunger'. This principle was still in place by the time of the crusades, when Anna Komnene remarked that 'sometimes when the chance offers itself, an enemy can be beaten by fraud'. Their words have a faintly modern ring, recalling Machiavelli's precept that the ruler 'must not flinch from being blamed for vices which are necessary for safeguarding the state'.[59] The attitude was a typically Byzantine one, instilled into the ruling classes with their classical education, holding that duplicity was a measure of sophistication, a mark of superiority over the uneducated and uncultured. One insider described how students in higher education were taught 'to weave webs of phrases, and transform the written sense into riddles, saying one thing with their tongues, but hiding something in their minds'.[60]

The practical application of these views can be seen in Byzantine foreign policy. Psellos boasted that he was able to phrase letters to the Fatimid caliph so as to appear to mean one thing, while in fact saying quite another. Another courtier deliberately confused the ruler of the Bulgarians by leaving out punctuation and inserting double negatives.[61] Byzantine dealings with the Paulician heretics in 1083 are a prime example of this permissible duplicity in action. The Paulicians were settled on part of imperial territory in Thrace, and, although theoretically subjects of the emperor, were considered to pose a threat to the surrounding area. Unwilling to risk open warfare with them, the emperor summoned them to gather at an appointed spot, where he met them personally with a flattering display of friendship, claiming that he wished to register them for military service in his army. Once their suspicions were lulled, the leaders were arrested and the rank and file disarmed. Their property was redistributed among the emperor's own loyal officers and their families driven from their homes. The detail with which Anna Komnene tells the story makes it clear that she considered the ruse in no way dishonourable and simply another valiant deed in defence of the *Oikoumene*.[62]

To those outside the charmed circle, such placing of the interests of the empire before all else could be interpreted in quite a different light. As the French cleric Odo of Deuil remarked bitterly, the Byzantines believed that 'anything which is done for the holy empire cannot be considered perjury'. What was presented by Anna Komnene as smooth resourcefulness looked to outsiders like trickery and duplicity. A disgruntled Russian grumbled that 'the Greeks are crafty even to the present day' and Western chronicles from the centuries before the crusades are replete with disparaging remarks about the tendency of the Byzantines to defeat by trickery those whom they could not overcome by force.[63]

There lay the seeds of conflict between the foreign policy of the Byzantine empire and the ideals of the crusades. One ideology saw the highest earthly goal of the pious Christian as the preservation of the *Oikoumene* under the leadership of the emperor and would adopt any means to achieve that aim. The other saw that goal as making war on the infidel to capture and defend the holy city of Jerusalem. As time would show, the application of traditional Byzantine diplomatic methods to the papacy, the crusaders and the crusader states was to bring about unforeseen and disastrous consequences.

# 3

# Response to crisis

The encounter between the Byzantine empire and the crusades had its origins in the middle of the eleventh century when, after a period of 150 years during which they had been on the offensive against their external enemies, the Byzantines suddenly found their borders once more under attack. On the Danube, the steppe tribe known as the Pechenegs began making incursions into the Balkans. In Armenia, the Seljuk Turks were raiding across the border while in southern Italy the Normans were slowly conquering the Byzantine provinces of Apulia and Calabria. The situation worsened as the century went on, especially in Asia Minor. A treaty made with the Seljuk Turks in 1055 failed to stem the raids which struck ever deeper into the Byzantine eastern provinces. In 1058 the city of Melitene was sacked, and Sebasteia suffered the same fate shortly afterwards. Six years later, the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan (1063–72) captured Ani, the old capital of the Armenian kingdom before its annexation by the Byzantines some 20 years before. In 1067 Caesarea, a city far from the frontier that might have considered itself safe, was pillaged and its Cathedral of St Basil desecrated. Clearly drastic action needed to be taken and, in August 1071, a large Byzantine army under the personal command of the emperor Romanos IV Diogenes headed into Armenia in an attempt to put a stop to the raids. Near to the town of Manzikert, however, Romanos clashed not with isolated Turkish war bands, as he had expected, but with the main army of Alp Arslan himself, which was in the area intent on confronting the Fatimids of Egypt in northern Syria. In the ensuing battle, the emperor's troops were scattered, and his own brave stand with his bodyguard only resulted in his being cut off by the victorious Turks and taken prisoner.

Having witnessed the shambles, Michael Attaleiates, who took part in the battle, could only lament the 'terrible misfortunes, extreme shame and most grievous catastrophe that befell the Romans'.[1] Yet, in spite of Attaleiates's words, the defeat itself was not a disaster. The terms dictated by the victorious sultan were generous, because his main aim was to resume his campaign against his most dangerous enemy, the heretical Shi'ite Fatimids. He therefore made no demands for cession of Byzantine territory, and released the captive Romanos after only a few days. The sultan's generosity and preoccupation elsewhere should have allowed the Byzantines a respite to recover from the defeat. Unfortunately, during Romanos's time as a prisoner of the sultan, Michael Psellos and his allies in Constantinople, the Doukas family, had proclaimed Michael VII Doukas as the legitimate emperor there. When Romanos returned from captivity, civil war broke out between the two rival emperors, in which Romanos was defeated and overthrown. Michael VII had little leisure to enjoy the throne. His position was constantly challenged by revolts and attempted usurpations, one of which succeeded in deposing him in 1078. His successor, Nikephoros III Botaneiates, ruled for less than three years before he in turn was toppled by Alexios Komnenos.[2]

In the confusion which resulted from these internal upheavals, central authority crumbled in Armenia and Asia Minor and various groups were quick to move in to fill the vacuum. When a Byzantine army was sent to retrieve the situation in 1073, Roussel of Bailleul, a Norman mercenary, deserted with several hundred followers and set up his own independent lordship in the area around Amaseia.[3] Roussel's mini-kingdom was overthrown by a Byzantine army led by Alexios Komnenos two years later but elsewhere in the region, others took over Byzantine territory more permanently. In the south east of Asia Minor, an Armenian general called Philaretos, who had loyally served Emperor Romanos IV up to the defeat at Manzikert, saw no reason to continue the allegiance to the new regime in Constantinople. He established himself as an independent ruler in the Cilicia region and took over Antioch in 1078.[4] Other areas were taken over by bands of Turks, acting outside the authority of the Seljuk sultan. The area around Sebasteia fell to the Danishmends and another group pushed westwards under the leadership of Suleyman ibn Kutulmush, a cousin of Alp Arslan. Suleyman did not fight the Byzantines but on the contrary lent his assistance to one or other side in the civil wars of the 1070s. That was how, in 1078, he came into possession of the city of Nicaea, only 100 kilometres from Constantinople itself, and in 1084 the strategically important city of Antioch. To the south, Smyrna, on the Aegean coast, was captured by a semi-independent emir named Tzachas so that by 1090, virtually the whole of Asia Minor was in the hands of Turkish or Armenian warlords. The Byzantines controlled only two small enclaves: one around Chalcedon, opposite Constantinople, and the other around Trebizond on the Black Sea.

The emperors in Constantinople might have been able to counter or reverse this process had it not been for the equally grave crisis that they were facing in their western provinces. In 1053 the Byzantine government had been forced to come to terms with the Pechenegs and to accept their settlement on imperial land south of the Danube but that did put a stop to further attacks. In 1090, the Pechenegs advanced as far as the Land Walls of Constantinople. In southern Italy the situation had gone beyond the point of no return and in 1071 the Normans, under their leader Robert Guiscard, had completed their conquest with the capture of Bari, putting an end to hundreds of years of imperial rule in the region. Ten years later, Guiscard and his son, Bohemond, launched an attack on the Byzantine Balkan provinces across the Adriatic, and in October 1081 at Dyrrachion inflicted on imperial forces a defeat far more severe than that at Manzikert. This time the emperor, Alexios I Komnenos, 'dusty and blood stained, bareheaded, with his bright red hair straggling in front of his eyes', escaped capture, but only after a high-speed chase on horseback, in which he killed one of his Norman pursuers. There was now a real danger that the Normans would press on to Thessalonica and Constantinople.[5]

For Michael Psellos the sudden reversal of the empire's fortunes was nothing less than 'a mighty deluge',[6] but grave though the situation was there were two factors that ensured that the empire had the ability to recover. In the first place, in spite of the bewildering rapidity with which emperors came and went, the civil bureaucracy remained in place and could bring its wealth of accumulated wisdom to bear on the problems of the day. Secondly, that wisdom taught that the situation now faced by the empire was by no means unprecedented. A search through histories and manuals would have revealed, for example, that in August 917, a Byzantine army had been wiped out at Anchialos in Thrace by the khan of the Bulgars, Symeon (893–927), a defeat which delivered most of the Balkans into Symeon's hands and brought his armies to the walls of Constantinople. The empire had survived and recovered from this blow not by overcoming Symeon in battle, but by cunning diplomacy and liberal use of gold. Symeon was planning to capture Constantinople but he knew that he would have to have naval support to do so. He therefore sent envoys to the Fatimid rulers of North Africa to negotiate an alliance. As the ambassadors sailed home with some Fatimid envoys to confirm the pact, they were intercepted and captured by a Byzantine fleet: it is quite possible that someone at the Fatimid court in Byzantine pay had sent word to Constantinople. While the Bulgars were imprisoned, the Byzantines courteously escorted the African envoys home where they paid the Fatimid ruler handsomely to break his alliance, remain neutral and keep his fleet in port. Meanwhile, the tentacles of Byzantine diplomacy were also creeping north where Symeon's enemies, the Serbs and the Croats, were paid to attack him and divert his attention from Constantinople. These tactics kept the Bulgar khan occupied until 927 when he suffered a fatal but extremely convenient heart attack. Thereafter the military prowess of his khanate declined under his successor and the Byzantines were able to re-establish their position in the Balkans.[7]

Faced with a similar situation in the later eleventh century, the rulers of the *Oikoumene* employed almost identical tactics, extending their diplomatic net far and wide and deploying their wealth to pay others to attack their enemies. In the 1050s an approach was made to the Fatimid caliph of Egypt for an alliance against the Seljuk Turks with shipments of grain to alleviate a food shortage as the inducement on this occasion rather than gold.[8]

Byzantine diplomacy was equally active in the West in the bid to neutralize the threat from the Normans of southern Italy. With typical pragmatism, the Byzantines' first impulse was to try to come to terms with the Normans themselves. In August 1074, with the assistance of Michael Psellos, Michael VII Doukas made a treaty with Robert. This was a classic piece of Byzantine diplomacy, which brought Psellos's twin pillars of honours and money to bear: Robert was to receive the title of Nobelissimos, one of his sons that of Kouropalates and Robert was given 43 other titles to dispense among his followers, all of which, of course, carried an annual pension payable in gold, and appropriate cloths of silk. The *quid pro quo* was the security of the *Oikoumene*. Robert was to respect Byzantine frontiers and to defend them, suggesting that Michael envisaged recruiting his aid against the Pechenegs and Turks. The treaty also aimed to secure recognition of the emperor's supremacy. Robert was to confirm the agreement with a solemn oath and was to agree to show the emperor the 'submission and good intentions' that he was due.[9]

Even the central and most far reaching of the treaty's clauses was nothing new. Michael VII agreed to contract a marriage alliance between Robert's daughter, Helena, and his own son Constantine. Anna Komnene was appalled by this 'extraordinary' concession, claiming that it led to Robert's invasion of the Balkans. Her horror reflected the Byzantine view, articulated by Constantine VII, that members of the imperial family should not marry foreigners, apart from the Franks because of their 'traditional fame and nobility'.[10] Yet Michael's willingness to have a non-Frankish daughter-in-law was not entirely unprecedented. In a treaty concluded in October 927, Romanos I Lekapenos (920–44) had bought off the Bulgarian threat to Constantinople by marrying his granddaughter to Tsar Peter, the son of the recently deceased Symeon. Faced with a similar situation in the late tenth century, when the Russian prince Vladimir was attacking Byzantine possessions in the Crimea, Basil II had purchased security by giving Vladimir the hand of his sister Anna. Michael VII had gone rather further than his predecessors in that he was offering the hand of a *Porphyrogenitos*, the son of a reigning emperor born in the Purple Chamber of the Great Palace, who was also the heir to the throne. Nevertheless, the treaty of 1074 fitted in with the long-standing pattern of Byzantine foreign policy.[11]

In the event, Michael VII's deposition in 1078 gave Robert Guiscard the pretext to abrogate the treaty, abandon the marriage alliance and, in 1081, launch his invasion of the Byzantine Balkans over the Adriatic. Alexios I therefore sought alliances elsewhere and despatched envoys to the western emperor, Henry IV, Robert's sworn enemy. The terms offered were not unlike those negotiated with the Normans, although no marriage alliance was offered in this instance. The Byzantine envoys came armed with 144,000 pieces of gold, 100 cloths of purple silk, various relics and other presents. There was also a promise of a further 216,000 gold pieces and the salaries of 20 honorific titles that Henry could confer as he wished. Henry's imperial title meant that Alexios could not be quite so specific in his demand for recognition of his status. Nevertheless, he made it clear in his letter, as preserved by Anna Komnene, that the balance of the money would only be handed over when Henry 'took the oath' according to a formula that the Byzantine representatives would explain to him. Presumably the oath contained a promise to attack Norman lands in southern Italy and possibly some reference to Alexios's imperial dignity, as that of Robert Guiscard had.[12]

As events turned out, the alliance with the German emperor provided little assistance against the Normans. When Henry IV did invade Italy in 1084, he was more interested in capturing Rome and punishing the pope with whom he had quarrelled over the issue of investiture of bishops. On the other hand, a pact made with the maritime republic of Venice was to prove helpful once the Normans crossed the Adriatic to attack the Byzantine Balkans in 1081. Situated at the head of the Adriatic, Venice was an ideal ally in the circumstances, well placed to use her powerful fleet to cut off Robert's supply of men and material from southern Italy to his bridgehead in the Balkans. The terms given by the Byzantines in the treaty, which was probably concluded in 1082, amounted to much the same mixture of gold and titles that had been dangled before Robert Guiscard and Henry IV. The Byzantine treasury was to pay an annual gift of 20 pounds of gold to be distributed among the churches of Venice. The doge and his successors in perpetuity received the title of Protosebastos, a rank usually restricted to members of the imperial family. The Venetian patriarch of Grado and his successors received the rank of Hypertimos, along with its annual pension of 20 pounds of gold. Moreover, as in the treaty with Robert Guiscard, provision was made to preserve the emperor's rightful dignity. It was specifically laid down that the Venetians should enjoy these rights as long as they 'display a great benevolence and a correct attitude towards Romania [i.e. the Byzantine empire] and toward Our Imperial Majesty'. Other clauses of the treaty, however, reflected Venice's interest in the maritime trade between Constantinople and the West. Venetian merchants were given the right to trade in all manner of merchandise in all parts of the Byzantine empire, free of the Kommerkion and other duties and harbour tolls, only the ports on the Black Sea, and on Crete and Cyprus, being placed out of bounds. They were to receive property along the Golden Horn in Constantinople, which was to form the basis of their own commercial quarter.[13]

Alexios, like Michael VII, could be blamed for offering overgenerous concessions in the treaty. He alienated a significant proportion of the empire's tax revenues in the Kommerkion exemption and put the Venetians in a position from which they were able to monopolize the trade between Constantinople and western Europe. Yet, in the context of the situation in the 1080s, the treaty was neither unsuccessful nor unprecedented. It certainly played an important part in the defeat of the Normans. At the Byzantines' request, the Venetians attacked the Norman fleet as it ferried troops between the ports of Apulia and the bridgehead near Dyrrachion. Although they were unable to deny the Normans passage altogether, and at one point suffered a serious reverse, the Venetians inflicted significant damage on Guiscard's fleet and supply lines, enabling Alexios to recover from his defeat at Dyrrachion in October 1081 and to drive the Normans from the Balkans in the two years that followed. Moreover, the concessions made to the Venetians allowed them to boost the internal trade and prosperity of the Byzantine empire.[14]

There were precedents for the grant. The Byzantines had already used trading concessions to gain Venetian military support in the past. An imperial chrysobull, issued in 992, had granted the Venetians a reduced rate of customs duties in return for their agreement to transport Byzantine troops to Italy when required to do so.[15] Even the far-reaching treaty of 1082 was nothing new. In 911, faced with the threat of Russian aggression from the north, the Byzantines had made comparable concessions to Russian merchants: total exemption from customs, their own landing stage and settlement on the Bosporus near Diplokionion, and a monthly allowance of necessary supplies for a period of six months. Such generous concessions as those of 911 were only made because the Byzantines were in a weak position. The situation changed drastically, however, in 944 when the Byzantine navy inflicted a severe reverse on a Russian fleet. The victorious emperor now negotiated a new treaty. Customs dues were reimposed, settlement on the Bosporus was forbidden and the Russians were no longer allowed to buy silk fabrics costing more than 50 gold pieces. It is clear that the Byzantines regarded the concessions made by Alexios I to the Venetians in a similar light, as something that it was necessary to grant in the present emergency, but which could be withdrawn at a later date. This is exactly what Alexios's son, John II, later attempted to do.[16]

It would be wrong, however, to suggest that the Byzantine response to crisis in the later eleventh century was exactly the same as that deployed against Symeon of Bulgaria in the 920s. There were some subtle differences such as the greater emphasis placed on recruiting outsiders to serve as mercenaries in the Byzantine armies rather than only as allies who mounted campaigns on their own initiative. That difference was largely the result of political developments within Byzantium since the late tenth century when the emperors and their advisers in Constantinople had become increasingly mistrustful of the provincial armies, based in the military districts known as Themes. They were fearful that if these armies became too powerful they would march on Constantinople, topple the ruling Macedonian dynasty and place their own general on the throne. Following a series of such revolts in the 970s and 980s, Basil II had been warned not to let generals on campaign have too much in the way of resources and to 'crush them with unjust exactions'. Constantine IX Monomachos went further during the 1040s and had completely demobilized one army, based in Armenia.[17] Instead, the emperors relied increasingly on foreign mercenaries who, as they were paid directly by the emperor himself, were deemed to be more trustworthy. So as the danger escalated in the second half of the eleventh century, it was only to be expected that the Byzantine emperors would seek to meet it by trying to recruit more mercenaries. Against the Normans in the Balkans in 1083, Alexios deployed 7,000 Turkish troops, sent to him by Suleyman ibn Kutulmush. Faced with the Pecheneg threat in 1090, he summoned mercenaries 'from all quarters'.[18]

There was another difference in the eleventh-century response to crisis. An ever greater proportion of the mercenaries being recruited by the Byzantine emperors were western Europeans or, as the Byzantines called them, 'Latins'. There were two main reasons behind this shift. First, the threat from the Pechenegs and Seljuk Turks meant that the Byzantines could not rely entirely on Turkic troops as they had in the past. The danger of employing mercenaries against enemies with whom they were racially akin was revealed all too clearly shortly before the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, when a contingent of Turks had deserted to the Seljuks.[19] Secondly, western Europeans were suddenly much more visible in Byzantium as a result of the expansion of the pilgrimage traffic to Jerusalem. Byzantine conquests in Syria and the concordat reached with the Fatimid rulers of Jerusalem in 1027 meant that the overland route to Palestine was now much safer, encouraging more Western pilgrims to make the journey. The easiest way to do so was to travel by land and as a result as the century went on ever more western Europeans passed through Constantinople on their way to or from Jerusalem. The passing pilgrims included clerics and laymen of the highest rank, such as Robert, duke of Normandy and Sweyn, son of Earl Godwin of Wessex. In 1064 a group of some 12,000 Germans arrived, led by a contingent of bishops. These pilgrims received a warm welcome in Constantinople and often departed laden with gifts from the emperor. Ulfric, bishop of Orleans, who was in Constantinople between 1025 and 1028 left with a portion of the True Cross and silk hangings. Pibo of Toul received another piece of True Cross, and Robert of Normandy was plied with gold and precious cloths.[20]

No doubt part of the motivation behind this largesse was the bolstering of the image of the emperor as the head of the Christian world, the patron and protector of pilgrims and of all Christians. But there was another reason: Ulfric of Orleans was not only a pilgrim. He was also an ambassador, who brought gifts from King Robert II of France (996–1031). The precise topic of the negotiations between the emperor and the bishop is not known but a later incident suggests what they may have been. Around 1090, Robert I the Frisian, count of Flanders (1071–93) was on his way back from a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Passing through Byzantine territory, he met the emperor Alexios I near Thessalonica. As a result of their discussions, Robert promised to send 500 horsemen to serve the emperor as allies. These horsemen duly arrived later and served under the emperor's direct command.[21] Clearly, the emperors and their advisers were taking advantage of the passing pilgrim traffic to recruit mercenaries for the Byzantine army.

Such was the need for troops, however, that they were not content to sit and wait for potential Western mercenaries to come to them as pilgrims. In 1051, a Byzantine official called Argyros was sent to southern Italy, amply equipped with the usual inducements of gold and silk garments, to recruit Norman knights. Such efforts seem to have spread wider as time went on. Letters were sent to the duke of Normandy, William the Conqueror, and the tentacles of Byzantine diplomacy reached across the Channel to England. A full-scale embassy arrived there in 1100, probably on recruiting business, but the evidence suggests that the Byzantines had been trying to attract Anglo-Saxon mercenaries long before that.[22] These initiatives appear to have achieved their goal. Normans were particularly prominent in the Byzantine armies of the eleventh century and, after 1066, English volunteers, fleeing from the Norman conquest of their country, were in abundant supply. They made up a sizeable contingent of the force which Alexios I led against Robert Guiscard at Dyrrachion in 1081 and they also served in the emperor's personal bodyguard, the Varangians.[23]

As a policy, the recruitment of Latin mercenaries did not work badly. There were some occasions when they did not serve the emperor as loyally as they might. In 1069, a Norman knight in Byzantine service called Robert Crispin, dissatisfied with his pay, took to robbing local tax collectors. Roussel of Bailleul, who had attempted to establish a principality for himself in Asia Minor in the 1070s was originally a mercenary in Byzantine service.[24] In general, however, Western mercenaries came to be viewed as some of the most loyal and effective troops in the service of the emperor. The Varangian guards were entrusted with guarding the life and person of emperor and according to Anna Komnene they regarded 'loyalty to the emperors and the protection of their persons as a family tradition, a kind of sacred trust and inheritance handed down from generation to generation'. Those who served in the field armies also excited the praise of the Byzantines. Michael Attaleiates recounts with admiration how in 1054 a Western soldier single-handedly destroyed a Turkish ballista during the siege of Manzikert. It was therefore by no means an intrinsic mistake on the part of the Byzantine elite to bring Western mercenaries into the empire, but rather the extension of the policy of bringing in outside help as a response to a severe threat. It had worked very well in the past and by and large continued to do so.[25] In just one instance, however, the standard procedure was to go badly wrong and the Byzantines were to lose control of their policy aims. This was when they sought the assistance of the papacy.

Ruling circles in Byzantium may well have felt that they knew all about the papacy. After all, it was an ancient institution, well established long before the foundation of Constantinople. The Church of Rome, over which the pope presided, was one of the five patriarchates and was regarded as the most authoritative and venerable because it had been founded not by one apostle but by two, Saints Peter and Paul. Consequently, the popes were generally treated with great respect by Byzantines. Anna Komnene described the pope as holding 'a noble office' and letters sent to him were addressed to 'the most holy pope of the elder Rome'. The protection of Rome, like that of Jerusalem, was considered to be an essential part of the role of the Byzantine emperor even if, after the eighth century, it lay outside the territory under his effective control. Papal legates were regular visitors to Constantinople and imperial embassies were often despatched to Rome, although the gifts they bore tended to be gospel books and ecclesiastical vessels, rather than gold coins and silk garments.[26]

Not that relations between Rome and Constantinople had always been cordial. Over the centuries, an ideological difference had grown up over the office of Roman emperor. In the year 800, the pope had staged a ceremony in St Peter's Basilica in Rome where he had crowned the Frankish king Charlemagne (768–814) and had him proclaimed as emperor of the Romans. The act was doubtless designed to cement the Frankish ruler's position as protector and champion of the papacy and it was justified on the basis of forged document known as the Donation of Constantine which claimed that when Constantine I had travelled east to found his new city of Constantinople in 324, he had relinquished his imperial authority in the West in favour of the papacy. The popes therefore claimed to be able to confer that authority on whomsoever they chose and Charlemagne's successors as western Roman emperor, including Otto I in 962, all made the journey to Rome to have their imperial title conferred in this way. These coronations were a direct challenge to the claim of Byzantine emperors who considered that they, and they alone, were the rightful holders of the title of Roman emperor by virtue of the *Translatio Imperii* when Constantine the Great was believed to have transferred imperial power irrevocably to Constantinople. The Byzantine court never recognized the title claimed by their Western counterparts or the right of the pope to confer it. One Byzantine civil servant went so far as to say that the pontiff was 'empty-headed and bungling' for failing to realize that the only emperor of the Romans was to be found in Constantinople.[27]

There had also been several sharp disagreements on matters of theology and doctrine between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople. One of the more recent had concerned the wording of the Nicene Creed. During the ninth century, Byzantine churchmen had become aware that the Latin version of the Creed, as used in the Western Church, had been slightly altered. The original Creed, which had been formulated by the Council of Nicaea in 325 and by subsequent councils of the Church, had stated that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Father. In a Latin version which began to circulate widely in western Europe, the word *Filioque* ('and from the Son') had been inserted. The Byzantines objected to the innovation for two reasons. First, it was theologically unsound, as it seemed to subordinate the third person of the Trinity to the other two. Still more important, since the Creed had been made by general or ecumenical councils of the whole Church, it could only be altered by another such council, not just by the Western Church alone. Disagreement on this issue had led to the brief 'Photian schism' between the Eastern and Western Churches in 867, when the pope and the patriarch of Constantinople had excommunicated each other. In 1009, another patriarch had removed the pope's name from the diptychs in Hagia Sophia, the list of those who were to be prayed for during divine service, because the latter had sent a letter accompanied by the Creed in its altered form.[28]

Stormy though relations could sometimes be, in practice the issues of imperial coronation and the Creed did not unduly disrupt relations between Constantinople and Rome. Even if the Byzantines insisted on referring to the pope's emperors as 'kings', they were still happy to recruit them as allies, as Alexios did Henry IV in 1081. The *Filioque* issue was for the most part quietly ignored. Moreover, for most of the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the papacy was in a lamentable state and in no position to indulge in theological disputes. The office of pope had fallen prey to Roman aristocratic factions who vied with each other to place their candidate on the throne of St Peter. The unworthy incumbents caused countless scandals which eroded the papacy's moral prestige. The Byzantines were given direct evidence of the situation in Rome when, in 974, a bishop arrived in Constantinople seeking asylum and claiming that he had been elected as Pope Boniface VII, only to be ejected by a rival. Boniface returned to Rome in 984 and overthrew the latest ephemeral pontiff John XIV, who was subsequently murdered in the Castel Sant' Angelo. Boniface himself then reigned as pope for 15 months, before he too was murdered, and his corpse dragged through the streets by the Roman mob.[29]

All this was to some extent irrelevant to the Byzantine court. Although the popes might hold some disagreeable opinions and were given to moral laxity and political faction, they could still be very useful allies in protecting the empire's provinces in southern Italy. They were, after all, the rulers of the papal states that lay to the north of Apulia and Calabria and they had the same interest as the Byzantines in protecting the region from invaders. In the past, they had cooperated with the Byzantines in defending Italy from the Arabs of North Africa who had established a foothold there, culminating in a significant victory in 915 when a joint Byzantine-papal force had successfully stormed an Arab stronghold.[30] So in the search for allies against the Norman threat during the second half of the eleventh century, the pope seemed to be an obvious choice. He had every reason to view the activities of Robert Guiscard with the same alarm that the Byzantines did and to fear the consequences if the Normans were to bring the whole area under their control. In 1051, the Byzantine envoy, Argyros, was sent to Rome to negotiate an alliance with Pope Leo IX (1048–54). A plan for joint action was worked out but this time the alliance was not so successful. Before he was able to link up with his Byzantine allies, Leo's army was routed by Robert Guiscard and his Normans at Civitate in June 1053. Somewhat to the embarrassment of the Norman victors, the pope himself was taken prisoner.[31] The defeat at

Civitate was a setback, but the policy of seeking an alliance with the pope against the Normans was not abandoned. As things turned out, it might have been better if it had been, for the renewed negotiations with the pope were to lead to a completely unforeseen outcome.

What Argyros and those who sent him were probably not aware of was that the papacy under Leo IX and his successors was a very different institution from that with which they had dealt in the past thanks to some fundamental changes that had taken place a few years before the Battle of Civitate. Following the scandal of the election of three rival popes in 1045, the western emperor Henry III (1017–56) had intervened and summoned the Synod of Sutri in 1046 to restore order. He had deposed all three papal claimants and replaced them with a succession of German popes who were completely unconnected with the Roman aristocratic factions. Leo IX was one of these, a native of Alsace and a kinsman of Henry III. With the independence of the papacy restored, Leo IX and a number of energetic cardinals, notably Peter Damian of Ostia and Humbert of Silva Candida, took it upon themselves to restore the prestige and morals of the Western Church, concentrating on rooting out what they considered to be the particularly grave sins of clerical marriage and simony, the purchase of ecclesiastical office. Unlike his predecessors, Leo travelled widely, convening and presiding over church councils in places far removed from Rome, and deposing bishops deemed to be unworthy of their sees.

In order to better equip themselves for root and branch reform and to counter any charge of unwarranted interference in local churches, Leo IX and his circle laid increasing stress on the doctrine of papal supremacy. In the gospel according to St Matthew, St Peter had been described by Christ as the rock upon which he would build his church and as the man to whom he had entrusted the keys of the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, with the promise that 'whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven'.[32] On the basis of this text, Cardinal Humbert and other apologists asserted that the Church of Rome, which had been founded by St Peter, was the 'head and mother' Church. The pope, as the successor of St Peter, had inherited the powers conferred by Christ and had authority over the whole church, not just that of Rome. With that power and authority, like those of the Byzantine emperor, came weighty responsibility. The pope was responsible for the spiritual health of the church and therefore of Christendom as a whole. 'Their soundness', wrote Humbert, 'corresponds to the soundness of the Roman Church, and they rejoice or languish in union with it'.[33] The doctrine was by no means new, but it was now being stated with greater stridency than ever before. As a result of these developments the Byzantines were now negotiating with a power which, unlike the Bulgars, Normans or Arabs, had its own claim to universal leadership within Christendom, a claim which, for reasons entirely unconnected with the Byzantine empire, was fast becoming a central element in the papacy's external relations. Almost immediately, the Byzantine elite was to receive a warning of the change that had taken place.

Even while he was still in captivity among the Normans in early 1054, Leo IX received letters from the Byzantine emperor, Constantine IX, urging him to renew the alliance, and from the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Keroularios, offering to restore the pope's name to the diptychs. In spite of its uncontroversial content, the patriarch's letter had exactly the same effect on Leo and his entourage as the arrival of the letter addressed to the 'emperor of the Greeks' in Constantinople in 968. The pope and the cardinals were annoyed that Keroularios addressed the pope as 'brother' rather than father and that he signed himself at the end as 'Ecumenical Patriarch'. Rendered into Latin as 'Universal Patriarch' (*Patriarcha Universalis*), the title seemed to suggest a claim on the part of the patriarch of Constantinople to just that universal authority to which only the successor of St Peter was entitled. While it is true that the term simply meant 'patriarch of the *Oikoumene*', that is of the Byzantine empire, it also reflected the all-important Byzantine political theory that their empire was the Christian world, a theory the vindication of which was one of the main aims of the empire's foreign policy. In the atmosphere of Rome under the reformed papacy, Byzantine ideology appeared to be a direct challenge to papal supremacy.[34]

In the outrage caused by the patriarch's letter, the anti-Norman alliance was largely forgotten as Leo and his followers focused on a number of ecclesiastical issues that were currently dividing the Churches of Rome and Constantinople. Keroularios had been complaining that the Normans, apparently with papal approval, were forcing Western ecclesiastical customs, particularly the use of *azymes* or unleavened bread in communion, onto the Greek population of the areas of southern Italy which they now controlled. In 1052, Keroularios had closed the Latin churches in Constantinople in retaliation. In response, Leo IX decided during the summer of 1054 to send a legation to Constantinople, under the leadership of no less a person than Cardinal Humbert, to instruct the erring patriarch in the nature of the authority of the Roman see. The legate and his companions went armed with an aggressive letter to Keroularios, reminding him of the biblical basis of papal supremacy:

> How detestable and lamentable indeed is that sacrilegious usurpation, when you pronounce yourself 'Universal Patriarch' everywhere in both writing and speech, when every friend of God would tremble to be honoured by the designation in this way: And who after Christ could be more worthy to be marked with that appellation, than he to whom was said by the divine voice: 'Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church'? Yet because [St Peter] is not found to have been called 'Universal Apostle', even though he was appointed 'Prince of the Apostles', not a single one of his successors has agreed to be called by such a weighty title . . .

To give further weight to the attack, Keroularios was accused in the letter of having obtained his office by improper means, one of the main abuses that the papal reform movement was engaged in rooting out.[35]

Although the legates remained in Constantinople for several weeks after delivering this missive, Keroularios steadfastly refused to retract his criticisms of Latin practices or even to discuss the matter with them. Accordingly, on 16 July, Humbert and his fellow legates walked into the cathedral of Hagia Sophia and, going up to the high altar, placed upon it a bull of excommunication against Michael Keroularios and his associates. Hardly surprisingly, Keroularios responded in kind by gathering his synod and issuing an excommunication of the members of the papal legation in turn.[36]

There has been much debate on the significance of the mutual excommunications of 1054. On one level they could be seen as the beginning of a state of schism between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople which continues to divide the Orthodox and Catholic Churches today. That seems to be a rather extreme interpretation. In his anathema, Humbert made it clear that his excommunication was aimed solely at Keroularios and his friends, not at the emperor and the Byzantines in general, whom he declared to be 'most Christian and orthodox'.[37] Much more significant is the reaction of the Byzantine elite to these events, or rather the complete lack of it. There is no specific mention of the visit of Cardinal Humbert and the subsequent excommunications in the extant writings of Michael Psellos or any other contemporary member of the court, even though, as a close adviser to the emperor of the day, Constantine IX, Psellos must have been aware of it. The only discernible reference comes in a speech pronounced by Psellos at Keroularios's funeral in 1059, in which he praised the late patriarch's heroic resistance to heretical doctrines.[38] It therefore seems safe to conclude that Psellos and others did not realize that henceforth there were likely to be problems if they tried to employ the papacy as a means of securing the twin aims of Byzantine foreign policy. Any attempt to use the papacy to advance the first aim, the security of Constantinople, was likely to have repercussions for the second, that of securing recognition of the hegemony of the emperor as the supreme authority in the Christian world.

The warning was not heeded and the Byzantine emperors and their advisers continued to pursue their policy of seeking an understanding with the papacy. Constantine IX probably had in mind reviving the proposal for an anti-Norman alliance in his discussions with Cardinal Humbert in Constantinople in June 1054. He certainly welcomed the legates very warmly, lodging them in an imperial palace, just outside the Pege Gate in the Land Walls. When an overzealous monk of the monastery of St John Stoudios endangered the negotiations by circulating a polemical tract against Latin ecclesiastical practices, Constantine compelled him to make a public retraction before the legates and ordered the offending tract to be burned. He even encouraged Humbert to pen a treatise setting out the Western position on the subject of the Filioque.[39] In spite of all Constantine's efforts, the subsequent excommunication of Keroularios and the abrupt departure of the legates for Rome brought any negotiations for an alliance to an end. In the years that followed, the situation in southern Italy changed dramatically. Finding himself having to fight a local faction for possession of Rome, Pope Nicholas II (1058–61) came to terms with the Normans, investing Robert Guiscard with the duchy of Apulia and Calabria in 1059. The investiture was repeated by Nicholas II's successor, Gregory VII (1073–85). Alexios I tried to woo Gregory away from his support for Robert Guiscard in the usual way, sending to Rome 'moderate gifts, with promises of much largesse and many honours in the future' but the pope nevertheless gave moral support to Robert Guiscard's invasion of the Balkans in 1081 on the grounds that Alexios was not a legitimate emperor but a usurper. Any prospect of an alliance with the papacy against the Normans was now evidently out of the question.[40]

That did not mean though, that the Byzantines ceased to cultivate the pope. Instead as the likelihood of an anti-Norman alliance faded, the approaches began to be made in a different way, with a different object in view. Rather than use the pope as an ally, the Byzantines began to try to enlist his help in their endless efforts to recruit Western mercenaries. An early example of the shift came in May 1062 when three Byzantine envoys arrived in Rome bearing letters from the emperor. The embassy had been carefully timed. The previous year, there had been a disputed papal election. When one group of cardinals had elected the bishop of Lucca as Pope Alexander II, another had raised Peter Cadalus, bishop of Parma, as Honorius II. Honorius and his supporters had then occupied Rome and the Byzantines' hope was that he would reverse the papacy's new policy of friendship with the Normans. This attempt to exploit a papal schism came to nothing for the supporters of Alexander II ousted Honorius from Rome very shortly afterwards. The significance of the episode lies in a peculiar suggestion that the emperor was reported to have made in his letter to the pope: he urged Honorius II to lead an expedition to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre from infidel rule. At first sight, it is puzzling as why the emperor should link opposition to the Normans with the liberation of Jerusalem. It is possible that the source of information here has garbled or misunderstood the exact tenor of the emperor's message but the arrival of the Byzantine ambassadors was reported not by someone remote or ill-informed but by Benzo, bishop of Alba, who was present at Rome at the time as the envoy of the western emperor Henry IV.[41]

It therefore seems likely that the letter of 1062 is an early example of the Byzantines urging the pope to use his moral influence to encourage Western knights to take service in their armies as mercenaries. After all, the increasing preference for recruiting western Europeans gave the Byzantines scope for offering additional inducements alongside the usual gold coins. Since they were dealing with fellow-Christians, rather than with pagan Pechenegs or Muslim Seljuks, the Byzantines could appeal to religious sentiment as well as to monetary gain. Service with the Christian Roman emperor in his wars against the infidel would surely be a pious act. But it went further than that. The Byzantines cannot have failed to have been aware of what drew Western Christians eastwards more than anything else. The sheer number of pilgrims passing through Constantinople and the dangers that they would have to face on the way would have made it obvious that Jerusalem and the Holy Sepulchre had an extraordinary hold on the Western imagination as the place on earth closest to heaven where any sin, however grievous, could be forgiven. It seems almost inconceivable that the Byzantines would not have played upon these perceptions in their recruitment drive.

That may well have been what happened when, in 1073, Michael VII sent two monks to Gregory VII bearing a letter. The precise contents of the letter are not known, and in his extant reply Gregory contented himself with vague phrases about his desire to see the restoration of the former concord between the Churches of Rome and Constantinople, stating that the main matter would be communicated by his messenger.[42] It is unlikely that Michael had written solely to discuss matters of ecclesiastical union for by 1073 the Byzantines were rapidly losing control of Asia Minor. It is more than likely that Michael asked the pope to use his moral authority to urge Western knights to enrol in Byzantine service. If that was the case, it would certainly explain Gregory's next move. In February 1074, he wrote to Count William of Upper Burgundy asking him to raise a force of knights that would first restore peace in Italy and then cross to Constantinople to help the Christians there. A month later, on receiving news of the deteriorating situation in Asia Minor from returning pilgrims, Gregory issued an encyclical addressed to all the faithful, warning that the Turks were virtually at the walls of Constantinople, and encouraging Christians to go east to help the Byzantine emperor in his struggle against them.[43] At the end of the year another summons was made with the pope now offering to lead the army eastwards in person. By then its aim had widened in scope for Gregory confided to the emperor Henry IV that he hoped to lead his followers 'as far as the Sepulchre of Our Lord'.[44]

It is impossible to know to what extent these plans were a response to initiatives from the Byzantine emperor but it would have been helpful for recruitment purposes that Gregory was presenting the defence of Constantinople as pious duty, even if no specific spiritual reward was mentioned at this juncture. It may well have been to reinforce the point that Byzantine embassies to the West at this time often came armed with gifts of holy relics as well as gold.[45] Unfortunately, this fruitful assistance from the papacy was stalled by the deposition of Michael VII Doukas in 1078. Pope Gregory VII excommunicated Michael's successor Nikephoros III Botaneiates as a usurper and renewed the sentence when Alexios I took over in 1081.[46] It was only in the later 1080s that contact was resumed. By then, Gregory VII had died and had been replaced by Pope Urban II (1088–99). Hard-pressed in the conflict with the western emperor Henry

IV, Urban was keen to restore good relations with Constantinople. One of his first acts as pope was to lift Gregory VII's excommunication of Alexios and to request in return that Latin Christians be allowed to reopen their churches in Constantinople. Alexios responded by gathering a synod in Constantinople to consider ways of restoring amity between the Eastern and Western Churches. When the members of the synod investigated the cause of schism, they could find no documents in the archives to enlighten them.[47] The way was open to resume relations with Rome and appeals for mercenaries. There was every need to do so. Although the Normans had been driven out of the Balkans in 1083, by the winter of 1090 the situation was once more critical with Constantinople under attack both from the Pechenegs by land and the Turkish emir of Smyrna, Tzachas, by sea. According to contemporary accounts, a wave of letters and embassies headed west 'begging with tears for the aid of the entire Christian people and promising very generous rewards to those who would give help'.[48]

Once again it may well have been that the recruiting drive went beyond merely offering generous wages. Alexios I had the reputation even among the Byzantines of being a wily and secretive character, fond of winning by finesse rather than by force. He was adept at understanding both friends and enemies and manipulating their strengths and weaknesses for the advantage of the empire. In 1087 he had induced terror in some ambassadors from the Cuman tribe by correctly predicting an eclipse of the sun.[49] This was not a man to forego opportunities to increase the number of mercenaries by playing on the cherished religious beliefs of the Latins. Possible evidence for him doing so comes in a letter sent to Robert I, count of Flanders, who had recently met Alexios in the Balkans on his way back from Jerusalem. The original does not survive, only a Latin version that has probably been to some extent doctored and altered from the original. Nevertheless, the broad tenor of the message is clear enough. As well as offering gold to potential volunteers, Alexios stressed the savage nature of the enemy and the atrocities that they had committed against peace-loving Christians. He listed the relics of the Passion that the recruits would find in Constantinople and urged them to come to his aid 'for the salvation of their souls'. Jerusalem was mentioned too, the letter ending with a warning that if the Byzantine empire were to fall, the Holy Sepulchre will be lost with it.[50] It is a moot point just how far Alexios and his advisers were going in manipulating Western religious feeling to encourage recruitment into their armies. The letter to the count of Flanders is so garbled in its surviving form that the references to Jerusalem may well have been inserted later and may not have emanated from the emperor at all. Other evidence, however, suggests that the Byzantines were indeed using Jerusalem as a kind of bait. Stories were drifting back from Jerusalem of the mistreatment of pilgrims by the Muslim authorities there and it must have been extremely tempting to use these in the appeal for mercenaries.[51] One Byzantine chronicle, attributed to Theodore Skoutariotes, bishop of Kyzikos, explicitly states that that was exactly what Alexios I did:

> For finding a pretext in the fact that this nation [i.e. the Latins] considered unbearable the domination of Jerusalem and the life-giving Sepulchre of Our Saviour Jesus Christ by the Persians and seeing therein a heaven sent opportunity, he managed, by dispatching ambassadors to the bishop of Old Rome and to those whom they would call kings and rulers in those parts, and by the use of appropriate arguments, to prevail over not a few of them to leave their country.[52]

These words should be treated with some caution since they were written some 200 years after the events of the 1090s. Even so, they may well represent as faithful reproduction of a contemporary source of information that is now lost. If so, it would seem that Alexios had indulged in a typically brilliant piece of Byzantine diplomacy, subtly manipulating his potential allies against his numerous enemies. And as in 1054, the brilliant tactic was to backfire disastrously when applied to the reformed papacy.

In March 1095, a Byzantine delegation arrived at Piacenza in northern Italy where Pope Urban II was presiding over an ecclesiastical council. Unfortunately, as in the case of Michael VII's contact with Gregory VII, the letter carried by Alexios's envoys to Urban II does not survive, nor is the embassy mentioned by Anna Komnene, John Zonaras or by any other contemporary or near-contemporary Byzantine source. It is therefore impossible to know with certainty exactly what it was that the Byzantines said to the pope. That has left plenty of room for later interpretations and disagreement over the nature of Alexios's approach to Urban. For a long time the consensus was that the Byzantine emperor simply asked the pope to help in the recruitment of mercenaries and had not the remotest idea of what this innocent request would lead to.[53] Later commentators have questioned this view and suggested that Anna Komnene's failure to mention the embassy was a deliberate attempt to hide Alexios's role in the genesis of the First Crusade. It has even been argued that the crusade, as it was ultimately launched, was deliberately planned and orchestrated by Alexios.[54]

These arguments are not entirely convincing. The failure of Byzantine historians to mention the approach to Urban II means nothing. They record very few of the numerous attested Byzantine diplomatic dealings with the West in the eleventh century. Writing in a genre which placed emphasis above all on events in Constantinople and the *Oikoumene,* accounts of happenings further afield are rare and, when they were included, were often garbled and unsatisfactory. The aim of recruiting limited numbers of mercenaries accords with previous Byzantine practice. It would even seem that Urban had already acted in this role: during the Pecheneg campaign of 1090–1, Alexios had been joined by a party of mercenaries sent from Rome.[55] Moreover, by 1095, the crisis facing the Byzantine empire had eased somewhat. In 1091 the Pechenegs had been overwhelmingly defeated at the Battle of Mount Levounion and the Balkans were now largely at peace. The Seljuk Turks of

Nicaea were not as formidable as they had been either for after the death of Suleyman ibn Kutulmush in 1086 they had been distracted by internal power struggles. The time was ripe to contemplate the reassertion of Byzantine control in Asia Minor and the mission may have been connected with that. It therefore seems most likely that Alexios's envoys were in Italy on a routine visit to ask the pope to help in the recruitment of mercenaries even if they might have been tempted to make mention of Jerusalem as an additional inducement. What happened to make the results of Alexios's initiative so momentous was that for reasons of his own, the pope took the Byzantine appeal and reinterpreted it from his own ideological standpoint, not with any anti-Byzantine motive but as a response to his own situation at the time.

Urban was in Piacenza in 1095 because Rome was not a safe place to be. The quarrel with the western emperor Henry IV was still in progress and many people in Rome did not recognize Urban as pope, preferring Henry's candidate, Clement III. So volatile was the situation that Urban was obliged to be escorted by a powerful bodyguard whenever he left his palace. In the autumn of 1094, he quit the city and moved north, opening a council at Piacenza, inside the imperial province of Lombardy as a calculated act of defiance. His action was in keeping with the heightened rhetoric of papal authority with which the popes had responded to the western emperor's challenge. Under the pressure of events, they had gone a great deal beyond the claims being made by Peter Damian and Humbert in the 1040s and 1050s. In 1075 Gregory VII had promulgated the *Dictatus Papae*, a series of statements about the powers of the pope, which included the assertion that he could depose emperors. The document was probably not circulated widely but it had an important implication. It meant that the pope was claiming to have authority over all secular rulers, even over emperors, and even over Roman emperors. The supreme authority in the Christian world, therefore, was that of the pope.[56] By holding the council inside the western emperor's territory, Urban was publically affirming that his authority had no borders.

The two contemporary monastic chronicles by Ekkehard, abbot of Aura, and Bernold of St Blasien provide the only surviving information about the Byzantine embassy at Piacenza. According to them, the envoys read a letter from the emperor, drawing a lurid picture of the situation in the East. Alexios allegedly claimed, as Gregory VII had done, that the empire's infidel enemies had reached to the very walls of Constantinople and he begged for help from his fellow Christians against them. Up to this point, Ekkehard and Bernold's accounts are entirely credible, mirroring Alexios's letter to Henry IV of 1081, in which he asked for help against 'the murderous, sinful enemy of God and the Christians'. Also credible is the remark of another chronicler, Guibert of Nogent, that Urban received gifts from Alexios. All these points can be paralleled with other examples of Byzantine diplomatic practice.[57]

In another respect, however, the tone of the embassy, as reported by Bernold and Ekkehard, was very different from that usually employed. Bernold claimed that the emperor 'humbly' implored the pope's aid and Ekkehard says that he 'deplored his inability to defend the churches of the east. He beseeched the pope to call to his aid, if that were possible, the entire west . . .'.[58] Not only was Alexios presented as a humble supplicant, but also as one prepared to admit that he was no longer able to fulfil his role of protector of Christians. The words of Ekkehard and Bernold are a curious echo of the doctored version of the letter to the count of Flanders, in which Alexios purportedly complained that:

> Although I am emperor I still do not know how to find any recourse or suitable way forward; I constantly flee the Turks and Pechenegs and stay in each city in turn until I know they are on their way.[59]

Moreover, in this version of events, the emperor's request was not for mercenaries to fight under his command but for 'the entire west', with no indication that he was expecting to lead or to control them in any way.

It is extremely unlikely that Alexios's letter was couched in these terms. As already discussed, the assertion of the emperor's superior status was central to Byzantine diplomatic correspondence. Even the treaties made with Robert Guiscard in 1074 and with the Venetians in 1082, which made far-reaching concessions, nevertheless adopted a tone of lordly superiority and made it quite clear that the opposite party would be fighting under the emperor's terms and on his instructions.[60] Why now, in 1095 when the empire was in a much stronger position, should Alexios suddenly start to complain that he could no longer cope with his imperial role and call upon Westerners to emigrate *en masse* to help him?

The answer lies in the outlook of the Latin writers. Bernold of St Blasien was a supporter of the reformed papacy and so reflected the strident claims to universal authority that the popes were now making. Ekkehard was in the camp of Henry IV and so less favourable to papal claims. On the other hand, he was a participant in the third wave of the First Crusade that was to head east in 1101. He was no friend of the Byzantine emperor on whom he placed much of the blame for the failure of the expedition. That undoubtedly coloured his account of the 1095 embassy, especially in his addition of the detail that Alexios promised to provide supplies for all the crusaders. In short, for reasons of their own, Ekkehard and Bernold turned Byzantine foreign policy on its head. Whereas the Byzantines were apt to insist on the universal claims of their emperor, Alexios was now being presented as willing to give up his empire to the more deserving Westerners. While the Byzantines had always drawn in warriors from foreign nations to serve under their banners in return for imperial largesse, they were now portrayed as begging for a rescue mission to retrieve a situation of which they had irrevocably lost control.

Urban himself was to reinterpret Alexios's appeal publicly in a sermon which he preached some months after the meeting at Piacenza. In November 1095, at another church council at Clermont in France, he addressed a huge crowd in the open air because none of the buildings in the town was large enough to hold the audience. There is no definitive, contemporary account of what was said on this occasion and Urban's words have to be reconstructed from the summaries given by four contemporary, or near contemporary, Latin chroniclers each of which differs slightly from the others.[61] In spite of those differences, the broad tenor of the sermon can be convincingly reconstructed. As was probably the case with earlier appeals made by Byzantine emperors, Urban described lurid atrocities committed by invading Turks and called upon his audience to go to the aid of the Eastern Christians against them.[62] In some versions, he even mentioned the material gain that those who answered his call were likely to reap, mirroring Byzantine diplomatic practice.[63]

Thereafter, however, the messages start to diverge. The Byzantine emperors may well have presented mercenary service in their armies as a kind of Christian duty but the pope as a clergyman could go much further, assuring his listeners that participation would earn the indulgence issued by the pope: the cancellation of penance due for sins committed in the past and 'the gift of glorious martyrdom' for those who died for the cause.[64] The widest gap of all concerned the goal of the expedition. While some versions of the sermon do refer to Constantinople and the Byzantine empire, none mentions the emperor Alexios. Instead for three of the four, it is Jerusalem and not Constantinople that needs to be saved from the infidel hordes. Earlier appeals from Byzantine emperors might have made reference to Jerusalem to enhance the attraction of the journey east but Urban made it central to the enterprise. He played unashamedly on the emotions of his hearers, lamenting that the holy city had been 'enslaved by those who know nothing of the ways of the people of God' and urging them to consider 'that almighty providence may have destined you for the task of rescuing Jerusalem'.[65]

In presenting the enterprise as a penitential pilgrimage to the Holy Sepulchre, Urban had changed Alexios's plan to draw in Westerners to help defend the *Oikoumene* into something quite different and in doing so, he had stated his claim to ultimate authority in the Christian world. Thus, in the words of Bernold of St Blasien, 'the lord pope was the foremost author of this expedition'.[66] As for Alexios and his advisers, they had been left far behind. The tried and tested tactics of gold and honours to entice western European states and warriors to give them support against their new and dangerous enemies had generally worked well in the past but when they had been applied to the reformed papacy, they had been interpreted in a completely different way, in accordance with the papacy's own fast-developing ideology. As a result, the rulers of Byzantium were faced in 1096 with a completely new and unprecedented situation.

# 4

# The passage of the First Crusade

Urban II could hardly have formulated a more potent appeal to the Western nobility gathered at Clermont in November 1095. Central authority was weak in western Europe in the eleventh century, and local warfare and sporadic violence were inevitable as the knightly class fought each other to protect and extend their lands. Consequently, many Western noblemen were uneasily aware that they had blood on their hands and that in all probability they would pay for it with eternal damnation. That was why so many of them had undertaken the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, passing through Constantinople on their way, in an attempt to atone for their wrongs. To this warrior elite, obsessed by the consequences of sin, yet compelled by social circumstances to commit it, Urban now proposed an armed pilgrimage, whose participants would not only journey to the Holy Sepulchre but would liberate it from infidel rule and in the process save their souls. It was an irresistible combination. The moment the pope had finished speaking, many of those present eagerly took a vow to join the expedition to Jerusalem, fixing crosses of cloth to their shoulders as a sign of their intention and in the months that followed, the extraordinary success of his appeal became apparent. Urban journeyed across western France during the spring of 1096, repeating his call at towns along his route, and sending written appeals to areas that he could not visit in person. Several important magnates now took the cross but Urban was careful to ensure that his own leadership of the enterprise was not lost sight of by appointing Adhémar of Le Puy as his representative on the expedition. The plan emerged that these volunteers, most of whom came from France and Italy, would be formed into a number of separate armies that would take different routes to arrive at the common assembly point of Constantinople. From there, the combined army would cross the Bosporus to Asia Minor to begin the next stage of the journey towards Jerusalem.

So it was that the Byzantines came face to face with the unexpected result of the routine embassy to Piacenza as the crusade armies arrived at Constantinople in three waves. The first arrived in the summer of 1096, a diverse, poorly equipped and apparently undisciplined army, sometimes known as the Peasants' or People's Crusade, led by Peter the Hermit and Walter Sansavoir. The second wave was composed of a number of independent armies. It was spearheaded by Hugh, count of Vermandois, the brother of King Philip I of France, who crossed from southern Italy to Dyrrachion. He was followed by a contingent led by Godfrey of Bouillon, duke of Lower Lotharingia, along with his brothers, Eustace and Baldwin of Boulogne, which crossed into Byzantine territory across the Danube and reached Constantinople by December. Bohemond of Taranto and his followers took the route of Hugh of Vermandois, arriving on 10 April 1097. Raymond of Saint-Gilles, count of Toulouse, and his army of Provençals reached the Byzantine capital a few days after Bohemond. Finally in May the contingent of Stephen of Blois arrived. It was this second wave which was later to pass through Asia Minor, capture Antioch and finally take Jerusalem itself. The third wave, composed of contingents from Lombardy, France and Bavaria, arrived in the spring and early summer of 1101, setting out through Asia Minor to reinforce their predecessors in the Holy Land.

The policy makers in Constantinople, therefore, had very little time to decide how to react before the arrival of the first wave nor would it have been easy to decide what line to take: the manuals had nothing to say about an invasion by allies. On the one hand, the crusader armies were supposedly coming east to assist the Byzantines against their Muslim enemies. On the other, they came not under the command of the emperor but under their own leaders, with the nominal authority of the pope represented by the legate, Adhémar. There were, moreover, a frighteningly large number of them: some 6,000 has been estimated for the first two waves alone. It is hardly surprising that, given the Byzantine mentality, Alexios and his advisers were wary of these supposed soldiers of Christ and considered that they might constitute a danger to Constantinople itself. Nor is it to be wondered at that the Byzantines adapted tried and trusted techniques to diffuse the perceived threat. The usual tactics of distributing gifts, exploiting divisions, extracting oaths to respect the rights of the emperor, but using force when absolutely necessary, were all employed. In many ways, these tactics proved to be extremely successful, and they allowed the Byzantines to take advantage of the passage of the crusading armies to reconquer western Asia Minor. On the other hand, the employment of traditional tactics towards the First Crusade was also to lead directly to conflict with the crusaders over the city of Antioch and to sow the seeds of the poor reputation that the Byzantines were later to suffer from in western European opinion.[1]

The reason that there has been so much debate about the exact line of policy pursued by Alexios I towards the First Crusade is that there is no contemporary Byzantine source of information on these events. They are only described in Greek by two historians writing many years later. One, John Zonaras, should have been well placed to record the crusade from the point of view of the Byzantine elite for he had held office during the later years of Alexios I. Yet his account of the crusade, or the 'commotion' as he calls it, is so brief as to be almost useless, and contains demonstrable errors, such as his claim that the crusaders captured Nicaea unaided in 1097 and then sold it to the Byzantines.[2] It has, therefore, to be left to Anna Komnene, the daughter of Alexios I, to represent the Byzantine view of the crusade. Unlike Zonaras, she gives a lively and detailed account of the First Crusade in her biography of her father, the *Alexiad*. It is an extraordinary work, full of striking descriptive passages and perceptive character sketches. Komnene has the engaging habit, shared with many Byzantine authors, of personally intruding into the history, confiding to the reader at one point: 'As I write these words, it is nearly time to light the lamps; my pen moves slowly over the paper and I feel myself almost too drowsy to write as the words escape me.'[3] The literary merits of the work aside, it has for a number of reasons, been regarded as a most untrustworthy record of the events of 1095 to 1100. Komnene was, after all, writing about events which took place when she was a child and which she could not possibly remember and her account is coloured by hindsight because she was writing in the aftermath of the Norman seizure of Antioch in 1098. That probably explains how her chronology comes often to be demonstrably awry. Her work is unashamedly one of panegyric, designed to boost the posthumous reputation of Alexios I and to present him as an almost Homeric hero. It also aimed to dismiss the achievements of Alexios's successors, for Komnene had no love for her brother John II or nephew Manuel I. In 1118 she had been party to an unsuccessful plot to prevent John's accession and replace him with her husband, Nikephoros Bryennios. She spent her later years in seclusion in a convent in Constantinople, where she contented herself with compiling a commentary on Aristotle and writing the *Alexiad*.[4]

Serious though these flaws are, they do not diminish the importance of the *Alexiad* as a statement of the attitude of ruling circles in Constantinople to the passage of the First Crusade. While she herself was not part of those circles in 1096, in later years Komnene had ample opportunity to talk to those who had been and, by her own account, derived a great deal of information from them. One of them was her uncle, George Palaiologos, who was present when Alexios I discussed future strategy with the crusaders at Pelekanon in June 1097. Another was her husband Bryennios, who had taken part in the clash with the army of Godfrey of Bouillon outside the walls of Constantinople on Maundy Thursday in 1097. Anna claims that she listened to conversations between Palaiologos and Alexios on matters of state, and that she incorporated materials collected by Bryennios into her own history.[5] Thus, however tendentious the *Alexiad* may be in matters of chronology, interpretation and tone, it can nevertheless be seen as a reliable guide to outlook and attitudes.[6]

Komnene is clear from the very beginning what it was that underlay Byzantine policy here. Alexios and his advisers saw the approaching crusade not as the arrival of long-awaited allies but rather as a potential threat to the *Oikoumene*. Its arrival was 'dreaded' and the declaration of the crusade leadership that they were heading towards Palestine to liberate the Holy Sepulchre was regarded with some scepticism, as a blind to some plan to seize Constantinople itself. Such suspicions were exacerbated by the presence at the head of one of the armies of the southern Italian Norman, Bohemond of Taranto, who had played a major part in his father Robert Guiscard's invasion of the empire in 1081. Komnene's claims are substantiated by the French priest, Fulcher of Chartres, who travelled with one of the crusader armies and who later recalled that the emperor 'feared that we might plot some injury to him'.[7] At the same time, Komnene stressed that the crusade was regarded as presenting an opportunity as well as a threat. Properly organized, these powerful armies could inflict significant damage on the empire's Eastern enemies: they 'might destroy the cities of the Ishmaelites or force them to make terms with the Roman sovereigns and thus extend the bounds of Roman territory'.[8] So in making preparations for the arrival of the crusading armies, Alexios and his advisers sought to defuse the danger, while turning the situation to their advantage.

How were these two aims to be achieved? Conventional wisdom in Byzantium dictated that, when it was weaker than the empire, a foreign power should be overawed by displays of gold and wealth. If it were stronger, it should be brought to heel by a show of military might and by being reminded of the strength of the walls of Constantinople.[9] The crusading armies may have seemed to fall half way between these two possibilities for they were, Komnene claims, unprecedented within living memory. Certainly the policy adopted contained elements of both reward and threat, a kind of 'carrot and stick' approach. Forces were sent to the Balkan frontiers accompanied by interpreters. They were given instructions to receive the crusading armies in a friendly fashion, and to supply them with provisions. They were, however, to shadow the armies closely as they marched towards Constantinople and to intervene if any attempts were made to pillage the countryside. Everything possible was to be done to keep the various armies and their leaders apart, so that they could not unite against the Byzantines. To prevent them linking up outside Constantinople, each army was to be ferried across the Bosporus to Asia Minor as soon as possible.[10]

In dealing with the first wave, the rather disparate group led by Peter the Hermit and Walter Sansavoir, carrot very soon gave way to stick. Komnene describes how, when Peter and his followers first arrived at Constantinople, Alexios initially advised him to wait on the European side of the straits until the other contingents arrived. Peter, she says, ignored the advice and crossed the Bosporus. There his force rashly became involved in a confrontation with a Turkish army near Nicaea and was almost annihilated. Alexios sent a force to rescue the survivors, and lectured Peter on his foolishness in ignoring his wise counsel.[11] Komnene's account is suspect here, in so far as it contradicts her statement elsewhere that Alexios wished above all to prevent the crusader armies from linking up on the European side. Hindsight is evidently at work too, for Komnene is trying to defend Alexios from later accusations that he had betrayed Peter to the Turks. A Western chronicle, the *Gesta Francorum*, gives a more convincing version of events. No sooner did Peter reach Constantinople than his followers started looting the suburbs, stripping lead from the roofs in order to sell it. It was therefore Alexios who, not unreasonably, insisted that they be ferried across to the opposite shore of the Bosporus.[12] The safety of Constantinople took precedence over that of Peter and his undisciplined army.

With the second and third waves, Komnene depicts Alexios and his court applying a more sophisticated policy, which sought to draw benefit from the crusaders as well as neutralizing the threat they posed. The element of security was certainly there. As they moved through Byzantine territory towards Constantinople, the crusader armies were subjected to close surveillance by bands of Pecheneg mercenaries in Byzantine service. Once they arrived, they were not allowed into the city itself but rather were persuaded to pitch camp near the upper reaches of the Golden Horn around the Kosmidion monastery, outside the walls but close to Alexios's residence in the Blachernae palace.[13] Some of the methods used to keep this intimidating horde under control were tough, to say the least. To prevent the armies from linking up, messengers plying between them were intercepted. When Hugh of Vermandois arrived on the Byzantine Adriatic coast with only a few followers, after his fleet had been scattered by a storm, the Byzantine governor of Dyrrachion had him placed under close escort and taken to Constantinople as a virtual prisoner.[14] With control established, a softer line could be adopted. Each of the leaders was required to swear an oath, described by Anna Komnene as 'the customary oath of the Latins' which contained an undertaking to hand over to Alexios any captured towns which had previously belonged to the empire.[15] When all had complied with this requirement, the tone of the reception changed dramatically. Alexios handed out generous quantities of gold, silver and costly fabrics as a sign of his approval, filling an entire room of the Kosmidion with presents for Bohemond. In addition, honorary membership of the imperial family appears to have been granted to some of the leaders, who were adopted as Alexios's sons.[16]

None of these methods was new. Strict supervision had always been applied to large groups of foreigners passing through the empire. In their treaties with the Russians in the previous century, the Byzantines had been careful to stipulate that their people should only enter Constantinople by one particular gate, unarmed and in groups of no more than 50, and that they were to be kept under surveillance by an imperial officer. As already discussed, the administration of oaths to foreigners was another traditional practice. Michael Attaleiates had done so to the Turkic mercenaries in the Byzantine army on the eve of the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 to ensure their loyalty in the coming battle, and oaths had recently been required from Robert of Flanders, Robert Guiscard and the emperor Henry IV when they entered into agreements with the empire. Gifts of gold, silver and silks had, of course, been poured into the eager hands of 'barbarians' for centuries. Even adoption of some of the leaders as sons was not new. Something similar had been conferred on the Bulgarian khan Boris in 865. These were standard procedures for neutralizing external threats and turning them to the advantage of the *Oikoumene*.[17]

In many ways, to judge by Komnene's account, Alexios and his advisers succeeded in doing just that. When the second wave of crusaders had crossed to Asia Minor in May 1097, their first objective was the city of Nicaea, which had been in Turkish hands since 1078. The Latins invested the city by land, and a squadron of Byzantine ships was launched onto the large lake which borders Nicaea to the west to prevent supplies coming in that way. When a relieving force, led by the Turkish sultan Kilidj Arslan I, failed to break through, the garrison surrendered to the Byzantine emperor on 19 June 1097. Later that month, the crusader armies set out across Asia Minor accompanied by a small Byzantine force, and struck a severe blow against the Seljuk Turks at the Battle of Dorylaion. During 1097 and 1098 Alexios took advantage of the disarray into which the Turks had been thrown by the arrival of these new and formidable opponents and sent his brother-in-law, the Grand Duke John Doukas, with an army into western Asia Minor against the independent Turkish emir Tzachas, who was based at Smyrna. Taking with him as a hostage Tzachas's daughter, who had been captured at Nicaea, Doukas fought a successful campaign, taking Smyrna, Ephesus and Philadelphia, and restoring Byzantine rule in the area. Further gains followed in the wake of the third wave of crusaders in 1101. One contingent marched into north-eastern Anatolia. Although it enjoyed little success against the Turks, it did capture Ankyra and the town was then handed over to Alexios in accordance with the oaths sworn in Constantinople. As a result, the Byzantines were later able to reassert their control over much of the Black Sea coast.[18]

In some respects, therefore, the handling of the First Crusade by Alexios and his advisers appears to have been another example of the successful

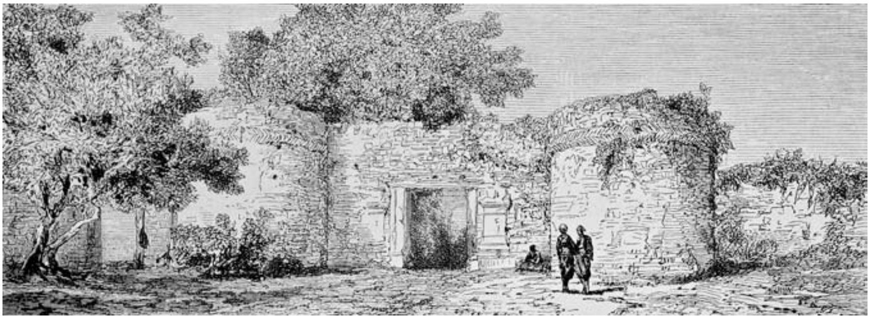


**FIGURE 5** *The eastern gate in the walls of Nicaea which kept the army of the First Crusade at bay for a month.* (Antonio Abrignani/Shutterstock.com)

application of accumulated wisdom, enabling them not only to prevent any attempt to seize Constantinople, but also to recover a substantial part of Asia Minor. Nonetheless, Anna Komnene still lamented that Alexios's toils over the crusade had 'won no advantage for the Roman empire'.[19] From her vantage point in the mid-twelfth century, she could see that the crusade had led directly to the Norman seizure of Antioch and to the anti-Byzantine propaganda that was by then circulating in western Europe. She put these setbacks down to a sinister plot harboured by the perpetrator of the deed, Bohemond of Taranto, from the beginning:

> The truth is that Bohemond was a habitual rogue . . . He was a bitter man, for as he had no inheritance at all to speak of, he had set out from his native land, in theory to worship at the Holy Sepulchre, but he had really done so in order to win power for himself – and better, if possible, to seize the Roman empire itself, as his father [Robert Guiscard] had suggested.[20]

Needless to say, the causes of tension lay much deeper than just Bohemond's supposedly bad character.

Impressive and successful though the methods of Byzantine foreign policy had been in the past, they had largely been developed for use in dealing with peoples who had no difficulty accepting the assumption of superiority that was integral to the way in which the Byzantines dealt with outsiders. True, modifications had been introduced when dealing with Muslim powers, which were often as wealthy and powerful as the empire and possessed their own religious ideology in Islam. The fact remained, however, that Byzantine foreign policy assumed, and was designed to secure acceptance of, the Byzantine emperor's leadership of the Christian world.

The problem with the crusaders was that they had their own Christian ideology, which was very difficult to reconcile with the Byzantine world view. They regarded themselves as soldiers of Christ, commissioned by God himself, through Pope Urban, to liberate the city of Jerusalem from the infidel. There could be no higher or more noble cause for a pious Christian. As Guibert of Nogent put it, the crusaders were the Lord's army, waging a 'most legitimate war' to protect the holy Church. God Himself led them and fought through them.[21] The treatment that the crusaders experienced once they arrived in the Byzantine empire, and the behaviour of Alexios in putting the interests of his own empire before the capture of Jerusalem, therefore often aroused shock and outrage.

That said, the early misunderstandings may not have been the result of policies hatched in the corridors of power in Constantinople. As in all medieval states, the writ of the Byzantine emperor became weaker the further his subjects were from Constantinople and Alexios's subordinates, the dukes who ran the frontier provinces, for whom large armies on the border usually meant a hostile invasion, probably applied too much stick. When the crusader armies first crossed into Byzantine territory, whether by land or sea, they found that their heels were dogged by bands of Byzantine troops and before long, clashes occurred. Bohemond's contingent of south Italian Normans was attacked by Pecheneg mercenaries without warning as it forded a river. In the ensuing tussle, the Normans captured several Pechenegs who, on being asked why they had attacked, said that they had been ordered to do so by the emperor. Raymond of Aguilers and Peter Tudebode recount how Count Raymond of Toulouse and his Provençal army, having come under attack from the Slavs as they travelled down the Dalmatian coast, believed that they were safely on Christian territory once they arrived at the Byzantine city of Dyrrachion. The harassment continued from the Pechenegs, however, who allegedly attacked and robbed the papal legate, Adhémar of Le Puy. The Western chroniclers felt particularly aggrieved by this treatment because it contrasted so starkly with friendly letters from the emperor which arrived at the same time, speaking of peace, brotherhood and alliance: Alexios was, perhaps, merely trying to distance himself from the actions of his over-zealous subordinates.[22]

The orders sent out from Constantinople about the provision of food for the crusaders did not work well either. According to Komnene, the emperor ordered that they were to be supplied 'abundantly with provisions gathered from all over along their route'. In practice, the provision was patchy which is hardly surprising given the number of mouths that had to be fed. Godfrey of Bouillon's contingent was well supplied when it reached Nish and Philippopolis but other groups did not fare as well. Many towns closed their gates when the crusade armies approached and refused to sell the food, leaving the Latins with no option but to plunder what they needed from the land round about. Raymond of Toulouse's contingent even captured and sacked one Thracian town, Roussa.[23]

Once the armies were in the environs of Constantinople, the emperor was better able to control events but further tension was to develop further as a result of Alexios's demand that all the leaders should swear an oath to him. Some, such as Bohemond of Taranto, Robert II of Flanders and Stephen of Blois did so without demur, but others put up violent resistance, protesting that the demand was 'unworthy of us'.[24] The issue seems to have been behind several clashes between imperial troops and Godfrey of Bouillon's contingent outside the walls of Constantinople between December 1096 and April 1097, although Godfrey did reluctantly swear in the end.[25] Bohemond's nephew, Tancred of Hauteville, did his best to avoid having to swear by crossing the Bosporus secretly with his contingent. When he was later summoned by Alexios to fall into line, he protested vigorously that he wanted no other lord than his uncle and ended up in an undignified scuffle with Alexios's brother-in-law, George Palaiologos, before he too reluctantly swore.[26] The most determined opponent of the oath was Raymond of Toulouse, who insisted that he had taken a vow to God alone, meaning presumably his oath to join the expedition to Jerusalem. He only yielded when he was urgently beseeched to do so by some of the leaders and threatened with violence by Bohemond. Even then he insisted on swearing a modified form of the oath: he only promised either not to sully the life or honour of Alexios, or not to take away the emperor's life or possessions, depending on how the Latin of the chronicles is translated.[27] It is likely that the oaths of 1096–7, like that administered to Robert Guiscard in 1074, would have involved giving an undertaking to show 'the submission and good intentions' which the emperor was due.[28] It was that element, rather than the undertaking to hand back conquered cities, that would account for the hostility.

The whole episode seems to have rankled and to have been seen as an unnecessary humiliation. Anna Komnene's tales of the boastfulness and arrogance of the crusade leaders, though no doubt exaggerated, probably reflect this resentment and the need for self-assertion by people far from home who felt themselves belittled and despised. On one occasion, when Alexios was receiving some of the leaders, probably in the Blachernae palace, one of them, to whom Komnene accords the unlikely name of 'Latinus', had the effrontery to sit himself down on Alexios's throne, in flagrant violation of the custom that all should stand in the presence of the emperor.[29] The crusade leaders clearly felt that they were every bit as good as the Byzantines, and sometimes took a contemptuous attitude to the gifts that their hosts distributed to those who complied with the imperial will. Some complained that they received too little. Raymond of Aguilers grumbled that his master Raymond of Toulouse had his share cut to a minimum because of his obstinacy over the oath. Albert of Aachen felt that Alexios's gifts were not gifts at all because they went straight back into his treasury when they were used to buy food in the emperor's own markets. Even those who were generously treated could be insulted by the very lavishness of the gifts. Bohemond initially sent back the riches brought to him by the emperor's servants and Tancred of Hauteville allegedly dismissed his presents as 'vulgar things', demanding Alexios's tent instead.[30]

In one important respect, that of military prowess, the crusaders regarded themselves as distinctly superior. Komnene has 'Latinus' proclaim proudly:

> I am a pure Frank and of noble birth. One thing I know: at a crossroads in the country where I was born is an ancient shrine; to this anyone who wishes to engage in single combat goes, prepared to fight; there he prays to God for help and there he stays awaiting the man who will dare to answer his challenge. At that crossroads I myself have spent time, waiting and longing for the man who would fight – but there was never one who dared.[31]

A further cause for resentment was the way the emperor seemed on occasion to take a friendlier attitude to Muslims, the enemies of the faith, than he did to the soldiers of Christ. Following the capture of Nicaea in June 1097, the crusaders were shocked at the emperor's lenient treatment of the garrison, who were offered the choice of enrolling in the Byzantine army or being given a safe conduct back to their own land. The crusaders felt that they had been robbed of their chance to plunder the city, in spite of the presents distributed by Alexios to make up for it, and suspected that the enrolment of Turks in the Byzantine armies was part of some future plan to do damage to the crusaders.[32] They were not entirely mistaken here. Although Alexios probably had no particular desire to see the crusade fail, he did not want to be left on bad terms with his Muslim neighbours if, as seemed likely, it did come to grief. Following the victory of the crusaders at Dorylaion in July 1097, the emperor redeemed many of the Turkish prisoners and had them transported to Constantinople. No doubt they were offered the same choice as the garrison of Nicaea. Nor did Alexios see any reason to cease the friendly contacts with the Fatimid regime in Egypt, built up by his predecessors. He even wrote to warn them of the approach of the crusade. He probably also alerted the Danishmend and Seljuk Turks to the approach of the third wave in 1101. Alexios was, of course, merely pursuing the interests of his empire by all possible means but, measured alongside the standards of the ideology of the crusade, such actions could easily be regarded as treachery.[33]

Deeply felt though the anger of the crusade leaders was, it would be wrong to accord it too much significance in the long term. In the first place, it appears that not everyone shared the frustration of some of the crusade leaders. As to the harassment by Byzantine troops in the Balkans, many crusaders were well aware that these attacks on their armies were more than balanced by the damage and looting perpetrated by Westerners. Similar activities by some crusaders in Hungary had elicited a comparable response from the government there.[34] As far as the stay in Constantinople is concerned, there were some who felt that their reception had not been in the least unfriendly or demeaning. Both Stephen, count of Blois, and Fulcher of Chartres, a priest in his army, left glowing accounts, praising Alexios's generosity and asserting that the journey could not have been made without his assistance.[35]

In the case of those who did feel that they had cause for complaint, there was no reason why the misunderstandings and tensions of 1096 and 1097 could not be forgotten later. This was certainly so in the case of Raymond of Toulouse. Although his contingent had fought some of the fiercest battles with Byzantine troops in the Balkans, and although he had been the most obstinate opponent of the oath, following the capture of Jerusalem in 1099 Raymond returned to Constantinople and became a staunch ally of Alexios. His change of heart was no doubt motivated by fear of the intentions of his fellow crusaders, Bohemond and Tancred, and by the tensions that had developed in 1098. The Byzantines were always only too happy to exploit such rifts among their enemies.[36]

None of the resentments voiced by some of the leaders over their treatment by the Byzantines should therefore have been anything more than ruffled feathers which would have been smoothed over again in course of time. As it happened, however, within a few years of the capture of Jerusalem, they had come to form the basis of a virulent anti-Byzantine propaganda that was circulating in western Europe. This was a result of the second unforeseen outcome of Byzantine policy towards the First Crusade, the annexation by Bohemond of the city of Antioch.

Both the crusaders and their Byzantine hosts must have known, during the winter and spring of 1096–7, that, if it were to reach Jerusalem, the Western army would have to capture Antioch. The city lay astride the main route from Asia Minor into Syria and Palestine, and was strongly fortified. It was not feasible to leave it as a centre for Turkish resistance in the rear. Although it had been under Muslim rule for a long period between the seventh and tenth centuries, in 969 it had been reconquered by the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas. It had only been lost again to the Seljuk Turks relatively recently, in 1084, when they had taken it from the Armenian Philaretos.[37]

Given the strategic importance of Antioch, it must have come up for discussion at some point or another during the crusaders' stay in the vicinity of Constantinople. The Byzantine court would have regarded it as being included in what they regarded as one of the most important clauses of the oaths taken by each leader, a promise 'that whatever cities, countries or forts he might in future subdue which had in the first place belonged to the Roman empire, he would hand over to the officer appointed by the emperor for this very purpose'.[38] From the Byzantine point of view, the whole performance was a routine way of extracting due recognition of the emperor's status and ensuring that the crusade worked to the empire's benefit. For their part, the crusaders would certainly have felt themselves bound by the oaths once they had taken them, for in their world the solemn link between lord and man formed a major basis of social obligation. They would, however, have regarded the oaths as involving much greater mutual commitment than the Byzantines appear to have done. The crusaders would have expected that their lord, Alexios, would fulfil his part of the bargain, by protecting and aiding his vassals, giving counsel and help in time of need. The anonymous author of the *Gesta Francorum* expresses this view, asserting that Alexios

> guaranteed good faith and security to all our men, and swore also to come with us, bringing an army and a navy, and faithfully to provide us with provisions by both land and sea, and to take care to restore all those things that we had lost. Moreover he promised that he would not cause or permit anyone to trouble or vex our pilgrims on the way to the Holy Sepulchre.[39]

At the time the oaths were taken, such a commitment might well have been merely understood, rather than spelt out so succinctly. In all probability, the Byzantine courtiers had acted in their accustomed way and employed well-turned but ambiguous phrases to reinforce an impression of support without making any definite commitment. A letter despatched by the crusade leaders to the pope from Antioch during the first half of 1098, reporting on the agreement made with the emperor, states that Alexios had promised only ‘that none of the pilgrims to the Holy Sepulchre would suffer any more injury’: no mention was made of any promise to supply the crusaders. Nevertheless, subsequent events suggest the crusaders believed that Alexios was under an obligation to assist them.[40]

Any specific discussion of Antioch during the spring of 1097 was reserved by Alexios for his supposedly deeply mistrusted former foe, Bohemond. According to an odd passage in the anonymous *Gesta Francorum*, Bohemond was summoned into the emperor’s presence and promised that, if he took the required oath, he would be given ‘land in extent from Antioch fifteen days’ journey, and eight in width’. This passage, which was copied into several other chronicles sits very oddly in the text of the *Gesta*, breaking into an account of how regrettable and humiliating it was for Bohemond and his followers to be required to take the oath. It has therefore often been dismissed an interpolation, added to the chronicle later for purposes of anti-Byzantine propaganda.[41] It seems likely, nevertheless, that Alexios did attempt to reach some kind of agreement with Bohemond, possibly involving Antioch, by which the Byzantines would be able to make use of his services. Anna Komnene claims that, when Alexios met Bohemond, the Norman demanded to be invested with the office of Domestic of the East, the commander of the Eastern armies, who in the past had operated from frontier bases like Antioch. Alexios, she says, neither granted the request nor denied it, flattering the Norman with hopes and pleading that the time was not ripe at present. Komnene may not be telling the whole story here. Other evidence suggests that Bohemond certainly did regard himself as being in the service of the Byzantines. When Raymond of Toulouse resolutely refused to take the oath, it was Bohemond who threatened to take the emperor’s part and to compel the count to comply. In May 1097 it was again Bohemond who organized the provisioning of the crusader army, a task which was the responsibility of the emperor but which he had perhaps delegated.[42]

Bohemond’s conduct here would suggest that Alexios was pursuing the familiar policy of recruiting mercenaries for the imperial army. It was not in the least out of the ordinary that he should attempt to recruit a former enemy: he had incorporated the defeated Pechenegs into his army in 1091. It was not, moreover, only Bohemond whom he was striving to hire: in June 1097 he offered to pay those among the crusader host who did not want to continue to Jerusalem to stay and guard Nicaea. His grandson Manuel I was to make similar offers at the time of the Second Crusade.[43] The terms on which Bohemond’s services were obtained will, of course, never be known but Alexios’s temporizing words, reported by Komnene, may have led the Norman to believe that he was somehow entitled to Antioch.

Up to the capture of Nicaea in June 1097, the agreement between Alexios and the crusade leaders worked well enough. After the victory, Alexios called a conference of the crusade leaders, to be held at Pelekanon, between Nicaea and Constantinople. The gathering was partly designed to ensure that all those prominent in the crusader host, who had not yet taken the oath, should now do so.[44] It was at this point that the crusaders urged the emperor to join their enterprise and march at their head to Jerusalem, a point on which he displayed considerable evasiveness. As he explained to Raymond of Toulouse, he was worried that his empire would be invaded by foreign enemies if he left its capital. Anna Komnene claimed that it was the vast number of the crusaders that deterred him from joining the enterprise. Whatever the precise excuse, it was agreed instead that, when the crusading host set out for Jerusalem, it would be accompanied only by a small detachment under a Byzantine general called Tatikios, whose task was 'to help and protect them on all occasions and also to take over from them any cities they captured'.[45] Alexios was once more putting his own empire first, and committing as few of its resources as possible to what must have seemed a rather dubious enterprise. So when the crusade army set out across Asia Minor in the summer of 1097, Alexios and the bulk of his forces remained behind. The defeat of the Turkish force sent to obstruct their march at Dorylaion in July 1097 was achieved largely without Byzantine help. Nevertheless, the crusaders continued to observe the terms of their oath. When in September they relieved the city of Comana, just south of Caesarea, which was under siege by the Danishmend Turks, a Provençal knight was installed with a garrison to hold the city for Alexios and the crusade leaders.[46]

It was only at Antioch that the agreement began to break down. The host arrived before the city in October 1097 but found it extremely difficult to capture. The main problem was that the city's walls were so long that it was impossible for the crusaders to blockade every single section of them, which meant that supplies could still be brought in to the besieged Turkish garrison. The crusaders, on the other hand, found themselves constantly short of provisions and were forced to endure great hardship during the winter of 1097–8. During that time, even the limited Byzantine cooperation with the crusaders on the spot all but disappeared. In about February 1098, Tatikios had abandoned the crusade army and departed for Cyprus. The sources give widely differing reasons for his defection. Anna Komnene, with obvious application of hindsight, claims that the whole thing was engineered by Bohemond, who knew that if Antioch were captured he would be compelled by his oath to hand it over to Alexios. He therefore decided to get rid of Tatikios by telling him that the other leaders were plotting to murder him. The Byzantine general was in any case distressed by the famine and despaired of Antioch ever being taken, so he quietly did as he was advised and left. The Latin sources, taking their cue from the *Gesta Francorum*, assert that Tatikios was afraid when he heard of the approach of a Turkish army and departed with the excuse that he was going to Cyprus to collect supplies. Neither version is particularly convincing, though it is perhaps significant that Alexios was not in the least displeased with his general for abandoning his post, appointing him to the command of a Byzantine fleet shortly afterwards. Given Alexios's own actions a few months later, he could hardly have blamed his subordinate for abandoning what appeared to be a hopeless situation.[47]

Antioch finally fell on 3 June 1098, nearly nine months after the siege had begun. The main credit for its capture went to Bohemond. He had made contact with an Armenian renegade inside the city who had lowered a rope from the walls during the night to admit the crusaders. In the ensuing fighting, the Turkish governor, Yaghi Siyan, was killed, along with considerable numbers of Antioch's inhabitants. This triumph did not end the crusaders' ordeal, for when the outer city was overrun, the Turkish garrison took refuge in the citadel which towers some 300 metres above it. There they held out, while the arrival of a large relieving force under the command of Kerbogha, atabeg of Mosul, meant that the Westerners were themselves now besieged in Antioch, heavily outnumbered by their Muslim opponents. The shortage of food became desperate, since the crusaders were penned in between the citadel and Kerbogha's army and so could no longer forage in the countryside round about. They were reduced to eating thistles and leaves, and to stewing the skins of horses and asses. There was one hope left: that the emperor Alexios would come with his army to relieve them.[48]

News of these events reached Constantinople and, according to Anna Komnene, Alexios 'was much concerned to bring help personally' to the crusaders.[49] He said much the same himself in response to a letter from the abbot of Monte Cassino, which had earnestly exhorted him to go to their aid:

> Let your venerable Holiness be assured on that score, for Our Majesty has been placed at their disposal and will aid and advise them on all matters: indeed we have already cooperated with them according to our ability, not as a friend, or relative, but like a father. We have expended among them more than anyone can enumerate. And had not Our Majesty so cooperated with them and aided them, who else would have afforded them help? Nor does it grieve Our Majesty to assist a second time.

This typical production of the Byzantine chancery was accompanied by an equally typical sweetener in the shape of a gift of gold.[50] In spite of the claims in the letter, however, little had been done during the winter of 1097–8. Byzantine ships did attempt to reach Antioch with supplies but there is no truth in the story that Alexios despatched Edgar the Aethling with a fleet and siege engines to help the crusaders.[51] Nor would it seem that the emperor was in any hurry to rush to Antioch himself. His letter to Monte Cassino was despatched from Constantinople in June 1098, indicating that he had still not yet set out, months after the siege began and at the very time when the crusading army was facing its greatest peril. There can be no doubt of Alexios's priorities here. What came first was the security of the *Oikoumene*. Anna Komnene says that Alexios was kept at home by the damage being inflicted on the Byzantine coast by Turkish pirates operating on the orders of the emir Tzachas in Smyrna. It was during the siege of Antioch in the campaigning seasons of 1097 and 1098, that Alexios entrusted a large part of his armed forces to the grand duke John Doukas and sent him to fight Tzachas and restore much of western Asia Minor to Byzantine control.[52]

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1098, Alexios did march east with a sizeable force towards Antioch. He got as far as the town of Philomelion, approximately halfway between Constantinople and the besieged crusaders. There he was met by Stephen of Blois and two other Western knights who, like Tatikios, had despaired of the situation and abandoned the surrounded army at Antioch. They now informed the emperor of the desperate straits to which their comrades had been reduced and swore oaths that the Christian force was on the verge of surrender. Moreover, rumours were spreading throughout the Byzantine camp that a huge Turkish army was on its way to prevent the emperor from linking up with his fellow Christians in Antioch. Given the information put before him, it is unlikely that Alexios hesitated for long, although Komnene gives the impression that he agonized for some time over what decision to make. The main consideration was that he 'might lose Constantinople as well as Antioch'. He cannot have forgotten that Romanos IV had lost the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 by pressing forward, against advice, to engage with a large Turkish force. He therefore decided to retreat and to lead the army back towards Constantinople, taking the evacuated Christian population of the area with him. It was the sensible decision and one which had the interests of the *Oikoumene* at its heart, but in taking it, Alexios had deliberately abandoned the crusaders to their fate.[53]

That fate proved to be rather different from what might have been expected, for events in Antioch now took an extraordinary turn. A soldier in the army of Raymond of Toulouse, called Peter Bartholomew, claimed that St Andrew had appeared to him in a dream. The apostle had revealed that beneath an altar in Antioch's Cathedral of St Peter lay hidden the Holy Lance with which the centurion had pierced the side of Christ during the Crucifixion and that its discovery would be a sign from God that the crusaders would prevail against all their enemies. Thirteen men were sent to the cathedral to investigate Peter's claims and after a day of toil unearthed the lance. Not everyone was convinced by this miraculous find. Fulcher of Chartres suspected that the relic had been planted. Anna Komnene, who knew that the real Holy Lance was safely in the Great Palace in Constantinople, referred to Peter Bartholomew's relic as the 'Holy Nail', as if it were something quite different. For most of the crusaders though, the discovery had a dramatic effect on morale and galvanized them into preparing a desperate counter-attack against the Turks.[54]

On 28 June 1098, after three days of fasting, masses and religious processions, the crusaders moved out of Antioch in six lines of battle and mounted a furious charge against the Turkish army of Kerbogha. Although heavily outnumbered and weak from fasting and privations, the Christian army had a huge advantage in its conviction that God was fighting on their side. Many crusaders afterwards reported that they had seen figures mounted on white horses leading the charge: undoubtedly St George and other soldier saints, dispatched by God to their aid. Even Anna Komnene had to admit that 'a divine power was manifestly aiding the Christians'. Unnerved by the ferocity of the onslaught, Kerbogha's Turks scattered and fled, abandoning their camp and supplies. From his vantage point in the citadel, the commander of the Turkish garrison watched the disaster unfold and realized at once what it meant. He promptly surrendered the citadel, leaving the crusaders in undisputed possession of the entire city. It was an outcome that nobody could possibly have predicted.[55]

The problem now arose of what to do with Antioch. Under the agreement made in Constantinople it should have been handed over to the Byzantines but that was not possible in the absence of Tatikios. Even while the siege was still in progress Bohemond, perhaps on the basis of his understanding with Alexios, had been urging the other leaders to allow him to take over the governorship of the city.[56] But the oath to Alexios had not forgotten and at that point it is unlikely that the leadership knew that Alexios had turned back from Philomelion when they had such need of his assistance. So Hugh of Vermandois and Baldwin, count of Hainault, were sent to Constantinople in July 1098 to invite the emperor to come and take control of Antioch, but also to suggest that he should keep what the crusaders regarded as his promise to assist them in taking Jerusalem. Some exasperation is evident from the wording of the message entrusted to Hugh. The crusaders specifically stated that they would regard the agreement as lapsed if the emperor did not come.[57]

Inexplicably, Alexios took his time to respond to Hugh's embassy and he certainly did not arrive in person. Only in March 1099 did some of his representatives catch up with the crusade leaders who were by that time far south of Antioch at Arqa in Syria, where they had moved on the next stage of their journey to Jerusalem.[58] By that time the situation had changed completely. Throughout the previous autumn, Bohemond had been lobbying vigorously to be allowed to take over the rule of Antioch. So confident was he of success that he had even made an agreement with the Genoese, promising them trading concessions in the city and the area round about. His demand that been stoutly resisted by Raymond of Toulouse on the grounds that it would be a breach of the oath made to the emperor and while the other leaders were less hostile, they did warn Bohemond to pull his troops back from the nearby port of Laodikeia as by rights it belonged to the Byzantines. The stand-off came to a head at the end of 1098, shortly after the crusade army had taken the Syrian town of Maara. Bohemond had left the army and had returned north with his men to Antioch. There he had ejected the garrisons that Raymond had installed in some of the towers in the defensive walls and had gained complete control of the city.[59]

When Alexios's envoys arrived at Arqa the following spring, they had presumably already been to Antioch and unsuccessfully demanded that the city be handed over. All they could do was complain bitterly about Bohemond. Standing before Godfrey of Bouillon, Raymond of Toulouse and the other leaders, they declared that by remaining in occupation of Antioch, Bohemond had broken the agreement to return all captured towns and cities to the emperor. They received little sympathy. The leaders objected that it had been Alexios who had broken the oath, by failing to follow immediately with a large army and by omitting to send provisions. In a spirited attempt to win them over, the envoys distributed the usual gifts and begged the leaders to wait until July before continuing to Jerusalem because by then the emperor would arrive with his army. Only Raymond of Toulouse spoke in support of this proposal. The other leaders voted to ignore it and to continue the march south immediately towards the next target, the port of Tripoli. The envoys had to depart empty handed. Needless to say, the promised Byzantine army never arrived or even set out.[60]

The lack of interest shown by most of the crusade leaders in Alexios's complaint is hardly to be wondered at. The great expedition to the East was now rapidly moving to its climax as the army drew near to its ultimate goal, the holy city of Jerusalem. After failing to capture the fortress at Arqa, the crusaders moved south during May 1099 first to Tripoli and then to Caesarea. On 7 June 1099 the host found itself before the walls of Jerusalem.[61] Since the previous August, the city had been under the control of the Egyptian Fatimids and it was by no means unprepared for the attack. The crusaders laid siege but, as in the case of Antioch, the assault soon ran into difficulties. The walls were too long and the crusaders too few to invest the city completely and food and water were in short supply: the latter had to be fetched from springs 6 miles away. Ominous reports began to circulate in the Christian camp that the Fatimid caliph was marching north from Egypt with a relieving force. The leaders therefore sought to reawaken the religious enthusiasm which had proved so effective at Antioch, ordering a solemn religious procession around the walls and a fast to implore God's help in taking Jerusalem. In the attack that followed on 15 July 1099, two knights from Tournai who were part of Godfrey of Bouillon's contingent succeeded in gaining a foothold on the walls by leaping across from a wooden siege tower, and opened the way for the crusaders to pour in.[62]

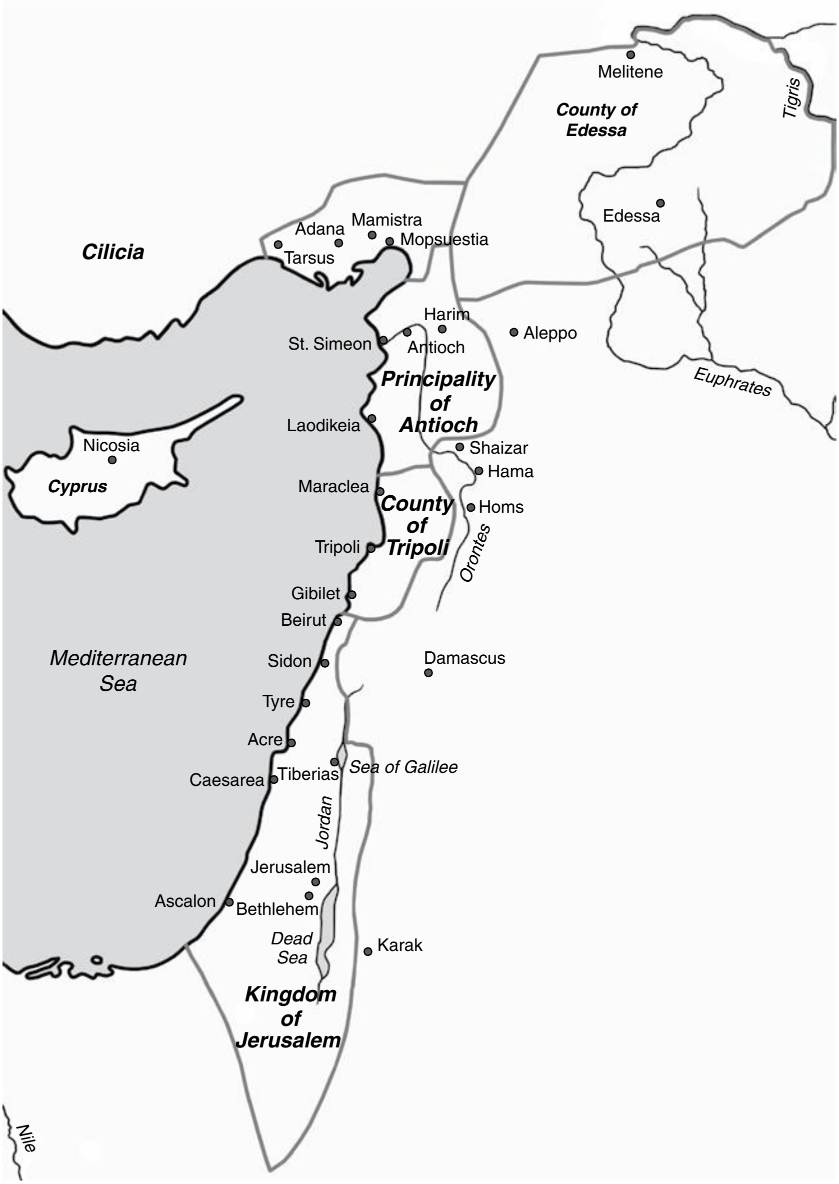
It is impossible to know how the news of the fall of Jerusalem was received in Constantinople but one suspects that it was not greeted with joy as some extraordinary Christian triumph. Anna Komnene devotes only a few lines to it and disapprovingly noted that 'many Saracens and Jews in the city were massacred'.[63] Report of events after the breakthrough had evidently reached the Byzantine court of how Jews who had taken refuge in a synagogue all died when it was burned over their heads and how in the al-Aqsa mosque imams, scholars and pilgrims were indiscriminately killed.[64] Unscrupulous and underhanded though the Byzantines could often be, they were acutely aware of the dangerous and destabilizing effect that religious fanaticism could have on international relations.

Komnene's lack of interest in the fall of Jerusalem also reflected the Byzantine court's obsession with the loss of Antioch. Her disappointment at the outcome of the First Crusade is therefore quite understandable. Although part of Asia Minor had been restored to imperial rule, its most important city had been withheld. What Komnene did not admit, however, was that the very methods employed by Alexios and his advisers had helped to bring the situation about. They had aroused resentment among the crusader leaders, and that resentment, to judge by the curt dismissal of Alexios's envoys at Arqa, had been used to justify the seizure of Antioch. The future status of the city, in turn, was to dictate Byzantine relations with the crusading movement and the crusader states for years to come.

# 5

# Jerusalem and Antioch

While the makers of Byzantine foreign policy had dealt with the First Crusade in the only way they knew how, and had achieved mixed success in obtaining their goals, the problems created by the expedition did not disappear after 1099. Although the crusade itself had come and gone, it left a legacy in the shape of four new Christian states in Syria and Palestine, which formed the basis of a Western presence that was to endure until 1291. The first of these states to come into being was the county of Edessa. It was formed by Baldwin of Boulogne who, while the rest of the host was besieging Antioch in late 1097, led his contingent to the city of Edessa at the invitation of its Armenian Christian inhabitants and established himself as ruler of the surrounding area. Edessa was followed by the principality of Antioch, the result of Bohemond's refusal to hand the conquered city over to Alexios I in 1098. To the south, Raymond of Toulouse, disappointed in his attempts to secure first Antioch and later Jerusalem, had conquered most of the coast between Gibelet and Maraclea by 1104 and formed the county of Tripoli. The largest and most prestigious of the Latin states was the kingdom of Jerusalem. With the city of Jerusalem in Christian hands, Godfrey of Bouillon was elected to rule the city but he stopped short of styling himself king and settled instead for 'advocate' or 'prince'.[1] After his death in 1100, he was succeeded by his brother, Baldwin of Boulogne, who showed no such hesitation and became the first king of Jerusalem. The crusader victory over the Fatimid relieving force at Ascalon in August 1099 and subsequent campaigns created a viable kingdom which, by the end of Baldwin's reign, extended from Beirut to the Negev desert. The Western settlers of the kingdom of Jerusalem and the other crusader states were far outnumbered by their new Muslim and Eastern Christian subjects and formed an isolated outpost of Christendom in a part of the world dominated by Islam, but they survived for a number of reasons. The disunity of the Muslims was probably the major one but the concentrated programme of castle building which created a string of impregnable strongholds to hold down the surrounding countryside also undoubtedly played a part. The Templars and Hospitallers, orders of knights who lived under a monastic rule, provided a standing defence force to man the castles and to take the field against Muslim armies. All these factors ensured that the crusader states were no transient phenomenon and that successive Byzantine emperors and their advisers would have to decide what to do about them over a period of almost 200 years.


Melitene
County of Edessa
Tigris
Edessa
Cilicia
Adana
Mamistra
Mopsuestia
Tarsus
Harim
Aleppo
St. Simeon
Antioch
Principality of Antioch
Euphrates
Laodikeia
Nicosia
Cyprus
Shaizar
Hama
Maraclea
County of Tripoli
Homs
Tripoli
Orontes
Gibilet
Beirut
Mediterranean Sea
Sidon
Damascus
Tyre
Acre
Sea of Galilee
Caesarea
Tiberias
Jordan
Jerusalem
Ascalon
Bethlehem
Dead Sea
Karak
Kingdom of Jerusalem
Nile

**MAP 3** *The Latin states of Syria and Palestine.*

The Byzantine court might have been expected to have welcomed the establishment of these Christian states in the region. They lay beyond the territory in Asia Minor occupied by various groups in the years after Manzikert: the Armenians in Cilicia, the Danishmend Turks based in the area around Sebesteia and the Seljuk Turks who, after the loss of Nicaea in 1097, had centred their power on the town of Ikonion. These were the enemies that the Byzantines would have to subdue if they were to restore their control over the whole of Asia Minor and the Latins were potential allies. Certainly the Byzantines never voiced any objection to Baldwin of Boulogne's takeover in Edessa, even though the town had belonged to the empire as recently as 1087 and had a sizeable Greek-speaking population, loyal to the emperor. In the case of Raymond of Toulouse's ambitions towards Tripoli, Alexios actively assisted him in conquering the area, by ordering the Byzantine governor of Cyprus to help the count in building a castle at Pilgrim's Mountain. He maintained an equally cordial relationship with Raymond's successor, Bertrand.[2]

Towards the principality of Antioch and the kingdom of Jerusalem, however, the line taken was very different, one partly dictated by the nature of the Byzantine court in the early years of the twelfth century. Alexios I had come to power in a military coup at a time of national crisis. In order to legitimize his position, he laid stress on his role as the saviour of the empire, the restorer of the traditional values which he claimed had been abandoned by his weak and feckless predecessors. One of his first actions on taking over in Constantinople in 1081 had been to bring in his formidable mother, Anna Dalassena, to reform the morals of the imperial palace. According to Anna Komnene, the palace had been 'a scene of utter depravity' but under Anna Dalassena's regime it came to resemble a monastery. There also appears to have been a purge of the palace bureaucrats. Whereas the intellectual Michael Psellos had dominated imperial policy for most of the 1050s, 1060s and 1070s, his pupil, John Italos, was accused of heresy and disgraced within months of Alexios's accession. Instead, Alexios often chose his advisers from members of his own family, devising new titles and honours in order to promote them above existing officials.[3] In such an atmosphere, the foreign policy adopted by Alexios was likely to be at best traditional and at worst decidedly unimaginative and his son and successor, John II, was to follow suit. In their dealings with the Latin states, they were to pursue the same goals, with the same methods, as the empire always had. These small lordships posed no direct danger to Constantinople, so the protection of the imperial city was not the aim here. Rather was the second traditional foreign policy aim, that of securing recognition of the status of the emperor, that dictated relations with Jerusalem and Antioch.

In the case of Jerusalem, even though they had not ruled the city directly for centuries, the emperors had always been at pains to secure recognition of their claim to be protectors of the Holy Sepulchre and other holy places there from whoever controlled them. During the eleventh century, the emperors had sought to achieve that aim by negotiation with the Fatimids of Egypt. With the Fatimids now gone, the same recognition would inevitably be sought, sooner or later, from the Frankish kings of Jerusalem, who had taken it for themselves.[4] As for Antioch, the attitude of the Byzantine authorities was rather more complex. At one level they seem to have seen the city and the surrounding area simply as a part of their territory which had been unjustly seized by Bohemond and which they wanted to regain. After all, unlike Jerusalem, Antioch had been in Byzantine hands within living memory, only falling to the Turks as recently as 1084. Moreover, its strategic position and its location on the trade route between Asia and the Mediterranean made Antioch a particularly important stronghold for the empire. Nevertheless, some modern commentators have been puzzled as to why the Byzantines became so deeply involved in the dispute over Antioch, which led to the diversion of troops and resources from what might be regarded as the main task of reconquering central Anatolia from the Turks.[5]

The only way to understand Byzantine policy towards Antioch is to place it within the traditions and outlook of the Byzantine elite, which, as we have seen, valued the vindication of imperial ideology far above acquisition of territory. On that scale of values, the reconquest of the barren Anatolian plateau was never going to occupy a high place on the agenda. Antioch, on the other hand, had a spiritual significance which far outweighed its military or commercial advantages, something that emerges from two recorded comments of Nikephoros II Phokas, the emperor in whose reign the city had been reconquered in 969. Nikephoros described Antioch as the third city of the world, thereby placing only Constantinople and Rome above it in importance. One the other hand, as Nikephoros had commented cuttingly to the Italian bishop Liudprand of Cremona, Saxony, the home of the western emperor Otto I was ‘not in our books’. Antioch was not just a piece of territory like Saxony or Anatolia. It features prominently in the Acts of the Apostles and its Church, like that of Rome, had been founded by St Peter. It was one of the five patriarchates of the Christian world and thus a holy city, similar to Constantinople or Jerusalem.[6]

The occupation of Jerusalem and Antioch by the crusaders almost immediately had a negative impact on Byzantine influence and prestige, especially as regards the Churches there. Successive Byzantine emperors had been able to negotiate with Muslim powers so that they had influence in appointments of patriarchs of Jerusalem and Antioch. In 1099, the patriarch of Jerusalem was Symeon II but he had been residing for some time on the Byzantine island of Cyprus because of the unsettled conditions in his see. From there he had put his name jointly with that of Adhémar of Le Puy to a letter urging Western knights to come and join the struggle at Antioch and had sent supplies of fruit, meat and wine to the crusaders during the siege of Jerusalem.[7] Shortly after the holy city was captured, Symeon died without being able to return to his see. To provide for the administration of the Church of Jerusalem, the clergy with the crusade elected one of their number, Arnulf of Chocques as chancellor, with the office of patriarch remaining vacant for the time being. Come December, however, the crusade leaders, largely at Bohemond's prompting, decided to appoint a patriarch of their own, Daimbert, archbishop of Pisa.[8] When Bohemond returned to Antioch after his Jerusalem pilgrimage in the spring of 1100, he did much the same there. The patriarch of Antioch was John IV Oxites, a Byzantine who had been appointed by the emperor in Constantinople in 1091. During the siege of 1097–8, the Turkish governor had imprisoned him and occasionally hung him over the walls of the city on ropes in full view of the besieging crusaders. Released when the city fell in June 1098, John initially resumed his office of patriarch but his position became increasingly difficult after December 1098 with Bohemond regarding him as a potential spy on behalf of Alexios. In 1100 John was forced to leave Antioch and retire to Constantinople where he resigned as patriarch. Alexios appointed a new incumbent to replace him but by then Bohemond had installed Bernard of Valence, a Latin cleric. Henceforth there were two claimants to the patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem, a Latin and a Greek, with the latter remaining in Constantinople under the emperor's protection.[9] The usurpation of the Byzantine emperor's control over these appointments was an open challenge to his claim to be the leader of the Christian world and that accounts for the determination with which Alexios I and his successors strove to bring the principality of Antioch to heel and to assert their authority over the kingdom of Jerusalem.

The first opportunity to do so came in the spring of 1101. A third wave of crusaders arrived in Constantinople, a mixed force of Lombards and Franks, including Stephen, count of Blois, anxious to atone for his earlier flight from Antioch. The newcomers were eager for the fray after receiving news of the capture of Jerusalem and Alexios sought to turn their bellicosity to his advantage by the same methods: the same oath was required as that sworn by the leaders of the second wave and a Byzantine general, Tzitas, was attached with a small force to the crusade army. There was, however, one slight difference, for Alexios also attached Raymond of Toulouse to the army. Raymond was by now the bitter enemy of Bohemond, and had returned to Constantinople after his humiliation at Antioch, when Bohemond's men had ejected his followers from the city. In all probability, Alexios hoped that once the third wave reached Syria, Raymond would oust the Normans from Antioch and return the city to imperial control. If this was the case, he was to be disappointed. The army marched into northern Asia Minor, capturing Ankyra on the way, but also massacring a group of local Christians who turned out to welcome them. In August, the crusaders ran into heavy Turkish resistance to the northeast of Ankyra and their army was scattered. Tzitas, Raymond and Stephen of Blois managed to escape and return to Constantinople, but many others were killed or taken prisoner.

What was left of the army was ingloriously ferried to the Holy Land in Byzantine ships and arrived with neither the strength nor the prestige to dictate terms to the Normans of Antioch.[10]

By that time Bohemond himself was no longer in Antioch. In August 1100, he had led a force north to take over the town of Melitene. The Normans had been ambushed by an army of Danishmend Turks and Bohemond taken prisoner. On hearing the news, Alexios negotiated with the Danishmend emir to pay Bohemond's ransom and get him released, presumably into the emperor's custody. That might well have delivered Antioch into Byzantine hands but the emperor's offer was rejected and in his uncle's absence, Tancred of Hauteville took over the rule of Antioch.[11] Tancred was well aware that if the principality of Antioch was to be at all viable, it would have to have an outlet to the sea and so he was eager to occupy the port of Laodikeia. Before he could do so, Raymond of Toulouse handed the port over to a Byzantine fleet that had sailed from Cyprus. In response, Tancred laid siege to the place thus initiating hostilities between Byzantium and the Normans of Antioch.[12] Laodikeia was heavily fortified so that when Bohemond's ransom had been paid and he was able to return to Antioch, the siege was still going on. In was only during 1103 that Laodikeia finally surrendered to Tancred who had then rather reluctantly agreed to hand it over to Bohemond.[13]

The loss of Laodikeia was the last straw for Alexios. Shortly afterwards, envoys were despatched to Bohemond armed with letters which dispensed with the usual flowery phrases and effectively challenged him to fight:

> You are aware of the oaths and promises made to the Roman empire, not by you alone, but by all the other counts. Now you are the first to break faith. You have seized Antioch and by underhand methods gained possession of certain other fortified places, including Laodikeia itself. I bid you withdraw from the city of Antioch and all the other places, thereby doing what is right, and do not try to provoke fresh hostilities and battles against yourself.[14]

Bohemond sent a defiant reply, accusing Alexios of failing to keep to his oath to follow the crusaders to Antioch with a strong force. Both sides were therefore committed to battle and Alexios dispatched a fleet from Cyprus which seized Laodikeia back in 1104. Bohemond sent a message to the Byzantine commander, calling upon him to surrender the port. He received a defiant, but typically Byzantine reply: 'Our allies have received the money for their gallantry in battle.'[15]

There was no battle, as it turned out. Bohemond had begun to realize just how vulnerable his newly established principality was, sandwiched between the Byzantines and the Turkish emirates. In May 1104, he and his nephew had suffered a minor reverse at the hands of the emir of Mosul and had to flee the field.[16] Now with the Byzantines on the offensive too, Bohemond is alleged to have complained to Tancred that 'the East terrifies us by land

and the West terrifies us by land and sea'.[17] He therefore suddenly changed his tactics. Having entrusted Antioch to Tancred, he sailed with a small fleet from the port of St Symeon, carefully skirting the Byzantine warships that were prowling off shore. The Byzantines believed that, in order to evade possible pursuit and interception, he faked his own death, and travelled back in a coffin. A dead and putrid cockerel was placed on his chest to deter the curious from taking a look inside. Once he was gone, Tancred resumed the siege of Laodikeia, retaking the place in 1106.[18]

Having landed safely in Apulia, Bohemond embarked on an extensive tour through France and Italy. Tales of his exploits on the First Crusade had gone before him. He received a hero's welcome wherever he went and the king of France, Philip I, was happy to give him his daughter, Constance, in marriage. One reason for the visit was to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Leonard at Limousin, in fulfilment of a vow that Bohemond had made while he was a prisoner of the Danishmends. Another was to call for volunteers for a new crusade to Jerusalem and volunteers flocked to Bohemond's banner. It must have been obvious though that there was another aim for the proposed expedition. Bohemond was accompanied on his tour by several members of the Byzantine Diogenes family, relatives of the former emperor Romanos IV. In 1094, one of Romanos's sons, Nikephoros had staged an unsuccessful coup against Alexios and there were still those who felt that this family had a better claim to the throne than the Komneni. When Robert Guiscard had attacked Byzantium in 1081, he had claimed to be acting on behalf of the deposed Michael VII. Bohemond was clearly preparing a similar pretext for his own bid to settle scores with Alexios I. It was not the last time that action against Constantinople was to be undertaken on behalf of some wronged claimant to the Byzantine throne.[19]

Thus when Bohemond set out on his planned expedition in October 1107, the initial target was not the Muslim enemies of the crusader states but the Byzantine empire. His army crossed the Adriatic and landed at Avlona, in imperial territory, then marched north to lay siege to the port of Dyrrachion. In following in the footsteps of his father in this way, Bohemond may well have been hoping, as Robert Guiscard had done, to seize the Adriatic coast before marching overland to Syria. For a moment, the threat must have appeared as grave as that of 1081, but in the end it was averted by those useful and time-honoured props of Byzantine foreign policy: avoidance of battle, artful stratagems and judicious use of gold. Dyrrachion was heavily fortified and well-defended. All Bohemond could do was sit down and invest the place as the autumn of 1107 turned to winter. For his part, Alexios did not hurry to confront the invaders directly, as he had in 1081. His first reaction when he received the news of the landing, on returning from a hunting trip, was calmly to order lunch. Perhaps he was reassured by a prophecy made by the hermit Cyril of Philea that the 'haughty and above-the-clouds' Bohemond would soon receive his just deserts. Having gathered his forces, he then moved west to surround Bohemond's followers as they were besieging Dyrrachion.[20] The old techniques now came into play. An attempt was made to sow discord in the enemy camp by allowing Bohemond to capture some concocted letters from Alexios to some of the noblemen in his army, suggesting that they were ready to desert the emperor. The tactic misfired in so far as Bohemond easily saw through the ruse and did not accuse his followers of treachery. In the weeks that followed, however, as supplies began to run low, deserters began to leave Bohemond's army. William of Clarelès went over to the emperor with 50 followers, to receive the usual gifts and titles. Robert of Montfort and even Bohemond's own half-brother, Guy, were seduced in much the same way. As a result of this haemorrhage of his followers, Bohemond was forced to sue for peace and an agreement was drawn up in September 1108.[21]

Unlike the oaths of 1096 and 1097, the exact terms of the so-called Treaty of Devol between Alexios and Bohemond survive as they are recorded in their entirety by Anna Komnene. The main points were as follows. The agreement made in Constantinople in 1097, which Bohemond admitted to violating, was declared invalid. One aspect of the earlier agreement was retained, however, in that Bohemond declared himself to be the servant and liege man (*lizios*) of the emperor and of his son John. In return, Bohemond was to be granted the city of Antioch and some of the places nearby for his lifetime, although these could be taken back at any time on demand. He undertook to compel Tancred to return to the emperor all the other towns which he had taken, including Laodikeia and to accept Alexios's nominee as patriarch of Antioch. In many ways the treaty was a lenient one. Bohemond was left in possession of Antioch as the emperor's vassal, apparently receiving what he had asked for in Constantinople in 1097.[22]

One school of thought asserts that the Treaty of Devol represented some kind of new approach in Byzantine diplomacy. It was an advance on the resented oaths extracted during the First Crusade and that it was formulated in the light of Western legal practices. That influence has been discerned in the use of a direct Greek translation of the Western feudal term *homo ligius* to describe Bohemond's relationship with Alexios, and in the provisions for the relationship between Bohemond's own vassals and the emperor.[23] This view is very unconvincing. Whatever Western influence there might have been on details in the treaty, in the last analysis it was, like the methods which had brought Bohemond to the negotiating table, a standard piece of Byzantine foreign policy. The clause which provided for Bohemond to give military assistance to the emperor was not so much the obligation of a vassal to a lord but the traditional concern of the Byzantine emperors to sign up their defeated foes as mercenaries, much as Alexios had done with the Turks of Nicaea in 1097. Otherwise there would have been no need for him to agree to pay Bohemond 200 gold pieces a year, which were probably the wages for the services that the Norman was to render. Similarly, the leniency of the treaty shows that the physical recovery of Antioch was not its main concern. The aim was rather to ensure proper acknowledgement of the emperor's position. That explains the insertion of the clause that the patriarch of Antioch would be appointed by the emperor, not by Bohemond. The text is littered with specific references to the nature of Alexios's office. He was the 'divinely appointed emperor', and the ruler of the Roman empire. In this the Treaty of Devol reflected that made by Michael VII with Bohemond's father in 1074, when the Norman duke promised to show the emperor the 'submission and good intentions' that were his due.[24] The securing of this recognition of imperial overlordship was evidently considered quite enough, and there was no need to demand the physical possession of Antioch as well.

There can be no doubt that, at the time, the Treaty of Devol would have been regarded as a triumph for Alexios. His old enemy had put his seal to a document which laid out uncompromisingly the exalted nature of the Byzantine imperial office. The emperor could now afford to be generous, allowing the defeated Latins to remain in the empire during the winter of 1108–9 before deciding in the spring where they wanted to go. Bohemond himself sailed back to Apulia. The weakness in the agreement, of course, was that Tancred, who actually held Antioch, was unlikely to accept it. Bohemond had promised in the treaty that he would compel his nephew to do so but he never returned to Antioch, dying in Italy in the spring of 1111. His failure in this respect does not necessarily mean that he reneged on the treaty. It might simply have been that infirmity overtook him before he was able to set out. It is not without significance that his mausoleum by the cathedral of Canosa in Apulia appears to have been modelled on the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, a visual acceptance of the leading role of the imperial city.[25]

In his last years, Alexios himself attempted to put pressure on Tancred to accept the Devol settlement. Ambassadors were sent with threats to Antioch and, when they were rebuffed, approaches were made to the king of Jerusalem and the count of Tripoli, now Raymond of St Gilles's son, Bertrand. The offer was the usual one: generous amounts of money, in return for military assistance against Tancred. The negotiations dragged on but no agreement was reached. A similar approach was made in late 1110 or early 1111 to the Turkish governor of Damascus, though this yielded no result either.[26] Tancred died in 1112 but he was succeeded as regent for the infant Bohemond II by his kinsman, Roger of Salerno.[27] Thus the Normans were still in undisturbed possession of Antioch when, in the summer of 1118, Alexios was taken seriously ill and conveyed from Blachernae to the hospital of the monastery of St George in Mangana. Ironically, in view of his evasiveness on this very point with the crusaders in 1097, some monks announced with divine inspiration that the emperor would not die until he had reached Jerusalem and prayed at the Holy Sepulchre. They were wrong and Alexios died on 15 August in Constantinople.[28]

Alexios's successor, his eldest son John II Komnenos, was a man remarkably similar to his father. He too was an able soldier and general and like Alexios

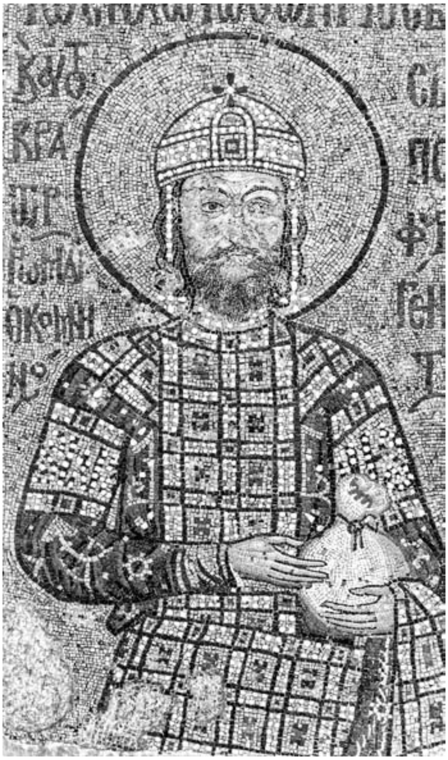


**FIGURE 6** *John II Komnenos (1118–43), from a mosaic in Hagia Sophia.* (Antony McAulay/Shutterstock.com)

he cultivated an aura of rigorous, even puritanical morality. He was given to lining up the members of his household to inspect their hair and shoes and he prohibited any ‘profligacy of food or dress’ in the palace.[29] This was not a man likely to usher in a dramatic rethink of policy and indeed Alexios had bequeathed him a blueprint for how to run the empire, a kind of political testament known as the *Mousai*. From beyond the grave the deceased emperor reminded his son that he held ‘the sceptre of Rome and its richly blessed throne’ and urged him to stockpile gold so that he could use it to stop the greed of the hostile peoples who lived on the empire’s borders. Above all John was to remember that his office was an ancestral inheritance, the gift of God alone.[30] It was therefore incumbent on John II to force recognition of imperial authority on the rulers of Antioch and to revive Byzantine claims to the protectorate of the Holy Places in Jerusalem.

During the first part of his reign he seems to have had little opportunity to do either. He had first to face a plot to prevent his succession, orchestrated by his sister, Anna, and mother, Eirene, who wanted Anna’s husband, Nikephoros Bryennios, to become emperor. As Alexios lay dying in the monastery of the Mangana, John managed to obtain his father’s signet ring and show it to the palace guards as proof that he was the chosen successor.[31] The years that followed were plagued by invasion and war with the Venetians, Hungarians, Danishmend Turks and Pechenegs. It was not until the 1130s that the policy makers in Constantinople could turn their attention to the Latin East. By that time, John II was in a much stronger position. He had inflicted defeats on the Pechenegs and Hungarians and made a settlement with the Venetians. Increased tax returns from a revived economy probably gave him the wherewithal to field an extremely large army. He was to lead that army on two major expeditions into Syria in 1137–8 and 1142–3.

Inevitably, there has been some difference of opinion as to what John was aiming to achieve on these campaigns. They have often been seen as an attempt to extend the empire's frontiers up to the Euphrates.[32] John's main aim, however, like his father's, was the familiar one of securing recognition. The methods used were hardly new either, with treaties and the threat of force being preferred whenever possible to open warfare and annexation.[33] Seizure of territory was not ruled out entirely for after all, the Byzantines had been quick to reconquer western Asia Minor back in 1097–8. John and his advisers, however, may have felt that the occupation of Antioch and the land beyond would have been a step too far that would have overstretched the empire's resources. A revealing incident later occurred in 1150 when the wife of Count Joscelin II handed over what was left of the county of Edessa to the Byzantines in return for a generous pension. Although garrisons were installed in the remaining fortresses, the new territory was lost to the Muslims within a year. As in the case of the Treaty of Devol, John II seems therefore to have been seeking overlordship rather than physical possession. There was certainly a precedent for that. During the tenth and early eleventh centuries, the Byzantine emperors had turned the emirate of Aleppo in Syria into a kind of client state. Its Muslim rulers paid annual tribute but there was no attempt to incorporate the city into the empire.[34]

That impression is reinforced by a careful examination of the three main sources of information on John's Syrian expeditions. From the Western point of view, there is the work of William, archbishop of Tyre (1175–c.1184), and from the Byzantine, those of John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. These authors are all difficult to interpret. All three were writing many years after the end of John's reign. William of Tyre composed his history after 1170, some 40 years after these events, and the two Byzantines were at work even later, Kinnamos after 1180 and Choniates, in his final draft, probably after 1204.[35] It is therefore almost certain that errors and distortions crept in over the years, and these may explain why all three differ, sometimes markedly, in their accounts of John's forays into Syria and the reasons behind them. There is, however, another explanation for the differences, especially those that separate William of Tyre from the Byzantine writers, and this is the matter of outlook and interpretation.

As a western European, albeit one born in Jerusalem, William of Tyre was the product of a society where status was based on the holding of land. As a result, acquisition of territory was an important end in itself, even for so spiritual an enterprise as a crusade. William characterizes the outcome of the First Crusade in these terms, remarking how the Latins 'appropriated the Land of Promise and practically the whole of Syria'.[36] Not surprisingly, he consistently presents John's actions in the same way, as aiming at the physical conquest of the city of Antioch and the land around. Kinnamos and Choniates, on the other hand, came from a society where status was based on the position one held at the imperial court, signalled by the holding of titles and honours. Foreign policy was essentially an extension of that hierarchy to the nations on the empire's borders, and conquest of territory was only a means of achieving that end. They present John's expeditions to Syria in exactly that light.

The three writers do not agree over what lay immediately behind John's decision to go to Antioch in 1137. Choniates does not give any reason at all and suggests that John was in the area solely to move against the Armenians who had taken possession of Cilicia, the south-eastern coastal area of Asia Minor, in the decades after the defeat at Manzikert. His father Alexios had already made tentative moves to reoccupy the area, sending a fleet to take the port of Seleukeia in 1099. With the Armenians threatening to retake the town, John felt compelled to act. The move to Antioch once the Armenian campaign was concluded is presented almost as an afterthought.[37] William of Tyre and Kinnamos, on the other hand, both link the expedition to John's fury at a failed marriage alliance. In 1126, the son of Bohemond and Constance had arrived in Antioch to rule as Prince Bohemond II but his reign was short. He was killed in an ambush by a combined force of Armenians and Danishmend Turks in 1130, leaving as a successor only a two-year-old daughter, Constance. John II entered into negotiations with the regency for the child and an agreement was reached that Constance should marry John's youngest son, Manuel. It was while John was campaigning against the Armenians in nearby Cilicia that news arrived that the regency had changed its mind and had instead given her hand to a younger son of the duke of Aquitaine, Raymond of Poitiers, who thus became prince of Antioch. Kinnamos stresses that John had wanted the marriage between Manuel and Constance because he wished to have Antioch in his power. When this failed to come about, according to William of Tyre, John 'claimed Antioch with all the adjacent provinces as his own and wished to recall them to his jurisdiction', citing the agreement made between Alexios I and the crusaders in 1096–7 as a justification. Clearly, John wished to extend his power over Antioch in some way.[38]

The vagueness of William of Tyre and Kinnamos leaves open the question of exactly what kind of sovereignty John had in mind here. Whatever it was, he was prepared to use considerable force to get it. Both historians describe how, when John's army reached Antioch in late August 1137, he used formidable siege engines to batter the walls. Faced with a superior force, Raymond of Poitiers had little choice but to come to terms. On what those terms were, however, the Byzantines differ markedly from William of Tyre. William gives a detailed breakdown of the agreement that was then drawn up. Raymond declared himself to be a liege vassal of the emperor and took a solemn oath that, whenever the emperor should desire, he should be allowed to enter Antioch or its citadel. In return Raymond would receive the towns of Aleppo, Shaizar, Hama and Homs. These were currently in Muslim hands, but, when they had been captured and given to Raymond, he would in turn hand Antioch over to John 'to hold by right of ownership', while he himself would rule in Aleppo instead.[39] The Byzantine version of the treaty, on the other hand, is much vaguer. Kinnamos says only that it was agreed that 'the emperor should be and be proclaimed lord but [Raymond] should lawfully be guardian of it by authority'. Choniates is even more succinct, stating only that John regarded Raymond as his liegeman (*lizios*). Most significant of all, neither makes any mention of any undertaking on the part of Raymond to hand Antioch over to John.[40]

This divergence between the Greek and Latin sources leaves a seemingly intractable problem of who to believe. Most modern accounts have inclined towards William of Tyre, since his version of events is so much more detailed than that of Kinnamos or Choniates.[41] This is where differences of interpretation and outlook need to be considered. William of Tyre presented the agreement as involving the physical handover of Antioch because he would have assumed that this was what the emperor sought above all. Kinnamos and Choniates, on the other hand, imbued with the ideology of the Byzantine court, saw the whole affair in terms of the acknowledgement of the authority of the Byzantine emperor by the prince of Antioch. There is no reason to think that the details given by William are necessarily false. It is merely that the Byzantines would not have interpreted them in that way.

If that point is accepted, it makes John II's conduct during the rest of the expedition of 1137–8 much more understandable. Following the agreement made between John and Raymond, whatever its exact terms were, in May 1138 a joint Byzantine-Frankish army set out for Aleppo and was joined by a contingent led by Count Joscelin II of Edessa. The expedition does not have to be seen as an attempt to grab land to compensate Raymond for the loss of Antioch. Rather John was reasserting another aspect of his role as leader of the *Oikoumene*, a role that had been usurped by the First Crusade. Although it was an article of Byzantine policy to avoid war where possible, part of the role of the emperor was to protect the Christian people by waging war against the infidel. John now prepared to do so with all available resources. An Arab eyewitness describes the terror inspired by John's siege engines, which could hurl millstones further than a bow shot and demolish entire houses. Having seen John's impressive army as it passed through Cilicia, a Jewish physician confidently predicted that he would soon be entering Aleppo or Damascus.[42]

The first objective of the Christian army was Aleppo, whose Muslim ruler, Zengi, was presenting an ever-increasing threat to the principality of

Antioch and the county of Edessa. When the defences of Aleppo proved too strong, even for John's well-equipped force, the army turned its attention southwards to the town of Shaizar, on the Orontes river. William of Tyre, who presented the campaign as an attempt to provide an alternative principality for Raymond, describes how, while John was noticeable for his energy and courage during the siege of Shaizar, Raymond exerted himself as little as possible, presumably because a victory for John would rob him of Antioch. He spent most of the time 'playing games of chance' with Count Joscelin. John was so incensed by this conduct that he broke off the siege after a month in return for a generous payment from the emir of Shaizar.[43]

Kinnamos and Choniates interpret the episode in an entirely different way. They make no mention of the conduct of Raymond as the reason for John's abandoning the siege. Kinnamos says that John accepted the emir's indemnity because he realized that it would be impossible to take the city. Choniates says that John abandoned Shaizar because he had heard that Edessa was under attack and hastened to its aid. Moreover, since both were influenced by Byzantine ideology, they regarded the emperor as having captured something far more important than the town itself. As part of their payment to induce John to withdraw, the citizens of Shaizar handed over a cross, carved from red marble, supposedly fashioned on the orders of Constantine the Great, and taken by the Turks from Romanos IV after the Battle of Manzikert in 1071.[44] Byzantine emperors had always regarded it as an important part of their role to restore precious religious objects and relics to Christian hands. During the previous century, their campaigns in Syria had yielded some of the hair of John the Baptist, the sandals of Christ, a tile miraculously imprinted with the face of Christ and the famous Mandylion. Such objects, added to the already impressive collection in Constantinople, enhanced the prestige of the emperor and of the imperial city and their recovery more than justified the expenses and hardships of the campaign.[45]

William of Tyre's version of subsequent events follows on from the reason he gave for John's withdrawal from Shaizar. On his return to Antioch, the emperor made a solemn entry, accompanied by processions of clergy and people, and then demanded that the city must still be surrendered to him, even though Aleppo and Shaizar had not been taken. Raymond managed to avoid compliance because Joscelin II stirred up a riot among the Latin inhabitants of the city who did not want it to be handed over to the Byzantines. The emperor, who had left his army outside the walls of the city, found himself besieged in a very vulnerable position. He promptly withdrew his demand that the citadel be handed over and left the city. Once he was at a safe distance, Raymond sent envoys to John's camp to appease his anger and even offered to hand over the citadel. John, however, declined and returned to Constantinople.[46] The Byzantine account is a great deal more laconic. Kinnamos ignores any subsequent stay in Antioch altogether, having John return directly to Constantinople. Choniates, however, does describe John's entry into Antioch, and predictably places great emphasis on its ideological significance. He stresses the warm welcome of the Antiochene population and the splendour of John's reception. Once again, the Greek and Latin accounts are by no means irreconcilable. The difference is one of interpretation not fact. William's version assumes that John was eager for possession of the city, Choniates that he sought recognition.[47]

The same difference of interpretation underlies the Latin and Greek accounts of John's second expedition to Syria in 1142–3. At first sight, the Byzantine historians seem to be suggesting that the annexation of Antioch and the surrounding area was the main motive behind the expedition. Kinnamos says that John wanted to make Antioch, along with Cilicia, Attaleia and Cyprus, into an appanage for his youngest son Manuel. Choniates says that John had a burning desire 'to unite Antioch to Constantinople' and to extend his dominion over it, and that this was the secret purpose behind his campaign.[48] Yet both of these statements fall short of outright conquest. It is unlikely that Kinnamos meant that John planned to detach a part of the empire's territory and give it to Manuel. The idea of doing such a thing would have flown in the face of Byzantine concepts of the indivisibility of imperial power.[49] It is much more likely that John was considering a marriage alliance involving Manuel, as he had before 1137. As for Choniates, his words could just as well be interpreted as a desire to bring Antioch within the orbit of the empire, by forcing an acknowledgement of imperial suzerainty.

William of Tyre, on the other hand, in a much more detailed narrative, is far more specific. He describes how John descended on Syria with a huge army 'which seemingly no kingdom of the world could withstand'. The emperor once again demanded that Raymond surrender Antioch, along with its citadel and fortifications, in accordance with the earlier agreement, so that John could better wage war on neighbouring Muslim cities. Although Raymond on several occasions invited John to come to the city, the nobles and people were adamant that it should not be handed over to the 'effeminate Greeks'. An embassy led by the patriarch was therefore sent to John, to say that Raymond had no power to hand over the city, thus forcing an angry emperor to spend the winter with his army in Cilicia. The divergence is the same: a Latin obsession with physical possession and domination, a Byzantine concern with recognition of the right order of things.[50]

During the second expedition, as the sources make clear, John widened his aims to include the protectorate of the Holy Places in Jerusalem, stating his intention to go on pilgrimage to the holy city. Choniates says that John had always wanted to visit the Holy Sepulchre and to adorn it with gifts. William of Tyre reports that the emperor sent letters to the king of Jerusalem, Fulk (1131–43), announcing his intention to pay that visit, bringing his army with him. The king was perturbed, fearing a Byzantine invasion. He therefore replied that the kingdom of Jerusalem was not rich or large enough to host the emperor's army, and begged that he only bring 10,000 men with him. John thereupon decided not to go because 'he did not regard

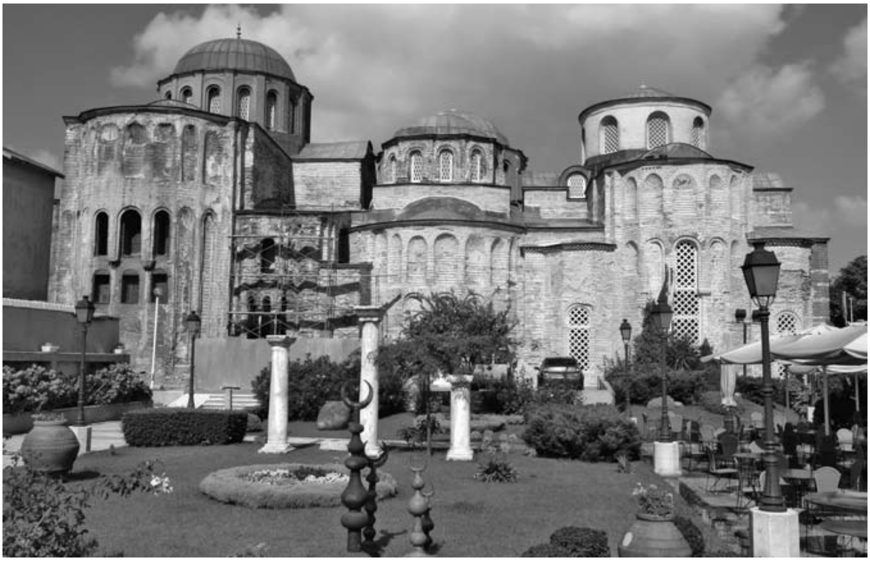


**FIGURE 7** *The Pantokrator Monastery in Constantinople built on the orders of John II in 1136.*

it as befitting to his imperial glory that he who was ever wont to move attended by many thousands should proceed with such a small escort'.[51] John's insistence on this point suggests that he had his eye on the ideological significance of his visit and on the restoration of the role of Protector of the Holy Places which his eleventh-century predecessors had established by their treaty with the Fatimids. John's early and unexpected death put an end to further negotiations with Antioch and Jerusalem. While hunting boar in the Cilician forests, he accidentally cut his hand on one of the arrows in his quiver. The wound turned septic and he died on 8 April 1143. His son Manuel at once returned with the army to Constantinople taking the late emperor's corpse with him. John was finally interred in the monastery of the Pantokrator, which he himself had founded.[52]

In spite of this abrupt ending, both John's expeditions to Syria and his general policy towards the Latin states appeared to contemporaries to have been a success. An oration delivered by Michael Italikos, shortly after John returned to Constantinople in 1138, gives an insight into the ideology of those who surrounded his throne. Summing up the achievement of John in the East, Italikos claimed that the prince of Edessa had offered him the help of his lance, the king of Jerusalem had set down his crown and recognized John as the only emperor, and the sovereignty of Constantinople had been extended over Antioch.[53] It might be objected that since this oration was almost certainly given in the presence of the emperor, it would therefore have been at pains to tell him what he wanted to hear. Italikos was merely trying to make the best of a bad job, flattering an emperor who had in fact returned empty-handed, having failed to secure the major prize. Yet the expedition of 1137 also seems to have been regarded as a success by one of John's political opponents. His sister Anna Komnene wrote that John had 'reduced the city of Antioch'. Had John been aiming to conquer the place and failed, Anna would hardly have passed the opportunity for criticism, especially as her husband, Nikephoros Bryennios, had died of an illness contracted while serving on the campaign. Elsewhere she bemoans how many of the achievements of Alexios I were frittered away by 'the stupidity of those who inherited his throne'.[54] John's Syrian campaigns can therefore be compared with that against Bulgaria in 864, when the aim was not to annex the country but to force Khan Boris to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Byzantine emperor. Seen in that light, John had achieved much of what he set out to do.[55]

Even some Latin sources hint at much the same thing. Orderic Vitalis, who was writing only a few years after the expedition of 1137–8, makes no mention of the agreement to hand Antioch over to John. Instead, after an initial clash between John's troops and those of the prince of Antioch, Raymond realized that Byzantine claims to Antioch were true, and so he became the emperor's vassal and received Antioch from him with a promise of help against the infidels of Damascus, a version of events not dissimilar to that of the Byzantine historians.[56] Another Latin writer, Odo of Deuil, gives an insight into John's priorities, recording that, when he took the towns of Tarsus and Mamistra in 1137, John expelled the Latin bishops he found there and replaced them with his own appointees.[57] This action displays John's concern with the ideological significance of his expedition and suggests once more that it was recognition of his authority that he sought. These contemporary attitudes no doubt provided the starting point for Kinnamos and Choniates in their accounts of an emperor of whom they could have had no personal recollection. Both were almost unreservedly favourable and it is not difficult to see why. John was seen as having fulfilled all the duties of a Roman emperor. He had defended the *Oikoumene*, leading successful campaigns against its enemies east and west, and he had upheld the divinely ordained order of the world by compelling recognition of his authority. For Choniates, therefore, John was 'the most royal' of emperors, an image preserved in perpetuity in the mosaic portrait of him in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia.[58]

While Byzantine intellectuals like Komnene, Kinnamos and Choniates might look back with fond nostalgia on the reigns of Alexios I and John II, as emperors who knew how to rule, it is easier, from a more distant perspective, to discern that their policy towards the crusader states was fraught with danger. While it enhanced their reputation in the eyes of Byzantine courtiers, they did little for the image of their empire in western Europe, particularly at the papal curia. They could all too easily be seen as working against the pious goal of maintaining the Latin presence in the East and so keeping

Jerusalem in the hands of Christians. Those whose temporal interests clashed with those of the Byzantines were quick to use this accusation as a way of justifying their conflict with the emperor.

The first to do so was Bohemond. His arrival in the West in 1106 was the signal for the start of a propaganda war, as he toured Italy and France gathering troops for his 'expedition across the sea'. At some point, Bohemond wrote a letter to Pope Paschal II (1099–1118), in which he levelled a number of charges at Alexios in order to justify his planned attack. Many of the charges were those habitually used to legitimize military action during the Middle Ages. Like his father Robert Guiscard before him, Bohemond claimed that Alexios was not the legitimate emperor, but a usurper who had won power by 'horrible plots and treachery', a reference to his overthrow of the previous emperor, Nikephoros III, in 1081. This charge was a grave one to Western ears because it meant that Alexios had won his throne by overthrowing his rightful lord, a violation of an oath of fealty that he was assumed by Westerners to have taken to the previous emperor. Exactly the same charge had been used to justify the Norman invasion of England in 1066.[59]

Other charges levelled by Bohemond were rather different and suggested that Alexios, though a Christian, had worked against the pious enterprise of 'liberating' Jerusalem and had even taken the side of infidels. According to Anna Komnene, when he arrived in Rome from Antioch Bohemond brought with him some captured Byzantine Pecheneg mercenaries who he displayed at the papal court as proof that Alexios was pitting pagans against Christians. Bohemond may also have been aware and told the pope that Alexios had received military help from the Turkish sultan of Nicaea, in his campaigns against the Normans in the 1080s.[60] Other sinister machinations were attributed to the emperor. In his letter to the pope, Bohemond asserted cryptically that Alexios was responsible for the 'robbing and drowning of pilgrims'.[61] This is presumably a reference to Alexios's reception of the First Crusade and the bad experiences of the crusade armies as they passed through the Balkans. The charge made briefly and obliquely in the letter was made in much more detail in a short, anonymous Latin account of the First Crusade, known as the *Gesta Francorum*, which was circulating in western Europe at the time of Bohemond's recruiting tour. It was almost certainly the work of a knight or cleric in Bohemond's army, and presents the Norman leader as a great warrior and the undoubted hero of the enterprise. The portrayal of Alexios I, on the other hand, is consistently hostile. He is described as 'the abominable emperor' and his every deed is presented as a sinister plot to bring about the destruction of the crusaders. His insistence on an oath is an attempt to 'seize these knights of Christ adroitly and by fraud'. He rejoices when the Turks massacre the followers of Peter the Hermit, and plots with them to bring about the downfall of the crusaders.[62] Another anti-Byzantine history circulating in the West in 1106–7 was Ekkehard of Aura's account of the fate of the third wave of the First Crusade. The various contingents that made up this expedition had all, like that accompanied by Tzitas and Raymond of Toulouse, come to grief in Asia Minor in the summer of 1101, a disaster that Ekkehard, an eyewitness and participant, laid at the door of Alexios. One of Ekkehard's accusations was that the emperor had plotted to drown the crusaders as they sailed across the Bosporus to Asia Minor, a tale that Bohemond was possibly referring to in his letter to Paschal II.[63]

Effective and widespread though Bohemond's propaganda was, his expedition against the Byzantine empire was not a success and ended with his humiliation in the Treaty of Devol. Nevertheless, his efforts undoubtedly led to an overwhelmingly negative portrayal of the Byzantines in Western literature of the time, largely through the influence of the *Gesta Francorum*. Its account of the First Crusade was copied by those who had never travelled to the East, such as Robert the Monk, Guibert of Nogent, William of Malmesbury and Orderic Vitalis. They repeated all the *Gesta*'s horror stories and added new ones. Alexios I was 'wily and smooth-spoken, a prolific and ingenious master of the art of deception', who plotted to poison the crusaders, to set savage lions and leopards on them and to lead them into Turkish ambushes.[64] As the twelfth century went on, the unflattering descriptions were increasingly extended to all Byzantines, not just Alexios, as feeble and effeminate, yet deceitful and treacherous. They were always referred to as 'Greeks' and never as 'Romans', thereby implicitly denying their claim to continuity with the Roman empire. Guibert of Nogent questioned the very basis of Byzantine political thought, the office of the emperor, excoriating the foolishness and fickleness of the Greeks who raised a man to power one day, then drove him into exile the next. Some compared these modern Greeks with their ancient forebears, and found in favour of the latter: the Byzantines had lost all the virtues of the ancient Greeks and inherited only their vices, part of a long drawn-out decline that had begun after the Trojan war.[65]

It would be wrong to read too much into these slurs. The Byzantines had been on the receiving end of such diatribes from Latin writers before, especially from those who had been outmanoeuvred by slick Byzantine diplomatic practices. Pope Nicholas I (858–67) deeply disapproved of the Bulgarian policy of Michael III and criticized the emperor for subjecting the Bulgars to the empire under the pretext of religion. Liudprand of Cremona, who had failed to secure a marriage alliance between the Ottonians and the Byzantine emperor in the tenth century, raged against the 'soft, effeminate, long-sleeved, tiara-wearing, hooded, lying, unsexed, idle people' whom he had encountered in Constantinople. A tenth-century German chronicler registered his disgust that the Greeks defeated by tricks those whom they could not overcome by force.[66] Just as the negative views were not new, neither were they universal. Orderic Vitalis, whatever his harsh words about Alexios's treatment of the First Crusade, reported his death in 1118 by describing him as 'a man of great wisdom, merciful to the poor, a brave and illustrious warrior who was genial to his soldiers, open-handed in giving, and a most diligent servant of the divine law'.[67] Perhaps most important of all, the Byzantines were not unaware of the danger. They do seem to have realized that what for them were legitimate actions in defence of the *Oikoumene*, or of the rightful position of the emperor, could be given a very different construction in the West. Even during the passage of the First Crusade, Alexios I and his advisers had understood perfectly well the necessity of presenting their actions in such a way as to avoid any implication that they had failed to support the pious enterprise. Anna Komnene recalled that Alexios wished to win some success to enhance his position in the eyes of the crusaders and his letters sent to the abbot of Monte Cassino in 1097 and 1098 display a similar concern.[68] In the aftermath of the crusade, Alexios worked hard to refute the propaganda circulating in the West. At the time of Bohemond's recruiting tour, when he discovered that the Norman leader was denouncing him as 'an enemy of the Christians', the emperor wrote to the governments of Pisa, Genoa and Venice warning them not to believe Bohemond's version of events or to join his expedition. To present himself as a pious Christian ruler, he secured the release of some Latin knights who had been captured by the Fatimids, treated them well in Constantinople, then sent them back to Italy, in the hope that they would counteract the impression given by Bohemond.[69] The empire still had friends in the West so the damage was not necessarily permanent.

There was, however, another charge that Bohemond made against Alexios in his letter to the pope that was to prove more pervasive and insidious: that Alexios had 'removed unity in the universal and apostolic church from his people, in so far as was in him, from which it is plain that he and his people dissent from the Roman Church', something that the *Gesta Francorum* and other chronicles do not mention.[70] Bohemond had realized or been advised that there was a division between the Byzantine and Western Churches and that they were no longer in communion. It was something of which clergymen were much more aware than laymen and as the twelfth century progressed tracts on the errors of the Greeks were produced in increasing numbers. Earnest clerics such as Rupert of Deutz fulminated against the refusal of the Byzantines to accept the authority of the Apostolic See, against their unsoundness on the *Filioque* issue, and against their use of leavened bread in communion. Their counterparts in Byzantium, such as the former patriarch of Antioch, John Oxites, were happy to reply.[71] Such theological hair-splitting hardly presented a threat in itself. The danger for Byzantium lay in the idea, implicit in Bohemond's letter, that because the Byzantines were in schism with the Roman Church, it was legitimate to make war on them. He may well have convinced the papal curia that this was so, for he was accompanied to France on his recruiting tour by a papal legate, Bruno of Segni, suggesting that he had papal blessing for the enterprise. Anna Komnene for one was quite convinced that the invasion of the empire in 1107 had the backing of the pope.[72] A generation later, a pope was to state explicitly that he regarded the Byzantine emperor as less than a Christian. When news reached Rome in March 1138 of John II's first expedition against Raymond of Poitiers in Antioch, Pope Innocent II (1130–43) was outraged. He issued an edict calling on all Latins serving in the Byzantine armies to desert on the grounds the emperor 'separates himself from the unity of the church', that is to say he was a schismatic. In 1147 a French bishop went even further, arguing that John's attack on Antioch showed that the Byzantines were Christians in name only and that it would therefore be legitimate to make an attack on Constantinople itself. Much the same was said by the clergy with the army of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204.[73]

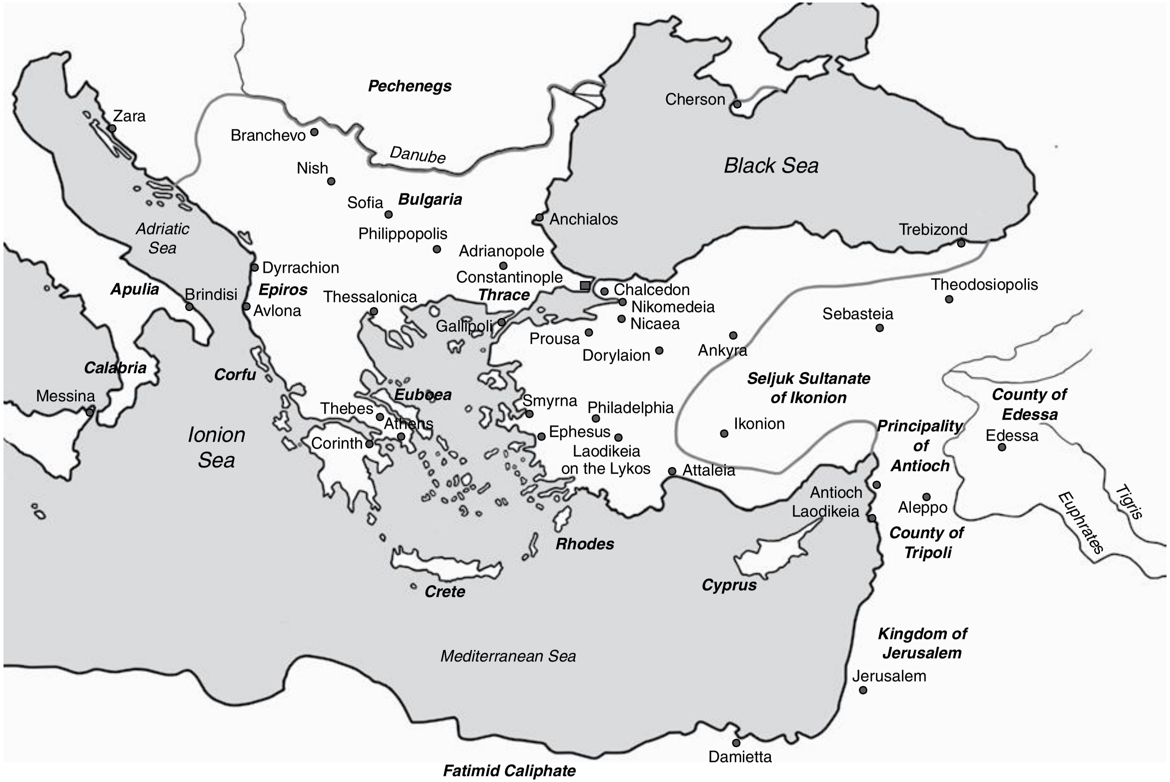
Once again, Alexios I and John II were both well aware of the danger and took steps to build bridges with the papacy. In 1112, Alexios wrote to the people of Rome, commiserating with them over the harsh treatment that Pope Paschal II had recently received from the western emperor, Henry V (1106–25). Shortly afterwards, when the archbishop of Milan passed through Constantinople on his way to Jerusalem, Alexios organized a series of debates on the issues that divided the Churches.[74] John II did much the same, sending an embassy to Rome in 1124 to propose that an ecclesiastical council should meet to resolve the schism and organizing a debate in Constantinople in 1136 between representatives of the Roman and Byzantine Churches.[75] These initiatives did not lead to anything. The schism remained and with it the potential excuse for military action against Byzantium. At the end of the day, in vindicating their own view of the world, the Byzantines were inevitably violating that of the reformed papacy and of its creations, the crusades and the Latin states of Syria. When they acted to protect the role of the emperor as the leader of Christendom, they could be accused of being its enemy and the confederates of the infidels. Only as the twelfth century went on did some at the Byzantine court learn from their mistakes and try to present their policies in ways acceptable to Western opinion.

# 6

# The friend of the Latins

Manuel I (1143–80), the successor of John II and third emperor of the Komnenos dynasty came to power in what amounted to a bloodless coup. He was the youngest of four sons and although two of these had predeceased their father, there was a natural assumption that John's eldest surviving son Isaac would succeed him. But when John died in Syria, Isaac was in Constantinople while Manuel was at his father's death bed. The dying emperor allegedly nominated Manuel as his successor and it was Manuel who led the army back to Constantinople. Letters were sent ahead to Manuel's supporters in the capital, instructing them to place Isaac under arrest in case he decided to dispute the succession. Only after Manuel had entered the city in June 1143 and secured his position was Isaac released after stoically accepting his relegation.[1] Not that Manuel's popularity suffered: the people of Constantinople were unconcerned by this breach of primogeniture and gave the new emperor a tumultuous welcome. Although he had his detractors, that popularity was carefully cultivated and maintained for most of his time on the throne. Like his father and grandfather before him he was an able general and he publicized his victories, such as that over the Serbs in 1149, with ostentatious triumphal entries into Constantinople. He knew the value of a crowd-pleasing gesture. When a precious relic, the marble slab on which the dead Christ was believed to have been laid after the crucifixion, was shipped from Ephesus to Constantinople, the emperor was waiting at the harbour and carried it up to the Great Palace on his own back.[2] He inspired immense personal loyalty in those who served him. He is the hero of the history written by his secretary, John Kinnamos, who attributes every possible virtue to him, not only bravery in combat, but also intellect, humanity and even a good grasp of philosophy and medicine. John Phokas, who served as a soldier in Manuel's army, spoke of him in later years as the 'universal benefactor'.[3]

What is more surprising is that Manuel also received a good press in Latin chronicles written in western Europe and the kingdom of Jerusalem, their authors extolling him as 'a generous and worthy man', 'beloved of God', 'a great-souled man of incomparable energy', whose 'memory will


Pechenegs
Zara
Branchevo
Danube
Nish
Sofia
Bulgaria
Philippopolis
Adriatic Sea
Dyrrachion
Adrianopole
Constantinople
Thrace
Apulia
Brindisi
Epiros
Avlona
Thessalonica
Gallipoli
Calabria
Corfu
Messina
Ionion Sea
Thebes
Euboea
Athens
Corinth
Crete
Black Sea
Cherson
Anchialos
Trebizond
Theodosiopolis
Sebasteia
Chalcedon
Nikomedeia
Nicaea
Prousa
Dorylaion
Ankyra
Seljuk Sultanate of Ikonion
Ikonion
Smyrna
Philadelphia
Ephesus
Laodikeia on the Lykos
Attaleia
Rhodes
Cyprus
Mediterranean Sea
Fatimid Caliphate
Damietta
Principality of Antioch
Antioch
Laodikeia
Aleppo
County of Tripoli
County of Edessa
Edessa
Euphrates
Tigris
Kingdom of Jerusalem
Jerusalem

**MAP 4** *The Byzantine empire, c.1150.*

ever be held in benediction'.[4] This shining exception to the generally unflattering picture of the 'Greeks' requires an explanation. It is tempting to see Manuel as breaking with the policies of his predecessors and as an inspired innovator who substituted cooperation for confrontation in his dealing with the West and the crusader states.[5] The temptation is best resisted. Although Manuel undoubtedly used rather more imagination and skill in this area of foreign policy than father and grandfather, the extent of his innovation and cooperation should not be exaggerated. Manuel was not 'pro-Latin': he was – of course – pro-Byzantine. A close examination of his actions shows that he and his advisers were pursuing the same goals as Alexios I and John II. The only difference was that they were more careful to present their actions in an acceptable way, in order to avoid giving offence to the rulers of the crusader states and their backers in the West, particularly the papacy. Moreover, this more careful approach only emerged in the later years of Manuel's reign, when he had learned from earlier mistakes. These qualifications aside, there is no doubt that sensitivity to Western opinion ensured that Manuel was largely to achieve the goal of extending Byzantine suzerainty over the crusader states.

In the early years of his reign, Manuel I's approach to the principality of Antioch was indistinguishable from that of his predecessors: he simply took up where John II had left off at his untimely death. Even before Manuel had reached Constantinople with his father's coffin, he was overtaken by some envoys sent by Raymond of Poitiers. Sensing that Manuel was in a weak position with the capital yet to be secured, Raymond demanded that he cede those territories in Cilicia close to Antioch that the Byzantine army had occupied. Manuel's reply is preserved by Kinnamos. The words he records may not be exactly those that were spoken on the occasion but they do represent the position taken by the Byzantine court in the matter. Manuel not only rejected the demand but reminded the envoys that Antioch itself 'first belonged to our state'.[6] When Raymond attempted to make good his claim by attacking these Byzantine-held cities, Manuel dispatched an army under Andronicus and John Kontostephanos which advanced to the walls of Antioch. Faced once more with superior force, Raymond was compelled to travel to Constantinople in 1145 and make peace. At first Manuel refused even to receive his visitor and waited for him to grovel sufficiently. It was only when Raymond made a propitiatory visit to the tomb of John II in the Pantokrator monastery that he was allowed to take the familiar vow to become Manuel's *lizios* or vassal, just as he had done to John II in 1137.[7]

In this, Manuel was not just following early policy towards Antioch but the Byzantine approach to small neighbouring states in general. For centuries the Byzantines had sought recognition from them of the emperor's overlordship and special status. Manuel continued to do so throughout his reign and not just in the case of the prince of Antioch. In 1172, after crushing a revolt by the Serbs, Manuel granted an audience to their defeated leader, Stephen

Nemanja. While the emperor sat on a raised dias, Nemanja approached him barefoot with a halter round his neck to beg for forgiveness. The scene was later immortalized for public consumption in a mosaic in one of Constantinople's churches.[8] When the Seljuk sultan Kilidj Arslan II (1156–92) visited Constantinople in 1162, he came not as a defeated foe like Nemanja, but in order to cement an alliance with the emperor. Nevertheless, the manner of his reception conveyed the same message, albeit with subtle amendments and as far as Kinnamos was concerned, the sultan was there 'in the guise of a servant'. Again, the emperor received his visitor seated on a raised throne of gold, his robes covered in jewels and pearls, and wearing an enormous ruby around his neck. Lavish gifts were bestowed on the sultan, to demonstrate the emperor's generosity and patronage.[9] It would be wrong, however, to suggest that it was just business as usual during Manuel's reign. Within a few years of his accession, something was to occur that was probably to alert him to the dangers of extending traditional Byzantine policies to western Europeans and their crusading expeditions: the so-called Second Crusade.

The expedition was launched by Pope Eugenius III in 1145. His crusading bull, *Quantum Praedecessores* was issued in response to the capture of the city of Edessa in 1144 by Zengi, atabeg of Mosul and Aleppo, and to the threat to the crusader states that the Muslim victory posed. In response to the pope's call, two large armies were formed, one headed by the French king Louis VII (1137–80), the other by the western emperor-elect Conrad III (1138–52).[10] Unlike the sermon of Urban II in 1095, Eugenius's appeal was not in any way inspired by diplomatic contact with the Byzantine emperor but Byzantium could hardly avoid involvement as both Louis VII and Conrad III had decided to follow the route of the First Crusade and to lead their armies through the Balkans via Constantinople on the way to the Holy Land.

On the face of it, Manuel's response to the arrival of the crusade armies was remarkably similar to Alexios's half a century before. Indeed, the parallels are so strong that some have been tempted to see Anna Komnene's version of the events of 1096–7 as having been modelled on those of 1147–8, which took place around the time she was writing.[11] Such an explanation is not really necessary. The continuity of the foreign policy and outlook of the Byzantine elite is sufficient reason why the two expeditions were handled in almost exactly the same way. In both cases there was a strong suspicion that the approaching crusade armies represented a threat. John Kinnamos states at the very beginning of his account that the journey to Jerusalem was only a pretext and that the real aim of the expedition was the conquest of Constantinople.[12] Manuel probably feared that the crusade would once more be exploited by the Normans of southern Italy and his fears were not ill-founded. He may have known that Louis VII's original plan had been to travel via Italy and join up with the Norman ruler, Roger II, there. Roger did not participate in the expedition but in the autumn of 1147,

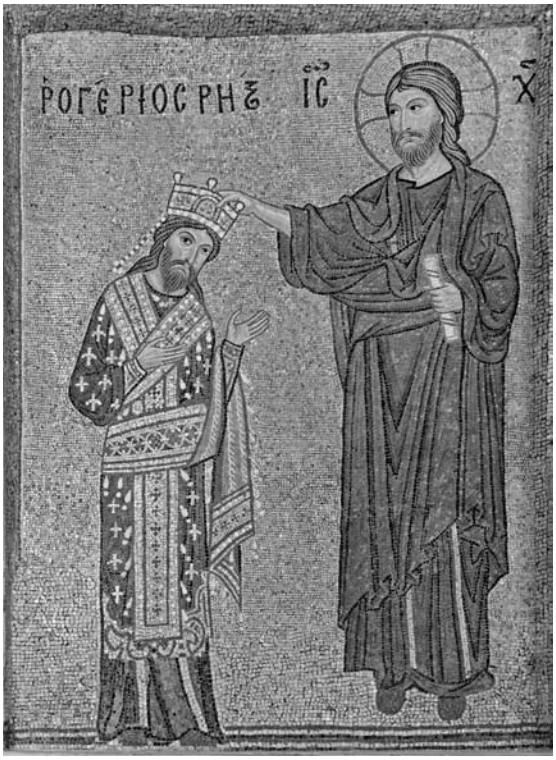


**FIGURE 8** *Roger II, Norman king of Sicily (1130–54), who mounted a damaging raid against Byzantine Greece in 1147. Nevertheless this mosaic portrait of him, from the Martorana church in Palermo, depicts him in the guise of a Byzantine emperor with his name given in Greek.* (Renata Sedmakova/Shutterstock.com)

at the very time that the Second Crusade was passing through Byzantine territory, he launched an attack across the Adriatic, just as Robert Guiscard and Bohemond in 1081 and 1107. His fleet occupied the Byzantine island of Corfu, and then sailed up the Gulf of Corinth to raid the prosperous towns of Corinth and Thebes.[13] Roger's action did much to raise tension in Constantinople so Manuel I probably felt compelled to follow the advice of his grandfather to protect the 'coveted city' when the nations of the West were on the move.[14]

The tactics used by Manuel and his advisers were also very similar to the carrot and stick approach that Alexios had used in 1096–7, although they seem to have been better informed and better prepared for the arrival of the armies. Envoys from the leaders arrived in Constantinople in the autumn of 1146, a full year before the armies, to discuss the all-important matter of supplies. The following summer, as the march began, Byzantine envoys were sent west to meet them. They met with Louis VII in the Bavarian city of Regensburg and there made the same demands that Alexios had made in Constantinople to the leaders of the First Crusade: that the French king would not attack the emperor's territory and that he should restore to the emperor any place captured by the crusaders from the Turks which had previously belonged to the empire. If the king was prepared to swear to these terms on oath, the ambassadors promised that adequate supplies would be provided for the French army.[15]

Careful though the planning was, once the first bodies of troops began to cross the border into Byzantine territory during the summer of 1147, a number of ugly incidents occurred. Conrad III's army crossed the Danube first, heading south towards Nish and Sofia, while the French of Louis VII followed on a few weeks later. The trouble began when the crusaders tried to buy supplies. Some locals could not resist the opportunity to make a profit by offering an unfair rate of exchange for the crusaders' copper coins. Another trick was to remain behind the walls of their cities and let down baskets into which the Westerners were instructed to place the purchase money. When this had been hauled up over the battlements, food of inferior quality would be sent down in the baskets to the furious, but impotent, crusaders below. There were also occasions when, rather than paying for supplies, the crusaders seized them by force. By the time the German contingent reached Philippopolis relations with the local Byzantines had reached a low ebb. A group of inebriated Germans took exception to a display of snake-charming in a tavern, in the belief that it was a cloak for an attempt to poison them, and burned most of the buildings outside the city walls. At Adrianople, when a German lying sick in a monastery was murdered by some vengeful locals, Conrad's nephew, Frederick Barbarossa, took matters into his own hands and promptly burnt the monastery down. As in the case of the First Crusade, these incidents were not the result of imperial policy but of individual dishonesty or ill will. They were, moreover, not confined to clashes between Byzantines and crusaders: the French and Germans brawled with each other whenever they coincided in a town along the route.[16]

Manuel and his advisers could only take control of the situation as the German army neared Constantinople in September. Given the incident at Adrianople, the emperor was understandably unwilling for the Germans to approach the imperial capital. He therefore sent an envoy to the German camp, to beg them to head for Gallipoli and to cross to Asia Minor by the Dardanelles, rather than the Bosporus. This Conrad refused to do so and kept his army on the road to Constantinople.[17] In this situation military confrontation was inevitable although Manuel was reluctant to make an open attack on the Germans because of their 'ostensible purpose' of travelling to the Holy Land. In spite of having lost many men and much equipment when a swollen river flooded their camp, the Germans remained belligerent and a pitched battle took place outside the walls of Constantinople. According to Kinnamos, who is the only detailed source of information on Manuel's relations with Conrad at this stage, the Germans were worsted by the smaller imperial army, composed largely of Turkish and Cuman mercenaries, because the Byzantines were 'superior in military science and perseverance in battle'.[18] Kinnamos then recounts how Manuel switched his tactics to those familiar 'other means'. The downcast and humbled Conrad was sent a letter containing a lecture on Byzantine political theory and reminding him that he was dealing with the Roman empire: 'Consider that they possess this country whose ancestors passed through the whole earth with arms, and became masters of yourselves and every other race under the sun.' A boat was then provided to ferry the German ruler across to the Asian side.[19] When it came to Conrad's army, Manuel was keen to ensure that it did not link up with the French who were still a few weeks behind and therefore ferried it across the Bosporus as quickly as possible. Before they crossed, the German troops found themselves being offered lucrative incentives to enter Byzantine service. A number were only too happy to abandon their crusade vow and accept.[20]

By the time Louis VII arrived on 4 October, the Germans were gone and order had been restored. There was no military confrontation and the French king could be given the standard welcome accorded to a visiting ruler, splendid and cordial but leaving him in no doubt as to his subordinate status. He was received by the emperor in the palace of Blachernae and as ever was given a seat placed at a lower level than the imperial throne on which to sit. He was given a guided tour of the city, which included the relics of the Passion in the chapel of the Great Palace. Then, having renewed his oath by giving pledges to be the friend and ally of the emperor, Louis and his army were ferried over the Bosporus.[21]

The situation in 1147 was, of course, different from that of 1097 in that when the crusaders were across the strait they were now still in Byzantine territory and would be until they crossed into land controlled by the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion. Thus Manuel undertook to supply the armies as they passed through his eastern lands.[22] Like the crusaders of 1101, however, the French and German armies encountered bitter Turkish resistance as they tried to advance on Ikonion. Conrad III pressed ahead from without waiting for the French and his army suffered a severe mauling. The armies combined and regrouped at Nicaea and managed to fight their way through to the port of Attaleia in January 1148 from where they took ship to Antioch.[23] Manuel nevertheless managed to extract some advantage from the debacle. When Conrad III fell ill at Ephesus in December 1147, Manuel sent a ship to collect him and bring him to Constantinople. There, as Conrad himself declared, Manuel 'showed us more honour than was ever shown to any one of our predecessors'. The following spring, the now recovered Conrad set out by sea for the Holy Land to fulfil his crusading vow.[24] Returning home by ship in late 1148 or early 1149, Conrad and his nephew Frederick stopped off to meet Manuel once more at Thessalonica and there concluded a treaty of alliance with him, sealed with the usual oath. The agreement was directed against the Normans of southern Italy who were the enemies of both rulers. In this Manuel was following in the footsteps of Alexios I and John II, both of whom had turned to the western emperor in order to stave off the threat from the Normans. Indeed Manuel had already married Conrad's sister-in-law, Bertha of Sulzbach in 1146.[25] Thus Manuel had succeeded, as Alexios I had with Raymond of Toulouse, in turning his enemy back into his ally.

Certainly at the Byzantine court, Manuel's handling of the passage of the Second Crusade was hailed as a great success. John Kinnamos presents the episode as such with the imperial city protected and the crusaders compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the emperor. The court orator Manganeios Prodromos took the same line, celebrating Manuel's saving of Constantinople from 'the wild beast from the west'.[26] If some rather underhand tactics had been employed, that was quite justifiable in view of the result. As another member of the educated elite, Eustathios, archbishop of Thessalonica, put it in a speech written in praise of Manuel:

> Thus having passed easily over to the opposite side, they fell short of what they desired. For you have given them their orders, shaking fear over them briefly . . . and they have departed, forgetting their boldness . . .[27]

Needless, many of those who had been on the receiving end of those tactics were less impressed. Their anger was to be all the sharper because the Second Crusade was not a success. Once the crusade armies had arrived in the Holy Land, they had failed miserably in their main objective of capturing Damascus in July 1148. Instead, Damascus was in 1154 brought under the rule of Zengi's son and successor, Nur ed-Din, greatly increasing his resources and his ability to threaten the kingdom of Jerusalem and the other Latin states. A scapegoat was needed to explain the disaster and while some blamed the prince of Antioch, Raymond of Poitiers,[28] the policies pursued by the Byzantines fitted them perfectly to the role.

The criticism came not from the camp of Conrad, who was now Manuel's friend and ally. The brief account of the expedition written by his kinsman, Otto bishop of Freising, makes no recriminations whatever against the Byzantines.[29] It was in the first-hand report written by Odo of Deuil, chaplain of Louis VII, that is characterized by a virulent anti-Byzantine bias. Like the *Gesta Francorum*, Guibert of Nogent and other accounts of the First Crusade, Odo's narrative contains all the usual sneers about Greek effeminacy but it also makes certain specific accusations against the Byzantines: that the emperor and his representatives were verbose and duplicitous flatterers, that they promised to supply the crusade but failed to do so and that they deliberately incited the Turks to attack the crusaders after they had crossed to Asia Minor.

Turning to the first charge, according to Odo, Greek duplicity began when the Byzantine envoys had met with Louis VII at Regensburg. Odo commented caustically on the pompous flattery with which they prefaced their speeches before the king and on the long-winded letters which they read out, as they attempted with 'inept humility' to secure the goodwill of the French. Once the French king had reached Constantinople, he found that the emperor Manuel behaved exactly like his subordinates, soothing him with pleasant and flattering words while hiding his real thoughts behind this smiling mask.[30] As regards supplies, the undertaking made at Regensburg was soon reneged upon, Odo claims. Once the French army had crossed the Danube into Byzantine territory, it discovered that Manuel had failed to provide sufficient food supplies and Odo blamed the emperor for incidents such as the bad food being let down in the baskets from the walls of cities. Things improved when the army reached the environs of Constantinople but then the emperor began to restrict the flow of food to extort concessions from the French king. As the troops were being ferried over the Bosporus, supplies were deliberately limited in order to force the king to provide further assurances that conquered towns would be returned to the Byzantines. Odo had even heard that some crusaders starved to death in Asia Minor.[31] Finally and most seriously there was the accusation of collusion with the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion. When the French reached Constantinople in October 1147, they discovered that Manuel had just made a 12-year truce with the Turks, the very enemy that the crusaders would have to fight if they were to reach Jerusalem. The subsequent French experience in Asia Minor seemed to suggest that the emperor had agreed not so much a truce with the Turks as a military alliance. The guides provided by Manuel led the army on the wrong road, and then abandoned it to attacks by the Turks.[32]

It would be easy to dismiss these charges simply as a jaundiced attempt to shift the blame for the crusade's failure onto the Byzantines and certainly Odo's accusations about the failure to supply the crusaders are hard to sustain. The shortage of supplies was probably the fault partly of dishonest local Greeks and of the German crusaders who had commandeered much of what they needed without payment as they preceded the French.[33] Odo's remaining two charges, on the other hand, were an understandable response to traditional Byzantine methods. With regard to the verbosity and duplicity, in Byzantine culture the ability to say one thing and mean another was a highly regarded rhetorical skill, something that marked out a civilized Roman from the barbarians that thronged his borders. Odo's account of the prolix but duplicitous ambassadors to the French king at Regensburg therefore rings only too true and is supported by other evidence from the time. In August 1146, when preparations for the Second Crusade were underway, Manuel had written to Louis VII. In this flowery missive, the emperor professed himself at great length to be eager to receive the French king in Constantinople. Nevertheless, almost as an afterthought, Manuel inserted the observation that 'Your Nobility, however, knows that, when the sceptre of empire was held by the noteworthy emperor, my grandfather, a great multitude of armies from those parts came across and agreements were made between both sides', an oblique allusion to the oaths sworn by the leaders of the First Crusade to return captured towns and territory to the emperor in 1096–7. The letter was a typical production of the Byzantine imperial chancery, in which the harsh demand for guarantees from the French was buried under mounds of flattery.[34] That was the way things were done in Byzantium but Odo's reaction to it is hardly surprising.

Even Odo's most serious claim, that Manuel actively encouraged the Turks to attack the crusaders as they passed through Asia Minor, has some substance. In his letter to Louis VII of August 1146, Manuel had posed as a participant in the struggle against the common Muslim enemy. He assured the king that he was currently at war with the Seljuk Turks, and that he had been leading his army against them when news of the plan for the Second Crusade arrived. Yet it is clear from Kinnamos that Manuel made peace with the Seljuks the following year, a pact that the French did not learn about, as Odo says, until they reached Constantinople. Manuel, no doubt, wanted his hands free so that he could deal with what he regarded as a more serious threat to Constantinople than the Turks.[35] Odo was by no means the only person in the French army to believe that the Turkish attacks on the crusaders in Asia Minor were encouraged by the Byzantines. Louis VII himself in a letter to Abbot Suger who was acting as his regent in France, claimed that the attacks occurred 'through the treachery of the emperor'.[36] The report is substantiated by two Syriac writers and even by the Byzantine Niketas Choniates who later asserted that Manuel sent letters to the sultan in Ikonion, urging him to attack.[37] Again, the action is not inconsistent with the way the Byzantines had acted in the past. The Seljuk sultan had sent troops to assist Alexios in his wars against Robert Guiscard in the Balkans in 1081–3 and against Bohemond at Antioch in 1106.[38] The use of Muslim allies against Christians was quite legitimate if done to protect the *Oikoumene*.

Even so, such actions were very dangerous. While Odo's version of events and extreme anti-Byzantine views were never as widely circulated as the *Gesta Francorum*, his tales of Greek duplicity and treachery soon found their way into second- or third-hand accounts of the crusade. It became widely, though by no means universally, believed in the West that the crusade failed at least partly thanks to Byzantine machinations.[39] As in the early years of the twelfth century, the circulation of such propaganda could provide a justification for military action against Constantinople, along the lines of Bohemond's invasion in 1107. The idea had been mooted when Louis VII was at Constantinople in October 1147, by one of the bishops with the army, Godfrey of Langres. Such action would be justified, the bishop claimed, partly on the grounds of Byzantine actions against the prince of Antioch, but also because of the heresies of the Byzantines. As well as referring to the matters of leavened and unleavened bread and the Filioque, Odo described how the French had discovered that, if a Latin priest celebrated mass at the altar of a Byzantine church, the Greek priests would wash it, as if to purify it from defilement. If a Latin married a Greek, he was expected to be baptized again, as if his original baptism were invalid. 'Because of this', Odo concluded, 'they were judged not to be Christians, and the Franks considered killing them a matter of no importance . . .'. It was the same justification that Bohemond had used in his letter to Paschal II.[40]

Bishop Godfrey's proposal was not accepted at the time and Louis VII's army continued westwards as planned. In the immediate aftermath of the crusade, however, a number of influential figures in western Europe made efforts to forge an alliance against the Byzantine empire. Peter the Venerable, abbot of Cluny, wrote to Roger II of Sicily urging him to make peace with Conrad III so that together they could wreak revenge on the 'Greeks and their worthless king'. Abbot Suger of St-Denis, a close confidant of Louis VII, was also in contact with Roger, in an attempt to draw him into a new crusade, which may have been intended to strike first at Constantinople. As it turned out, the plan received little support either in France or Rome and had petered out by 1150.[41] Even so, the rulers of Byzantium had been given yet another reminder of the fury that the pursuit of their usual policy could provoke in Western opinion. Manuel appears to have appreciated the danger at a very early stage and it is after 1150 that the change of tone in his dealings with the West, which sets him apart from his father and grandfather, starts to become apparent.

There were probably a number of influences behind this change of tone. As already seen, an awareness of the dangers of provoking Western hostility and of providing an excuse for an attack launched from the heel of Italy was probably an important consideration. In part, it might also have been a response to the change in the political landscape that took place after 1150 both in western Europe and in the Middle East. In the West, Manuel's ally Conrad III died in 1152 and was succeeded by his nephew, Frederick I Barbarossa (1152–90). For the first few years of his reign, Barbarossa maintained the alliance against the Normans of southern Italy that he and his uncle had made with Manuel at Thessalonica in 1149. After 1158, however, Barbarossa began a campaign to impose his will on Italy, taking military action against Milan and the city states of the north and intervening in a disputed papal election. Alarmed by the growing power of the German emperor, the papacy, the Lombard league of northern cities and even the Normans of southern Italy courted Manuel's friendship, giving him ample scope to achieve his aims without incurring resentment.[42] In the East, the balance of power was similarly shifted by Nur ed-Din's unification of the whole of Syria under his rule. The rulers of the Latin states found themselves faced with a single powerful Muslim enemy rather than the patchwork of emirates that had existed when they arrived. Hard-pressed by Nur ed-Din's attacks, from about 1157 they began actively to solicit Byzantine help, once again giving Manuel the opportunity to intervene without opprobrium.[43]

The change of tone was not only dictated by fortuitous changes on the international scene. There were internal factors too. The empire seems to have been economically prosperous during Manuel's reign, to judge by the large numbers of coins that were in circulation. That would have boosted the tax revenues: a visitor to Constantinople in around 1161 reckoned that the Byzantine fisc earned 20,000 gold coins a year in customs duties and rents from the city alone. Hence the ease with which Manuel was able to purchase good will with gifts, dowries and ransoms.[44] The emperor's own outlook and personality played a part too. Once he was in power, the repressive, even monastic, regime instituted by Alexios I and his mother and continued by John II was abandoned. Sexual mores were relaxed, and the palace once again became the scene of imperial love affairs as it had in the days of Constantine IX. Niketas Choniates rather primly recorded that Manuel,

> being young and passionate, was wholly devoted to a dissolute and voluptuous life and given over to banqueting and revelling; whatever the flower of youth suggested and his vulgar passions prompted, that he did.[45]

More importantly there was a new atmosphere of free enquiry at court. While Alexios I had recommended the study of Scripture and the Fathers as an ideal leisure pursuit, Manuel's court was the scene of all kinds of intellectual activity, with open discussion of theology and astrology encouraged. Even the panegyrics, those stiff and formal speeches given in praise of the emperor on important feast days, show subtle departures from traditional form.[46] Like all the rulers of the Komnenos dynasty, Manuel gave many of the chief offices of state to members of his own family but he also brought in outsiders from humble origins such as John of Poutze which must have contributed to a culture of innovation.[47]

That more open environment seems to have led to a more knowledgeable and flexible approach to other cultures. Byzantine intellectuals were beginning to take an interest in Arabic literature, geography and medicine and to translate these works into Greek. Manuel himself was interested in building bridges with the empire's Islamic neighbours. He attempted to make it easier for Muslims to convert to Christianity by proposing that the section of the catechism which cursed the 'god of Mohammed' be removed.[48] That same interest can be detected with regard to the Latins, with some elements of Western fashion, such as broad brimmed hats, catching on in Constantinople. Manuel took a particular interest in the customs of western Europe. He was prepared to participate in tournaments, a Western institution, hitherto unknown in Byzantium, and is even alleged to have written to the king of England, Henry II (1154–89), to ask about the geography and notable features of his realm. The emperor employed Latins in roles other than their familiar ones of mercenaries, such the Pisans Leo Tuscus and Hugo Eteriano, who acted as interpreters and advisers on Western affairs.[49]

An interest in Western fashion and geography was probably just a passing fad. More significant was the way in which the Byzantine ruling classes were slowly becoming much better informed about the claims of the reformed papacy and the ideology of the crusades. As late as the 1120s, they were still apparently unaware that the pope was claiming authority not only over the whole Church but even over kings and emperors. When John II sent a letter to Pope Honorius II in 1126, he took the opportunity to propound the old doctrine of the two swords, the idea that authority in the Christian world was divided between the secular and spiritual powers, both of which had their own roles and responsibilities.[50] Ten years later, the Byzantines were certainly aware that the papacy was claiming much more than that. When a papal legate visited Constantinople in 1136, the archbishop of Nikomedeia complained to him that the doctrine of papal primacy would turn the Byzantines from sons of the Church into its slaves. Anna Komnene, writing in the 1140s, denounced the claim of the popes to preside over the entire *Oikoumene* as typical Latin arrogance and John Kinnamos grumbled that they 'usurp the highest peak of authority and confer the imperial dignity upon themselves'.[51]

By then the Byzantines also knew that there was a link between papal claims and the ideology of the crusades. This was a more difficult idea for them to grasp because in Byzantium the Church had never involved itself directly in warfare. It took its teaching on the issue from St Basil of Caesarea (330–79), who, while acknowledging that it was sometimes necessary for Christians to take up arms in defence of their country and their faith, advised that those who had done so should abstain from communion for three years. Killing, though sometimes justified, could never be praiseworthy, let alone earn a spiritual reward. An attempt by the emperor Nikephoros II in the tenth century to have those of his soldiers who died fighting against Muslims declared martyrs was firmly resisted by the patriarch of Constantinople.[52] Given that background, it was only to be expected that educated Byzantines would react with perplexity and disgust to the idea of a cleric preaching war and promising spiritual rewards for participation in it. In 1137, an imperial ambassador to the western emperor, Lothar III (1125–37) gave him and his court a long lecture on the errors of the papacy, one of which was organizing and participating in warfare. Anna Komnene expressed her shock that Gregory VII, the disciple of the Man of Peace, should lead an army against Emperor Henry IV. Distasteful as it was, there was nothing for it but to admit, as Komnene did, that 'the Latin customs with regard to priests differ from ours'.[53]

The expressions of pious horror apart, this better understanding of what drove the Latins eastwards on crusade would have enabled the policy makers in Constantinople to present their actions in an appropriate light. Mindful no doubt of the allegations of collusion made after the First and Second Crusades, Manuel was at pains to represent his dealings with Muslim powers in crusading terms and to stress his actions on behalf of Christendom as a whole. In a letter written to Henry II of England in 1176, for example, he described his campaigns against the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion in the following terms:

> From the beginning, Our Imperial Majesty has nourished hatred in the heart against the Persians, the enemies of God, when we have beheld them vaunting over the Christians, triumphing over the name of God, and holding sway over the land of the Christians.

Manuel sent letters to the pope around the same time couched in a similar tone. The Byzantines themselves were aware of what Manuel was trying to do. Kinnamos recalled how he was particularly eager to score a victory over the Turks in order to impress his German wife, Bertha, no doubt with a view to tales of his great deeds getting back to the West.[54] The stratagem worked. Gradually, the negative impression given by the Byzantine treatment of the Second Crusade was smoothed away. By 1160 Louis VII appears to have forgotten all about it and he wrote to Manuel, fondly recalling to the kindly way in which he had been received in Constantinople in 1147. The process of reconciliation was completed in March 1180, when Louis's daughter Agnes was married to Manuel's son Alexios. This was only the most prestigious of a number of marriages arranged by Manuel between his relatives and members of the Latin aristocracy. His daughter by his first marriage, Maria, was wedded to Renier, son of the marquis of Montferrat and two of his nieces to other Italian noblemen.[55] This careful diplomacy no doubt played a role in creating Manuel's posthumous reputation in Latin chronicles.

The same strategy of concealing Byzantine foreign policy goals beneath a façade that satisfied Latin expectations was to bring Manuel considerable success in his dealings with the principality of Antioch and the kingdom of Jerusalem in the 1150s, 1160s and 1170s. With Antioch, an opportunity to intervene arose in June 1149 when Nur ed-Din mounted a daring raid deep into the principality. Raymond of Poitiers hastened to intercept him without waiting to gather all his forces and in the ensuing encounter he was abandoned by most of his men and killed.[56] Nur ed-Din had the prince's head and right arm hacked off and sent to the caliph in Baghdad, then proceeded to devastate the land around Antioch at his leisure. Raymond's son, Bohemond III, was too young to rule, so it was imperative that a regent be appointed to govern the principality during his minority. The king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III (1143–63), occupied the role for a time. When he departed for his own kingdom, Count Joscelin II of Edessa was summoned to take over, but he was ambushed by brigands on his way to Antioch and taken off to Aleppo as a prisoner.[57]

In 1152, Manuel stepped in, aiming to bring Antioch under imperial suzerainty not by direct annexation but by putting someone whom he controlled in charge of the city. Manuel was hardly doing anything new here for Alexios I, by the Treaty of Devol, had appointed Bohemond to the role. Manuel's choice also fell on a Norman, a certain John Roger whom he sent to Antioch to seek the hand of Raymond's widow, Constance. The plan came to nothing. The people of Antioch were opposed to the match because they feared that they might become subject to Byzantine taxation, while Constance herself decided that John Roger was too old, and married instead a French nobleman, Reynald of Châtillon, who thus became the new prince of Antioch.[58] Undaunted by this setback, Manuel changed tactics and sought to enrol Reynald of Châtillon himself as his agent. In 1156 he hired the prince of Antioch's services against the Armenian prince Thoros, who had embarked on attacks on the Byzantine cities of Cilicia that had been recovered by Alexios I and John II.[59] Again, things did not go according to plan. Having driven Thoros's forces back, the prince of Antioch considered that Manuel was too slow in coming up with the promised reward. He therefore turned round and allied himself with Thoros and they launched a joint raid on the Byzantine island of Cyprus, causing great damage in particular to the monasteries of the island, which they did not scruple to plunder. According to William of Tyre, the raiders

> showed no mercy to age or sex, neither did they recognise difference of condition. Finally, laden with a vast amount of riches and spoils of every kind, they returned to the sea shore. When the ships were ready, they embarked and set sail for Antioch. There, within a short time, all the wealth which had been so wickedly acquired was dissipated; for, as says the proverb, 'Booty wickedly acquired brings no good results'.[60]

It is clear from the words of this Latin chronicler that opinion in the kingdom of Jerusalem was shocked by an attack on fellow Christians and believed that the perpetrators richly deserved to be punished. Reynald had, therefore, played into Manuel's hands and provided a pretext for the emperor to take military action against Antioch. Moreover, Manuel's conciliatory attitude towards the papacy and the pope's own preoccupation with the threat from Frederick Barbarossa ensured that there would be no opposition from that quarter either. When Manuel marched on Antioch in 1158, Reynald could hope for little outside help and he hurried to meet Manuel at Mamistra and to make peace as soon as news of the emperor's approach reached him.[61]

The continuity of Manuel's policy and methods with those of the past is demonstrated by the conditions that he imposed on his defeated foe. The supremacy of the Byzantine emperor had to be publicly asserted in a humiliating spectacle and, since he was in a strong position, Manuel had no need to forego any of the details which prefigured the humiliation that was to be inflicted on the defeated Serb leader Stephen Nemanja a few years later. Reynald appeared in person at the Byzantine camp, barefoot, dressed in a short woollen tunic and with a rope around his neck. He handed his sword to the emperor and then fell prostrate at his feet where he lay 'till all were disgusted and the glory of the Latins was turned into shame'. A poet at the Byzantine court exploited the episode for all it was worth, recounting how Reynald was forced to 'curl up like a small puppy' at Manuel's 'red-slippered feet'.[62] The detailed stipulations of Manuel's treaty with Reynald also reveal the underlying continuity. Reynald agreed that the citadel of Antioch should be surrendered to the Byzantines on demand, that the Latin patriarch of Antioch should be replaced by a Byzantine appointee, and that he should provide a contingent to serve in the Byzantine army.[63] The first two demands had been made before, the last was a time-honoured way of treating a defeated enemy. After spending the winter in Cilicia, in April 1159 Manuel made a ceremonial entry into Antioch, just as his father had done before him, to make the point absolutely clear. He entered the city on horseback, wearing a jewelled garment over his armour, while Reynald and the nobles of Antioch walked alongside.[64]

Manuel now prepared to do what John II had done and demonstrate his hegemony by leading an expedition against Nur ed-Din. A joint Frankish-Byzantine army set out against Aleppo but the attack was never pressed home, prompting an Armenian chronicler to conclude sourly that the emperor who had arrived like a powerful eagle had departed like a weak fox. Instead, Manuel entered into negotiations with ambassadors from the sultan. Nur ed-Din agreed to provide the Byzantines with help against the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion and, more importantly, to release many of the French and German captives taken at the time of the Second Crusade.[65] As in the case of John II's recovery of the marble cross at the end of the siege of Shaizar in 1138, Manuel had succeeded in enhancing imperial prestige without the need for a costly campaign. Restoring Christian prisoners to their families was an important part of the image of the pious Christian emperor. Alexios I had employed it as a way of combating Bohemond's propaganda, and in coming years, Manuel was often to pay the ransoms of Latin knights and nobles who had been captured in battle as a way presenting himself in a favourable light to Western opinion. In 1180, he doled out no fewer than 150,000 gold pieces and released 1,000 Muslim prisoners in return for Baldwin of Ibelin. Last but not least, he had avoided a costly and uncertain military campaign for, as he confided to Nur ed-Din, he was only too well aware of 'the evil results to which the effects of war gave rise and the difficulty of attaining the hoped for end'. Manuel's dealings with Nur ed-Din were thus not a retreat but a continuation of policy by other means and, in the eyes of the Byzantines, a great success.[66]

Unlike Alexios and John, Manuel was able to maintain his influence in Antioch after his return to Constantinople in 1159. He achieved this partly by a marriage alliance. In 1162, after the death of his first wife Bertha of Sulzbach, he married Maria, one of the daughters of Raymond of Poitiers and the sister of the young Bohemond III. He also put Bohemond III in his debt by paying his ransom of 100,000 dinars after the prince had been captured by Nur ed-Din at the Battle of Harim in 1164. In return, Manuel was able finally to enforce the reinstatement of the Byzantine patriarch of Antioch, Athanasius I Manasses, in accordance with the Treaty of Devol and the agreement made in 1158. The Latin patriarch, Aimery of Limoges, was sent off to live in a nearby village and Athanasius henceforth presided in the cathedral of St Peter.[67] There were, of course, limits to the influence that Manuel could wield in distant Antioch. In 1170 an earthquake brought the sanctuary of the cathedral in Antioch crashing down. The unfortunate patriarch Athanasius, who happened to be celebrating the liturgy at the time, was buried under the rubble and killed. Prince Bohemond considered the earthquake to be a clear case of divine judgement and at once recalled the exiled Aimery. Manuel appointed a new Greek patriarch, Cyril II, but kept him in Constantinople and made no effort to impose him on the Antiochenes, perhaps because he realized that to do so would cause further ill will.[68] This setback aside, by the later years of his reign Manuel could view his achievements in Antioch with some satisfaction, especially as it had all been done without incurring Western opprobrium.

Much the same can be said about Manuel's policy towards the kingdom of Jerusalem between 1158 and 1180. The old objective of securing recognition of the emperor's guardianship of the Holy Places was central to Manuel's agenda. Unlike in the case of Antioch, however, Manuel did not have a *casus belli* which justified the overt humiliation of Reynald of Châtillon. He had, therefore, to tread even more carefully. His dealings with the kingdom of Jerusalem began in 1157 when King Baldwin III sent an embassy to Constantinople to request a Byzantine princess as his wife. It is not difficult to discern the motive behind the request. Baldwin was chronically short of men and resources with which to defend his kingdom and, since little help seemed to be forthcoming from the West, he turned to the fabled wealth of the Byzantine emperor. As William of Tyre put it, Manuel would be able 'to relieve from his own abundance the distress under which our realm was suffering and to change our poverty into superabundance'. Baldwin was not disappointed. The ambassadors returned with 13-year-old Theodora, the daughter of Manuel's brother Isaac whom he had ousted from the succession in 1143. Along with Theodora came 100,000 gold pieces for her dowry, an extra 10,000 for marriage expenses, and divers jewels and silk garments which William of Tyre reckoned as being worth a further 14,000 gold pieces.[69]

Byzantine money was never distributed without the expectation of something in return. That recompense was exacted when Manuel and his army were encamped near Antioch in 1159, after Reynald of Châtillon had been brought to heel. Baldwin III travelled north to pay his respects and received a warm welcome, liberal gifts of the usual type being lavished on him and his followers. Nevertheless, there were the customary formalities to be followed so that no one should be under any illusions about the right order of things. When the two rulers held court together, Baldwin was seated on a throne placed lower than that of the emperor. When Manuel entered Antioch, the king was required to ride deferentially behind him. Baldwin seems also to have consented to that familiar instrument of Byzantine policy, an oath. Manuel succeeded in extracting acceptance of these symbols of his superiority without inspiring the kind of resentment that Alexios had from the leaders of the First Crusade. The king and the emperor visited the baths together and went hunting. When Baldwin fell from his horse and injured his arm, it was Manuel who bound it up and visited him over the next few days to see how he was convalescing. The two rulers parted on the best of terms.[70]

When Baldwin III died at Beirut in 1163, Manuel's new suzerainty over the kingdom of Jerusalem was maintained. In 1165 Baldwin's successor, his younger brother Amalric (1163–74), sent an embassy to Constantinople to ask if he too could be furnished with a Byzantine bride. Manuel's great-niece, Maria Komnene, was despatched to Jerusalem, accompanied by a number of Byzantine nobles whose job it was to ensure that 'none of the prescribed ceremonies was omitted'. In return, Amalric renewed the oath of loyalty sworn by his brother Baldwin.[71] All this was, of course, the stock-in-trade of Byzantine diplomacy. The greater sensitivity employed by Manuel, however, emerges from the carefully stage-managed visit of Amalric himself to Constantinople in March 1171, to request the emperor's aid for the by-now beleaguered kingdom of Jerusalem. As recorded in detail by William of Tyre, the visit was an object lesson in the reception of an obedient monarch of lower status at the Byzantine court. All the usual visual symbols were rolled out. Amalric was presented with lavish gifts, was received by the emperor, who sat on a throne of gold, and was given a slightly lower throne on which to seat himself. Touchingly, however, William of Tyre records that curtains were drawn around the emperor's throne as Amalric approached it. This was done, he declared, so that the king's retinue would not see how the emperor showed so much condescension in his greeting to the king. It is much more likely that the curtains were drawn for the opposite reason: to hide the deep obeisance made by Amalric in accordance with protocol. Manuel probably had no desire to risk censure by imposing a public humiliation on Amalric as had been meted out to Reynald. If this is so, it is another good example of Manuel's judicious cloaking of traditional Byzantine diplomatic practice.[72] For domestic consumption, of course, there was no need for concealment: one of Manuel's advisers proclaimed that the visit had made it manifest that the Byzantine emperor was the king of kings.[73]

Central to Manuel's accommodation with the kings of Jerusalem was public recognition of the emperor's role as the protector of the Holy Places. Like his predecessors of the eleventh century in their negotiations with the Fatimids, Manuel secured the right to participate in the rebuilding and decoration of the basilicas and monasteries in the Holy Land, including the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem where he paid for the shelf on which Christ's body had allegedly been laid after the crucifixion to be covered in gold, presumably to make up for the loss of its marble slab that was now in Constantinople. From the reign of Amalric, Byzantine clergy were allowed to perform the liturgy in Greek every day at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Visual symbols of Manuel's patronage were everywhere.

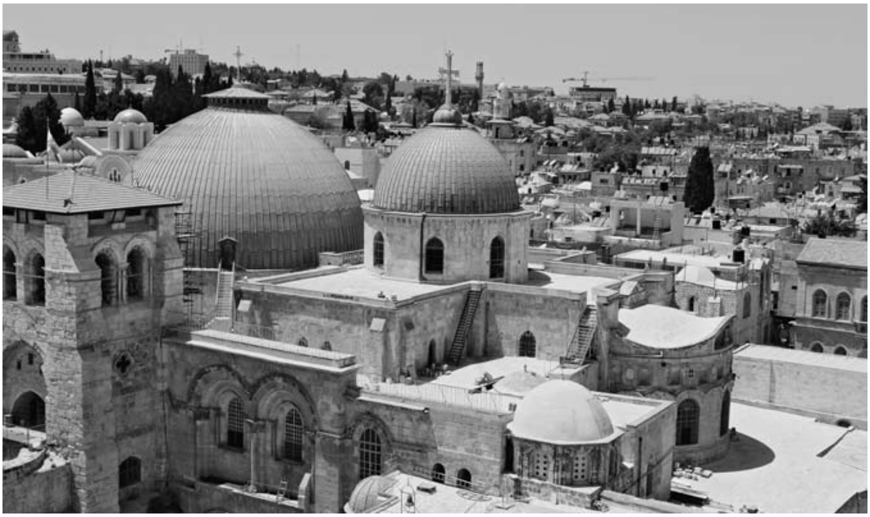


**FIGURE 9** *The Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem which was rebuilt during the eleventh century by the Byzantine emperor under the terms of his treaty with the Fatimid caliph and later adorned by Manuel I.* (Mtsyri/Shutterstock.com)

In the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, which had been redecorated with mosaics at his expense during the 1160s, several portraits of him were prominently displayed. On the south wall of the church an inscription in Greek recorded that 'the present work was finished by the hand of Ephraim the monk, painter and mosaicist, in the reign of the great emperor Manuel Porphyrogenitos Komnenos and in the time of the great king of Jerusalem, Amalric'. The placing of Manuel's name first was significant although, as in the case of Amalric's visit, there was careful sensitivity: in the Latin version of the inscription, which is the one which would have been read by Westerners, Amalric's name was placed before that of Manuel.[74]

Visual symbols apart, Manuel needed to demonstrate his overlordship of the kingdom of Jerusalem by leading the war against the common Muslim foe. Since 1027, the Byzantines had generally been on good terms with the Fatimid rulers of Egypt, enjoying from them concessions with regard to Jerusalem and allowing Friday prayers in the mosque in Constantinople to be said in the name of their caliph. The Byzantines had even warned the Fatimids of the approach of the First Crusade.[75] From the 1150s the relationship changed for the regime in Cairo was visibly ailing, torn apart by power struggles between rival viziers. Both Nur ed-Din and Amalric of Jerusalem were poised to take advantage of the weakness especially as Egypt was one of the most fertile and productive lands in the region. Manuel was also tempted to intervene, in spite of the distance but his first move was to send an embassy to Cairo to demand the payment of annual tribute. Only when this was refused did Manuel send envoys to Jerusalem to discuss joint action against Egypt in the summer of 1168. In October the following year, Amalric led his army into Egypt, supported by a Byzantine fleet of some 300 ships and the combined force laid siege to the town of Damietta in the Nile Delta. Manuel's eagerness to go to war in this instance is in stark contrast to his readiness to make peace with Nur ed-Din ten years before. Kinnamos even claims that he longed to recover Egypt as a Byzantine province. The Byzantines were happy enough to fight, if they believed that there was a good chance of success and the costs would not be ruinous. The emperor had, however, miscalculated. The siege of Damietta dragged on for weeks and the limited provisions brought by the Byzantine fleet began to run out. In December a truce was agreed and the Christian forces withdrew. Half the fleet was wrecked in a storm on the way back to Constantinople.[76]

The Egyptian campaign is usually portrayed as a complete disaster. Certainly it played a part in allowing Nur ed-Din's lieutenant, Saladin, to cement his position as vizier to the Fatimid caliph from which he was ultimately to gain control of Egypt. As far as Byzantium was concerned there were no ill effects beyond the loss of the ships. The caliph hastened to make a treaty with Manuel soon afterwards and relations with the kingdom of Jerusalem were not unduly damaged. William of Tyre even paid tribute to the courage with which the Byzantine commander, Andronicus Kontostephanos, and his men had fought at Damietta. In 1177, Manuel proposed a renewed campaign and another Byzantine fleet was sent to Palestine to join in the invasion. This time the attack never got off the ground, due to the refusal of Count Philip of Flanders and several prominent nobles of the kingdom of Jerusalem to participate.[77] In spite of that, Manuel was still recognized as protector of the Latin states.

There were limits to how far Manuel could go in pursuing the traditional goals by repackaging them in an acceptable way. Even if the king of Jerusalem and the prince of Antioch accepted his aid when they needed it, they could never completely assent to the ideological claims that went with it. When Leontios, Manuel's nominee as patriarch of Jerusalem, turned up the Holy Land in the summer of 1177, he was not allowed to officiate in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and had to visit the shrine as a private individual.[78] The same was true in Manuel's dealings with other Western rulers. In 1164 he reminded King Vladislav of Bohemia that he was a vassal of the Byzantine emperor on account of the oath that he had sworn to him when he had accompanied Conrad III on the Second Crusade. It is unlikely that Vladislav was impressed: he owed his royal title to Manuel's rival Roman emperor, Frederick Barbarossa who had raised him from duke to king at the diet of Regensburg in 1158.[79] The best chance for achieving recognition of Byzantine claims in the West came with the disputed papal election of September 1159 when Frederick Barbarossa championed Victor IV against Alexander III. Manuel saw his chance to undermine his rival and gave his moral and financial support to Alexander. This was nothing new. Alexios I had sought to make similar capital out of the investiture dispute between the papacy and the western emperor. In 1112, he had written to the people of Rome, commiserating with them over the harsh treatment that Pope Paschal II had recently received from the western emperor, Henry V. He even offered himself or his son John as a replacement for Henry but there is no evidence that the offer was considered seriously.[80] Manuel, however, came a great deal closer to receiving that recognition. Hard-pressed by Barbarossa's forces, in 1161 Alexander III seems to have offered to crown Manuel as the western Roman emperor in place of the recalcitrant Barbarossa. The offer was never taken up. It became clear that the pope expected Manuel to reside at Rome rather than Constantinople and Manuel could not, of course, accept such a reversal of the doctrine of *Translatio Imperii*. In 1177, Alexander and Barbarossa were reconciled and there was for the time being no further opportunity to exploit the rift between pope and western emperor.[81]

Another limit on how far Manuel could go was placed by his own subjects. As part of his bid to make Byzantine actions acceptable in Western eyes, Manuel sought to defuse the issue of the schism with Rome which those who sought to justify attacks on the empire had used to such good effect. In 1166 a council was held in Constantinople to discuss the differences between the Churches at which Manuel actively encouraged Westerners to put forward their point of view. He expressed a willingness to root out those practices which had so shocked Odo of Deuil at the time of the Second Crusade, particularly the washing of altars that had been used by Latin priests and the rebaptism of Latins who married Byzantines. The emperor made efforts to find some compromise on the matter of papal authority, reinterpreting the Donation of Constantine, a document which supported papal claims to universal authority, in such a way as to make it compatible with the claims of the Byzantine emperor.[82]

But where the emperor led, by no means all of his subjects were ready to follow, especially many from the ranks of the clergy and the monks. As the twelfth century went on there was a discernible hardening of attitudes against Latin claims and practices that gave rise to ever-increasing numbers of strongly worded letters and polemics. In 1155, the archbishop of Thessalonica, Basil of Ochrid, wrote to the pope objecting to the pontiff's description of the Byzantine Church as a 'lost sheep'. It was not the Byzantines, he argued, who had added to the Creed or introduced the use of unleavened bread in communion. Even more strident criticism of Latin 'deviations' came from the pen of the canonist Theodore Balsamon, who was later to serve as non-resident patriarch of Antioch. Asked if Byzantine clergy should give communion to Latins, Balsamon answered that they should not, unless the individual abjured the doctrines and practices that separated the Western Church from the Eastern.[83] In the light of entrenched attitudes like these, Manuel realized that no amount of repackaging could disguise the fundamental differences that existed between east and west over the questions of papal authority and the *Filioque*. In an interview with the Pisan, Hugo Eteriano, he lamented that

> to break the thread of this discord is very difficult or well-nigh impossible. For the Greek will never write that the Spirit proceeds from the Son, while the Latin will never delete or pass over what he has written. How will this wound be healed?[84]

As Manuel's reign went on there was a growing undercurrent of criticism of his priorities and methods. Some felt that he was nurturing 'inordinate ambitions and setting his eyes upon the ends of the earth' which might be a reference to his Italian policy or the expedition to Egypt. Others complained that he placed too much trust in foreigners, which may possibly refer to the employment of Latins at his court.[85] Such criticisms were only to be expected of a leader who was attempting to come to terms with change and by his own standards, Manuel's reign was a success. Alexios I and John II had applied tried and tested Byzantine policy to the crusader states and had incurred Western resentment that had in 1107 coalesced into direct military action against the empire. By an intelligent awareness of Western sensitivities on certain points, Manuel had secured an acceptance of the empire's hegemony over Antioch and Jerusalem. In the last analysis, however, that acceptance was dependent on an intelligent and well-informed emperor and courtiers who had the acumen to pursue traditional goals without sparking off Western hostility. Their successors were to lack that delicate finesse.

# 7

# Andronicus the tyrant

After the death of Manuel I in 1180, a series of violent political upheavals removed not only his designated successor but also the courtiers who had probably played an important role in framing foreign policy and packaging it for Western consumption. As a result, within five years the empire was back where it had been in 1150 in the eyes of western European opinion. Virulent anti-Byzantine propaganda was once more circulating, reviving the old charges of schism with Rome and of collusion with the infidel which Manuel and his advisers had worked so hard to avoid. Such a rapid unravelling needs to be explained, and the reason usually given is the seizure of power by a supposedly 'anti-Latin' faction in Constantinople, led by Manuel's cousin, Andronicus I Komnenos (1183–5). As well as instituting a reign of terror in Constantinople, Andronicus allegedly exploited the bigoted nationalism of the Byzantine populace to gain power, and then shifted the emphasis in foreign policy away from conciliating Western opinion to direct confrontation.[1]

For a number of reasons, this picture of the motives behind Andronicus's dealings with the West is inaccurate. In the first place, Andronicus himself was not specifically anti-Latin. His takeover in 1182 was motivated rather by a desire for personal revenge on Manuel I and his supporters. Secondly, the Byzantine population was not gripped by xenophobic hatred of all western Europeans, as is sometimes claimed. Lastly, the policy pursued by Andronicus towards the crusader states was neither new nor anti-Latin but rather a continuation of a line of conduct that can be traced back over 150 years. Byzantine foreign policy was not, and had never been, formulated in terms of pro- or anti-Latin, but on the doctrine of *Translatio Imperii* and the consequent need to defend Constantinople and to ensure recognition of the status of the emperor. That said, Andronicus can still be blamed for the renewed hostility towards Byzantium in western Europe and the crusader states because, unlike Manuel I, he showed complete indifference to how his actions might be interpreted by Western opinion. During his seizure of power in 1182, he permitted a massacre of Italian residents of Constantinople. In the light of that atrocity, it did not matter that Byzantine foreign policy had no specifically anti-Latin motive. Henceforth it would inevitably be seen in that light in the West, so that fairly routine matters, like an agreement with Saladin, the sultan of Syria and Egypt, over the protectorate of the Holy Places, came to be seen as deliberate and sinister machinations against Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

To substantiate these points, it first needs to be considered why Andronicus's coup has been seen, quite wrongly, as anti-Latin. The misconception arose because of developments which took place within the Byzantine empire between the middle of the eleventh century and the end of the reign of Manuel I. During that time, the numbers of western Europeans living in Constantinople had increased enormously. They fulfilled a variety of roles, many of them in the service of the emperor. Most were probably mercenary soldiers, from the Scandinavians and Englishmen who made up the Varangian guard in the palace, to the Norman knights who were an important component of the armies led on campaign by the first three emperors of the Komnenos dynasty. Latins had plenty of other uses. For obvious reasons they were often selected to lead embassies to western European courts, like Wilfricus of Lincoln who was sent to England by Alexios I in 1100. They seem to have had an advisory role as well. At the end of the text of the Treaty of Devol, which had been agreed with Bohemond in 1108, most of those who signed the document from the Byzantine side were western Europeans suggesting that they had been involved in the negotiation of the terms.[2] The number of Latins in imperial service and the variety of roles they fulfilled seem both to have increased still further under Manuel I and they were said to have 'flocked to his court'. He brought in translators and advisers such as the Pisan Eteriano brothers while the south Italian, Alexander of Gravina, acted as both a military leader and an envoy to Latin rulers throughout the reign.[3] The Latin element at the centre of power was reinforced by Manuel's marriage alliances with Latin powers. Both of Manuel's wives, Bertha of Sulzbach and Maria of Antioch, were of Latin origin and during 1180 he arranged marriages for his children with Westerners: his daughter Maria the Porphyrogenita to Renier, son of the marquis of Montferrat, and his son Alexios to Agnes, the daughter of Louis VII of France. These wives and husbands would have brought their own retinues and followers with them to Constantinople. Hence Manuel's reputation as the most pro-Latin of Byzantine emperors.

It was often assumed at the time and has been ever afterwards that many Byzantines must have resented the presence of these outsiders and there certainly were occasional rumblings of discontent. The eleventh-century courtier and soldier, Kekaumenos, had counselled the emperor not to bestow high rank or great offices of states on foreigners because it would not 'please your own officers who are of Roman origin'.[4] Niketas Choniates recorded that many people felt that Manuel I preferred them in his service over Byzantines. Rather than confining them to military roles, as in the past, he allegedly gave them posts in the imperial administration, appointing them as judges and tax collectors when they could not even speak Greek properly. George Tornikios, when trying to secure a post at court for his uncle, found that there was fierce competition from 'those of barbarian tongue', 'taken from the market place to the imperial palace'.[5] Outside the corridors of power, there were occasions when some Latins were the object of hostility from the wider Byzantine population. The Pisan Hugo Eteriano reported that during the year 1166, Latins were pointed out in the streets of the Byzantine capital as objects of hatred and detestation.[6]

It would be unwise to make too much of these instances, however. The obloquy described by Eteriano was a result of the highly charged atmosphere during the theological debates organized by Manuel in the 1160s, and was not necessarily a permanent state of affairs. Many writers of the time, including Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates, paid fulsome tribute to the loyalty and courage of the Latins in Byzantine service. The Byzantine empire was not, after all, a Greek national state. It was only to be expected that Christians of all races should be found in the service of the universal Christian emperor. Other literary evidence from the period shows quite plainly that many Byzantines regarded Latins simply as fellow Christians.[7] Even the reports that Manuel gave all the best jobs at his court to Latins should be treated with caution. In the first place, apart from these vague remarks, there is no evidence for any named individual of Latin origin occupying any of the important administrative posts at court.[8] Secondly, the words of Choniates and Tornikios must have been seen in the wider context of the jealousy with which members of the Byzantine ruling elite guarded the right to office that they believed their education gave them. They had always been quick to denigrate rivals in the competition for office, whether Byzantine or foreign, by questioning their education and competence in Greek, as Michael Psellos had when he was ousted from the inner circle around the Empress Theodora in 1055–6.[9] Choniates and Tornikios provide evidence not of anti-Latin prejudice but of the usual vigilant guardianship by a small and privileged group of the right of entry to their charmed circle. It is therefore quite clear that there was not necessarily a widespread seething hostility towards all Latins in Constantinople.

That said, there were particular groups among western Europeans who were singled out for resentment. The one which was most certainly the cause of deep and long-lasting antipathy was the representatives of the Italian merchants, especially the Venetians. The reasons for this hostility went back to the late eleventh century, when Alexios I, in search of an ally against the threat of a Norman invasion from southern Italy, had made a treaty with Venice. So acute was his need that the emperor had granted the Venetians far-reaching concessions in the maritime trade between Constantinople and the West. Venetian merchants were given the right to trade in nearly all parts of the empire, free of the Kommerkion and other dues, and were granted their own commercial quarter, along the Golden Horn in Constantinople.[10] The Byzantine government appears to have regarded these concessions as a temporary measure, which could be withdrawn once the empire was in a stronger position. The moment seemed to have arrived when John II acceded in 1118. By then, with the defeat of Bohemond in 1108, the danger from that quarter was no longer pressing and John accordingly refused to renew the treaty that his father had made. The Venetians were not prepared, however, to lose their valuable trading concessions. In the winter of 1124, a Venetian fleet that was returning from the Holy Land, where it had helped the king of Jerusalem to attack Tyre, diverted and sailed into the Aegean. There it made a series of attacks on Rhodes and other Byzantine coasts and islands, carrying off numerous young captives as slaves. The attack came without warning so that John, with no fleet in the area, was powerless to intervene. To avoid further depredations, he gave way and in August 1126 he signed a treaty restoring Venice's original commercial privileges.[11]

In spite of this unpleasant experience, the Byzantine authorities later granted similar trading concessions to other Italian merchant cities. In 1111 a treaty was made with Pisa, giving lesser exemptions from customs dues, and a commercial quarter and a landing stage on the Golden Horn. The Genoese received much the same in their treaty with Byzantium in 1155. To have extended the concessions to Genoese and Pisans was not as risky and unwise as it sounds. They were valuable allies against first the Normans and then Frederick Barbarossa and the Byzantines doubtless hoped to play them off against their commercial rivals, the Venetians. Moreover, it may well have been that the wealth they generated through their trading activities more than compensated for any concessions in the matter of customs dues. Provincial ports such as Dyrrachion and Thessalonica seem to have thrived as a result of the trade brought to them by Italian merchants.[12] Nor was it in any way unusual to make these kinds of treaties with the Italian maritime republics. In 1123, Baldwin II of Jerusalem concluded a similar agreement with Venice with exemption from customs duties and commercial quarters in Tyre, Sidon and other ports. Agreements with the Pisans and Genoese followed soon after and there can be no doubt that the merchants contributed greatly to the prosperity of the Latin states of Syria and Palestine.[13]

Whatever the precise considerations of policy behind these treaties, there can be no doubt that the Italian merchants were deeply unpopular with the rest of the population. Their enclaves along the Golden Horn were like self-contained cities with shops, taverns, warehouses, mills and churches where services were conducted in Latin, rather than Greek.[14] It was this quasi-independence, along with the great wealth and the perceived arrogance of the Italians, and the Venetians in particular, that gave rise to the resentment. They were seen as swaggering, boastful and disrespectful to the people that they lived among. Moreover, as is often the case with unwelcome immigrants, it was believed that there were far more of them than there actually were, one observer estimating their numbers at 60,000 by 1180.[15] It was not that the Byzantines were uniquely intolerant or xenophobic. A wide body of Western opinion also regarded the Venetians and Genoese as arrogant and materialistic, probably in response to the single-minded commercial policies they pursued. Fulcher of Chartres was horrified by the news of Venetian attacks on the Byzantine Aegean islands in 1124–5, prophesying that the perpetrators would die impenitent of the perfidy and be punished with damnation.[16] The dislike felt for the Italians by Byzantines and other Latins was, moreover, mild in comparison to the antagonism that existed between the Venetians and Genoese themselves. The commercial rivalry often spilled over into violence. In 1162 the Venetians banded together with the Pisans and local Byzantines to mount an attack on the Genoese in an attempt to drive them from their compound in Constantinople.[17] Byzantine resentment of the wealth and privileges of the Italian merchants was therefore deeply felt but by no means unique.

That antipathy may have been behind the dramatic action taken by the supposedly pro-Latin Manuel I. In sharp contrast to his usual practice of conciliating Western opinion, in the spring of 1171 he secretly brought troops into Constantinople. On 12 March, he suddenly ordered the arrest of all Venetians in the city and sent instructions to provincial governors to do the same in the ports of their districts. The operation was carried out with remarkable efficiency throughout the empire without the Venetians getting wind of what was going to happen. By the end of the day some 10,000 people, men, women and children had been rounded up and confined in prisons and monasteries. Most were released after a short time and allowed to return to Venice but their houses, warehouses, ships and movable property were confiscated.[18] The coup was undoubtedly popular with the Byzantine population but pleasing the crowd may not have been Manuel's only motive here. Niketas Choniates ascribes it to personal motives: Manuel had never forgiven the Venetians for an insult they had paid him when the Byzantines and Venetians were besieging the forces of Roger II of Sicily on Corfu back in 1149. Some Venetian sailors had stolen the imperial galley and, finding the imperial regalia on board, had staged a mocking burlesque of Byzantine ceremonial. More realistically, Manuel may have wanted to punish the Venetians for an attack they had made on the Genoese quarter in Constantinople the previous year, when several warehouses were set alight. It may also have been connected to Manuel's policy in Italy, where the Venetians had recently disappointed him by failing to provide a fleet when asked.[19]

Whatever it was that prompted Manuel to strike so decisively, it was only to be expected that the Venetians would react forcefully to this attack on their commercial interests. In September 1171, a powerful fleet led by Doge Vitale Michiel II sailed out of the Venetian lagoon and, as in 1124, headed for the Aegean. This time the Venetians reached as far as the island of Euboea but a combination of an energetic Byzantine naval response and disease decimating the Venetian crews forced them to turn back.[20] The Venetians were therefore compelled to resort to long drawn-out negotiations in an attempt to extract compensation for their losses in 1171 and to have their trading privileges renewed. A Venetian patrician called Enrico Dandolo, who as doge was later to play a leading role in the Fourth Crusade, was one of those involved in the discussions. A later chronicler claimed that he had been blinded in a brawl in Constantinople at this time and henceforth harboured a bitter grudge against the Byzantines, although the story is almost certainly made up.[21] By the last year of Manuel's reign, an agreement was close since the emperor was worried about a renewal of the threat from Norman southern Italy and needed Venetian naval help in the event of an attack, but the issue had not been resolved when Manuel died in 1180 and the Venetians were still largely excluded from Constantinople.[22] It is these events, not any developments in Antioch or Jerusalem that provide the background for what was to happen next.

It is unlikely that when Manuel died on 24 September 1180 that anyone would have predicted the rapid reversal of fortune that was to overtake both Byzantium and the Latin state of Syria and Palestine during the 1180s. Certainly, the Byzantine emperor had suffered a reverse at the hands of the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion at the Battle of Myriokephalon in 1176 but the damage was more to his prestige than to his military capability. Manuel was able to withdraw from the field with much of his army intact and to negotiate very reasonable terms with the Seljuk sultan.[23] For the Latin East, worrying developments were taking place in Egypt where Saladin was rapidly extending his power and influence. As vizier in Egypt he put an end to the Fatimid caliphate and restored the country to Sunni orthodoxy. Following the death of Nur ed-Din in 1174, Saladin succeeded in receiving the recognition of the caliph in Baghdad as his successor and marched on Damascus. Egypt and Syria were now united under one ruler and the Latins were not blind to the threat to their position that Saladin now posed. However, when the army of the kingdom of Jerusalem clashed with that of Saladin at Montgiscard in November 1177, the Muslims were routed and the sultan himself only narrowly escaped being taken prisoner.[24] It is therefore unlikely that anyone would have predicted that Saladin would be master of Jerusalem ten years later.

The Byzantines were probably much less concerned by either the defeat at Myriokephalon or the rise of Saladin than by Manuel having left only a minor to succeed him: his 11-year-old son, Alexios II. Minorities were always times of uncertainty and instability during the Middle Ages as different factions attempted to gain control of the young ruler or to supplant him. Byzantium was no exception although there was an established procedure for how government was to be provided for until the emperor was of age to rule. Under Byzantine law, a man's widow became head of the household on his death. Consequently it was accepted that in a minority the empress should be regent for the young emperor, a position that she usually exercised with the help of a council of prominent courtiers or relatives. Accordingly, the dying Manuel had entrusted his son to the care of his wife, Maria of Antioch, who was the boy's mother. She shared this responsibility with the patriarch of Constantinople, Theodosios Boradiotes, and the nephew of the late emperor, Alexios Komnenos who held the rank of Protosebastos.[25]

Before long, a faction opposed to the regency coalesced at court. Its most prominent members were Manuel I's daughter by his first marriage, Maria the Porphyrogenita, and her husband Renier of Montferrat. According to contemporary Byzantine sources, they and their followers were incensed by rumours that the Protosebastos was the empress's lover, that he was diverting public funds for his own purposes, and that he had designs on seizing the throne himself. They feared for their own position were his ambitions to be fulfilled.[26] Outside observers on the other hand, especially those in western Europe and the Latin East, discerned another motive for the discontent, attributing it to a resentment of the 'pro-Latin' stance of the regency. It was, after all, nominally headed by a Latin, Maria of Antioch, and contemporary Latin writers claimed that Alexios II and the Protosebastos followed Manuel I's putative policy of preferring the Latins over the Byzantines and giving them the highest honours, causing deep resentment among the Byzantine nobles and courtiers.[27] That all seems most unlikely. One of the leaders of the opposition, Maria the Porphyrogenita, was herself married to, and assisted in her plans by, a Latin, Renier of Montferrat. When the two sides came to blows in the spring of 1181, Maria and Renier recruited a contingent of Italian mercenaries, an odd course of action if the motive behind the revolt was anti-Latin.[28] The fact is that both sides were happy to use Latin help against their opponents in what was essentially a dynastic power struggle within the Komnenos family. The motives of the opposition party were personal hatred of the Protosebastos and a desire to eject him from his position of influence, rather than dislike of favouritism to the Latins.

By early 1181 a plan was in place to assassinate the hated Protosebastos when he left the Great Palace for a church service during Lent but it was betrayed to the regency. Most of the plotters were rounded up but Maria the Porphyrogenita and Renier of Montferrat, realizing that they were under suspicion, fled with their remaining supporters to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia where they barricaded themselves inside. A large mob gathered outside to show their solidarity with the couple and proceeded to ransack houses that belonged to supporters of the regency. After two months of hesitation, the Protosebastos and the empress Maria sent in troops to eject the rebel pair by force but after a day's inconclusive fighting, the patriarch Theodosios succeeded in brokering a settlement. Maria the Porphyrogenita and Renier were allowed to emerge from the cathedral and go free, but most of their supporters remained in prison.[29] The conflict was by no means resolved and the opponents of the regency were still looking for some way to overthrow it by force. They decided to appeal for aid from another member of the Komnenos family outside Constantinople. A message was accordingly sent to the late emperor's cousin, the governor of the province of Pontos, Andronicus Komnenos, at his castle on the Black Sea.

Like Maria the Porphyrogenita, Andronicus had his own, personal reasons for becoming involved in political opposition to the regency, which had nothing to do with anti-Latin prejudice. He had long been something of a maverick outsider in the Komnenos family. The son of John II's younger brother, Isaac, Andronicus was already in his sixties in 1182, with a lifetime of scandal and adventurous exploits behind him. During the 1150s, he had fallen into disfavour at court as a result of his involvement in various plots against Manuel I and of the first of his many illicit affairs with his female relatives, in this case his niece, Eudokia. He was imprisoned for nine years in the dungeons beneath the Great Palace, before escaping in about 1164 by smuggling a wax impression of the keys out to his supporters. He fled to Galicia in Ukraine where he was welcomed at the court of Prince Jaroslav. Pardoned and restored to imperial favour, he was sent to Cilicia as governor in 1166. His rehabilitation proved to be short-lived. Andronicus caused outrage in Constantinople by deserting his post and installing himself in the city of Antioch, where he entered into a marriage engagement with Philippa, one of the daughters of Raymond of Poitiers and the sister of Manuel's second wife, Maria of Antioch. Before long, however, Andronicus realized that Manuel's client state of Antioch was hardly a safe refuge and so he abandoned Philippa and absconded to the kingdom of Jerusalem, taking with him most of the year's tax receipts from Cilicia and Cyprus. King Amalric nevertheless received him amicably enough and granted him Beirut as a fief. Andronicus, who appears to have been incapable of avoiding scandal, then fell in love with Theodora, the niece of Manuel I and the widow of the previous king of Jerusalem, Baldwin III. The couple eloped first to the court of Nur ed-Din, and then to that of Saltuq Ibn Ali, the ruler of Theodosiopolis in eastern Asia Minor. Andronicus did not return to Byzantine territory until July 1180, when he was again forgiven and allowed to live quietly with Theodora and their children in Pontos.[30]

In spite of the reconciliation, it would seem that Andronicus had not forgotten his long period in the wilderness nor forgiven his family, so the appeal from the opponents of the regency Constantinople was irresistible. In the spring of 1182, he gathered an army and marched on the capital. His following was not large and with determined opposition his revolt would easily have been put down. By the time he reached the Bosporus, however, public opinion in Constantinople had swung firmly behind him and he was hailed as the saviour of the young emperor from the evil influence of the empress Maria and the Protosebastos. The commander of the fleet deserted to Andronicus and elements within the city arrested the Protosebastos and took him across the straits to the rebel camp. Andronicus was therefore able to ferry his troops across to the city and capture it with virtually no opposition.[31] How he saw his takeover emerges from Choniates's account of his triumphant entry into Constantinople in May 1182. Almost at once, Andronicus went to the monastery of the Pantokrator, ostensibly to pay his respects to the late Emperor Manuel whose sarcophagus was topped by the marble slab that he had brought from Ephesus some years before. As he knelt before the tomb, some bystanders were impressed by his grief for his dead kinsman. Others, who were nearer, recalled that he had used the occasion to vow revenge on his cousin, his persecutor and the cause of his many wanderings, and had promised that he would 'fall upon his family like a lion pouncing on a large prey'.[32]

In the months that followed, Andronicus did exactly that, plunging into an orgy of political violence that parallels Shakespeare's Richard III and liquidated his political opponents, real or imagined, with brutal efficiency. The Protosebastos Alexios had his eyes gouged out and was then immured in a monastery but at least he survived the takeover. Others were not so lucky. The empress and regent, Maria of Antioch, was strangled, and her memory obliterated: Andronicus had all pictures of her in public places replaced with his own portrait. He had no intention of sparing even those members of the imperial family who had opposed the regency and supported his takeover. Maria the Porphyrogenita and Renier of Montferrat were both murdered within a few months, probably poisoned. The young Alexios II was first sidelined when Andronicus was proclaimed emperor in September 1183. Shortly afterwards, the boy disappeared mysteriously. It was later said that he had been strangled with a bowstring and his body dumped in the Bosporus, weighted with lead to ensure that no evidence was washed ashore. When a few months later a rumour circulated that Alexios was alive and living in Sicily, Andronicus wryly remarked that he must be a very good swimmer. One of the few from the immediate imperial family to survive was Alexios's young French wife, Agnes, although her life was purchased at the cost of having to marry Andronicus, 50 years her senior.[33]

At the same time as destroying his immediate relatives, Andronicus carried out a purge of the administration of Manuel's appointees, bringing in his own creatures instead. One prominent victim was Andronicus Kontostephanos, who had led the expedition against Damietta in 1169 and earned the admiration even of the Latins. His defection to Andronicus's side at the crucial moment had helped the usurper to win power but in the summer of 1183 Kontostephanos was disgraced and blinded along with his four sons on suspicion of conspiracy. Constantine Makrodoukas who had been with Manuel I at Myriokephalon ended up being dragged off to a hill outside Constantinople and impaled.[34] As a warning to his enemies, Andronicus had a portrait of himself painted on an outer wall of the Church of the Forty Martyrs, depicting him in peasant garb, holding a sickle. There could be no doubt at whom the sickle was aimed: the grandees who had supported the previous regime. Andronicus was on record as boasting to his sons that he would rid them of giants, so that after he was gone they would have only pygmies to rule over. In place of the old guard, men like Michael Haploucheir and Stephen Hagiochristophorites now held the emperor's confidence and assiduously implemented the purge. Their voices, recalled Choniates, 'crashed throughout the palace' as they sought out all who were regarded as suspect. The terror rippled out from the court and capital into the provinces. The inhabitants of the cities of Nicaea and Prousa in Asia Minor, which had held out against Andronicus's takeover, suffered for their defiance. When the cities were captured, many of the prisoners were impaled outside the walls where, Choniates recounts, their corpses 'swayed in the wind like scarecrows'.[35]

The main victims of Andronicus's coup were therefore not Latins but the Byzantines themselves. The high-profile Latins who did perish, Maria of Antioch and Renier of Montferrat, did so because they were the wife and son-in-law of Manuel I respectively. The only member of Manuel's immediate family to survive was a Latin, his French daughter-in-law, Agnes. Moreover, Andronicus depended on a certain degree of Latin support to carry out his purge. Like all his predecessors, he had plenty of Latin mercenaries in his service and he relied on them to deal with his political opponents. German Varangians guarded the Protosebastos Alexios after his arrest in 1182 while Andronicus, like his predecessors, had a personal bodyguard of Latin troops.[36] It was impossible to be 'anti-Latin' in a general sense in twelfth-century Constantinople: western Europeans were simply far too useful.

Be that as it may, Andronicus still succeeded in earning himself the reputation as an enemy of the Latins in the West on account of an appalling atrocity which accompanied his seizure of Constantinople in April 1182. Once his troops were inside the city walls, they made common cause with the citizens of Constantinople in an attack on a very specific target: the unpopular Italian merchants who lived along the shores of the Golden Horn. Given that there were now few Venetians in Constantinople following Manuel's coup of 1171, the majority of the victims were probably Genoese and Pisans. They had got wind beforehand of what was likely to happen and many of them had been able to escape either by scattering through other parts of the city or by boarding their ships and sailing away. Those left behind, the aged, the infirm, men, women and children were killed without mercy as the mob rampaged the Italian quarters, looting and then torching the houses and warehouses. There is conflicting evidence as what prompted this outburst of savagery. Byzantine accounts suggest that Andronicus may actively have set his troops to make the attack because the Pisans and Genoese were sympathetic to the empress Maria and the Protosebastos who had requested their assistance against the opponents of the regency. The speed with which events had moved had prevented the Italians from intervening but Andronicus may have feared that they would oppose his entry. Then again it is quite possible that the attack was entirely spontaneous and nothing to do with Andronicus. So deeply unpopular were the Italian merchants that the city populace did not need encouragement to harm them and to seize their wealth, something that they had already attempted in

1162. As for Andronicus's soldiers, it may well be that they simply got out of hand. It was not unknown for the armies of victorious usurpers to go on the rampage once they were inside the walls of Constantinople. Alexios I's had done so in 1081 and caused widespread damage.[37]

Whatever the precise motivation, when news of it reached the Holy Land and the West, the assault on the Genoese and Pisans was seen as an attack on all Latins, motivated by Greek hatred of Western military prowess and superiority. The first reports were brought by the survivors to the ports of the principality of Antioch and the kingdom of Jerusalem where they recounted their experiences in graphic detail. Some incidents were particularly shocking. A hospital run by the knights of St John had been attacked, and the sick murdered in their beds. Those who had not been killed had been sold to the Turks of Ikonion as slaves. A priest visiting from Rome on papal business had allegedly been decapitated and his head tied to the tail of a dog, giving rise to the belief that the adhesion to the Church of Rome was another reason for Byzantine hatred of the Latins. 'In such a fashion', wrote William of Tyre, 'did the perfidious Greek nation, a brood of vipers . . . requite their guests – those who had not deserved such treatment and were far from anticipating anything of the kind'.[38] By the time the story had reached western Europe, it had grown in the telling and further refinements had been added, bringing in the old accusations of schism and collusion with the Muslims. It was alleged that the massacre had been carried out with the help of the Saracens and that the papal legate had died a martyr when he had proclaimed his obedience to Rome to the bloodthirsty mob.[39] The episode was a disaster for Byzantine relations with western Europe, the papacy and the crusader states, undoing the patient work of Manuel I over 30 years in a day. Although anti-Latin sentiment was behind neither Andronicus's coup nor the policy which he pursued thereafter towards the crusader states, such was the outrage caused by the massacre, and so tarnished was the reputation of the Byzantines, that almost anything they subsequently did was likely to be interpreted as a sinister plot.

Andronicus's coronation as senior emperor in September 1183 was a carefully stage-managed affair. He was acclaimed by a doubtless carefully selected crowd in a vaulted audience hall in the palace of Blachernae. He feigned reluctance to have the honour thrust upon him, until some of his supporters took him by the arms and pulled him onto the throne. The next day, he rode to Hagia Sophia to be crowned by the patriarch and afterwards rode quickly back across the square to the Great Palace, surrounded by the shields of his bodyguards. Some attributed his haste to fear of assassination, some to the strain that the long ceremony had put on the old man's bowels. It was only a matter of days before Alexios II was disposed of, his usefulness now at an end.[40]

Once securely in power, Andronicus had to formulate foreign policy but the situation that he faced was already very different from that of Manuel's reign. Not only had his purge deprived him of a great deal of accumulated wisdom and experience but Byzantium was now very much on the defensive. Many Byzantine nobles had not waited for Andronicus's henchmen to come visiting but had fled abroad to the pope in Rome and to the courts of the king of Hungary, the Norman king of Sicily and Seljuk sultan at Ikonion. They urged these rulers to invade the empire and overthrow the usurper. None showed much interest in doing so except the king of Sicily, William II (1166–89). As the heir of Robert Guiscard and Roger II, the lure of extending his rule across the Adriatic was too strong to resist, especially when an individual turned up at his court claiming to be the wronged and ousted Alexios II. With a cast-iron pretext of restoring a legitimate ruler, William II began to make preparations for an invasion across the Adriatic.[41] This was a threat that Byzantium had faced many times in the past and Andronicus prepared to counter it in the usual way by seeking an ally who could close the Adriatic to William's fleet. The only way to do that was to reverse Manuel I's policy and to seek reconciliation with Venice, whatever it might cost. A Venetian embassy visited Constantinople and an agreement was reached that compensation of 1,500 pounds of gold would be paid in instalments over the next six years to cover the Venetians for losses incurred in Manuel's confiscations of 1171. The Venetians appear also to have been given permission to return to their old quarter on the Golden Horn and to resume their commercial activities.[42]

Thus far, Andronicus had been pursuing a very tried and tested response to the threat from southern Italy. A very different kind of response is recorded in a letter supposedly written by an anonymous correspondent from the Latin East in about 1189 and preserved in the chronicle of a German monk, Magnus of Reichersberg (d. 1195). It provides the sensational revelation that Andronicus, out of fear of an imminent invasion by William II, had entered into an alliance with the sworn enemy of Christian rule in the Holy Land, Saladin, the sultan of Egypt and Syria. The two men had actually met in the past when Andronicus had taken refuge at the court of Nur ed-Din and, according to the anonymous correspondent, the emperor now reminded the Saladin of that past friendship and proposed the following terms. The emperor and the sultan were to provide each other with mutual aid against their common enemies, the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion and the Latin states of Palestine and Syria. If Saladin and the emperor were to make war on the sultan of Ikonion, the emperor was to receive any land taken up as far east as Antioch and Armenia. On the other hand, if Saladin were to conquer the kingdom of Jerusalem with Byzantine help, then the Byzantines would receive the city of Jerusalem and all the coastal cities except Ascalon. Finally, Saladin was to pay homage to Andronicus because he was emperor. Saladin responded favourably to the proposal and sent an embassy of his own to Constantinople.[43]

Many modern accounts have taken this report literally and cited it as evidence that Andronicus was pursuing a new 'anti-Latin' foreign policy, completely reversing that of Manuel I, with a view to bringing about the destruction of the crusader states of Antioch and Jerusalem and partitioning their territory between Byzantium and the Ayyubid sultanate.[44] There are, however, good grounds for taking a different view. The negotiations between Andronicus and Saladin are not mentioned by any contemporary or near-contemporary Byzantine or Muslim source, only by a letter written by an outsider, passing on what he had heard. This in itself dictates that the evidence should be treated with some caution, and the contents of the letter reinforce that conclusion. Detailed though its report of the negotiations is, it is very difficult to accept it at face value in view of the many inconsistencies and absurdities that it contains. It claims that Andronicus made his approach to the Ayyubid court because he was seeking help against the Hungarians and the Normans of southern Italy, his enemies in the West. Yet he negotiated a treaty that made no provision whatsoever for Saladin to help the empire against those enemies. Instead it promised major acquisitions of territory in the East, Asia Minor, Jerusalem and the coast of Palestine. It seems incredible that Andronicus should have been dreaming of extending the empire in the east when he was in imminent danger of losing it in the west. Another peculiar feature was the undertaking of Saladin to pay homage to Andronicus. It is hardly credible that Saladin, whose main political platform was that of jihad against the infidel, would enter into an agreement whereby he would hold part of his conquests as the vassal of a Christian ruler, and would hand over the rest as a gift.[45]

These unbelievable aspects of the report make it likely that it was another piece of anti-Byzantine propaganda, like the *Gesta Francorum* or the doctored letter to the count of Flanders, circulated in the West to present the Byzantines as the enemies of the crusade against whom military action was justifiable. That does not necessarily mean that the report should be dismissed as a tissue of lies. Like so much Western anti-Byzantine propaganda, it accurately reflected some aspects of traditional Byzantine foreign policy, albeit overlain with interpretations arising from crusade ideology and feudal notions of the importance of landholding. There is, for example, no reason to doubt that Andronicus was in contact with Saladin. Byzantine rulers had always been prepared to negotiate with their Muslim counterparts and had maintained very cordial relations with Saladin's predecessors in Egypt, the Fatimids.[46] Both Manuel I and the regency, in spite of their concern to avoid alienating Western opinion, continued to negotiate with Muslim powers whenever possible. Manuel had made a peace treaty with Nur ed-Din in 1159, and Alexios the Protosebastos had sent an embassy to Saladin in Cairo in 1181. Moreover, one of the terms reported by Magnus of Reicherberg's informant, mutual aid against the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion, had featured in Manuel's earlier negotiations with Nur ed-Din, suggesting that at least part of the information given by the Latin source was correct.[47] Byzantium was, moreover, not the only power to seek an accommodation with the new power that had arisen in the East. In 1177, the Genoese had negotiated a treaty with Saladin who, as the master of Alexandria, held the key to trading concessions in one of the major ports of the eastern Mediterranean. Even the Latin states of Syria and Palestine were in constant diplomatic contact with the Ayyubid court to the extent that Count Raymond III of Tripoli and his negotiator Humphrey of Toron were accused of becoming too friendly with infidels.[48]

Diplomatic contact with a Muslim power was one thing but a pact to take joint military action against Christians was quite another and the question remains of the credibility of the most radical of the clauses supposedly contained in the treaty negotiated by Andronicus: that the Byzantines and Saladin would take joint action against the kingdom of Jerusalem and, having overthrown it, would partition it between themselves. If the treaty had indeed provided for such an action, it would have been unprecedented, a complete departure from traditional Byzantine foreign policy and would vindicate the claim that Andronicus's foreign policy was anti-Latin.[49] A close examination of the exact terms of the agreement, as reported in the letter from the East, bears out neither of those interpretations. The two rulers allegedly agreed that

> if Saladin succeeded in occupying the land of the men of Jerusalem with [Andronicus's] advice and assistance, then Saladin would keep some land for himself, but he would leave Jerusalem and all the coastal area apart from Ascalon free, on condition however that he would hold it from the aforesaid emperor.[50]

These terms are distinctly ambiguous, leaving it unclear whether Saladin would hand Jerusalem and the coastal cities over to the emperor and would hold the rest of Palestine as a fief or whether he would hold most of Palestine by right of conquest, but keep Jerusalem and the maritime cities as a fief. Moreover, it is by no means clear what was meant by the 'homage' that Saladin was supposed to pay to Andronicus, given that it was a Western term that had no validity in Muslim or Byzantine society. It is here that the nature of the source of information has to be taken into account. Even if Magnus's informant was a Latin living in the East at the time, it is unlikely that he would have been privy to the exact details of the negotiations between two foreign powers or in a position to outline the precise details of the agreement. He was also ignorant of the terms that might have been used in such an agreement and therefore fell back on the inappropriate vocabulary of Western feudalism. What in fact he is giving us is therefore a feudal, Latin interpretation of an agreement whose basis was that if Saladin took Jerusalem, he would recognize the Byzantine emperor as protector of the Holy Places and of the Christians living there. If that indeed was what was meant, then Andronicus's treaty would have been nothing new, but simply a continuation of the policy that the Byzantines had been employing towards the Holy Land, and whoever ruled it, for centuries past. They had sought that recognition from the Fatimids in the eleventh century and the Latins in the twelfth. Now, possibly as an insurance policy, Andronicus I sought an undertaking from Saladin that, in the event of his coming to control Jerusalem, he would make the same concession. For his part, Saladin seems to have been angling for such an agreement since 1177 when he had invited the Byzantine patriarch of Jerusalem, Leontios, to visit him in Egypt.[51]

The treaty with Saladin need not therefore necessarily be seen as anti-Latin. It is true that, following the death of Manuel I and the accession of a minor, Byzantium had lost some of the influence which Manuel had established in the principality of Antioch and the kingdom of Jerusalem. That influence had originally been secured because it brought with it powerful military and financial aid for the Latin states. The embattled regency in Constantinople was hardly in a position to offer anything like that. Consequently, in 1180 the prince of Antioch, Bohemond III, repudiated his Byzantine wife, Theodora, another of Manuel I's apparently inexhaustible supply of relatives. With this tie broken, Bohemond started to expand his principality at the expense of Byzantine cities in Cilicia. Relations with Jerusalem also worsened as the pro-Byzantine party there lost ground, culminating in the accession as king in 1186 of Guy of Lusignan, who had always been opposed to cooperation with Byzantium. That party would no doubt have been strengthened by the disturbing news from Constantinople in 1182.[52]

It is difficult to know whether Andronicus was aware of these events or not. To judge by the main Greek account of his brief reign, that of Niketas Choniates, his attention was entirely occupied first with imposing his will on his own subjects and then with invasions of his empire by the Hungarians and by the Normans of southern Italy. His negotiations with Saladin might not even have been so much an attempt to obtain from the Muslims the influence in the Holy Land that was being denied by the Latins, but rather the old game of playing one side off against another, hoping that whoever came out on top, the Byzantine emperor would preserve his position of protector of the Holy Places. Unfortunately, in the highly charged atmosphere created by the massacre of 1182, which Andronicus had condoned if not orchestrated, any Byzantine dealing with Muslim powers was bound to be interpreted in the worst possible light. This is what seems to have happened here.

How Andronicus's policy might have developed in the long run is impossible to say, for he was never given the chance to take it any further. During the summer of 1185, his reign began to unravel. William II's army landed on the Adriatic coast in June and swiftly captured Dyrrachion which had successfully withstood Bohemond in 1108. The Normans then marched east to seize the empire's second city of Thessalonica on 24 August, and its capture was accompanied by atrocities every bit as savage as those inflicted on the Latins of Constantinople in 1182.[53] In Constantinople, Andronicus scarcely responded and showed distinct signs of megalomania as his purges of his real, potential and imagined political opponents continued unabated.

As the executions grew ever more frequent, one individual was driven to a desperate act of rebellion. When a group of henchmen led by Stephen Hagiochristophorites was sent to arrest a young nobleman called Isaac Angelos, a relative of the Komnenos family who was suspected of plotting against Andronicus, Isaac at first hid in his house, while his pursuers prowled around the courtyard outside. Reasoning that he was likely to die anyway, Isaac crept to the stables, leapt onto a horse and charged out, brandishing a sword and taking his pursuers completely by surprise. Having killed Hagiochristophorites with a single blow to the head, Angelos galloped across the city to Hagia Sophia to take sanctuary. News of his exploit soon spread, and Angelos found himself the centre of popular demonstrations against Andronicus. Fearing for his life as his troops lost control of the city to the frenzied mob, Andronicus left Constantinople by ship, taking his young wife, Agnes, his mistress and a few attendants with him, in the hope of sailing across the Black Sea to his former refuge in Russia. Unfortunately, a contrary wind prevented the ship from making much progress up the Bosporus before the pursuers arrived. Andronicus was taken prisoner and dragged back to Constantinople. Hauled into the Hippodrome, the erstwhile emperor was lynched by the crowd, no doubt composed of many of the same people who had welcomed him so enthusiastically less than four years earlier. For several days, his corpse was left hanging head down amidst the antique statues and columns before being cut down and tossed into one of the vaults of the Hippodrome. It was later taken to a nearby monastery but was not properly buried and could still be peered at by the curious for many years after.[54]

As for Angelos, amid scenes of wild jubilation, he was crowned by the patriarch and found himself emperor as Isaac II. Andronicus's reign of terror was over, and the Byzantine ruling classes could now congratulate themselves on having survived his ruthless purges and looked forward to the rule of the 'liberator' Isaac.[55] The new emperor and his advisers, however, were now to inherit an unfortunate legacy from Andronicus's short tenure of office. By giving free reign to his troops in 1182, Andronicus had effectively destroyed the empire's standing in the West and sparked off the type of anti-Byzantine propaganda which could be used to justify Western military action against the empire. The test for the new regime was whether it would succeed in retrieving the situation.

# 8

# Iron not gold

If the news of the massacre in Constantinople in 1182 was a shock to Western opinion, it was to be eclipsed five years later by a far worse calamity. In the summer of 1187 Saladin invaded the kingdom of Jerusalem with a force of 20,000 men and laid siege to Tiberias. The king of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, hurried to the rescue and unwisely led his army into the arid lands to the west of the Sea of Galilee. When a battle was fought on 4 July on the slopes of the twin peaks known as the Horns of Hattin, the Christian army was suffering acutely from thirst and heat exhaustion and proved no match for Saladin's troops. By the end of the day, not only had King Guy and most of his leading nobles been taken captive but a relic of the True Cross which had accompanied the Latin army into battle was also in Muslim hands. Reynald of Châtillon, the old adversary of Manuel I, was among the prisoners, but he was swiftly executed by Saladin himself. All the Templar and Hospitaller prisoners suffered the same fate at the hands of Sufi holy men. Having wiped out the main opposition, in the months that followed Saladin was able to capture the castles and towns whose garrisons had been with the Christian army at Hattin, including the ports of Acre and Ascalon. By September he had occupied the entire coast south of Tripoli and was ready to move against Jerusalem itself. After a short siege, the city surrendered on 2 October, bringing to an end the Latin occupation that had lasted for 88 years. While the principality of Antioch and the county of Tripoli still held out in the north, most of the kingdom of Jerusalem was now in Saladin's hands, apart from the port of Tyre which was ably defended by Conrad of Montferrat, the brother of the ill-fated Renier.

The depth of the outrage and grief felt in western Europe can be gauged from the emotive language of the crusading bull *Audita Tremendi,* issued by Pope Gregory VIII on 29 October 1187 in response to the arrival of news of the defeat at Hattin. Gregory, much like Urban II before him, portrayed the Muslims as 'savage barbarians thirsting after Christian blood', but he did not place the whole blame on them. Rather the defeat was the result of the sinful lapses on the part of Christians, not just those living in the kingdom of

Jerusalem but of all the faithful. The military response to Saladin's victory, he urged, was to be accompanied by sincere repentance.[1] There was, however, a body of opinion that placed the blame rather differently. According to the informant of the German monk, Magnus of Reichersberg, the fall of Jerusalem had been brought about by the new Byzantine emperor, Isaac II Angelos. Once he had overthrown Andronicus I, Isaac allegedly wished to have his elder brother Alexios with him in Constantinople. Alexios was, at the time, a guest at Saladin's court in Damascus, and, on receiving his brother's summons, he travelled to the port of Acre in the kingdom of Jerusalem to take ship. There, he was arrested on the orders of Count Raymond of Tripoli and the prince of Antioch, Bohemond III, who had got wind of Byzantine negotiations with the Ayyubids. Isaac, so the story went, thereupon appealed to Saladin to attack the Latin states to liberate Alexios, and sent a fleet of 80 galleys to support the invasion. Although Isaac's fleet was destroyed off Cyprus by the Sicilian admiral Margaritone, Saladin was successful at Hattin and went on to conquer Jerusalem.[2]

There are a few elements of fact in this account that can be substantiated from other sources. Alexios Angelos does seem to have spent time in the Muslim world, either as a prisoner or as a refugee from the purges of Andronicus I. A Byzantine fleet of 70 ships was dispatched to the eastern Mediterranean in 1186 and was destroyed by Margaritone.[3] Most of Magnus of Reichersberg's version of the fall of Jerusalem, however, is demonstrably false. The objective of Isaac II's fleet was not the kingdom of Jerusalem but Cyprus, which was in revolt against imperial rule under Isaac Komnenos. Saladin invaded not at the behest of the Byzantine emperor but because of the provocations offered by Reynald of Châtillon, who preyed on the Muslim caravans that plied between Damascus and Mecca from his fortress of Karak in Transjordan.[4]

Nevertheless, in the highly charged atmosphere that prevailed after the massacre of 1182 and the loss of Jerusalem in 1187, the story of Byzantine complicity in the loss of the Holy Land was only too likely to gain credence in some quarters, and before long further rumours were circulating that the Byzantine emperor had entered into a treaty with Saladin to prevent a crusade from reversing the defeat at Hattin. Many modern commentators, while rejecting the sensational elements, have accepted the general tenor of the Western version of events, and have asserted that a military alliance existed between Isaac II and Saladin to defeat the Third Crusade and to prevent it from recovering Jerusalem.[5] In fact, no such alliance existed in a formal sense. Isaac II and his advisers were merely pursuing the traditional foreign policy goals by tried and tested means. It was only that in the West, thanks to the events of Andronicus I's reign, those policies were now inevitably interpreted as collusion with the enemy.

It may well have been that, at the beginning of his reign, Isaac II had no idea whatsoever of the damaging rumours that were circulating. Indeed, it is likely that Saladin's victory went almost unnoticed in the empire which had more than enough troubles of its own. Thessalonica had fallen to the Normans in August 1185, just a month before the overthrow of Andronicus, but the Byzantines quickly recovered from the blow. During November 1185 the Byzantine general Alexios Branas severely mauled the Norman army on the River Strymon and the survivors fled back to Thessalonica or Dyrrachion. Most then escaped by ship but any Normans found alive when the Byzantine army reached those cities were killed mercilessly. This auspicious start to Isaac's rule was not maintained for he had to face a worrying upsurge in local separatism in the provinces. Already the island of Cyprus had been taken over by Isaac Komnenos, a renegade member of the previous imperial dynasty. In the Balkans, Serbia under Stephen Nemanja had enjoyed almost complete independence since 1180 and early in 1186 a revolt broke out in Bulgaria as Vlachs and Bulgars united in protest against rising taxation. Isaac II personally led two campaigns against the rebels but he was not an inspired general. His army was worsted at Beroe in October 1187, only a few days after Saladin had marched into Jerusalem.[6]

It is thus hardly surprising that during his reign Isaac II never attempted to do what John II and Manuel I had done and march east to impose his will on the crusader states. But he did not ignore the East altogether. While in general, he set about reversing many aspects of his predecessor's reign, bringing in new advisers, recalling those who had fled into exile and even ordering the demolition of a water tower erected by Andronicus, in one respect there was continuity: Isaac carried on with Andronicus's negotiations with Saladin. Once again, the information comes from the Latin camp. According to Magnus of Reichersberg's correspondent, by the time Saladin's response to Andronicus's embassy reached Constantinople in the autumn of 1185, Isaac II was safely on the throne but the new emperor decided to ratify the treaty and set his golden seal to it.[7] Further, rather suspect details of the next stage of the negotiations emerge from this letter and others sent to the West by Conrad of Montferrat, by some French envoys in Constantinople and by Queen Sibylla of Jerusalem. They describe how, following his capture of Jerusalem in October 1187, Saladin sent an embassy to Constantinople to announce his victory. Isaac II hastened to respond and sent his own embassy to the sultan at Acre in early 1188 to request a renewal of the treaty and to warn him that a new crusade was being prepared in the West. Receiving confirmation that large Western armies were indeed on the way to Palestine, Saladin gladly agreed to the renewal. This time, the terms were allegedly as follows: Isaac was to send a hundred galleys to assist Saladin in the siege of Antioch, and he supposedly promised that he would impede the progress of any crusading army that crossed his territory. In return, Saladin was to hand the whole of the Holy Land over to the Byzantines and to turn all the churches there over to Greek clergy. These breathless accounts supplement the story with all kinds of sensational details. Isaac II had made the treaty purely out of fear and hatred of the Latins. He had agreed to imprison any

Westerner in Constantinople who took the cross and he had sent supplies of corn to Saladin's forces in Jerusalem, actions that were 'the height of iniquity and desolation of Christianity'. In return, Saladin had rich gifts sent to Constantinople. These included a barrel of poisoned wine to use against any passing crusade armies. So powerful was the poison that its very odour alone could kill, its efficacy having been tested on an unfortunate Frankish prisoner. Adding apostasy to treachery, the Byzantines had even allowed the sultan to send an idol to Constantinople so that it could be set up and publicly worshipped there.[8]

As in the case of the alliance supposedly concluded between Saladin and Andronicus I, there is a school of thought that takes these accounts at face value and believes that Isaac II and Saladin really did have a pact whereby Byzantium would obtain the Holy Land if it gave military assistance against the Third Crusade.[9] The Latin sources of information are, however, deeply unreliable. Many elements, like the poisoned wine, are obvious fabrications. The assertion that Saladin, who based his leadership on the jihad to recover the Holy Land, would be prepared, once he had conquered it, to hand it over to another Christian power is simply unbelievable. Most suspect of all is the claim that Isaac concluded the treaty with Saladin because he hated and feared Latins. In spite of the aggression of the Sicilian Normans, the policies pursued by Isaac and his advisers in the early years of his reign show a desire to conciliate Western opinion reminiscent of the reign of Manuel I. Isaac opened negotiations with the Pisans and Genoese to compensate them for their losses in the massacre of 1182 and sent agents to mediate when, in 1187, another assault was mounted by the Constantinopolitans on the Italian quarter. He contracted marriage alliances with Western powers. His sister Theodora was betrothed to Conrad of Montferrat in 1187 and his daughter Eirene married Roger, son of King Tancred of Sicily, in 1193. The emperor himself married Margaret, the daughter of Béla III of Hungary, very shortly after his accession. It is also difficult to see Isaac as anti-Latin when he, just like his predecessors, employed Latins as mercenaries, ambassadors and translators. He relied on Conrad of Montferrat to organize the defence of Constantinople during an attempted military coup in 1187 and sent an Englishman called Peter as his ambassador to Genoa in 1192.[10]

If hatred of Latins was not behind Isaac's negotiations with Saladin, it is not at first sight easy to determine what was. The evidence of Latin sources cannot be checked against Byzantine ones, because the latter fail to mention the agreement with Saladin altogether, apart from a brief mention in Choniates that implies that it was a mere rumour.[11] Fortunately, however, there is some information on this later round of negotiations from Arab and Syriac sources. The work of Abu Shama (1203–67) and the biography of Saladin by his younger contemporary, Baha al-Din (1145–1234), both discuss the negotiations with the Byzantines. The only point at issue, they claim, was the mosque in Constantinople and the insistence that Friday prayer there should henceforth be said in the name of the Abbasid caliph supported by Saladin.[12] A Christian Syriac writer indicates what it was that Isaac wanted in return for his concession over the mosque: Bar Hebraeus recorded that, after Saladin's conquest of Jerusalem, the administration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was handed over to the Greek patriarch, something the Byzantines had wanted ever since Daimbert of Pisa had been appointed by the victorious crusaders in 1099.[13] There is no mention whatsoever in either the Arabic or Syriac accounts of any proposed military cooperation against the Third Crusade or any promise by Saladin to hand the Holy Land over to the Byzantines. It therefore seems safe to assume that no such agreement existed and that the Byzantines were merely pursuing protectorate of the Holy Places as they always had.

Once again, it appears that the Latin reporters had picked up some genuine information about these negotiations in garbled fashion, mixed in with the horror stories. The 'idol', which Magnus's informant and Conrad of Montferrat say was sent to Constantinople, was probably a mimbar or pulpit, destined to be installed in the Constantinople mosque. The Arab sources confirm that one of these was despatched. Two Latin accounts of the Third Crusade even mention that a mosque had recently been built in Constantinople, quite unaware that it had, in fact, been there for years. The letter of Conrad of Montferrat confirms what it was that Isaac wanted in exchange, recording that once Saladin was in control of the Holy Land he would hand all its churches over to the emperor, so that the Greek rite could be celebrated in them.[14] Thus it is not difficult to discover what had happened. Inevitably with the massacre of 1182 still fresh in their minds, Latin writers interpreted these rather limited negotiations as a sinister plot against the crusade. Moreover, just as Isaac II's implementation of traditional Byzantine policy towards a Muslim power which controlled the city of Jerusalem aroused Western ire, so did his handling of the Third Crusade, which was motivated by that other perennial goal of Byzantine foreign policy, the security of the *Oikoumene* and particularly of Constantinople.

In response to Pope Gregory VIII's appeal of late 1187, three large armies were formed to undertake the expedition to recover Jerusalem from Saladin, led by the most powerful monarchs in the West. Those under Richard I of England, known as the Lionheart, and Philip Augustus of France travelled to Palestine by sea and did not venture near Constantinople. The third, under the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa, planned to follow the route of the First and Second Crusades and to travel by land via Constantinople and Asia Minor. Barbarossa's participation and choice of route gave rise to some anxiety at the Byzantine court. Like Bohemond before him, he was an old enemy of the Byzantine empire. During the Second Crusade's passage through Byzantine territory in 1147, Barbarossa had been responsible for burning down a monastery near Adrianople in revenge for the murder of a German nobleman. On succeeding Conrad III, he had done what his uncle had not and had himself crowned emperor of the Romans by the pope in

1155. His adoption of this title was a direct challenge to the Byzantine doctrine of *Translatio Imperii*, which held that the only true Roman emperor was the one in Constantinople. The two emperors had also been at odds over Italy: Manuel I had supported the Italian city states in their war against Frederick and, during the 1160s, rumours had circulated in Constantinople that Barbarossa was planning an attack on the empire in revenge.[15] Now, a quarter of a century later, information emerged that envoys of the Serbian grand prince Stephen Nemanja had visited Barbarossa's court and the German emperor was soon after also to make contact with one of the leaders of the Bulgarian rebels. Both men were the enemies of the Byzantine emperor.[16]

Thus it is hardly surprising that many people in Constantinople viewed the prospect of Frederick marching across the Balkans at the head of a large army with some alarm and it was widely believed the real motive behind the expedition was the capture of Constantinople. The patriarch of Constantinople, the ascetic monk Dositheos, delivered a prophecy that Barbarossa would seize the Queen of Cities itself and would enter by a postern gate near the Blachernae palace. To avert the threat, the credulous Isaac promptly had the gateway blocked up with bricks and mortar.[17] He also decided to pursue the old game of trying to control the crusade army to ensure that it was not in a position to attack Constantinople and of playing the crusaders off against the Muslim powers to try and derive maximum benefit for his own empire. Like his predecessors, he outwardly claimed to be giving all possible support to the enterprise. Before Frederick set out Isaac despatched the logothete of the drome, John Kamateros, with an embassy to meet the German emperor at Nuremberg in the autumn of 1188, much as Manuel I had done to Louis VII at Regensburg in 1147. An agreement was duly arrived at by which Isaac promised to give Frederick's army free passage through his empire and to provide markets, while Frederick swore to keep the peace while passing through Byzantine territory.[18]

The ensuing events followed the pattern set the last time a crusade army had marched through the Balkans. Barbarossa's army crossed the Sava River into Byzantine territory on 1 July 1189 but almost at once came into conflict with the locals. Although the new arrivals were welcomed by the Byzantine governor of Branchevo, he allegedly then guided them away from the main highways to hamper their progress towards Nish. As the army marched on, its rearguard was ambushed repeatedly and stragglers and foragers were shot with arrows. In one incident a sick knight was set upon as he was being carried along in a litter. Leaping up, he struck one of his assailants in the mouth with his sword whereupon the rest fled. The knight then lay down again and his fever, which had vanished in the moment of crisis, returned. Although the attackers were not regular troops, prisoners taken during these skirmishes claimed that they were acting on the orders of the Byzantine authorities, just as the Pechenegs who had attacked the First Crusade had done. Even so it is likely that much of the interference in these border regions was the work of local elements outside the emperor's control.[19] As usual the promised supplies also failed to materialize and supplies ran perilously short during the four-day stay at Nish, forcing the Germans to forage for food. That only led to further tension with the locals and more ambushes as the army set out from Nish on the next leg of the journey. Many of the passes through the Balkan mountains had been deliberately blocked with tree trunks and when the army reached Sofia once again there was no market. Barbarossa's patience was beginning to run short.[20]

As before, once the army drew closer to Constantinople, a more coherent imperial policy can be discerned. Arriving at Philippopolis on 24 August, the Germans were greeted by the news arrived that Isaac II had arrested and imprisoned the ambassadors that Frederick had sent on ahead to Constantinople. Shortly afterwards, some Byzantine ambassadors arrived at the German camp with letters from Isaac, summarized as follows by Dietpold, bishop of Passau, who was present at the time:

> [Isaac] proudly and arrogantly described himself as emperor of the Romans, an angel of God and the source of our faith. He conveyed his grace to our emperor, saying that he had learned from messages from the kings of France and England, and the duke of Brindisi, that the lord emperor had entered Greece with the intention of extinguishing his line and that he wished to transfer rule over the Greeks into the power of his son, the duke of Swabia. Moreover he said that the treaty of friendship that he had heard had been concluded between the emperor and the Great Count [of Serbia, Stephen Nemanja] was suspicious and very much against his interests. He added also that the lord emperor should send hostages to him to secure his agreement to the army's crossing of the Bosporus, and once he swore to do this then he would grant a market [for the army]. He said furthermore that he wanted half the land which our army conquered from the Saracens to be assigned to him.[21]

On one level, the demands made by Isaac were only what might have been expected. The Byzantine emperor would hardly have welcomed Barbarossa's negotiations with enemies like Stephen Nemanja and the Germans can hardly have been taken aback that Isaac remonstrated with them on this point. The demands for guarantees of the empire's security and for the return of any captured land were, of course, exactly those made of earlier crusading armies. Even so, this and subsequent letters were a diplomatic faux pas. Like previous generations of crusaders, the Germans found the grandiloquent tone that the Byzantines loved to use most distasteful. Just as the envoys to Louis VII in 1147 had strained the patience of the French by using hyperbole in every sentence, so Barbarossa's men found Isaac II's letter 'full of pride and arrogance'. At the Byzantine court, orators were fond of punning on Isaac's surname and describing him as the 'angelic emperor'. In this context it came across simply as ludicrous presumption. Most offensive of all was the way in which Isaac described himself as 'emperor of the Romans' but demoted

Frederick to 'king of the Germans'.[22] Those who had a better knowledge of the Byzantines would have expected that. William of Tyre, who had visited Constantinople on a number of occasions, knew that the Byzantines

> take it ill that the king of the Teutons calls himself emperor of the Romans. For thereby he seems to detract to much from the prestige of their own emperor whom they themselves call monarch, that is, the one who rules supreme over all and therefore is the one and only emperor of the Romans.[23]

The Germans in Frederick's army did not have the benefit of his experience and saw the letter simply as an insult. Once again Byzantine universalist ideology struck a jarring note when applied to those who considered themselves to be on a holy mission to Jerusalem.

Relations deteriorated over the next few days. Barbarossa's army marched into Philippopolis, occupied the town and decided to remain there for some weeks while it resupplied. Three days later, Barbarossa's son Frederick, duke of Swabia, received news that a Byzantine army was camped about 3 miles from the town. Although it was making no move to attack, the duke decided that it constituted a threat and launched a surprise dawn raid. Taken completely off guard the Byzantine troops scattered in alarm.[24]

Even though the Germans had won the battle, the deployment of a Byzantine army, coming on top of the harassment on the march to Philippopolis and the arrest of the envoys in Constantinople, seemed to confirm to Barbarossa and his advisers that Isaac II was deliberately trying to prevent his fellow Christians from reaching the Holy Land. The apparent explanation for such conduct emerged from a tearful letter which reached the German camp from Sibylla, the queen of Jerusalem, around the same time. She warned that

> the emperor of Constantinople, the persecutor of the church of God, has entered into a conspiracy with Saladin, the seducer and destroyer of the Holy Name, against the name of our lord Jesus Christ . . . I tell you truthfully that you ought to believe the most faithful bearer of this letter. For he himself witnesses what he has seen with his own eyes and heard with his own ears. This is the reason that with my head bowed to the ground and with bent knees, I ask your Magnificence that, inasmuch as you are the head of the world and the wall of the house of Israel, you should never believe the Grecian emperor.[25]

Chroniclers in the German camp were quick to see the supposed alliance with Saladin as the key to Isaac's actions. A priest with Barbarossa's army declared that the Byzantine emperor had imprisoned the German ambassadors because 'he wished to gain the favour of his friend and confederate the Saracen Saladin, the enemy of the Cross and of all Christians'. He had even given the German envoys' best horses to some of the sultan's visiting ambassadors.

Once the Germans believed that such a plot was afoot, their paranoia knew no bounds. Stories circulated that the patriarch of Constantinople had promised a plenary indulgence to anyone who killed a crusader, and the tale of the poisoned wine, supposedly sent by Saladin to Isaac, spread like wildfire. On one occasion, it was reported, some treacherous Greeks had left some barrels of the deadly brew in a captured town, in the hope that the Germans would drink it, but their gleeful cachinnations gave the game away. One group of Germans became convinced that some wall paintings in a church contained an incitement to the congregation to kill crusaders, and they proceeded to burn the church and lay waste to the area round about.[26]

In November, the German army marched out of Philippopolis and moved to Adrianople with a view to using the city as base over the winter, plundering the countryside of Thrace as it went.[27] Barbarossa's plans at this stage are revealed in the angry letters which he wrote to his son Henry and to Duke Leopold of Austria, complaining of what he regarded as a Byzantine breach of faith. Isaac had violated the oaths that had been sworn by his ambassador at Nuremberg and it was therefore plain that, in order to cross the straits, the Germans would have first to conquer Constantinople. Barbarossa instructed his son to contact Venice, Genoa, Ancona and Pisa to collect the necessary ships for the task. Henry was also to write to the pope and to ask him to rouse the Christian people against the Greeks, the enemies of the cross.[28]

Isaac II had thus succeeded in bringing Byzantium to the brink of all-out war with a crusade army. He had not done so, of course, in accordance with any agreement with Saladin. He and his advisers had only deployed the standard tactics to neutralize any potential threat to Constantinople but this time the strategy had backfired badly. It was not just that they had caused resentment: they had done that with the First and Second Crusades. The difference this time was that the Byzantines were not dealing with a number of contingents under their own leaders, whose disunity they could exploit, but one very large and experienced army under a leader to whom it was intensely loyal. Whereas Anna Komnene and John Kinnamos had been able to boast that the Byzantine forces had worsted the armies of Godfrey of Bouillon and Conrad III by superior tactics, the roles were now reversed. The difference became apparent when the duke of Swabia had scattered the Byzantine force outside Philippopolis so easily.[29] Although he continued to bluster, Isaac had little option but to back down. In October he released the imprisoned ambassadors but he sent them back to Frederick's camp accompanied by his own representatives and another ill-judged letter which caused Barbarossa to erupt in indignation when he was described as a mere king.[30] The standoff continued throughout the winter with Frederick chaffing at the delay that was preventing him from reaching the Holy Land. In December he sent some Byzantine envoys back to their master bearing a declaration of war.[31] The following year the impasse was finally resolved. After protracted negotiations, a treaty was concluded at Adrianople in

February 1190. Isaac had to agree to reverse his previous obstructionism and to facilitate the passage of the German army to Asia Minor with all the resources at his disposal. Ships were to be sent to Gallipoli to ferry the troops across the straits and markets were to be provided to supply them. He also handed over hostages and a large indemnity in the form of gold and silver coin and silk cloths. In March the German army made the crossing and started the march east towards Jerusalem.[32] The worst was over but relations remained tense as the Germans marched through the Byzantine eastern provinces. There were further ambushes and skirmishes, which were ascribed to the treachery of the Byzantine emperor although again they might have been the work of elements outside his control. Finally the crusade army reached Laodikeia on the Lykos and there passed out of Byzantine territory.[33]

Isaac II could hardly congratulate himself on his handling of the situation but he still attempted to make some capital out of it. Like Alexios I, he saw no reason to sacrifice his good relations with Muslim powers just because a crusade was passing through his territory. He sent letters to Saladin, warning him that a new crusade to recover Jerusalem was gathering in the West. In late 1189, while Barbarossa was still in Thrace, Isaac wrote to Saladin again. This time he gave an account of Frederick's progress through the Balkans and claimed that the Germans had been so mauled by the Byzantine army that they no longer posed a threat to the Ayyubid regime. He even implied that he had done this in accordance with an agreement with Saladin. The letter has been interpreted as a feeble attempt by Isaac to persuade Saladin to fulfil his supposed side of the bargain, as recounted by the Latin sources, and hand over the Holy Land, even though Isaac had failed, on his part, to stop Frederick Barbarossa from passing through his empire.[34] What the letter was in fact trying to do was to play Saladin off against Frederick, by claiming that the attempt to control Frederick's army, which the Byzantines would have done anyway, was done to oblige Saladin. The ploy had been used before. Alexios I had written to the Turks of Damascus in 1110 telling them that he had tried to block the passage of the First Crusade, no doubt with the same end in view.[35] Unfortunately for Isaac, his dealings with Saladin were ultimately no more successful than those with Barbarossa. The sultan and his advisers were not in the least taken in. They had received a much more realistic report of Frederick's passage through the Byzantine empire from the katholikos of Armenia, and dryly concluded that Isaac 'fears the Franks because of his empire and he wants to repel them; if he succeeds completely, he will claim that it is in our interest; in the opposite case, he will claim that he is far from the aim that we are both pursuing'.[36]

Had Barbarossa's crusade gone on to be a resounding success and recaptured Jerusalem, the events of 1189–90 would probably have not had such a damaging effect on Byzantium's image in the West but the expedition was to end in bitter disappointment. To begin with the Germans carried all before them. When the Seljuk Turks attempted to ambush the army in the same narrow pass at Myriokephalon where they had trapped Manuel I in 1176, they were beaten off and Barbarossa went on to capture their capital of Ikonion, a feat that Manuel had never been able to achieve.[37] In spite of these successes the army was now short of food and as it marched through Cilicia in June Frederick was drowned while attempting to ford a river. His death was a devastating blow to morale. Although the army then pressed on to Antioch under the command of the duke of Swabia, over the next few months the ranks were severely reduced by disease and desertion. The survivors headed south to participate in the siege of Acre but they had little impact on the campaign, especially after the death of the duke of Swabia in January 1191. As in 1148, it would not be difficult to find a scapegoat for the disaster.

If there was a precise moment when it began to dawn on some members of the Byzantine ruling classes that their ideology, policies and tactics were slowly alienating them from the Christians of the West, it was probably the winter of 1189–90. Given the nature of the Byzantine court those misgivings could not be voiced openly but had to be expressed through subtle nuances in the formal speeches that were given in praise of the emperor at important religious festivals throughout the year. One such speech was delivered, probably in the palace of Blachernae, by the grand chamberlain of the public fisc, Niketas Choniates, at Epiphany in January 1190. At that time, Barbarossa's army was still encamped at Adrianople and Choniates had witnessed its passage through the Balkans at first hand. He had been governor of Thrace the previous summer and had been present at the debacle outside Philippopolis when the duke of Swabia had scattered the Byzantine army in his dawn attack.[38] Needless to say, nothing about that appeared in the Epiphany speech. Instead, Choniates followed all the conventions and lauded his imperial master to the skies, describing Isaac II in Homeric terms as the 'godlike' emperor and praising him for dealing so effectively with the threat to Constantinople posed by Barbarossa, 'a source of many evils and lover of perjury'.[39] Then Choniates abruptly changed tack and came out with these mystifying words:

> After you have established such multiple foundations of the empire of the Romans you will add to it, besides these large white stones with which Solomon once built that famous temple also its crowning summit . . . you will not only observe Palestine, but having expelled the pagans you will give Palestine to them [the Romans] as their hereditary allotment, just as Joshua had once done with the Israelites.[40]

As with so much of the rhetorical output of the Byzantine elite, the meaning is hidden under a web of language. Choniates was clearly talking about Jerusalem and about Isaac gaining control of the holy city and wished thereby to convey some point to his audience, which would have included the emperor himself. What that point was can only ever be a matter of speculation.[41] One possible interpretation is that Choniates was reminding the emperor of the spiritual importance of Jerusalem for Christians and suggesting obliquely that the best way to have safeguarded it would have been to have expedited Barbarossa's progress east rather than to have hindered him.

That interpretation is borne out by what Choniates later wrote in his history of the period 1118 to around 1208, which was originally composed in the 1190s and revised after 1204. This work has not always been appreciated for what it is by modern readers. Choniates has been described as a 'fervent Greek patriot' who regarded all Latins as 'one hostile block', universally dedicated to the overthrow of the empire and the seizure of its riches. His angry outburst that there was a huge gulf between the boastful and aggressive Latins and the more sophisticated 'Romans' is often quoted as typical Byzantine contempt for outsiders. His failure to mention the treaty with Saladin, other than very obliquely, has been interpreted as deliberate concealment of something which he would have regarded as highly discreditable to the empire.[42] In reality, Choniates was neither a bigoted nationalist nor a deliberate liar and his work shows a remarkable even-handedness towards the Latins. Although he denounced the perpetrators of atrocities, such as the Normans who sacked Thessalonica in 1185, he wrote enthusiastically of the bravery of other Latins such as the defender of Tyre, Conrad of Montferrat, whom he compares favourably to the Byzantines. Moreover, Choniates was prepared to criticize both the rulers and the people of his own empire and bring to light incidents which discredited them vis-à-vis the West. He admitted that the sufferings of Thessalonica at the hands of the Normans had come about partly as Latin revenge for the massacre of 1182, and he condemned the deliberate mistreatment of the prisoners of war captured when the Norman invaders had finally been defeated in 1186.[43]

It was therefore only to be expected that Choniates would adopt a much less flattering line towards Isaac II in his history than he took in his Epiphany speech. After all, by the time he was writing, Isaac was no longer in power and it was safe to portray him as indolent and self-indulgent. According to Choniates, so convinced was Isaac that his miraculous accession to the throne was a sign of divine favour that he believed that he could simply sit back and allow God to see to the affairs of the empire.[44] His handling of the passage of Barbarossa's army in 1189–90 was a case in point. While the Western sources interpret Isaac's actions as part of a sinister plot in alliance with Saladin, Choniates presents them simple incompetence, a hopeless mixture of bluster and indecision, largely prompted by the 'worthless' prophecies of the patriarch Dositheos. At first, Isaac took an aggressive line. He detained Frederick's envoys in Constantinople, ordered his troops to block the mountain passes with boulders and fallen trees, and told Choniates to rebuild the walls of Philippopolis, which the Germans were fast approaching. Then almost immediately, the emperor countermanded his orders and commanded that the walls be pulled down, in case they provided Frederick with a place of refuge. Shifting his ground again, the emperor ordered his army to attack the Germans in August 1189, leading to the humiliating defeat near Philippopolis. Choniates describes how he and others then went to Isaac and relayed the news to him, adding that the policy of obstructing the Germans was giving rise to a rumour that Isaac was in league with Saladin and that the two rulers had sealed their pact by drinking each other's blood. Isaac was persuaded, and swung round to doing precisely the opposite of his earlier efforts. He now tried to expedite Barbarossa's passage, releasing the imprisoned envoys, handing over hostages, and promising to provide provisions and supplies for the German army. Even then, Isaac's efforts were attended by a farcical atmosphere. He had selected a number of high officials to act as hostages but when the time came for them to go to Frederick's camp, none could be found. Humble secretaries had to be sent instead.[45] Choniates's account of the Third Crusade is startling in its contrast to those of Anna Komnene of the First and Kinnamos of the Second. While they praise the actions of the Byzantine emperor, Choniates does precisely the opposite, presenting him an incompetent fool whose policy was inconsistent, badly thought out and ultimately profitless.

There is another striking difference. Komnene and Kinnamos portray the crusaders as a potential threat whose professed mission to the Holy Sepulchre was simply a cover for a plot to seize Constantinople. Choniates, on the other hand, depicts Barbarossa as a model of moderation and fidelity to his purpose, a genuine crusader whose sole aim was to aid the Christians of Palestine and who had no plans whatsoever to attack Constantinople until he was provoked. The western emperor acted properly from the beginning, sending an embassy to Constantinople to request free passage through the empire for his troops on their way to Palestine and the provision of markets. Choniates blames the Byzantines for the subsequent breakdown of the agreement. The imperial envoys, John Kamateros and Andronicus Kantakouzenos, who had been sent to facilitate Frederick's passage, 'through ignorance of their obligations and unmanliness' succeeded in provoking him and making him see the Byzantines as enemies. As a result, the oaths were broken. The Germans found themselves short of food, and were forced to forage in the countryside as they passed through. Later, in April 1190, when Frederick reached Laodikeia on the Lykos, the last outpost of Byzantine territory in Asia Minor, he proclaimed that, had he been received in the empire in peace, 'the Germans would have crossed the Roman borders long before, their lances at rest in their sheaths, without tasting the blood of Christians'. Reporting Frederick's tragic end, Choniates paid tribute to him in fulsome terms:

> He was a man who deserved to enjoy a blessed and perpetual memory and justly to be deemed fortunate in his end by prudent men, not only because he was well-born and ruled over many nations as an heir of

> the third generation but also because his burning passion for Christ was greater than that of any other Christian monarch of his time. Setting aside fatherland, royal luxury and repose, the worldly happiness of enjoying the company of his loved ones at home, and his sumptuous way of life, he chose instead to suffer affliction with the Christians of Palestine for the name of Christ and due regard for his life-giving tomb.[46]

The most radical gulf of all between the work of Choniates and that of his predecessors is the way he calls into question the very diplomatic practices which had regulated Byzantium's relations with its neighbours for so long and the wisdom of applying them to crusading expeditions and to the Latin states of Syria and Palestine. Those doubts can already be found in Choniates's account of the events which took place under John II and Manuel I. In 1142, he wrote, John II saw no point in entering Antioch to be 'properly venerated and honoured, only to leave without having achieved anything innovative in the public affairs of the city or having altered anything in the established customs'. Choniates's words suggest that he was unconvinced of the worth of the public spectacles with which the Byzantines loved to make manifest the supremacy of their emperor. Similarly, in his account of the passage of the Second Crusade in 1147–8, he questioned some of the stratagems employed by Manuel I to turn the situation to his advantage. In stark contrast to John Kinnamos, he declared that the crusaders were absolutely sincere in their declaration that their aim was to bring assistance to the kingdom of Jerusalem, rather than to seize Constantinople, and he even showed some awareness of crusading ideology in a heroic speech placed in the mouth of Louis VII. At the same time, Choniates offered criticisms of the Byzantine treatment of the Second Crusade, confirming stories in the Latin accounts that the local Byzantine population joined with the Turks in attacks on the crusaders, and that they cheated them and sold them poisoned food. These 'iniquitous and unholy' deeds were not merely the work of local, rogue elements, Choniates implied, but were deliberate imperial policy designed as 'indelible memorials for posterity, deterrents against attacking the Romans'. The whole passage suggests that Choniates felt that the interests of the *Oikoumene* were not well served by arousing the resentment of those who had the power to do it a great deal of harm.[47]

Such critical passages recur as Choniates proceeds to events which he himself had lived through. To take just one example, he criticizes the Byzantine custom of making envoys stand in the presence of the emperor, a practice which was patently designed to reflect the right order of things but which inevitably aroused resentment from Westerners. According to Choniates, when the German envoys were finally released by Isaac II in October 1189 and returned to Frederick Barbarossa at his camp, the western emperor was furious to hear that they had been made to stand in Isaac's presence. He made a point of having them sit down with him, even the cooks and grooms, 'to mock the Romans and to show that there was no distinction among them in virtue and family'. How different from the self-assurance of Anna Komnene in her scandalized account of the arrogant Latinus, who broke the rules and sat down on the emperor's throne while Alexios I himself was still on his feet.[48]

Another instance is Choniates's description of the reception of a German embassy during the 1190s. The Byzantines resorted to the tried and tested technique of overawing the barbarian with wealth and magnificence. Meeting the German envoys on Christmas Day, the emperor and his courtiers donned their finest robes and jewels. The tactic proved a mistake and quite inappropriate for the circumstances. The envoys were unimpressed and announced dryly:

> The Germans have neither need of such spectacles, nor do they wish to become worshippers of ornaments and garments secured by brooches suited only for women whose painted faces, headdresses and glittering earrings are especially pleasing to men . . . The time has now come to take off effeminate garments and brooches, and to put on iron instead of gold.[49]

The criticism here was not unprecedented. As early as the 1060s a court orator had warned the emperor that barbarians would not be overawed by sight of him and his courtiers dressed in their finery.[50] In the context of the 1190s, when the Byzantines had very nearly come into conflict with a powerful Christian army, such misgivings were all the more urgent. For Choniates, Byzantine diplomacy was a fatal mix of swaggering arrogance and abject submission, and completely unsuited to the situation in which the empire now found itself. In all probability, of course, Choniates had finally arrived at that conclusion after having witnessed the sack of Constantinople in April 1204 but it is likely that he and others were thinking along these lines even as Barbarossa's army receded across Asia Minor in the spring of 1190. As even the emperor himself had to admit, in a letter to Saladin, that all that his policy towards the army of Frederick Barbarossa had achieved was 'the enmity of the Franks and their kin'.[51]

As has been seen, the Byzantine handling of passing crusades had aroused fury on previous occasions and yet the empire had weathered the storm. This time it was different for in the year after Barbarossa's passage through the empire, an incident occurred that was to have very ominous implications. The English and French rulers had taken much longer than Barbarossa to gather their forces and to set out by sea for the Holy Land. Their fleets did not join up at Marseille until July 1190 by which time the German emperor was already dead. After setting sail and wintering at Messina, the French contingent of Philip Augustus reached Acre in April 1191. The fleet of Richard I of England followed behind and did not reach Acre until June. The reason for the delay was a detour made to the island of Cyprus. Officially, Cyprus formed part of the Byzantine empire, but since 1184 it had been under the rule of Isaac Komnenos who had proclaimed himself emperor in opposition to first Andronicus and then Isaac II in Constantinople. On 6 May Richard landed with his troops at Limassol, and, after a short and easy campaign, defeated Isaac Komnenos's army and occupied the island. Isaac took refuge in a castle, but is said to have agreed to surrender provided that Richard would promise not to put him in chains of iron. Once he had Isaac in his hands, Richard had special silver chains made and locked him up in those. The campaign had lasted only a little over three weeks.[52] This was no mere raid like that of Reynald of Châtillon in 1156. Although Richard himself left for the Holy Land within a few weeks, he clearly intended that the island should remain in Western hands. Shortly after his departure, he sold all his rights in Cyprus to the Knights Templar for 100,000 gold pieces. The Templars then governed the island until April 1192 but they were not effective rulers. They did not send enough troops and the people of Nicosia rose up against them. The master of the Templars thereupon realized that his order was not up to the task, and surrendered the island back to Richard. Richard now sold it again, this time to Guy of Lusignan, the former king of Jerusalem, whose family were to rule the island until 1489.[53]

This was the first time that a crusading army had seized territory directly from the Byzantines and then retained it. Such an action had to be justified somehow, since knights who had taken the cross were supposed to fight against infidels and not against their fellow Christians. The immediate *casus belli* was apparently the result of a storm which drove some of the ships in Richard's fleet onto the coast of Cyprus. Isaac Komnenos had the crews imprisoned and maltreated, and also made attempts to capture a ship carrying Richard's sister, Joanna, and his bride-to-be Berengaria of Navarre. In a letter of August 1191, Richard cited this as his justification for landing on Cyprus and overthrowing the usurper.[54] The Western chroniclers who recorded these events, however, clearly felt that further justification was needed. They therefore availed themselves of all the stock-in-trade of anti-Byzantine propaganda that was circulating at the time. In the first place, they claimed, Isaac Komnenos hated the Latins and was always on the lookout for some way of doing them harm. He had killed his own wife and son because the latter had confessed to liking Westerners. He was an enemy of the Christian faith: he would stand at the altar on Good Friday and expect people to bow down and worship him. He mistreated pilgrims to the Holy Land, having those who were unfortunate enough to land on his island rounded up and beheaded. Like his counterpart in Constantinople, he had failed to assist the crusade and had withheld supplies from crusaders fighting in the Holy Land. Finally, he was friendly with Saladin, and the two rulers had undergone a ceremony of drinking each other's blood as a sign that they were allies.[55]

What is significant here is that alongside these familiar and ludicrous slurs, a new justification for action against the Greeks during a crusade appears for the first time. The Latin chroniclers often commented that

Cyprus was a wealthy island, 'stuffed with much treasure and various riches'. Lest their master Richard be accused of wanting to take the place out of greed, however, they were at pains to point out that this wealth was of immense value to the crusade. As an anonymous priest in the Plantagenet king's entourage pointed out, Cyprus was close to the Syrian coast and in the past Jerusalem 'used to receive no little benefit each year' from Cyprus. He was right. During the First Crusade's siege of Jerusalem in July 1099, the patriarch Symeon had dispatched much needed supplies of fruit and meat to the Christian army from his refuge on Cyprus. The island's role as the breadbasket of the Latin states of Palestine and Syria had been recognized at a very early stage in their creation. In around 1113 a Byzantine envoy had threatened the count of Tripoli with cutting off the food supply from Cyprus so that 'you will die, the victims of famine'.[56] So while Richard kept the gold, silk and jewels that he captured for himself, he passed on the silver and food supplies to his men, thus providing them with the wherewithal to remain in the field. Attacking Byzantine territory was therefore justified if it provided financial or strategic advantages for the crusaders.[57]

It seems unlikely that Choniates or anyone else on the Byzantine side saw the significance of conquest of Cyprus at the time for the two surviving Greek accounts of Richard's invasion make no mention of his possible motives and justification. Both are both strongly prejudiced against Isaac Komnenos and show no sympathy to him in his downfall. The monk Neophytos, a recluse who spent most of his life living in a cave on Cyprus, called the seizure of the island by Isaac Komnenos a disaster and describes how the usurper plundered and mistreated his own people. The other version of events by Choniates speaks of the 'horrors wickedly inflicted on the Cypriots' by their 'master and destroyer', Isaac. Neither Neophytos nor Choniates takes the opportunity to vent much spleen on Richard, although Neophytos describes him as a wretch and a sinner.[58] The government in Constantinople reacted to the seizure of Cyprus in much the same way as it had to the occupation of Antioch by Bohemond in 1098. Diplomatic efforts were launched to find allies who would help to get it back. As usual the Byzantines cast their net widely. Embassies were sent to both Saladin and the pope in Rome, though neither showed any interest in helping to recover the island.[59] Thereafter, the emperor and his advisers seem to have let the matter lapse. It is likely that their priority was to hold on to territories closer to home.

The significance of the capture of Cyprus was probably better appreciated in the Latin camp in the light of the closing phase of the Third Crusade. After his victory on Cyprus, Richard departed for the Holy Land and joined his ally Philip Augustus of France at the siege of Acre. The Muslim defenders held out valiantly but they were eventually compelled to surrender on 12 July 1191. Although weakened by the departure of Philip Augustus shortly afterwards, Richard went on the following September to defeat Saladin and his army decisively at the Battle of Arsuf. Thereafter, the sultan assiduously avoided battle and the way to Jerusalem seemed now to be open. But the king was doomed to bitter disappointment. When they advanced on the holy city during the autumn, the crusaders encountered torrential rain which ruined most of their food supplies and reluctantly Richard had to order a retreat in January 1192 when the army was only a few miles from Jerusalem. In theory, the campaign could have been renewed in the spring but the events of the winter had brought home an important lesson. The king and his advisers realized that even if Jerusalem were retaken 'it could not have been held by our people for long, because when the pilgrimage was completed the people would have gone home and there would not have been anyone left who could defend it'.[60]

If Jerusalem were to be held in the long term, some kind of permanent standing army would have to be provided to garrison it. It would need to be a powerful force for, unlike Constantinople, Jerusalem had no geographical advantages that could make up for a small number of defenders. That was where the difficulty lay. The primitive economies of western Europe lacked the wherewithal to equip and pay a large army that would then spend much of its time doing nothing. Military forces were generally gathered for the occasion and then disbanded at the end of the campaign so that they would no longer have to be fed. Even then, providing the necessary finance was very hard as Richard I's efforts to prepare for his crusade demonstrate. The famous story that he declared that would have sold London to pay for his crusade, if he could have found a buyer, may be apocryphal but it highlights the difficulty and his frustration. In 1188, the Saladin tithe, a 10 per cent tax on incomes and moveable property, had been introduced by the pope to provide funds for the Holy Land. It was levied in England but it was deeply unpopular and extremely difficult to collect, so that it probably only yielded about £6,000.[61] Most crusaders simply paid their own way but that often meant that they ran short of funds and experienced considerable privation and hardship during the campaign. No wonder that in his letters, sent back to the West from the Holy Land in 1191–2, Richard had complained that many of his vassals would not be able to stay on the campaign, unless further supplies of money were sent.[62] The conquest of Cyprus had undoubtedly been a first step to providing the supplies that would keep the Holy Land and Jerusalem garrisoned but it was simply not enough.

In these circumstances, Richard decided that the crusade should be brought to a close for the time being. In September 1192, he concluded a five-year truce with Saladin who accepted that the coast from Tyre to Jaffa was to remain in Christian hands, and Richard then departed by ship from Acre. The kingdom of Jerusalem had been saved from the extinction with which it had been threatened at the end of 1187 but until Jerusalem was retaken, the task could not be regarded as complete. Before long, further plans were afoot for another expedition to finish the job. Since the wealth and resources of the Byzantine empire, like those of Cyprus, were seen by many in the West as being vital for the success of the enterprise, it can hardly be maintained that what happened next was merely a series of accidents.

# 9

# Paralysis and extortion

If the Byzantines knew that their diplomacy had backfired on them and that the sophisticated game that they had played had created a strong impression in western Europe that they were working against efforts to recover Jerusalem, they had nothing with which to replace it. In the years leading up to the sack of Constantinople in April 1204, those who ran the empire appear to have been increasingly gripped by a collective paralysis, sometimes sticking to traditional methods, sometimes attempting to revive the conciliatory tone of Manuel I and often doing nothing whatsoever. They simply seem to have run out of ideas as their empire and ideology crumbled before their eyes.

Attempts were made to stave off the threat. In the aftermath of the Third Crusade, Isaac II and his advisers tried to repair the damage caused by the bungled handling of the passage of Frederick Barbarossa's army. In a letter to the pope, drawn up by the courtier Demetrius Tornikios between 1191 and 1195, Isaac returned to the tone of Manuel I and attempted to present himself in a guise acceptable to Western opinion, maintaining earnestly that the fate of the Holy Places touched him most deeply and afflicted him with constant sadness.[1] Isaac had, however, run out of time to make up for his disastrous dealings with Frederick Barbarossa. In April 1195, while he was hunting in the countryside of Thrace, his elder brother Alexios and a group of conspirators seized the imperial regalia which had been left behind in a tent. Isaac returned from his exertions to discover that his brother had been proclaimed emperor. In an attempt to ride his way out of trouble, as he had ten years before, Isaac tried to lead a charge on the camp but none of his servants would follow him, compelling him to make an ignominious flight on horseback. Overtaken by Alexios's supporters and taken to a monastery close by, he suffered the fate of so many deposed Byzantine emperors and was blinded, such mutilation being deemed a disqualification for imperial office. He was then taken back to Constantinople to be imprisoned first in the dungeons beneath the Great Palace and then at Diplokionion on the Bosporus. Isaac was less than 40 years old at the time of his overthrow and, in spite of his blinding, was still destined to play an important part in events leading up to the sack of Constantinople in 1204.[2]

Once in power, the new emperor Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203) pursued much the same line of policy as his brother had and went even further in his efforts to build bridges with the West, perhaps because his position was weaker. To the usual charges of collusion with infidels and schism with Rome, Alexios had added a third by making himself emperor 'by treason'. Consequently, all three elements which had been used by Bohemond to justify his attack on the empire in 1107, that the emperor was a usurper, that he was a schismatic, and that he had worked against the cause of the crusade, were once more in place, and Alexios III, like Alexios I Komnenos before him, had to do something to defuse the anti-Byzantine propaganda that was circulating in the West.[3] He did this by sending ambassadors to Rome in February 1199 bearing precious gifts for the newly elected Pope Innocent III (1198–1216). The envoys carried letters from the patriarch of Constantinople, John X Kamateros, and one from Alexios himself in which, like his brother Isaac, he expressed pious concern at the fate of the Holy Sepulchre and sincere hopes for its recovery. Alexios was, however, careful not to commit Byzantium to any crusading enterprise. The precise moment when Jerusalem would be recovered for Christianity was, he hastened to say, in the hands of God and he took the opportunity to complain about the behaviour of Frederick Barbarossa's army when it has traversed the empire in 1189–90. No doubt with a view to removing the charge of schism, Alexios also raised the question of a reunion of the Churches and asked the pope to call a council for this purpose.[4]

These initiatives were hardly original, but at least they showed some appreciation of the situation. Choniates was not impressed. He later condemned the emperors of the Angelos family and their advisers as supine because they failed to do anything to deal with the threat from the West. He was particularly scathing about Alexios III. According to Choniates, once Alexios was safely in power, he completely neglected affairs of state, like a steersman who has let go of the ship's tiller. These jaundiced comments should be treated with some caution, since they were written much later when Choniates was aspiring to a post at the court of Alexios's son-in-law and rival for power, Theodore Laskaris in Nicaea. At the time, the historian enjoyed high favour under Alexios III. He delivered laudatory speeches in honour of the new emperor and was promoted to be logothete of the Genikon, the chief financial official. Even if Choniates's political bias and bureaucratic prejudices are discounted, however, the impression remains of astonishing inactivity as the storm gathered.[5]

The driving force behind the storm was the problem of financing the effort being put together to retake and hold Jerusalem. In the years after the Third Crusade a solution to the problem seemed to present itself. In the light of the spurious stories of Byzantium's dealings with Saladin, the perception

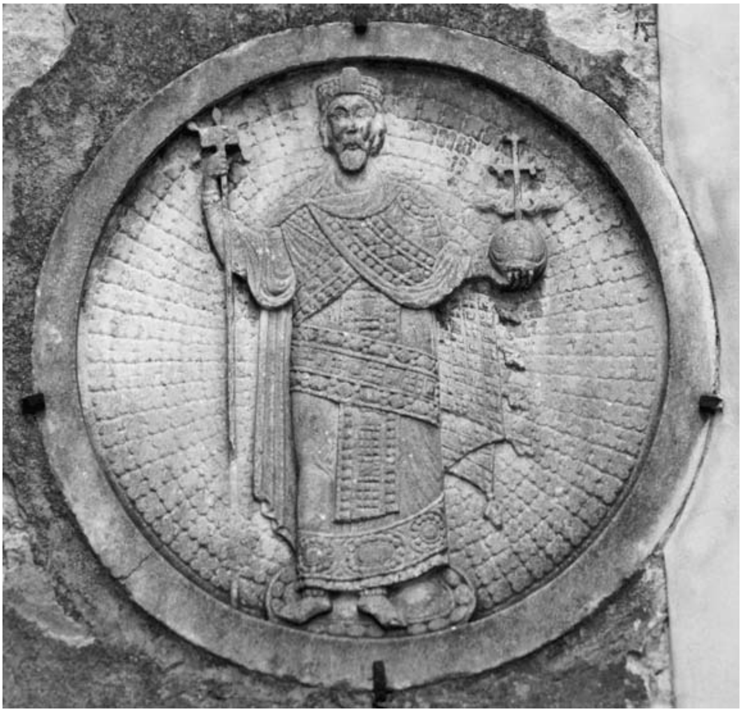


**FIGURE 10** *Marble roundel of a twelfth-century Byzantine emperor, possibly Alexios III Angelos, from Venice.* (Jonathan Phillips)

had arisen in the West that the empire should atone for its previous conduct by making its immense resources freely available for the purposes of a crusade. That conclusion was made all the more attractive by the empire's obvious weakness by 1195, in stark contrast to the position under John II and Manuel I. The first signs of deterioration had appeared during the later years of Manuel's reign. The large army amassed by the Komnenian emperors had to be paid for by ever more stringent tax demands. The emperor, Choniates grumbled, 'poured into the treasuries the so-called gifts of the peasants' like water into a cistern to slake the thirst of the armies. Although Manuel's successors did try to relieve the burden, the needs of state left them with little room for manoeuvre.[6] The taxes and the arbitrary and unjust methods by which they were collected inevitably aroused opposition, especially in the peripheral provinces. The archbishop of Athens declared that the people of Greece were having their marrow sucked out by the tax gatherers and the resentment fuelled local separatism. It was the attempt to impose a new tax that caused the Vlachs and Bulgars to rise in revolt in 1186. Elsewhere throughout the empire, local archons such as Theodore Mangaphas in Philadelphia, Dobromir Chrysos in Macedonia and Alexios and David Komnenos in Trebizond seized power from central authority.

They collected the taxes themselves and because they spent the proceeds on defending their own areas, they enjoyed considerable support from the local population.[7] The client states on the empire's borders which had once accepted the emperor's overlordship now openly rejected it. Serbia was already independent and in 1202 Alexios III had reluctantly to recognize the independence of Bulgaria in a treaty with its new leader, Tsar Kalojan (1197–1207). In 1194, Leo the ruler of Cilician Armenia sent envoys to the western emperor requesting that he be crowned king. The ceremony took place in 1198 with the Armenian katholikos and a German archbishop presiding. According to one Armenian account, when Alexios III heard of the coronation, he belatedly sent a crown himself but by then it was too late.[8] In the crusader states too, Byzantine influence had now evaporated as their rulers looked elsewhere for support, King Amalric of Cyprus becoming a vassal of the German emperor in 1195.[9]

Separatism in the provinces and the detachment of client states were matched by instability at the centre. The period 1118 to 1180 had been one of almost unprecedented political continuity with three long-reigned emperors dying of natural causes and passing the throne to their son. In the 24 years that followed the death of Manuel I, in contrast, no fewer than six emperors came and went, all being ultimately deposed or murdered. In addition, there were numerous unsuccessful military revolts as generals and noblemen attempted to seize Constantinople and usurp the throne, such as that of Alexios Branas in 1187 and John Komnenos in 1200.

The internal disarray of the empire played into the hands of Western aggressors, providing an excuse for military intervention. This was amply demonstrated during the Norman invasion of the Balkan provinces in 1185 for ironically the invaders were invited in by the Byzantines themselves. During Andronicus I's reign of terror, many of his potential victims had fled from Constantinople to Rome, Ikonion, Antioch, Jerusalem or any court that would receive them. Some went to King William II of Sicily and among them was a young man who claimed to be the ousted son of Manuel, Alexios II. The supposed emperor was an imposter, either a former imperial servant or a farmhand from Epiros, but he was the right age, had Alexios's complexion and was missing the same tooth. Not that William II enquired too closely since the claimant provided him with the perfect cloak for his invasion of the Byzantine empire in June 1185. Even after the defeat of the Norman army in November of that year, there were still a number of young men claiming to be the murdered Alexios II who moved around Asia Minor, attempting to incite local Muslim rulers to intervene in the empire on their behalf.[10] Those who did lead armies into Byzantine territory soon discovered that the empire was in no position to defend itself. The Normans enjoyed striking initial success in their 1185 invasion. Meeting little resistance, they were able to march straight to Thessalonica, the empire's second city, and to capture it after only a short siege. Frederick Barbarossa's army swept aside the ill-judged resistance of Isaac II's army four years later. These events were carefully noted by outside observers. It was concluded at the court of Saladin that nothing was to be gained from the emperor's friendship and nothing to be feared from his enmity. Nor was it lost on the West, the advisers of Frederick Barbarossa noting that the empire was growing weaker every day.[11] While Byzantium's disastrous diplomacy and reputation for collusion with the enemy had provided a justification for aggression, its weakness furnished an opportunity and its wealth an incentive.

In his conquest of Cyprus in 1191, Richard I of England had been the first to avail himself of this opportunity but he was by no means the last. In 1196 a concerted effort to make Byzantium disgorge its treasures in support of the crusade was made by the western emperor Henry VI (1190–7), the son and successor of Frederick Barbarossa. Henry was in a good position to bring pressure to bear on Alexios III because since the end of 1194, he had also been master of the kingdom of Sicily and southern Italy through his wife Constance, daughter of the late William II. On Good Friday 1195, the emperor assumed the cross at Bari, taking advantage of the favourable situation presented by the death of Saladin in 1193 and the disunity among the late sultan's heirs. Preparations were set in train for an expedition to the Holy Land and envoys were sent to Constantinople to deliver what amounted to an ultimatum, laying formal claim to all the land between Dyrrachion and Thessalonica that had briefly been occupied by the forces of William II in 1185. It appears that Henry's main aim here was not the conquest of Byzantine territory but the threat of doing so in order to extort Byzantine help for his proposed crusade. His envoys called for Byzantine ports to be put in readiness to receive for the crusade fleet and for Byzantine ships to join the expedition, as well as for the payment of 5,000 pounds of gold. If the Byzantines failed to deliver, the envoys grimly warned, Henry would 'come and pay you a visit in your empire'.[12]

Alexios III and his advisers were well aware that they would not be able to resist Henry VI if he invaded to enforce his demands. An attempt was made to negotiate and a Byzantine envoy, Eumathios Philokales, succeeded in getting the tribute reduced to 1,000 pounds of gold. This small success apart, Alexios III now had no option but to give way and to raise the tribute demanded. A special levy, the *Alamanikon* or German tax, was imposed on the provinces to meet the demand, and the gold and silver ornaments on the tombs of long dead emperors were plundered to provide further funds, only that of Constantine the Great in the Church of the Holy Apostles being spared by imperial decree.[13] Henry VI had not waited for the Byzantine gold to be delivered and his fleet sailed into Acre in September 1197. Only a few weeks later, news reached the German crusaders that Henry had suddenly died at the age of only 33, leaving as his heir a baby son. Knowing that instability was bound to follow, the Germans hurriedly made a truce with the Ayyubid sultan and withdrew. Byzantium was also reprieved and the heavy tribute was never delivered since there was no longer any likelihood that Henry's threat would be carried out. But even though the empire has escaped this time, the precedent had been set. Byzantium was expected to demonstrate its commitment to the cause of Christendom by putting its hand in its pocket, and was to be threatened with force if it failed to comply.

The German emperor was followed by another great Western potentate, Pope Innocent III, albeit in a rather different way. At the very beginning of his pontificate, on 15 August 1198, Innocent preached a new crusade as another attempt to recapture Jerusalem. The response was good with several prominent French nobles such as Thibaut III, count of Champagne, Baldwin, count of Flanders, his brother Henry, Louis, count of Blois and Hugh, count of Saint-Pol all taking the cross. No crowned heads came forward but Innocent may secretly have welcomed their absence as he was anxious to keep the new crusade, known to posterity as the Fourth Crusade, under his own overall command. He certainly had far more to do with the mundane matters of supply than previous popes. That involvement emerges from a letter sent by Innocent to Alexios III in November 1199. In many respects, the pope's letter was most restrained and conciliatory. He made no mention of the pact with Saladin or even the supposed complicity of the emperor in the loss of Jerusalem, perhaps because he was suspicious of some of the tall stories that were circulating. He even allowed the version of the clash with Frederick Barbarossa given by Alexios in a previous letter, which accused the western emperor of breaking the agreement, to go by uncorrected, no doubt because, as a Staufer and frequent enemy of the papacy, Frederick was hardly entitled to Innocent's sympathy. But in other respects Innocent's letter was uncompromising. After briefly congratulating Alexios on his dutiful approach to the Apostolic See, Innocent sternly warned him that the Byzantines must put an end to the schism, by bringing the Byzantine Church back to Rome 'like a limb to the head and a daughter to the mother'. As regards the recovery of Jerusalem, Innocent had little time for the suggestion made by Alexios that the matter should be left in the hands of God:

> If you wish to wait, because the time of the redemption of that same land is unknown to men, and do nothing by yourself, leaving all things to divine disposition, the Holy Sepulchre may be delivered from the hands of the Saracens without the help of your aid. Therefore through negligence your Imperial Magnificence will incur divine wrath, when through solicitude you could have merited the gratitude of the Lord.[14]

Precisely what kind of assistance Innocent had in mind that Alexios would provide for the forthcoming crusade is not spelt out specifically, but the use of the word *subventio* seems to suggest that financial aid was meant. As Innocent had already told Alexios in an earlier letter, a pious Byzantine emperor would use his ample resources to assist the cause of the crusade. Any hope that Alexios might have cherished that he could lie low and not become involved in the preparations for another assault on the Holy Land was dispelled once and for all. His financial contribution was expected and demanded with the full authority of the successor of St Peter.[15] There remained the question of what was to be done if the emperor failed to do his Christian duty. As a priest, Innocent could hardly express himself in the same brutal terms as those used by Henry VI. Nevertheless, in November 1202 he issued to Alexios III what amounted to a thinly veiled threat:

> Even though, from the time of Manuel, your predecessor of honoured memory, the empire of Constantinople has not deserved such as we ought [otherwise] to have effected because it has always answered us and our predecessors with words and not backed them up with deeds, nevertheless we have set a policy of proceeding in a spirit of mildness and gentleness, believing that, when you have considered the favour of how much we have done for you, you ought all the more quickly to correct what has thus far been less prudently neglected by you and your predecessors. For you ought most zealously to attend to this as human energy allows so that you might be able to extinguish or feed the fire in distant regions lest it be able in some measure to reach all the way to your territories.[16]

The threat is perfectly clear under the verbiage. If Byzantium failed to cooperate, it could expect to meet force. What kind of force Innocent had in mind was discussed in the instructions which he sent to the leaders of the Fourth Crusade in June 1203. Anticipating that the army might run short of food, Innocent undertook to write to the Byzantine emperor and to ask him to make the necessary supplies available. If, however, the emperor, like his predecessors, failed to perform his Christian duty in this respect, Innocent had his response ready: ‘Necessity, especially when one is occupied in necessary work, excuses much in many situations.’ If the emperor attempted to impede the crusaders’ journey, as had his predecessors, military action would be justified.[17]

Innocent was not urging a full-scale assault on Constantinople. He insisted that he was not countenancing rapine but ‘tolerating what, in the face of grave necessity, cannot be avoided without serious loss’. His aim was clearly to extract assistance and church union from Alexios III, and he probably believed that this could be done without resort to force. That would certainly explain why, in June 1203, Innocent warned the crusade leaders that neither the schism nor the usurpation of Alexios III gave them any justification for intervening in the Byzantine empire. Their task was to liberate Jerusalem and they were not to allow themselves to be deviated from it.[18] In spite of this specific prohibition, it is not difficult to imagine how Innocent’s earlier words were interpreted in the crusade army. There was a widespread belief that the pope had permitted the crusaders to take ‘half a year’s supply of free food’ from the Byzantine coast, that Innocent III hated Constantinople, and that he wanted the city to be captured, provided that this could be achieved without bloodshed.[19] Innocent’s letters therefore contained an ambivalence which allowed the crusade leadership, and the clergy who were travelling with the army, to argue that an attack on the Byzantine capital was not only justified but laudable if it resolved the schism and supplied the crusade. All these justifications were to be brought to bear in April 1204.

In addition to Henry VI and Innocent III, there was a third Western potentate who saw the Byzantine empire as a way of financing the reconquest of Jerusalem. This was Boniface, marquis of Montferrat, who, following the death of Thibaut of Champagne in May 1201 was elected as leader of the gathering crusade.[20] The Montferrat family had long-standing connections with Constantinople. Boniface's younger brother, Renier, had married the daughter of Manuel I in 1180 and had perished in the purges which followed the usurpation of Andronicus I. Another brother, Conrad, had gone out to Constantinople in 1187, married the sister of Isaac II and saved his brother-in-law from an attempted coup by Alexios Branas. Conrad, however had not remained long in Constantinople. He departed for Palestine in high dudgeon because he considered that his talents had not been sufficiently rewarded. There he saved Tyre from Saladin's army and was eventually chosen to succeed as king of Jerusalem. Before he could be crowned, he fell victim to an assassin's knife on 28 April 1192 while riding back from a dinner party through the streets of Tyre.[21]

Given those connections, Boniface has always been seen as one of the prime movers behind the diversion of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople. A contemporary chronicler and participant in the crusade, the Picard knight Robert of Clari, asserted that Boniface's motive in going to Constantinople was that he bore a grudge against the Byzantine emperor because of the ungrateful treatment of Conrad. Another chronicler, the monk Robert of Torigny (d. 1186), recorded another motive. When Renier had married the Porphyrogenita Maria, the emperor Manuel had granted his new son-in-law the city of Thessalonica, probably as an appanage in the way that John II had hoped to confer Antioch on Manuel. In view of the fact that, after the Fourth Crusade, Boniface did indeed end up as king of Thessalonica, both opinion in the papal curia in the early thirteenth century and more recent commentators have seen a desire to cash in on his family's eastern inheritance behind Boniface's support for the diversion.[22]

Neither personal vendetta nor territorial ambition, however, is a convincing explanation. The emperor who had slighted Conrad, Isaac II, was now languishing in prison, and the diversion of the Fourth Crusade, rather than wreaking vengeance on him, rescued him and restored him to his throne. As for territorial ambitions, it is quite clear that Boniface received Thessalonica after 1204 not as a long-desired prize, but as a consolation after he had been outmanoeuvred by Baldwin of Flanders and the Venetians in the election for the new Latin emperor of Constantinople.[23] It is far more likely that Boniface, who was after all in a very good position to appreciate the wealth and resources of Constantinople, saw the diversion as a means of financing the crusade and of ensuring that it would reach the Holy Land. In a letter to Innocent III of August 1203, Boniface explained the decision to go to Constantinople in exactly those terms.[24] Like Henry VI and Innocent III, Boniface no doubt also believed that resort to force would be justified if the sought-after supplies were not forthcoming. Moreover, like Robert Guiscard and William II of Sicily, he had a pretext for his intervention.

At the time that the Fourth Crusade was being planned in the West, not only was the former Isaac II still a prisoner, but so was his young son Alexios. For some inexplicable reason, Alexios III decided to release his nephew and to allow him to accompany the imperial army on a campaign to put down a rebellion in Thrace. This proved to be a great mistake. Prince Alexios succeeded in escaping from the army and in persuading the captain of a Pisan ship to hide him on the vessel as it set sail for Italy from a small port on the Sea of Marmara. By one account, Alexios was hidden in a barrel with a false bottom. After an anxious moment, when the ship was stopped by an imperial warship and searched, Alexios arrived safely at the Italian port of Ancona in the early autumn of 1201.[25]

Like so many of the losers in Byzantine political upheavals had done before him, Prince Alexios now sought help from foreign powers. At some point, he went to Rome, but he was unable to interest Innocent III in his cause.[26] He had more luck as he travelled through northern Italy, where the army of the Fourth Crusade was assembling at Venice under its recently elected leader Boniface of Montferrat. Stopping at Verona, Prince Alexios met members of the army en route for Venice and his companions advised him that this force might be able to help him against his uncle. Alexios therefore made an approach to Boniface and the other leaders, who were extremely interested in what he had to say. The message was sent back: ‘If your young lord will agree to help us reconquer Jerusalem, we in our turn will help him regain his empire.’ The leaders then sent envoys with him on the next stage of his journey, which was north to the court of Philip of Swabia, brother of the late Emperor Henry VI, and claimant to the western empire. Alexios no doubt chose this destination because Philip was the second husband of his sister, Eirene. At Christmas 1201, Alexios was joined at Philip’s court at Hagenau on the Rhine by Boniface of Montferrat.[27] It is impossible to know exactly what was said during the discussions at Hagenau, but it is not difficult to guess. The two children of Isaac II would have been anxious to secure his restoration, while Philip of Swabia, the son and brother of prominent crusade leaders, and Boniface of Montferrat, the elected leader of the new crusade, would have wanted supplies for the expedition. Subsequent events certainly bear out this interpretation.

The need for Byzantine wealth was all the greater because the Fourth Crusade had been plagued by shortage of finance from the very beginning. Unlike the Third Crusade and the expedition organized by Henry VI, both of which mounted a direct assault on the Holy Land, the plan now was that the army would sail to the Nile Delta in Egypt where it would disembark, conquer the country and use it as a base from which to march on Jerusalem. The plan was not new. A Byzantine fleet had co-operated with the army of Amalric I in a similar project in 1169 and Richard I had considered attacking Egypt in 1192.[28] Possession of Egypt would certainly make the conquest and retention of Jerusalem much more feasible but it would require a very large fleet to carry the army there.

The only Western power which possessed ships in the required numbers was Venice. In April 1201, Geoffrey of Villehardouin, marshal of Champagne, and five other envoys negotiated a treaty with the doge, Enrico Dandolo. In return for the sum of 85,000 marks, Venice would provide transport for 4,500 knights and their horses, 9,000 squires and 20,000 foot soldiers to Egypt. The problem was that, when the crusade army arrived at Venice and was quartered nearby, its numbers amounted to only a third of the projected force. Since it had been agreed that each soldier would pay for his own passage, the crusaders found themselves 35,000 marks short of the sum they had promised.[29] The Venetians reluctantly allowed the crusaders to postpone their payment if they would assist in the capture of the town of Zara on the Dalmatian coast, which had defected from Venetian allegiance in 1186. Zara was taken by the combined Venetian and crusader force on 24 November 1202, but the financial problem remained. The debt to the Venetians had only been postponed, while during the winter of 1202–3, when the army was quartered at Zara, supplies began to run dangerously low, so that many men on the expedition had ‘neither money nor provisions to maintain themselves’.[30]

It was at this point that the proposal to divert to Constantinople first emerged publicly. In January 1203, some envoys sent by Philip of Swabia arrived in Zara, bringing a message on behalf of Alexios Angelos. Through the envoys, Prince Alexios promised that, if the crusaders’ fleet would accompany him to Constantinople and restore Isaac II to the throne, Alexios would see to it that the schism was brought to an end and the Byzantine Church placed under the authority of the pope. Of more immediate interest, he promised that he would relieve the current financial crisis by handing over 200,000 silver marks and providing ample supplies for every man in the army. He also undertook to go with the crusader host to Egypt, at the head of a contingent of 10,000 men. Once that campaign was over, he would maintain a corps of 500 knights in the Holy Land to assist in its defence.[31] In short, the Byzantine prince was promising to turn his empire from obstructing the crusades, as it was perceived to have done in the past, to being an active participant in them, even to the extent of going to Jerusalem in person. He was also offering a permanent solution to the problem of how to hold the holy city once it was taken.

Alexios’s proposal by no means met with unanimous approval. One of the prime motives for participation in a crusade was to obtain remission of sin through the indulgence offered by the pope to those who fought to defend the Holy Land. Many feared that by going elsewhere they would miss out on this spiritual benefit. Even the plan to attack through Egypt had been controversial, so that the leaders had initially kept it secret from the rank and file. The news that it was now planned to go to a Christian city therefore aroused vociferous opposition, led by a Cistercian abbot, Guy of Vaux. The debate raged on for several months. When the fleet moved on from Zara to Corfu, a large group staged a kind of sit-down protest, declaring that they would remain on the island until ships could be found to take them to Brindisi, from where they could make their own way to the Holy Land. Between January and April, a considerable number of crusaders carried out their threat and left the army.[32]

On the other hand, Alexios's proposal had the support of all the leaders, that is the doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, Baldwin of Flanders, Louis of Blois, Hugh of Saint-Pol and, of course, Boniface of Montferrat. They employed every resource at their disposal in order to convince the rank and file. Their argument was in part a strategic one. Earlier crusaders had gone directly to Syria but had achieved nothing: only by going via Constantinople could success be ensured. The latter option was presented as a roundabout route to Jerusalem similar to that originally planned via Egypt. More telling for most of the soldiers, however, was the argument that it was better to go to Constantinople than to die of hunger. Spiritual doubts were addressed by the abbot of Loos and the bishops with the army who urged that it would not be sinful to go to Constantinople but a righteous deed because it would be the best way to win back Jerusalem. When all else failed, the leaders resorted to emotional blackmail. Boniface and the others went down on his knees before the recalcitrants and begged them not to abandon the enterprise, causing them to burst into tears and to agree to stay with the army until Michaelmas, provided that afterwards ships were provided to take them to Syria. So it was that the leaders won their point but only by appealing to the emotions and chivalrous instincts of their men. They themselves were swayed by much more rational and sober considerations of how the army was to equip itself for the daunting invasion of Egypt.[33]

Those who were present at the time remembered departure of the crusading fleet from Corfu as a stirring event. The ships set sail on a fine and sunny day in May 1203, propelled by a favourable wind, 'so fine a sight that had never been seen before'. So impressive did they look that, when they passed two ships returning from Syria, a sergeant on board one of them deserted his companions and rowed across to the larger fleet, announcing 'I'm going with these men, since it looks certain they must conquer lands.' Meanwhile, Prince Alexios had set out from Germany and had reached Zara, where he was met by the doge and Boniface. He was conveyed from there first to Dyrrachion, in Byzantine territory, where he was joyfully recognized by the local people as the lawful emperor and then on to join the main army. Over the next few weeks the fleet sailed round the Peloponnese and up the Aegean. When it put in at the island of Euboea there was an equally warm welcome from the locals for Prince Alexios, fuelling hopes that on arrival at Constantinople it would simply be a matter of marching in. In late June, after crossing the Sea of Marmara, the ships put in at the port of Chrysopolis, conveniently sited just across the Bosporus from Constantinople and affording a good view of the sheer size of the city and of the formidable defence offered by the towering Sea Walls.[34]

When the response from the Byzantine court came, it was entirely predictable. An envoy was despatched to Boniface of Montferrat and the other leaders at their newly established base in a palace at Chrysopolis. To undertake the mission, Alexios chose one of the many Latins in his service, a Lombard named Nicholas Rosso, who delivered the following message:

> My lords, Emperor Alexios informs you that he knows that you are the best of men among those who do not wear crowns, from the best land there is, and he is deeply perplexed as to why or for what purpose you have come to his lands and to his kingdom. You are Christian, he is Christian and he well understands that you set out to recover the Holy Land overseas, the Holy Cross and the Sepulchre. If you are poor and needy, he will gladly give you some provisions and some money, and then you can leave his lands. He does not wish to do you any harm, but he has the power to do so.[35]

With its mixture of flattery, bribery and threat, Rosso's words were straight out of the textbook. He came armed with gifts and promises of gold and silver, although these were refused, because 'we did not want the Greeks to solicit or soften us with their gifts'.[36] Rosso was sent away with the uncompromising message that Alexios III must yield the throne to his nephew. The leaders knew now that they could extort much more than the usual baubles.

Niketas Choniates was predictably scathing about the response of Alexios III and his advisers to the appearance of the fleet in their home waters. When news had arrived from Corfu that it was on its way, the emperor had made ready a fleet of 20 vessels, made a tour of inspection of the walls and ordered a heavy chain to be strung across the mouth of the Golden Horn to prevent the crusade ships from entering the harbour. Now the threat had materialized and his attempt to buy off the intruders had been rebuffed, he did almost nothing, 'sat back like a spectator' and let the crusaders take the initiative. His forces around the city made little attempt to interfere with the Western fleet or the troops who had landed and they withdrew precipitately when attacked themselves, leaving the Latins to occupy the north shore of the Golden Horn unopposed. To be fair, Alexios III may not have had much choice but to wait on events. He had no idea how many of those around him may have favoured the cause of his nephew and probably decided that the best strategy would be to sit behind the defences and ride out the storm.[37]

The crusade leaders were thinking along much the same lines. As soon as Rosso had departed, Boniface of Montferrat and Prince Alexios boarded a galley which rowed up and down the Sea Walls while the inhabitants of Constantinople were urged to open their gates to the rightful emperor. Unlike in Dyrrachion and Euboea, there was no demonstration in favour of the young prince, only stony silence and the occasional missile. In the face of this rebuff, Boniface could have withdrawn and resumed the journey to Egypt but, as he explained in a letter to the pope some weeks later that was not an option because only 15 days' food supply now remained.[38] The crusaders had therefore to mount an attack. The first objective was to bring the fleet into the Golden Horn, where it could mount an assault on the weaker Sea Walls along that side of the city. That meant breaking through the chain which was strung between two towers on either side of the entrance to the harbour. On 6 July the crusaders captured the tower on the Galata side, when the garrison ill-advisedly sallied out to attack them. The chain was then uncoupled, allowing the Venetian ships to sail in unopposed.[39]

The flaw in Alexios III's passive strategy was now exposed. From the windows of the palace of Blachernae, the disaster in the Golden Horn was clearly visible. Full of indignation at Alexios's inaction, Choniates described the chaotic rout that ensued once the chain was down and the Byzantine ships in the harbour were either captured or grounded themselves on the beaches. Nothing was said at the time, of course, but the emperor must have known that confidence in his rule was waning and according to Choniates he was already considering flight.[40] He made one last attempt to retrieve the situation. With the harbour in their hands, the crusaders had disembarked on the upper reaches of the Golden Horn and had drawn up their forces in front of the Land Walls. On 17 July Alexios III finally marched out to meet them with a large army but he failed to press home his attack in spite of his huge numerical superiority and ended up tamely withdrawing back behind the walls.[41] The following night, the emperor fled from the city, taking with him as much in treasure as he could carry. With Alexios III gone, the courtiers in the palace, of whom Choniates was one, had themselves to decide what to do next. Alexios had left behind his wife Euphrosyne and many of his relatives and close friends, but it was decided not to choose a new emperor from this group, as they were all regarded as tainted with the treason of the departed emperor. Another faction in the court therefore decided to turn to the former emperor Isaac II. One of the courtiers, a eunuch called Constantine Philoxenites, gained the support of the Varangian guard who seized and imprisoned Euphrosyne and her relatives. He had Isaac II brought back to the palace, placed him on the throne and proclaimed him emperor once more. Isaac's first move was to send messengers to the Latin camp, to summon his son to join him in Constantinople so that he could be crowned as co-emperor Alexios IV.[42]

With the Byzantine empire under the rule by two compliant emperors, it could now start to play the role that it was always supposed to have done and take a leading part in the effort to retake Jerusalem. Once the change of regime was confirmed, a delegation was sent by the crusade leaders to remind Isaac II and Alexios IV of the promise made at Zara to put the empire under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Rome, to pay 200,000 silver marks to the army along with a year's supply of provisions to men of all ranks, and to provide troops to garrison the Holy Land. The emperor Isaac, who presumably now learned of the terms for the first time, regretted that they were so heavy but admitted that they were no more than the crusaders deserved and ratified the treaty. The Latin army then returned to its tents and 'politely awaited' the fulfilment of the emperors' promises.[43]

The task of delivering fell entirely to Alexios IV. His father Isaac had to be largely sidelined from the business of government. Blind and broken in health after his long incarceration, he was no longer the man who had dramatically burst from his house nearly 20 years before. During August, Alexios took steps to carry out the undertakings he had given. He wrote to Innocent III promising his personal obedience and assuring the pope that he would do everything in his power to bring the Byzantine Church into obedience to the Holy See. He sent envoys to the Ayyubid sultan, Saladin's brother Al-Adil, with a declaration of war and took an oath that he would join the crusade fleet with 10,000 men the following March and sail with it to Egypt. In the meantime, he provided food supplies for the crusaders in their camp and the Venetians on their ships and sent over a large consignment of silver coins which allowed many of the crusaders to pay off the debts incurred on the passage so far.[44] It was a time of happy Byzantine-Latin cooperation, a far cry from the tense standoff between Alexios I and the First Crusade. Small groups from the crusade army were allowed into the city to admire its churches and relics, while a friendly trade was carried on across the Golden Horn between the two sides. Alexios IV regularly used to have himself rowed across to visit Boniface and the other leaders and they were frequent guests at the palace of Blachernae. There would be uproarious drinking sessions where the emperor and his hosts would try on each other's hats and play dice. The crusaders seem to have had no doubts whatsoever at this point that they would be sailing for Egypt in the spring.[45]

Under the façade of amity, all was not well. Byzantine wealth, that time-honoured weapon for dealing with dangerous enemies, was not, it turned out, inexhaustible. Although Alexios IV was able to make some initial payments to the crusaders, he soon realized that he would not be able to meet the full 200,000 silver marks that he had committed himself to. The treasury was empty and he was not receiving the same levels of tax income that his predecessors had. Receipts from the Kommerkion and other customs duties must have been affected by two serious fires that raged in the commercial district during the summer. The first had started during the crusaders' attack on Constantinople in July when missiles fired by some crusaders had set alight to some houses near the Sea Walls at Blachernae. It soon got out of hand and destroyed a wide area in the north of the city. Worse was to come a month later when some crusaders decided to make an attack on the Mitaton mosque which stood outside the Sea Walls on the Golden Horn. Driven off by the Arabs and their Byzantine friends, the attackers lit another fire which soon spread and raged for two days, coming close to the cathedral of Hagia Sophia until it finally died down.[46] Just as the customs duties were dwindling, receipts from the land tax levied in the provinces were also reduced. Alexios IV was not recognized as emperor more than a few miles west of Constantinople because Alexios III had taken control of Adrianople where he was collecting the taxes for himself. With conventional sources of income drying up, Alexios IV was forced to seize church plates and to have the frames hacked off icons in order to melt them down into coin.[47]

Even then Alexios still could not muster the vast sums demanded of him and he had to admit as much to the crusade leadership. He requested help in subduing the European provinces of the empire, so that he could start collecting taxes there. Accompanied by Boniface of Montferrat and Henry of Flanders, he led a powerful army out into Thrace in August 1203. During the late summer and autumn, he forced his uncle Alexios to flee from Adrianople and had some success in establishing his authority in the western hinterland.[48] In spite of this success, when Alexios IV returned to Constantinople in November he discovered that the situation had deteriorated in his absence. The deep resentment aroused by his stringent taxation and his conciliatory policy towards the crusade army had reached boiling point in Constantinople and a number of clashes took place between crusaders and locals, such as the battle over the Mitaton mosque. On another occasion, a mob of Byzantines attacked the Pisan and Amalfitan quarters along the Golden Horn, causing their inhabitants to flee over to the crusader camp. There was an element of irrationality here. Another mob attacked and smashed a colossal ancient bronze statue of the goddess Athena which stood in the Forum of Constantine, because they believed that its outstretched arm was beckoning the crusaders to attack the city.[49] In the face of these outbreaks, Alexios IV felt increasingly insecure. As he confided to the crusade leaders, his own people hated him because of his relations with the Latins, and, if the army ever left, he would undoubtedly be killed.[50]

Choniates might scornfully dismiss these rioters 'the wine-bibbing portion of the vulgar masses' but their resentment was shared by many of the educated elite in the palace who had serious doubts about Alexios's ability to control his dangerous friends and regarded his favours to them as undermining everything that was sacred in Byzantine eyes, not least Michael Psellos's twin pillars of honours and money. As always, opposition was couched in the guarded and opaque language of public speeches. The Epiphany oration in January 1204 was given by the court orator, Nikephoros Chrysoberges, and he addressed the emperor with the expected sycophancy as 'doer of great deeds' and 'competitor with Alexander the Great in prosperity'. He proclaimed that when Alexios had been carried by the crusade fleet to Constantinople, the sea had remained particularly calm in his honour. It is hard to see any criticism behind such hyperbolic praise but it is there. Chrysoberges congratulated Alexios because he was able to 'draw forth the foreign-tongued Italians' but went on to suggest that the emperor should instruct them that they would prosper only as long as they sided with him. The court orator probably wanted to suggest that Alexios IV should follow in the footsteps of Alexios I and Manuel I Komnenos, in exploiting the crusade for the good of the *Oikoumene* and not allow it to control him.[51]

By then, however, Alexios IV had almost completely lost control. Even though he relied on the crusade army to protect him from his own people and to assist him against Alexios III, by December 1203 his payments of treasure had ceased altogether. Alexios may have been pressurized by his courtiers or the populace into taking this step, or he may just have run out of money.[52] As far as the crusaders were concerned, however, the Greeks had once more reneged on their promises. The attempt to secure their cooperation in the crusade by peaceful means had failed and the expedition was no nearer achieving its goal. The original plan had been to depart for Egypt immediately after Isaac II's restoration the pervious summer but that had been postponed to give Alexios IV more time to gather the promised money. Now the spring departure was starting to look unlikely and Pope Innocent was becoming increasingly restive at the delay.[53]

The first step of the crusade leaders was to send an embassy, consisting of three Frenchmen, Conon of Béthune, Miles of Brabant and Geoffrey of Villehardouin, and three Venetians across the Golden Horn to the imperial city. Alexios IV and Isaac II received them in the midst of their courtiers at the palace of Blachernae, and were faced with a blunt demand that they fulfil the covenant as agreed at Zara: 'If you do this, [the leaders of the crusade] will be extremely pleased; but if not, they will no longer regard you as their lord and their friend, but will use every means in their power to obtain their due.' The ultimatum was not well received:

> The Greeks found this challenge most astounding and most shocking. They said that no one had ever been so bold as to dare defy the emperor of Constantinople in his own hall. Emperor Alexios and the other Greeks looked at the envoys with faces full of ill-will, faces that on many earlier occasions had shown such kindness. There was a great uproar in the hall. The envoys turned on their heels and made for the gate . . .[54]

It was the type of outraged reaction which the Byzantine elite reserved for those who failed to respect the position of the emperor of the Romans, just like Anna Komnene's scorn for Latinus who sat on her father's throne. In this case it amounted to a declaration of war but in spite of the bellicose tone, the hostilities that followed during December and January were desultory and sporadic. The crusaders ransacked palaces and churches outside the walls of the city and along the Bosporus and inside Constantinople there were further attacks on the Italian communities. In early January, fire ships were launched over the Golden Horn towards the Venetian fleet but they failed to do much damage. Alexios IV was unwilling to lead his army into a pitched battle with the Latins, clearly believing that an accommodation could still be reached.[55]

He might well have been wise to avoid a final showdown but it did not play well with most of his advisers who considered it weakness in the face of an external threat and began to make plans to dethrone him. On 25 January, a great crowd gathered in Hagia Sophia to elect a new emperor, but irresolution still dominated. When Choniates was pressed to nominate a candidate for the imperial office, he declined to do so on the grounds that 'whoever was proposed for election would be led out the very next day like a sheep to slaughter, and that the chiefs of the Latin hosts would wrap their arms around Alexios and defend him'. The assembly was reduced to endless bickering as to who the new emperor should be. It was only after three days that a reluctant youth called Nicholas Kannavos was chosen. In spite of everything that had passed, the only response that Alexios IV could think of was to contact Boniface of Montferrat and ask for help against the usurper.[56] Amidst the confusion and indecision, another candidate stepped forward to seize the initiative: the Protovestiarios Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos, who had gained popularity and respect by engaging a Latin force outside the walls on 7 January, in defiance of specific orders from Alexios IV not to do so.[57] On 29 January, he led a palace coup and had both Alexios IV and his rival Kannavos flung into prison. Alexios IV was later strangled after he foiled two attempted poisonings by taking antidotes. The shock of these events was all too much for the enfeebled Isaac II, who expired around the same time. The way was thus cleared for Mourtzouphlos to be crowned emperor as Alexios V.[58]

The change of rulers spelt the end of any hope of peaceful Byzantine co-operation with the expedition to Egypt as the new emperor made it perfectly clear that there would be no further deliveries of coin or supplies. There was no question of the fleet leaving as it was the middle of winter and the sea journey would be too hazardous. On the other hand, food was now beginning to run very short and what was available was becoming more and more expensive.[59] The only alternative to starvation appeared to be to capture Constantinople but for many of the rank and file such action would be incompatible with their crusading vow: they had sailed east to liberate Jerusalem not to attack a Christian city. The long-standing grievances were now once more appealed in order to justify the forthcoming assault and to overcome those scruples. There was the well-known treachery and duplicity of the Greeks, exemplified by their failure to observe the agreement sworn at Zara and the murder of their rightful lord and emperor, Alexios IV. 'Have you ever heard of any people', asked Villehardouin, 'guilty of such atrocious treachery?' 'An idle cowardly rabble', fulminated a German monk, 'an unfaithful burden to its kings'. Then there was the schism. The Latin clergy present with the crusade army assured the soldiers that fighting to bring Constantinople under the authority of Rome was a just cause, and that they would therefore benefit from an indulgence, just as if they were fighting to liberate Jerusalem.[60] Finally there was the failure of the Byzantines to aid the crusaders from the very beginning and their collusion with infidel powers. As Baldwin of Flanders later wrote to the pope:

> For it is this city, which in the most unclean rite of the heathens – sucking blood in turn as a sign of fraternal union – very often dared to secure deadly friendships with the infidels . . . What, on the other hand, the city did for the pilgrims, deeds rather than words provide the instruction of the entire Latin people . . . This is the city that deemed all Latins worthy of being called not humans but dogs, the shedding of whose blood they almost reckoned among the works of merit . . .[61]

All the resentments and charges to which Byzantium's handling of the crusades had given rise, now came back to haunt its capital at the decisive moment.

If there were any in the crusade army who still had doubts that they were right to fight their fellow Christians, the events of one day in early February would have been reassuring. When a force led by Henry of Flanders was returning from a foraging sortie to the north, Alexios V decided to sally forth with his army and intercept it before it could reach the camp. In the ensuing clash, Alexios V found himself deserted by his troops and only narrowly escaped himself. In his flight he left behind a richly adorned icon of the Mother of God which fell into the hands of Henry's troops. The Virgin Mary was considered to be the special protector of the city of Constantinople and the emperors had always carried her image into battle as what Choniates called 'their fellow general' and Psellos 'the surest protection against [their] opponent's terrific onslaught'. Although this icon was probably not the famous Hodegetria, its loss seemed to suggest that divine protection had now been withdrawn and the favour of the Virgin had been transferred to the enemies of the empire. The victors were not slow to exploit their prize, taking the icon in a galley to be rowed up and down before the walls of Constantinople.[62]

With the coming of spring, the crusade leaders were ready to launch an all-out assault. It was decided to concentrate the attack on the Sea Walls, along the Golden Horn which were by no means as high or formidable as the Land Walls. Wooden towers were mounted on the prows of the Venetian ships so that when they were beached in front of the walls, the troops could jump down and take possession of the towers. The attack began early on Friday 9 April but contrary winds drove the ships back and prevented them from getting close to the wall. A second assault was launched on 13 April and this time a stiff breeze drove the ships onto the southern shore of the Golden Horn and allowed the Latins to take several towers of the Sea Walls. That should not necessarily have delivered victory to the crusaders but once the defences had been breached, the fighting seems to have come to an abrupt end. The leaders had expected at least a month of street fighting to give them control of the city, but they soon realized, to their amazement, that no resistance at all was to be offered. The crusade army suffered only one casualty inside the walls, a knight who plunged with his horse into a pit while charging after the retreating enemy. Far from saving the city, Alexios V followed in the footsteps of Alexios III and fled.[63]

Given the events of the past months, when the crusade leaders had been trying so hard to extort as much as they could from Constantinople, it is hardly surprising what happened next. After hardship bordering on starvation, the victorious soldiers suddenly found themselves among

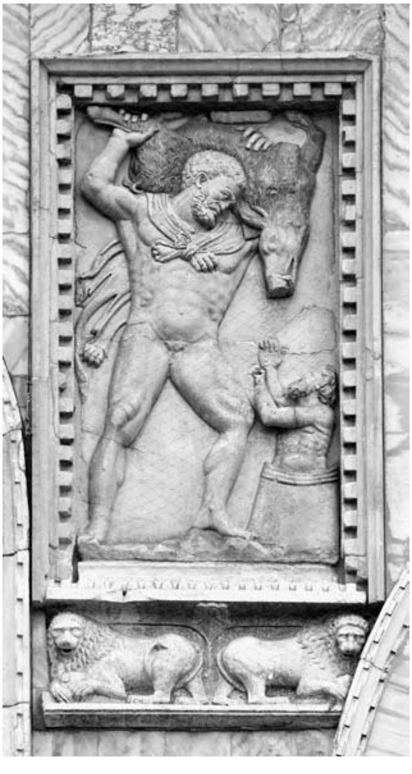


**FIGURE 11** *Byzantine bas-relief of Hercules carrying the Erymanthian boar now on the façade of St Mark's Church in Venice and probably looted from Constantinople in 1204. The classical subject reflects the preservation of ancient Greek literature throughout the Byzantine period.* (Mountainpix/Shutterstock.com)

the opulent palaces and churches of Constantinople and ran riot as each individual rushed to secure what he considered to be his by right. The Great Palace and the palace of Blachernae escaped unscathed, because Boniface of Montferrat and Henry of Flanders moved swiftly to place them under their protection. Niketas Choniates's house close to Hagia Sophia was also spared because a Venetian friend of his, a long-term resident of Constantinople, positioned himself at the door and pretended that he was a soldier with the army who had appropriated the house as his share of the spoils. Most of the other houses and palaces of the wealthy, however, were systematically ransacked for anything of value. As the looting went on, another fire raged. Some crusaders had set fire to a number of houses after the capture of the Sea Walls, fearing a Byzantine counter-attack, and the flames spread rapidly, as far as the Sea Walls opposite Galata. In spite of the damage, there was still plenty of loot. Villehardouin enthused that 'so much booty had never been gained in any city since the creation of the world'; Robert of Clari estimated only that it was the greatest haul since the time of Alexander the Great, but

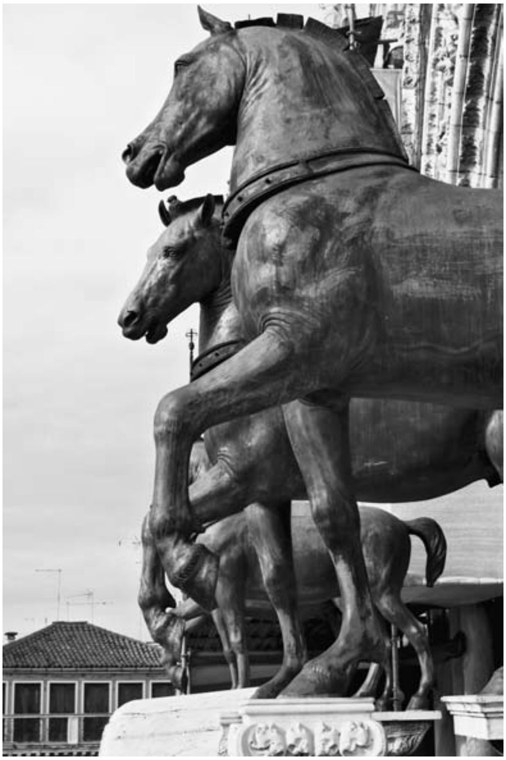


**FIGURE 12** *Four bronze horses from the second century* CE *that once adorned the Hippodrome in Constantinople. Taken to Venice after 1204, they are still preserved in St Mark's Church.* (Santhosh Varghese/Shutterstock.com)

grumbled because most of it found its way into the hands of the wealthy and powerful rather than of ordinary soldiers like himself. Various estimates put the value of the loot at 900,000 silver marks.[64]

There could be no more obvious demonstration of the complete defeat of Byzantine ideology and foreign policy. The city of Constantinople, which was so central to both, had fallen and was in the hands of those who subscribed to an entirely different set of values, the crusading ideal dictated from Rome. In their attempt to protect Constantinople and the *Oikoumene*, the rulers of Byzantium had first provoked Western aggression and then proved themselves incapable of withstanding it. The events of April 1204 should, therefore, have spelt the end of the empire. In fact they did not and the aftermath of the fall of Constantinople is in many ways the strangest chapter in the long saga of Byzantium and the crusades.

# 10

# The rivers of Babylon

The events of April 1204 appeared to be a manifest indication of divine favour towards Western Christians and a chastisement of the Byzantines for their failure to accept papal authority and to cooperate in the defence of Jerusalem. They had, at a stroke, delivered the strategically important city and its wealth into the hands of the crusaders and appeared to have put an end to the schism once and for all. The vision now opened up of a Levant dominated by a swathe of Latin-dominated territory with only the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion standing between a Catholic Byzantine empire and the principality of Antioch, the county of Tripoli and the tiny kingdom of Jerusalem. When the news reached Innocent III he was delighted and gave permission to the crusade army to abandon the expedition to Egypt and remain in Constantinople since 'through the aid of its assistance the Holy Land might be more easily liberated from pagan hands'.[1]

The victors certainly had every intention of making their conquest permanent. With Constantinople in their hands, they implemented a pact which had been made between the Venetians and the crusade leaders shortly before the final attack. It provided for the replacement of the Byzantine ruling hierarchy with a Latin one. An electoral council of six Venetians and six Franks was to elect a new emperor from among the crusade leadership. Contrary to expectations, they chose not Boniface of Montferrat but Baldwin of Flanders: the marquis's close links to Genoa might well have cost him the Venetian vote. Baldwin was duly crowned in Hagia Sophia by the bishop of Soissons on 16 May 1204. This takeover of the upper echelons of the empire was completed when Boniface of Montferrat married Margaret of Hungary, the widow of Isaac II.[2]

The pact made in March 1204 also provided for the partition of the Byzantine empire. The newly elected emperor was to take Asia Minor, Thrace, and some of the Aegean islands to form what has become known as the Latin empire of Constantinople. The rest was to be divided among the Venetians, the Roman Church and the emperor's vassals. During the summer of 1204, the crusade army marched out into Thrace and Macedonia to implement the division, and a number of Latin states on former Byzantine territory came into being, not unlike those formed in the Syria and Palestine after the First Crusade. In Thessaly and Macedonia, Boniface of Montferrat formed the kingdom of Thessalonica, for which he paid homage to the emperor Baldwin while Renier of Trit received Philippopolis. In the Peloponnese, the Latin principality of Achaia was set up by William of Champlitte and Athens became the centre of another Latin feudatory, the duchy of Athens and Thebes, ruled by Otto de la Roche. Lesser figures received one of some 600 smaller parcels of land, held either from the emperor in Constantinople or from the king of Thessalonica.[3] A substantial proportion of the spoils went to Venice which had after all provided the fleet to convey the expedition. Constantinople itself was divided between the Italian republic and Emperor Baldwin, with Baldwin receiving the greater part, including the Great Palace and the palace of Blachernae, but the Venetians taking Hagia Sophia and a vastly increased commercial quarter along the Golden Horn. They also secured the exclusion of their Genoese and Pisan rivals from the commerce of the empire. Outside Constantinople, the Venetians acquired footholds in the Ionian Islands and on the Dalmatian coast, Andros and part of Euboea in the Aegean. Their biggest prize was the island of Crete which they purchased from Boniface of Montferrat in August 1204 but for which they then had to fight the angry Genoese for 14 years before their control was complete.[4]

The land grab was paralleled by an ecclesiastical takeover, similar to that which had occurred in Jerusalem and Antioch in 1099. The treaty of March 1204 had provided for the election of a patriarch of Constantinople as well as that of an emperor, disregarding the claims of the Byzantine incumbent, John X Kamateros. Since the emperor had been chosen from among the Franks, the Venetians effectively chose the patriarch, opting, hardly surprisingly, for one of their own people, Tommaso Morosini. Innocent III was greatly displeased by the uncanonical election but reluctantly endorsed it. The new Latin hierarchy was extended out into the provinces. Byzantine prelates were replaced with Latins: in Athens Niketas Choniates's brother Michael was succeeded by a Frenchman, Berard.[5]

As the takeover proceeded in late 1204 and early 1205, it encountered remarkably little resistance. Faced with what appeared to be the invincible strength and power of the western Europeans who now ruled them, many of the inhabitants of Constantinople seem to have been prepared at first to throw in their lot with the new order. Their own leaders, Alexios III Angelos, Alexios V Mourtzouphlos, the patriarch John X Kamateros, and large numbers of the nobility and bureaucracy had, in any case, abandoned them and fled the city. When it was clear that the Latins were in control, some Byzantines openly hailed Boniface of Montferrat as the new emperor, and when Baldwin of Flanders was crowned in Hagia Sophia a number of Byzantines were in the congregation to acclaim him. For their part, the new rulers did their best to foster a sense of continuity, modelling Baldwin's coronation ceremony on that of the Byzantine emperors of the past. They seem to have succeeded in persuading much of the populace of the new emperor's legitimacy. Shortly afterwards, when Alexios V was taken prisoner and brought to Constantinople in chains, he was jeered and taunted by his former subjects as he passed through the streets, on his way to execution by being hurled from the column of Theodosius. Baldwin's successor as Latin emperor, his brother Henry of Flanders (1206–16), integrated Byzantines into his regime by giving them posts in the administration and army.[6]

There was a similar initial lack of resistance in many of the provinces of the empire. When, in the summer of 1204, Emperor Baldwin moved towards Thessalonica with his army, the population streamed out to welcome him and acknowledged him as emperor. When Renier of Trit arrived with 120 knights to take over his town of Philippopolis the people were overjoyed because at last they would have some protection against Bulgarian raids. Boniface of Montferrat experienced a similar reception in Thessaly, thanks to some Byzantines who accompanied him and carefully arranged matters. William of Champlitte was aided in his conquest of the Peloponnese by some of the local Byzantine archons.[7] Niketas Choniates and his fellow bureaucrats received a less cordial welcome when they fled from Constantinople to the countryside of Thrace. They found themselves the object of scorn and derision from the local people, who rejoiced that those who had once lorded it over them and collected their taxes were now reduced to poverty and misery. The old educated elite that had led the empire to disaster was completely discredited.[8] Once the new Latin overlords were established, many archons adjusted quite easily to the change, simply swapping masters and holding on to the same land. Nor was there a huge change in matters of religion. Although the Byzantine bishops were replaced with Latin ones and Greeks were compelled to pay a tax to support the Latin Church, at parish level no changes were made and the local Byzantines carried on worshipping in their own churches much as they had always done.[9]

Thus, in the months immediately following the sack of Constantinople, it might well have appeared that the ideology that had sustained Byzantium for so long had been utterly destroyed along with so much else, and that all the lands of the empire would be integrated into a wider, Western Christendom. That, in fact, did not happen and the Byzantine empire was to revive and to recover Constantinople some 57 years after its loss to the Fourth Crusade. The revival came about through a strange combination of radical renewal and conservative entrenchment.

While in some areas Latin rule was accepted passively, in others where a local archon with some imperial link provided leadership, there was resistance. At Corinth, both William of Champlitte and Boniface of Montferrat found their advance blocked by Leo Sgouros who ostensibly held the town and the castle there in behalf of his father-in-law, the fugitive Alexios III Angelos.[10] Sgouros's resistance was more of a nuisance than a challenge. He was bottled up in the castle at Corinth and died there in 1208. A much

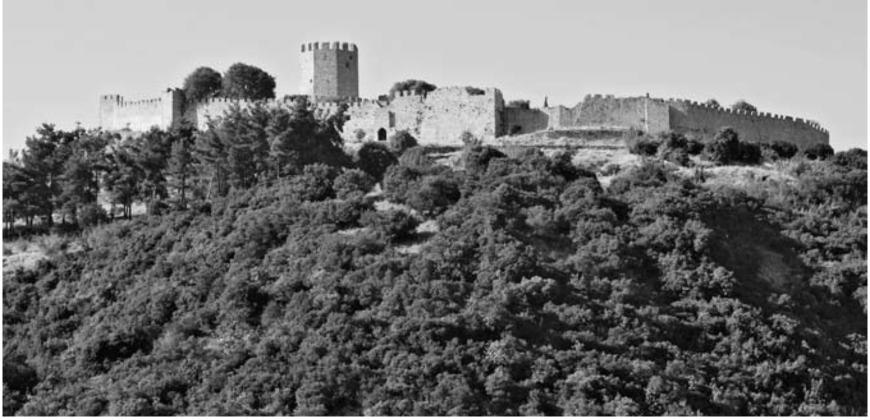
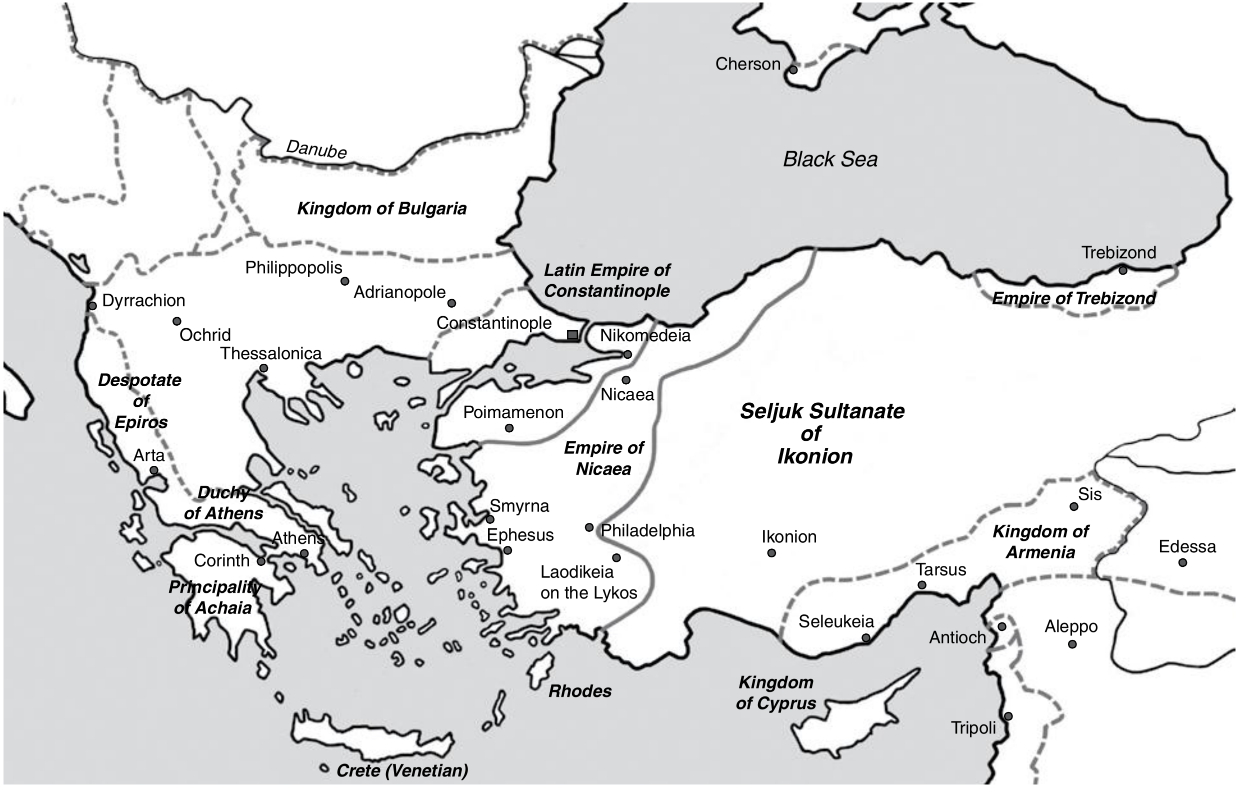


**FIGURE 13** *Castle of Platamonas built to defend Boniface of Montferrat's short-lived kingdom of Thessalonica. It fell to Theodore Angelos of Epiros in 1218.* (Fritz16/Shutterstock.com)

more serious opponent was Michael Angelos, a cousin of Alexios III, who was of those who had originally hoped to accommodate himself to the new regime. He had entered the service of Boniface of Montferrat and, during the autumn of 1204, had accompanied the marquis on his campaign in Thrace and Macedonia, only abruptly to abandon him and head north into Epiros. This area had originally been assigned to Venice in the partition but the republic had only taken control of the coastal cities of Dyrrachion and Ragusa. Angelos was thus able to seize the inland town of Arta and to proclaim himself despot or ruler of the entire area.[11] Further resistance was encountered in Asia Minor. In the autumn of 1204, a Latin expedition crossed the Bosporus to subdue the area and to parcel it out among the crusaders: Nicaea had been promised to Louis of Blois who sent 120 knights to take possession. Nikomedeia fell without a fight but then the expedition encountered forces led by another son-in-law of Alexios III, Theodore Laskaris who had established himself at Nicaea. Laskaris was by no means an outstanding general and that December his forces were routed by the Latin force at Poimamenon. By then, however, the Latin emperor was embroiled in a war with the Tsar of Bulgaria and had to postpone the project of bringing Asia Minor to heel.[12]

Thanks to that lucky break, two successor states to Byzantium emerged at Nicaea and Arta, their rulers laying claim to the imperial title. Theodore Laskaris of Nicaea was crowned 'Emperor and Autocrat of the Romans' in 1208 by a new, Byzantine patriarch of Constantinople, appointed in opposition to the Latin patriarch, Morosini. Theodore of Epiros, brother and successor of Michael Angelos, took the same step in 1227, with the archbishop of Ochrid performing the ceremony. Both men now considered themselves the legitimate successor of the Byzantine emperors who had


Cherson
Black Sea
Danube
Kingdom of Bulgaria
Trebizond
Empire of Trebizond
Latin Empire of Constantinople
Philippopolis
Adrianopole
Dyrrachion
Ochrid
Constantinople
Nikomedeia
Thessalonica
Nicaea
Despotate of Epiros
Poimamenon
Seljuk Sultanate of Ikonion
Empire of Nicaea
Arta
Duchy of Athens
Smyrna
Ephesus
Philadelphia
Ikonion
Sis
Kingdom of Armenia
Edessa
Athens
Corinth
Laodikeia on the Lykos
Tarsus
Principality of Achaia
Seleukeia
Antioch
Aleppo
Rhodes
Kingdom of Cyprus
Tripoli
Crete (Venetian)

**MAP 5** *The Latin empire of Constantinople and the successor states, c.1215.*

reigned in Constantinople before 1204. The clergy of Arta hailed their ruler as 'the descendant of various emperors' and to reinforce the point he added the name Komnenos to his title. The Nicaean emperor claimed that 'the ancestors of our majesty . . . for many centuries held sway over Constantinople'.[13] The courts of Nicaea and Arta were carefully modelled on that of Constantinople in every detail of administration, civil service and imperial household. Their rulers were advised by officials who sported grandiose titles such as Megalepifanestatos ('Great, Most High Appearing') and Paneutychestatos ('All Most Fortunate'), and who had been schooled in the traditional course of higher education. These functionaries turned out polished speeches in praise of their particular emperor just as they had in the past of Isaac II and Alexios III. They reminded them that like the Israelites in Babylon, they would all soon be returning to the new Jerusalem.[14]

These assertions of continuity were all very well but they had two very obvious flaws. In the first place, given the inglorious collapse of the empire in 1203–4 and the unheroic behaviour of its rulers during the defence of Constantinople, it could have been risky to revive a system that appeared to have been so utterly discredited. Indeed critics of the system were to be found among the exiles. Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197–1272) blamed the 'culpable conduct of those who were on the throne' for delivering Constantinople into the hands of the Latins and Niketas Choniates, who revised and completed his historical work at Nicaea, said much the same. It was not just the individual rulers who came in for criticism but traditional Byzantine ideology and outlook as well. Whereas in the past it had been customary to compare 'barbarous' Latins unfavourably with sophisticated and subtle Byzantines, now those roles were reversed. The ousted archbishop of Athens, Michael Choniates, wrote despairingly that, while the Latins could debate matters among themselves in an orderly fashion, the Byzantines were incapable of restraining their anger. As has been seen, his brother Niketas even went so far as to question the Byzantine political system vis-à-vis that of the West.[15] Secondly, the adoption of the imperial title by both the ruler of Nicaea and that of Epiros inevitably would inevitably have raised the question of which one was, in fact, the legitimate emperor. They were, moreover, not the only claimants. Alexios III Angelos was still alive and seeking to make a political comeback while at Trebizond the grandson of Andronicus I was claiming that he was the real emperor of the Romans. The greatest challenge of all was the Latin emperor who by possessing Constantinople held the traditional key to what made a Roman emperor as opposed to a simple ruler like any other.

To counter these flaws, the courts in exile had subtly to modify traditional Byzantine ideology even as they stridently claimed complete continuity with the past and militantly to voice their rulers' claim to be the rightful emperor. The process can be most clearly traced through the speeches that were delivered on special occasions at the court of Nicaea. In stark contrast to previous practice, some orators now took to referring to the Byzantines not as 'Romans' but as 'Hellenes', a word that in the past would have had the connotation of 'pagans'. This was probably a direct riposte to the Latin seizure of Constantinople and the claim that this victory demonstrated Western superiority. On the contrary, as heirs of the ancient Greeks, whose language they spoke, the Byzantines had inherited a sophistication and culture of which the Latins knew nothing. One had only to look, claimed Niketas Choniates, at the thoughtless way in which the Westerners smashed classical bronze statues and melted them down into coin, revealing them as 'haters of the beautiful'.[16] Another departure was a recognition that Byzantium was more than just its capital city. In the past, the educated elite had scarcely acknowledged the existence of anything beyond the walls of Constantinople. Now the emperor himself made a speech in praise of Nicaea, extolling the city a second Athens. The alienation that had grown up between Constantinople and the provinces in the later twelfth century had certainly been noted.[17]

At the same time, the speechmakers in Nicaea were shrill in vindicating their ruler's claim to the imperial title and rubbishing that of his rivals in Arta and Trebizond. Choniates denounced the 'polyarchy' to which these competing claims had given rise while George Akropolites sneered at Michael Angelos of Epiros because 'he did not understand the hierarchy or protocol or the many ancient customs'.[18] The most dangerous rival of all was the Latin emperor in Constantinople who, Innocent III sternly told Theodore Laskaris, was the ruler that all Christians including Byzantines ought to honour and respect.[19] In response to that claim, the orators of Nicaea had a very potent weapon: the stories of the behaviour of the Latin troops when they had stormed into Constantinople in April 1204.

There had certainly been plunder, murder and rape. Choniates had been an eyewitness to an attempted rape, which he succeeded in preventing, as he and his family were escaping from Constantinople and there were claims that new-born babes had been murdered, monks had been tortured and nuns indecently assaulted.[20] To some extent though, such acts were only to be expected when a victorious army took possession of a conquered city. What really played into the hands of the propagandists of Nicaea was the yawning gap between the professed pious intention of the crusaders and their conduct towards the churches and holy places. It was reported that a crowd of them had entered Hagia Sophia and started to remove the gold and silver candlesticks and ecclesiastical vessels, including a huge ciborium that weighed thousands of pounds. So numerous and heavy were these objects that they had brought donkeys and mules into the cathedral to carry them away. Hardly surprisingly, these creatures had left their dung and urine within the hallowed precincts. One of them had lost its footing on the slippery marble pavement and, as it went crashing down, had impaled itself on the metal objects with which it was loaded and its blood had spread in a pool over the floor. It was also claimed that the looters had brought in a prostitute who performed a dance on the *synthronon*, the most sacred part of the church, behind the screen that separated the congregation from the altar. Another group was reported to have burst into the Church of the Holy Apostles, where many emperors of the past lay buried. They opened the tomb of the emperor Justinian. Finding that his corpse was uncorrupted after over 600 years, they left it alone but stripped off anything of value from the sarcophagus. At other shrines and churches, they destroyed icons and turned a marble altar screen into a latrine. In short, they had desecrated and profaned everything that the Byzantines held sacred.[21]

No doubt there was exaggeration but the Byzantine account is confirmed by Western sources, in spite of the Latin claim that before the attack in April 1204 the crusaders took a vow not to harm any ecclesiastical building.[22] Innocent III was outraged when news of these events reached his ears:

> It was not enough for them to empty the imperial treasuries and to plunder the spoils of princes and lesser folk, but rather they extended their hands to church treasuries and, what was more serious, to their possessions, even ripping away silver tablets from altars and breaking them into pieces among themselves . . .[23]

A Latin writer reported that the church and monastery of Christ Pantokrator, where Manuel I lay buried under his precious slab of marble, suffered a similar fate to that of Hagia Sophia and the Holy Apostles. The crusaders had received reports that the church was being used as a repository for valuables brought in from the countryside for safety. The looters were accompanied by an abbot and two priests, who were determined to seize any holy relics that the church might contain. Finding an elderly Greek priest, the abbot threatened to kill him unless he revealed where the relics were, and departed with part of the True Cross, a trace of the blood of Christ and other items hidden in his cassock. A group of Venetians proudly recalled how they had smashed their way into a church containing the tomb of St Simon and carried away the saint's bones.[24]

Events such as these confirmed the suspicions the Byzantines had always had about the crusading ideal. Taking the teaching of St Basil as their starting point, they could not understand how a priest like the pope could organize and despatch armies, even for as worthy a cause as the liberation of Jerusalem. Here now was the proof of their fears. They dwelt on the disparity between the crusading ideal and the conduct of the crusaders in Constantinople. They poured scorn on those who had taken the cross and had vowed to fight Muslims, yet had turned aside and despoiled a Christian city instead. Saladin, when he had taken Jerusalem in 1187, had dealt magnanimously with his defeated enemies. 'How differently', complained Choniates, 'the Latins treated us who love Christ and are their fellow believers, guiltless of any wrong against them'. As for their ransacking of churches: 'Such was the reverence for holy things of those who bore the Lord's cross on their shoulders.' To make matters worse, their own priests had urged them to act in this way. In the very moment when it appeared to have been overthrown, the ideology of the Byzantine empire had therefore been vindicated and that of the Latin west shown to be a hypocritical sham. The Latins were clearly quite unworthy to rule Constantinople and the sooner they yielded the city to a true Christian emperor, the better.[25] These were harsh words indeed but that is all they would have remained had not the balance of power suddenly and dramatically shifted.

The shift was already starting by the end of 1204. The readiness of many Byzantines to accommodate themselves to the Latin regime did not last when many discovered that there was no place for them in the new order of things. Some prominent Byzantines who had remained loyal to Alexios III had approached Emperor Baldwin and Boniface of Montferrat to request positions in their army and government and were mortified when they were turned away empty-handed.[26] It was only their careers that could not be accommodated. While rural parish churches in the Peloponnese could continue to carry out their Greek services exactly as they had always done, that was not possible at the centre of things in Constantinople. The newly installed ecclesiastical authorities demanded that the Byzantine clergy recognize the authority of the pope and of the new Venetian patriarch, Tommaso Morosini, and commemorate their names in the services. During the second half of 1206, a number of meetings took place between the Byzantine clergy, led by John and Nicholas Mesarites, and Morosini and the papal legate, Cardinal Benedict of Santa Susanna. No agreement was reached and the discussions ended with Morosini shouting angrily: 'You should accept me. You are disobedient and we shall treat you for what you are!' The Byzantine clerics then wrote to Pope Innocent III, requesting that they should be allowed to have a patriarch of their own. No answer was received and in 1213 a new papal legate, Pelagius, carried out Morosini's threat and closed the Orthodox churches in Constantinople. Those Byzantines resident in the city did not despair at once. They sent another letter to the pope, requesting that a council be convened to discuss the differences between the Churches and that in the meantime a Greek patriarch should be appointed alongside the Latin one, as had long been the case for Antioch and Jerusalem. They also appealed to the Latin emperor, Henry of Flanders. Henry reopened the churches but the damage, however, was done.[27] All over the Latin-ruled territories, Byzantines began to leave for Arta or Nicaea. Among them was Niketas Choniates who, after returning to Constantinople for six months in 1206, left for Nicaea to escape the Latins and 'their drivelling'. The young George Akropolites was sent by his father to Nicaea in 1233 and when the father died George was brought up in the palace there.[28] The dream that the Latin empire would simply replace the Byzantine one would now never be fulfilled.

Parallel to the disillusionment of the Byzantines was the manifest weakness of the Latin empire which revealed itself within a year of its establishment. The disgruntled archons of Thrace had risen in revolt against their Latin rulers, had taken over the city of Adrianople and made contact with the

Tsar of Bulgaria, Kalojan, who promised to come to their aid. In the spring of 1205, Kalojan marched south with his Cuman allies to confront Emperor Baldwin who was besieging Adrianople. In the ensuing battle the Latins were completely outclassed by the fast-moving Cuman mounted archers and some 300 knights were killed. Baldwin himself was taken captive and carried off to Bulgaria, never to be seen again. According to rumours that circulated later, he had his arms and legs lopped off before being thrown into a ravine to die a slow and painful death. The Latin empire did not collapse there and then because Baldwin's brother Henry, who took over first as regent and then as emperor, succeeded in retrieving the military situation. After his death in 1216, however, the Latin empire withered under a series of transitory emperors. Henry's successor, his brother-in-law, Peter of Courtenay, was crowned in Rome in April 1217 but on his journey overland to Constantinople he was kidnapped by the ruler of Epiros, Theodore Angelos and, like Baldwin, disappeared into captivity. Peter's wife Yolanda then ruled as regent in Constantinople until her son Robert of Courtenay (1221–8) arrived as emperor. During his short reign Robert succeeded in alienating both his Byzantine subjects and his own French knights and he ended up fleeing to Rome. His successor Baldwin II (1228–61) was only 11 years old when he acceded to the throne so that a succession of regents had to run the empire until 1237.[29]

The Latin empire suffered from financial weakness as well as ineffectual leadership. The pact of March 1204 had assigned to the Latin emperor only a fraction of the territories that his Byzantine predecessor had enjoyed and he had not succeeded even in subduing all of these. By 1230 the empire consisted of little more than Constantinople and a small strip of territory along the Bosporus. As a result, the emperor was unable to bring in the substantial tax receipts which had been such a strength to the Byzantine empire and was constantly short of money. Starved of tax income, the Latin emperors resorted to milking the city of Constantinople of anything of value. When the gold and silver were gone, they turned to the bronze, melting down the classical statues that were to be found all over the city. When the bronze was gone, they turned to the lead which Baldwin II had stripped from the roofs of the imperial palaces and to sell for scrap.[30] Another source of revenue was the sale of relics. Many of these had been stolen before the Latin emperor could draw any profit from them. In the chaos that followed the defeat at Adrianople in 1205, for example, an English priest who had charge of the relic collection in the Great Palace allegedly purloined a piece of the True Cross and took it back to the priory of Bromholm in Norfolk.[31] Nevertheless, enough remained to provide some benefit for the Latin regime. The head of John the Baptist and other items were taken to France by Nivelon, bishop of Soissons, to give authority to an appeal for help for the beleaguered defenders of Constantinople. In 1237, Baldwin II pawned the Crown of Thorns to a Venetian merchant for 13,134 gold pieces. When it was clear that the debt could not be redeemed, the relic was taken over by agents of the king of

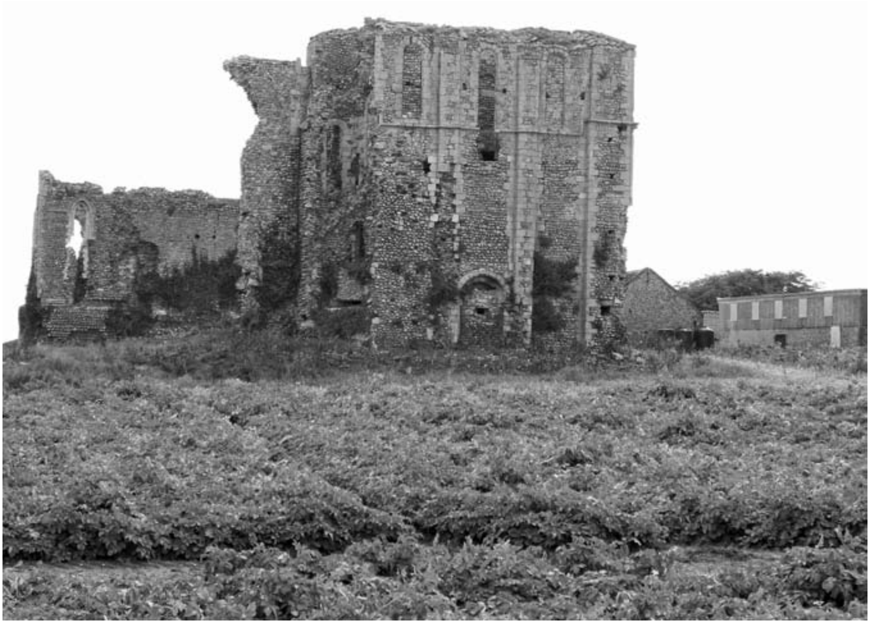


**FIGURE 14** *The priory of Bromholm in Norfolk, England, where a fragment of the True Cross, allegedly taken from Constantinople, was preserved until the Reformation.* (Author)

France, Louis IX (1226–70), who paid the debt and took the relic to Paris, where the Sainte-Chapelle was specially built to house it.[32]

While the empire tottered, in other areas Latin rule was proving more successful and the emperors might have looked there for succour. In the Peloponnese, the principality of Achaia became a prosperous and stable state. By dint of assiduous castle-building and an intelligent approach to the local Greek population, the principality lasted until well into the fifteenth century, but it was never powerful enough to defend distant Constantinople. Most enduring of all was Venetian rule which in some areas lasted until the late eighteenth century. Possession of the Ionian islands, Crete, and a string of towns and islands in the Aegean gave the republic the ideal bases to serve as stepping stones to the lucrative trade of Constantinople. Venice certainly looked to have been the greatest beneficiary of the conquest of Constantinople and the four bronze horses that were taken from the Hippodrome and set up as a trophy outside St Mark's Church were a powerful symbol of that.[33] It was only to be expected then that the Venetians would do all they could to prop up the Latin empire: in 1231 it was their ships that transported the new regent, John of Brienne, to Constantinople and which by patrolling the Bosporus kept the emperor of Nicaea at bay. Even so, the trade with Constantinople was no longer the lucrative draw that it had been. The decline in population, the disappearance of the Byzantine court hierarchy and the disruption of the Black Sea trade by the expansion of the Mongols all meant that while the Venetians defended Latin Constantinople, its prolonged existence was not essential to the republic's commercial well-being.[34] Besides, Venice was only ever strong at sea and could never provide much military help on land.

The Latin emperors therefore had to look westwards for assistance in the hope that Latin knights would take the Cross and come to their rescue. After all, Innocent III and his successors had made it clear that defending Constantinople against any Byzantine attempt to retake it would earn exactly the same remission of penance as crusading in the Holy Land.[35] During the early thirteenth century there were good reasons for hoping that many knights would respond to this call. The immediate threat to the kingdom of Jerusalem had subsided, largely thanks to continual power struggles among the Ayyubid dynasty. In 1217 a fleet set out from Acre in the hope of achieving what the Fourth Crusade had neglected by conquering Egypt. This Fifth Crusade was not a success: it spent years trying to take Damietta and once it did it was compelled to withdraw shortly afterwards. Even so, it was the Christians who were on the offensive at this time. In 1228, the German emperor Frederick II (1220–50), the grandson of Barbarossa, sailed to the Holy Land on the Sixth Crusade. By the Treaty of Jaffa, which he concluded with the sultan of Egypt in 1229, he secured the return of Jerusalem to Christian rule. There was good news from the East too. The Mongol army of Genghis Khan had overrun Persia in 1219–21 and many hoped that the Mongols would become a powerful ally in the war against Islam. In this climate, there was crusading zeal to spare for the Latin empire. So much so, in fact, that in 1205 Innocent III became worried that too many crusaders were going to Constantinople and not enough to the Holy Land. There were even cases of knights leaving Palestine to take service with the Latin emperor. As late as the 1230s there was a good response when Pope Gregory IX (1227–41) issued a call for crusaders to help the Latin empire and Baldwin II was able to lead a contingent of troops back from western Europe to Constantinople to bolster the garrison.[36]

Unfortunately, the favourable situation was not to last. On 23 August 1244 Jerusalem was recaptured by Khwarismian mercenaries, Turks who had moved west from Persia as refugees from the Mongols. Worse was to come on 17 October in the same year, when the Latins, who had joined forces with one faction in a feud among the Ayyubids, were heavily defeated by the other faction at the Battle of La Forbie. The Templars and Hospitallers who took part were almost wiped out and the defeat marked the collapse of the gradual reconstruction of the kingdom of Jerusalem that had been taking place since 1191. In response Louis IX of France took the cross and in 1249 he led the Seventh Crusade in an another attack on Egypt. The expedition enjoyed initial success and quickly captured Damietta but it ended in disaster when Louis's army was forced to retreat from Mansourah and finally to surrender. The crusade was also indirectly responsible for the coup d'état of May 1250 when Turanshah, the last Ayyubid ruler, was assassinated and replaced by a series of militaristic and aggressive Mamluk sultans. Louis's subsequent stay in the Holy Land did help to shore up the defences but the extinction of the Latin presence in the East was once more a distinct possibility. Suddenly no one seemed to think that the defence of the Latin empire was as worthy a cause as that of Jerusalem. The shift in attitude was partly the result of the changed situation in the East but it was probably also a reaction to the propensity of the thirteenth-century popes to call for crusades not against the Muslims but against Christians in western Europe. The most notorious example was that preached in 1241 by Pope Gregory IX against the German emperor, Frederick II, which offered a full indulgence to those who took part and commutation of the vows of those who had undertaken to go to the Holy Land if they would take part in the war against Frederick instead. There was even a current of opinion in some quarters that was favourable to the Byzantines, seeing them as victims of papal aggression. In the light of these developments, many Western knights refused to answer the pope's call to fight for any other purpose than the defence of the Holy Land. In 1239, when Richard, duke of Cornwall, was planning a crusade, the pope suggested he and his followers should commute their crusading vow by making a monetary payment which could be used for the defence of Constantinople. The would-be crusaders responded by taking a solemn oath at Northampton to go only to the Holy Land 'lest their honest vow be hindered by the objections of the Roman Church and diverted to shedding Christian blood in Greece or in Italy'. When the Latin emperor Baldwin II toured Europe again in 1244–8 to drum up support he received a very unsympathetic reception. Even that paragon of crusading, Louis IX of France, was reluctant to get involved, pleading poverty to avoid sending a promised contingent of 300 knights to assist Baldwin. The inability of the Latin emperors to pay for their own defence was therefore compounded by a lack of willing volunteers coming to help them from the West.[37]

The weakness of the Latin empire gave hope to the rulers of Nicaea and Epiros that they would be able to retake Constantinople and so vindicate their claim to be Byzantine emperor. At first, it looked as if Epiros would win the race. From the moment of his accession to power in 1215, its ruler Theodore Angelos was determined to expand his territory eastwards, and he set himself, as a first objective, the capture of Thessalonica. The kingdom set up by Boniface of Montferrat was already ailing. The marquis himself had perished in battle against the Bulgarians in 1207, leaving Thessalonica to his infant son Demetrius. The Latin emperor Henry of Flanders took the young Demetrius under his protection and crowned him as king and the pope preached a crusade to bring assistance to the tottering kingdom.[38] It remained weak and divided, however, and in 1224 Theodore's troops marched into Thessalonica. In the years that followed, the now Emperor

Theodore led his forces to the very walls of Constantinople and it looked as if he would soon achieve his ultimate ambition. Then in 1230, Theodore quarrelled with the Bulgarian ruler, John Asen II (1218–41), and his invasion of Bulgaria ended in his defeat and capture at the Battle of Klokotnitsa. In the aftermath, most of Epiros was overrun by the Bulgarians, and the ambitions of its rulers to retake Constantinople evaporated, much to the satisfaction of their rivals in Nicaea.[39]

It was from Nicaea that the campaign against the Latin empire was led after 1230. During the reign of Theodore I Laskaris (1208–21), the small principality had been fighting for its very existence and had to ward off a number of incursions by the formidable Henry of Flanders. On his eastern frontier, Theodore had to contend with the Seljuk Turks, who invaded Nicaean territory in the spring of 1211, ostensibly acting on behalf of the peripatetic Alexios III Angelos, who was a guest at the sultan's court in Ikonion. Theodore's victory over the Seljuks at Antioch on the Meander ended the threat, and delivered Alexios III as a prisoner into his hands. He showed no kindness to his father-in-law, who was incarcerated for the rest of his life. It is unlikely that Alexios III's role in handing Constantinople over to the Latins had been either forgotten or forgiven.

The real architect of Nicaean success was Theodore's son-in-law and successor, John III Vatatzes (1221–54), a remarkable ruler who was later canonized as a saint of the Orthodox Church and whose feast day is still celebrated on 4 November. John was certainly a very successful general although he was fortunate in not having to face Henry of Flanders who was now dead. In 1225 he encountered and routed a Latin army at Poimamenon after which he was able to occupy those few areas of Asia Minor that were still in Latin hands and to take over the islands of Lesbos, Chios and Samos. Before long John III had expanded Nicaean power beyond Asia Minor. By making an alliance with the Bulgarians in 1235, he was able to lead his forces across the Dardanelles into Europe to take part in a joint siege of Constantinople. The alliance soon broke down, but it left John in possession of the strategically vital town of Gallipoli and a bridgehead into Europe, prompting Pope Gregory IX to make his appeal to help the beleaguered Latin empire. In spite of the aid that Baldwin II did receive, by 1246 John III had conquered Thessalonica and a large part of the southern Balkans.

Military acumen was not the only ingredient in John III's success. Like the earlier emperors whose successor he claimed to be, he deployed considerable wealth, astute diplomacy and strident ideology, albeit with subtle differences from the way they had been used in the past. When it came to wealth, John's sources of income were rather different from that of the Komnenos and Angelos emperors. Without Constantinople, he could not collect the Kommerkion and other revenues generated by the capital's entrepôt trade while his smaller territory would have yielded correspondingly smaller sums in land and hearth tax. On the other hand, he was fortunate in possessing one of the most fertile areas in the region, the western coastlands of Asia Minor and especially the Meander valley which produced very large amounts of corn, olive oil, fruit and wine. John did his best to make the most of this asset, developing the imperial estates and settling refugee farmers in the area to increase agricultural production. During his reign the region produced a surplus of wheat which was exported to the Seljuk sultanate of Ikonion. Moreover, the compact territory of the Nicaean empire had no need of the Italian maritime republics to carry its internal trade. John made no commercial treaties with them during his reign and even introduced a law forbidding his subjects from purchasing luxury goods from foreign merchants. This policy might have been ethical in origin, but it was no doubt directed against the Venetians, the chief prop of the Latin empire of Constantinople from whom John III was hoping to wrest the island of Crete.[40] These prudent policies allowed the empire of Nicaea to become rich and John used that wealth much as his predecessors had. He issued gold coins that were exact imitations of those of John II Komnenos, although with a lower gold content, a visual symbol of continuity with the past. He also used them to buy in the best troops as mercenaries as he did with a large group of Cuman horse-archers in 1241.[41]

Since John claimed to be the rightful Roman emperor, he had to voice the traditional ideology and nowhere did he do so more stridently than in the letter he sent to Pope Gregory IX in 1237. The imperial throne, he declared, had been given to the Byzantines by Constantine the Great, the old doctrine of *Translatio Imperii*. The letter, however, was not a bland reassertion of the same articles of faith and it reflects the times in which it was written. Having heard that Gregory planned to mount a new crusade, John rather sarcastically asked whether the first goal of the participants would be to wreak vengeance on the impious Latins who had seized Constantinople. He also expressed the subtle changes that had taken place in Byzantine ideology at Nicaea, referring to the Byzantines at one point as Greeks.[42] Even so the sense of mission and righteousness that pervades the letter reflects the concerted propaganda campaign which must have played a role in John's success.

Finally when it came to diplomacy, John cast his net as widely as his predecessors had done. Like them, he realized that the removal of the schism with Rome was essential to the empire's future security. He entered into negotiations with Pope Gregory IX and in the spring of 1234, some Franciscan friars arrived at his palace of Nymphaion near Smyrna. No agreement was reached and it was after these talks broke down, that the pope issued his call to Western Christians to defend Constantinople against the ruler of Nicaea.[43] Rebuffed by the pope, John III turned to his enemy, the western emperor Frederick II and in 1244 married Frederick's illegitimate daughter, Constance. There was outrage in the West and the crusader states that the western emperor should ally himself with a schismatic but since Frederick had himself been excommunicated by the pope it was natural for the two rulers to draw together.[44] In the East, John's ambassadors travelled hundreds of miles to the court of the Mongol khan Möngke (1251–9) at

Karakorum in 1253. By that time the Mongols were the terror of both the Christian and Muslim worlds but John III was under no direct threat from them. Indeed by crushing the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion in 1243 they had removed the threat to his eastern border. There is no record of what was discussed at Karakorum but it would seem that John III initiated the friendly contacts that were to be continued by his successors. In these dealings with Frederick II and the Mongols, he was reaching far beyond the hostile Latin block led by the pope.[45]

Wide ranging though John's diplomatic feelers were, his aims were inevitably more modest than those of his predecessors. Immediate survival and the recovery of Constantinople were his main concerns and that was what pushed him into alliance with Bulgaria in 1234.[46] Every now and again though, he showed the same concern for wider recognition of his status that had so exercised his predecessors. He must have been gratified when Frederick II wrote to him in 1250 pouring scorn on the pope who 'constantly and before everyone excommunicates your imperial majesty and all the Romans who are your subjects', even if this rare Western acknowledgement of the Roman claim of the Byzantines came when they themselves were starting to accept that they were in fact Greeks.[47] John may even have dreamed of restoring Manuel I's hegemony over the crusader states. He could never contemplate marching east, imposing his will on the kingdom of Jerusalem and then confronting the Ayyubids, but in the early 1250s he sent an embassy to Acre where Louis IX was in residence. The Latin clerk who noted the visit had no idea what the Byzantine visitors wanted but it is possible that the patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem were among the topics discussed. John may also have raised the issue with the Mongols. One thing is certain. When, in 1260, the Mongol ilkhan of Persia, Hülagü (1256–65), received the submission of the prince of Antioch, Bohemond VI (1251–75), he insisted that a Greek patriarch be restored in the city. He may have done so in response to an earlier request from Nicaea.[48]

Towards the end of his reign then, John III was looking and behaving more and more like a Byzantine emperor. He was not, however, to enjoy the final triumph of recapturing Constantinople. That was left to one of his generals, Michael Palaiologos, a man who never had the remotest chance of being considered for canonization. Ruthless and pragmatic, Michael's rise to power had many similarities to that of Andronicus I. Like Andronicus, he was of imperial descent from both the Komnenos and Angelos families, a competent administrator, an able soldier and he was married to the great niece of John III. Such distinction made him look like a potential usurper and after John III's death in 1254, he was held in deep suspicion at the court of the next emperor Theodore II Laskaris (1254–8). Following Theodore II's premature death in 1258, Michael was appointed regent for John III's grandson, the seven-year-old John IV Laskaris, after probably having had the previous regent, George Mouzalon, murdered during a church service. Once he was securely in power, the regent had himself crowned emperor as Michael VIII (1259–82). His young charge was first sidelined, then imprisoned and ultimately blinded.

This atrocity was forgiven or overlooked by a large section of the Byzantine populace on account because of a remarkable coup that occurred very early in Michael's reign. By 1259, it was obvious that the empire of Nicaea was poised to take over Constantinople and what remained of the Latin empire. Other powers in the region therefore hastily made common cause against Michael VIII, and a coalition came into being consisting of the ruler of Epiros, Michael II Angelos, the king of Sicily, Manfred, and the prince of Achaia, William of Villehardouin. In autumn 1259 Michael's brother, John Palaiologos, met the combined army of the coalition at Pelagonia, in Epiros, and won a complete victory. Every single one of the 400 knights sent by the king of Sicily was killed. The prince of Achaia tried to escape when he saw what was happening and hid under a bush, but was found and recognized because of his unusually protruding teeth. The victory at Pelagonia ensured that there was no land-based power which could stop the Nicaeans from recovering Constantinople.[49]

The only obstacle to the recovery of Constantinople was now the maritime power of Venice, whose fleet guarded the waters around the city. Michael VIII therefore turned to Genoa and on 13 March 1261, he concluded the Treaty of Nymphaion, by which the Genoese promised to aid him in time of war. In return, they were granted extensive privileges, notably tax and customs concessions throughout the empire, and their own commercial quarters in the chief ports of the empire, including Constantinople, once it was recovered. In short, the treaty granted to Genoa the commercial hegemony in the Levant that Venice had enjoyed since the eleventh century.[50] Genoese help was not needed in the end. In July 1261 one of Michael's generals, Alexios Strategopoulos, was in the area of the Land Walls of Constantinople with his army when he received information that the city was virtually undefended. Much of the Latin garrison had gone off to attack the Nicaean island of Daphnousia. News also came that one of the gates in the walls had been left open by a sympathizer on the inside. The chance was seized and the army entered Constantinople on the night of 25 July 1261. There was virtually no resistance and by daybreak the city was in Strategopoulos's hands.[51]

The economic and military weakness of the Latin empire, the military triumphs of John III and Michael VIII and a small dose of good luck had all played their part in bringing about the recapture of Constantinople. Ideology had also had a role. The propagandists of Nicaea and Arta had made a compelling case for the illegitimacy of the Latin regime and the need to restore the right order of things as it had been before 1204, scotching any idea of compromise. By the same token, the pope and the Latin emperor had failed to persuade would-be crusaders that fighting to keep Constantinople out of the hands of the Byzantines was as worthy a cause as defending the Holy Sepulchre. The ideological battle was to be just as important in determining whether Constantinople was to remain in Byzantine hands after 1261.

# 11

# And so the land is lost!

The reaction in the papal curia when news arrived that Constantinople had fallen was much the same as it had been when Jerusalem had been lost to Saladin in 1187. Pope Urban IV (1261–4) sent out a series of letters ordering that a crusade be preached throughout Europe, promising that those who joined the expedition to retake Constantinople would enjoy the same remission of sin granted to those who went to the Holy Land. Justification was given partly on the old grounds that the Greeks were schismatics who had fallen away from Rome but also on the more recent strategic consideration that, if the old Byzantine borders were re-established, the way to Jerusalem and the Holy Land would be barred.[1] Lines had hardened since November 1204, when Innocent III had made the limited concession of placing the Latin empire of Constantinople under the protection of the Holy See and equating any Byzantine attempt to recapture the city with an assault on the Roman Church.[2] Now, for the first time, a pope was preaching a crusade against a Byzantine emperor in Constantinople. Thus Michael VIII's reign represents something of a climax in the Byzantine confrontation with the crusades.

To begin with though, the threat appeared to be an empty one. Urban IV's call encountered the same lack of interest and even resistance that earlier appeals to bolster the Latin empire had. The clergy of Spain and France refused point-blank to pay the levies on their incomes that the pope was demanding to finance the proposed expedition. The only place where the call was welcomed was Venice whose government generously offered free transport for the crusaders to Constantinople. But then the Venetians had a vested interest in seeing the city returned to Latin rule for Michael VIII's triumph had resulted in the Venetians being ejected from their monopoly of Constantinople's trade in favour of the Genoese.[3] In any case, Urban IV was not in a position either to accept the Venetian offer or to press the point on the Constantinople expedition with those who opposed it. He was distracted by a fierce struggle with the ruler of Sicily and southern Italy, Manfred of Hohenstaufen, the illegitimate son of Emperor Frederick II, and brother of

John III Vatatzes's wife, Constance. Besides, there was increasingly bad news from the Holy Land.

The Latins had long since come to realize that the Mongols were unlikely to convert to Christianity and liberate the Holy Sepulchre but they were the only power that could keep the most dangerous Muslim regime, the Mamluks of Egypt, in check. Then in September 1260, the Mamluks defeated a Mongol army at Ain Jalut and drove them out of Syria. Shortly afterwards, the Mamluk sultanate was seized by Baibars I (1260–77) who, with the Mongols out of the way, turned his attention to the remaining Latin strongholds in the area. In yearly campaigns he picked off towns and castles one by one and in May 1268 he marched into the principality of Antioch. The city itself was taken by storm after a two-week siege and some 7,000 of its inhabitants were massacred, dramatically marking an end of the principality founded by the first Bohemond back in 1098. The current prince of Antioch, Bohemond VI, was absent from the city at the time so Baibars sent him a sarcastic letter to fill him in on what he had missed: 'You would have seen your Muslim enemy trampling on the place where you celebrate the mass, cutting the throats of monks, priests and deacons upon the altar . . . .'[4] Baibars's erosion of the Latin East did not go unchallenged. The veteran crusader Louis IX of France sailed to Carthage in 1270, probably in the hope of allying himself with the ruler of Tunisia against Baibars, but he encountered only opposition and died there in August of that year. A contingent under Prince Edward of England reached Acre in May 1271 but it achieved little apart from agreeing a ten-year truce with Baibars the following year. In spite of this reprieve, what was left of the kingdom of Jerusalem and the county of Tripoli was now extremely vulnerable and there was much soul searching at the papal curia as to how fortunes could be reversed. The Constantinople crusade quietly slipped off the agenda.[5]

In the immediate aftermath of his return to Constantinople, therefore, Michael VIII could be reasonably confident that, in spite of the pope's initial call, no large-scale crusade was going to be unleashed on him. Still there was no room for complacency and the emperor took steps to build bridges with the papacy as soon as he could, sending envoys to Rome in the summer of 1262. In the circumstances, Urban IV was prepared to negotiate, offering to recognize Michael VIII's legitimacy and possession of Constantinople if he would put an end to the schism and recognize the authority of the pope over the Byzantine Church.[6] At the same time, Michael saw no reason to jeopardize his good relations with Muslim powers and he was simultaneously in touch with the papacy's chief infidel bugbear, the Mamluk sultan Baibars. Envoys arrived from Cairo almost as soon as Constantinople had been recovered, bringing with them a giraffe and other exotic gifts while the emperor himself treated them to a tour of the Mitaton mosque. The upshot was a non-aggression pact between Michael and Baibars, with clauses providing for the mutual good treatment of merchants and the shipping of Cuman mercenaries from the Crimea to Egypt via Constantinople. Then there were the Mongols. Michael was in contact with Baibars's mortal enemy, the ilkhan of Persia, Hülagü. His illegitimate daughter, Maria, was sent to marry Hülagü in 1265 although he died while she was in transit and she ended up being given to his son and successor, Abaka (1265–82), instead.

It is quite clear that Michael's diplomacy aimed to neutralize threats from all quarters, protecting the empire's eastern flank by playing off the Mamluks against the Ilkhanids of Persia and defusing the menace of a Western crusade. As in the past, however, it ran the risk of incurring resentment if any one power discovered that Michael was simultaneously talking to its enemies. The pope was as annoyed when he learned that Michael VIII was enjoying friendly relations with the chief enemy of the Latin East as the first crusaders had been when they discovered that Alexios I had been in correspondence with the Fatimids. Likewise in the summer of 1264, Baibars found out that Michael was in contact with Hülagü and relations became rather frosty for a time. Even so, the Byzantine-Mamluk treaty survived and was renewed by Sultan Qalawun (1279–90) in 1281. Michael was later able to build bridges with the other Mongol group, the Golden Horde of southern Russia. Their ruler Berke (1257–66), who had recently embraced Islam, was decidedly peeved that the Byzantines were cultivating the pagan Hülagü and in 1265 he ordered an invasion of Byzantine Thrace. Again, concord was restored in the end. In 1269, a treaty was made and Michael arranged for another, legitimate daughter, Euphrosyne, to become the wife of Berke's nephew Nogai.[7]

If Michael VIII's versatile diplomacy was redolent of Alexios I's cultivation of Muslim powers even as the First Crusade passed through Constantinople, that was no coincidence. This was a ruler whose main political platform was that of restoring Byzantium to exactly the way it had been before the disaster of 1204. The effort began as soon as Constantinople was recovered in 1261. The emperor was on the Asian side of the Bosporus with his part of the army when the news of the capture of Constantinople arrived and he did not reach the Land Walls until 14 August. He did not enter immediately, however, spending the night at the Kosmidion monastery outside the Land Walls. That way, he could enter on 15 August, the Feast of the Dormition of the Virgin, as the protector of Constantinople. The entry itself was carefully stage managed and heavy with symbolism. The emperor rode in through the Golden Gate and processed along the Mese, towards the Great Palace. At the head of the procession was the Hodegetria icon of the Virgin Mary, which had survived the Latin occupation unharmed, in recognition that the triumph was the result of her intervention, not of any human strength. A few days later, the patriarch Arsenios arrived from Nicaea to replace the Latin patriarch who had fled and he presided over Michael's second coronation in Hagia Sophia. The right order of things had been demonstrably re-established and, as Michael put it in his autobiography, Constantinople 'by God's gift was returned to the Romans through us'.[8]

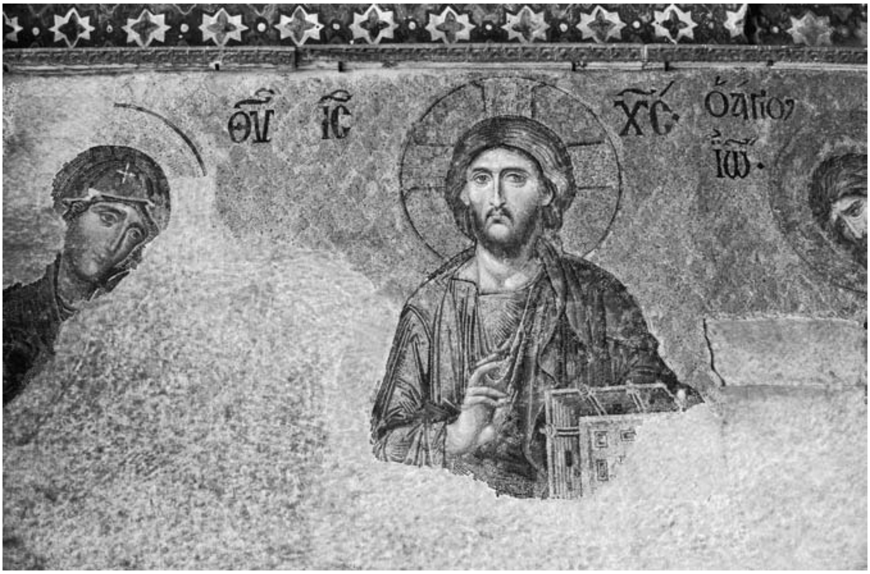
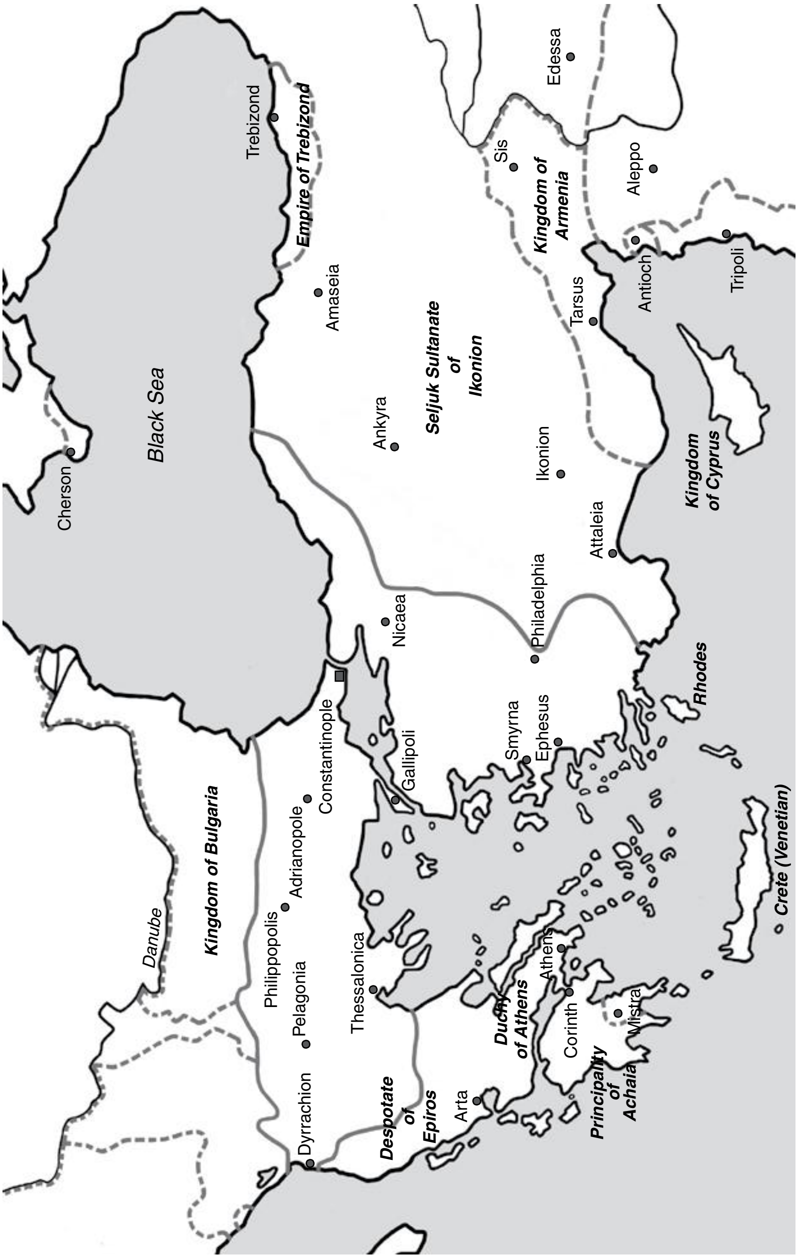


**FIGURE 15** *Mosaic of the Deisis from Hagia Sophia: Christ with the Virgin Mary and St John the Baptist. The mosaic was probably commissioned shortly after Michael VIII recaptured Constantinople in 1261.* (Senai Aksoy/Shutterstock.com)

The celebrations of August 1261 were only the beginning. Throughout his reign Michael VIII reinforced the idea that he was not merely the emperor of the Romans but the new Constantine who had restored Constantinople to its proper place in the world. That article of faith was visibly expressed in a column that Michael had erected outside the Church of the Holy Apostles. On top of the column was a statue of St Michael and before him knelt the figure of an emperor, presenting the Archangel with a model of Constantinople. The emperor depicted could, of course, have been either Constantine, the founder, or Michael, the restorer. Details of Michael's propaganda spread as far afield as Acre where it was noted that after he retook Constantinople he 'had himself called Constantine'.[9] Just as the emperor had been restored, so was his court, the circle of advisers and the educational system that produced them. Shortly after the city was retaken, Michael re-established the university and entrusted its governance to George Akropolites, one of his high ministers. The old custom of rhetorical speeches in the palace on major feast days was resumed. In this kind of atmosphere there was no room for those subtle ideological changes that had developed at Nicaea. The ideas that the Byzantines could be identified as Greeks rather than Romans or that provincial towns could be a seat of imperial power were firmly off the agenda. Court orators now extolled the virtues of Constantinople, the 'head of the Oikoumene' and there were no more references to the emperor 'of the Hellenes'.[10]

It was only to be expected that Michael VIII's restoration of the old order should spill over into his foreign policy. That meant a return to the old obsession with seeking not only the protection of the Oikoumene and the city of Constantinople but also the recognition of the emperor's claim to be the supreme Christian ruler. Thus in 1282 Michael summoned the emperor of Trebizond, John II (1280–97), to Constantinople and insisted that he renounce the imperial title. In return John received the hand of the emperor's daughter in marriage and the title of Despot. It was a classic piece of Byzantine diplomacy, titles and honours being used as a way of bringing a less powerful foreign ruler into the Byzantine 'family' of princes, under the emperor's overlordship without the need for territorial annexation.[11] It is possible to see this concern for recognition being pursued in Michael's dealings with Western powers too. A treaty concluded with the Genoese in 1272, for example, displays all the lordly superiority of that made with Robert Guiscard in 1074. Michael was designated the 'father' of the Genoese and any new *podestà* sent from Genoa to govern the Genoese colony at Galata on the opposite side of the Golden Horn was expected to prostrate himself twice before the emperor and to kiss his hand and foot. As in the past, Western rulers were integrated into the Byzantine hierarchy by the granting of a title. The treaty that Michael VIII made with William, prince of Achaia, which secured the prince's release after the Battle of Pelagonia, bestowed on William the office of Grand Domestic and the privilege of standing as godfather to one of the emperor's sons. As in the case of the crusaders in 1096–7, the pact with William was confirmed by an oath. Finally, like his predecessors, Michael sought to play the role of protector of the Holy Places. Jerusalem was by now under Mamluk rule and in the treaty with Baibars of 1261, it was agreed that the patriarch of the city should henceforth be Michael's nominee and in return, Michael promised that the Constantinople mosque would be restored.[12]

Strive as he might to persuade his subjects and outside observers that nothing had changed, Michael could hardly have been unaware that behind the façade of continuity the Byzantine world was now very different from that of before 1204. On the most obvious level, the empire as reconstituted in 1261 was a great deal smaller than that ruled over by the Komnenos and Angelos emperors. It consisted only of about a third of Asia Minor, a strip of territory across the Balkans from the Adriatic to Constantinople, a small part of the Peloponnese and some of the Aegean islands. During Michael's reign some attempt was made to recover further territory from the Latins as in 1277 when a force was landed on Euboea but only a portion of the island was conquered.[13] The principality of Achaia resisted reincorporation until the fifteenth century and many areas such as Bulgaria, Crete, Cyprus and the Ionian islands were never recovered. This shrinkage of territory meant that Michael VIII received only a fraction of the land and hearth tax receipts that his predecessors had enjoyed. The other source of revenue, the Kommerkion and other customs duties, was also in decline, as much of Constantinople's


Black Sea
Cherson
Trebizond
Empire of Trebizond
Amaseia
Edessa
Sis
Kingdom of Armenia
Aleppo
Antioch
Tripoli
Tarsus
Seljuk Sultanate of Ikonion
Ankyra
Ikonion
Kingdom of Cyprus
Attaleia
Philadelphia
Nicaea
Constantinople
Gallipoli
Smyrna
Ephesus
Rhodes
Crete (Venetian)
Kingdom of Bulgaria
Danube
Adrianopole
Philippopolis
Pelagonia
Thessalonica
Athens
Duchy of Athens
Corinth
Mistra
Principality of Achaia
Arta
Despotate of Epiros
Dyrrachion

**MAP 6** *The Byzantine empire, c.1265.*

trade was diverted through the Genoese colony of Galata. It was estimated that by the mid-fourteenth century the Genoese earned 200,000 gold pieces in duties a year, while the Byzantine treasury received a mere 30,000.[14] Michael VIII was therefore much more limited in the resources he could deploy in defence of the empire. He could maintain the illusion but only as long as no major power set its sights on Constantinople and brought to bear forces that he could not match. In the later 1260s, just such a power was to emerge.

When Louis IX had embarked on the ill-fated Seventh Crusade to Egypt in 1248, he took with him two of his brothers: Robert, count of Artois, and Charles, count of Anjou and Provence. Robert perished at the Battle of Mansourah in 1250, largely as a result of his own impetuosity but Charles of Anjou proved himself to be a brave and resourceful soldier on the campaign. Not that he won his brother's unalloyed approval. On the ship back to Acre, Louis discovered Charles up on deck playing dice. Considering this to be in very bad taste in view of the recent defeat, the king pitched both dice and board into the sea.[15] The king might question Charles's piety but his military ability was not in doubt. In the spring of 1262, Louis IX was visited by the envoy of Pope Urban IV who begged him to accept the crown of Sicily and oust the enemy of the papacy, Manfred of Hohenstaufen. Louis declined but proposed his able brother Charles instead. It was the right choice for Charles delivered a swift victory, marching into southern Italy in late 1265 and having himself crowned king of Sicily in Naples. Early the following year, he defeated and killed Manfred at the Battle of Benevento. The last obstacle was removed two years later when Charles disposed of another challenge to his rule by Manfred's nephew Conradin. The victorious king had his 16-year-old rival publically executed in Naples.

The efficiency and ruthlessness with which Charles of Anjou conquered his kingdom were a clear signal that he was not likely to be content with what he had won so far. With Sicily and southern Italy came the old ambitions of the Norman rulers of the region to seize the opposite shore of the Adriatic but Charles's ambitions stretched even further than that. In May 1267, he met with the fugitive Latin emperor of Constantinople, Baldwin II, at the papal court at Viterbo. There the two rulers made a treaty which was also a marriage alliance, Baldwin's son Philip of Courtenay being betrothed to Charles's daughter Beatrice. The agreement was that Charles was to send an army and a fleet to retake Constantinople, restore Baldwin to his throne and provide a force of 2,000 cavalrymen to defend the revived Latin empire for a year thereafter. In return he would receive one-third of the lands conquered from Byzantium in the Balkans and the Aegean. The treaty was couched in terms that gave the proposed expedition all the aura of a crusade, describing it as 'the pious task of restoring the noble limb severed by the schismatics from the body of our common mother, the Holy Roman Church'.[16]

Charles had effectively taken over the crusade preached by Urban IV in 1262. The new pope, Clement IV (1265–8), certainly approved the content of the Treaty of Viterbo but interestingly he ordered no preaching to support the venture and granted no indulgences so, like Bohemond's 1107 invasion, Charles's plan probably fell short of a strictly defined crusade.[17] As far as Michael VIII and his advisers in Constantinople were concerned, that was of little comfort. The former indifference to papal calls on behalf of the Latin empire had been replaced by the ambitions of a powerful Western ruler who had the material resources to realize them. By 1272, Charles was in control of the port of Dyrrachion, the essential first step in a march overland to Constantinople.

Faced with this very serious threat, the Byzantines launched a diplomatic offensive in the hope of blunting it. Galling though it was, in 1268 Michael VIII came to terms with Venice, readmitting the republic to its old concessions and commercial quarter in Constantinople. The treaty stipulated that Venice would not ally itself with any power against Byzantium. Although there was no undertaking, as in the treaty of the 1080s, that Venice would make war on the empire's enemies, at least Michael VIII could be sure that Charles's army would not arrive at Constantinople in Venetian ships as the Fourth Crusade had. In 1270 ambassadors were sent to the camp of Louis IX while he was on crusade at Carthage to beg the king to restrain his brother. But Louis was already a very sick man and although he received the envoys, he died shortly after they left.[18] None of this was going to be enough to stop Charles of Anjou and Byzantium's straitened resources could not buy allies in the way the emperors had in the past. Something new would have to be attempted.

Several of Michael VIII's predecessors, Alexios I, Manuel I and John III Vatatzes had attempted to defuse Western hostility and remove the pretext for aggression against Byzantium by opening negotiations with the pope to resolve the schism between the Churches. Michael followed their lead but he made the approach in a very different way. Not only did he exploit the crisis that was facing the Latin East and present Byzantium as a potential active partner in the defence of the Holy Land but he also dispensed with negotiation and offered to end the schism immediately on papal terms. The pope was now Gregory X (1272–6). Originally Tedaldo Visconti of Piacenza, archdeacon of Liège, Gregory had been at Acre with Prince Edward's crusade at the time of his election. He was known for his passionate attachment to the defence of the Holy Land and most of his energies were devoted to that cause during his short pontificate. On his return to Rome, probably during 1273, Gregory received a letter from Michael VIII, who claimed to be devoted to the Apostolic See and eager to work for the union of the Churches. Gregory had already called a council of the Church to meet at Lyon in May 1274, which was to discuss a new crusade to rescue the embattled Holy Land. Michael was therefore invited to send representatives to the council.[19] The Byzantine delegation, led by George Akropolites, arrived at Lyon in June 1274. So pressing was the threat from Charles of Anjou that shortly after he arrived, apparently without having entered into any debate on the issue, on 6 July 1274, Akropolites read out a letter from Michael in the cathedral of St John at Lyon making a formal acceptance of the Filioque, an acknowledgement of the pope's authority over the whole Church, and an acceptance of the Western position on minor matters such as the doctrine of purgatory and the use of unleavened bread in communion. A mass was then celebrated in which the priests with the Byzantine delegation openly used the *Filioque* during the creed, not once but three times just to make sure that they were heard.[20]

When Akropolites and the delegation returned to Constantinople, the ceremony was re-enacted in the presence of the emperor in the cathedral of Hagia Sophia on 16 January 1275. A compliant cleric, John Bekkos, formerly the archivist of Hagia Sophia, was raised to the patriarchate, with the job of implementing the newly agreed union.[21] The following June, an embassy headed by George Metochites was despatched to Rome, bringing with it concrete proposals on how the Byzantine emperor would participate in the forthcoming crusade. Michael VIII promised to have the Cross preached throughout his territories and encouraged the pope to choose the landward route via Constantinople, undertaking to supply the expedition with food, money and anything else it needed. He even indicated that he would be prepared to abandon his treaty with Baibars. Like Alexios Angelos in 1203, Michael was telling the Latins exactly what they had always wanted to hear but there was to be a reward: as the crusade headed for the Holy Land it would reconquer central Asia Minor and return this territory to the emperor.[22]

Just like Alexios Angelos again, Michael had an ulterior motive for his concessions and he got what he wanted. As the Byzantines were now once more in communion with Rome and co-operating with the forthcoming crusade, all justification for an assault on Constantinople by Charles of Anjou as a 'pious enterprise' was removed at a stroke. In the months before the arrival of the Byzantine delegation, Gregory X had insisted that Charles of Anjou proclaim a truce with Byzantium until the outcome of the council was known. Afterwards, papal legates were sent to Constantinople to arrange for the truce to be extended. Charles was allegedly so furious at being baulked of his prey that he bit his sceptre but there was nothing else he could do.[23] Michael VIII's dealings with the papacy at the Council of Lyon might therefore seem to have been both sensible and very successful.

Unfortunately, this was not another triumph for wily Byzantine diplomacy. Just as Michael had departed from the rule book in making the concessions at Lyon, so the mentality of his subjects had changed in a way that was to make it very difficult for his policy to succeed. While anti-Latin feeling had certainly existed in Constantinople before 1204, it had been focused on particular groups, such as the Venetians and Genoese. The experience of the Fourth Crusade and the period of exile had a very deep impact. It had altered the way that many of those outside the court defined themselves and their society, giving much greater prominence to their

Orthodox religious faith as opposed to the ‘heresy’ of the Latins. Indeed, in their efforts to prove the illegitimacy of the Latin regime in Constantinople, the propagandists of Nicaea had encouraged that development. Any Latin visitor to Constantinople soon discovered how deep the strength of feeling was. As a papal envoy to Constantinople later advised the pope, the memory of the sack of April 1204, and the attempt to force Western ecclesiastical hierarchy and dogmas on the city, had left many Byzantines utterly and uncompromisingly opposed to any agreement with Rome. So entrenched were such feelings that, as one Dominican monk living in Galata complained, the locals would even break a cup out of which a Latin had drunk as if it were something contaminated.[24]

The unprecedented concession made by Akropolites at Lyon, therefore, opened up a deep rift within Byzantine society. A large number of people in Constantinople simply refused to accept the union and those who had supported and implemented imperial policy found themselves branded as traitors. George Metochites, who had conducted negotiations with the pope on the emperor’s behalf during 1275, was told by the anti-unionists on his return that he had ‘become a Latin’.[25] The most vociferous opponents of union were the monks who staged demonstrations and disseminated tracts attacking the union as a surrender to heresy but the outcry was not restricted to the sort of people whom the courtiers disdainfully dismissed as garbed in hair shirts ‘like theatrical costumes’. Among the ringleaders of the opposition was Michael’s own sister Eulogia, who defiantly insisted that ‘Better that my brother’s empire should perish, than the purity of the Orthodox faith’. Many highly educated courtiers were equally dismayed at what they regarded as the betrayal of their ancestral faith.[26] Determined to crush the opposition, Michael meted out severe punishments to those who raised their voices against the union. Eulogia was imprisoned, although she later succeeded in escaping to Bulgaria. One monk had his tongue cut out and another was blinded. The educated elite suffered too. Manuel Holobolos and Theodore Mouzalon, who refused to undertake an embassy to Rome, were flogged. The Protostrator Andronicus Palaiologos died in prison.[27]

As a result of this opposition, Michael’s policy towards Charles of Anjou and the papacy began to unravel. Rumours of the state of affairs in Constantinople drifted back to Rome and gave rise to accusations that Michael VIII had reneged on the agreement made at Lyon. Letters from the pope became sterner as they demanded that the union be properly implemented in churches throughout the Byzantine empire, with the pope’s name being commemorated in the liturgy. By now, Pope Gregory X had died and the Holy Land crusade had slipped off the agenda at the Papal Curia under a series of short-lived successors.[28] Charles of Anjou saw his chance and began to resume operations on the coast of Epiros in preparation for the main assault. In 1281 Pope Martin IV, a Frenchman sympathetic to Charles of Anjou, repudiated the union of Lyon, excommunicated Michael VIII, and urged Charles of Anjou to launch a crusade against the Greeks 'for the recovery of the empire of Romania [i.e. Byzantium] which is held by Palaiologos and other occupiers'. Charles was only too happy to comply. He was now at the height of his power and prestige, having recently purchased the kingdom of Jerusalem for a thousand gold pieces. The conquest of Byzantium would link his two kingdoms and he began to build a fleet in the harbour of Palermo.[29]

Ironically, it was at this moment of crisis, when Byzantine ideology seemed to waver and Michael's clever diplomacy seemed to have failed completely, that the time honoured methods came to the rescue. Just as centuries before Emperor Leo VI had counselled the use of money as an alternative to actual war, so the court orators now told Michael VIII that he needed to use the weapons of intelligence and diplomacy.[30] In the Great Palace of Constantinople news was constantly arriving from all over the world, usually brought by merchants but also by pilgrims and refugees. From them the emperor and his advisers would have discovered who was the enemy of their enemy. One man who had cause to hate Charles of Anjou was the king of Aragon, Peter III (1276–85). He was married to Constance, daughter of the ill-fated Manfred, and so considered that he had a better claim to the throne of Sicily than the French usurper. His court was a safe haven for refugees from Charles's rule and Peter had been planning some kind of military action even before he became king. Sometime in around 1281, amidst conditions of great secrecy, an alliance was concluded between Michael VIII and Peter III, whose daughter was to marry Michael's son. As an additional inducement Peter was promised the sum of 60,000 gold pieces if he would invade Sicily. Raising the sum must have been a considerable strain for Michael but these were desperate times.[31]

As preparations went ahead in Aragon, Michael's agents were almost certainly active in Sicily itself as well. The island still had a large and volatile Greek-speaking population: they had clashed with the soldiers of the Third Crusade in the winter of 1190–1 when Richard I's fleet was anchored at Messina. By 1280, most of the inhabitants of Sicily, Greek and Latin, were seething with resentment at the heavy taxation imposed on them by their French rulers to pay for Charles of Anjou's invasion fleet. Byzantine gold was liberally distributed here too although it was probably not very difficult to persuade the Sicilians to take up arms.[32] On 30 March 1282 a riot broke out in Palermo and the disturbances quickly spread to the rest of the island as the local population attacked the French occupiers. The so-called Sicilian Vespers revolt was reinforced in August when Peter III of Aragon arrived with his fleet and landed at Trapani. Charles of Anjou was forced to divert his attention and fleet from the attack on Constantinople to defending his own kingdom and the threat withered away. Michael VIII later boasted of his own role in inciting the revolt in his autobiography, wryly commenting that 'If I were to say that [the Sicilians'] present freedom was brought about by God, and were to add that he brought it about through us, I would only be saying what confirms the truth.'[33]

Michael VIII did not live to enjoy his victory for long. In December 1282, while campaigning with his troops in Thrace, he fell ill and died, aged 58. With him at the time of his death was his son Andronicus, who was immediately proclaimed emperor as Andronicus II Palaiologos (1282–1328). On his return to Constantinople, Andronicus's first official act was to abrogate the union of Lyon and to proclaim the restoration of Orthodoxy. After all, the miraculous frustration of the plans of Charles of Anjou seemed to confirm that the Byzantine view of the world had been right all along. Andronicus therefore deposed the patriarch John Bekkos and restored the previous incumbent, Joseph, to office. Bishops who had supported Michael were deposed and replaced with anti-unionists. All those who had been thrown into prison for opposing Michael were now released, and were greeted as they emerged by cheering crowds and clanging church bells.[34] Amidst the celebrations, the memory of the late emperor was erased. Michael VIII's corpse was not brought back to Constantinople for burial in one of the great churches of the city as was customary but was interred instead in unconsecrated ground close to the village where he had died. Not until the following spring was it moved to a monastery in the small port of Selymbria but it was not buried according to the rites of the Orthodox Church, since the ecclesiastical hierarchy held that Michael had died a heretic. That might seem a poor recompense for such an energetic and successful emperor but it reflects the ideological shift whereby most Byzantines had come to define themselves in opposition to the Latins.

It might have been expected that hordes of crusaders would have swept down on Andronicus II to exact retribution for his flouting of papal authority, but none came. With Charles of Anjou diverted from the role of papal instrument against Byzantium, there was no one to take his place. Recognizing that, Pope Nicholas IV (1288–92) was inclined to be emollient. He wrote to the emperor urging him to return to the true faith and encouraged plans for Andronicus's son Michael to marry Catherine of Courtenay, the granddaughter of Baldwin II, and thus legitimize the Palaiologos dynasty in Western eyes.[35] Momentous events, however, were soon to seize the attention of Western Christendom. A few years after the accession of Andronicus II, reports spread through Constantinople of terrifying portents. In Hagia Sophia, an image of the Virgin Mary painted on a wall had started to shed tears. Blood had flowed from an icon of St George. Many predicted that a terrible disaster was about to strike the empire.[36] The chronicler of the events, the deacon George Pachymeres, however, realized with hindsight that the portents had not related to Constantinople at all but to the Christians of Syria where the Mamluk armies were on the move. In February 1289, Sultan Qalawun rode out of Cairo at the head of his troops and made for Tripoli. The city fell on 26 April after a 34-day siege during which the walls had been battered by 19 catapults. The disaster was greeted by the usual lamentations in the West but with the Aragonese and Angevins still locked in conflict over Sicily, there was little effective response.[37]

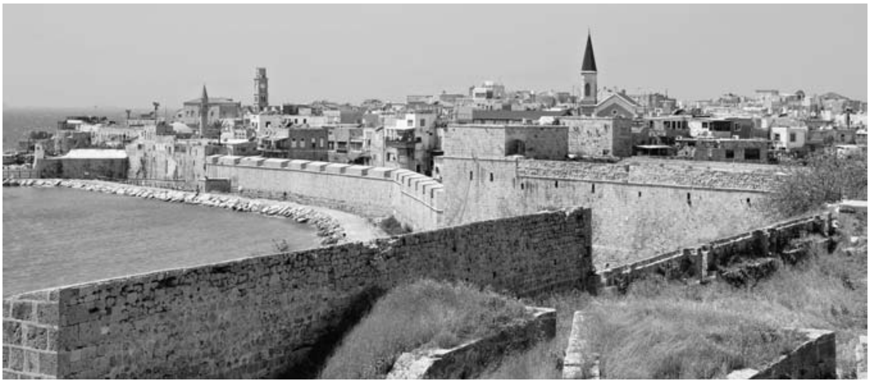


**FIGURE 16** *The port of Acre, one of the last crusader footholds in the Holy Land which fell to the Mamluks in May 1291.* (Protosov AN/Shutterstock.com)

Two years later, Qalawun's successor Al-Ashraf (1290–3) marched on what had long been the effective capital of the kingdom of Jerusalem, the port of Acre. If he was expecting an easy victory, he was disappointed. There was fierce resistance on the walls and the king of Cyprus, Henry, arrived to bolster the garrison. In spite of that, the Mamluk army breached the walls on 18 May 1291 and entered the city. Even then some Templars held out in a tower for ten more days, until it was undermined and brought crashing down. Then it was all over. The remaining towns in Christian hands were captured or were evacuated before the year was out, bringing the Latin presence in the East to an end. The account of these events takes up very little space in the history of Pachymeres. He and his fellow Byzantines were much more interested in what was going on inside their own empire, notably the continuing quarrel in the Church over the aftermath of the now discredited union of Lyon. It was left to the Latins to lament: 'And so', concluded a refugee on Cyprus, 'the land is lost!'[38]

The fall of Acre did not end Byzantium's role in the crusades. In late 1291, a letter arrived in Constantinople from Pope Nicholas announcing the disaster. Shortly afterwards the Council of Sens, which had convened to consider how the Holy Land might be recovered, resolved that the resolution of the schism with the Byzantine Church should be a priority so that the empire could supply the crusade when it set out. Byzantium featured in the numerous proposals on how Jerusalem might be regained for Christianity put forward by everyone from sober veterans to the lunatic fringe. The empire's role was seldom perceived as that of an active partner. In 1300 Pierre Dubois advised the king of France that the best route to the Holy Land would be the one followed by Godfrey of Bouillon and Frederick Barbarossa, seizing Constantinople from 'that usurper Palaiologos' on the way. He also proposed a novel way of resolving the schism. Since Byzantine clergy were permitted to take wives they should be induced to marry educated Latin women who would then convert them to the Catholic faith.[39] There were plenty of variations on the broad theme. The Franciscan Ramon Lull wrote in 1305 that the Byzantines should be given every opportunity to renounce the schism and to join the crusade but if they did not, Constantinople should be stormed and sacked. Others pointed out that such a drastic course of action would be entirely justified in view of the Byzantine emperor's friendly relations with the nemesis of the Latin East, the Mamluk sultan. Those who opposed the plan to march via Constantinople did not do so out of sympathy for the Greeks but from anxiety as to the risks involved. The Byzantines might ally themselves with the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion and make common cause against the crusaders. One particularly nervous writer surmised that they might even use divers to sink the Latins' ships as they crossed the Bosporus.[40]

Most of these plans were hopelessly impractical and never even came close to being implemented. On the other hand, while the Holy Land might be irrevocably lost, the papacy was determined that those territories that had been seized from Byzantium in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade should remain in Western hands. In 1322, three years' absolution was granted to anyone who would fight for the principality of Achaia against 'Greeks, schismatics and other infidels'. There was even talk of reviving the old Latin empire, for the descendants of Baldwin II were still maintaining their claim. In recognition of that, the pope finally excommunicated Andronicus II in 1307.[41] By the 1330s, however, attitudes were beginning to change. The threat to the Latin territories in the Levant no longer came from Byzantium but from the new Turkish emirates of Asia Minor that were emerging from the wreck of the old Seljuk sultanate of Ikonion. Once again the Byzantines came to be seen as potential allies. In 1333 a crusade was launched not to liberate the Holy Sepulchre but to counter the menace of Turkish pirates in the Aegean and the Byzantine emperor was urged to join in, regardless of the schism.[42]

By that time, Byzantium was a very different place. The old ideology of the universal Oikoumene under the Roman emperor in Constantinople was still officially maintained. As the fourteenth century went on, however, regional centres such as Mistra and Thessalonica became much more important and the people of the empire increasingly identified themselves in terms of their language, descent from the ancient Greeks and their Orthodoxy as opposed to Catholicism.[43] Thus the year 1291 can be taken to mark not just the termination of the Latin presence in the Holy Land but the end of a period of nearly 200 years when the Byzantine emperors and their advisers had paid lip service to the crusade ethos while pursuing their own ideological agenda by any means in their power.

# Epilogue: The impact

It remains only to sum up what kind of impact the crusades had on Byzantium. After all, although it had outlived the Latin states of Syria, by 1291 the empire was entering a period of sustained decline. Even during the time of Michael VIII, the effort of fending off Charles of Anjou and amassing treasure to pay the king of Aragon had meant that the defences of Asia Minor had to be neglected. That was particularly unfortunate because the frontier was coming to be subjected to ever more frequent incursions by the independent Turkish emirs who were the successors to the old Seljuk sultanate of Ikonion. Under Andronicus II, the frontier broke down altogether and by the time he died in 1332, four years after being overthrown by his grandson, most of Asia Minor, including Nicaea and Smyrna, had been lost forever. Byzantium might yet have survived as a solely European entity but in 1354 one group of Turks, the Ottomans, succeeded in establishing a bridgehead at Gallipoli, on the European side of the Dardanelles. From there they launched their conquest of the Balkans which was to create the new dominant power in the region, the Ottoman empire. A truncated Byzantium lingered on for another century, until 29 May 1453 when Constantinople was finally captured by the Ottoman sultan, Mehmed II.

Such a complete and utter annihilation of an empire which had once been so formidable a power in the eastern Mediterranean demands some rational explanation. Many historians have seen the crusades as a major factor. Although the Ottoman Turks delivered the final blow, the seizure of Constantinople and the dismemberment of the provinces by the Fourth Crusade in 1204 must have weakened the empire. Even though Constantinople was recaptured in 1261, Byzantium as reconstituted was a greater deal smaller and poorer than the empire of 1050.[1] To lay the whole responsibility on the shoulders of the crusaders, however, seems a little unfair. There were clear signs of disintegration in the late twelfth century, quite unconnected with Western aggression and Byzantium had many other enemies to contend with. Some commentators have therefore identified local separatism or even the unwarlike nature of Byzantine religion as the root cause of the empire's disappearance.[2] Nevertheless, the crusades seem likely to have been at least one factor in Byzantium's decline.

If that was the case, then it certainly calls for some explanation in view of the fact that the First Crusade was launched partly with the aim of helping the empire. As has been argued here, the theory that the events of 1204 were the culmination of a century of misunderstanding between two very different civilizations is unconvincing. During the eleventh and twelfth centuries, far from being alien to Byzantine culture, many western Europeans were deeply involved in it as mercenaries, ambassadors and advisers. Such differences as there were, over theology, ecclesiastical hierarchy, and liturgical practice, sometimes gave rise to harsh words, mainly between clerics, but were not in themselves the cause of armed conflict. Equally flimsy, on the other hand, is the opposite argument to that of deteriorating East–West relations: that the Fourth Crusade was simply an accident, the fortuitous outcome of a random and unpredictable sequence of events. The pronouncements of the German emperor Henry VI and Pope Innocent III make it quite clear that, by the 1190s, western European leaders held the opinion that the Byzantine empire was under an obligation to assist the crusading effort and that it was quite legitimate to use force if the emperor failed to do his duty. Such a failure occurred in January 1204 and was followed by retribution only a few months later.

So to return to the wider question of Byzantium's final disappearance, it could be argued that the deterioration of Byzantine relations with the crusades, the diversion of the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople and the general decline of the empire were all the outcome of the failure of a human institution. The codified foreign policy aims and methods preserved over the centuries by the Byzantine ruling elite had achieved great success in the past when they had helped to spread Byzantine influence in the Slav lands to the north and to secure the empire's survival in the face of overwhelming odds. When these same aims and methods were applied to the reformed papacy, the crusades and the crusader states between 1054 and 1204, they were to prove a liability. By being seen to put their own empire before the struggle for Jerusalem and by using any method to achieve their goals, the rulers of Byzantium appeared to be betraying the cause of the crusade and colluding with the infidel. That perception prompted crusade leaders first to demand Byzantine money to supply their armies, then to attack and occupy Byzantine territory when it was not forthcoming. Moreover, by the late twelfth century, the old methods and ideology were also failing when applied to Byzantium's Slav subjects in the Balkans, to the Ayyubid regime in Egypt and to the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion. Thus it could be said that the empire ultimately declined because no human institution can survive unchanged indefinitely as conditions change and new challenges arise.

In the final analysis, even though the empire disappeared as a political entity in 1453, it can hardly be seen as having been unsuccessful. It survived for centuries in the face of almost constant invasion and upheaval. Even when it finally came to an end, many aspects of Byzantine civilization survived. Its religious tradition, so fiercely defended by the opponents of Michael VIII in the 1270s, is perpetuated in the Orthodox churches of eastern Europe. Its literary culture, based on the ancient Greek classics so beloved of Anna Komnene and Niketas Choniates, passed to Italy at the time of the Renaissance. Émigrés from Constantinople taught, copied and translated the key texts which formed their inheritance and so influenced scholars and thinkers as diverse as Francesco Guicciardini and Thomas More. Byzantium's distinctive style of architecture was revived in the nineteenth century and has influenced public buildings throughout the world. So while the legacy of the crusades is still an uneasy relationship between Islam and the West, that of Byzantium, though far less well known, has been considerably more benign.

# NOTES

## Introduction

1 Registers of Innocent III in Andrea, 2000, p. 117; Chrissis, 2013, pp. 2–12.

2 Hanotaux, 1877, pp. 74–102. Nevertheless, the theory of Venetian duplicity persisted: Pears, 1885, pp. 263–7; Godfrey, 1980, p. 74; Nicol, 1988b, pp. 124–6.

3 For summaries of the various theories see Queller, 1971; Queller and Stratton, 1969, pp. 235–77; Brand, 1984, pp. 33–45; Angold, 2006, pp. 301–16.

4 Runciman, 1955, pp. 79–80; Norden, 1898.

5 Choniates, 1984, p. 167; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 38; Ni Chleirigh, 2011, pp. 161–88.

6 On 1054 as the beginning of mutual hostility, see Vasiliev, 1952, pp. 338–9; Ostrogorsky, 1968, pp. 334–7. On 1096, see Runciman, 1955, pp. 79–80; Cowdrey, 1988, p. 167; Nicol, 1967, pp. 329–30; Angold, 1997, pp. 233–40. On 1180, see Brand, 1968a, pp. 41, 175, 188.

7 On Western barbarity see Runciman, 1951–4, iii. 131. Byzantine snobbery: Nicol, 1967, p. 329; Bryer, 1981, p. 103.

8 Choniates, 1984, pp. 210, 212–13; Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 95.

9 Villehardouin, 2008, pp. 30–1; Robert of Clari, 1936, pp. 59, 93–4; Queller et al., 1974, pp. 441–65.

10 Jacoby, 2008, 53–73; Barber, 1989, pp. 116–18, 123–4; Chrissis, 2013, pp. 77–8, 156–7.

11 Queller and Madden, 1997, pp. ix–x; Riley-Smith, 2002, pp. 51–2; Phillips, 2004, pp. 310–12; Tyerman, 2004, p. 59; Housley, 2006, pp. 64–8; Constable, 2008a, pp. 324–5.

## Chapter 1

1 Skylitzes, 2010, pp. 262, 365; Leo the Deacon, 2005, pp. 132–4; Matthew of Edessa, 1993, pp. 51–4.

2 Stephenson, 2000, pp. 80–3.

3 Choniates, 1984, p. 253; Benjamin of Tudela, 1907, p. 10; Harvey, 1990, pp. 213–37; Kazhdan and Epstein, 1985, pp. 31–46.

4 Akropolites, 2007, p. 277; Harvey, 1990, pp. 208–13; Foss, 1996, pp. 29–39; Kazhdan and Epstein, 1985, p. 38; Angold, 1997, pp. 86–7; Angold, 1973, pp. 98–104; Cormack, 2000, pp. 145–50, 163–70.

5 Neville, 2004, pp. 5–11; Stephenson, 2000, pp. 123–30.

6 Choniates, 1984, p. 317; Psellos, 1966, p. 114; Anna Komnene, 2009, p. 39; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 21.

7 Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 79; El Cheikh, 2004, pp. 204–7; Benjamin of Tudela, 1907, p. 13; Ciggaar, 1996, pp. 102–3; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 374–5; Macrides, 2002, pp. 193–212.

8 Skylitzes, 2010, p. 37; Choniates, 1984, p. 117; Harris, 2007, pp. 42–7.

9 Skylitzes, 2010, pp. 405–6; Villehardouin, 2008, p. 34; Odo of Deuil, 1948, p. 69.

10 Ralph of Coggeshall, in Andrea, 2000, p. 285; Nightingale, 1995, p. 18.

11 Komnene, 2009, p. 424; Choniates, 1984, pp. 11, 222, 303; Ciggaar, 1996, p. 47; Harris, 2007, pp. 51, 133–5; Reinert, 1998, pp. 125–50.

12 Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 101; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 79; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 50.

13 Choniates, 1984, p. 68; Harris, 2007, pp. 114–15, 119.

14 Benjamin of Tudela, 1907, pp. 12–13; Harris, 2007, pp. 119–20.

15 Skylitzes, 2010, p. 249; Robert of Clari, 1936, pp. 108–9.

16 Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 107; Ciggaar, 1996, p. 187; Harris, 2007, pp. 8–13.

17 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, p. 365; Komnene, 2009, pp. 461–3; Choniates, 1984, pp. 160, 172, 285, 305, 358–62; Borelli and Toniato, 1979, pp. 127–8; Harris, 2007, pp. 10–13.

18 Choniates, 1984, p. 323; Odo of Deuil, 1948, p. 65; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 79; Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 105; Harris, 2007, pp. 76–8.

19 Theophanes Continuatus, 1838, pp. 144–5, 337–8; Psellos, 1966, p. 252; Skylitzes, 2010, pp. 12, 51; Choniates, 1984, p. 117; Komnene, 2009, pp. 81, 188.

20 Komnene, 2009, p. 81; Choniates, 1984, p. 117; Kinnamos, 1976, pp. 131–2; Odo of Deuil, 1948, p. 65; Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 105; Benjamin of Tudela, 1907, p. 13.

21 Komnene, 2009, p. 62; Harris, 2007, pp. 90–3.

22 Choniates, 1984, p. 132; El Cheikh, 2004, p. 208; Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 1953, pp. 110–11.

23 Constantine of Rhodes, 2012, p. 21; Mesarites, 1957, pp. 862, 869–89, 891–3; Psellos, 1966, pp. 250–2; Choniates, 1984, p. 183; Harris, 2007, pp. 7–8.

24 Dvornik, 1979, pp. 85–7.

25 Skylitzes, 2010, p. 38; Wolff, 1948, pp. 319–28; Harris, 2007, pp. 40–2.

26 Guscin, 2009, pp. 177–83; Robert of Clari, 1936, pp. 102–5; Ciggaar, 1996, pp. 47–9; Harris, 2007, pp. 15–17.

27 Constantine of Rhodes, 2012, pp. 53, 202–3; Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 108; Skylitzes, 2010, p. 38; Leo the Deacon, 2005, pp. 208–9; Choniates, 1984, p. 183.

28 Robert of Clari, 1936, p. 106; Mango and Parker, 1960, pp. 233–45; Harris, 2007, pp. 35–6.

29 Robert of Clari, 1936, pp. 110–11; Gunther of Pairis, 1997, pp. 116–17; Harris, 2007, pp. 16–17.

30 Matthew 22.21; I Peter 2.17. Most English versions of the Bible translate St Peter's Greek word *Basileus* as 'king' rather than 'emperor'. However, Basileus was the title used by the Byzantine emperors, and the Byzantines certainly considered that this was the office that was referred to here.

31 Eusebius of Caesarea, 1976, pp. 87–8, 120; Barker, 1957, pp. 194–6; Alexander, 1962, pp. 339–57, at 341–7; Nicol, 1988a, pp. 52–3.
32 Komnene, 2009, p. 39; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, p. 113; Nicol, 1988a, p. 60.
33 On Constantinople as New Rome, as opposed to the Elder Rome in Italy: Komnene, 2009, p. 392; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 13. As second Jerusalem: Choniates, 1984, p. 326; John Mauropous in Kazhdan and Epstein, 1985, p. 255.
34 Barker, 1957, pp. 194–6; Obolensky, 1971, p. 104.

# Chapter 2

1 Eusebius of Caesarea, 1976, p. 87; Alexander, 1962, pp. 348–54; Nicol, 1988a, pp. 52–3; Chrysostomides, 2001, pp. 91–2; Angelov, 2007, pp. 79–84.
2 Mathews, 1998, p. 72. See the cover of this book.
3 Psellos, 1966, pp. 43–4.
4 Psellos, 1966, p. 28; Tougher, 2008, pp. 54–67.
5 Wilson, 1996, pp. 2–4; Constantinides, 1982, pp. 1–2; Mango, 1980, pp. 125–48.
6 Psellos, 1966, pp. 178–9, 334; Kaldellis, 1999, pp. 8–9; Choniates, 1984, pp. xi–xii; Akropolites, 2007, pp. 5–18; Constantinides, 1982, pp. 9–10, 31–2, 66–89; Wilson, 1996, pp. 156–66.
7 Mango, 1980, p. 147.
8 *Iliad*, iii, lines 156–7; Psellos, 1966, p. 185.
9 Lemerle, 1967, pp. 77–100, at 84–7; Stethatos, 2013, p. 7.
10 Psellos, 1966, p. 28; Tougher, 2008, p. 138.
11 Psellos, 1966, p. 351; Choniates, 1984, p. 311; Komnene, 2009, pp. 146–52.
12 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, pp. 708–11; Komnene, 2009, pp. 87–8; Zonaras, 1999, pp. 250–1; Oikonomides, 1972, p. 297.
13 Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, pp. 200–2; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, pp. 710–11.
14 Psellos, 1966, pp. 170–1, 263–4; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 31; Choniates, 1984, pp. 116, 244, 249–50, 265–6; Akropolites, 2007, p. 298.
15 Choniates, 1984, pp. xii, xiii, 221; Komnene, 2009, p. 326.
16 Theophanes Continuatus, 1838, pp. 95–6; Choniates, 1984, p. 37; Canard, 1964, p. 41; Koutrakou, 1995, pp. 9–10.
17 Psellos, 1966, pp. 335–6; Attaleiates, 2012, pp. 235–7; Choniates, 1984, p. 225; Akropolites, 2007, p. 307; Angelov, 2006, pp. 49–68.
18 Psellos, 1966, p. 353; Miklosich and Müller, 1860–90, iii. 46; Koutrakou, 1995, pp. 9–10.
19 Psellos, 1966, p. 253; Bibicou, 1959, p. 44.
20 Leo VI, 2010; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012; Dennis, 1985.
21 Magdalino, 1993, p. 437; Angold, 1997, p. 136.
22 Tornikios, 1970, pp. 244–5, 262–3; Komnene, 2009, p. 3.
23 Komnene, 2009, p. 421; Psellos, 1966, pp. 167–8.
24 But see Kaldellis, 1999, where Psellos is presented as a critic of official ideology.

25 Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, pp. 267–70.
26 Kinnamos, 1976, pp. 165–6; Philotheos in Nicol, 1988a, p. 60.
27 Lemerle, 1965, pp. 255–97, at 255; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, pp. 239–40.
28 Psellos, 1966, p. 253; Bibicou, 1959, p. 44.
29 Barker, 1957, p. 89. In general see Obolensky, 1994, pp. 1–22; Obolensky, 1971, p. 357.
30 Theophanes Continuatus, 1838, pp. 291–2, translation in Obolensky, 1971, p. 135.
31 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, p. 691; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 287–302; Shepard, 1996, pp. 80–2; Shepard, 2006, pp. 19–20.
32 Leo the Deacon, 2005, pp. 207–9; Matthew of Edessa, 1993, pp. 28–33; Walker, 1977, pp. 301–27; Ikonomopoulos, 2009, pp. 21–2; Dennis, 2001, pp. 34–7.
33 Hamdani, 1974, p. 173; Runciman, 1946–8, pp. 207–15; Reinert, 1998, pp. 135–40.
34 Bar Hebraeus, 1932, p. 195; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 406–7.
35 Theophanes Continuatus, 1838, pp. 162–5; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 117–18.
36 Leo VI, 2010, pp. 3–5, 35; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 77.
37 Leo VI, 2010, pp. 555, 589.
38 Psellos, 1966, pp. 45, 170; Benjamin of Tudela, 1907, p. 13; Harvey, 1990, pp. 103–5; Laiou and Morrisson, 2007, pp. 49–61.
39 Psellos, 1966, p. 53; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 77; Maas, 1913, p. 357; Chrysostomides, 2001, p. 94.
40 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, p. 576; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 266; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 285; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 83; Hill, 1962, p. 9.
41 Leo the Deacon, 2005, pp. 111–12; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 271.
42 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, pp. 594–8; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, pp. 197–8.
43 Komnene, 2009, p. 103; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, p. 470; Ciggaar, 1982, pp. 90–5; Muthesius, 1992, pp. 237–48; Mathews, 1998, pp. 142–3.
44 Attaleiates, 2012, p. 77; Bibicou, 1959, p. 46.
45 Liudprand of Cremona, pp. 271–2; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, pp. 66–9; Pachymeres, 1984–2000, i. 61–3; Muthesius, 1992, p. 246.
46 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 2012, pp. 3–4, 568–9; Kinnamos, 1976, p. 157; Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 198; Shepard, 1992, pp. 62–3; Chrysostomides, 2001, p. 98.
47 Theophylact of Ochrid, 1980, pp. 222–5; Shepard, 1985, pp. 236–7.
48 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, pp. 48–55; Choniates, 1984, p. 113.
49 Komnene, 2009, p. 65; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 485.
50 Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, pp. 45–7.
51 Obolensky, 1971, pp. 262–3.
52 El Cheikh, 2004, pp. 83–9; Runciman, 1946–8, pp. 211–13; Chrysostomides, 2001, pp. 99–100.
53 Jenkins, 1966, p. 334; Nicol, 1967, pp. 315, 329; Magdalino, 1984, pp. 58–78.
54 Komnene, 2009, pp. 122, 182; Kinnamos, 1976, pp. 67, 226.
55 Nicol, 1967, p. 317; Harris, 2000, p. 27.
56 Komnene, 2009, p. 268.

57 Nicholas Mystikos, 1973, p. 14; Chrysostomides, 2001, pp. 99–100; Canard, 1964, pp. 40–1; Jeffreys, 1986, pp. 305–23.
58 Theophanes Continuatus, 1838, pp. 185–90; Baha al-Din ibn Shaddad, 2001, p. 121; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 185–9.
59 Komnene, 2009, pp. 367, 437; Leo VI, 2010, p. 555. Cf. Machiavelli, 1999, p. 50 (ch. XV).
60 Mesarites, 1957, p. 866.
61 Psellos, 1966, p. 253. For the letters of Leo Choerosphaktes to Symeon of Bulgaria, see Wilson, 1996, pp. 3–4.
62 Komnene, 2009, pp. 155–6.
63 Odo of Deuil, 1948, p. 57; Cross and Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 1953, p. 88; Widukind of Corvey, 1935, p. 148; Thietmar of Merseburg, 2001, p. 102; Shepard, 1985, pp. 235–7.

## Chapter 3

1 Attaleiates, 2012, p. 291.
2 On Manzikert and its aftermath, see Cheynet, 1980, pp. 410–38; Angold, 1997, pp. 44–8, 117–20.
3 Attaleiates, 2012, pp. 333–51; Komnene, 2009, pp. 9–10.
4 Komnene, 2009, pp. 169–70.
5 Komnene, 2009, pp. 125–7.
6 Psellos, 1966, p. 159.
7 Skylitzes, 2010, pp. 214, 253–4; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, pp. 156–7; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 151–5.
8 Hamdani, 1974, p. 175.
9 Bibicou, 1959, pp. 44–8; McQueen, 1986, pp. 429–32.
10 Komnene, 2009, p. 30; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, pp. 70–5.
11 Obolensky, 1971, pp. 158, 253.
12 Komnene, 2009, pp. 102–3; Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, p. 274.
13 Tafel and Thomas, 1856–7, i. 51–3; Komnene, 2009, pp. 161–2. For a controversial reinterpretation and redating of the treaty to 1092, see Frankopan, 2012, pp. 76–7 and the very convincing arguments against the theory in Madden, 2002, pp. 23–41.
14 Komnene, 2009, pp. 112–13; Nicol, 1988b, pp. 57–63; Ostrogorsky, 1968, p. 359; Stephenson, 2000, pp. 168–71; Harvey, 1990, pp. 217–18, 222–4.
15 Tafel and Thomas, 1856–7, i. 36–9; Nicol, 1988b, pp. 40–5.
16 Kinnamos, 1976, p. 210; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 244–7.
17 Psellos, 1966, p. 43; Skylitzes, 2010, p. 444; Attaleiates, 2012, pp. 143–5; Angold, 1997, pp. 62–3.
18 Komnene, 2009, pp. 140, 220; Frankopan, 2012, p. 47.
19 Attaleiates, 2012, p. 287.
20 Rodulfus Glaber, 1989, pp. 202–3; Waitz, 1848, p. 647; William of Jumièges, 1992–5, ii. 82–5; Whitelock et al., 1961, p. 124; Shepard, 2005, p. 303; Morris, 2005, pp. 139–53; Ciggaar, 1996, pp. 45–77; Giesebrecht and Oefele, 1868, pp. 815–17.
21 Rodulfus Glaber, 1989, pp. 202–3; Komnene, 2009, pp. 199, 202, 220.

**22** William of Apulia, 1961, pp. 134–6; William of Poitiers, 1998, pp. 96–7; Stevenson, 1858, ii. 46–7; Ciggaar, 1982, pp. 78–96; Egan, 2007, pp. 111–17.
**23** Orderic Vitalis, 1969–80, iv. 16; Geoffrey of Malaterra, 2005, pp. 157–9; Komnene, 2009, pp. 120–2; Van Houts, 1985, pp. 544–59; Shepard, 1993, pp. 283–8. On the Varangian guard, see Blöndal, 1978.
**24** Bryennios, 1975, pp. 146–9; Komnene, 2009, p. 10; Shepard, 1993, pp. 297–300.
**25** Komnene, 2009, pp. 71–2; Orderic Vitalis, 1969–80, iv. 16–17; Attaleiates, 2012, p. 83; Shepard, 1993, pp. 290–2.
**26** Nicholas Mystikos, 1973, pp. 286–93; Duchesne, 1955–7, ii. 147–8; Komnene, 2009, p. 38.
**27** Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 270; Alexander, 1963, pp. 11–12; Nicol, 1967, pp. 320–1.
**28** On the background to Byzantine relations with Rome, see: Hussey, 1986, pp. 72–9; Runciman, 1955, pp. 1–27, 33–4; Dvornik, 1979, pp. 27–123.
**29** Duchesne, 1955–7, ii. 259.
**30** Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, p. 99; Hoffmann, 1980, pp. 133–5; Constantine VII Porphyrogenitos, 1967, p. 129.
**31** William of Apulia, 1961, pp. 135–6, 143–7; Robinson, 2004, pp. 150–2.
**32** Matthew 16. 19–20.
**33** Humbert of Silva Candida, 1929, p. 128; Ullmann, 1952, p. 112.
**34** Runciman, 1955, pp. 40–3; Hussey, 1986, pp. 132–3. Cf. Liudprand of Cremona, 2007, pp. 267–8.
**35** Leo IX, 1882, cols 773–4.
**36** Robinson, 2004, pp. 148–9; Will, 1861, pp. 155–68.
**37** The tendency over the past 50 years has been to play down the importance of the events of 1054: Hussey, 1986, pp. 72–80, 135–6; Runciman, 1955, pp. 22–7, 55–8; Kolbaba, 2003, pp. 49–51; Harris, 2014.
**38** Kolbaba, 2003, p. 50.
**39** Humbert of Silva Candida, 1924, pp. 97–111.
**40** Bonizo of Sutri, 1865, pp. 642–3; William of Apulia, 1961, pp. 153–5; Komnene, 2009, p. 101, 135; Gregory VII, 2002, pp. 281–2, 371–2.
**41** Benzo of Alba, 1854, pp. 616–17; Cowdrey, 1982, pp. 38–9.
**42** Gregory VII, 2002, p. 20.
**43** Gregory VII, 2002, pp. 50–1, 54–5; Cowdrey, 1988, pp. 154–6; Cowdrey, 1982, pp. 29–31.
**44** Gregory VII, 2002, pp. 122–4, 127–8; Cowdrey, 1982, pp. 34–6.
**45** Stevenson, 1858, ii. 46–7; Hodgett, 1971, p. 3.
**46** Gregory VII, 2002, pp. 280–1; Cowdrey, 1988, pp. 156–7.
**47** Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, p. 298; Runciman, 1955, pp. 61–2; Cowdrey, 1988, pp. 162–3; Frankopan, 2012, pp. 19–21.
**48** Shepard, 2005, p. 304.
**49** Komnene, 2009, pp. 54, 190, 367; Choniates, 1984, p. 6.
**50** Robert the Monk, 2005, pp. 219–22; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, pp. 36–8; Joranson, 1949–50, pp. 811–32.
**51** Jotischky, 2008, p. 52; Frankopan, 2012, pp. 89–93.
**52** Charanis, 1949, pp. 33–4.
**53** Runciman, 1951–4, i. 104; Ostrogorsky, 1968, p. 362.

54 Thomas, 1991, pp. 274–6; France, 1984, p. 21; Angold, 1997, p. 159; Shepard, 1997, p. 109; Frankopan, 2012, pp. 6, 101, 111.
55 Komnene, 2009, p. 224.
56 Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, pp. 316, 323; Gregory VII, 2002, pp. 149–50.
57 Ekkehard of Aura, 1844, p. 213; Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, p. 324; Komnene, 2009, p. 102; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 40.
58 Ekkehard of Aura, 1844, p. 213; Charanis, 1949, pp. 27–8; Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, p. 324.
59 Robert the Monk, 2005, p. 220; Joranson, 1949–50, pp. 814–15.
60 Bibicou, 1959, pp. 44–8.
61 Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 62–7; Robert the Monk, 2005, pp. 79–82; Baldric of Dol, 1998, pp. 29–32; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, pp. 42–5.
62 Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 66; Robert the Monk, 2005, pp. 79–80; Baldric of Dol, 1998, p. 30; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 45.
63 Robert the Monk, 2005, pp. 80–1; Baldric of Dol, 1998, p. 32.
64 Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 66–7; Robert the Monk, 2005, p. 81; Baldric of Dol, 1998, p. 32; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 43.
65 Robert the Monk, 2005, p. 81; Baldric of Dol, 1998, p. 30; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 44. Fulcher of Chartres does not mention Jerusalem.
66 Bernold of St Blasien, 2008, pp. 324, 329; Cowdrey, 1970, pp. 181–2.

# Chapter 4

1 See, however, Shepard, 1996, pp. 68–132 and Frankopan, 2012, pp. 127–37, where it is argued that Alexios's policy towards the crusaders was innovative.
2 Zonaras, 1999, pp. 262–3; Macrides, 2000, pp. 72–5.
3 Komnene, 2009, p. 373.
4 Choniates, 1984, pp. 5–9; Tornikios, 1970, pp. 283–301; Magdalino, 2000, pp. 24–9; Shepard, 1997, p. 109; Thomas, 1991, 293–6; France, 1984, p. 31; Frankopan, 2012, pp. 9–10.
5 Komnene, 2009, pp. 286–8, 304–5, 421; Macrides, 2000, pp. 70–1.
6 Komnene, 2009, pp. 286–8, 304–5, 421; Macrides, 2000, pp. 70–1. For a different view, see Stephenson, 2003, pp. 41–54.
7 Komnene, 2009, pp. 277, 279, 285, 292; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 78.
8 Komnene, 2009, pp. 400–1.
9 Dennis, 1985, pp. 124–5.
10 Komnene, 2009, pp. 276, 285, 289.
11 Komnene, 2009, pp. 277–9.
12 Hill, 1962, pp. 2–5; Morris, 1997, pp. 23–4.
13 Komnene, 2009, pp. 284, 290. Cf. Hill, 1962, p. 6.
14 Komnene, 2009, pp. 279–81, 285; Hill, 1962, pp. 5–6; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 73.
15 Komnene, 2009, pp. 281, 285, 289.
16 Komnene, 2009, pp. 289, 293. Cf. Hagenmeyer, 1901, p. 138; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 80; Ekkehard of Aura, 1844, p. 220; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 87.
17 Attaleiates, 2012, p. 289; Bibicou, 1959, p. 47; Komnene, 2009, pp. 102, 199; Obolensky, 1971, pp. 118, 245.

**18** Komnene, 2009, pp. 298–302, 309–12, 319; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 597; Lilie, 1993, pp. 67–8; Roche, 2009, pp. 135–53.

**19** Komnene, 2009, p. 401.

**20** Komnene, 2009, p. 294.

**21** Guibert of Nogent, 1997, pp. 28, 43, 73.

**22** Hill, 1962, pp. 8–9; Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 26–8; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 18–21; Peter Tudebode, 1974, pp. 22, 27–8; Albert of Aachen, p. 71; Stephenson, 2000, pp. 174–9.

**23** Komnene, 2009, p. 276; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 73; Hill, 1962, p. 17; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 21; Peter Tudebode, 1974, p. 26; Bell, 2010, pp. 38–71.

**24** Hill, 1962, p. 11.

**25** Albert of Aachen, 2007, pp. 75–91; Hill, 1962, pp. 6–7; Komnene, 2009, pp. 285–9.

**26** Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 33–4, 40–1; Hill, 1962, p. 13; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 91; Komnene, 2009, pp. 304–5.

**27** Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 23–4; Hill, 1962, pp. 11–12; Robert the Monk, 2005, p. 99; Hill and Hill, 1952–3, pp. 322–7.

**28** Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 91; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 79; Komnene, 2009, p. 293. Cf. Bibicou, 1959, p. 45.

**29** Komnene, 2009, pp. 291, 305.

**30** Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 24; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 87; Komnene, 2009, p. 294; Ralph of Caen, 2005, p. 41. For a similar reaction from an earlier Norman visitor to Constantinople, Duke Robert, in 1035, see William of Jumièges, 1992–5, ii. 82–5.

**31** Anna Komnene, p. 291.

**32** Komnene, 2009, pp. 303–4; Hill, 1962, p. 17; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 26–7.

**33** Al-Azimi', 1938, p. 370; Ibn al-Qalanisi, 1932, p. 42; Hillenbrand, 1999, p. 44; Orderic Vitalis, 1969–80, v. 335; Neocleous, 2010, pp. 257–9. Alexios's letters warning the Fatimids of the approach of the Franks may have been those which were found in the Egyptian camp after the crusader victory at Ascalon in August 1099: Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 90; Lilie, 1993, pp. 235–6.

**34** Peter Tudebode, 1974, p. 29; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 23–4; Albert of Aachen, 2007, pp. 13–17, 21–3, 55–9.

**35** Hagenmeyer, 1901, p. 138; Barber and Bate, 2010, p. 15; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 80.

**36** Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 165; Anna Komnene, 2009, pp. 295–6, 317–18; Hill, 1962, p. 72; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 298; Lilie, 1993, pp. 66–70.

**37** Komnene, 2009, pp. 169–70.

**38** Komnene, 2009, pp. 289, 321; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 327.

**39** Hill, 1962, p. 12.

**40** Barber and Bate, 2010, p. 25; Ralph of Caen, 2005, p. 41; Robert the Monk, 2005, p. 100. For discussions of how both sides interpreted the oaths, see Lilie, 1993, pp. 24–5; Pryor, 1984, pp. 111–32.

**41** Hill, 1962, p. 12; Peter Tudebode, 1974, p. 30; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, p. 61; Ralph of Caen, 2005, p. 32; Krey, 1928, pp. 57–78.

**42** Komnene, 2009, pp. 294–5; Zonaras, 1999, pp. 268–71; Hill, 1962, pp. 13–14. For a detailed discussion of the relations between Bohemond and Alexios, see Shepard, 1988, pp. 185–277. On the office of Domestic of the East, see Treadgold, 1995, p. 34.

**43** Komnene, 2009, p. 305; Kinnamos, 1976, pp. 67, 151.

**44** Komnene, 2009, pp. 304–5.

**45** Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 23; Komnene, 2009, pp. 296, 305.

**46** Hill, 1962, pp. 25–6; Peter Tudebode, 1974, pp. 40–1; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 36–7.

**47** Komnene, 2009, pp. 307, 323; Hill, 1962, pp. 34–5; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 37; Guibert of Nogent, 1997, pp. 81–2. For a full discussion of the question, see France, 1971, pp. 137–47.

**48** Hill, 1962, pp. 62–3.

**49** Komnene, 2009, p. 309.

**50** Hagenmeyer, 1901, pp. 152–3; Bloch, 1946, p. 222.

**51** Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, p. 88. On Edgar the Aethling, see Runciman, 1951–4, i. 226–7, corrected by Hooper, 1985, pp. 208–9.

**52** Komnene, 2009, pp. 309–12; Roche, 2009, p. 151; Frankopan, 2012, pp. 145–6.

**53** Komnene, 2009, pp. 312–13; Hill, 1962, pp. 63–5; Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 96–7.

**54** Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 99–101; Komnene, 2009, p. 314; Hill, 1962, pp. 59–60, 65–6.

**55** Hill, 1962, pp. 67–71; Komnene, 2009, pp. 314–15; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 103–7.

**56** Hill, 1962, pp. 44–5; Komnene, 2009, pp. 307–8; Albert of Aachen, 2007, pp. 271–3; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 244, 297, 300.

**57** Hill, 1962, p. 72; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 298; Lilie, 1993, pp. 39–40; Asbridge, 2000, pp. 34–46.

**58** William of Tyre, 1943, i. 326–7.

**59** Caffaro, 2013, p. 169; Hill, 1962, pp. 75–6, 80; Albert of Aachen, 2007, p. 483; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, 113; Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 121–2; William of Tyre, 1943, i. 312–13; Komnene, 2009, p. 315.

**60** William of Tyre, 1943, i. 326–8; Raymond of Aguilers, 1968, pp. 105–6; Lilie, 1993, pp. 42–3.

**61** Hill, 1962, pp. 85–7; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 113–15; Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 128–30.

**62** Hill, 1962, pp. 87–93.

**63** Komnene, 2009, p. 315.

**64** Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, pp. 121–2; Ralph of Caen, 2005, pp. 148; Ibn al-Qalanisi, 1932, p. 48; Gabrieli, 1969, p. 10.

## Chapter 5

**1** Hill, 1962, p. 92; Fulcher of Chartres, 1969, p. 124; Murray, 2000, pp. 63–77.

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**39** Nicholas IV, 1905, p. 904; Leopold, 2000, p. 140; Dubois, 1956, pp. 118–19, 156, 172.
**40** Lull, 1961, pp. 108–9; Leopold, 2000, pp. 138–43; Schmieder, 1999, p. 365; Schein, 1991, pp. 208–10.
**41** John XXII, 1910, p. 213; Clement V, 1885, p. 56; Gill, 1979, p. 188; Chrissis, 2013, pp. 269–71; Lock, 1995, pp. 66–7; Laiou, 1972, pp. 43–56.
**42** Gill, 1979, pp. 195–6.
**43** Angold, 2003, pp. 213–14; Nicol, 1988a, pp. 72–3, 76; Wright, 2011, pp. 72–5.

## Epilogue: The impact

1 Runciman, 1951–4, iii. 476–7; Vasiliev, 1952, p. 469; Godfrey, 1980, p. 160.
2 Ostrogorsky, 1968, pp. 478–9; Treadgold, 1997, p. 849.

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