

The Byzantino-Latin Principality of Adrianople and the Challenge of Feudalism (1204/6–ca. 1227/28)

Empire, Venice, and Local Autonomy

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In the aftermath of the conquest of Constantinople in 1204 during the Fourth Crusade, one of many new political entities that took shape was a relatively short-lived principality centered on the city of Adrianople in Thrace. Until recently not much attention had been devoted to its history or position within the Byzantine space in the first decades of the thirteenth century.¹ A few years ago, however, Benjamin Hendrickx wrote an article with as starting point the observation that most Greek scholars until then had always maintained that the principality in question was an independent state in the sense of a so-called *Territorialstaat* or *toparchia* as defined by Jürgen Hoffman.² Through a renewed analysis of the so-called *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* from 1206 between the Byzantine magnate Theodore Branas and the Venetian *podestà* of Constantinople Marino Zeno, an agreement by which Branas was

designated or recognized by Venice as ruler of the city of Adrianople, the author convincingly argues that the principality was no independent state, but a feudal principality within the framework of the (Latin) Empire of Constantinople, a conclusion that for non-Greek authors such as Jean Longnon had been rather self-evident.³

Along the way Hendrickx also makes some statements that in my opinion raise new questions and warrant further investigation. First, the author considers the mentioned *Pactum* to be an illustration of “Venice’s independent policy in Romania” vis-à-vis the Latin emperors.⁴ I will argue however that there are good reasons to challenge this proposition. Relevant passages in the chronicles by Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Henry of Valenciennes in my view point in a quite different, indeed opposite direction. Second, the author alleges that “no successors in Andrinople are known” after the deaths of Branas and his wife Agnes, daughter of the

1 Cf. J. Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la Principauté de Morée*, Bibliothèque historique (Paris, 1949), 85–86, 97, 105. A. Carile, *Per una storia dell'impero latino di Costantinopoli (1204–1261)*, Il mondo medievale: Sezione di storia bizantina e slava 2, 2nd ed. (Bologna, 1978), 209. P. Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean 1204–1500* (London, 1995), 146. There is no mention at all of the principality of Adrianople in D. Jacoby, “The Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Frankish States in Greece,” *NCMH* 5:525–42.

2 B. Hendrickx, “Some Notes on the ‘State’ of Theodoros Branas,” *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 12 (2001): 118. J. Hoffman, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten im byzantinischen Reich (1071–1210): Untersuchungen über Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und ihr Verhältnis zu Kaiser und Reich*, *Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia* 17 (Munich, 1974).

3 Longnon, *L'empire latin*. On the feudal nature of the (Latin) empire of Constantinople: F. Van Tricht, *The Latin Renovatio of Byzantium: The Empire of Constantinople (1204–1228)*, *The Medieval Mediterranean* 90 (Leiden, 2011), 57–58. Regarding the debate on the nature and place of feudalism in medieval Western society (in the wake of the fundamental challenge to traditional views in S. Reynolds, *Fiefs and Vassals: The Medieval Evidence Reinterpreted* [Oxford, 1994]), I agree with the opinion expressed in D. Barthélemy, “La théorie féodale à l'épreuve de l'anthropologie (note critique),” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52 (1997): 321–41.

4 Hendrickx, “Some Notes,” 124.

French king Louis VII (1137–1180) and former empress as wife of Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–1185).⁵ Again this statement ignores some of the available source material. Third, and more generally, Hendrickx with respect to the history of the principality concludes that “practically nothing is known about it as a ‘unit.’”⁶ To me this seems a bit too bleak an assessment, though admittedly the sources at our disposal are scant. Various elements of the history of the principality left untouched by the author, for example the ecclesiastical organization and the religious situation, may be discussed. In this contribution I propose to address these three aspects.

The Origins of the Feudal Principality of Adrianople

Adrianople first came into contact with the new Latin rulers in the spring of 1204. Shortly after his coronation (16 May), Emperor Baldwin undertook an expedition in Thrace and Macedonia in order to subject these regions to his authority. At this time the Byzantine lands had not yet been divided among those Latins—participants in the Fourth Crusade or immigrants from the Crusader states in Syria and Palestine—who were planning to settle in Romania. Both the rival emperors Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203/4), based in Mosynopolis, and Alexios V Mourtzouphlos (1204)—who managed to retake Tzouroulon, which in an unknown context had already recognized Baldwin’s rule—still controlled considerable lands in these provinces. Henry of Flanders/Hainaut, Baldwin’s younger brother, led an advance guard of some hundred knights who preceded the main army by several days. Traveling from town to town he met no resistance, the local population on the contrary being prepared to swear allegiance to the new emperor, while Mourtzouphlos chose to flee to Alexios III in Mosynopolis. In this way Henry arrived in Adrianople, where according to Villehardouin he received a warm welcome: *Et cil de la cité le reçurent mult volentiers et firent fealté l’empereor. Lors se herberja en la ville, il et sa gent; et enqui sejourna tant que l’empereres Baudoins vint.*⁷

5 Ibid., 126.

6 Ibid.

7 Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral, 2 vols., Les classiques de l’histoire de France au moyen âge

Baldwin’s brother’s conciliatory attitude toward the local elite and people, well attested in other sources with regard to various places and regions, was no doubt a factor in securing Adrianople’s initial acceptance of the new regime.⁸ Robert of Clari concurs with Villehardouin that Baldwin himself on his way to Adrianople was also well received and recognized as *saint empereres* in all the towns that he passed through.⁹ There seems to have been no general rejection on principle of a Latin on the imperial throne of Constantinople. Perhaps after his arrival in Adrianople the emperor confirmed a status quo with respect to the local administrative structures, just as he did later in Thessalonike as both Villehardouin and Niketas Choniates inform us.¹⁰ During his stay Baldwin

18–19, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1961), §§266–69. Henry was not unfamiliar with the region: he had accompanied Emperor Alexios IV Angelos (1203–1204) on his campaign in Thrace in the summer of 1203 (*ibid.*, §201).

8 On Henry’s conciliatory attitude toward the local elites and populations, see for example also Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §310, §§321–23; Henri de Valenciennes, *Histoire de l’empereur Henri de Constantinople*, ed. J. Longnon, Documents relatifs à l’histoire des croisades 2 (Paris, 1948), §663, §671, §683; Georgios Akropolites, *Historia*, ed. A. Heisenberg, Georgii Acropolitae Opera 1 (Leipzig, 1903), §16.

9 Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. P. Lauer, Les classiques de l’histoire de France au moyen âge 40 (Paris, 1924), §99. Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §272.

10 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §280. Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed. J.-L. Van Dieten, 2 vols., CFHB Series Berolinensis 11 (Berlin, 1975), 2:599. Another passage in Villehardouin’s chronicle (§279) may perhaps be taken as an indication that such a confirmation was standard procedure: on his way from Adrianople to Mosynopolis Baldwin probably passed through Didymoteichon, which was to become part of the principality of Adrianople. With regard to this town the chronicler further on—in the context of the rift between the emperor and marquis Boniface of Montferrat concerning Thessalonike—mentions that when the marquis arrived there *cil li fu renduz per un Greu de la ville*, which seems to imply that Baldwin during his presumed stay there had not introduced any governmental changes and opted for complete administrative continuity. Choniates’ statement (*Historia*, 598) that the emperor stationed a garrison also in Didymoteichon seems open to doubt: the Byzantine chronicler maintains in the same passage that during the expedition troops were also stationed in Philippopolis by Baldwin, but it is clear from Villehardouin that the expedition did not move further north than Adrianople. Moreover Villehardouin says nothing about the presence of an imperial garrison in Didymoteichon when marquis Boniface took possession of the town. Possibly Villehardouin and Choniates thought it only worthwhile to mention the imperial confirmation explicitly with regard to Thessalonike because of its position as the empire’s second city.

then received a message that Alexios III had blinded Mourtzouphlos, and it was decided to move against Alexios's power base around Mosynopolis. Informed of this the local elite of Adrianople implored the emperor to station a military presence in their city, so that they would be better protected from the Bulgarian emperor Kalojan (1197–1207), *qui guerre lor faisoit sovent*. Baldwin granted the request and left behind the Flemish knight Eustace of Salebruic as commander of a garrison numbering forty knights and one hundred sergeants on horseback.¹¹ This need for protection from the Bulgarian threat no doubt was an important reason why the Adrianopolitans, and neighboring towns, opted for recognizing the new regime.

Adrianople and neighboring Didymoteichon, which was to become part of the principality of Adrianople, next became involved in the power struggle between Emperor Baldwin and Marquis Boniface of Montferrat concerning Thessalonike.¹² In this context Boniface managed to take possession of undefended Didymoteichon without a fight, after which he moved his army farther north to lay siege to Adrianople, defended by Baldwin's garrison. Meanwhile according to Choniates, Boniface managed to win over many Romaioi in the region, using his recent marriage to empress Margaret of Hungary, the widow of Isaac II Angelos (1185–1195 and 1203/4), and her underage sons Manuel and John Angelos, the former of whom he proclaimed emperor.¹³ It is noteworthy that the inhabitants of Adrianople did not deliver their city to Boniface, which they no doubt could have done notwithstanding the presence of Baldwin's troops.¹⁴ This may be interpreted in the sense that the Adrianopolitan

elite at this time was fairly content with the state of affairs, with Eustace of Salebruic presumably not intervening in the city's administration, and did not want to risk a possible deterioration under Boniface.¹⁵

After the conflict between Baldwin and Boniface had been settled, the distribution in September 1204 of the Byzantine territories among the Westerners brought new changes. In the preserved distribution agreement that was prepared in May–September 1204—the so-called *Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie*—Adrianople figured in the three-eighths of the empire awarded to Venice, while Didymoteichon was included in the three-eighths awarded to the non-Venetian *peregrini*.¹⁶ The latter town was then *in concreto* allocated to Count Hugh IV of Saint-Pol (1165–1205), one of the four major non-Venetian leaders of the Crusade.¹⁷ Both Doge Enrico Dandolo (1192–1205) and Count Hugh installed garrisons in their respective possessions, but they did not themselves take up residence there. Nothing much more is known about their rule or administration in both places.¹⁸ It seems however that the local elites and populations grew frustrated about how things developed—possibly in the direction of growing Latin interference and domination in local affairs—in the fall and winter of 1204–5.¹⁹

This appears to be borne out by the fact that Byzantine magnates who wanted to overthrow the new Latin regime with Bulgarian aid in both places

11 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §273.

12 On this conflict, see T. F. Madden, "The Latin Empire of Constantinople's Fractured Foundation: The Rift between Boniface of Montferrat and Baldwin of Flanders," in *The Fourth Crusade: Event, Aftermath, and Perceptions: Papers from the Sixth Conference of the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East, Istanbul, Turkey, 25–29 August 2004*, ed. T. F. Madden (Aldershot, 2008), 45–52.

13 Choniates, *Historia*, 599–600. B. Hendrickx, "Boniface de Montferrat et Manuel Angelos, empereur 'manqué' de Byzance (1204)," *Byzantinos Domos* 12 (2001): 71–75.

14 Ca. 1227/28 the Adrianopolitans delivered their city to Theodore Doukas, originally ruler of Epiros and by then emperor of Thessalonike (ca. 1215–1230), notwithstanding the presence in the city at that time of a Nicaean army sent by Emperor John III Vatatzes (1221–1254) (*Akropolites, Historia*, §24; see also below).

15 In the towns that had come under his command Boniface had already started collecting taxes, as Choniates tells us (*Choniates, Historia*, 599).

16 A. Carile, "Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie," *StVen* 7 (1965): 218, 220. On this document, see also: N. Oikonomides, "La décomposition de l'empire byzantin à la veille de 1204 et les origines de l'empire de Nicée: À propos de la 'Partitio Romaniae'," in *XV^e Congrès international d'études byzantines: Rapports et co-rapports*, vol. 1, *Histoire*, pt. 1, *Forces centrifuges et centripètes dans le monde byzantin entre 1071 et 1261* (Athens, 1976), and Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 47–53.

17 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §§334–37.

18 On the presence of a garrison consisting of Hugh's men in Didymoteichon: Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §335. On the presence of a Venetian garrison in Adrianople: *ibid.*, §336.

19 In this context it is important to note that before 1204 imperial administration had only "touched lightly on provincial society," as Leonora Neville has shown. L. Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950–1100* (Cambridge, 2004), 2: "The ordering of society was left to individual households and communities who competed for control with little concern for the intervention of imperial officials."

found fertile enough ground to start their revolt. Villehardouin states in general terms that after the distribution of the lands *comença chascuns a faire mal en sa terre, li uns plus et li autres mains, et li Grieu les comencierent a haïr et a porter malvais cuer*.²⁰ Didymoteichon and certainly Adrianople were probably among the places where more or greater wrongs were committed than in others. The Old French continuations of William of Tyre are more explicit: *Il [the Venetians] mesmenoient mout cels de la cité [Adrianople], et mout leur faisoient de honte and il [the people of Adrianople] avoient mis hors les garnisons des Venissiens qu'il [Emperor Baldwin] i avoit laissies, il l'avoient fait sour leur droit deffendant, car il les mesmenoient si à dolour de lor femes et de lor enfans qu'il ne le pooient plus souffrir*.²¹ The magnates mentioned had belonged to the entourage of Alexios III, but after his capture (fall 1204) by Boniface of Montferrat had offered their services to first the marquis and then Emperor Baldwin, who both had turned them down. This led them to seek an alliance with the Bulgarian emperor Kalojan and successfully stir up a revolt in the towns of Thrace.²²

The ultimate aims of both allies were probably contradictory from the outset: Jean-Claude Cheynet has hypothesized that the Byzantines wanted to create a Byzantine state in Thrace and Macedonia, with the conquest of Constantinople as a possible ultimate objective, while Günter Prinzing has convincingly argued that Kalojan's aim was the incorporation of Thrace in his Bulgarian Empire.²³ Following the death of Count Hugh around early March 1205 the Byzantine magnates,

with the help of the local elite and population, managed to overthrow the Latin garrison of Didymoteichon. Shortly afterward Adrianople joined the revolt and the Venetian garrison fled for Tzouroulon, which belonged to the imperial domain.²⁴ Emperor Baldwin, after having awaited reinforcements from the expeditionary troops at that time engaged in conquering northwestern Asia Minor, reacted with an initially successful counteroffensive in late March, reconquering several towns and laying siege to Adrianople, which as the most strategic city in the region had meanwhile become the main center of the revolt. According to the Old French continuations of William of Tyre at this point negotiations took place between Baldwin and the Byzantines from Adrianople. This indicates that no great love was lost between the Byzantines and their ally Kalojan, who in the years leading up to 1204—and following in the footsteps of his brothers and predecessors Peter (1185–1197) and Ivan Asen (1189–1196)—had successfully established Bulgarian independence from Constantinople, in the process repeatedly raiding Thrace and neighboring regions.²⁵

It remains unclear precisely who was prepared to negotiate with Baldwin: the local Adrianopolitan elite, Alexios III's former entourage, or both. The demands they formulated in any case served the interests of both groups. They were willing to recognize Baldwin as emperor and to render the city to him *s'il les* [probably signifying the community or elite of Adrianople as a whole; see also below] *voloit tenir à droit comme ses hommes*. At the same time they strongly opposed any return of the Venetians. In this way Adrianople would have become a feudal principality under direct imperial suzerainty, granting the local elite and Alexios III's entourage a much desired position of prime importance and complete autonomy in local affairs. This

20 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §303.

21 *Chronique d'Ernoult et de Bernard le trésorier*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), 378, 381. A quasi-identical version in the closely related *L'Estoire d'Eracles empereur et la conquete de la Terre d'Outremere*, RHC HOcc 2:279, 281. Of course emperor Baldwin never installed a Venetian garrison in Adrianople: the chronicler here confuses the imperial garrison installed by Baldwin in the spring of 1204 (when the Latins first took possession of the city) with its replacement, a Venetian garrison installed by Doge Dandolo later during the same year, after the city had been allocated to Venice.

22 Choniates, *Historia*, 612–13.

23 J.-C. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations à Byzance (963–1210)*, Byzantina Sorbonensia 9 (Paris, 1990), 470–71. G. Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens in den Jahren 1204–1219 im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung und Entwicklung der byzantinischen Teilstaaten nach der Einnahme Konstantinopels infolge des 4. Kreuzzuges*, Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 12 (Munich, 1972), 25–35, 57–59.

24 On the revolt having started in Didymoteichon and Adrianople, see Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §§335–39. On the instrumental role of Alexios III's former entourage: Choniates, *Historia*, 612–13. Extensively on this Byzantine-Bulgarian alliance in 1205–early 1206: T. Vlachos, "Kalojan plünder Thrakien und Makedonien," *Byzantina* 2 (1970): 271–83; Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens*, 1–63; G. Cankova-Petkova, "A propos des rapports bulgaro-francs au commencement du XIII^e siècle," *BHR* 4 (1976): 51–61; Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium* (n. 3 above), 388–89.

25 R. L. Wolff, "The 'Bulgarian Empire': Its Origin and History to 1204," *Speculum* 24 (1949): 188–89. P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier: A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204* (Cambridge, 2000), 288–310.

was of course a step down from the independent state they originally may have aspired to, but apparently it was an acceptable compromise in the given circumstances and in any case no setback compared with the situation before 1204, when Adrianople had been only part of a province administered by governors sent from Constantinople. The Adrianopolitan proposal fits within a broader trend in late twelfth-century Byzantine provincial society toward more regional autonomy, although these local ambitions were mostly expressed in defiance of imperial authority.²⁶ Emperor Baldwin was not unsympathetic to the Adrianopolitan request and asked Doge Dandolo to cede Adrianople in exchange for other territories elsewhere. The latter was however unwilling to accept this proposal, wanting to avenge *le honte qu'il avoient fait à lui et à ses homes*. Baldwin did not wish to let down his Venetian partner or risk a rift, and the offer from the Adrianopolitans was finally turned down.²⁷

The consequences of this decision to reject the Adrianopolitan proposal—combined with the earlier rejection of Kalojan's offer of peaceful relations shortly before and shortly after the conquest of Constantinople—are well known: shortly afterward (14 April 1205) Baldwin suffered a crushing defeat against Kalojan, which would cost him and many other Latins their lives.²⁸ In the months following, the Bulgarian ruler raided Thrace time and again, ravaging many towns that still were under Latin control and inflicting further defeats, among others at Rhousion in January 1206. As Villehardouin relates, the Byzantine insurgents in Adrianople and Didymoteichon meanwhile had started to seriously doubt their ally: the destruction of Thrace and its towns had of course not

been their intention.²⁹ For Choniates, Kalojan's devastation of Philippopolis (late 1205?) and the execution of part of its elite was a turning point. The Byzantine chronicler informs us that part of its Greek elite managed to escape to Adrianople and Didymoteichon, where they convinced the local insurgents to try and make peace with the Latins.³⁰

With this aim, during the spring of 1206, they contacted Theodore Branas in Constantinople, according to Villehardouin the one Byzantine magnate in the relevant area who at this time still sided with the Latins. Theodore was no stranger to the Adrianopolitans: he had been *doux* of the *thema* of Adrianople-Didymoteichon under Alexios III.³¹ For the Latins his marriage with Agnes, sister of the French king Philip II Augustus (1180–1223), no doubt inspired confidence in his loyalty. The said chronicler tells us that Branas was asked to implore Henry of Flanders/Hainaut, at that time still regent for his brother Baldwin, who had been captured by Kalojan at the battle of Adrianople, and the Venetians *que il li donassent Adrenople et le Dimot, et li Grieu se torneroient tuit a lui, et ensi porroient estre li Grieu et li Franc ensemble*. The issue was then much debated (*paroles i ot de maintes manieres*), but the outcome of the discussion was *que al Vernas [Branas] et a l'empereris sa feme, qui ere suer le roi Felippe de France, fu otroie Andrenople et li Dimos et o totes lor apertenances; et il en feroit le servise a l'empeoreur et a l'empire*.³² In essence this settlement was similar to the offer that had been proposed to Baldwin one year earlier, the difference being that the enfeoffed party now was a known quantity to the Latins, and not the more

26 Hoffmann, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten*, 77–140. Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations*, 427. M. Angold, "The Road to 1204: The Byzantine Background to the Fourth Crusade," *JMedHist* 25 (1999): 257–78.

27 Mas Latrie, *Chronique d'Ernoul*, 381. Again a quasi-identical version in *L'Estoire d'Eracles*, 281. That Villehardouin in his narrative completely omits any reference to these negotiations is not surprising. As a member of the imperial council he had been directly involved in these discussions and could be seen as partly to blame for the—in retrospect—tragically ill-advised decision that was taken (Villehardouin, *La conquête* [n. 7 above], §§349–56).

28 On Kalojan's offer of peaceful relations shortly before and shortly after the capture of Constantinople: Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 388–89.

29 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §422.

30 Choniates, *Historia* (n. 10 above), 627.

31 A. Kazhdan and S. Ronchey, *L'aristocrazia bizantina: Dal principio dell' XI alla fine del XII secolo*, Nuovo prisma 3 (Palermo, 1997), 304. Theodore belonged to a prominent Byzantine family that during the 11th and 12th centuries produced a number of generals and provincial governors, and was related to both the Komnenos and Angelos dynasties. His father Alexios was a general who around 1186–7 unsuccessfully revolted against Isaac II ("Branas," *ODB* 1:319–20; Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations*, 121–22). On the *thema* of Adrianople-Didymoteichon: P. Soustal, *TIB* 6:161–67, 240–44.

32 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §423. Translation: "that to Branas and to the empress his wife, who was the sister of King Philip of France, was granted Adrianople and Didymoteichon and all their dependencies; and he would do the service attached to these to the emperor and the empire."

abstract concept of the Adrianopolitan community or elite as a whole (see also below).

Striking is how the Venetian rights to Adrianople go virtually unmentioned in Villehardouin's account. It is however very probable that the Venetians, just as one year earlier, again voiced objections to the proposed arrangement (cf. the phrase *paroles i ot de maintes manieres*). But this time around these apparently were laid aside, no doubt because the situation had substantially changed. Doge Enrico Dandolo had died (June 1205) and his replacement, Podestà Marino Zeno, surely did not carry the same authority.³³ Also, the Venetian refusal in the spring of 1205 had been the cause, or so it certainly must have seemed to the non-Venetian barons, of the many misfortunes that had befallen the empire since then and which had made abundantly clear that the Thracian-Bulgarian alliance could not be broken by military force. From the fact that the Venetians now accepted a—still much debated—arrangement which they had refused only one year earlier, it is in my opinion clear that regent Henry and his entourage more or less forced the Venetians into agreeing to the compromise, a Byzantine principality under imperial suzerainty. Simultaneously—as is clear from the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* (below), although Villehardouin doesn't mention it—a feudal link between Venice and Adrianople was allowed to be established. This however was hardly any compensation or consolation, rather a pro forma way to meet the stipulations of the 1204 *Partitio* which had allotted the city to the Serenissima. In April 1205 Baldwin had offered territorial compensations to Venice for ceding Adrianople, but now the Serenissima had to be content with a second-rate feudal overlordship over the city.

From an imperial point of view, the feudal bond between Branäs and the Latin emperor with regard to the principality in its entirety—Adrianople, Didymoteichon, and their surrounding region—indeed was to take precedence, as is clear from the complete omission of the feudal tie with Venice in the quoted

passage from Villehardouin, who, it should be remembered, was imperial marshal and an influential baron at the court of both Baldwin and Henry.³⁴ In my opinion, the mentioned *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* that established a feudal relationship between Adrianople and Venice was for Podestà Marino Zeno essentially an attempt to save face, after the fundamental compromise with regent Henry had already been reached. According to the *Pactum* Adrianople and its surrounding area (*usque ad ipsum fluvium de Caurotomo*)³⁵ were granted to the *Adrianopolitani* and Branäs was appointed as *dominum et capitaneum secundum successionem* to rule the region according to *voluntatem suam secundum usum Grecorum*. In exchange Branäs and the Adrianopolitans were to help the Venetians in times of need with five hundred mounted soldiers, and yearly the sum of twenty-five hyperpera was to be paid to the Venetian doge. Branäs swore to observe these terms, as did Michael Kostomyres on behalf of the *nobiles habitatores terre*. In the future all succeeding *capitanei* and the *populus Adrianopolitanus* were to swear to Zeno and his councilors to uphold the agreement. The podestà likewise swore to observe the terms and to support them *contra omnes homines, inimicos nostros et suos*.³⁶

The arrangement, which can be—and Hendrickx does—labeled as feudal in nature, is somewhat remarkable in the sense that formally the enfeoffed party was the entire community of the Adrianopolitans, among whom Theodore Branäs and his heirs were to hold a special responsibility as hereditary *capitanei*.³⁷ The arrangement is in this aspect reminiscent of the original Adrianopolitan proposal to Emperor Baldwin in the spring of 1205. Both the 1206 *Pactum* and this original proposal may be interpreted as manifestations

33 On the function of the Venetian podestà in Constantinople, see R. L. Wolff, "A New Document from the Period of the Latin Empire of Constantinople: The Oath of the Venetian Podestà," *AIPHOS* 12 (1953): 539–73, and D. Jacoby, "The Venetian Government and Administration in Latin Constantinople, 1204–1261: A State within a State," in *Quarta crociata: Venezia, Bisanzio, Impero latino*, ed. G. Ortalli, G. Ravegnani, and P. Schreiner, 2 vols. (Venice, 2006), 1:19–79.

34 J. Longnon, *Recherches sur la vie de Geoffroy de Villehardouin* (Paris, 1939), 84–104. Idem, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade* (Geneva, 1978), 26–27.

35 The Caurotomo river has not been identified; see Soustal, *TIB* 6:227. Hendrickx transliterates as Kabrotomos in Hendrickx, "Some Notes" (n. 2 above), 122.

36 G. L. F. Tafel and G. M. Thomas, eds., *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig mit besonderer Beziehung auf Byzanz und die Levante*, 3 vols., *Fontes Rerum Austriacarum: Diplomataria et Acta 12–14* (Vienna, 1856–7), 2: no. 169, pp. 17–19.

37 Hendrickx, "Some Notes," 122–23.

of a contemporary trend in both Western Europe and Byzantium toward more urban autonomy. In the West urban elites obtained charters of liberties conferred to them by territorial princes, sometimes in the form of a feudal grant, and in Byzantium at least one city—Thessalonike—appears to have obtained certain privileges before 1204; from the thirteenth century onward Byzantine emperors granted more common chrysobulls (fiscal, judicial, and other privileges) to a number of towns and cities in the Greco-Balkan region.³⁸ However, it should be noted first that according to Villehardouin the 1206 imperial grant regarding Adrianople (and Didymoteichon) did not involve the Adrianopolitan elite or populace in any way, and second that it was no general policy of Venice to grant (feudal) charters to urban communities. On the contrary, all other feudal grants by Venice in the Latin Empire were made to individuals, for example Achaia to Geoffrey I of Villehardouin and Epiros to Michael I Doukas.³⁹ No matter from where inspiration was drawn, in my opinion the specific wording of the *Pactum* in essence must have stemmed from an Adrianopolitan concern to ensure that Venice could never again claim actual rule over the city, for example in the eventuality that Branás or one of his descendants would die without heir. The Old French continuations explicitly state in the context of the negotiations in the spring of 1205 that it was essential for the Adrianopolitans *que jamais tant com il vesquissent, Venissien n'aroient seignorie sour aus*.⁴⁰ In view of this and the other arguments mentioned, it is in my opinion, and in contrast to that of Hendrickx, clear that the *Pactum* cannot be seen as an illustration of any independent policy in Romania by Venice. The fact that no reference is made to the emperor must rather be seen as a symbolic retaliation, after having been forced

by the imperial regent to grudgingly accept Branás as effective ruler in what should have been one of its major assets in the empire.⁴¹

The Reality of the Principality's Relations with the Latin Emperors and Venice

Since the principality of Adrianople in 1206 was established as a feudal entity dependent, at least formally, on both the emperor and Venice, it seems useful—in the light of Hendrickx's suggestion concerning Venice's independent policy—to trace how the relationship of this entity with these two powers developed. First we shall take a look at its relations with the emperors and the imperial court, and next examine what can be said about its relations with Venice.

The 1206 compromise brought about a feudal relationship between the ruler of the new principality, Theodore Branás, and the Latin emperor. According to a feudal contract, which was confirmed with an oath of fealty by the vassal, both parties were expected to assist each other with *consilium* and *auxilium*, in particular in times of need. A vassal was also expected to offer his suzerain hospitality.⁴² It can be argued that these feudal obligations were actually observed by both parties. Shortly after the compromise, the people from Adrianople and Didymoteichon appealed to both regent Henry and Branás, still in Constantinople at the time, to come to their aid against Kalojan, who had laid siege to Didymoteichon after realizing that his Byzantine alliance was over. Villehardouin tells us that *cil de Costantinoble*—Henry and Branás included—*pristrent conseil del Dimot seccore*. Their decision was to mount a relief expedition, which turned out to be successful, with Kalojan abandoning the siege and

38 J. Pryor, "The Problem of Byzantium in the Mediterranean World of the High Middle Ages, c. 1050–c. 1400," in *Montjoie—Studies in Crusade History in Honour of H. E. Mayer*, ed. B. Kedar, J. Riley-Smith, and R. Hiestand (Aldershot, 1997), 199–212. E. Patlagean, "L'immunité des Thessaloniens," in *Eupsychia: Mélanges offerts à Hélène Ahrweiler* (Paris, 1998), 592–98, 600. *Les origines des libertés urbaines: Actes du XVI^e Congrès des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur*, ed. B. Guillemain (Rouen, 1990).

39 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 207, pp. 97–98, and no. 223–24, pp. 119–23.

40 Mas Latrie, *Chronique d'Ernouf*, §33, 381. *L'Estoire d'Eracles*, 2:281.

41 Emperor Henry of Flanders/Hainaut (1206–1216), with regard to other territories attributed to Venice in the 1204 *Partitio* (for example Négrepont/Euboia, Achaia, Epiros), also made feudal arrangements without paying much attention to the Serenissima's rights. All the doge afterward could do was to conclude separate feudal contracts with the lords and princes who had already obtained imperial recognition. Where possible this was also done without any reference to his imperial partner-competitor (Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 163–64, 218–19).

42 F. L. Ganshof, *Qu'est-ce que la Féodalité?*, 5th ed. (Paris, 1982), 132–33, 187–88. B. Hendrickx, "Le contrat féodal et le fief dans l'empire latin de Constantinople," *Byzantiaka* 20 (2000): 223–42, with some remarks in Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 55 (n. 45), 212 (n. 213).

retreating in the direction of Bulgaria. At the end of the campaign Branias was left behind with the local Byzantine troops and a garrison of forty Latin knights *que Henris, li bals de l'empire li lassa* to provide for the defense of the principality.⁴³

Following a renewed offensive around September 1206 from Kalojan, who this time succeeded in capturing an ill-defended Didymoteichon by force, Henry—who meanwhile had been crowned emperor—again responded to an appeal for aid from *cil d'Andrenople*. He pursued the Bulgarian ruler in order to liberate the large number of captives—some twenty thousand men, women, and children—and cattle the latter had taken when he had seized Didymoteichon. Byzantine troops from Adrianople took part in this imperial rescue operation, which was again crowned with success. At the conclusion of the campaign—which, after the freed people had been brought to safety, had continued with a raid into Bulgarian territory—in October, Emperor Henry again stationed a garrison in Adrianople, consisting of twenty knights under the command of Peter of Radinghem.⁴⁴

In the early spring of 1207 Kalojan launched a new invasion and laid siege to Adrianople, causing *li Grieu et li Latin ensemble* to send word to *l'empereor Henri* *que ensi les avoit Johanniss assis et que il les secorrust*. The emperor again responded favorably to the new appeal, but could react only after a truce had been concluded with his other opponent, Emperor Theodore I Laskaris of Nicaea (1205/8–1221).⁴⁵ By the time the imperial army reached Adrianople around the end of June, Kalojan had already abandoned the siege, his Cuman allies having departed for their homeland.⁴⁶ Henry again decided to raid Bulgarian territory, again with the participation of Byzantine troops from Adrianople, in order to replenish the stocks and supplies of the relieved city. He then enjoyed the hospitality of the Adrianopolitans for some two weeks and on his departure provided the city with a garrison of one hundred

knights under *protovestiaris* Cono of Béthune, one of the most influential figures at the imperial court.⁴⁷ From this increase both in the number of troops and in the status of their commander it might be deduced that the emperor wanted to organize the defense of the city and principality in a more effective manner.

This seems to have worked, in that the next raid in May 1208 by the new Bulgarian emperor Boril (1207–1218), his predecessor Kalojan having died at the siege of Thessalonike in October 1207, appears to have been much less damaging to the region. Imperial cleric Henry of Valenciennes in his chronicle admittedly states that *Commain estoient entré en sa [= Emperor Henry] tierre, et Blacois et molt malmenoient sa gent*, but no siege operations appear to have been undertaken, and as soon as the imperial army was assembled the Bulgarians retreated, having without doubt ravaged part of the countryside, but without posing any threat to the towns and fortresses.⁴⁸ Having arrived in Adrianople the emperor again enjoyed the city's hospitality while he awaited further reinforcements. Next he invaded Bulgarian territory, defeating Boril in the Battle of Philippopolis (31 July), in which *iii. batailles de purs Grifons* participated. Later in the campaign one of these battalions *de Grifons d'Andrenople* under the leadership of Eustace of Flanders/Hainaut, Henry's bastard brother, departed with Alexios Slavos—the emperor's newly won vassal—to his principality encompassing the Rhodopes region.⁴⁹

The next Bulgarian incursion mentioned in the sources that must have affected the region around Adrianople took place in 1212. Emperor Henry in a letter sent to *universi amici sui* in January 1213 relates how Boril had invaded Thrace in the spring of 1212 reaching as far south as the vicinity of Rhousion. And once more the Latin emperor, returning from a campaign in Epiros, gathered his forces and repelled the invader, who retreated to his homeland choosing not to give battle.⁵⁰ Then in 1213 the alliance concluded between

43 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §§426–41. Choniates, *Historia*, 628–34.

44 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §§442–49. On Peter of Radinghem, see Longnon, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin*, 177.

45 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §461, §472, §§487–90. Choniates, *Historia*, 635–637.

46 On the Cumans, see for example P. S. Nasturel, “Valaques, Coumans et Byzantins sous le règne de Manuel Comnène,” *Byzantina* 1 (1969): 167–86.

47 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §496. On Cono I of Béthune, see Longnon, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin*, 145–46.

48 Valenciennes, *Histoire de l'empereur Henri* (n. 8 above), §§504–5.

49 *Ibid.*, §§505, §543, §§549–50. Slavos shortly afterwards married Henry's (illegitimate) daughter and was granted the title of despotes (“Alexios Slavos,” *ODB* 3:1916).

50 G. Prinzing, “Der Brief Kaiser Heinrichs von Konstantinopel vom 13. Januar 1212: Ueberlieferungsgeschichte, Neuedition und Kommentar,” *Byzantion* 43 (1973): 413. On the date of the letter (1213 instead of 1212), see F. Van Tricht, “La politique étrangère de l'empire

Constantinople and Bulgaria must have brought the principality a period of prolonged peace, which it had not known since the start of the Bulgarian war of independence around 1185, until ca. 1227/28. After this date (1213) we do not have any direct information on how Adrianople's relationship with the emperors in Constantinople developed.

However, Henry in 1214 and 1215 undertook two successive expeditions to Serbia, and on both occasions, no doubt using the so-called Military Road, he must have passed through Adrianople, again enjoying the city's hospitality and possibly reinforcing his army with local Byzantine feudal levies.⁵¹ In early 1221 emperor-elect Robert of Courtenay (1221–1227), taking the overland route from his western homeland (the counties of Flanders and Namur) to Constantinople, passing through Germany, Hungary, and Bulgaria, also must have passed through Adrianople.⁵² There he was probably welcomed with a procession as his predecessors and uncles Baldwin and Henry had been.⁵³ Probably enjoying the city's hospitality for a few days, he also may have received the oath of fealty from Branas or his successor, and possibly the local elite and population also swore allegiance to their new emperor.

Apart from the fulfillment of these mutual feudal obligations, other links between the principality, or its ruler Theodore Branas, and the imperial court are also attested. In the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* from 1206 Branas is mentioned as *felicissimum cesarem*. This is without doubt the Latin rendition of one of the highest ranking Byzantine court titles, that of *kaisar*, second only to the titles of *despotes* and *sebastokrator*.⁵⁴ Since

Theodore is not mentioned with this title, or indeed any title, before 1204, it would seem that he obtained it from the Latin emperor.⁵⁵ At which moment remains unclear. Branas may have acquired it on the occasion of the enfeoffment with Adrianople and Didymoteichon.⁵⁶ But it is equally possible that the Byzantine magnate acquired it earlier, through his marriage with Agnes of France. Possibly Emperor Baldwin and his entourage in this way wanted to further increase the status of her husband—already (albeit rather distantly) related to the Komnenoi and Angeloi—who after all had become Philip II Augustus's brother-in-law, whether the wedding had taken place before the crusaders' arrival or only after the conquest.⁵⁷ It may thus partly have been a diplomatic gesture aimed at anticipating any dissatisfaction from the French king, Baldwin's suzerain for the county of Flanders. Another possibility is that regent Henry bestowed the title upon Branas after the Battle of Adrianople (14 April 1205), to reward the Byzantine magnate for his continued loyalty. He in any case received the town of Apros in fief from the regent around that time.⁵⁸

As *kaisar* and lord of Adrianople-Didymoteichon Branas did not remain isolated from the imperial court elite. Aubry de Trois-Fontaines informs us that a daughter from his relationship and marriage with Agnes of France espoused Narjot I of Toucy. Under the year 1205 he writes: *Livernas autem princeps ad hoc adductus est, ut sororem regis Francorum . . . legitimo conjungeret matrimonio; et filiam eius dederunt viro nobili Nargaldo de Torceio*. The latter is first attested in the empire in April 1217 as addressee—together with

de Constantinople, de 1210 à 1216: Sa position en Méditerranée orientale; Problèmes de chronologie et d'interprétation (1^e partie),” *Le Moyen Age* 107 (2001): 221–27.

51 On the peace with Bulgaria and the two Serbian campaigns, see F. Van Tricht, “La politique étrangère de l’empire de Constantinople, de 1210 à 1216: Sa position en Méditerranée orientale; Problèmes de chronologie et d’interprétation (2^e partie),” *Le Moyen Age* 107 (2001): 420–29. On the military road from Constantinople to Niš, see K. Belke, “Communications: Roads and Bridges,” *OHBS* 296.

52 Philippe Mouskes, *Chronique rimée*, ed. F. de Reiffenberg, Collection de Chroniques belges inédites (Brussels, 1938), 404. See also F. Van Tricht, “Robert of Courtenay (1221–1227): An ‘Idiot’ on the Throne of Constantinople?” *Speculum* 88 (2013): 1023–24.

53 Villehardouin, *La conquête* (n. 7 above), §272, §490.

54 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 169, p. 18. On the Byzantine court title of *kaisar*, see R. Guiland, *Recherches sur les institutions byzantines*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam, 1967), 2:25–43.

55 Choniates for example never mentions Branas with any court title (Choniates, *Historia* [n. 10 above], passim).

56 Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium* (n. 3 above), 176–77.

57 As a child Agnes had been betrothed to the imperial heir-apparent Alexios II Komnenos. She was sent to Constantinople in 1179 and from then on she lived in Byzantine court circles. After Alexios was murdered in 1182 she was married to the usurper Andronikos I Komnenos (d. 1185). According to Aubry of Trois-Fontaines, a Cistercian monk from Champagne writing in the second quarter of the 13th century, by 1193 she had become the mistress of the aforementioned Theodore Branas. De Clari tells us that at the time of the conquest in 1204 Theodore and Agnes were already married, while Aubry relates that they married only after the capture of Constantinople. See Clari, *La conquête* (n. 9 above), §53; Albericus Trium Fontium, *Chronica*, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, MGH SS 23:870, 885; Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §249, §403.

58 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §403.

regent Cono I of Béthune and imperial *buticularius* Milo I le Bréban among others, an indication of his already prominent status at that moment—of a papal letter announcing the advent in Constantinople of legate Giovanni Colonna, cardinal priest of St. Praxedis.⁵⁹ It is unclear whether at that time Narjot had been in the empire for several years or had only arrived very recently—the Toucy family being vassals of and related to the Courtenay family—in the context of the imperial election in 1216 of Yolande of Flanders/Hainaut and her husband Peter of Courtenay, count and countess of Auxerre, Nevers, Tonnère, and Namur.⁶⁰ It thus remains unknown at which precise time the marriage took place, but very roughly the termini of 1217 (arrival in the empire?) and sometime before 1227 (Latin loss of Adrianople) may be advanced.

Furthermore, we may deduce from Aubry's wording (*filiam eius dederunt*) that it was possibly not Branas who took the initiative to give his daughter in marriage to Toucy, but rather the powers that be at the imperial court, depending on when the marriage was concluded either Emperor Henry (1206–1216), regent Cono of Béthune (1216–1217, 1219), Empress Yolande (1217–1219), regent Colonna (1220), or even Emperor Robert of Courtenay (1221–1227).⁶¹ Perhaps Branas was already deceased at the time of the wedding or perhaps he only assented to a marriage engineered by others, his daughter possibly being raised at the Constantinopolitan court.⁶² In any case Narjot's

marriage to Branas's daughter shows that after 1208—when our more exhaustive narrative sources such as Villehardouin, Valenciennes, and Choniates break off—the latter remained well connected with Constantinopolitan court circles. Indeed, another element points in the same direction.

An entry in the martyrology of the abbey of Chocques in the county of Flanders calls one Baldwin of Béthune—probably a nephew of the already mentioned Cono I of Béthune—*rex Adronopoli*.⁶³ Since according to the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* Branas was to rule the city *secundum successionem* (above), and also the constitutional pact from March 1204 concluded by the Crusade leaders stipulated in general terms that fiefs in the empire were to be held *de herede in heredem, tam in masculum, quam in feminam*, and in the absence of any information concerning any conflict regarding Branas's succession, we may deduce that Baldwin must have been Branas's legitimate heir.⁶⁴ This appears to imply that at some point he must have married a daughter of Branas. Although this second daughter is nowhere else attested in the sources, such a marriage is not surprising in view of the Toucy marriage. Moreover Cono I of Béthune had, as has been seen, served as commander of an imperial garrison at Adrianople in 1207

From *Childhood to Chivalry: The Education of the English Kings and Aristocracy, 1066–1530* (London, 1984), 58–60.

63 The relevant fragment from the martyrology: A. Duchesne, *Histoire généalogique de la maison de Béthune: Preuves* (Paris, 1639), 76. Ernest Warlop assumed that Baldwin must have been a son—mentioned then in no other source—of Cono I, who in any case had another son—Cono II—who came to live in the empire. Cf. E. Warlop, *De Vlaamse adel voor 1300*, 2 vols. (Handzame, Belgium, 1968), 2.1:75; idem, *The Flemish Nobility before 1300*, 2 vols. (Kortrijk, Belgium, 1975–6), 2.1:667. However, and although I previously subscribed to Warlop's supposition (Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 244), it now seems to us more likely that our Baldwin is to be identified with the Baldwin of Béthune who is mentioned as witness in a 1204 charter from Eustace, viscount of Lens for the abbey of Chocques. This Baldwin (*Baldevinus filius Comitis de Albemarle*) was the son of Cono's brother Baldwin of Béthune, lord of Chocques and titular count of Aumale (Duchesne, *Histoire généalogique*, 53–54). The double link between Baldwin and Chocques (the 1204 charter and his mention in its martyrology, while Cono I by way of comparison is commemorated in that of Saint-Barthélemy of Béthune; *ibid.*, 76) strongly argues in favor of this hypothesis.

64 W. Prevenier, ed., *De oorkonden van de graven van Vlaanderen (1191–aanvang 1206)*, 3 vols., *Verzameling van de Akten der Belgische vorsten* 5 (Brussels, 1964–71), 2: no. 267, p. 558.

59 P. Pressutti, ed., *Regesta Honorii Papae III*, 2 vols. (Rome, 1888), 1: no. 526. On Narjot I of Toucy, regent of the empire in 1228–31 and 1238–40, see J. Longnon, "Les Toucy en Orient et en Italie au XIII^e siècle," *Bulletin de la Société des Sciences historiques et naturelles de l'Yonne* 96 (1957): 33–43.

60 On the imperial succession in 1216–17, see Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 274–76. On the feudal and family relationship between the Courtenay and Toucy families, see Longnon, "Les Toucy en Orient," 33–43 (the author was not familiar with the 1217 papal letter); A. Saunier-Seite, *Les Courtenay: Destin d'une illustre famille bourguignonne* (Paris, 1998), 213.

61 If Branas and his wife were the subject of the verb *dederunt*, one would expect *filiam eorum* (their daughter) instead of *filiam eius* (his daughter); from another passage it is clear that Narjot's wife was the daughter of both Branas and Agnes (Albericus Trium Fontium, *Chronica*, 947).

62 On the presence of young aristocratic women serving in the entourage of the Byzantine empress and of daughters of foreign rulers at the Byzantine court: J. Herrin, *Unrivalled Influence: Women and Empire in Byzantium* (Princeton, 2013), 87, 227. On aristocratic girls being raised away from home in Western Europe: N. Orme,

(see above). Both men may have gotten to know each other better in this context and we might trace the origins of the marriage alliance between their two lineages to this occasion. Cono, among a number of other Latin barons at the imperial court, appears to have been a supporter of Latin-Byzantine cooperation with an open attitude to Byzantine culture, as for example his use of Byzantine court titles (protovestiariorum and later sebastokrator) seems to suggest.⁶⁵

While evidence demonstrating a tangible link between Adrianople and the imperial court is thus relatively abundant in light of the unfavorable source situation, the same cannot be said with regard to the relationship with Venice after the conclusion of the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* in 1206. This normative document, stipulating how things were to be in the future, of course cannot be used on its own to ascertain whether its clauses were observed by the contracting parties. There is in fact little or no evidence that this was the case. After the 1206 arrangement with Branas the cited chroniclers Villehardouin, Valenciennes, and Choniates do not mention any link between Adrianople and Venice. A Venetian contingent participated in the rescue operation for Adrianople in the summer of 1206, but this was in the context of a larger imperial campaign and should be seen as the fulfillment of Venice's feudal obligations toward the emperor.⁶⁶ No Venetian troops appear to have been stationed to help with the defense of the city, Branas or his successor Baldwin never appear to have lent military assistance to Venice, and we hear nothing about any payments being made to Venice or oaths being sworn to the Serenissima's representatives.

Of course it may be argued that all of this could be a consequence of the rather meager source situation. Nevertheless it is striking that also thirteenth- and

fourteenth-century Venetian chroniclers mention next to nothing with regard to the lagoon city's rights concerning or involvement with Adrianople. Martin da Canal, writing in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, does not mention Adrianople at all, while he does treat many other aspects pertaining to Venice's interests in Romania.⁶⁷ The unpublished so-called Marco-chronicle from ca. 1292–1304 likewise does not give any information on Venetian involvement with Adrianople, while Romania in other respects figures prominently in this text.⁶⁸ We find a similar picture in both the continuation of the succinct *Chronicon Venetum* (until around 1240) and the *Historia Ducum Veneticorum* (until 1229).⁶⁹ The fourteenth-century doge and chronicler Andrea Dandolo (1343–1354) in his discussion of the Battle of Adrianople in April 1205 mentions that the city had been given to the Serenissima, but after that remains silent with regard to its fate.⁷⁰

The available documentary evidence also remains silent with regard to the Venetian interests concerning Adrianople. Podestà Jacopo Tiepolo in his letter from December 1219 to Doge Pietro Ziani gives a status quaestionis with regard to the Venetian possessions and rights in the broad area around Constantinople. Tiepolo asserts Venice's rights with regard to its citizens in the Thracian coastal town of Rhaidestos and mentions the Serenissima's claims concerning the duchy of Philippopolis and the Kingdom of Thessalonike, but says not a word about Adrianople.⁷¹ To my knowledge there is also not a single mention of Adrianople in Venetian trade documents with regard to Romania.⁷²

65 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden* (n. 36 above), 1: no. 160, p. 574; 2: no. 256, p. 214. For both Narjot I of Toucy and Baldwin of Béthune, marriage to one of Branas's daughters of course also brought with it the considerable prestige of marrying into the French royal family, since through their mother these ladies were granddaughters of king Louis VII (see n. 58 above).

66 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §436. Villehardouin does mention Venetian participation or interests on other occasions, see for example §417, §436, §466, §477. Valenciennes on the contrary does not mention Venice or the Venetians a single time in his chronicle. The chronicler, a cleric in the imperial entourage, wanted to glorify Emperor Henry, and the Venetian share in the empire clearly did not fit this program.

67 Martin da Canal, *Les Estoires de Venise: Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. A. Limentani, *Civiltà Veneziana: Fonti e Testi* 12 (Florence, 1973), 1: §§36–62, §§65–69, §§71–72, §§81–86, §95, §§116–17; 2: §§24–25, §§39–43, §106, §§150–51, §168, §171.

68 Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Cod. Marc. It., Cl. XI, no. 124 (6802), fols. 41r, 43r–44r, 45r–49r, 76r–79v, 81v.

69 *Chronicon Venetum quod vulgo dicunt Altinate*, ed. H. Simonsfeld, MGH SS 14:68–69. *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, ed. H. Simonsfeld, MGH SS 14:92–95.

70 Andreas Dandolo, *Chronica per extensum descripta*, ed. E. Pastorello, 2 vols., *RIS*, n.s. 12.1:280.

71 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 257, pp. 216–20.

72 Cf. R. Morozzo Della Rocca and A. Lombardo, *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, 2 vols., *Regesta Chartarum Italiae* 28–29 (Rome, 1940). L. Robbert, "Rialto Businessmen and Constantinople, 1204–1261," *DOP* 49 (1995): 43–58. D. Jacoby,

Finally, the 1229 pact between the Constantinopolitan barons and the emperor-elect, and former king of Jerusalem, John of Brienne (1231–1237), lists the *pertinentias de Dimot et Andrenoble* as a possible part of the lands to be assigned to Brienne's heirs, without any mention of the Venetian rights to Adrianople.⁷³ This element too points toward the complete absence of any real Venetian influence in Adrianople after 1206.

Local Autonomy: Rulership, Elite, and Ecclesiastical Organization

The principality of Adrianople-Didymoteichon was not an entirely new administrative entity. In fact it may be considered as the continuation in an autonomous form of the late twelfth-century thema of the same name.⁷⁴ The 1204 *Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie* denotes the territorial scope of its main cities as follows: *Civitas Adrianopoli cum omnibus que sub ipsa and Didimochium cum omnibus que sub ipsa*.⁷⁵ The 1206 *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* describes the (Venetian) land given to Branas as the *pertinenciam Adrianopoli cum omnibus suis pertinentiis usque ad ipsum fluvium de Caurotomo*.⁷⁶ The 1229 pact between the Constantinopolitan barons and emperor-elect John of Brienne describes the principality, as seen above, as the *pertinentias de Dimot et Andrenoble*.⁷⁷

Whether the principality was territorially identical to the former thema cannot be ascertained, since the exact borders of both entities remain unknown. It is unclear whether the term *pertinentia* in the 1206 and 1229 documents is to be understood as the Latin translation of the Greek *episkepsis*, a term which was used to

denote a fiscal subdivision of a thema, or as a more general term to denote an administrative circumscription.⁷⁸ If the pre-1204 thema of Adrianople-Didymoteichon numbered no more than two episkepseis (or pertinentias—Adrianople and Didymoteichon), the Latin-Byzantine principality may have been territorially almost identical to the former thema. However, the number of episkepseis of the pre-1204 thema remains unknown. Nevertheless, the wording in the 1229 document comes close to the wording in Alexios III's November 1198 chrysobull for Venice, where the thema in question is listed as the *provincia Adrianupleos et Didimotichi*.⁷⁹ The fact that the 1229 document uses the term *pertinentias* instead of *ducatatus*—the term normally used in Latin imperial documents to denote pre-1204 themata (derived from the Byzantine title for a provincial governor: *doux*)—may be explained by the fact that the principality had originally been established as the merger of two distinct Latin administrative entities.⁸⁰ In any case, Branas's principality must have included a large part of the pre-1204 province, since it included its two main cities.

Because there are no diplomatic or narrative sources informing us about his rule, we do not have any direct knowledge on how Theodore Branas presented himself to the local elite and population. From the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* it may be deduced that he made use of his high court title (*felicissimum cesarem*), and no doubt he also emphasized the fact that he was related to a former imperial lineage (*nobilissimum Comniano*).⁸¹ His successor Baldwin of Béthune

“Venetian Settlers in Latin Constantinople (1204–1261): Rich or Poor?” in *Ricchi e poveri nella società dell’Oriente greco-latino*, ed. C. Maltezou, Biblioteca dell’Istituto ellenico di Studi bizantini e postbizantini di Venezia 19 (Venice, 1998), 181–204.

73 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 273, p. 268. The Venetian rights in the empire are only mentioned further on in a general way in the context of the oath to be sworn by the emperor to uphold and defend the empire (*salvis iuribus et honoribus Venetorum*).

74 M. Sesan, “Les thèmes byzantins à l’époque des Comnènes et des Anges (1081–1204),” *RESEE* 16 (1978): 48.

75 Carile, “Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie” (n. 16 above), 218, 220.

76 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 169, p. 18; see also n. 36 above.

77 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 273, p. 268.

78 Cf. “Episkepsis,” *ODB* 1:717; Carile, “Partitio terrarum imperii Romanie,” 228–29.

79 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 1: no. 85, 269.

80 Other themata are known to having been continued under the Latin emperors, seemingly without territorial changes: for example the ducatus—or thema—of Philippopolis and that of Nikomedia (Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 273, p. 268), and that of Neokastron, which Baldwin I in 1204 granted to the Knights Hospitaller, who however never conquered the region (Prevenier, *De oorkonden van de graven van Vlaanderen*, 2: no. 285, 624; the editor wrongly identifies the ducatus *Neocastri* as Navarin in the Peloponnese; cf. O. Markl, *Ortsnamen Griechenlands in “fränkischer” Zeit* [Graz, 1966], 53).

81 Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 169, p. 18. In Paphlagonia another Komnenos—David, ruler of Paphlagonia—also sided with the Latins (Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium* [n. 3 above], 353–56). It seems unlikely that Theodore would have used the—in comparison with their kaiser title rather insignificant—Venetian

appears to have inherited his probable father-in-law's court title. The phrase *rex Adronopoli* in the Chocques martyrology in my opinion is to be interpreted as an imperfect Latin translation of the Byzantine kaiser title.⁸² It may be that the Flemish monk drawing up the martyrology was confused by the "imperial" nature of Baldwin's title, knowing full well that his subject had not been emperor. Wanting to avoid any further confusion he then must have decided to transpose the troublesome Byzantine title with an indeed very lofty, but clearly nonimperial title. The fact that Baldwin was thus probably known in the West as *cesar* of Adrianople, may indicate that he—most likely following in his predecessor's footsteps—used the same title vis-à-vis his subjects.⁸³ If my hypothesis about Baldwin being married to a daughter of Branas and Agnes of France is correct, the former no doubt also made good use of the fact that his wife was a Komnena.

As already mentioned, the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum* stipulated that the principality should be ruled *secundum usum Grecorum*. No doubt this clause was recorded at the request of Branas and the Adrianopolitan elite. We have not a single indication that Byzantine administrative, judicial, and fiscal practices might have been reformed or altered under Theodore Branas or his successor Baldwin of Béthune. Georgios Akropolites, the mid-thirteenth-century chronicler whose loyalties lay with the Byzantine Empire of Nicaea, does relate that after the disastrous Latin defeats at Poimananon and Serres (1224) against Emperor John III Vatatzes of Nicaea and Theodore Doukas of Epiros, the Adrianopolitans sent an embassy to the Nicaean emperor asking him to free them of

the Latins (see also below), but this in my view cannot be seen as implying any kind of misgovernment or infringement on the *usum Grecorum* on the part of Baldwin of Béthune. The chronicler's very general statement, not mentioning any specific cause of tensions or conflict for which the Adrianopolitans would have wanted to oust Latin rule, is to be read in the context of his constant efforts to portray the Nicaean rulers as the legitimate Byzantine emperors.⁸⁴

In the ecclesiastical sphere we also find continuity. Until his death in 1206 the Byzantine patriarch in exile John X Kamateros may have been the de facto ecclesiastical leader in the region, although Peter Wirth has established that he did not play any political role in the diplomatic interchanges between the Byzantine and Latin Churches after 1204.⁸⁵ Thereafter the Byzantine archbishop of Adrianople appears to have assumed a position as autonomous church leader, as is attested by a 1222 letter from John Apokaukos, metropolitan of Naupaktos in Epiros, written in response to a letter from Patriarch Manuel I Sarantenos (1216–1222) in Nicaea. The Byzantine patriarch had accused the Epirote bishops of performing uncanonical episcopal appointments. In his reply Apokaukos pointed out that the metropolitan of Adrianople had done likewise and had regulated the affairs of his church without reference to any higher authority.⁸⁶ This clearly shows that a Byzantine metropolitan remained in place after 1204. That Adrianople at the same time is listed as an archbishopric in the *Provincialia Romana*—lists of all the bishoprics belonging to the Church of Rome—from 1210 and 1228 may perhaps indicate that the local

capitaneus title mentioned in the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum*. Aubry of Trois-Fontaines calls Branas *princeps* (Albericus Trium Fontium, *Chronica*, 885).

82 That the principality was never elevated to a kingdom (cf. the *rex* title in the Chocques martyrology) is evident from the already cited 1229 pact between the Constantinopolitan barons and emperor-elect John of Brienne: Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden*, 2: no. 273, p. 268.

83 In this context it should be noted that Narjot I of Toucy, Branas's (other) son-in-law, in any case did bear the title of *cesar*; see for example the text of the truce from August–September 1228 concluded between then regent Narjot and Theodore Doukas, emperor of Thessalonike; see R. Cessi, ed., *Deliberazioni del Maggior Consiglio di Venezia*, 3 vols., Atti delle Assemblee Costituzionali Italiane dal Medio Evo al 1831: Serie terza; Parlamenti e Consigli Maggiori dei Comuni Italiani (Bologna, 1930–51), 1: no. 140, pp. 209–10.

84 Akropolites, *Historia* (n. 8 above), §24. On Akropolites as champion of the Nicaean cause, see George Akropolites, *The History: Translated with an Introduction and Commentary*, trans. R. Macrides, Oxford Studies in Byzantium (Oxford, 2007), 94–97.

85 P. Wirth, "Zur Frage eines politischen Engagements Patriarch Joannes X. Kamateros nach dem vierten Kreuzzug," *ByzF* 4 (1972): 239–52. J. Richard, "The Establishment of the Latin Church in the Empire of Constantinople (1204–27)," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 4 (1989): 48.

86 V. G. Vasiljevskij, "Epirotica saeculi XIII," *VizVrem* 3 (1896): no. 17, p. 274. See also K. Lambropoulos, *Ioannis Apocaukos: A Contribution to the Study of His Life and Work*, Historical Monographs 6 (Athens, 1988), no. 70, p. 216. D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford, 1957), 89. A. D. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epiros (1217–1233)*, Byzantina Keimena kai Meletai 7 (Thessalonike, 1973), 51.

metropolitan, possibly in the context of the 1206 compromise, pro forma had recognized the pope in Rome and the Latin patriarch in Constantinople.⁸⁷

However, that none of its pre-1204 suffragan bishoprics are mentioned and that Adrianople never figures in the yet numerous papal letters concerning Romania indicates that Latin influence in ecclesiastical affairs must have been limited to a merely formal token of obedience at the most. The metropolitan surely must have kept suffragan sees, although adjustments must have been made to the new political situation. Concerning for example Didymoteichon, before 1204 a suffragan see of Trajanopolis and unmentioned in the *Provincialia*, we may perhaps suppose that it was transferred to Adrianople after its incorporation in Branas's principality in 1206. Suffragan sees such as Sozopolis and Debeltos, towns that already before 1204 had become part of the Bulgarian Empire, were probably lost. Others nearby Adrianople—like Boukelon, Skopelos, and Probaton—no doubt simply continued to be suffragan sees.⁸⁸ The archbishop and his suffragans presumably continued to play an important role in local society, much as they had done before 1204 and as they had continued to do in Latin Thessalonike, where Byzantine bishops formed a tribunal applying Byzantine law and presided over by the local Byzantine *doux*.⁸⁹

With regard to the secular local elite of the principality of Adrianople-Didymoteichon there is not much information available. Apart from Theodore Branas himself we know only one other Byzantine by

name: Michael Kostomyres, who in 1206 on behalf of the Adrianopolitan *nobiles* swore to uphold the *Pactum Adrianopolitanum*. Before 1204 the Kostomyres family had not been part of the local elite, but rather belonged to the civilian administrative elite of Constantinople.⁹⁰ Perhaps he had fled the capital in the context of the conquest in 1204 or perhaps he had arrived in the city as a member of Alexios III's former entourage.⁹¹ Whether members of prominent local families from before 1204—such as the Bryennioi, the Humbertopouloi, the Petraliphai, the Raoul, the Tarchaneiotai, and the Vatatzai, who all at the same time had been prominent in the government of the empire—remained established in the principality, cannot be ascertained.⁹²

90 Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations* (n. 23 above), 374.

91 On the—certainly only partial and in my view not to be exaggerated—exodus of the Byzantine Constantinopolitan elite after 1204: Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 24–39. See also T. Shawcross, “The Aftermath of the Fourth Crusade: The Lost Generation (c. 1204–c. 1222); Political Allegiance and Local Interests under the Impact of the 4th Crusade,” in *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. J. Herrin and G. Saint-Guillain (Farnham, 2011), 9–45.

92 This list of families is taken from Cheynet, *Pouvoir et Contestations*, 232–33, 241. The Bryennioi, Humbertopouloi, and Raoul seem not to be attested in Nicaea or Epiros in the years 1204–27/28. At the end of the 13th century and in the early 14th century we again find Humbertopouloi in the reunited empire, in Thrace no less; see D. M. Nicol, “Symbiosis and Integration: Some Greco-Latin Families in Byzantium in the 11th to 13th centuries,” *ByzF* 7 (1979): 118–19. Ca. 1242 a certain Alexios Raoul was protovestiarios under John III Vatatzes in Nicaea: Akropolites, *Historia*, §40; see also H. Ahrweiler, *L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations turques (1081–1317) particulièrement au XIII^e siècle*, Travaux et mémoires du centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantines 1 (Paris, 1965), 175–77. Bryennioi are again attested in the Byzantine imperial administration only in the early 14th century (“Bryennios,” *ODB* 1:328–29). A branch of the Petraliphas family had established itself in Thessaly already before 1204 and is next attested under Latin rule, and later also in the entourage of the Doukai from Epiros. Another branch had established itself in the empire of Nicaea by 1237. Possibly yet another branch remained present in Adrianople in the 1st quarter of the 13th century (cf. *MM* 4:345–49; Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros*, 215–16; D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai: A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, University of London Historical Studies 22 [London, 1968], 165–66). A Tarchaneiotas was ca. 1225 involved in the conspiracy against the Nicaean emperor John III Vatatzes (Akropolites, *Historia*, §23; Ahrweiler, *L'histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne*, 177). With John III Vatatzes, who married a daughter of Theodore I Laskaris after 1204, the Vatatzai—who before the conquest also had links with the Thrakesion thema in Asia Minor—are of course attested in Nicaea; see J. Langdon, *John III Ducas Vatatzes'*

87 R. L. Wolff, “The Organization of the Latin Patriarchate of Constantinople 1204–1261: Social and Administrative Consequences of the Latin Conquest,” *Traditio* 6 (1948): 53. See also J. Richard, “Evêchés titulaires et missionnaires dans le Provinciale romanae ecclesiae,” *MélRome* 61 (1949): 227–30.

88 On the ecclesiastical organization before 1204, see J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae Episcopatum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Texte critique, introduction et notes*, Géographie Ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin 1 (Paris, 1981), 364.

89 On the role of bishops in Byzantine provincial society: B. Moulet, *Evêques, pouvoir et société à Byzance (VIII^e–XI^e siècle): Territoires, communautés et individus dans la société provinciale byzantine*, Byzantina Sorbonensia (Paris, 2011). On the Byzantine tribunal in Latin Thessalonike: Demetrios Chomatenos, *Ponemata Diaphora*, ed. G. Prinzing, Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae, Series Berolinensis 38 (Berlin, 2002), no. 106; see also D. Simon, “Witwe Sachlikina gegen Witwe Horaia,” in *Fontes Minores* 6, ed. D. Simon, Forschungen zur Byzantinischen Rechtsgeschichte 11 (Frankfurt am Main, 1984), 329–35.

Fleeing members of the elite of Philippopolis may also have established themselves permanently in Adrianople and the surrounding area after Kalojan's destructive siege in 1205.⁹³

This elite, to be imagined as a group of influential *oikoi* or households to use a terminology proposed by Leonora Neville, no doubt was very actively involved in the government of the feudal principality.⁹⁴ Both the 1205–6 alliance with Kalojan against Latin rule and the successive splits from the Empires of Constantinople and Nicaea around 1227/28 (see below) picture the local elite as a self-conscious sociopolitical force to be reckoned with. They must have held prominent positions in the local administration and justice system. Perhaps Branás and his successor Baldwin of Béthune—who as the heads of the princely household up to a point must have taken over the role previously played by the imperial *oikos*—also tried to preserve their loyalty by extending the elite's probably already substantial estates through the granting of Byzantine-style *pronoiai* or Western-style fiefdoms.⁹⁵ Of course the installation of the Branai as the hereditary princely *oikos* must have somewhat upset the existing balance of power between the different aristocratic *oikoi* because one household was elevated above the others, which may have inspired envy. But this was a double-edged sword: a local hereditary ruler genuinely concerned about the region and its

elite's welfare obviously also offered advantages and was perhaps to be preferred to an indifferent and temporary imperial governor.⁹⁶

Branás's succession by Baldwin may have made the Latin element in the principality's administration more prominent, although in this context it should be remembered that with Branás's wife Agnes of France—even though she had lived in Byzantium since her childhood—there was a Latin presence at the highest echelon from the beginning.⁹⁷ Villehardouin records explicitly that in 1206 the principality was granted in fief to both Branás and his wife, which opened possibilities for the latter—a former empress also—and her personal (partly Latin?) entourage to play an active political role.⁹⁸ In addition, the commanders and knights of the imperial garrison stationed in Adrianople—it remains unclear whether this was a temporary or more permanent situation, in particular after 1208—can also be considered to have formed a component of the local elite.

Byzantine Empire in Anatolian Exile, 1222–54: The Legacy of His Diplomatic, Military and Internal Program for the "Restitutio Orbis" (Ann Arbor, 1980), 21; V. Puech, "The Aristocracy and the Empire of Nicaea," in *Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean after 1204*, ed. Herrin and Saint-Guillain, 71–72. The attestation of a family member in one political entity of course does not detract from the possibility that other members may have been established in another political entity.

93 Choniates, *Historia* (n. 10 above), 627.

94 Neville, *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society* (n. 19 above), 66–98. On regional and local government and authority in Byzantium at the turn of the 13th century, see J. Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesos, 1180–1205," *DOP* 29 (1975): 252–84. See also n. 19 above.

95 *Pronoiai* are already attested in Thrace under the Komnenoi and Angeloi; see D. Angelov, "Die bulgarische Länder und das bulgarische Volk in den Grenzen des byzantinischen Reiches im XI.–XII. Jahrhundert (1018–1185)," in *Thirteenth International Congress of Byzantine Studies (Oxford 1966)* (London, 1967), 151–66; also M. C. Bartusis, *Land and Privilege in Byzantium: The Institution of Pronoia* (Cambridge, 2012), 36, 504, 509. On Byzantines possibly holding fiefs in Latin Asia Minor in this period, see Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 111.

96 On the indifference of provincial governors at the end of the 12th century, see Herrin, "Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government," 252–84.

97 It is not clear when Baldwin succeeded Branás. As has been seen, the latter may have been deceased by the time of his daughter's marriage to Narjot I of Toucy, but unfortunately the date of this wedding is also unknown (see above and references in nn. 57–59). In any case it seems certain that the principality of Adrianople and Didymoteichon was not divided between Baldwin and Narjot after Branás's death. This can be deduced from the 1229 pact between the Constantinopolitan barons, headed by regent Narjot, and emperor-elect John of Brienne. In this document both the *ducatus de Finepople* and the *pertinentias de Dimot et d'Andrenoble* are listed as possible parts of the lands to be assigned to Brienne's heirs. With regard to Philippopolis the rights of the current titular lord, *baro imperii* Gerard of Estreux, are explicitly mentioned. With regard to Didymoteichon and Adrianople there is no mention of any current rights, indicating that Narjot had never obtained either of these two cities (and that by this time Baldwin was probably deceased); see Tafel and Thomas, *Urkunden* [n. 36 above], 2: no. 273, 268–69). On Agnes of France, see n. 58 above. Hendrickx gives no source reference corroborating his statement that "Agnes of France died by the end of 1220, several years after the death of her husband, Theodoros Branás himself" (Hendrickx, "Some Notes" [n. 2 above], 126).

98 Villehardouin, *La conquête*, §423. According to Robert of Clari, Agnes when she first met the crusading leaders in the summer of 1203 kept her distance. Her cousin, count Louis of Blois (1191–1205), nevertheless frequented her afterward, indicating that Agnes's relations with the Latin barons soon became closer (Clari, *La conquête* [n. 9 above], §53).

The End of the Feudal Principality of Adrianople

Before we consider the context in which the principality of Adrianople was lost for the Empire of Constantinople, we must ask ourselves precisely when this parting of ways took place. Until recently most historians, myself included, on the basis of a passage in George Akropolites' chronicle accepted that this event must be dated to 1225.⁹⁹ The thirteenth-century chronicler however gives no date for the embassy the Adrianopolitans sent to John III Vatatzes offering him control over their city and the surrounding region. He states only that this occurred before the Nicaean emperor concluded a peace treaty with the Latins of Constantinople.¹⁰⁰ This treaty traditionally has been situated in 1225—the Latin defeat at Poimanenon having taken place in 1224—although Akropolites again cites no date. In a recent article I have however questioned this date. I have argued that after Poimanenon, Emperor Robert intensively looked for ways to continue the fight and was not prepared to make peace with Nicaea. This may explain why the said chronicler does not mention the Latin emperor personally in the context of the conclusion of the peace treaty. Consequently in my opinion this treaty must have been concluded after Robert had left for Rome (early 1227) or after his death (November 1227).¹⁰¹ Probably it was reached sometime during 1228 when with certainty a truce with Theodore Doukas, emperor of Thessalonike, was entered into (ca. August–September 1228)—significantly not by any emperor, but by regent Narjot I of Toucy—the text of which makes clear that at that time Adrianople was no longer a part of the Empire of Constantinople.¹⁰²

99 See for example: Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople* (n. 1 above), 161–62; Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 215.

100 Akropolites, *Historia*, §24.

101 Akropolites states that the truce was concluded with the Italoï (not mentioning any emperor), which seems to indicate that Robert was deceased—or at least absent—at the time. In comparison, the peace between Theodore Laskaris and Henry of Flanders/Hainaut in 1213 is explicitly reported as being concluded between both emperors (Akropolites, *Historia*, §16 and 24).

102 See my recent article: Van Tricht, “Robert of Courtenay” (n. 52 above), 1028. For the truce with Doukas, see Cessi, *Deliberazioni del Maggior Consiglio*, 1: no. 140, pp. 209–10; the Thracian towns of Vrysis, Vizya, and Gehenna are cited as still being in Latin hands, but Adrianople and Didymoteichon go unmentioned.

If my hypothesis is correct, then the Adrianopolitan embassy would have taken place somewhere before or during 1227/28. With another element taken into account, this chronological window can yet be narrowed down somewhat more. Akropolites' report on the takeover of the city by Nicaean troops and its subsequent seizure by Theodore Doukas in my view indicates that Vatatzes' general, *protostrator* John Ises, held the city for only a limited period of time, a few months or so, before he was forced to retreat and leave Adrianople to the Thessalonican emperor. Doukas's takeover of the city has been dated, convincingly in my opinion, by François Bredenkamp to sometime after his imperial coronation ca. April–August 1227.¹⁰³ Doukas's takeover at the same time predates his truce with the Latins, as Akropolites relates that after Adrianople had come into his hands the Thessalonican emperor continued his offensive against Constantinople. All these elements taken together indicate that the Adrianopolitan embassy to Vatatzes should be dated at the earliest to the beginning of 1227 and at the latest to early 1228. This adjusted chronological framework is important to understand why the Adrianopolitans appealed to the Nicaean emperor.

As has been seen, Akropolites depicts the Adrianopolitan embassy as a request to be liberated from the Italoï, a term used by the chronicler to denote Westerners in general. This has in my view more to do with the specifics of Nicaean imperial ideology than with historical reality.¹⁰⁴ What was the situation for the Adrianopolitans and the surrounding principality in 1227/28? Until then they had enjoyed a reasonably long two decades of relative peace and apparently undisturbed regional autonomy. After 1206 we hear of no Latin-Byzantine conflicts in the region whatsoever. Akropolites himself also remains silent with regard to any concrete Latin-Byzantine tensions. This suggests that local ruler Baldwin of Béthune, as has been seen probably married to a Branaina/Komnena, or the feudal tie with the Latin emperor were not perceived as problematic. Latin-Byzantine antagonism then seems not to have been at the heart of the Adrianopolitan decision to break with Constantinople.¹⁰⁵ What probably was,

103 F. Bredenkamp, *The Byzantine Empire of Thessalonike, 1224–1242* (Thessalonike, 1996), 109, 126.

104 See n. 84 above.

105 Nevertheless it should be noted that from 1217 onward the imperial court in Constantinople became the scene of political strife

is that the Adrianopolitans' comfortable situation of peace and stability had become threatened by 1227/28.

Theodore Doukas had by then successfully conquered virtually all of the Kingdom of Thessalonike and was now unstoppable marching east, capturing Mosynopolis and other towns. To the Adrianopolitans it must have seemed but a matter of time before their city and region would be conquered also. The Constantinopolitan imperial armies had been defeated severely at Poimanenon in 1224 by John III Vatatzes and at Serres by Doukas in the same year. The remaining Constantinopolitan troops were not able to successfully sustain an all-out two-front war.¹⁰⁶ In addition, local lord Baldwin of Béthune was probably dead by 1227/28, most likely fallen in battle, without leaving behind an (adult) heir.¹⁰⁷ This left the Adrianopolitans in a precarious position. Conquest by Doukas must have seemed undesirable, since the emperor of Thessalonike was at war not only with the Latins but also with the Bulgarian emperor.¹⁰⁸ In spite of the fact that Doukas was winning now, in a later phase Ivan II Asen (1218–1241) might take the offensive and then Adrianople and Thrace would no doubt suffer the devastating consequences. This was no enticing prospect.

It is in my opinion in this context that the Adrianopolitans turned to the Nicaean emperor, who had no quarrel with Bulgaria and who was now the prime power in Byzantine Asia Minor, and thus a credible potential protector. The Adrianopolitans may also have had more affinity with the ruling establishment of Nicaea than with that of Epiros/Thessalonike. The Vatatzai themselves for example were a family with Adrianopolitan origins, and members of the Branas

family had also established themselves in Nicaea.¹⁰⁹ Important to note here is that the Adrianopolitans' choice for Nicaea was in my opinion not guided by, and cannot serve as an illustration of, any form of supposed Byzantine or Greek (proto-)nationalism or patriotism, or indeed by any other ideological considerations. The central motive was a pragmatic concern about the region's stability in the immediate future, a crucial element for the local *oikoi* to preserve their estates and privileged socioeconomic status.¹¹⁰



The principality of Adrianople had functioned well as a feudal entity within the Empire of Constantinople for over two decades, meeting the two chief aspirations of the local elite: autonomy and security. A Latin on the throne of Constantinople as *basileus ton Romaion* apparently was not considered to be a fundamental problem. From the Latin emperor's point of view the Adrianopolitan recognition of his emperorship substantiated his claim to be the legitimate Byzantine emperor vis-à-vis other claimants, first and foremost the emperors of Nicaea. Adrianople was not alone in this respect: other regions likewise ruled by Byzantine magnates also for some time recognized Latin imperial authority, among them Epiros (1209–1217), Paphlagonia (1206–1214/21?), and the Rhodope region (1208–1220/24?).¹¹¹ Major geopolitical changes in the Byzantine space in the years 1224–1227/28 made it so that the Latin emperor could no longer fulfill his role as suzerain and the terms of the feudal contract, *in concreto* offering protection against external threats. In this context it was not surprising that the Adrianopolitans started to look for an alternative overlord. It is telling that in the years 1227/28–1246 the city and surrounding region would change hands four times (Constantinople–Nicaea

between a faction advocating the Latin-Byzantine equilibrium that had come about in the empire of Constantinople and a Latin faction that questioned this balance of power (Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium* [n. 3 above], 296–304). This evolution may have been a cause of concern for the Byzantine elite of Adrianople, but they appear not to have been directly affected by it.

106 Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople*, 161–64. Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 368–70, 384–86.

107 Neither Baldwin nor any heir of his are mentioned in the April 1229 pact between the Constantinopolitan barons and emperor-elect John of Brienne (see n. 97 above). It is perhaps not impossible that underage children of Baldwin were raised by their mother, Branas's daughter, in Adrianople after 1227/28. A Theodore Branas is attested in the city around 1329/30 (*PLP* 2:3170).

108 Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros* (n. 86 above), 59–60. Bredenkamp, *Byzantine Empire of Thessalonike*, 82–84.

109 For the Branai, see V. Laurent, *Les Regestes des Actes du Patriarchat de Constantinople*, vol. 1, *Les Actes des Patriarches*, pt. 4, *Les Regestes de 1208 à 1309*, Publications de l'institut français d'études byzantines (Paris, 1971), no. 1217; Ahrweiler, *L'histoire et la géographie*, 168–69. For the Vatatzai, see n. 92 above.

110 The coming into being of a Greek/Byzantine (proto-)nationalism in the 13th century is in my view a rather problematic notion. Cf. T. Sansaridou-Hendrickx, "The Awakening of Greek National Consciousness in the 13th Century," *Anno Domini* 2 (2005): 80–180.

111 Van Tricht, *Latin Renovatio of Byzantium*, 239–48.

[1227/28], Nicaea–Epiros/Thessalonike [1227/30], Epiros/Thessalonike–Bulgaria [1230], Bulgaria–Nicaea [1246]) without a single blow. Each time the Adrianopolitans simply surrendered their city to the prevailing power of the moment, no doubt on the condition that their local autonomy would be respected and that security would be provided for. Any other considerations must have been deemed to be of only secondary importance. For the Latin emperor the loss of Adrianople-Didymoteichon was another serious blow, as it was the last (Latin-) Byzantine principality

that still recognized his imperial authority: his claim to be the legitimate *basileus ton Romaion* could now no longer be expected to carry much weight in the post-1204 geopolitical Byzantine arena.

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