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April 13th, 2011

“For the Honor of God and of the Holy Roman Church:”
Understanding Venetian Motivations and Involvement during the Fourth Crusade

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Abstract

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Venetian participation in the Fourth Crusade has often been misconstrued by modern historians as self-serving and materialistic, a gross corruption and subversion of the crusader ideal in service to the advancement of a secular state. It has been argued that the diversion of the Fourth Crusade from Egypt to Zara and then to Constantinople was a deliberate attempt by the Venetians to nefariously employ a holy army for selfish political and economic advancement. Such a notion fails to appreciate not only the very meaningful contributions of the Venetians during the whole crusading movement but also the fundamental concept of the crusade itself. This thesis will attempt to understand the often controversial actions of the Venetians during the Fourth Crusade through an analysis of the history of the crusading movement, with special emphasis on Byzantine relations, the historical interactions between Venice and Byzantium, and the particular contributions of the Venetians during the Fourth Crusade itself and perceptions of the Venetians by their fellow crusaders, the papacy, and the Greeks. The nature of the Venetian crusading spirit and her relationship with the pope will be instrumental in understanding this final point. Through a close analysis of the often polemical secondary resources and a nuanced reading of the extant primary texts, it will be possible to paint a more realistic picture of Venetian motivations and involvement during the Fourth Crusade. The author hopes to illustrate that, contrary to the opinions of many, the Venetians, as their leader, Enrico Dandolo, stated, fought always “for the honor of God and of the Holy Roman Church.”

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The author would like to dedicate this work to the memory of Marion Leathers Kuntz, his late grandmother, whose love of Venice now truly runs in his veins and remains a true testament to her intelligence and drive. The author also wishes to dedicate this, his first major work, to his parents, Charles and Linda Daniels, and his grandfathers, Eb Daniels III and Joseph Paquette, who have provided the foundations for all that he has achieved.

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Finally, the author must also acknowledge the late Donald Queller and Thomas Madden for their incredibly important contributions to the study of the Fourth Crusade and the involvement of the Venetians. The author also reserves a special thank-you for Thomas Madden, who has provided the author with exceptional advice and has become a major influence on his own work in Venetian medieval history.

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Part I: Introduction

On April 13th, 1204, an army of French and Venetians crusaders stormed an Eastern city and seized, in the name of God, the wealth and relics of their hated enemies. These enemies, however, were fellow Christians, and the city was Constantinople.

This thesis will attempt to unravel how it came to be that men who claimed to fight in the name of the cross had come to attack one of the most important cities in all of Christendom. It shall focus particularly on the motivations and actions of the Venetians, a people whose involvement in this crusade and the crusading movement in general has often been misunderstood. Beyond the realm of crusading, this thesis will also evaluate how the Byzantine East interacted with the Latin West, especially through the intermediary state of Venice. The Republic of St. Mark is one of the best cities to serve this function in that it was originally a protectorate of the Byzantine Empire. Through the centuries, however, she evolved into a mighty power in her own right. This shifting relationship had major implications on the events of April 13th. The author hopes that through the examination of Venice's role in this endeavor it will be possible to learn more, not just about the Fourth Crusade, but the very function of the Republic of St. Mark in medieval history. These conclusions, however, shall require extensive consideration.

There is little doubt as to the chain of events which precipitated the sacking of Constantinople by Latin crusaders in 1204. French commoners and nobles, incensed by crusading zeal, had intended to journey to Syria to assist in the reconquest of Jerusalem. Seeking transport, they decided to charter a Venetian fleet. Herein the narrative becomes more tangled. Unable to pay for the services of the Venetian navy, the French crusaders found themselves embroiled in the politics of the Mediterranean. Driven to accept an alliance with Prince Alexios, exiled heir to the Byzantine throne, the crusaders agreed to retake Constantinople for this errant royal. Shortly after departing from Europe, the crusaders found themselves attacking, not Saracen-held Jerusalem, but Christian Constantinople. The subsequent assault and sack on the city proved to be one of the most lucrative, and terrible, in medieval history.

The majority of modern historians have described the pillaging of Constantinople as the nadir of the already repugnant crusading movement: Western warlords, goaded on by avaricious Venetian

merchants, assaulted the crown jewel of the Byzantine Empire in an orgy of rage and rapine. The treatment of the Venetians has been particularly strident: John Julius Norwich, whose *History of Venice* has become the primary Anglophonic chronicle of Venice, condemns the Venetians, and Dandolo especially, for their efforts to divert the Fourth Crusade from its stated goal to Constantinople as a means to supplant the Byzantines as a Mediterranean mercantile power.

The modern popularity of this theory, however, belies the extant primary resources on this topic. As will be seen, a close examination of the sources paints a very different picture of Venetian involvement in the Fourth Crusade. While Byzantine sources are understandably vitriolic, their attacks are aimed more at the Latins in general and not especially the Venetians. The Western sources are almost all positive regarding the Venetians, often celebrating their martial skill and devotion to crusade. Although this approach has been begun by Donald Queller and Thomas Madden, there is still a great deal of research to be done.

The author would argue that while the Venetians did not entirely conform to crusading models typified by idealized figures like Godfrey of Bouillon or King Richard the Lionheart, the assumption that their interests in the crusade were purely material is false and easily disproved through the existing primary resources. Such depictions of the Venetians do not appear in many of the primary resources, and where they are evident, the author believes that this is more the result of literary license or the perceptions of the writer than a representation of historical fact. As will be illustrated, the theory that the Venetians intended to subvert the crusade was itself the product of anti-Venetian and anti-Western sentiments generated during the highly polemical period just after the sack of Constantinople. That the theory has gained currency has been due to a fundamental misunderstanding of the political and cultural realities of the time and a failure to appreciate the historical context of the entire affair.

The Venetians, despite claims to the latter, were just as religiously motivated to enter into the crusades as their European peers. This is evident both in the actions of the Venetians and in accounts of their intentions by external sources. The Fourth Crusade, in particular, contains extensive representations of the Venetians in their crusading capacity, nearly all of which, from the crusader perspective, are

positive. While the Venetians did participate in self-enriching activities while on crusade, this thesis will demonstrate that such action is not antithetical to the crusading institution. Finally, as will be demonstrated, many of the ulterior motives ascribed to the Venetians will be shown to have been committed by others or inclusively linked to the Venetians. The author will attempt to illustrate that the nefarious desires attributed to the Venetians do not correspond to their actual needs or even their capabilities. The Venetians cannot be cast as the “villains” of the Fourth Crusade. Their actual role was far more complex.

To better understand the analytical context of the Venetians and the Fourth Crusade, this thesis will begin with a brief overview of the most important primary resources. This introduction will help to ground the research and provide background to the sources which will be employed in the thesis itself. In this same section, the author will briefly summarize the historiography of the topic, an especially pressing concern in this thesis, as the tenor of secondary research has greatly influenced the debate over Venetian motives and involvement in the Fourth Crusade. Only by first identifying the nature of existing scholarship may the reader hope to grasp the fundamental arguments of this thesis, which seeks to rectify, in the author’s view, a flawed understanding of the topic at hand.

To better illustrate the complexity of Venetian involvement in the Fourth Crusade, the author has provided two sizable summations of medieval history up to the Fourth Crusade. The first of these historical reviews concerns relations between the Byzantine Empire and the West as they pertain to crusading at large. This section will place special emphasis on Western perceptions of the Christians of the East, whose commitment to the crusading movement was often cast into doubt. This history of interaction is crucial when speaking of Western perceptions and actions during the Fourth Crusade.

Byzantine relations with the West at large, however, are not as important as Byzantine relations with Venice. These two states had long-standing ties going back centuries, and any effort to understand the events of 1204 must be contextualized through these existing relationships. Although under the protection of Byzantium during its nascent phase, the Venetian polity quickly developed into a strong and independent state possessing remarkable power and prestige in the Mediterranean. Venetian efforts to

assert itself as an independent entity, expressed through historical self-presentation and political action, were strongly at odds with Byzantine conceptions of the Venetians. This disjoint is fundamental to understanding how the Venetians are depicted, especially by the Greek sources. The development of the Venetian state also played a major role in how the Venetians and their leader, Doge Enrico Dandolo, interacted with their fellow crusaders and, most importantly, the pope himself. Only by understanding Venetian history may one be able to draw conclusions about the events of the Fourth Crusade.

Having identified the context of the debate over Venetian motivations and involvement in the Fourth Crusade, the thesis will consider the contributions of the author and pertinent existing scholarship in a thorough examination of the historical events of the Fourth Crusade. The author will deconstruct, through the primary resources, the events of the entire endeavor and attempt to illustrate that although the Venetian crusading experience did not necessarily conform to existing ideals, it did represent an act of genuine piety and devotion and was not a presumption solely to advance political and economic ambitions. Rather, the Venetian crusaders participated in the crusade with the full intention of fulfilling their vows. The diversions which beset the undertaking and eventually drew the crusaders to Constantinople cannot be laid at the feet of the doge or his people. The destruction of Constantinople was not the will of Venice.

Part II: The Historiography

The extreme drama and violence of the Fourth Crusade has made it a striking topic in the history of the crusades. From its beginning people were writing about the grand undertaking and have been doing so up to the modern day, with all the controversy one would expect to come with so monumental an event. While almost a dozen near-contemporary resources refer to the Fourth Crusade or its aftermath, only four constitute the traditional primary corpus and for this thesis these documents, along with one more major collection, will be examined in detail. Due to the nature of this thesis, special emphasis shall be given to how these sources frame and contextualize the motivations and actions of the Venetians.¹ Although other primary sources will be employed, these major works justify an enhanced introduction.

The most important primary resource for the Fourth Crusade is Geoffrey Villehardouin's *De la Conquête du Constantinople*. Villehardouin was marshal of Champagne and one of the leaders of the crusading movement. His prose account, which drew extensively from his own first-hand experience and records tabulated from the crusade, was written between 1207 and 1212 and is the oldest surviving example of Old French historical writing.² As Villehardouin's most recent editor and translator, M.R.B. Shaw notes, the marshal's account has often been questioned by modern historians who see him as too naïve and personally involved to render an accurate account of the crusade. Some have even gone so far as to claim that Villehardouin was the official chronicler and therefore "cheerleader" of the endeavor. That Villehardouin's account strongly favors Doge Enrico Dandolo and the Venetians has greatly influenced this assertion.

Donald Queller and Irene B. Katele have already answered many of the concerns of veracity and intent in *Le Conquête*, concluding that while Villehardouin certainly had a major interest in the endeavor, the historical discrepancies of his account are "slight," and while his perspective certainly favors the

¹ For an excellent summation of how the Western sources treat with the Venetians during the Fourth Crusade, see Donald E. Queller & Irene B. Katele, "Attitudes towards the Venetians in the Fourth Crusade: The Western Sources," in *The International Review of History*, Vol. IV, no. 1, (Feb., 1982), pp. 1-36.

² Shaw's edition of *De le Conquête* provides an excellent introduction to Villehardouin, his account, and his veracity as an author, Geoffrey Villehardouin, *De le Conquête du Constantinople*, in *Chronicles of the Crusades*, ed. & trans. M.R.B. Shaw, New York: Dorset Press, 1985, pp. 10-16.

Venetians, this reading of events does not, in fact, disprove his account.³ Villehardouin was evidently an intensely pious and devoted young warrior, bound by twin devotions to God and honor. As marshal of Champagne he also possessed a keen military mind which expertly positioned him to render an accurate and engaging, if somewhat dry, record of the crusade.

This is not to say, however, that Villehardouin is entirely without verve. In While Villehardouin's attacks on these deserters do stand out from the rest of his record, the author attempts to account for them as they appear in the text below. The modern historian Edgar H. McNeal also believes that these episodes might be attributed to the literary milieu in which Villehardouin was writing: the high drama of a secretive cabal would become a commonplace trope in lay prose literature, and it is possible that Villehardouin drew from these ideas when crafting his history which, while intended to inform, could also entertain.⁴

Broadly speaking, then, Villehardouin is the most important, and perhaps most trustworthy, of the Fourth Crusade chroniclers. His history was predicated upon first-hand accounts and probably drawn from a journal which the marshal kept himself. While influenced by his own devotion to the crusade, his bias is not so strong as to justify discounting his record of events, and his own interpretations of motive are thus incredibly valuable. The modern historian W.B. Bartlett provides an excellent summation of Villehardouin as a resource: "Although care must, of course, be taken in analyzing the narrative of a man who had a strong vested interest in the events that he was describing, by his proximity to great events and great men Villehardouin provided the basis of much that is known about the Fourth Crusade."⁵ While not perfect, the account of the marshal of Champagne is incredibly valuable.

Another Old French prose account, written down about 1216, also survives and offers a very different perspective on the crusade, although it draws very similar conclusions. *Li estoires de chiaus qui*

³ Queller & Katele, "Attitudes," pp. 8-13.

⁴ Edgar H. McNeal, "Chronicle and *Conte*: A Note on Narrative Style in Geoffrey of Villehardouin and Robert of Clari," in *Monatshefte für deutschen Unterricht*, vol. XXXVI, no. 4/5 (Apr. – May, 1945), pp. 110-113. While McNeal writes mostly about Robert of Clari, discussed below, his account of Villehardouin provides an enlightening, and reasonable, explanation of Villehardouin's deviations from pure historical narrative.

⁵ W.B. Bartlett, *An Ungodly War: The Sack of Constantinople & the Fourth Crusade*, Gloucester: Sutton Publishing, 2000, p. 55.

conquisent Constantinople draws from the first hand experiences and also second-hand accounts of Sir Robert of Clari, a young knight from Picardy in the service of Count Peter of Amiens.⁶ Because Robert was not one of the crusader leaders, he cannot be wholly trusted when speaking of the deliberations and motivations of the leading men of the endeavor. His account is very valuable, however, in that it details the perspectives of the “common” soldiers. The disjoint between the rich and poor pilgrims remains a common theme in his history. While Robert of Clari, in that he was a member of the warrior elite, was not actually a member of the lower classes, his account most closely approximates the presumed opinions of the humbler laity. The only other comparable accounts from members of the lower classes are from monks or the lower clergy whose interest in religious matters often stymies their ability to accurately report on the common soldiery.

Robert of Clari, however, lacks the historical bent and detail of Villehardouin. The young knight, as has been mentioned, was not privy to the deliberations of the crusader leaders and so can only reveal the - often misinformed - assumptions of the regular warriors. Edgar McNeal sees a very strong literary influence on Clari’s account – miniature romantic episodes dot the narrative as Clari recounts in fabulous detail the martial exploits of the famed men of the crusade, sometimes even referring to events which had taken place years before. McNeal believes that these narratives were incorporated by Clari into his own text: “Robert undoubtedly heard these tales recited by professional or amateur *contëors* in camp on the route or during the sojourns of the host.”⁷ While Villehardouin was influenced by literary tropes circulating at the time, Clari intentionally melds literature and history to produce his account.

Like Villehardouin, Clari has a distinctly positive view of the doge and the Venetians. While Clari will constantly bemoan the greed of the leading men of the crusade and their efforts to rob the poorer pilgrims, he does not, as one would perhaps expect, explicitly link the Venetians to any such

⁶ Robert of Clari, *Li estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Constantinople*, in *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusade*, ed. & trans. Edward Noble Stone, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1939, pp. 161-246.

⁷ McNeal, “*Conte*,” pp. 110-111.

avarice. In fact, in Donald Queller's opinion, if Clari attempts to distinguish between "good" and "bad" crusaders, the Venetians, and their doge, must be placed in the former category.⁸

This is not to say, however, that Clari is a partisan of the Venetians – rather, his characterization of Enrico Dandolo in particular is often at variance with the characterization of the doge as found in Villehardouin. This issue is dealt with below but it is necessary to stress at this point, once again, that Clari best illustrates how the doge and the Venetians were perceived by the common French soldiers, and his opinions, drawn without personal interaction with the doge, are just that – opinions.

A similar treatment should be employed in how Clari deals with the Venetians. Although rarely commented on, Clari refers to the members of the crusade in two distinct groups: the "pilgrims," who seem to consist exclusively of the French crusaders, and the "Venetians," whom Clari has elected to sequester from the rest. One would be then be tempted to assume that Clari is stating that the Venetians were merely the "middlemen" of the operation and not actually crusaders themselves. Clari, however, explicitly states that the Venetians did assume crusader vows. Why, then, does he differentiate between the "pilgrims" and the "Venetians"? The text provides no obvious answer but the author would suggest that Clari was merely distinguishing between those who had travelled for an extended time over land, the pilgrims, and the other crusade participants. Clari, after all, had been journeying for over a year when he finally reached Venice. These travails would have constituted the "pilgrimage" aspect of the crusade, in that the attack on Zara, the sea voyage to Constantinople, and the siege thereof, were not so much extended periods of travel as they were camping and battling.⁹ The Venetians may have been crusaders, but it is possible that, by Clari's interpretation, they were not pilgrims.

Another Western source, however, would have no problem, at least initially, condemning the Venetians as poor members of the crusade. A *translatio* account, which details how several valuable relics made their way from Constantinople to the Cistercian abbey of Pairis, in German Alsace, the

⁸ Queller & Katele, "Attitudes," p. 16.

⁹ This explanation is purely conjecture on the part of the author. It is possible that Clari did not consider the Venetians actually members of the crusade, but rather transporters, although this reading does not sync with the rest of his account.

Hystoria Constantinopolitana by Gunther of Pairis is often taken as a monastic perspective on the Fourth Crusade. Written around 1205 as a prose history with poetic chapter summations, the *Hystoria* does not attempt to provide a holistic picture of the crusade.¹⁰ Rather, it functions as an encomium of Abbot Martin, who becomes the hero of the endeavor by steadfastly clinging to his religious convictions despite the worldly concerns of his fellow crusaders, especially the Venetians. Gunther is especially distraught by the diversion to Zara, so much so that he actually abandons the crusade and reaches the Holy Land on his own. He would return, however, after the crusaders reached Constantinople, as he considered the destruction of the Eastern schismatics a right and worthy goal. Interestingly enough, Gunther's portrayal of the Venetians, especially Enrico Dandolo, improves dramatically in this section of the text, completely contradicting his earlier portrayals.

Martin, like Clari, was not privy to the administrative decisions of the crusade. He was not a member of the upper clergy and had little military influence, although he seems to have served as the *de facto* leader of the German crusader contingent. Accordingly, his account suffers from the same misunderstandings and assumptions which mar Clari. In that Martin, however, was not a strong advocate of the diversion to Zara and his initial opinions of the Venetians are very low, he is a useful resource to employ when contrasting his account with that of Villehardouin or Clari.¹¹ Gunther's account is one of the most prominent Western sources which claims that the Venetians were motivated by a desire for wealth, a characterization which is dealt with in this thesis below.

Greed, however, would be but one vice associated with the Venetians in the scathing account of Niketas Choniates, the most important Eastern source for the Fourth Crusade. Choniates was a Byzantine senator who wrote his magnum opus, *O City Byzantium*, soon after the events of 1204. The history is actually a full account of the decline of the Byzantine Empire in 21 volumes, spanning the years from

¹⁰ This summary is drawn almost exclusively from Alfred Andrea's incredibly useful and insightful introduction to his translation of the *Hystoria*. The author strongly urges anyone interested in the work itself, its author, or its hero to consult this edition directly, Alfred Andrea, *The Capture of Constantinople: The Hystoria Constantinopolitana of Gunther of Pairis*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

¹¹ Queller & Katele, "Attitudes," pp. 31-32.

1118 to 1207. The Fourth Crusade, however, is perhaps the most important section of the work and Choniates devotes expansive, and hyperbolic, passages to the event.

Although styled as a historian, Choniates was following the imperial tradition of using the past to make moral and political statements. *O City Byzantium* actually reads like a tragedy at times as the author bemoans the sinfulness of the emperors and the citizens of the empire which doomed the Queen of Cities.¹² It is important to note that the climactic necessity of the piece is the divinely sanctioned destruction of Constantinople – Choniates bends all action to fulfill this event. Accordingly, he has taken, sometimes very blatant, liberties with the history behind the crusade. This is only to be expected, as Choniates was not privy to any actions by the crusaders until their arrival in Asia Minor. Accordingly, he puts forward several glaring errors, including the claim that Pope Innocent III endorsed the diversion to Constantinople, a risible notion, as shall be demonstrated.

Choniates is also the genitor of the “conspiracy” argument surrounding the Fourth Crusade. He claims, unequivocally, that the Venetians and a cabal of Western lords intended, from the beginning, to use the crusade to destroy the Byzantine Empire. He outlines Venetian-Byzantine relations throughout the 12th century, and while his account is highly controversial in many respects, it provides an excellent background to how the New Roman Empire perceived its relationship with the Most Serene Republic. This relationship, however, is also constructed to conclude with the destruction of Constantinople. Choniates constantly paints the Venetians as hubristic barbarians who desired to enrich themselves by supplanting Byzantium as the powerhouse of the Mediterranean. Failing to account for the literary veneer Choniates has spread over his history, many Byzantine historians have taken his account at face value and so rendered a very distorted image of Venetian motivations in the Fourth Crusade.¹³ Choniates’ account has gained special prominence because it was highly influential in its day, influencing other Greek historians like John Kinnamos. This thesis will attempt to examine Choniates’ characterizations of the Venetians, and will illustrate that these characterizations merely represent the perspectives of the Greeks.

¹² Thomas Madden has argued as much on several occasions.

¹³ Thomas Madden, “Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade,” in *The International Review of History*, vol. XVII, n. 4 (Nov., 1995), pp. 729-730.

The author will then account for how these characterizations are also products of Choniates' own attempt to explain the decline of the Byzantine Empire.

These four sources are the most important for understanding the historical realities of the Fourth Crusade. This thesis will also focus heavily, however, on accounts which deal more with the motivations of the Venetians, rather than their actual activities. The *Gesta Innocenti* and the *Register* of Pope Innocent III are the two primary sources for how the pope interacted with the crusaders. While the *Register* has, for obvious reasons, played a major role in the scholarship of the Fourth Crusade, the *Gesta* has often been overlooked.¹⁴ Although Innocent was not privy to the intentions and actions of the crusaders, his perceptions are nonetheless very important. They help to provide insight into how the crusade was viewed by the upper members of the clergy. Although two accounts from Catholic bishops survive, which are treated with below, they are not as expansive as Innocent's sources.

Innocent also played a very important role in shaping the formation and activities of the crusade and his opinions carried very great weight. This is obvious in that all of the great men of the crusade, including Dandolo himself, found it necessary to enter into protracted correspondence with the pontiff. It has long been assumed that Innocent was wary of the Venetians during the crusade and came to despise them. While this assumption had largely been disproven by Queller and Madden, this thesis attempts to convey a new dimension of the relationship between the doge and the pope. By examining how the Venetians interacted with the papacy, it will be possible to discern the exact nature of Venetian-papal relations, which were different from the relations shared by the papacy and other Western powers.

One would think that Venetian resources would constitute the primary crux of this thesis. Unfortunately, such documentation does not survive. As Thomas Madden has noted, the corpus of Venetian accounts of the Fourth Crusade is effectively non-existent. Wills, letters, notarized vows, shipping information, personal accounts – all have been lost in a series of fires which destroyed the archives of the Ducal Palace, the main depository of official historical, political, and economic

¹⁴ For more on how the *Gesta* has been employed, as well as a very impressive examination of its authorship and function, see the introduction to James M. Powell, *The Deeds of Pope Innocent III by an Anonymous Author*, Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University Press of America, 2004.

documents. The only period piece to survive is the last will and testament of Walframe of Gemona, a resident alien of Venice.¹⁵ This humble crusader is, in fact, the only named Venetian crusader whose identity is now known, save for Dandolo himself. The only other period resources are the letters of Dandolo recorded in the registry of Pope Innocent III, which are examined in full in this thesis.

By the middle of the 13th century, however, Venice had begun an extensive literary campaign to immortalize her participation in the holy undertaking. The first account, the anonymously written *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, can only be dated to around the year 1230 and deals only briefly with the Fourth Crusade. The more expansive chronicle of Martino da Canale was not written until 1275 and it took extensive liberties with the historical facts.¹⁶ Accordingly, modern historians have written off many of the Venetian chronicles as mere instruments of propaganda, useless in an effort to unravel the truth of the period. Serban Marin, however, has argued that while the Venetian accounts of the Fourth Crusade do indeed bring the doge to particular prominence and glorify the actions of the Venetians, they do not so much attempt to validate these actions: “Venetian authors did not necessarily justify their ancestors’ enterprises, but did feel the necessity to eulogize them, in order to follow their pattern of outstanding deeds.”¹⁷ If Venetian chroniclers distort the facts, they do so with a particular goal in mind, and is this not the same for any historical writing, especially from the Middle Ages?

These accounts, however, will not constitute the majority of this thesis, which is more concerned with perceptions of Venetians from external sources. While a Venetian understanding of the Fourth Crusade is critical, the lateness of these documents places them beyond the scope of this thesis. The author will instead seek to illustrate, using the above-mentioned documents, that the Venetians crusaders did not revel only in their own glory, but the glory rendered by their peers.

¹⁵ Madden, *Dandolo & the Rise of Venice*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003, pp. 140-141. The will itself is incredibly valuable and Madden has, rightfully, devoted a large section of his text to examining it.

¹⁶ Donald M. Nicol, *Byzantium and Venice: A Study in Diplomatic and Cultural Relations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 125.

¹⁷ Serban Marin, “Between Justification and Glory: The Venetian Chronicles’ View of the Fourth Crusade,” in *The Fourth Crusade: Event, Aftermath, and Perceptions*, ed. Thomas Madden, Burlington: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 113-115.

While the reservoir of primary resources for the Fourth Crusade is relatively dry, a veritable sea of ink has been split in writing secondary accounts. The debate soon became so heated and so polemical that Achille Luchaire, a late 19th century historian of Pope Innocent III, finally concluded regarding the debates over the Fourth Crusade that “historical science has something better to do than to discuss indefinitely an insoluble problem.”¹⁸ Fortunately, subsequent historians were not so willing to give up the fight for knowledge.

Many readings, especially those predicated only upon the work of Villehardouin, viewed the crusade as a series of misunderstandings and unusual circumstances. No one actor had intended for the attack on Constantinople – unforeseen events simply propelled the endeavor in that direction. Those interested in placing blame, however, identified several potential perpetrators. The pope, who had ordered the crusade, seems a likely culprit as historians assumed that his desire to reunite the two churches, by any means necessary, made possible the Latin conquest of the seat of the Greek church. The apologists of Pope Innocent III, including the author of the *Gesta*, heaped blame upon the Hohenstaufen Germans and the Venetians for the diversion, claiming that the attack on Constantinople had been engineered to place a pliant potentate on the throne of the Eastern Empire. Consistently, however, modern historians have preferred to lay the blame squarely on the Venetians.

Drawing upon theories first put forward by Choniates, many historians, especially Byzantine historians, have embraced a grand conspiracy theory in which the Venetians, led by their wily doge, subverted the Fourth Crusade to advance their own position at the expense of the Byzantine Empire. The great Byzantine historian George Ostrogorsky, writing around the middle of the 20th century, famously claimed that Dandolo was “completely unmoved by the genuine crusading spirit” and believed that the “permanent security of Venetian pre-eminence in the East could only be obtained by destroying the

¹⁸ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 192. Bartlett offers an excellent summation of the controversy in the “Diversion Debate” chapter of his book.

Byzantine Empire.”¹⁹ Donald Nicol, whose work features prominently in this thesis, echoes the Byzantine party line that Dandolo not only sought the enrichment of Venice at the expense of Byzantium but that the doge himself bore an “obsessive hatred” for the Greek people.²⁰ As this thesis will attempt to illustrate, such a characterization of the doge and his people is a gross, to use Madden’s term, caricature.

When Donald Queller published his first history of the Fourth Crusade in 1977, he sought to disprove the vitriolic attacks upon the Venetians which flourished in the academic literature of the 1950s and 60s.²¹ He largely succeeded, and save for a few radicalizing, and usually Byzantine, books and articles, most modern literature on the Fourth Crusade has a much more moderated tone regarding the Venetians. The history of W. B. Bartlett provides just such an example, although he asserts that Venetian support for the crusade was minimal and that Dandolo, while perhaps not its originator, was an “enthusiastic supporter” of the diversion.²² The Fourth Crusade was not conceived in evil, but it was certainly corrupted so.

The notion that the entire crusade, while perhaps not predicated upon a conspiracy, was nevertheless subverted by its leaders has gained new prominence amongst critics of the undertaking. The Venetians still receive a disproportionate amount of blame in this respect. Marco Meschini concedes that nearly all the major leaders of the crusade pursued a multiplicity of goals, in which the liberation of Jerusalem was only the most important. He stresses, however, that the Venetians had a particularly strong “brash autonomy” from the religious concerns of the crusade, ignoring Christian unity, papal authority, and crusader piety, all of which were “placidly subordinated to the goals of the Republic.”²³ While no longer cast as villains, most modern historians do strongly doubt the crusading zeal of the Venetians.

¹⁹ Madden, “Outside and Inside,” pp. 729-731. This essay by Madden is one of the most expansive works on anti-Venetian historiography and expertly details the exaggerated and hyperbolic claims levied against the Venetian crusaders.

²⁰ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 119-210.

²¹ Donald Queller & Thomas Madden, *The Fourth Crusade: The Conquest of Constantinople*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997.

²² Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, pp. 201-202.

²³ Marco Meschini, “The Four Crusades of 1204,” in *The Fourth Crusade: Event, Aftermath, and Perception*, ed. Thomas Madden, Burlington: Ashgate, 2008, pp. 36-37.

Thomas Madden, who has dedicated most of his career to the study of the crusades and also Venetian history, has strongly condemned this view in most of his major publications. Drawing from the work of his mentor, Donald Queller, he has illustrated that Venetian attitudes towards crusading and piety are far more complex than they appear and that Venetians were no better, and no worse, in their crusading activities than others. Madden's arguments will feature prominently in this thesis as they have had major influence over the author's opinions. This thesis will, however, attempt to add nuance to Madden's interpretation of the Venetians as crusaders. The author believes that the Venetians do not conform to the traditional interpretation of the crusader ideal. This does not mean, however, that their spiritual devotion was any less than that of their fellow crusaders. Venetians waged holy war with genuine piety. Their tactics, however, were distinct and unique, not unlike their own position in Western Europe.

Part III: Byzantium and the Crusades

The history of the crusading movement before the sack of Constantinople has major implications for the events of the Fourth Crusade. The interactions between the Latins and the Greeks as each prosecuted their own brand of holy war would define relations between the two powers for centuries to come. Although the crusades were ostensibly called to aid the Byzantine Empire, which had fallen under attack by the Muslim Turks, the goals of the crusaders and the goals of the Greeks were soon at odds. Within a few short years, a series of misunderstandings and misadventures would severely damage relations between the Christians of the East and West. These missteps would be augmented by the perennial cultural and religious differences which had always divided the two branches of Christian thought. Although the crusaders set out for the Holy Land with the understanding that the Byzantines were their allies, it would soon appear as if the two sides were enemies.

Appendix III provides an expansive narrative history of the crusades with special emphasis on Western-Byzantine relations. For the present, however, it is sufficient to consider the causes and origins of the crusades, the stated and implicit goals of the crusaders, and the role of the Byzantines in the crusades. These events, presented chronologically but with a strongly thematic bent, will allow for a solid understanding of how the crusading movement evolved relative to the actions and perceptions of the Byzantine Empire and how these evolutions influenced the Fourth Crusade.

In the interests of time and relevancy, the First, Second, and Third crusades will be examined, with special emphasis upon the germination of the crusading ideal. The First Crusade, in particular, provides the most complete conception of the intentions of the said crusade and subsequent crusades. It also illustrates the friction which developed between Byzantium and the West, caused primarily by the disjoint in how each of these powers viewed the purpose of the crusading movement and in the perceptions those two very different groups of people developed of each other. These conflicts, which began during the First Crusade and would develop during the Second and Third, have major implications for the events of the Fourth Crusade. Because the First Crusade, however, provides the most expansive

examples of Western-Eastern relations, it shall be examined most closely. For the purposes of examining Venetian involvement in the crusades Western sources shall also be given prominence.

Pope Gregory VII is credited with first conceiving of a holy endeavor from the West to aid the Christians in the East suffering at the hands of the expansionist states of Islam. After the disastrous defeat of the imperial army at Manzikert in 1071, Byzantium had been on the defensive and was desperate for Western assistance.²⁴ It was not until the pontificate of Pope Urban II, however, and the reign of Emperor Alexios I, that any real steps could be taken to ensure the preservation of the Christian East.

Alexios had seized power in a military coup and so, in a typical military flourish, he desired to ensure the security of his fledgling reign. This meant war with the Muslims, which had always, according to his biographer and daughter, Anna Comnenus, been the young emperor's desire.²⁵ Alexios, however, would require aid from the West and so he wrote to Urban II, requesting an elite corps of knights to serve in the imperial legions under the emperor's command to repel the invaders.²⁶

The nature of Alexios' request is critical. Since the pontificate of Gregory VII, the Byzantines had requested support from their Western brothers in their fight against the growing Islamic powers of the Middle East. This support, however, was for the preservation of the Byzantine state. Alexios required well-trained soldiers which he could employ to reinforce his own men, who were being overwhelmed in their efforts to both drive out the Turks and defend existing imperial territory. Although Christians in the East, especially in Jerusalem, had suffered over the years at the hands of their Muslim oppressors, especially the "Mad" Caliph Hakim, Alexios' request for aid was part of his general program for the restoration of the imperial state.²⁷ He envisioned something of a "strike force" which he could use to stabilize the situation in the East. He would receive, however, something very different.

²⁴ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium, Volume II: The Apogee*, New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, pp. 337-357. While the Byzantines had enjoyed some military successes against the Muslims, especially during the reign of Emperor Romanus IV, by the reign of Michael VII, who had lost at Manzikert, the tide had turned against the Christians.

²⁵ Anna Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book I, trans. E.R.A. Sewter, New York: Penguin Classics, 2003, p. 9: "And the ambition of the young Alexios threatened the barbarians: he made it clear that one day he would come to grips with them, and when that happened his sword would have its fill of blood."

²⁶ Norwich, pp. 29-31.

²⁷ Thomas Asbridge, *The First Crusade, A New History: The Roots of Conflict between Christianity and Islam*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 16-17.

Urban II redefined Alexios' request to conform to his own desires: the liberation of the holy Christian sites in the Middle Orient, especially Jerusalem, as part of a larger movement to end violence and strife within Europe itself, to ensure greater peace and stability. The security of the Byzantine Empire was a secondary interest, not even explicitly mentioned. The pope's primary concerns are best captured in the various accounts of the Council of Clermont in 1095, when Urban laid out his ambitious plan for the crusades.²⁸ The following passage from one version of the council drawn from the *Historia Therosolimitana* of Robert the Monk illustrates the tenor of Urban's appeal:

Disturbing news has emerged from the city of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople and is now constantly at the forefront of our minds: namely the race of the Persians, a foreign people and a people rejected by God, indeed, a generation that has sent not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God, has invaded the lands of those Christians, depopulated them by slaughter and plunder and arson, kidnapped some of the Christians and carried them off to their own lands and put others to a wretched death, and has either overthrown the churches of God or turned them over to the rituals of their own religions...[And so] set out on the road to the Holy Sepulcher, deliver that land from a wicked race and take it yourselves – the land which was given by God to the sons of Israel, as Scripture says, a land flowing with milk and honey.²⁹

Although this crusade had ostensibly been called to aid the Eastern Empire, Urban was careful to avoid explicit references to the Byzantines, favoring instead vague terms like “Eastern brothers in Christ.” This may have been due to rampant anti-Byzantine sentiments in the West. The Normans and the Holy Roman Empire had been at war with the Byzantines on several occasions, but, more than this, the Eastern and Western churches were actually in a state of schism.³⁰ Although popes had for decades attempted to

²⁸Edward Peters has compiled five versions of the speech: the *Historia Heirosolymitana* of Robert the Monk, the anonymously written *Gesta francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, the account of the Archbishop of Dol, Balderic, the *Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Francos* of Guibert, abbot of Nogent, and *Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium* of Fulcher of Chartres. The side-by-side comparison which Peters' edition provides allows the reader to appreciate the variation between the different versions. Edward Peters, *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulbert of Chartres and Other Source Materials*, Philadelphia: the University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, pp. 1-31.

²⁹ Robert the Monk, *Historia Therosolimitana*, trans. Carol Sweetenham, Burlington: Ashgate, 2005, Book II, pp. 79-81.

³⁰ In 1054 representatives of Pope Leo IX formally excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Cerularius, over doctrinal disagreements. The patriarch then excommunicated the pope in turn. Since then, the two churches were officially divided, although Popes Gregory VII and Leo IX had made efforts to reunite Christendom. This desire would play a major role in Innocent III's involvement in the Fourth Crusade. While the upper clergy, however, actively negotiated to bring the East back into the papal fold, popular opinion of the Orthodox adherents was likely relatively low and would only decrease over the course of the crusades. Politically speaking, Robert the Monk includes a reference to the “kingdom of the Greeks,” but the account of its dismemberment appears in a

bring the two churches back into full union, the major theological differences which separated them made such a goal almost inconceivable.³¹ The two sides had begun to view each other almost as separate religions and while it was still possible to speak of “Christianity” as a religion, the important differences between the two branches created a great divide, one which would only become wider as the two faiths interacted. Europeans would have been eager to avenge their fellow Christians. It is not so clear that similar zeal would have been produced if Urban had stressed the “Greekness” of the Eastern faithful.

The defense of Byzantium, then, was a small part of the crusader program. Urban was arguing for a much more expansive expedition and one which had far loftier goals than the mere security of the Byzantine Empire. The crusaders, while tasked with protecting Eastern Christians, were fighting, not for the emperor, but for God.

In exchange for their holy services knights could expect the complete remission of their sins and an almost guaranteed position in heaven. As Urban urged, “Accordingly undertake this journey for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the imperishable glory of the kingdom of heaven.”³² While a more pessimistic interpretation of crusader motives has been in vogue amongst many modern historians, especially the writers of popular history, one must recall that the crusades themselves were fundamentally spiritual undertakings.³³

This is not to say, however, that material gains were not a consideration: in fact, Urban even refers to them as an incentive. In the version of Robert the Monk, the Holy Land is called a paradise of

section which celebrates the exploits of the Frankish nation as well, as if Urban was comparing a strong polity to a weak one, Robert the Monk, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 3.

³¹ As is noted below, the issue of rejoining the two churches, by force, if necessary, would become one of the primary goals of the diversion to Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade.

³² Robert the Monk, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 4.

³³ For overviews of crusader motivations in popular histories, see the “Introduction” of Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms: Crusades, Jihad, and Modernity* and “Lifted in a Mystic Manner,” in Bruce Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language*. The “pessimistic” view of the crusades, generally speaking, argues that they were expressions of proto-imperialism, Western adventurism, and greed. While all of these factors influenced the crusaders, and material gains may have been foremost in the minds of certain “exceptions to the rule,” as it were, the author believes that most of the crusaders were primarily concerned with saving their souls, rather than enriching their pockets. For further explanation of this viewpoint, see “The Call” in Madden, *The New Concise of the Crusades*, Asbridge, p. 66-76, and “Crusades as Christian Holy Wars” and “Crusades as Christian Penitential Wars” in Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The Crusades, Christianity, and Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2008.

luxury and prosperity, abounding with wealth for those brave enough to take it.³⁴ If, in undertaking the will of God, the Christians had the opportunity to enrich themselves, so be it – like King David, the holy warriors would grow rich upon the spoils of God’s enemies.³⁵

Urban was also well aware that a continued Western presence in the East would be fundamental to the security of the region. If lords were to garrison their armies near the holy sites, they would require lands to support themselves. While devoted to God’s holy war, Urban did not forget the realities of medieval warfare. Combat was an expensive business and a medieval warlord needed ready access to land and loot to support himself and his retainers.³⁶ Urban understood this necessity and so promised both sustenance and spoils in the East. The warriors of Christ could strip their defeated enemies of their own wealth while carving out property for themselves in the Holy Land. The crusaders had to have a way to make a living whilst engaged in killing.

Mindful of these harsh realities, Urban did not attempt to lead the crusaders himself. Urban dispatched a papal legate, Adhemar, bishop of Puy-en-Valey. Adhemar was to have a crucial role in the undertaking, acting as vicar of the Vicar of Christ. In December of 1095, after Clermont, Urban dispatched a letter of instruction to the crusaders which included his appointment of Adhemar as leader of the undertaking: “And we have constituted our most beloved son, Adhemar, bishop of Puy, leader of this expedition and undertaking in our stead, so that those who, perchance, may wish to undertake this journey should comply with his commands, as if they were our own, and submit fully to his loosings or bindings,

³⁴ “That land which as the Scripture says “floweth with milk and honey,” was given by God into the possession of the children of Israel Jerusalem is the navel of the world; the land is fruitful above others, like another paradise of delights,” Robert the Monk, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 3-4; “The possessions of the enemy, too, will be yours, since you will make spoil of their treasures and return victorious to your own,” Balderic of Dol, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 9.

³⁵ Samuel II, 8:1-13. This reading of the crusades is fundamental to understanding the motivations of the Venetians in their own crusading endeavors. To grow rich while crusading was not a sin – only to be concerned exclusively with wealth while warring for God was wrong. As is argued below, while the Venetians did indeed enrich themselves while on crusade, this did not detract from their zeal, nor were they really any different from other crusaders who likewise filled their pockets while fulfilling their vows.

³⁶ For more on fiefs and the payment of soldiers during the crusades, see Peter Edbury, “Warfare in the Latin East,” in *Medieval Warfare: A History*, ed. Maurice Keen, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 89-112. Broadly speaking, a warrior expected to receive lands and the opportunity to take loot after a battle as a means to compensate himself for the expenses and risks of waging war. Although salaried fighting forces did exist, they fundamentally depended upon the lands of a lord for the generation of wealth.

as far as shall seem to belong to such an office.”³⁷ Fulcher of Chartres refers to Adhemar in his history as the one who “acting as vicar-apostolic, ruled the whole army of God wisely and thoughtfully, and spurred them to complete their undertaking vigorously.”³⁸ Abstractly, the papal legate would administer the crusade directly and completely.

The reality of Adhemar’s tenure, however, was very different. The modern historian Steven Runciman argues that while Adhemar was an important religious figure and his influence greatly affected the spiritual developments of the crusade, he held very little authority over the daily activities of the undertaking – he certainly was not “leader” of the expedition in any sense.³⁹ Adhemar, rather, functioned strictly in a religious capacity, which may have, in fact, been as Urban intended. While an initial reading may ascribe to the papal legate sweeping authority, a more nuanced reading illustrates that Urban only explicitly grants Adhemar the right to absolve the crusaders and fulfill the same capacity as the pope himself. In these days before the *Unam Sanctam* of Pope Boniface VIII, the minutia of actual papal authority were still hotly debated.⁴⁰ The exact authorities of the pope had not yet been established and so one should not assume that in his letter of instruction Urban II was naming Adhemar leader of the crusade in every capacity. Rather, the papal legate was to administer to the religious needs of the pilgrims.⁴¹

This understanding of the function of a papal legate will prove incredibly important in the examination of papal-Venetian relations. During the Fourth Crusade, the Venetians, and their fellow crusaders, had few dealings with the designated papal legate, Pietro da Capua. Although some historians have taken this as evidence that the Venetians were not concerned with papal authority, the author wishes to stress at this point that the function of a papal legate was not necessarily so prominent as one might believe, as is indicated by the role played by Adhemar of le Puy. The legate was, however, a key figure in

³⁷ “Urban’s Letter of Instruction,” in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 15-16.

³⁸ Fulcher of Chartres, *Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, ch. IV, p. 31.

³⁹ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. I*, pp. 256, 289.

⁴⁰ For more on papal authority during the Middle Ages, especially during the crusading period, see Uta-Renate Blumenthal, “The Papacy, 1024-1122,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. IV, c. 1024-c. 1198, Part II*, ed. David Luscombe & Jonathan Riley-Smith, Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 2004, pp. 8-37.

⁴¹ The papal legates of the Second and Third crusades were even less important than Adhemar, sharing his lack of military authority and possessing none of his prominence. The reader should bear this in mind when considering the function of the papal legate Pietro da Capua during the Fourth Crusade and his relations with the Venetians.

the promulgation of the call to crusade, along with the other lay and clerical attendees of the Council of Clermont, who were quick to spread Urban's call for holy war across Western Christendom.

The message fell upon willing ears. Eager to fight for Christ and win places for themselves in heaven, as well as the opportunity to escape the violent instability of Europe and enrich themselves in the East, tens of thousands of Western Christians, noble, clerical, and common, took the crusader's vow.⁴² In addition to the knights and soldiers whom Urban had addressed at Clermont, women, children, and the elderly also participated, eager to save their souls.

Such a motley army was not what Alexios had expected. He wanted a strike force of knights, not a rabble of religious zealots. Furthermore, the intentions of these crusaders were not clear. These men intended to liberate the Holy Land, and while this would be a boon for Alexios, he had intended for these warriors to aid him in the worldlier goal of securing his empire. Instead he found at the gates of Constantinople a ragtag group of fanatics with unclear objectives.

This "plague of locusts," as Anna Comnenus called them, represented a real threat to Byzantine security.⁴³ As they crossed Asia Minor, the crusaders looted freely, even when provided with food from the emperor.⁴⁴ Western pilgrims in the Byzantine Empire soon gained a reputation for their barbarism and violence, with some very real fear that the Latins actually intended to conquer the empire, as Anna Comnenus believed: "The simpler folk were led on by a genuine desire to worship at Our Lord's tomb and visit the holy places, but the more villainous characters, in particular Bohemond and his like, had an ulterior motive, for they hoped on their journey to seize the imperial capital itself, looking upon its capture as a natural consequence of the expedition."⁴⁵ Many Greeks may have wondered, if the Latins were to save them from the Muslims, who would save them from the Latins?

⁴² Thomas F. Madden, *The New Concise History of the Crusades*, New York: Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005, p. 10-11.

⁴³ Comnenus, Book X, p. 275.

⁴⁴ John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium, Volume III: The Decline and Fall*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁵ Anna Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book X, p. 277. Anna reiterates this concern in direct reference to Bohemond on p. 279: "Others among the Latins, who like Bohemond and his cronies, had long coveted the Roman Empire and wished to acquire it for themselves...."

The Westerners, however, were also very suspicious of their Greek “hosts.” The first group of crusaders, an especially chaotic group of peasants led by Peter the Hermit, effectively got lost in the region and was massacred by the Turks.⁴⁶ The Latins blamed the Greeks for inadequately guiding and preparing the crusaders. The emperor himself was also blamed, especially as he seemed to demand inordinate control over the subsequent groups of crusaders who arrived at Constantinople.

Alexios attempted to influence the crusaders by making them swear oaths to protect and serve the Byzantine Empire, hoping to rein in their zeal.⁴⁷ Many of the crusaders, however, considered such an oath antithetical to their holy purpose. Godfrey of Bouillon, who would be crowned as the first ruler of Latin Jerusalem, actually attacked Constantinople before being beaten back and finally forced to accept the terms.⁴⁸ Raymond of Toulouse could not even be convinced to agree to the oath as it was presented and would only consent to a modified form which did not place him under imperial sway.⁴⁹ For many of the crusaders, the emperor’s oath was a desperate effort to use the crusade as a means to protect his own empire and expand his own territory⁵⁰ It is terribly ironic that this was precisely what the crusade was supposed to have been, as Alexios had outlined it.⁵¹ The crusaders, however, had a very different vision. They found Alexios to be a wicked and grasping despot. To make matter worse, he seemed to have little interest in the religious goals of the crusades.

Alexios appeared to the crusaders to be a scheming politician, augmenting his kingdom at the expense God’s. Robert the Monk believed that the “oath of fidelity” demanded by the emperor was meant

⁴⁶ Asbridge, pp. 100-102

⁴⁷ Asbridge, pp. 109-111. Asbridge concisely outlines the confusion inherent within this clause and its potential readings.

⁴⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 20-22.

⁴⁹ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. I*, pp. 159-160, 163.

⁵⁰ Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book II, Ch. VI, p. 93; *Gesta*, p. 136; Raymond d’Aguiliers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Jerusalem*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Edward Peters, pp. 40-41.

⁵¹ Some Western resources note that Alexios feared the crusaders coveted his lands: “For [the emperor] feared that by chance we might plot some injury to him,” Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds of the Franks*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 41-42; “[the] emperor is more frightened of [the crusader armies] than of storms in heaven, because his view is that [the crusaders] are more interested in taking his kingdom from him than in pilgrimage; that is why he constantly plots,” Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book II, ch. XIV, p. 97. It should be noted, however, that Robert later attributes this fear to the fact that “a deceitful mind is always on edge and worried about falling prey into the same traps it sets for others,” *Ibid.*, chp. XVII, p. 99.

“to ensure that whatever [the crusaders] conquered by force of arms would fall to him.”⁵² The *Gesta* refers to the machinations of the “evil emperor” by which he intended to secure control through the crusaders’ oaths in his “counsels and ingenious calculations.”⁵³ In Raymond d’Aguiliers’ account of Raymond before Alexios, he focuses upon the “demand” of the emperor for homage and loyalty, a thing which Raymond could not give, for he “had not come thither to make another his lord or to fight for any other than the One for whom he had left his country.”⁵⁴ The Western historiographical ideal of the crusade framed its participants as men who “rejected the beauties and pleasures of the world and clung to God.”⁵⁵ The Byzantines, whose mighty city and finely arrayed inhabitants, would have appeared all the more worldly and corrupt to their Western counterparts.⁵⁶ The crusaders could be swayed to put so holy an enterprise under the rule of the Emperor Alexios only if they felt that he had the best interests of the faith at heart.⁵⁷ That the lords were not sure of this indicates just how much the two factions distrusted each other.

From their first meeting, the crusaders and the Greeks were at odds. This conflict could possibly be explained by the fundamental disjoint between the two parties regarding the nature of the crusade, as mentioned above. Other issues, however, soon present themselves. Anna Comnenus refers on several occasions to the pride of the Latins, a sense of grandeur which seemed all the more improbable to the Byzantines because it lay in the hearts of men whom they considered little better than barbarians. Godfrey is called “extremely proud of his noble birth, his own courage and the glory of his family,” with the addendum that “every Kelt is anxious to outdo his peers.” A similar charge is laid before Hugh of Vermandois, another crusader baron.⁵⁸ Anna also comments upon the “insolence” which the crusaders

⁵² Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book II, ch. VI, p. 93.

⁵³ *Gesta*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 136.

⁵⁴ Raymond d’Aguiliers, *Historia Francorum qui ceperunt Jerusalem*, in *The First Crusade*, ed. Edward Peters, pp. 40-41.

⁵⁵ Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds of the Franks on their Pilgrimage to Jerusalem*, in *The First Crusade*, ed. Edward Peters, p. 24.

⁵⁶ Norwich, *Byzantium Vol. III*, p. 41.

⁵⁷ Raymond of Toulouse actually demanded that Alexios accompany the crusaders, but the emperor claimed that his duties at the capital made that impossible, Raymond d’Aguiliers, *Historia Francorum*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Anna Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book X, p. 277; p. 279.

displayed before Alexios: Raoul, one of Godfrey's retainers, dared to cast aspersions upon the emperor's honor and had adopted "an arrogant and quite insolent attitude."⁵⁹ Such hubris could not be borne.

The Byzantines held themselves as heirs to the most ancient and serene Roman Empire. The 13th century historian Choniates referred to its capital, Constantinople, as "garbed in royal silk and purple" and "enthroned on high, striding far and wide, magnificent in comeliness and more becoming in stature."⁶⁰ It is not surprising, then, that the Byzantines should look upon the presumptions of the Latins with disdain and the ambitions of the Latins with fear. As John Julius Norwich has noted, the crusaders were "dirty and ill-mannered barbarians..., surely worse than most" in the eyes of the sophisticated and powerful Byzantines, whose capital easily dwarfed any city in Europe.⁶¹ As soldiers of Christ, the Latins had some use against the Turks. Alexios, echoing the fear ascribed to him by Anna, however, remained wary of their intentions against his empire.⁶²

The crusaders also had serious doubts about the intentions of the emperor. In fact, many Western sources of the time allude to Alexios' many efforts to imprison or even murder his Latin allies. Albert of Aachen, in his *Historia Ierosolimitana*, recounts how, when Godfrey was summoned before Alexios, he was met by "strangers from the land of Franks" who warned him "to beware the tricks and poisoned garments of the emperor, and his deceitful words, and under no circumstances to go into his presence."⁶³ Robert the Monk reports that the emperor "had decreed that all crusaders be taken captive and brought to him in Constantinople," but that Alexios also intended to have the leaders of the crusades killed: Robert recounts in detail the attempts on the lives of Godfrey and Bohemond.⁶⁴ Similar episodes, either to

⁵⁹ Anna Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book X, p. 289.

⁶⁰ Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, trans. Harry J. Magoulias, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1984, p. 317.

⁶¹ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 42.

⁶² Byzantine distaste for Westerners would also express itself in Greek relations to the Venetians, as is noted below. That the crusaders were also held in disdain seems to indicate a fundamental disjoint between East and West which would precipitate the violence, stemming from mutual distrust and hatred, which would culminate in the sack of Constantinople

⁶³ Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, ed., trans. Susan B. Edgington, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007, p. 75.

⁶⁴ Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book II, chps. VI, IX, XIV-XV; pp. 93-97.

apprehend or kill the crusaders, appear in the *Gesta*.⁶⁵ It is not surprising that the crusaders had difficulty functioning with the emperor – many believed that he was trying to kill them.

Interestingly enough, these violent episodes are almost entirely lacking from Fulcher of Chartres' account, and even in those documents where they are mentioned, they are partially justified. Fulcher states only that the emperor demanded oaths from the crusaders, "for he feared that by chance we might plot some injury to him," and he even credits the emperor with supporting the crusade, since without his "counsel and aid we could not have completed our journey."⁶⁶ As Fulcher notes, the crusaders were aware of the danger they posed to the emperor. Robert the Monk also states that captured Byzantine soldiers claimed that their "emperor is more frightened of [the crusader armies] than of storms in heaven, because his view is that [the crusaders] are more interested in taking his kingdom from him than in pilgrimage; that is why he constantly plots."⁶⁷ To some extent, many crusaders recognized why the emperor did not have confidence them. This did not, however, allay the fears of those Latins who themselves did not trust the emperor. That no clear picture exists of the emperor's motives is indicative of the great difficulty in working with crusader resources, which are usually highly hyperbolic and polemical. This discrepancy will only be the first of many.

After departing from Constantinople, the Latins laid siege to the city of Nicaea, hoping to claim it as their own. After several months of bitter fighting and waiting, however, agents of Alexios seized the town through bribery and claimed it for the empire. Anna makes little mention of the crusaders' response to this trick, and the issue was not of great importance to Robert the Monk, Albert of Aachen, or Fulcher of Chartres, who commented merely on the conquest of the city and sometimes even viewed the emperor's trick as a mutually agreed-upon plan.⁶⁸ In the *Gesta*, however, the anonymous author says that "the emperor, full of vain and evil thinking, ordered [the Turks] to depart unpunished, without any fear,"

⁶⁵ *Gesta*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 124, 136.

⁶⁶ Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds of the Franks*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 41-42.

⁶⁷ Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book II, ch. XIV, p. 97. It should be noted, however, that Robert later attributes this fear to the fact that "a deceitful mind is always on edge and worried about falling prey into the same traps it sets for others," ch. XVII, p. 99.

⁶⁸ Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book III, ch. VI, p. 106-107; Albert of Aachen, *Historia Ierosolimitana*, p. 127; Fulcher of Chartres, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 44-45.

despite that fact that hundreds of Christians had died in the battle to secure the city. Raymond of d'Aguiliers similarly treats the episode as an example of the emperor's betrayal, stating that the crusaders allowed the city to fall to the emperor with the understanding that he would provide them with supplies and establish Western churches in the city. When Alexios failed to do this, he was cursed and declared a traitor to the crusade.⁶⁹ Granted, the crusaders had sworn that all land which had formerly been held by the emperor would be returned to him. Pursuant to the long-held traditions of medieval siege warfare, however, many crusaders had expected the chance to loot Nicaea, as they had dedicated so much time and so many lives to its conquest. When Alexios, through his machinations, seized the city in their stead, many crusaders believed that he was simply hoarding the wealth which they had earned.⁷⁰

And yet, when the crusaders were again beleaguered outside the city of Antioch, the imperial army dispatched by Alexios turned around and left because it was believed that the crusaders were in a hopeless position.⁷¹ When Antioch finally fell to the crusaders, with the help of a traitor in the city whom Bohemond had bribed, the crusaders were quick to recall that this victory had been all the more hard-won because the imperial troops had not been present. The crusaders, several years later, would also abandon their Greek allies during a battle with Zengi, a Muslim warlord, threatening the armies of Emperor John II.⁷² Each side had cause to doubt the military and political devotions of the other crusade and to battling the Muslims at large.

After the conquest of Jerusalem in 1099, the crusaders went about the secondary goal of the crusade: the establishment of a Latin kingdom in the East and their personal enrichment. Although Godfrey of Bouillon famously refused to be crowned with gold where Christ had been crowned with thorns, he did assume the title of protector of the kingdom of Jerusalem and all pursuant lands, soldiers,

⁶⁹ *Gesta*, in *The First Crusade*, ed. Peters, pp. 146-147; Raymond d'Aguiliers, *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁷⁰ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 24.

⁷¹ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 28.

⁷² Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 79-81.

and wealth attributed to the office.⁷³ Bohemond also seized Antioch as his own seat, contrary to the oath which he had sworn to Alexios. The Byzantines took offense at this seizure of property.

Alexios had never promised the Latins land in the Middle Orient. He only intended for them to help him secure his own. That these crusaders were carving out kingdoms for themselves in the middle of his empire was a major affront. Antioch would become a point of contention for the crusaders and the Byzantines, and the two sides would argue over its ownership for decades to come.⁷⁴ Alexios had hoped that the crusaders would defend his empire. Instead, he found them distributing it amongst themselves.

To aid these fledgling states of the Holy Land, a second crusade was called in 1145 by Pope Eugenius III, spearheaded by the French king, Louis VII, and German emperor, Conrad III. This effort, however, was an abysmal failure, memorable only because of the increased hatred it produced between the Latins and Greeks.⁷⁵ While marching to the Holy Land, the men of the German emperor Conrad were especially rowdy as they made their way to Jerusalem. When these forces finally reached the Holy Land, they were ambushed and almost completely destroyed. The attack was blamed on the Greeks who were guiding the crusaders: “The guides, however, led by the malice inherent in the Greek race and also by their customary hatred of the Christians, acted treacherously, either because commanded by their master or because bribed by the Turks, they purposely led the legions ... into places which offered the enemy favorable opportunities to attack and overcome a credulous people.”⁷⁶ Crusader paranoia about the loyalties of their Greek allies engendered resentment towards Manuel, contributing to what John Julius Norwich refers to as “an almost psychopathic resentment against the Greeks.”⁷⁷

⁷³ Runciman, *History, Vol. I*, pp. 292-295.

⁷⁴ Runciman, *History, Vol. II*, p. 212-214. Runciman includes the text of Fulk’s letter to Raymond, found in Odericus Vitalis, XIII, 34, which references both the long history of Byzantine control in Antioch and the oath sworn to Alexios during the First Crusade: “We all know and our elders have long taught us that Antioch was part of the Empire of Constantinople till it was taken from the emperor by the Turks...and that the emperor’s claims about the treaties made by our ancestors are correct. Ought we then to deny the truth and oppose what is right?” See also William of Tyre, *A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea*, Vol. II, trans. Emily Atwater Babcock & A.C. Krey, New York: Columbia University Press, 1943, Book XV, Ch. 19-20, pp. 119-121.

⁷⁵ Runciman, *Crusade, Vol. II*, pp. 280-286.

⁷⁶ William of Tyre, *History*, Book XVII, chps. 20-21, pp. 168-169.

⁷⁷ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. III*, p. 98.

The French force of the Second Crusade also suffered from “Greek perfidy.” These men, having reached Anatolia, had been promised ships, but they found a tiny fleet waiting for them, totally unfit for transporting the army. While a fraction of the French departed, the rest of the crusaders were abandoned to survive, totally unsupported, in the harsh environs of Asia Minor.

One eye-witness glibly remarked:

How will a just judge, either God or man, spare the Greek emperor, who by cunning cruelty killed so many Christians in both the German and Frankish armies? Thus, when the hosts of new paupers, succumbing to tedium, robbed of their money, and wasted with disease, learned that the Greeks had lied about the ships, they came to the king and set forth their will...: ‘Oh Lord King...when we did not wish to march with you by land, because we believed in the Greeks, we were both lazy and deluded. But because we now feel the compulsion of poverty, we wish to make the march without our leader. We are rushing to meet death, but, if God wills us to prevail, we can avoid the death which threatens us. Perhaps it will be easier to endure the Turk’s sword than the treachery of these [Greek] natives.’⁷⁸

The French crusaders would eventually reach the Holy Land, but with severely decreased numbers – they could do little to aid the kingdoms of Outremer. The failure of the Second Crusade was largely blamed on the Greeks, who were charged with not providing adequate support for the effort. The Greeks, to be sure, were also beginning to have serious doubts about the crusaders and their intentions. The concern was that they had exchanged one enemy, the Turks, for another, the Latins.

In addition to this mounting friction between the former allies, the Greek emperors, embroiled more and more in petty wars and palace politics, were unable to match the might of the great Islamic warlords: Zengi, Nu red-Din and Saladin. In 1185 they would actually sign a peace treaty with the Muslims, the very men whom they had invited the Latins to battle against, both out of necessity and the recognition that the Western crusaders were too volatile to be controlled.⁷⁹ The court at Jerusalem was also unable to counter the rising tide of Islam as petty squabbles between the royal family distracted from

⁷⁸ Odo of Deuil, in *Competing Voices from the Crusades*, ed. Andrew Holt & James Muldoon, Oxford: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2008, pp. 78-79.

⁷⁹ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. II*, p. 428-429.

war with the infidel.⁸⁰ After a disastrous defeat at the Horns of Hattin the city of Jerusalem was once more threatened with Islamic rule.⁸¹ In 1187 the city fell.⁸²

Three European monarchs, Philip of France, Richard I of England, and Emperor Frederick I of the Holy Roman Empire all swore to retake the holy city.⁸³ The crowned head of the empire of the East, Isaac II, however, refused to participate, fearful of Western expansion into his realm. He even went so far as to ally with the Muslims against his fellow Christians.⁸⁴ This contract with Saladin outraged the lords of the West, who now saw open treachery in the actions of the emperor. Alexios' demands had been onerous enough, and the suspicious aid rendered during the Second Crusade had proven to be more of a hindrance than a help, but the actions of Isaac were too much. Frederick took an overland route to the Holy Land, actively threatening to storm and sack Constantinople himself.⁸⁵ Philip and Richard completely avoided the Byzantine Empire, shutting out the emperor from their undertaking.

Although Philip, eager to win lands for himself in Europe, quickly abandoned the crusade and Frederick died on the journey, Richard fought bravely, winning a spectacular victory at Acre and forcing Saladin to terms at Jerusalem. He also initiated the crusader strategy of attacking and controlling Egypt to ensure the security of Jerusalem.⁸⁶ Richard, however, had to return to England to deal with Philip and his scheming brother John, and he would die before returning to the Holy Land.⁸⁷ In 1193 Saladin followed him to the grave, casting the Islamic Empire into chaos.⁸⁸

Richard had revitalized the crusading movement. His success would directly inspire the Fourth Crusade as he had proven, conclusively, that even the mightiest Muslim warlord could be brought to heel.

⁸⁰ Runciman, *Crusades*, Vol. II, pp. 446-451.

⁸¹ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 75-76.

⁸² Ibn al-Athir, "Negotiations for the Surrender of Jerusalem," in *Competing Voices*, ed. Holt & Muldoon, pp. 119-120.

⁸³ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 79-80.

⁸⁴ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 161; Nicol, *Byzantium*, p.115.

⁸⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 161.

⁸⁶ John Gillingham, *Richard I*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, p. 182. Although the will of the Christians may have been indomitable, their holy city of Jerusalem was not. Poorly positioned defensively and easy to assault, Jerusalem was almost impossible to hold, as both the Muslims and Christians had learned. Richard knew that to hold the city, he would have to hold the surrounding regions and cut off the Venetians from their reserves in Egypt. It was said that Egypt was the key to unlock Jerusalem.

⁸⁷ Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, p. 560-563.

⁸⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 94-95.

The earlier crusades, however, did more than just inspire the holy warriors of the Fourth Crusade. After several decades of interacting with their “Eastern brothers,” the Western crusaders were forced to reconsider their relationship with the Byzantines.

Betrayals, charges of cowardice, and greed had all corrupted the unity of the Christian warriors. To the Greeks, the Latins were little more than land-mad barbarians bent on destruction and death. To the Latins, the Greeks were more concerned with their own economic position and imperial power than the holy objectives of the crusade. Furthermore, each side had been convinced that the other could not be trusted. Their alliance had begun to crumble at the inception of the First Crusade and had nearly completely collapsed by the close of the Third.

The Latin and Greeks also had learned just how different they each were. The Westerners, in particular, who had set out to aid their “Eastern brothers” would have found, especially during their encampment at Constantinople, that the Orthodox faith bore little resemblance to their own. Greek customs, religious and cultural, would have appeared as alien to the crusaders as those of the dreaded “Saracens.”⁸⁹ The supposed perfidy of the Greeks and their effectively schismatic religious beliefs had convinced many of the crusaders that the Byzantine Empire was no ally to the crusading movement. In fact, considering that Isaac II had been an ally, not of the crusaders, but of Saladin, it might be more accurate to say that the East, even the Christian East, was an enemy of the West. At the very least, the Empire had proven detrimental to the goals of the crusaders.

Although subsequent religious leaders, especially popes, would continue to press for the reunification of the two churches, secular leaders, especially warriors, only became more and more suspicious of the Byzantine emperors. The gulf between the two branches of Christianity was widening and when the maw was finally fully open, it would mean, as during the Fourth Crusade, open war, which would cast Gregory VII’s dream of a unified church into the black abyss.

⁸⁹ For more on the disjoint between Eastern and Western Christianity and the pursuant theological and culture strife, see “Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth: Eastern Orthodoxy” in Shelley, *Church History*, and Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, pp. 96-100.

A similar gulf may be found in relations between Venice and Byzantium. Unlike the other Western powers, Venice had very good relations with the East for centuries. Byzantine assistance, in fact, was crucial to the development of the Republic of St. Mark from a tiny protectorate of the Empire to a full-fledged world power. Like the crusaders, however, the Venetians would slowly begin to doubt the intentions of the Greeks and their value to the advancement of the crusader cause. The Byzantines, also, would view the rise of the Venetians with the same suspicion and disdain which they held for the crusaders. To the Greeks, the Westerners, and the Venetians especially, were ambitious and dangerous barbarians. To the Latins, and especially the Venetians, the Greeks, who were originally friends, would quickly become enemies.

The primary focus of this thesis, however, is not so much the relationship between Byzantium and the West as the relationship between Byzantium and Venice. When Enrico Dandolo confronted the emperors of Constantinople, he did so at the forefront of nearly one thousand years of history. This historical tradition has serious implications in how one treats Venetian motivations and actions during the Fourth Crusade, especially when relative to the Byzantine state.

Broadly speaking, several major themes of Byzantine-Venetian relations must be understood within this thesis. The first involves the origins of Venice, both historical and mythological, and the roles that these play in both Venetian self-perception and Byzantine external-perception. These notions of origins also have implications in the longstanding political and economic bonds which united the two states, both in the long history of their alliance and just prior to the Fourth Crusade. Relative to the crusade itself, however, one must also consider the tradition of “holy war” in Venice, which is both very similar to and completely different from the more Continental conception of the crusade. Finally, the very idea of the Venetian state, its function, and its position relative to the Western and Eastern world, with special emphasis on the interplay between Venetian, imperial, and papal authority, must be considered. In the interests of cohesion and unity, this section will be laid out in chronological terms, approaching the aforementioned themes as they develop within Venetian history.

The origins of the Venetian polity remain befuddled, largely due to the mythological fabrications which have obscured the historical realities. Ostensibly, Venice was founded by prosperous citizens who, having grown tired of constant barbarian raids, relocated to the serenity of the nearby lagoons. There they established a beautiful new town on the island of Rialto at high noon on Friday, March 25th, 421.⁹⁰

The reality is starkly different. It is unlikely that any major settlements were even present along the lagoons of the Adriatic until the late 5th century, when Roman citizens, discouraged by years of barbarian raiding, left the more populated urban centers of the Veneto and coalesced into a semi-autonomous collective centered around the mainland city of Grado, a lagoon city well north of present-day Venice. There, although nominally under the control of the Empire, they established a self-governing

⁹⁰ John Julius Norwich, *A History of Venice*, New York: Vintage Books, 1982, pp. 4-5.

community which depended more and more upon the nearby islands and less and less upon the mainland.⁹¹ During the Byzantine Emperor Justinian's campaign to retake Western Europe, Venice entered into an alliance with the great general Narses. He was held in high regard by early Venetian chroniclers, who honored his tactical acumen and generosity with the spoils of war. It was also said that he dedicated two churches on *Rivoalto* (High Bank), which would later be called Rialto, and was home to some of the first major settlements on what would become Venice proper. By 539 Venetia had formally reasserted her ties to Byzantium and when Narses was general the polity provided ample support to the imperial army.⁹² Although the Venetians may have enjoyed their relative independence, the threat of Germanic expansion necessitated an alliance with a world power. The Byzantines, with their capitals thousands of miles away, would likely prove useful but liberal overlords.

This relationship, however, need not be associated with vassal subjugation. During the late 12th century, as Venice grew mightier and Byzantium weaker, Greek chroniclers would often paint the Venetians as disgruntled clients who were attempting to surpass their patron. During her nascence, the Empire had been of great service to the Most Serene Republic and so the Greeks viewed the growing power of Venice as a usurpation by up-jumped barbarians. While it is certainly true that Venice depended upon Byzantium for military support, the agreement was mutually beneficial, as is herein indicated. Although allied, Venice and Byzantium, even in the beginning, were separate entities.

This separation is best expressed in Venetian political myth. Future generations of Venetian nobleman would trace their lineage back to the first settlers of Venice, creating an idealized body of "founding fathers" comparable to the One Hundred Senators mentioned in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.⁹³ The compact corpus of leading men, who exchanged offices of power amongst each other, were to treat their power, not as a privilege, but a responsible, comparable to the "liturgies" of republican Athens.⁹⁴ Imperial involvement plays little role in these early myths of Venetian political origins. As it had been

⁹¹ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 6.

⁹² Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 2-3.

⁹³ Frederic C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, p. 4.

⁹⁴ Garry Wills, *Venice, Lion City*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001, pp. 111-113.

during the Barbarian Invasions, Venice looked to her own noblemen for protection. Beloved imperial officials, like Narses, were few and far between.

Naturally, there are no definitive methods of determining actual Imperial participation in the government affairs of the Venetian state at this time. Later historiography, however, clearly indicated that such a veneer was applied over early Venetian history. The *Altino Chronicle*, a collection of myths and pseudo-historical narratives collated during the twelfth century, includes a reference to the arrival of Prefect Flavius Longinus, an imperial official sent to replace Narses as viceroy of Italy. According to the *Chronicle*, a delegation of leading Venetian men met Longinus with this speech:

The Lord, who is our help and protection, has preserved us that we may live in these watery marshes, in our huts of wood and wattle. For this new Venice which we have raised in the lagoons has become a mighty habitation for us, so that we fear no invasion or seizure by any of the Kings or Princes of this world, nor even by the Emperor himself.⁹⁵

Lofty words from what would have been a relatively minor province far from the new epicenter of the Byzantine Empire. According to Justinian's reforms after the reconquest, however, local governors were to be appointed by the noblemen and bishops over whom they would rule. In addition to these universal Italian rites, according to the *Altino Chronicle*, the Venetians asked in particular that they not be required to take any oath to the emperor in Constantinople, but merely acknowledge his authority in exchange for protecting Venetian shipping interests. Nicol considers this nothing more than "patriotic fiction," but it is an important fiction – by the time of the writing of the *Altino Chronicle*, it behooved Venice to claim origins independent of Byzantium.⁹⁶

This independence was far less important to the early Venetians. When the Lombards began to invade northern Italy in seventh century, the last vestiges of imperial power on the mainland were driven away. The major urban areas of the Veneto, including Aquileia, were attacked and conquered, absorbed into the Lombard empire. The local bishop fled his see and established a new one at Grado. The majority

⁹⁵ *Altino Chronicle*, in A.S.I., Vol. VIII, in Norwich, *Venice*, p. 9.

⁹⁶ Nicol, *Venice and Byzantium*, pp. 3-4.

of the locals fled to Torcello, a large island located in the same lagoon as Venice.⁹⁷ The civic government followed soon after, in 639. The Greek governor and the bureaucracy fled to the existing city of Cittanova, which was renamed Heraclea to honor a later Byzantine emperor. The government continued, however, under a *magister militum* who apparently offered a viable means of sustenance to his charges. In the late sixth century, a group of bishops in the Veneto under Lombard rule wrote to the Emperor Maurice asking that they be liberated from the “grievous foreign yoke” of their oppressors.⁹⁸ Whatever autonomy the Venetians of the 10th century would apply to their ancestors, the Venetians of the Early Middle Ages depended heavily upon Byzantium for military support.

With imperial protection, Venice began to prosper. Of course, it was still anachronistic in the 7th and 8th centuries to speak of a city of Venice. The majority of the people lived in enclaves scattered around the lagoon, supporting the three major urban areas. The new bishop of Grado retained ecumenical control from that city, while the economic powers tended to coalesce around the thriving city of Torcello. The mercantile elites, however, began to feud with the church leaders for power. The imperial bureaucrats at Heraclea were of small use – as outsiders, they were too little trusted to provide strong leadership but, in keeping with the status quo, they refused to allow local leaders to assume decisive powers within the Veneto.⁹⁹ The elites of the region were beginning to see beyond the realm of Byzantine control. They desired their own leader.

The early eleventh century historian John the Deacon refers to this monumental event in his *Cronaca*: the election of the first *doge* of Venice. He writes, “All the Venetians, with the one patriarch and the assembly of bishops, determined by common counsel that henceforth it would be honorable to abide under dukes rather than under tribunes. And while they were pondering whom amongst them they

⁹⁷ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 10-11.

⁹⁸ *Gregorii Papae Registrum Epistolarum*, ed. P. Ewald, I, I (Berlin, 1887), in *MGH, Epist.*, I, pp. 17-21, in Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 5).

⁹⁹ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 12.

should convey to this dignity, at last they came upon a most skilled and illustrious man, Paulicius by name, whom, after giving to him the faith of oaths, they established as duke in the city, Heraclea.”¹⁰⁰

Naturally, John is writing many years after the event itself and managed to greatly muddle the details. Paulicius was actually Paul, exarch of Ravenna, a duly invested Byzantine official. Subsequent histories of the Venetian Republic do not even list him as a *doge*.¹⁰¹ John the Deacon’s treatment of Paulicius, however, indicates a clear need for leadership in this period, a need so strong that a future historian fabricated it. Paulicius was a myth, but a very powerful one. An imaginary portrait of him can even be found amongst the other doges in the *Sala del Maggior Consiglio* in the Venetian Ducal Palace.¹⁰² His role as political genitor was a very important one and would heavily influence Venetian notions of government. As Lane notes in his examination of later Venetian historiography and political identity, “Other Italian city-states of the Later Middle Ages acknowledged a theoretical sovereignty of the emperor or pope, but the Venetians looked on no such high authority to legitimize their government. They believed it legitimate and possessed of final authority because it expressed the will of the Venetians, a people who had always been free, that is, independent of outside control.”¹⁰³ Paulicius was constructed as the first of many doges who answered, not to some distant empire, but the people of Venice.

During the Iconoclast Controversy promulgated under Emperor Leo III, all of Italy would rebel openly against imperial authority. The Venetians, already eager for independence, seized upon the religious justification of this controversy to aid their cause. They were sanctioned in their rage by Pope Gregory II, who vouchsafed the tradition of venerating, but not worshiping, icons as a fundamental belief of the Christian faith.¹⁰⁴ All across Italy, Gregory encouraged the faithful to rise up against the heretical purge of art undertaken by the Byzantines. In the Veneto, Exarch Paul, the inspiration for the fictitious first doge of Venice, was deposed and killed by the true first doge of Venice, Orso of Heraclea. A resident of the imperial center of the Veneto, Orso would have been aware of the permutations of imperial

¹⁰⁰ John the Deacon, *Cronaca Veneziana*, p. 91.

¹⁰¹ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 13.

¹⁰² Giandomenico Romanelli, *Guide: The Doge’s Palace of Venice*, Milan: Electra, 2005, pp. 95-105.

¹⁰³ Lane, *Maritime Republic*, p. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Shelley, *History*, pp. 134-135.

government. His transition to power, although predicated upon a revolution, was relatively smooth. As the violence began to wane, in fact, Orso was even acknowledged by the emperor in Constantinople as the new *dux* of Venice and was given the honorific *hypatos*, a position comparable to that of consul. The title was so esteemed that Orso assumed the surname “Ipatos.”¹⁰⁵

The return of cordial relations between the West and East, despite the continuation of the iconoclast issue, was brought about by the rising strength of the Lombards. Already masters of large sections of northern Italy, the Lombards, who were Arians and therefore hated heretics, represented a far greater threat than the emperor in Constantinople in the eyes of the pope. Italian governments were encouraged to work with the Byzantines in an effort to curtail the Lombard flood. In Venice, Doge Orso, in exchange for the recognition of his legitimacy, renewed relations with the emperor and conceded the continued over-lordship of Byzantium.¹⁰⁶ Although now under the direct authority of a local duke, Venice remained an imperial province.

The myths surrounding the first doge of Venice indicate in Venetian historical writing a trend towards independence and regional autonomy. Despite the historical realities, the Venetians found it expedient to refer to their early history as free from imperial domination. Even during the 10th century the Venetians conceived of themselves as a sovereign nation from their inception, casting the Byzantine Empire in a secondary role as temporary protector or ally. The Byzantines themselves would reject such an understanding of early Venetian history. To the Greeks, the Venetians were imperial colonists who depended wholly upon the largess of the Empire. These conflicting stories about the origins of the Venetian republic would be but the first of many which would greatly shape how each of the powers viewed the other. The battle over the perceptions of Venice would predicate the battles between Byzantium and Venice.

¹⁰⁵ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 12-13.

¹⁰⁶ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 10-11. Again, the exact nature of this agreement remains amorphous. In exchange for access to the imperial military, Venice was to serve as a staging ground for imperial action in the West. It is not clear if Venice had yet assumed its duties as naval guardian of Byzantium in the Adriatic, her primary function from the middle of the 8th century onwards.

These battles would primarily be fought by the emperors and doges, as each vied for power in and over Venice. Over the coming decades, the office of the doge would become closely associated with the regalia and ritual of the office of the exarch, and later, of the emperor. John Julius Norwich views these similarities as evidence of cultural exchange and harmony between an imperial power and its colonies.¹⁰⁷ When one accounts for the historical sentiments concerning Byzantium within Venice, especially during the early Middle Ages, however, the relationship becomes more complex. The following centuries would be awash with Venetian insurrection against Byzantine authority and the slow establishment of a new, independent political order. If the doge assumed offices and mannerisms formerly associated with the emperor, it was not because he wished to mimic him – it was because he wished to replace him. The office of the doge was slowly supplanting the office of the emperor in the Veneto, replacing the imperial diadem with the ducal *cornero*.

The actual break in Venetian loyalty to Byzantium would be some time in coming, but the doge also had to negotiate carefully within Italian politics. Since the 7th century, the petty kings and princes of Italy had turned to the pope in Rome for protection. Although his authority was not supreme, as the Byzantine presence on the peninsula weakened, the Vicar of Christ was best able to ensure order and stability.¹⁰⁸ When the Lombards prepared for a final push against Byzantine holdings in Venice during the middle of the 8th century, the popes attempted to orchestrate a resistance. Emperor Constantine V was heavily involved in the needs of the Eastern Empire but spared little thought for the West, save his insistence upon continuing the iconoclastic purge. This earned papal and Italian distrust of his methods. When Ravenna was attacked in 732, the emperor ignored the problem. The exarch fled to Venice, where he was well-received, and with the help of the Venetian navy the city was retaken.¹⁰⁹ It would, however, fall again in 751 to the king of the Lombards, Aistulf, never again to return to Byzantine hands.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 16.

¹⁰⁸ Thomas F.X. Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984, pp. 57-58.

¹⁰⁹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 11.

¹¹⁰ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. I*, p. 364.

The loss of the Byzantine Empire, however, would be the gain of Venice. Aistulf did not continue into Venetian territory but instead contented himself with his gains in and around Ravenna. This has led Thomas F.X. Noble to conclude that the Venetians may have been involved in the attack on Ravenna and had been given their liberty in exchange for this assistance.¹¹¹ Norwich believes that the Lombards were merely practical and unwilling to engage in a protracted war with the Venetians in the muddy and desolate swamps surrounding the lagoons. Furthermore, the Lombards were faced with a far greater threat from over the Alps: the Franks.¹¹² In a few short years, the Franks would become the new defenders of papal interest and solidify their position as the “strong right arm” of the pope.¹¹³

Franco-papal relations, while important to Venetian history, are not the topic of this thesis. Far more interesting is the decline in imperial power in Italy during the 8th and 9th centuries. In 742 the people of Malamocco, a non-imperial city on the Venetian lagoon, revolted against Doge Marcellus, who had ruled for a brief time after Orso. Little is known about Marcellus except for the fact that he ruled from Heraclea, a distinctly imperial city.¹¹⁴ That the revolution against him arose in Malamocco, a more culturally Venetian and republican city, implies that the death of Marcellus came at the hands of a mob anxious to remove imperial influence in the Veneto. The fact that Marcellus was replaced by the son of Orso, who had gained the ducal throne during a rebellion against the Byzantines, strengthens this argument, especially when one considers that Orso’s son changed his name from the Greek-sounded Teodato to the Latinized Deusdedit.¹¹⁵ Teodato moved the capital from Heraclea to Malamocco and established a government consisting largely of local Venetians.

Local governance, however, was easily upset by local feuds. Stability in Venice was constantly threatened as three factions – those in favor of the Byzantines, those in favor of the Franks, and those in

¹¹¹ Noble, *Republic*, p. 60.

¹¹² Norwich, *Venice*, p. 16.

¹¹³ Shelley, *History*, p. 175.

¹¹⁴ It should be noted that in his *Cronaca Veneziana* John the Deacon still refers to Heraclea as “Civis Nova,” the original name of the city before it was renamed to honor Emperor Heraclius. It is possible that during the 10th century the city had reverted to older, non-Byzantine nomenclature, a shift which could have occurred when the capital was moved, John the Deacon, *Cronaca*, p. 94.

¹¹⁵ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 16.

favor of an independent Venice – vied for power. One such feud set off a massive war between the Byzantine Empire and the Franks for control of Venice, with Venice eventually siding with the East. In 810 a peace accord was finally reached between all parties, establishing Venice as a Byzantine protectorate, although the exact nature of Byzantium “protection” is not clear.¹¹⁶

In these machinations of the early 9th century one must come to grips with Venice’s role betwixt two world empires: the Franks and the Byzantines. Many Venetians were attempting to throw off the mantle of imperial purple and clad themselves in new colors, either the banner of the Franks or of a truly free Venice. In the coming centuries Venice would keep an even keel between the shoals of the two empires, recognizing that she needed their support but unwilling to fully accept either as a master. While overall Venice would remain closest to the Byzantine Empire, her relations with the Western Empire would have great influence on her policies and culture.

Under the terms between the two empires in 810, there was peace in Italy. The doge, Agnello, seized the opportunity to begin important infrastructure work within Venice proper, which was slowly rising up from the islands of Rialto. At this time the foundations of the first Ducal Palace were laid down and a chapel to the patron saint of Venice, St. Theodore, who had been venerated under the aegis of the Byzantines, was erected.¹¹⁷ Agnello laid the foundations for the future splendors of the city of Venice. His rule, however, was predicated heavily upon Byzantine influence. While the government in Constantinople remained aloof from Venetian affairs, it would have been well understood that Agnello served at the behest of the emperor. It fell to Agnello’s son, Giustiniano, to once again assert the independence of the Venetian state.

This assertion came in the form of Venice’s patron saint, St. Mark the Evangelist. Stories about his preaching in the Veneto spread rapidly during this period. The most common version is as follows. While out upon a boat, a storm had arisen. An angel of the Lord appeared, comforting St. Mark with the words “Peace unto you, Mark, my evangelist. Here your body will lie.” This myth was likely fabricated to

¹¹⁶ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁷ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 26-28.

justify the removal of the body of St. Mark from Alexandria in 829, when Venetian merchants absconded with the saint's remains to keep them from falling into Muslim hands. St. Mark quickly became a saint closely associated with Venetian identity. He supplanted the old rule of St. Theodore and would serve as a fitting bulwark against St. Peter, founder and patron of the papal republic. At the Council of Mantua in 827, the see of Grado, now based in Venice proper at the Cathedral of St. Pietro de Castello, was formerly placed under the archdiocese of Aquilea, which was part of the Frankish Empire. Without a religious capital, Venice risked falling under the influence of a foreign-dominated faith. The presence of St. Mark, however, guaranteed sovereignty – an evangelist was a very valuable ally.¹¹⁸ Doge Giustiniano immediately began work on a great chapel to house the remains of St. Mark, which was completed during the reign of Giustiniano's brother and successor, Giovanni. The *furta sacra* proved to be quiet a coup for Venice. Norwich implies that the merchants may have been working under the doge's orders.¹¹⁹

Whether or not the doge orchestrated the theft, he was quick to make use of it. His father had ruled according to the largess of the Greeks and so Giustiniano undertook a rapid campaign to disassociate himself from his Eastern lords. In 819 Emperor Leo V had attempted to curry Venetian favor by lavishing several important relics – a piece of the True Cross, the Virgin's veil, and the body of St. Zaccaria – upon the doge, likely with the hope that St. Zaccaria would become the new patron.¹²⁰ The choice of St. Mark, preacher to the Italians, would have sent a clear message to the Byzantines about where Venetian loyalties lay, although no Greek opinions on the matter are extant. By throwing off their associations with their former patron, St. Theodore, in exchange for a saint who had distinctly Venetian appeal, the Venetians were asserting their independence from the Empire. A new patron meant a new political and cultural direction.¹²¹ The selection of St. Mark as protector of Venice was meant to send a clear message that the Venetians no longer needed to rely upon the protection of the Byzantine Empire.

¹¹⁸ Rostand, *Myths*, pp. 51-54.

¹¹⁹ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 29.

¹²⁰ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 23-25. A pro-Byzantine faction attempted to place the relics of Saints Sergios and Bacchus in the Cathedral of St. Peter in Venice proper, but the move was met with staunch popular resistance.

¹²¹ For more on St. Mark and his association with Venice, see "The Peace of St. Mark" in Rosand, *Myths*, pp. 47-95.

And Venice would be quick to support this assertion of independence with action. As Venetian trade expanded, it became an even greater target for Slav pirates operating from the eastern coast of the Adriatic. Doge Pietro Tradonico took a proactive stance against these aggressions, launching several successful campaigns in the mid ninth century. Venetian naval supremacy was so great that in a treaty with Emperor Lothar dated 840, Doge Pietro personally assumed responsible for maintaining order within the Adriatic, implicitly making the area, to corrupt a Roman phrase, a “Venetian lake.”¹²² At the same time, Doge Pietro reformed the honorifics of the doge. Where before the doge had been *humilis*, he was now *glorissimus*, and where before he had ruled through *dominus noster* the Byzantine emperor, he now ruled by *gratia dei*.¹²³ Venice had acquired a patron saint to call her own and a region of influence for which she had an imperial mandate to rule. Slowly, Venice was growing.

The Republic was largely ignored by the East until 867, when the famed Emperor Basil sought to reestablish their ties.¹²⁴ Byzantium was once again flexing its muscles. At a state visit in 879, during the reign of Doge Orso I, imperial ambassadors conferred upon the doge the title of *protospatharios* and in return Orso sent to the emperor a present of twelve incredibly valuable bells.¹²⁵ As Nicol has noted, it was very rare for imperial delegations to visit provincial commands. An embassy would imply that Byzantium was finally treating Venice like a sovereign nation, an honor the Franks had acknowledged decades earlier. The granting of new titles, however, also implied an effort by the emperor to attract Venice into a voluntary relationship with the East. The former vassal was now a potential ally.

Venetians, however, were wary of imperial dominance. They had only recently thrown off the Byzantine yoke and were eager to maintain their independence. When Doge Pietro Candiano IV accepted lands and a title from the Western emperor, effectively making himself a vassal of a foreign lord, the

¹²² Norwich, *Venice*, p. 31.

¹²³ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 29.

¹²⁴ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. II*, pp. 89-91.

¹²⁵ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 33-34.

Venetian people became disgruntled. When he attempted to use Venetian conscripts to defend his private territorial holdings, they revolted and killed him.¹²⁶

The reign of Pietro Candiano IV illustrates the entrenched anti-imperial sentiments of the Venetian people. Venice, although dependent upon the two empires in many ways, wished to see the empires render honor to her and under the brilliant reign of Doge Pietro Orseolo II, she would gain such acclaim. In 992 Pietro concluded one of the most beneficial treaties ever devised with Byzantium: *bona fide* Venetian goods could be sold in the East at tariffs far lower than goods from other ports and Venetian merchants themselves would be directly under the imperial minister of finance, effectively freeing them from bureaucratic delays. The greatest boon, however, came in the year 1000, when Emperor Basil II was bogged down in constant warfare with Tsar Samuel of Bulgaria. Unable to defend the territories along Dalmatia, Basil offered to cede them to Venice as protectorates under imperial suzerainty. Pietro gladly accepted and launched a massive fleet to secure his new-found holdings and defeat the pirates who had multiplied in the unregulated waters. Friendship was firmly established between Pietro and Basil, Venice and Byzantium, when Giovanni, Pietro's son, married an imperial princess and niece of the emperor.¹²⁷

In 1062, solidifying her gains in Dalmatia, which were more and more becoming Venetian land and less and less an imperial protectorate, a small Venetian navy recaptured the city of Zara, a major port and source of timber which had been convinced to rebel against Venice by King Stephen of Hungary, who was generally contributing to the chaos along the Eastern coast of the Adriatic. It was not the first time that Zara would throw off Venetian power and the fate of this little port town would have monumental influence on the course of Venetian history.

Growing power, however, meant growing risks. Doge Domenico Selvo, in joint action with Emperor Alexios I, took steps to counter the rising power of the Normans in the Mediterranean. Although the efforts failed, Alexios was convinced that Venetians were worthy allies. As a reward, he began to make yearly contributions to every church in Venice and granted the Venetians nearly full tax exemption

¹²⁶ John the Deacon, *Cronaca veneziana*, pp. 138-140. John the Deacon offers a riveting account of the attack on the ducal palace by the mob and it is quite possible that he was an eye-witness to the events.

¹²⁷ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. II*, p. 257.

and access to berths along the Golden Horn. He also honored the doge with the title of *protosebastos*.¹²⁸

With Byzantine power guarding the way, Venice now had access to all of the wealth of the Orient.

Venetian hegemony in the Adriatic and a favorable trading relationship with Byzantium proved incredibly beneficial for the Venetian state and by the late 11th century an abundance of wealth was pouring into the city. The population was approaching 50,000 souls, making Venice one the largest metropolises in Europe, and to celebrate this wealth, glory, and divine favor, the ducal chapel of St. Mark's was rebuilt on a monumental scale. Its design was drawn from the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople and when it was consecrated in 1094 it was one of the most sumptuous holy places in the Western world.¹²⁹ Venice was solidifying its position as a world power, one which, like St. Mark's, was drawn from Byzantine origins but destined for her own greatness. Economic and military alliances with Byzantium had proven very helpful for the development of the Venetian state. These associations, however, represented a communion of equals. Greek observers, however, as evidenced by Choniates, persisted in their belief that the Venetians remained, even at this late juncture, vassals to the empire.¹³⁰ The Venetians strongly rejected any such claims and cleaved to their independence. Such views, however, would soon harm the Byzantine position. As the power of the Republic of St. Mark grew, it invariably siphoned off, especially in the West, imperial power.

A year after St. Mark's was re-consecrated, Pope Urban II issued at Clermont the call for the First Crusade. The traditional school of thought regarding Venetian crusading efforts, firmly established in modern scholarship by John Julius Norwich, asserts that the Venetians were "reluctant crusaders," more interested in economic gain than the plight of the Holy Land.¹³¹ The Venetians eventually dispatched a fleet, after the conquest of the holy city, and when the Venetians reached Jerusalem, they entered into a

¹²⁸ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. II, pp72-75.

¹²⁹ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 6-7. St. Mark's would quickly become an emblem of Venetian might and glory, especially in the face of Byzantine. During the 13th century, as is argued below, renovations to the exterior of the chapel would codify Venetian superiority over the Byzantine Empire. In the 11th century, however, the program seemed more aimed at imitating, rather than eclipsing, the Eastern Empire.

¹³⁰ See below.

¹³¹ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 76-78. This was the first major conflict between Venice and Pisa and it would certainly not be the last. The two trading powers would compete for trading supremacy in the Orient for centuries to come.

treaty with the newly-formed Christian kingdom of Jerusalem in which they would receive exclusive trading rights with the fledgling kingdom, a market and church in every town, control over one third of all land that they helped conquer, and complete ownership of Tripoli, although they would have to render tribute to the king. Norwich calls this deal “hardly redolent of selfless crusading zeal” and writes off Venetian involvement in the crusade as purely self-serving. He says that the French only accepted the Venetian offer so quickly out of desperation.¹³² Donald Nicol continues this line of thinking, asserting that Venice appeared to be more interested in her own gains than the interests of the crusade.

A newer wave of scholarship has criticized this portrayal of Venice during the crusades. Championed by Thomas Madden, this new school argues that Venice actually had a well-developed and devoted ardor for the crusade. Elena Bellomo has advanced this school of thought in her work on Venetian involvement in the First Crusade.¹³³ As Madden notes, when Urban issued his decree at Clermont, the reigning doge, Vitale Falier, was dying. When he finally passed away in 1096, the Venetians immediately elected Vitale Michiel, one of the most ardent supporters of the crusade. He held a grand mass in St. Mark’s where he commended his people to gladly take up the cross to defend Christ and to defend the Holy Land, all with the understanding that there was the possibility for great wealth in the Orient. Over nine thousand Venetians took the cross and work began on the massive crusader armada. If the fleet which left Venice in 1099 was tardy, it was only because it was so large: two hundred ships, the single largest contribution to the effort by any single power. Norwich also fails to note that after the death of Godfrey and the abandonment of the effort to take Acre, the Venetian fleet aided Tancred in his considerably less impressive conquest of Haifa. The crusaders returned home with little material benefit, although they did have in tow the body of St. Nicholas, patron of sailors, which they had stolen from the

¹³² Norwich, *Venice*, p. 79. One should consider, however, that the French could have just as easily accepted the Venetian offer so quickly because it seemed perfectly fair to them. Every major member of the First Crusade expected, and received, except of course for those who returned home, a fiefdom in the Holy Land to support their interests in the crusader kingdom. It should come as no surprise that Venice should expect, and receive, a comparable means of support.

¹³³ Elena Bellomo, “The First Crusade and the Latin east as seen from Venice: the Account of the *Translatio sancti Nicolai*,” in *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. XVII, No. 4 (Nov., 2009), pp. 420–443.

island of Myra on their way to the Holy Land.¹³⁴ Venice continued to build both her spiritual and economic capital.

In 1110 another Venetian fleet set sail, this one containing 100 ships. They aided King Baldwin I, who had succeeded Godfrey, in taking the city of Sidon and for that they received markets in Acre, which had been conquered six years earlier. It is possible, although it has not been stated in any extant resources, that Baldwin was honoring the agreement that Godfrey had made with the Venetians in 1099.¹³⁵ Venice was now well-positioned in the Holy Land, augmenting its growing market in Alexandria where it profited greatly from the spice trade although, pursuant to the edict of 971, Venice did no trade in strategic goods with the Muslim.

In Byzantium, however, the situation was rapidly deteriorating. Alexios, perhaps hoping to increase competition and so decrease prices in the Byzantine Empire, granted sweeping trade rights to Pisa in 1111. The Pisans received reduced tariff rates and could establish their own quarter in Constantinople, a privilege held formerly by the Venetians alone. To make matters worse, when Alexius died, his son, John II, revoked all of the privileges held by the Venetians. While this was within his rights, the Venetians were dumbfounded. Nicol has argued that John, enraged by Venetian involvement in the East and the conduct of Venetians in the Empire, including the theft of saints' bodies, prompted this backlash. John wished to reiterate that Byzantium was still the dominant power.¹³⁶ This backlash may also have been predicated upon the common Greek trope of viewing Latins as barbarians, unworthy of power and influence. Venice would not, however, be able to answer this affront as another crisis was rising in the east.

¹³⁴ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 10-12. The theft of the body of St. Nicholas was one of a series of *furta sacra* undertaken by the Venetians in this period. In 1107 or 1108, a member of the Dandolo family would steal the body of St. Stephen the protomartyr from a church in Constantinople, creating a great scandal. Nicol sees the theft of saints' bodies from Byzantium as indicative of a growing resentment for the empire on the part of the Venetians, Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 78.

¹³⁵ Norwich somewhat smugly asserts that Venice had done "nothing" to merit Acre and while the attack had in fact been ten years earlier it would not be unlike the Venetians to recall the agreement which Godfrey had made with them, Norwich, *Venice*, p. 81.

¹³⁶ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 77-78.

In 1119, King Baldwin II of Jerusalem wrote Pope Calixtus II with desperate tidings: the kingdom of Jerusalem was threatened on every side and required immediate assistance. Calixtus passed the request on to the Republic of Venice and in 1120 ten papal legates arrived in the city.

The doge of Venice, Domenico Michiel, escorted the legates to St. Mark's. There, he gave a moving oration in which he begged the Venetian people to join him on this holy crusade:

Venetians, what splendid renown and immortal glory will you receive through this? What rewards will you receive from God? You will earn the admiration of Europe and Asia, the standard of St. Mark will fly triumphantly over those distant lands, new profits, new sources of greatness will come to this most noble country... Enthused with the holy zeal of religion, moved by the suffering of your brethren, excited by the example of all Europe, prepare your arms, think on the honors, think on your triumphs, and be guided by the blessings of heaven.¹³⁷

The response was overwhelming. In just under a year Venice put to sea a fleet of approximately 120 ships with over 15,000 fighting men. Michiel, however, had affairs to settle with Byzantium before he could depart. Venetians had died to keep Corfu secure from the Normans but since John II had, in the doge's eyes, betrayed Venice, Venice would revenge herself by taking the island. In 1122 the crusader fleet stopped at Corfu and besieged it. Early in 1123, however, Michiel learned that the situation in the Holy Land was rapidly deteriorating. Urged by ambassadors from the king of Jerusalem, the fleet set sail to defend the Holy Land.¹³⁸ Despite what many modern historians might claim, Venice was a city as pious as any other in Europe.¹³⁹ That the doge was interested in securing his position and enriching his followers while on crusade was not in itself wrong – as even Urban II had stated, the wealth of the Orient was the right of any crusader, provided that he gained without threatening his vow. While Michiel was willing to use his fleet to aid Venice, he never forgot his holy purpose and, when the time was right, he struck out against the Muslim enemies of Christ.

¹³⁷Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, Venice: Libreria Filippi, 1975, 2:29.

¹³⁸Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 14-16.

¹³⁹Nicol believes that the fleet had only been assembled to cow the emperor and rein in the Byzantine Empire and that they "grudgingly" abandoned the siege, Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 78-79. Such a reading depends wholly upon the interpretation of the historian, as such a charge is not leveled upon the Venetians by any contemporary source. Nicol fails to consider that after aiding the kingdoms of Outremer the Venetians would launch their own fleets to deal with the emperor. If the Venetians had always intended to deal personally with John, it seems unlikely that they would outfit a crusader fleet and subvert its mission. Why not simply dispatch an anti-Byzantine fleet from the beginning, rather than employing the pretense of a crusader fleet?

Baldwin had been captured and now the Fatimid fleet was waiting off the coast near Ascalon. The doge dispatched a small squadron to lure the Egyptians into battle and then committed his full navy to the fray. The victory was spectacular. The entire Fatimid navy was sunk and Michiel earned special honor for personally arranging his flagship against that of the Egyptian admiral. The fleet returned in triumph to Jerusalem, where Michiel remained for several months negotiating a new treaty. The terms were spectacular. Venice would receive, in every town in the Kingdom of Jerusalem, a street with a bakery, baths, and a church, along with full exemption from all taxes and tariffs and the right to employ her own weights and measures. Venice would also receive a third of Tyre and Ascalon, if they could be conquered.¹⁴⁰ Venice had proven herself a valuable ally. The crusader kingdoms had been well served by the Venetian fleet and was clearly interested in maintaining a strong connection to this dominant naval power. Tyre would fall in 1124 but Michiel would not have the chance to take Ascalon. His fleets returned to Venice, with much rejoicing. The Venetians had completed their holy task and in the process secured remarkable wealth and prestige.

The expedition of Doge Domenico Michiel was the last major crusader spearheaded by the Venetians until 1202. It capped off, however, decades of Venetian involvement in the Holy Land. Contrary to the assumptions of many historians, these efforts in the Middle Orient were not aimed exclusively at wealth acquisition. The Venetians rendered invaluable services to the armies of the First Crusade as they laid the foundations for the Kingdom of Jerusalem and again to King Baldwin in his efforts to defend this kingdom. As Madden and Bellomo have demonstrated, these services were offered with genuine piety and devotion – the moving speech of Domenico Michiel is perhaps the best expression of Venetian crusading zeal. That the Venetians also grew wealthy off of these expeditions should in no way mar what they achieved. All crusaders who assumed lands in the Middle Orient and established new kingdoms were also growing rich off of their crusader vows. These kingdoms were necessary for the material sustenance of the Latin East. The Venetians, likewise, saw to their own sustenance and in doing so established the lines of trade, as well as the military institutions, which sustained the crusaders in their

¹⁴⁰ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 86-89.

new environs. Venice did not grow rich at the expense of the Kingdoms of Jerusalem and Acre. Rather, all of these Christian states prospered together as they melded religious devotion with temporal might.

The news of the great Venetian victory against the Egyptians quickly spread through the Mediterranean. After a series of raids launched against the Eastern Empire, which included the acquisition of several new saints' relics, John II came to terms with the Venetians. In 1126 he renewed all existing trade agreements with the Venetians with the understanding that Venice would continue her "service" to the Empire.¹⁴¹ Throughout the chrysobull, John refers to the ancient relationship between the two powers. His efforts to remind the Venetians of their former loyalty are likely meant as an attempt to "save face:" it has been widely accepted that John only issued the chrysobull to end the raids and hostility of Venice. To maintain power in the agreement, he would have to rely on Venice's past with Byzantium. The Eastern Empire was certainly in no position to reign in Venetian ambition with military might, so John was forced to dredge up past obligations and agreements. The Venetians accepted this arraignment, ignoring the arrogant tone of the letter because, after all, they had achieved their goal: the restitution of their trade rights. If the emperor felt the need to bandy about lofty phrases from by-gone days, so be it.

Relations with the Eastern Empire would initially improve but then suffer catastrophically under John's successor, Manuel. Early in his reign Manuel resolved to retake the island of Corfu from the Normans, who had launched another invasion of the East. Manuel had already granted the Venetians a renewal of their trade rights and in 1148, after Doge Pietro Polani committed a fleet to aid the Byzantines in their attack on Corfu, the emperor granted the Venetians more land in their quarter in Constantinople. The death of Polani, however, delayed the action.

When the emperor visited the siege-grounds the following spring, he was disgusted to learn that the Venetians and Byzantines had been fighting amongst themselves as much as they had been fighting the Normans: numerous brawls had broken out between the ostensibly allied forces and the Venetians had even torched several Greek ships in their berths. The greatest insult, however, occurred when several drunken Venetians stumbled onto the imperial flagship. Breaking into the vessel, they stole the emperor's

¹⁴¹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 80-81.

raiment and dressed up a Nubian as the imperial person. They then staged a mock coronation of the slave, much to the amusement of the Venetians and the horror of the Greeks. Manuel was infuriated at this insult but was unable to do anything about it, as he depended upon Venetian support. He personally led the joint attack against Corfu in 1149.¹⁴²

What is one to make of these strange events? Niketas Choniates records the events during the siege of Corfu in lurid detail. He identifies no source of the quarrel, nor does he lay the blame on any one side, saying only that a “lamentable misadventure” arose and the “Romans and the Venetians quarreled in the center of the agora.” Despite the best efforts of leaders on both sides, the conflict could not be settled until the Byzantine governor dispatched his elite guard to put down the Venetians. It was then that the “barbarous nature” of the Venetians prompted them to burn the Byzantine ships and committing the “monstrous” evil of their mock coronation. Although Choniates states that the armies soon “became friends again,” he notes that Manuel never forgot this grave insult.¹⁴³

Donald Nicol believes that accounts like this one expressed imperial dissatisfaction with what was perceived as Venetian “arrogance.” By some accounts, 10,000 Venetians lived in Constantinople following the expansion of their quarters. These tenets tended to be wealthy merchants or the sons of merchants in the East representing their family interests. Entitled, by imperial decree, to live under their own laws, these men kept Venetian customs and loyalties.¹⁴⁴ The Byzantines fancied themselves heirs to the Roman Empire, and yet within their very capital, they were subjected to the constant sight of foreigners, men held to be little more than barbarians, growing ever wealthier and more powerful.¹⁴⁵

Niketas Choniates offers this fascinating glimpse into Byzantine perceptions of these Venetian residents:

[The Venetians are] nourished by the sea, they are vagabonds like the Phoenicians and cunning of mind. Adopted by the Romans when there had been need for naval forces, they had left their homeland for Constantinople in swarms and by clans. From there they dispersed throughout the Roman Empire, retaining only their family names and looked upon as natives and genuine Romans, they increased and flocked together. They amassed

¹⁴² Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 102-103.

¹⁴³ Choniates, *O Byzantium*, Book VI.II, secs. 85-87, pp. 50-51.

¹⁴⁴ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 88.

¹⁴⁵ Madden notes this consistent characterization of Venetians as boorish, swaggering *nouveau riche* in the histories of Cinnamus and Choniates, Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 9, n. 59.

great wealth and became so arrogant and impudent that not only did they behave belligerently to the Romans but they also ignored imperial threats and commands.¹⁴⁶

The Venetians, who had initially been welcomed into Constantinople and received as “genuine” Romans, had, in Choniates’ opinion, forgotten their place. His references to military service and the paternal terminology of “adoption” imply that Choniates saw the Venetians as inferior beings who had been received into the imperial fold for their own benefit, not unlike the *foederati* of the Late Empire.¹⁴⁷ The Venetians, however, had failed to maintain the *status quo* and grown too proud for their positions. Many Byzantines, like Choniates, would feel that by the 12th century the Venetians had gained a great deal while the Byzantines had gained considerably less from this relationship.

And Emperor Manuel was at the forefront of reversing Venetian gains. When the Western emperor, Conrad III, fell ill while departing for the Second Crusade, he recovered in Constantinople. He and Manuel struck up a strong friendship which was cemented with a marriage between Manuel’s niece, Theodora, and Conrad’s cousin, Heinrich of Babenberg, in 1148. Paul Magdalino believes that “the renewal of the German alliance determined the principal orientation of Manuel’s foreign policy for the rest of his reign.”¹⁴⁸ This alliance, after the debacle at Corfu, would have monumental repercussions for Byzantine-Venetian relations. Even before the mock coronation at Corfu, Manuel had been suspicious of Venetian intentions and power. Byzantines had complained of Venetian hubris for decades: now the imperial person had suffered at its hands and Manuel busied himself in the search for new allies. Conrad was an excellent candidate, but there alliance came to naught.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Choniates, *O Byzantium*, Book V, sec. 171, p. 97.

¹⁴⁷ The custom of granting Roman citizenship to barbarian tribes could be found through-out Roman history but its function in a Late Imperial or Byzantine context is of special consideration here. While the Byzantines often claimed to be the superior party in the *foederati* system, most of the agency, especially in the 5th century, lay with the barbarians and the “payments” given by the Imperial government were really tribute. Imperial delusions were perhaps at their highest in 488, when Emperor Zeno claimed that he had allowed Theodoric the Ostrogoth to rule Italy as an “imperial agent,” provided that he return the Western insignia and regalia to Constantinople, Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. I, pp. 173-179. In reality, Zeno had sacrificed the West to Theodoric in a desperate bid to preserve his own power. He was a victim, who shouted loudly that his mugging had been his own idea.

¹⁴⁸ Paul Magdalino, “The Byzantine Empire, 1118-1204,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, pt. 2, ed. David Luscombe & Jonathan Riley-Smith, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 621.

¹⁴⁹ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 102-104. The implication of an Eastern and Western imperial alliance are astounding. The two empires had been vying for power and prestige since the time of Charlemagne and the resulting animosity had doomed almost any diplomatic proceedings between the two powers. That Conrad and Manuel would

Conrad would die in 1152 and his successor, Frederick I, proved no friend to the Byzantines and was unwilling to assist in Manuel's attack on Italy. Manuel, however, needed an Italian port. Venice had a stranglehold on imperial trade in the West and thus could, in the eyes of many Byzantine merchants and likely the emperor himself, siphon off imperial profits. Manuel thus dedicated himself to securing the port of Apulia, which was attractive because of its strong position in the Mediterranean and its long history of Greek rule. Despite some success, the invasion faltered without imperial support and Manuel entered into peace negotiations with William I of Sicily, Roger's successor and longtime enemy of Byzantium, in 1158.¹⁵⁰ Manuel was having considerable trouble consolidating his holdings in Italy.

Venice was likewise proving incredibly unhelpful. In 1154, during the Byzantine campaign against William I in Italy, Doge Domenico Morosini had completed a treaty with the Normans by which Venetian merchants received special privileges in southern Italy and Sicily while the northern reaches of the Adriatic were declared off-limits to Norman raids or attacks. This action was ostensibly taken to ensure Venetian shipping security, but it is likely that Domenico Morosini understood the implications of his actions. He was aware of Manuel's machinations and no doubt hoped to preempt the Byzantine emperor, forcing him to recognize that a trading alliance with Venice was his best option. Still hoping, however, to replace Venice as Byzantium's primary ally in the West, Manuel courted Genoa and Pisa in the search for military allies and trading partners. Although these initial efforts would prove abortive, Manuel had instigated a relationship with Pisa which would prove to be incredibly strong in the future.¹⁵¹

Manuel's troubles continued to grow on the Continent. Frederick I, who dreamed of rebuilding the Western Roman Empire, had initiated his own imperial program in Italy. Manuel would vacillate between favoring Frederick and William while maintaining very strong ties with Pope Hadrian IV and the

form such a strong union resulted from the personal attraction each felt for the other and the mutually beneficial nature of their alliance. Conrad needed Eastern support to bolster his claim to the imperial throne. Manuel needed allies in the West. That Manuel did not turn to Venice for aid clearly indicates that the emperor was either unwilling or unable to secure Venetian support.

¹⁵⁰ Magdalino, "Byzantine," pp. 621-622.

¹⁵¹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 93-95. Manuel expanded the Pisan quarter in Constantinople and allowed several hundred Genoese to live there as resident aliens. Feuding soon broke out between the Venetians and the newcomers, however, and the Pisans and Genoese were exiled in 1162. That Greek mobs fell upon the new arrivals illustrate that Byzantine dislike for Venetians, at this point, was primarily the product of a general distrust of the West.

city-states of northern Italy. When Hadrian died in 1159, Frederick sponsored Victor VI as the new pope while the Italian peninsula and Manuel himself endorsed Alexander III. Manuel finally had his pretext for war with Frederick. He likely hoped that this schism would allow him to justify a campaign in Italy through which he could augment the Eastern Empire at the expense of the Western.

Venice, despite her concerted efforts to remain neutral, was forced to choose sides in the mounting conflict. Venice had little to gain from endorsing either side, but while Alexander largely fought to maintain the status quo in Italy, Frederick hoped to completely upset the balance of power and in doing so greatly decrease Venetian authority. Venice joined the anti-imperial camp, allied with the papacy and the other Italian city-states. She would soon be distracted, however, by a far more pressing development in the East.

Manuel was watching the expansion of the anti-Frederick forces with some chagrin. The efforts were spearheaded by Pope Alexander and the Normans. Manuel had hoped to use the war as a pretext to seize more land but he had missed his opportunity – if the Italians could defend themselves, he had no excuse for intervening.¹⁵² Manuel, however, had been preparing for a protracted campaign in Italy. These armies were not wasted and as the emperor was unable to strengthen his position on Italy, he worked to increase his power in the Adriatic at large. This was most assuredly an attack on Venetian power in the region and part of a larger effort by Manuel to advance Byzantine trading interests at the expense of the Venetians. When the massive imperial force defeated the armies of King Stephen III of Hungary, Croatia and even Dalmatia, which had been ceded to Venice as protectorates, were once again imperial territory.¹⁵³ Venice felt that her commercial interests in the Adriatic were in jeopardy and so the doge

¹⁵² The Byzantine historian John Kinnamos claims that in 1165 Doge Vitale Michele II invited the emperor to participate in Italian affairs and help organize a resistance to Frederick. Kinnamos, however, is the only resource which puts forward this claim: Choniates has the emperor involved in battles at Hungary around that time and makes no mention of imperial involvement in Italy.

¹⁵³ Authority, but not complete control, over Dalmatia had been given to Venice in 1000 by Emperor Basil II. Hungary had been fighting with Venice on and off for years for control of the region and Venice was actually involved in a war with Hungary when the Byzantine incursion took place. It would likely appear to many Venetians that, in seizing Dalmatia outright, Manuel was depriving them of land they had died to defend while protecting them in the name of the empire.

entered into negotiations with the Hungarians. He also began an embargo of Byzantine goods.¹⁵⁴ The once frigid relations between the doge and Manuel were then positively icy and bordered on open warfare. Likely it was only the specter of war in the West between the Italian states and the Holy Roman Empire that prevented combat between Venice and Byzantium.

Manuel responded by opening up Constantinople once again to Pisan and Genoese merchants. Meanwhile, Frederick, now faced with a massive oppositional force in Italy, revitalized his relationship with Manuel. The Eastern emperor once more had an opportunity to gain land in Italy, this time by backing the Western emperor against the city-states. Manuel was prepared to return his empire's financial footing to his own control. To do so, however, he would have to deal with Venice. And the Venetians themselves would give him the provocation.

Following the return of the other Italians to the markets of Constantinople, an angry Venetian mob attacked the Genoese quarter. Manuel used this episode to justify a vicious reprisal against the Venetians living in the empire: he secretly decreed that on March 12th, 1171, every man, woman, and child of Venetian extraction living within the empire would be arrested and their goods confiscated. The arrests were calculated down to the last detail, so that the trap could be sprung simultaneously across the empire. Doge Vitale Michel II, either because he wished to make amends for the attack on the Genoese quarter or because he had heard rumors of reprisals against Venice, dispatched his legates in Constantinople, Orio Mastropiero and Sebastiano Ziani, to meet with Manuel. The exact nature of their discussion is unknown but the message given by the legates to the doge and the Venetians of Constantinople has survived: the emperor feels no ill-will and Constantinople remains a free port.¹⁵⁵ This could not be farther from the truth.

¹⁵⁴ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 95-96. As Nicol notes, however, there appears to have been no major decrease in Venetian commercial activity in Constantinople. Ducal decrees, it would seem, did little to deter the trading interests of the Venetian people.

¹⁵⁵ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 52-53. Following the message from the ambassadors, a greater number of Venetian merchants flocked to Constantinople. While it is possible that Manuel intended for this to occur, that he might increase the spoils which could be confiscated, it cannot be proven. Madden also argues that Manuel decided to arrest the Venetians, rather than merely seize their goods, to have leverage on the doge. The Byzantines were naturally concerned about the strength of the Venetian navy and Manuel anticipated an attack by the doge. He would do well to have thousands of Venetians as bargaining chips.

When March 12th arrived, thousands of Venetians were herded into overcrowded prisons. When there was no more room in the prisons, monasteries were converted into make-shift jails. Historically speaking, this draconian measure was likely prompted by the violence of the Venetian attack on the Genoese in Constantinople. Niketas Choniates, however, attributes the seizure to the long-standing “villainies” of the Venetian people:

Buffeted by a series of villainies, one worse than the other, the emperor now recalled [the Venetians’] offensive behavior on Corfu and turned the scales against them, spewing forth his anger like the tempestuous and stormy spray blown up by a ... north wind. The misdeeds of the Venetians were deemed to be excessive.¹⁵⁶

The insult at Corfu seemed especially damning in the eyes of Choniates. While the incident of the attack on the Genoese quarter had been the spark, the seizure of the Venetians in the empire was clearly the result of a long-standing power struggle between Byzantium and Venice. Manuel meant to bring the Venetians to heel. Striking at the people of Venice, and their commercial interests, was the best way to achieve this goal.

The people of Venice were infuriated: 10,000 Venetians had been taken prisoner in Constantinople alone. These prisoners were younger sons sent to secure family commercial ties, extended family seeking new lives in the Orient, and trusted companions and friends. While Choniates had spoken of the Venetians having become “genuine Romans,” the Venetians considered them true Venetians. This unprecedented action was nothing less than a declaration of war. Angry mobs took to the streets, demanding action. Doge Vitale Michele II acquiesced. Forsaking his part in the war against Frederick, he amassed a navy of 120 ships in just under four months. This monumental effort necessitated a massive public forced debt and the conscription of seamen from all across the Venetian empire, but in September of 1171 the mighty armada was prepared for battle. Vitale himself accompanied the war fleet, which landed first at Euboea at the behest of imperial dignitaries, who wished to speak with the doge. Emperor Manuel, the Venetians were told, had acted only to secure peace and he was more than willing to enter

¹⁵⁶ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book V, sec. 171, p. 97.

into discussions with the doge to rectify the unfortunate situation. If Vitale would only winter his fleet at Chios, peace negotiations could begin.¹⁵⁷

It was the worst decision that Vitale Michele would ever make. The Venetian ships, overcrowded with soldiers eager to revenge themselves upon the Byzantines, were cesspools of disease. A terrible plague soon spread, all while Manuel continued to sue for peace. It is clear that Manuel had no real desire for reconciliation – at first he was only stalling to give himself time to prepare for the Venetian attack and after the outbreak of plague, which some Venetians blamed on the Byzantines, the longer Manuel could keep Vitale distracted, the smaller Vitale's force would become. In 1172 Vitale dispatched a delegation led by Enrico Dandolo to Constantinople to negotiate terms. Dandolo, however, would not meet the emperor. When he arrived in the capital, he was informed that the Venetian fleet had already weighed anchor and was returning to Venice.¹⁵⁸ The glorious armada, which was supposed to topple the proud Byzantines and secure the release of 10,000 captured Venetians, limped back into port disarrayed, discouraged, and disgusted.

Emperor Manuel watched these proceedings with glee. Not only had he sufficiently chastised the Venetians, but he had been able to do so without having to risk any military entanglements with his former allies. He dispatched a mocking letter to Vitale Michele, which the doge would have likely received during his retreat:

Your nation has for a long time behaved with great stupidity. Once you were vagabonds sunk into abject poverty. Then you sidled into the Roman Empire. You had treated it with the utmost disdain and have done your best to deliver it to its worst enemies, as you yourselves are well aware. Now, legitimately condemned and justly expelled from the empire, you have in your insolence declared war on it – you who were once a people not even worthy to be named, you who owe what prestige you have to the Romans; and for having supposed that you could match their strength you have made yourselves a

¹⁵⁷ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 105-106.

¹⁵⁸ Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 55. Madden puts special emphasis on the decision to select Dandolo for this mission. If Dandolo were the anti-Greek zealot which some modern historians paint him as, he would have been a poor choice for such a mission, especially since Vitale Michele was clearly interested in securing peace. Dandolo's father, Vitale Dandolo, was actually one of the doge's most trusted advisors and some accounts state that the Dandolo family had actually cautioned the doge to not lash out at the Byzantines, although Madden himself contests this point.

laughing-stock. For no one, not even the greatest powers on earth, makes war on the Romans with impunity.¹⁵⁹

Manuel could afford to be bold with his words. In actuality, he had a great deal to fear from Venice's military – it was a stroke of luck that the plague struck at Chios. Otherwise, despite the claims of Choniates, that the imperial fleet was in no “way less resolute or less well-equipped,” Manuel would have been forced into a battle he might not have been able to win.¹⁶⁰ The Venetian fleet, however, was stumbling back to Venice when he dispatched this letter and so the emperor felt secure in his gloating.

Once again, the Venetians were outraged, but this time their anger was directed at their doge. Vitale Michele had ruled well for over a decade, but this failure wiped away all of his other accomplishments. During a public meeting called by the doge to inform the people of what had occurred and to discuss further action, a furious mob prompted the dismissal of the meeting as the doge and his councilors fled for their lives. In the commotion, Vitale Michele II was slain by a young assassin.¹⁶¹

The Venetians quickly recovered from their bloodlust. The men responsible for the death of the doge were executed: the people had indeed believed that Vitale was guilty of criminal incompetence and deserved punishment, but he was still a duly elected doge and deserved better than to be knifed in the dark. The ramifications of Michele's death were monumental. When the Venetians next assembled to elect a new doge, they instead created a council of men who were tasked with reforming the Venetian government. Thomas Madden considers this council to be one of the most important ever called in Venetian history. Under its *aegis*, the executive powers of the state were drawn into the sphere of a few select aristocrats, curtailing popular power but also the power of the doge himself. The famous *Maggior Consiglio* was also formed, a council of just under 500 men from the noble families of Venice who were

¹⁵⁹ John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John & Manuel Comnenus*, trans. C.M. Brand, Records of Civilization Sources and Studies, 45 (New York, 1975), p. 285.

¹⁶⁰ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book V, sec. 173, p. 98. It is likely that Manuel would have delayed the Venetian fleet at Chios until he could bring Vitale Michele to terms, utilizing the captured Venetians as leverage. That Choniates makes no mention of the plague that wracked the Venetian fleet, and instead implying that the Venetians were terrified of the imperial fleet, one notes empty grandstanding and delusion. If Manuel had been able to face the Venetians in open battle, he would not have employed diplomatic intrigues. His Hungarian and Italian campaigns made it clear that Manuel was comfortable with open combat if he believed that he could triumph.

¹⁶¹ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 106.

tasked with critical appointments and legislative decisions within Venice.¹⁶² The reforms of 1172 forever ensured that Venice would function as an oligarchy. While the doge remained a powerful figure, and the people still exacted great influence over public affairs, the majority of the authority and power resided within a select class of privileged wise men. Considering that popular outrage had sparked the disastrous campaign of 1171, one must conclude that the Venetians had entrusted their government to the right men.

The new doge, Sebastiano Ziani, was conservative and pragmatic. He had been one of Vitale Michele's most trusted advisors, having served as an ambassador to Constantinople, and as such understood the position after the failed armada very well. Rather than risking another frontal assault, he forced Manuel to terms diplomatically. Ignoring Venetian allegiance to the Italian communes, Ziani assisted Frederick I in his siege of the Byzantine town of Ancona, in Italy, and clandestinely stirred up Serbian rebels against the empire. When this failed, Venice actually approached William II, king of the Normans in southern Italy, and entered into a formal alliance. Although these terms merely reinstated the terms of their 1154 treaty, Manuel took note. A Norman-Venetian alliance, coupled with Frederick, threatened to destroy the potential for the Byzantine presence in the West.

To make matters worse for the emperor, the Genoese, whom Manuel attempted to use as replacements for the Venetians, proved even more avaricious, demanding huge sums of money as compensation for their troubles in the East.¹⁶³ Manuel's gambit had proven foolish. The Venetians, although lacking their own force, could still bring military pressure to bear on the empire through the Normans. Furthermore, even if the empire could resist an attack, its commercial interests were better served with Venice than Genoa. Manuel did not wish, however, to seem overly eager in his negotiations with Venice. Now lacking any trump cards, save the captured Venetians, whom he dared not harm for fear of reprisals, he would have to play his hand coolly.

The Venetians, likewise, were very interested in normalizing affairs with the Byzantines. Although they still had access to markets in the Christian Holy Land and Alexandria, Byzantium was

¹⁶² Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 57-58.

¹⁶³ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 100-101.

their primary port of call. While Enrico Dandolo was occupied in negotiations with William of Sicily, his father Vitale traveled back and forth between Venice and the imperial capital. He would die on such a voyage, still attempting to mend relations between the two powers.¹⁶⁴ While the exact terms of these treaties are unknown, their efforts were fruitless. Manuel seemed content to rely on the Genoese for Western trade but recognized that he needed to expand his markets if he meant to gain profits equal to those which had been available under the Venetians. In the Holy Land, he was presented with such an opportunity. Manuel hoped that he could gain control of the crusaders but his military skill was not great enough to defeat the Muslim armies.¹⁶⁵ After a series of disastrous defeats, Manuel lost his army, his hope for new gains in Anatolia, and the support of the Latin East.

The empire in the West suffered similarly vacillating fortunes. On July 30th, 1176, Frederick Barbarossa successfully entered Rome and was crowned as emperor by his anti-pope. Alexander was in flight and Frederick likely believed that his victory was assured. The taking of Rome, however, galvanized the Italian communes. Sebastiano Ziani, in particular, recognized that Frederick's ambitions for a united, imperial Italy were a major threat to Venetian sovereignty. To counter the imperial advance, Venetian ambassadors and representatives from fourteen other Italian city-states met with the exiled Pope Alexander at Pavia in December, where they formed the Greater Lombard League. Venice committed its military resources to the endeavor, although her navy would prove largely unhelpful in the coming fray.¹⁶⁶

The symbolic presence of Venice as a founder member of the League, however, was astronomically valuable. The fact that Venice had supported Frederick at Ancona made her position as a founder of the League truly astounding. John Julius Norwich argues that in this moment Venice realigned

¹⁶⁴ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 60-61. It might seem strange that Enrico Dandolo was tasked with meeting with the Normans, as he had already been slated to speak with the emperor in 1172. One might be tempted to assume that Ziani knew that the younger Dandolo could not keep his cool with the Greeks and so dispatched his father instead. There is no evidence for this, however, and it is far more likely that, because negotiations with the emperor were more important, the more senior Dandolo was employed.

¹⁶⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 134-136.

¹⁶⁶ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 102-103. Interestingly enough, the treaty includes references to Venice distributing to her allies any resources which she might receive from the Byzantine Empire. Imperial-Venetians relations were still chilly, at best, in 1176, but it would seem that Manuel still had dealings with Venice, although these could be limited to military missions designed to check the advance of Frederick.

herself as a Western power, devoted to the causes of Italy, rather than either of the empires.¹⁶⁷ While this statement is somewhat hyperbolic, it does speak to a monumental shift in Venetian policy: Venice was no longer a republic within Italy, but a full-fledged Italian republic, fighting with her brothers against foreign domination.

The Italian brotherhood soon forced Frederick to terms. The German emperor had neither anticipated the stiff resistance to his rule nor the popularity of Pope Alexander: already his pontificate was recognized all across Europe, even in the Western Empire, while Frederick's pretender to the papal tiara was roundly mocked. Relations between the two figures, however, were abysmal and neither trusted the other at all. Negotiations for peace, it was realized, would be difficult, especially because the two parties could not agree upon where they would meet. Ravenna and Bologna were both suggested and declined. Pope Alexander left the negotiations in early 1177 and traveled to the Veneto, which he reached in March of that year.

It is not known precisely why the pope visited but his arrival was celebrated by the people of Venice. He was allowed to stay in the palace of the Patriarch of Grado, Enrico Dandolo, namesake and uncle of the future doge, Enrico Dandolo. After offering blessings to the churches and people of Venice and conferring new privileges on the city, Alexander left in April and travelled to Ferrara for another round of negotiations. It very likely that Alexander's interactions with the Venetians, and especially the older Dandolo, strongly influenced the younger Dandolo's understanding of how Venice and the papacy were to interact. The pope was a guest of Venice, honored by the people but likewise willing to honor Venice. Each side dealt with the other fairly and equitably. It is quite possible that, when he became doge, Enrico Dandolo was surprised to find that he could not treat with Innocent III in a similar fashion.

¹⁶⁷ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 103. One must recall, however, that while Byzantine relations were frayed at this time, they were on the mend. Venice had not forsaken its long-term Eastern ally, merely altered the terms of their relationship. Venice as a state had never been particularly well-connected to the Western Empire. Certain factions had favored the so-called Holy Roman Emperor, and Pietro Orseolo had been close personal friends with Emperor Otto III, but this relationships were largely temporary and could not be compared to the hallowed union between Byzantium and Venice.

Alexander, meanwhile, renewed his talks with Frederick. The Lombard delegates insisted that the meetings be held in Bologna, a city aligned to their needs. Frederick naturally declined and suggested Ravenna, Pavia, or, interestingly enough, Venice.¹⁶⁸ Pope Alexander assented almost immediately to Venice – he had, after all, just visited and found the city to his liking. The emperor favored it, because, during Venice’s wars with Byzantium, it had had little time to make war against Frederick. The Lombards decried the choice at first, hoping to keep the meeting in their territory on their terms, but they were eventually convinced.

One of the most valuable resources for the Peace of Venice is the anonymously written *De Pace Veneta Relatio*. The author says that Venice was a particularly good choice because she was “subject to God alone...a place where the courage and authority of the citizens could preserve peace between the partisans of each side and ensure that no discord or sedition, deliberate or involuntary, could arise.”¹⁶⁹ Venice was a loyal follower of the Catholic faith, but not a partisan of the temporal policies of the papal office. Likewise, she lacked the vitriolic hatred felt by the other Italian communes for the Western Empire. The city was the ideal location for these tense negotiations, which began on May 10th. Pope Alexander stayed, once more, in the palace of Patriarch Dandolo, where he met with delegates from Frederick I. The emperor himself was to remain at Ravenna for security reasons. The deliberations dragged out but in July it was clear that the two sides had come to terms. On July 24th Frederick knelt before Alexander and offered his submissions. The pontiff raised the emperor to his feet and welcomed him back into the Church. The author of the *De Pace Veneta* describes the event in effusive terms which celebrated the reunion of the holy father with his prodigal son.

Venice had hosted one of the most monumental events of the 12th century. Pope and emperor were reconciled and the Republic of St. Mark was the location of their union. Accordingly, both sides lavished the Venetians with gifts and honors. The emperor granted them safe passage, toll exemption, and free travel through his empire and claimed the same for his own subjects in Venetian land, tacitly

¹⁶⁸ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 70-71.

¹⁶⁹ As translated and cited by Norwich, *Venice*, p. 117.

confirming Venetian dominance in the Adriatic and Dalmatia. From the pope, Venice received special blessings for her churches and a settlement in the longstanding debate between the Patriarchs of Aquileia and Grado: Grado would return to Aquileia certain holy relics and Aquileia would acknowledge the supremacy of Grado in the Veneto, Istria, and Dalmatia. This boon was a special honor for Patriarch Dandolo and represented a major augmentation of his authority.¹⁷⁰ Venice's greatest honor, however, lay in the prestige which this visit represented. The two greatest powers in the Western world had been reunited in Venice, a city which, according to the author of the *De Pace Veneta*, was worthy of hosting them both because it was subject to God alone.

The events of 1176 would be forever enshrined in Venetian myth. Amongst the many gifts which Pope Alexander bestowed upon his hosts were the *trionfi*, an eclectic collection of ceremonial objects: candles, lead seals, a sword, a golden ring, a processional umbrella, eight banners, and eight long silver trumpets. As Gary Wills notes, each of these gifts was taken to symbolize a particular aspect of the Venetian state:

The candle represented the pure faith that burns in Venice as the guarantor of religion. The lead seals resembled those of the Vatican, and gave documents of Venice the same authority. The ring signified the doge's union with the sea. . . . The umbrella was a portable *baldacchino*, marking the doge off from other men, the way the pope's polygon umbrella did.¹⁷¹

Venice had played court to the world powers of Europe. In this capacity, she believed that she had become their equals in the eyes of God and Man. Accordingly, when the doge treated with the emperor or the pope, if he gave them any primacy, it was only as *primus inter pares*. The Republic of St. Mark stood proudly upon the zenith of the West, bestriding the world like the Republic of St. Peter or the Empire of Charlemagne.

¹⁷⁰ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 116-117.

¹⁷¹ Wills, *Venice*, pp. 42-43. These myths, however, developed slowly over the centuries and were not fully enshrined until the 14th century, when they were depicted in fresco upon the walls of the *Maggior Consiglio*. Their origins, however, were in the events of 1177 and these myths, although not yet fully realized, surely had currency in the 12th and 13th centuries. For a similar treatment of ceremonial objects granted by the pope to a favored nation, see the gifts given by Pope Gregory II to Charles Martel, Noble, *Republic*, p. 46.

Venetian honor likewise extended to the East, where Manuel's failed efforts in Asia Minor drove him once more to seek normal relations with his most valuable trading partner. It was not until 1179, however, that any sort of agreement was reached between the two powers – Choniates reports that Manuel won over the Venetians with “forbearance and friendship” and renewed their trading privileges and offered restitutions for their losses: “The Venetians decided that it was more profitable than grievous to forgo the redistribution of their personal wealth for greater commercial benefits and agreed to receive in several payments fifteen hundred pounds of gold in return for their losses.”¹⁷² Many Venetians remained in captivity, however, and it would decades until Venice received full restitution for her commercial losses, but the rift was slowly being healed. Peace and unity behooved both parties.

The crisis of 1171 was truly the nadir of imperial-Venetian relations. Manuel, as he saw it, was driven to act by increasing Venetian hubris and adventurism in the Mediterranean. Byzantine tropes, which denied the sovereignty and independence of Venice, necessitated the humbling of the foreign merchants who were growing rich off of the Empire. The seizure of the Venetians and their property was meant to re-establish a *status quo* which had not existed for centuries: Byzantine hegemony and domination over Venice. The Venetians, naturally, could not allow this to happen. Although a military solution could not be found to bring Byzantium to heel, Venice was able to exert sufficient economic pressure to force the emperor to terms. Although the political ties between the Empire and the Republic were weakening, their mercantile relations were as strong as ever. This monetary union was mutually beneficial to both parties. Although the reign of Manuel, and especially the events of 1171, was a low-point for cooperation between the two states, their relations quickly improved. They needed each other.

This fact belies the assertion of some historians that the Venetians, in 1204, were seeking revenge for the events of 1171. As will be shown, the emperors had already paid their debts by that time. Imperial restitution for the arrest of the Venetians and the confiscation of their goods would soon be offered by the

¹⁷² Choniates, *O Byzantium*, Book V, sec. 174, p. 98. In Andrea Dandolo's account, there were no peace negotiations with the Venetians and Manuel remained a hated enemy of Venice until his death. As Nicol notes, however, contemporary Venetian accounts do not mesh with Dandolo's account, which was written much later, Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 101.

Empire, which recognized that Venetian goodwill was fundamental to the economic security of its state. Venice, likewise, understood how valuable Byzantium was. Although this might lead one to assume that the Venetians would wish to conquer their Eastern partners, as will be shown below, such a reading does not sync with the realities of the late 12th century Mediterranean basin.

In September of 1180 Emperor Manuel died, leaving the throne to his twelve year old son, Alexios II. To topple the weak ruler, a Comnenus cousin, Andronicus, staged a coup in which his agents intentionally singled out the Western inhabitants, who supported the young Alexios. Whether they intended it or not, this set off a firestorm of xenophobic hatred. Enraged Greek mobs rampaged through Constantinople, massacring every Westerner they could find. The Orthodox clergy, fanning the flames, encouraged the mob to attack followers of the Latin rite. Cardinal John, the papal legate, was decapitated and his body foully desecrated. The April Massacre became infamous. Although the total death count could never be reckoned, 4000 souls were apparently sold into slavery. The few who could escape bore back to the West with them tales of unmitigated horrors. Byzantium quickly earned the hatred of the West and Andronicus, swept into power on this wave of blood, was despised by many Western leaders.¹⁷³

Ironically, the Venetians were spared most of the violence. Having been driven out in 1171, they had not yet returned *en mass* to the imperial capital in 1182. Accordingly, Andronicus quickly sought them as allies. He had forced the wife of the deposed Alexios II, Agnes of France, to marry him, but he knew that this union with a twelve year-old child, done by force, would win him no favors in France. Venice, however, would be a suitable bulwark in the West. Accordingly, Andronicus issued attractive new trading rights for the Venetians and released nearly all of the Venetians still under arrest. He also made overtures about restitution to the Venetians for damages, although no actual treaty was signed.¹⁷⁴

Andronicus, however, would soon be swept from the imperial throne by the same violence which had planted him there. In 1185 Norman invaders swept into the Byzantine Empire, storming Thessalonica and paying back the citizens of the city, in kind, with the same horrors which the Greeks had visited upon

¹⁷³ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 140-144.

¹⁷⁴ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 107-108.

Westerners in 1182.¹⁷⁵ When Andronicus appealed to Venice for aid, he was informed that Venice was still obligated by the peace treaty which they had signed with the Sicilians several years earlier.

Unable to defend his throne, Andronicus began to see traitors everywhere. Accordingly, he ordered the execution of Isaac Angelos, a cousin to the emperor who had been named as a rival claimant by a soothsayer. When imperial agents attempted to arrest Isaac, however, he killed them and then rode on his horse to St. Sophia, rallying the people against Andronicus. The mob quickly turned on him, horribly mutilating Andronicus' body before hailing Isaac as the new emperor.¹⁷⁶

Emperor Isaac II was desperate for Venetian assistance. Although he had succeeded in halting the Norman advance, his government was effectively bankrupt. In 1187 Isaac invited Doge Orto Mastropiero to dispatch envoys to Constantinople to settle a new chrysobull which would settle any existing conflicts and renew friendship between the two powers.

Venice received three such chrysobulls, each representing a major boon. The first two reaffirmed existing treaties: Venice would continue to benefit from every trade agreement which it had made with Emperors Alexios I, Basil II, John II, and Manuel I, and the rights and dimensions of the Venetian Quarter were reasserted. The third chrysobull, however, was truly unique. Although Venice had been free from all colonial obligations to Byzantium for centuries, most treaties with the empire had a distinctly aloof tone. Donald Nicol, however, sees this new chrysobull in new terms: "This is not a privilege granted from on high to an inferior power. It is more in the nature of a contract between equal partners, a pact or treaty of alliance between Byzantium and Venice which emperors of an earlier age would not have countenanced."¹⁷⁷ The terms are astounding. The Byzantines entrusted all of their ship-building

¹⁷⁵ Dramatic accounts of the sack may be found in *De Capta Thessalonica*, by Eustathios of Thessalonica, and Choniates. The Sicilian Normans, it has been noted, were rarely rapacious in their attacks on Byzantine holdings. Either both of these sources have exaggerated the extent of the horrors, which included, according to Choniates, Sicilian mercenaries urinating on Orthodox altars and then dancing upon them, or the barbarity was a direct result of the slaughter in 1182. As the account of Eustathios details, however, Thessalonica soon settled into the rhythms of an occupied town and in a few weeks the Greeks, who were apparently able to buy and sell with the invaders, began to grow rich off their conquerors. Eustathios is particularly perturbed by the sight of Greek women on the arms of swaggering Sicilians. One must wonder, therefore, to what extent the horrors of the sack were the artistic license of the authors.

¹⁷⁶ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 152-153.

¹⁷⁷ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 111.

operations to the Venetians. The imperial navy could request 40 to 100 ships from Venice, with six months' notice, to be crewed by Venetians living in the Empire, under Venetian captains. Venetian ports were also to serve as the staging grounds for any subsequent imperial action in the West. Venice would also enter into no allegiance with an enemy of Byzantium, with the same terms applying to the empire. It truly was as Isaac said: Venice was "reunited" with the Byzantine Empire.¹⁷⁸

The relationship between Byzantium and Venice, then, was a contested one. Each side had profited and suffered at the hands of the other, but each was also strongly linked by historical bonds and economic necessity. As Venice grew in power and prestige, however, that relationship was tested. The inheritors of the Roman Empire did not appreciate the ambitions of a people they considered little better than colonists. Venice, likewise, sought to advance her own honor to the point that she actively rewrote her own history, displacing Byzantine dominance with a fabricated myth of sublime independence. By the 9th century, however, Venice truly was an independent state, one of the most powerful in the West. Accordingly, she felt justified in exercising power and authority comparable to any emperor and even to the pope himself. The Republic of St. Mark was quickly eclipsing the Empire of the East.

¹⁷⁸ Norwich, *Venice*, p. 121. Norwich, and others, have noted that the terms of these chrysobulls seem strangely favored towards Venice. The Empire had no real prospect of re-establishing its power in the West, so it was unlikely that Byzantium would have need of Venetian ports or would enter into open combat with any of Venice's potential allies. It is also strange that Isaac would effectively entrust the maintenance of the imperial navy to a foreign power. While these terms clearly indicate that Isaac was desperate for Venetian support, one should not forget that the emperor likewise had leverage over the Venetians. The payments of restitution, for instance, would only continue so long as the alliance continued. Also, Constantinople would remain Venice's primary portal to the riches of the Orient. If Venice wished to maintain its commercial position, she would have to depend upon the empire. It is likely that Manuel believed these economic ties would bind the Venetians to his will and so he felt comfortable entrusting the military might of his empire to them.

Part V, A: Venice and the Fourth Crusade: From Venice to Zara

At the dawn of the 13th century, the world of the Mediterranean was on the cusp of change. The reconciliation of Pope Alexander and Frederick I, orchestrated by Venice, had provided the Most Serene Republic with greater political clout and prestige than she had ever before possessed. Her increasingly lucrative economic relationship with the East, established through the very favorable trading rights offered by Isaac II, ensured a steady and impressive financial footing which would only augment her position. To the West at large, however, Byzantium had only become more onerous. The insults of the Second Crusade and the open treachery of the Third were eclipsed by the outright violence and horror of 1182, when Andronicus rode a wave of Latin blood into the imperial palace. The slaughter of the Latins and the atrocities committed thereof made it perfectly clear to the Western powers that the Greeks could not be trusted.

Open collusion with Muslims and the killing of Latin Christians made the Byzantines enemies of the West. Although many powers, namely the Venetians, the Papacy, and the forces of Philip of Swabia, would attempt to maintain cordial relations with the East, the damage had already been done. It should come as no surprise, then, that the monarchs of the Third Crusade ignored and even challenged the Byzantines as they made their way to the Holy Land. That the crusade was something of a success may have indicated to the Latins that they were better off without the Greeks.

The Third Crusade may have failed to recapture the holy city of Jerusalem, but the triumphs of King Richard sparked new interest in the crusades.¹⁷⁹ After the disastrous efforts of King Louis and Emperor Conrad and the petty in-fighting which rocked the Kingdom of Jerusalem in the late 12th century, the victories at Acre and the news of the death of Saladin revitalized the faithful in the West. The ambitious new pope, Innocent III, was poised to ride this wave of enthusiasm unto the very shores of the Holy Land.

¹⁷⁹ Gillingham, *Richard*, pp. 4-11. Gillingham notes that, save a few contemporary detractors, English histories were overwhelmingly positive regarding Richard and his crusading efforts. Fascination with the Third Crusade, especially in the interplay between Richard and Saladin, prompted a corpus of chivalric literature in both Insular and Continental circles which would prove highly influential.

Innocent had ascended to the papal throne at a remarkably young age. His biographer reports that his election had been blessed by God Himself, when one of three doves settled piously near the hand of the pontiff. Innocent seems to have taken this portent to heart, believing that the most effective means of securing the Holy Land would be to keep the crusade under his direct control.¹⁸⁰ He personally wrote to Patriarch Aymar of Jerusalem for a full appraisal of the situation in the Holy Land.¹⁸¹ On August 15th, 1198, Innocent published an encyclical which established the groundwork for the new crusade. He had already dispatched two papal legates to rally together men for this undertaking: Pietro da Capua had been sent to mediate peace between Richard I and Philip while Cardinal Soffredo of Santa Prassede was dispatched to Venice to seek “aid for the Holy Land.”¹⁸²

Initially, the outlook for the crusade was a good one. da Capua convinced Richard and Philip to enter into a truce and Soffredo, although he had been unable to make any agreements with the Venetians, had convinced them to dispatch their own envoys to meet with Innocent personally.¹⁸³ Andrea Donà and Benedetto Grillioni were veteran ambassadors who had previously served at the imperial court of Alexios III. They informed Innocent that Venice would be happy to participate in a crusade but that an undertaking of such magnitude would represent a substantial drain on Venetian resources. In 1187, they noted, Pope Gregory VIII had banned all trade with Muslims and as a result Venice had suffered a massive decrease in trade revenues. The ambassadors pointed out that this blow was especially hard on

¹⁸⁰ Some historians have argued that Innocent believed that the involvement of any monarchs would create infighting and destabilize the crusading effort. Donald Queller notes that in the August 15th call for crusade no kings are mentioned so that the undertaking would be totally under “papal control,” Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, p. 1.

¹⁸¹ Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades, Volume III: The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954, p. 107.

¹⁸² Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 119. As Madden notes, the decision to involve Venice at the inception of the crusade is an important one. It belies the assertion from some modern historians that Innocent III doubted the faith of the Venetians and wished to keep the crusade out of their influence. That Venice would receive the same sort of envoy as had been dispatched to Richard and Philip, leaders of the previous crusade, speaks to the importance of Venice in the pope’s plans. Although legates were also dispatched to Genoa and Pisa, it cannot be asserted that these men were intending for those powers to participate in the crusade.

¹⁸³ The decision to avoid speaking with a papal intermediary but rather with the pope himself merits further examination. As noted above, Venetian Papal-Imperial interactions had been forever changed in 1176 when Doge Sebastiano Ziani negotiated peace between Emperor Frederick I and Pope Alexander III. The majority of Venetian statesmen, including Enrico Dandolo, would have remember the *trionfi* given to Venice by the pope, by which, in their minds, Venice was granted the same authority as the Holy See, Rostand, *Myths*, p. 6. Dandolo’s interactions with Peter Capua later in the crusade would reflect just such an attitude. Venice would not treat with the Vatican through emissaries – she fancied herself worthy to approach the papal throne herself.

the Venetian people, as the Venetian economy was predicated, not upon agriculture, but trade, primarily through Byzantium but also with the Muslims of the Orient – in service to Christ, the Venetians had effectively destroyed their own livelihoods.¹⁸⁴ If Venice was expected to wage war in the East, it could not do so while shouldering the burden of decreased trade revenue as well.

On December 3rd, 1198, Innocent responded to this request from his “beloved sons,” the Venetian ambassadors. He states:

We, consequently, moved by the paternal love that we have especially for you, prohibit you, under threat of anathema, to presume to aid the Saracen by selling, giving, or exchanging with them iron, flax, pine pitch, sharp instruments, fire instruments, rope, weapons, galleys, ships, and timbers, whether furnished or rough. But for the time being (until, of course, we order you to do otherwise), we permit you, when necessary, to cross into the kingdom of Egypt or Babylon carrying other articles of merchandise.¹⁸⁵

Innocent concludes with the hope that this agreement will allow the Venetians to fully embrace the crusade and aid in its completion. The Venetians, however, possessed no land army of great size and so Innocent must have been depending upon Richard and Philip to provide the main army. Although Venice was perfectly capable of launching amphibian assaults, supported by her fantastic navy, her marines could not be expected to push far into the mainland.¹⁸⁶ Although the Venetians, when fighting the Muslims, Byzantines, and others, had great success against coastal targets, an inland target, such as Jerusalem, would be out of the question for the Venetian army. A more traditional force would be necessary. Innocent, however, would be sorely disappointed. In 1199, when Richard was slain while putting down a

¹⁸⁴ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 120-121. Venetian efforts to revive trade with the East should not be seen as avaricious or self-serving – as Madden has argued, Venice depended wholly upon trade revenue to import foodstuffs and supplies into the city, as, during the 12th and early 13th centuries, Venice had precious few land holdings. Madden goes on to note that while it may seem pretentious for the Venetians to request a dispensation from the pope, their efforts could be viewed as a form of piety – while Venice begged permission to trade with the East, Genoa and Pisa were actively violating the terms of the papal edict, without any kind of papal permission. Rather than defy the pope in this matter, Venice wished to reason with him.

¹⁸⁵ Innocent III, Reg. 1:536 (539), in *Contemporary Sources for the Fourth Crusade*, ed. & trans. Alfred J. Andrea, Boston: Brill, 2008, pp. 22-24. Andrea believes that the letter is “grudging” but this author finds no reason to read any subtext into the piece. Innocent may have been perturbed that trade with the East was necessary for the stability of the Venetian state, but he seems to recognize that this is due to circumstances and not some sort of ill-will on the part of the Venetians themselves.

¹⁸⁶ No major examination of Venetian military capabilities has been undertaken, although this topic is often touched upon by scholars. For a succinct assessment of the Venetian war fleet, see Lane, *Maritime Republic*, pp. 364-369. Although Lane is speaking about military organization during the Early Modern Period, the Venetian navy of the Middle Ages would have likely been similarly aligned.

rebellion by the viscount of Limoges, Philip reneged on his crusader vows, likely wishing to remain in Europe to determine if he could make any in-roads against Richard's weak younger brother, John.¹⁸⁷ At this point, the entire undertaking effectively fell apart.

Innocent's efforts, however, along with the renown of the Third Crusade, had already excited crusade zeal within Europe. A few years after the papal encyclical, Geoffrey Villehardouin reports that the preaching of Foulques of Neuilly inspired many people across France to take the cross.¹⁸⁸ According to Villehardouin, at a tournament being held in Champagne, Counts Thibaut of Champagne and Louis of Blois, Simon de Montfort and Renaud de Montmirail agreed in a spontaneous gesture of piety to make an armed pilgrimage to the Holy Land and "people throughout the country were greatly impressed when men of such high standing took the cross."¹⁸⁹ Although no kings would partake in the holy crusade, it would be led by the cr me of the French aristocracy.

The noblemen resolved to assemble at Soissons and then at Compi gne to discuss their prospects and plans. The preaching of Foulques in France and Abbott Martin of Pairis in Germany guaranteed a sizable number of errant knights and peasants who wished to participate, although fewer men were assembled than had been involved in the First Crusade.¹⁹⁰ The management of such a force, however, would require the attention of all the present nobles and so the minutiae of preparing the crusade were entrusted to six noblemen who would act "with full power to settle what should be done, exactly as if they

¹⁸⁷ Gillingham, *Richard*, pp. 323-329. Gillingham notes that immediately following Richard's death tales circulated that he had been in France pursuing treasure. It is possible that these stories conveyed the sense of betrayal felt by the Western faithful – Richard, celebrated crusader, was killed, not in the Holy Land, but in France, while bickering with one of his vassals. The implication is that if Richard had been seeing to the Kingdom of Heaven, and not to his own, his armies could have retaken Jerusalem.

¹⁸⁸ Villehardouin, *Conqu te*, ch. I, p. 29. That Villehardouin credits Foulques with germinating the crusade is telling. Robert of Clari and Gunther of Pairis also claim that Foulques initiated the crusade and that Innocent only approved of what the monk from Neuilly was preaching. While historically there is no doubt that Innocent was considering a crusade long before Foulques, the perception that the undertaking did not begin with the pope may explain the apparent disregard the crusaders had for the pope and his legates, as shall be indicated.

¹⁸⁹ Villehardouin, *Conqu te*, ch. I, p. 29. Queller believes that the court of Champagne would have been particularly inclined to the ideals of the crusade due to the influence of nascent chivalric culture. Thibaut's mother, Marie de Champagne, was a respected patroness of troubadours and minstrels and the glorious tales of Chretien de Troyes and the early Arthurian romances would have been well-known to Thibaut and his peers, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 4-5. Bartlett agrees with this reading, *Ungodly War*, pp. 49, 54-55.

¹⁹⁰ Runciman, *Crusades III*, pp. 109-110.

were their lords in person.”¹⁹¹ A fair-sized force was assembled and so the delegates turned their thoughts towards transporting their host to the Holy Land. The overland route was almost immediately discounted – the main forces of the previous crusade, the armies of Philip and Richard, had made good time to the East by taking ship, as opposed to the armies which had gone overland and suffered at the hands of raiders and the ever more powerful Turks.¹⁹² Furthermore, the few Germans who were present would have recalled the ill-treatment which the forces of Frederick I had experienced at the hands of Isaac II in Byzantium.¹⁹³ Contracting ships, however, would be expensive, and only the maritime Italian city states could be expected to provide transport for such a sizable army.

Genoa, Pisa, and Venice had the fleet capacity and infrastructure necessary to convey Western pilgrims to the East – every year they organized two major convoys to the Holy Land.¹⁹⁴ The sources disagree as to how the delegates determined whom to approach. Villehardouin, a member of this delegation, states only that the members believed that they would find “a greater number of ships in Venice than in any other port.”¹⁹⁵ Gunther of Pairis is vague but seems to imply that Venice was the only city approached by the crusaders.¹⁹⁶ Robert of Clari claims that the delegates went first to Genoa and then to Pisa but were rebuffed, because those cities could not provide such a fleet, and that only then were the Venetian approached.¹⁹⁷ It may be said with some confidence that the Genoans would have been held in low esteem by the French, as Philip had accused them of price-gauging and poor service when he had contracted them to ship his own forces during the Third Crusade.¹⁹⁸ While there was no clear reason for Pisa to be accepted or rejected, Venice would have been particularly attractive to the crusaders. Innocent had already had dealings with the Venetians and the *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* claims that the pope

¹⁹¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. I, p. 31.

¹⁹² Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 56.

¹⁹³ See above.

¹⁹⁴ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquest*, ch. I, p. 31.

¹⁹⁶ Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. 6, pp. 76-77.

¹⁹⁷ Robert of Clari, *Li estoires de chiaus qui conquisent Coustantinoble*, in *Three Old French Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Edward Noble Stone, Seattle: The University of Washington, 1939, ch. 6, p. 175.

¹⁹⁸ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 7.

actually ordered the crusaders to go by way of Venice.¹⁹⁹ While Queller argues, quite convincingly, that after the debacle with the Venetian ambassadors Innocent was unlikely to favor the Venetians, he also notes that there would have no little reason for Innocent to outright reject them – the pope’s preference probably played little part in the process.²⁰⁰ The delegates probably believed that Venice was simply the best choice.

As Villehardouin recounts, the envoys arrived in Venice in 1201 and were met by the venerable leader of the Venetians, Doge Enrico Dandolo himself.²⁰¹ Armed with the decrees of their lords, effectively granting them *carte blanche*, the delegates requested that Dandolo convene his “council” so that they could petition the entire ruling body of Venice.²⁰² Madden has taken this request to mean that the French must have had some familiarity with the functions of Venetian government, in so much as they recognized that Dandolo was not an autocrat and that his power derived from the ruling elites of Venice. Dandolo said that it would take four days to assemble the ruling body.²⁰³

After the appointed time, the delegates were brought before the Venetian council. According to Villehardouin, the envoys told the council of their intention to sail with a mighty fleet to the Holy Land and they petitioned the Venetians to provide help “in any way that [they] care to advise or propose.”²⁰⁴ The doge then requested one week to deliberate over the issue, with the warning that the proceedings could take even longer. When the council was reconvened, he laid out his suggestions: Venice would provide transports to carry 4,500 horses and 9,000 squires with additional vessels for 4,500 knights and

¹⁹⁹ *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 213. Andrea believes that this imperative came in 1202, long after the crusaders had decided on their own to contract with Venice.

²⁰⁰ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 7.

²⁰¹ Enrico Dandolo is one of the most important, and fascinating, medieval doges. His historical reputation has vacillated over the years but Thomas Madden, in his biography entitled *Enrico Dandolo & the Rise of Venice* paints the fullest picture of the man, his times, and his reputation.

²⁰² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. II, p. 32.

²⁰³ Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 122. Some historians have criticized Dandolo for making the crusaders wait for four days, as if it were some kind of delaying tactic. As Madden notes, however, both the Great Council and the Council of Forty, the two primary executive bodies of this time, were tasked with a plethora of tasks pursuant to managing the Venetian state. After the reforms during the reign of Sebastiano Ziani, the doge’s ability to make decisions without legislative input was greatly curtailed, as Madden notes. A waiting period of four days would not be unreasonable and furthermore, Villehardouin does not consider the wait excessive.

²⁰⁴ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. 2, p. 33.

20,000 footmen, along with supplies for nine months.²⁰⁵ The total cost would be 85,000 marks.²⁰⁶ In addition, the Venetians offered to dispatch 50 galleys at their own expense, provided that the Franks agreed to share one half of all war booty.²⁰⁷

Much debate, however, has been made over these figures, especially the costs, which the Venetians gave to their fellow crusaders. Some historians claim that the notion that the French could amass a force exceeding 30,000 men was absurd and that the Venetians had roped the unsuspecting Frenchmen into a bargain they could not fulfill.²⁰⁸ It is clear, however, that Villehardouin or one of the envoys must have given the reckoning to the Venetians – why else would Dandolo select this number? And while a force of that size was truly massive, certainly exceeding the size of any other single crusader force, the envoys must have had some justification for selecting it. Villehardouin himself was the respected marshal of Champagne – his entire career revolved around assembling and managing armies. An army of such a size must have appeared completely viable to him at the time and if one examines the sizes of other crusader forces and the potential enrollment of the Fourth Crusade, the number appears less unreasonable.

By modern estimates, the total number of men assembled for the Third Crusade was between 25,000 and 30,000 men. Richard I assembled an army of 8,000, Philip an army of about 2,300 and Frederick a massive force of 15,000 to 20,000.²⁰⁹ During their deliberations at Venice, the crusader delegates may well have been under the influence that King John and King Philip still intended to join the crusade, with the implication that they would bring with them sizable armies of their own. The crusaders

²⁰⁵ Estimates on the size of the fleet vary but most modern historians believe that it numbered between 300 and 500 ships, Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 68.

²⁰⁶ Robert of Clari sets the initial price at 100,000 marks, which the envoys then bargained down to 87,000. Robert, however, was not present at the meeting and the accounts he offers of events he was not present to see tend to be incorrect, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. VI, p. 175.

²⁰⁷ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople.*, ch. 2, p. 33.

²⁰⁸ Nicol's account of the proceedings illustrates such complaints: he somewhat editorially asserts that Dandolo would have "recognized" that the crusaders could not possibly raise so large a force and that, in order to ensure that Venice would "gain" from the undertaking, the French would have to be forced into a written contract from which the Venetians could extract profit in the form of armed service, Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 127-128. As is argued below, such machinations on the part of the Venetians need not be assumed.

²⁰⁹ Jonathan Philips, *The Fourth Crusade and the Sack of Constantinople*, New York: Viking Adult, 2005, p. 66. Contemporary accounts place the size of Frederick's force at 100,000 but this is almost certainly an exaggeration.

would also have been aware of the crusader vow of Emeric of Hungary, who would be the only monarch to take the crusader's vow during the crusade.²¹⁰ Finally, aid would have been assumed to be coming from the Holy Roman Empire, Pisa, and Genoa, all of which, as will be shown, were courted for more men by the crusaders. In addition, the crusaders had a tally of men who had already joined the crusade and they included them in their reckoning, perhaps not accounting for men who would abandon the crusade or seek their own means of reaching the Holy Land. It does not, then, seem unreasonable to estimate that a force of 30,000 men, under the best case scenario, could be assembled for the crusade. These considerations may very well have influenced Villehardouin and his associates when contracting their fleet from the Venetians. While this figure proved to be far too high in hindsight, it may not have appeared so at the time. Regardless, however, the Venetians cannot be faulted for acquiescing to his request.

Having heard the offer, the envoys retired and deliberated over the offer. The terms which the Venetians offered evidently seemed fair, as, according to Villehardouin, the envoys agreed to them willingly enough.²¹¹ Queller has made an in-depth study of the "going rates" for shipment to the Holy Land from Italy and found that while the Venetians charged slightly more per man than other city-states, one must recall that no army of such a size had been transported such a distance and so a greater price would be expected.²¹² One should still recognize, however, that 85,000 silver marks was an

²¹⁰ To what extent he honored this vow, however, will be seen below.

²¹¹ The author of a *translatio*, the Anonymous of Soissons, is one of the few contemporary resources to accuse the Venetians, not just of price-gauging while the crusaders were in the city, but when giving a price for the fleet: "The Venetians demanded from them excessive charges, both expenses and a profit for their ships," Anonymous of Soissons, *Concerning the Lands of Jerusalem...*, in *Source Materials*, ed. Andrea, p. 233. Such, however, is only the opinion of the author, who was likely a cleric and not a warrior. While this opinion must have been widely held, especially among the poorer members of the crusade, it does not reflect the tactical opinion of men like Villehardouin which, in this situation, is more valuable.

²¹² Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 12. Queller calculates that a unit of one knight, two squires, and two horses would have cost 14 marks to transport. A squadron of thirteen knights had sailed from Genoa in 1184 with their mounts and retainers at the cost of 12 and $\frac{3}{4}$ marks per "unit" for one year. In 1190, Philip Augustus transported, again through Genoa, 650 knights, 1,300 squires, and 1,300 horses at a rate of 13 and $\frac{1}{2}$ marks per year, although, as noted above, this price was seen as unfair. Philip's army, however, numbered just under 2,000 men while the envoys wished to transport a force of nearly 35,000. The Venetians would be under a far greater burden than the Genoans, and so it seems reasonable that their pricing would be higher – the Venetians would have a great deal more to prepare.

unprecedented sum. As Frederic Lane has calculated it, the price was twice the annual income of the king of France and would have equaled just under 20,000 kilograms of silver.²¹³

It is misleading, however, to think only of the lump sum. Per the agreement as Villehardouin outlines it, every man would be responsible for paying his own way – two silver marks per man and five per horse.²¹⁴ For a landed warrior or a member of his retinue, such a sum was very manageable and it is implied, although not stated, that the wealthier members of the crusade would subsidize their peers. As has been argued above, the delegates had reason to believe that the agreed-upon number of men would arrive in Venice and so they would have had no cause to doubt their ability to raise the needed silver.

Although the envoys had agreed, Dandolo now had to convince the remainder of his government. After speaking with the ruling council of Venice and winning their support after, as Joinville puts it, “gradually, persuading first a few, and then more,” he brought the issue before the common people for a plebiscite.²¹⁵ At this point, the envoys themselves addressed the people, begging them, for the love of God, to aid in this holy undertaking. Weeping with joy, the Venetians assented to their requests and Dandolo remarked that it was such an honor for France, “the finest nation in the world, to turn aside from all other people and choose [Venice] to join with them in so high an enterprise as the deliverance of Our Lord.”²¹⁶ The envoys had secured a fleet. Now they needed men, and someone to lead them.

From the beginning, Thibaut of Champagne had exerted great influence over the crusade, although it is unlikely that he held any formal control over the undertaking.²¹⁷ On May 24th of 1201, he died. It was then necessary for the crusaders to find a new leader for their monumental undertaking. Baldwin of Flanders seemed the most likely candidate – he was the most powerful of the assembled

²¹³ Lane, *Maritime Republic*, p. 37.

²¹⁴ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. II, p. 33.

²¹⁵ The tradition of asking the common citizens of Venice to agree to major legislation was called the *arengo* and it could be traced back to the ancient method of electing a doge by popular acclaim. As noted above, the governmental system of Venice had been radically altered after the assassination of Doge Vitale II Michiel. Reforms established in the early 1170s attempted to temper popular opinion with the foresight of an elite body of statesmen. In attempting to build so mighty a fleet, however, Dandolo felt that he needed the endorsement of the people. As noted below, building the crusader armada would require a monumental effort on the part of the Venetian people.

²¹⁶ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. II, p. 35.

²¹⁷ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 23-24. As Queller notes, Robert of Clari and others state that Thibaut was elected as the first leader of the crusade but they were likely misinformed, as none of these sources would have been privy to such information and no such election is mentioned elsewhere.

crusaders. Baldwin, however, had recently been at odds with King Philip and it was possible that the crusaders, hoping that the French monarch would provide them with resources, did not wish to alienate him. Judging from the rather obscure list of noblemen who Villehardouin says were considered for the position, Bartlett has argued that the crusaders may have hoped to bolster the ranks of the crusading host by selecting a lord from lands which had not yet contributed large numbers of men to the undertaking.²¹⁸ The final decision, however, fell upon Boniface, marquis of Montferrat, whom Villehardouin himself recommended.²¹⁹

Boniface was not an unexpected choice. He had strong ties to the East – his brother, Conrad, was a renowned hero of the crusades, as his father had been, and his other brother, Renier, had been married to a Byzantine princess. The house of Montferrat was also well-regarded by King Philip of France and Pope Innocent III, while not enamored with Montferrat for supporting the Hohenstaufens, great enemies of the Papacy, must have had some faith in Boniface, whom he had appointed to a special commission with the archbishop of Mainz.²²⁰ Montferrat power and influence extended into French, German, and Italian lands and Boniface himself was a well-respected leader with vast wealth and a large, well-trained army.²²¹ With a new leader, the crusaders began to assemble in Venice.

²¹⁸ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 61. Villehardouin mentioned earlier in his account that members of the delegation to Venice had travelled to Genoa and Pisa to determine “what help the people there might give them for the land oversea”, Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. II, p. 35. It is clear that Villehardouin and his men were taking steps to secure a sufficiently large army. The other crusaders, in not wishing to alienate Philip and hoping to gain addition men through the appointment of a leader, clearly hoped to swell the ranks of the crusaders.

²¹⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. III, pp. 37-38.

²²⁰ Runciman believes that Innocent III would have resented the election of Boniface of Montferrat, as this effectively removed the crusade from his control, Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. III*, p. 111. Bartlett brings up a greater issue: Philip of Swabia was, of course, in opposition to Otto of Brunswick, who wished to assume the position of Holy Roman Emperor which was left vacant after the death of Heinrich VI, Philip’s brother. Innocent, eager to see the power of the Western Empire decreased, endorsed Otto. Eventually, Otto would be crowned as Emperor Otto IV, but in 1210 Otto expelled papal troops from Italy and he attempted to increase imperial authority on the peninsula. Innocent promptly excommunicated his former ally. For more on this issue, see Michael Toch, “Welfs, Hohenstaufen and Habsburgs,” *The New Cambridge Medieval History, Vol. V: c. 1198-1300*, ed. David Abulafia, Cambridge: The Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 375-404. Queller argues that Philip actually had a cordial relationship with Innocent III.

²²¹ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 25-30. Queller discusses all of Boniface’s qualifications as they have been enumerated here but in much greater detail. The author wishes only to add that Boniface, a Lombard lord within extensive holdings in the Italian Piedmont, would geographically expand the scope of the crusade and likely increase the number of potential crusaders.

In the summer of 1201, as the faithful began to trickle into the city from across Christendom, starting around June 1st, however, it became painfully obvious that the reckoning would fall short. The Bishop of Autun, Jean de Nesles, Thierry de Flandre, along with others, simply ignored the request that the crusaders assemble in Venice and instead took ship from different ports directly to the Holy Land. Villehardouin violently castigates these parties which were “afraid to face the great perils of the enterprise that the army in Venice had undertaken.”²²² Villehardouin was right to be angry. He states that Jean de Nesles and his party had promised to arrive in Venice with a fleet – their decision to depart on their own was viewed as an act of gross dishonor by Villehardouin. Villehardouin, with the rest of the crusaders who had made it to Venice, established camp on the Lido of St. Nicholas, a large, sandy island which lay next to Venice proper.²²³ They had little choice but to wait and hope that more men would arrive.

While the crusaders tarried in Venice, far larger events were fomenting which would have a monumental effect on the undertaking. On April 8th, 1195, Isaac II, who had undone the horrors of Andronicus’ reign, was deposed by his brother, Alexios. Isaac was blinded and thrown in prison and his son, Alexios the Younger, arrested. Niketas Choniates records, however, that Alexios III was “unmindful of the indelible disasters suffered by the masses” and that “Vengeance [does not] sleep forever, but takes delight in the chronic changes [in government] and eagerly pursues those who performs lawless acts, and

²²² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 40. Queller details the extensive debate raging over Villehardouin’s decision to blame the failure of the crusade on those who failed to arrive at Venice. While some historians have accepted Villehardouin’s treatment of these “deserters,” the author included, others believe that they represent the naivety of Villehardouin, if not his complacency in a conspiracy to deny Venetian wrongdoing in the affair, Queller, “Bibliography,” *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 300-302. It is certainly true, however, that Villehardouin expresses a rancor towards those who failed to assemble that is, to say the least, extreme. This disgust is treated in greater detail below.

²²³ The *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* claims that the Venetians forced the crusaders to live in squalor on the little island, where food was expensive to come by, *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 213. Robert of Clari and Villehardouin make no mention of the crusaders being compelled to reside on the Lido and Villehardouin says that the Venetians established a market for the crusaders which was “abundantly supplied,” Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. X, p. 176; Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 40, 45. As Queller notes, the cityscape of Venice was hardly suited to housing tens of thousands of foreign troops and so the decision to house the crusaders on the Lido was not cruel on the part of the Venetians but rather very reasonable, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 52-53. As Queller notes, conditions on the Lido would have been terrible as the crusaders delayed there well into the boiling summer months, but this was the fault of the men who had not arrived and not that of the Venetians.

so he did not keep his brother under very close watch.”²²⁴ Isaac communicated freely with the West and even arranged for his son Alexios the Younger, who had been given equal freedom of movement, to escape to Europe with the help of Pisan merchants to find allies for himself and his father.²²⁵ He would find them in the courts of the Western Empire – his sister, Irene, had been given in marriage by Emperor Heinrich VI to his younger brother, Philip of Swabia.²²⁶ Alexios the Younger suspected that the imperial court of Germany could provide the help he needed to regain the imperial court of Asia Minor.

Alexios the Younger spent a great deal of time from October of 1201 at the court of Philip at Hagenau. It is likely that Alexios was there when Boniface of Montferrat, bannerman to Philip, was also present. A short time later, Alexios was in Rome, asking Innocent III to endorse his efforts to retake the throne which was stolen from him by his perfidious uncle. The pope, however, was already involved in negotiations with Alexios III and rebuffed the young claimant’s requests.²²⁷ The *Gesta Innocentii*, however, does claim that it “was said” that Philip had commended the cause of Alexios to Boniface, although modern historians believe that this statement was the work of Innocent’s biographer to free his subject of blame for the results of the crusade.²²⁸ Either way, Alexios was unable to find any guaranteed methods of securing his throne. He would have to remain in the West for a little while longer for the opportunity to present itself.

²²⁴ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, section 536. The florid prose of Choniates should remind the reader that this work is not so much a work of history as it is a tragedy bemoaning the loss of Choniates’ beloved city. The criminal nature of Alexios III, and Isaac, for that matter, who is also called corrupt and perverse, consigned Constantinople to divine punishment.

²²⁵ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 537. Choniates explicitly names Pisans as Alexios the Younger’s rescuers and the author believes that this is significant. In section 538 of the same book, Choniates mentions that both of the Angelus brothers favored the Pisans in their commercial dealings, much to the chagrin of the Venetians. It is possible that Isaac had developed such a strong rapport with the Pisan merchant fleet that he entrusted them with the safe, and secret, conduct of his son to the West. Choniates explicitly states that when Alexios was “negotiating” with the Pisan captain, he did so at the behest of his father. The favor shown to the Pisans by Isaac would indeed have to have been great, if they were willing to risk the ire of Alexios III on behalf of the deposed emperor.

²²⁶ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 163-164.

²²⁷ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 67.

²²⁸ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 66; Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 35-36, 38. Queller notes, however, that when Boniface visited Rome in March of 1202 he suggested that the crusaders could stop by Constantinople and attempt to bring the city to heel. Innocent flatly denied this suggestion. Queller believes that Boniface was merely airing a possible course of action and that the marquis, at that time, had no serious notion of moving against Constantinople.

In Venice, the crusaders were desperate. When the envoys had first opened negotiations with the Venetians they had set June of 1202 as a departure date, but that day had already come and gone. Thousands of men had been camped on the isle of St. Nicholas, a barrier island right next to Venice, for several months, and conditions were starting to worsen.²²⁹ In August the final stragglers arrived: Martin of Pairis, Conrad of Krosigk, the bishop of Halberstadt, and Boniface himself, who arrived on the 15th.²³⁰ Between 10,000 and 15,000 men had assembled in Venice – the rest had departed from other ports or failed to go on crusade at all.²³¹ As it appeared as though no more crusaders would arrive, Dandolo approached the assembled army and demanded payment. The Venetians had more than exceeded their portion of the agreement. Every ship had been assembled and crewed and the expedition was ready to commence.²³² Even the author of the *Gesta* of Innocent III, no friend of the Venetians, had to concede that the armada was mighty and had been launched according to the exacting specifications of the

²²⁹ Villehardouin and Clari say that the crusaders had willingly settled on the isle because there was not sufficient lodging in Venice herself, Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 40; Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. X, pp. 176-177. The *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* and Gunther of Pairis, however, claim that the Venetians forced the crusaders onto the island, trapped them there, and charged them exorbitant sums for food, Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. VI, p. 77-78; *Devastatio*, pp. 213-214. It is likely that that the Venetians did indeed steer the crusaders to remain on St. Nicholas, lest they cause trouble in Venice proper and it is likely that conditions on the small island quickly became unbearable. The *Devastatio*'s account, however, of massive piles of body seems unlikely and one doubts that the Venetians were intentionally harming their allies. For more on the debate, see Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 132.

²³⁰ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 50. The bishop had taken the cross because he was under excommunication, having endorsed Philip of Swabia as Holy Roman Emperor rather than Otto of Brunswick, Innocent's candidate.

²³¹ There is no reliable account of how many men reached Venice in the summer of 1202. Villehardouin, who would be best able to give an estimate, says that after taking a reckoning of the men who had assembled, and factoring in money given to the poorer crusaders by the wealthier, the sum was still only half of the 85,000 silver marks, Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 42. If half of the sum was prepared, one would think that about half of the men had arrived. One must recall, however, the variable rate of charge between men and horses. The author, therefore, recommends a very round figure, between one third and one half of the expected total of men. Gunther of Pairis and the *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* also note that many who had arrived in Venice, both rich and poor, departed after learning that the fleet would not head directly for Jerusalem, Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. VI, p. 78; *Devastatio*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 214.

²³² Thomas Madden has made an extensive study of the Venetian efforts to craft this massive armada. He calculates that the undertaking would have completely absorbed the efforts of the entire city-state. Several primary resources note that Dandolo suspended all overseas trade, so that merchant ships could be drafted into the crusader navy. It would also be necessary to build the horse transports, as such craft required exacting specifications. Finally, crews would need to be raised for this massive flotilla. Modern accounts state that half of the able-bodied male population of Venice would be required, along with levies drawn from across the Adriatic. A special draft system was instituted to gather the needed number of men. Madden, and Queller before him, believe that the expenditure of material and man-power on this scale belies the notion that Venice was intending, all along, for the crusade to fail. They argue that there would have been simpler means to divert the crusade than to invest Venice in one of the greatest naval undertakings in history, Madden, *Enrico Dandolo*, pp. 129-130.

crusaders.²³³ An account of the deeds of the bishops of Halberstadt includes a reference both to the fleet and its implied cost to the Venetians: “the Venetians had magnificently equipped themselves at great expense and cost for this service.”²³⁴ The doge demanded the payment, which was his by right.

Queller and Madden have already written extensively on the cost which would have been generated in preparing such a mighty fleet. As is argued below, it was a major undertaking which severely drained the resources and manpower of the Venetian state. To contextualize, however, just the productive aspect of the fleet, it would be useful to summarize the already impressive nautical achievements of the Venetian state. Perhaps the greatest of these was the crusade fleet of Doge Vitale Michele – 200 ships, which had taken nearly three years to finish, although delays were rampant.

To counteract these delays the famous Venetian Arsenal was built in 1104. By combining the creative capabilities of the city’s shipwrights in one area, the state could vastly decrease production time for large vessels, although the medieval Arsenal could not match the efficiency of the Early Modern Arsenal, which according to popular myth could turn out a warship a day.²³⁵ The new capabilities of the Arsenal allowed Doge Ordelafo in 1110 to launch his fleet of 100 ships to aid King Baldwin in just under a year, the same amount of time that it would take Domenico Michele to raise a fleet of 120 ships in 1122. Perhaps the most impressive undertaking was the fleet of 1171 – 120 ships raised by Vitale Michele II to attack Manuel for the seizure of the Venetians in the Byzantine Empire, which only took four months to construct. That fleet, however, was raised in a time of crisis and should not be held as indicative of the normal capabilities of the Arsenal. That the Venetians could construct upwards of 300 ships in a year is truly remarkable. It should come as no surprise that the Venetians expected fair compensation for their monumental efforts.

The crusaders were in a terrible position. Villehardouin bemoans that the men were in no position to compensate the Venetians for the appointed sum. The more pious barons contributed all of their wealth

²³³ “For the Venetians had prepared such a magnificent fleet, that hardly ever had such great naval preparations been seen or heard of,” *Gesta*, ch. LXXXV, p. 139.

²³⁴ “The Deeds of the Bishops of Halberstadt,” in *Sources*, Andrea, p. 250.

²³⁵ Norwich, *Venice*, 83-85. There is some debate about exactly when and under whom construction of the Arsenal began. For more on the Arsenal in the Early Modern period, see Lane, *Maritime Republic*, pp. 362-364.

in a desperate attempt to meet the required amount while, as Villehardouin reports, a faction of men refused to offer any more money to the cause, as they had already paid their share and were willing to seek other passages to the Holy Land if necessary. Villehardouin believes that these men secretly wished to see the army disbanded so that they could return to their homes – these men are labeled as rogues who, like those who failed to come to Venice, sought the destruction of the crusade.²³⁶ The Venetians were rightly upset when they learned that payment would not be forthcoming. Robert of Clari says that Dandolo personally chided the crusaders for their failure, as his people had already expended so many resources in the undertaking. He said that he would withhold food and drink from the Lido until the payment was offered. Clari, however, goes on to say that “the Doge was a right worthy man, and, for all that he had said, he ceased not to suffer both drink and meat a plenty to be fetched to them.”²³⁷ Despite this mercy, however, the Venetians, who had already invested so much, could not allow the crusade to get under way. The livelihoods of the entire population depended upon the money promised by the crusaders – the Venetian state had likely come to a standstill and the due funds would be needed to see the city through while a huge portion of its population was engaged abroad.

Circumstances in Venice, however, allowed for a mutually beneficial arraignment. For most of the 12th century, Venice had been maintaining a tenuous hold over the major cities of the Adriatic, both to ensure the steady flow of supplies and the security of the city. One city, Zara, had been a persistent thorn in the side of the city. In 1187 it had rebelled once again against Venetian authority, but the crisis after the fall of Jerusalem had prevented the Venetians from retaking it. One abortive attack was launched in 1190, and in 1192, just a short while after his election to the dogeship, Enrico Dandolo had launched an attack fleet which had conquered land around Zara but not the city itself. Since that time, Zara had remained a

²³⁶ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 42. As has been noted above, commentators have been puzzled by Villehardouin’s blaming of the “deserters” and, in this case, the cabal of men who wanted to end the crusade before it even began. Villehardouin provides no other rationale for their schemes and Bartlett has noted that it seems unlikely for men to have travelled to Venice to depart on the crusade but then seek to unravel it, Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, pp. 69-70. Edgar H. McNeal believes that this statement may be attributed to the *conte* style. In such a poem, the audience would expect a certain amount of intrigue and subterfuge as part of the adventure, McNeal, “*Conte*,” pp. 110-113.

²³⁷ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XI, pp. 177-178.

hostile port, preventing Venetian access to the forests of Dalmatia, a valuable source of timber for ships, and even worse, the port had become a haven for pirates. Now, Dandolo believed that he had an opportunity to rectify that problem.²³⁸ He proposed to the crusaders that, if they agreed to aid the Venetians in putting down this rebel city, he would suspend payment of the 30,000 outstanding marks.

It should be noted, however, that Robert of Clari does not refer to the attack on Zara as a necessary precursor to the launch of the crusade. Rather, he recounts an episode in which the doge came before his advisers and told them “Sirs, if we let these people go unto their own country, we shall ever be esteemed wicked men and deceivers. But let us straightway go to them and let us say to them that if they will render us these six and thirty thousand marks which they owe us, out of the first conquests that they shall make and shall have for division, then will we set them over the sea.”²³⁹ Although Dandolo does suggest that the crusaders attack Zara, this stipulation occurs after the fleet is preparing to depart and does not seem to be forced upon the crusaders in any way. Naturally, one would assume that Clari was simply not privy to the actual negotiations regarding Zara and so was unaware of them before the crusaders reached the city – he himself admits as much. In electing, however, to not assert that the Venetians forced the crusaders to attack Zara, but that the Venetians were more interested in acting nobly, Clari characterizes the Venetians as less greedy and nobler than one would otherwise expect. This characterization is all the more important when one considers that Clari often harps upon the avarice of the nobles of the crusade, an avarice he does not, apparently, attribute to the Venetians.

The decision to attack Zara highlighted another issue which had been simmering in the crusader camp for months. Although Jerusalem was the anticipated goal of the crusade, it had never truly been the target. At some point, although the sources disagree on when, the barons seemed to have agreed to attack Egypt. The area had been the final target of King Richard I, as it was a fertile region, but one which could

²³⁸ Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 129. As Madden notes, it was common for a lord to “stabilize” his dominions before going on crusade – Richard I, the consummate crusader of the era, had himself launched several small campaigns on the Continent before departing for the Holy Land. As Zara was both a rebel territory and a hostile threat to Venetian interests, Dandolo likely assumed that it would be perfectly acceptable for him to secure the city before departing for the Holy Land.

²³⁹ Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XII, p. 178.

easily be conquered as the local Shi'ites were hostile to the Sunni who had recently conquered them. Jerusalem itself was a strategically weak area – holding Egypt would increase the security of Outremer while crippling the Muslim ability to prosecute war.²⁴⁰ Also, at the same time, the Kingdom of Jerusalem was in the midst of a five year truce with the Muslim forces, as Gunther of Pairis notes.²⁴¹ The crusaders did not wish to upset the delicate balance of affairs in the Holy Land.²⁴² The Venetians were probably also aware of this plan: as Queller has noted, the ships constructed by the Venetians had unusually shallow drafts, clearly designed for an amphibious landing on long, inland beaches, like those surrounding Alexandria.²⁴³ It seems likely that the Venetians were prepared for an attack against Egypt

After the debacle of the Fourth Crusade, a rumor would circulate that the Venetians had always intended to attack Zara or Constantinople, as they were currently involved in trade negotiations with the Egyptian sultan. While it is possible that the Venetians were in fact trading with the Egyptians, as they had recently received permission from Pope Innocent to do, it is unlikely that these negotiations would influence the Venetians to not attack Egypt. As Thomas Madden has noted, Venetian ships bound for Egypt make up only 11% of the surviving manifests from 1184 and 1205. For the same period, trade to Byzantium accounted for 65%.²⁴⁴ Venice had little trade interest to protect in Egypt, while she was clearly, as has been shown, a strong presence in Byzantium. One must also consider that a successful attack on Egypt would guarantee Venice the right to establish her own trading center in Alexandria, as she

²⁴⁰ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, pp. 72-74. As Bartlett notes, the barons likely kept this fact a secret from the rank and file. While Egypt was, tactically speaking, a sound target, the common men of the crusade would have preferred to march immediately on Jerusalem. As noted above, the average crusade was more concerned about reaching Jerusalem than he was about sound military strategy.

²⁴¹ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria Constantinopolitana*, ch. VI, p. 77.

²⁴² This concern was not, however, shared by all who took the cross. A small cohort of knights led by Renaud of Dampierre ignored the pleas of Aimery II, king of Jerusalem, and struck out on their own, ignoring the terms of the truce. They were ambushed and massacred by Muslim raiders, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 47-48.

²⁴³ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 70. As Queller notes, the landing zones around Constantinople would not have supported ships of this sort – this very fact would force the crusaders, once they reached Constantinople, to land at Chalcedon. Queller argues that the design of the ships clearly indicates that the Venetians had no intention of diverting the fleet to Constantinople.

²⁴⁴ Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 127.

had been granted in Acre by Godfrey for services rendered after the First Crusade.²⁴⁵ It does not appear that Constantinople would have been a very enticing target.

It must be conceded, however, that an attack on Zara would be far more lucrative for the Venetians. The city had eluded their control for centuries.²⁴⁶ The city was so valuable because it was a primary source of the timber and foodstuffs which kept the Venice supplied. Of greater import, however, was the recent spate of pirating which had been taking place in and around Zara. The Venetians had difficulty protecting their vessels and Dandolo was unwilling to effectively leave his city undefended after risking so much to aid the crusaders. An attack on Zara would guarantee the security of Venice and, in the long run, offer up new avenues of income which could offset the losses of 1202.

Many have wondered, however, why Dandolo did not simply postpone the debt completely. The assumption is that if the doge had truly had the best interests of the crusade at heart, he would not have allowed financial concerns to hamper the effort. Donald Queller has neatly refuted this argument. As has been mentioned, the Venetians invested their very livelihoods into the production of the crusader fleet. Having suspended trade for a year, cannibalizing most of their ships to fill the order, and sending off most of their young men to fight, it is no exaggeration to say that the Venetians had invested their very existence in the undertaking. As Queller notes, Dandolo was in no position to cast aside these concerns. The sustenance of his island depended upon compensation for the massive fleet and he had to ensure that some restitution was provided to Venice.²⁴⁷ Dandolo could not morally, and certainly not legally, allow

²⁴⁵ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. I*, pp. 312-313. The ailing Godfrey gladly welcomed the Venetian fleet, which offered its aid in exchange for the right to trade within the newly formed kingdom, a church and market in every town, one third of every area which they helped to capture, and all of Tripoli, for which they would render tribute to the King of Jerusalem. If the Venetians wanted to use the crusade for profit, it would behoove them to attack Egypt, where they had little presence. The fact that so little Venetian trade took place in Egypt, despite it being a major hub for the goods in which Venice specialized, seems to indicate that the Venetians took to heart the prohibition issued by Pope Gregory VIII.

²⁴⁶ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 111-112.

²⁴⁷ "A pious and wealthy monarch might well have put off the debt without imposing conditions. But Dandolo was no monarch and Venice no autocracy. The doge had no authority to forgive or postpone debt without support of the ducal council and Great Council. Given the large number of purveyors in Venice who wanted their promised payments, a deferment would have probably also required broad popular approval. Something had to be offered to those Venetians injured by the crusaders' inability to pay. By choosing a landing at Zara, Dandolo was able to gain the necessary support," Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 58-59.

the crusaders to depart with most of the ships and men of Venice without first providing compensation for their failure to provide the agreed-upon sum.

Modern historians, like Donald Nicol, however, have noted an error in this line of thinking. True, the Venetians could claim that they desperately needed full compensation before the fleet could be allowed to depart. This particular compensation, however, was not material in nature. At Zara, the Venetians did not steal food or supplies which they then returned to Venice. They departed with the crusaders even though they had not secured material recompense of any kind, effectively agreeing to postpone the charges. The attack on Zara did not take the place of these charges, as the Venetians expected to be paid out of the spoils collected by the crusaders. The diversion to Zara might have provided long-term benefits for the Venetians, but it does not seem as if it would make their city any more stable when the crusaders were attempting to weigh anchor in the summer of 1202.²⁴⁸ One wonders, therefore, why Zara had to be attacked at all, if, other than improving Adriatic security, it accomplished no other immediate goal.²⁴⁹

The author would suggest that in addition to the arguments given by Queller and Madden over the economic and political value of Zara, there was another, more abstract, issue at hand. Recent scholarship has focused extensively on the role that chivalric culture and the concept of honor played in the Fourth Crusade.²⁵⁰ Most of this scholarship, however, has focused upon the culture of the French knights – a reasonable effort, as many of them came from Champagne, treasure trove of the secular romance and lay *geste*. In this chivalric culture societal value was, broadly speaking, defined by the honor lavished upon the individual by his peers. To merit this honor, a knight was expected to conduct himself rightly in war and in his personal affairs – he was to fight fairly and keep his vows, for instance.²⁵¹ Such ideals guided

²⁴⁸ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 131-132.

²⁴⁹ This is not to say that security in the Adriatic was not important, nor the acquisition of Zara as a trading post. As Madden notes, while Dandolo was on crusade, life went on in Venice. Those left behind to man the few remaining trading ships would have been greatly aided by the taking of Zara. One must wonder, however, if the diversion to Zara was quiet so necessary for the benefit of the Venetian state as Queller and Madden argue.

²⁵⁰ Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 4-5; Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 54

²⁵¹ For more on vows and contracts, see Madden, “Vows and Contracts in the Fourth Crusade: The Treaty of Zara and the Attack on Constantinople in 1204,” in *The International History Review*, vol. XV, no. 3 (Aug., 1993), pp. 441-468.

the actions of the French crusaders, as shall be illustrated below. Although fighting for God, they had to function within their own society and its cultural norms.

Far less, however, has been written about how honor culture would have affected the Venetians. This is mainly because the resources which would allow for these kinds of deductions – letters and contemporary histories from the Venetians – simply do not survive. One should also note that the honor systems of the Venetians and the French were very different. By the 12th century, a French knight was defined by his land holdings, vassalages, and lordships.²⁵² Such external indicators of honor did not exist in Venice. As was noted above in the case of Doge Pietro Candiano IV, the Venetians largely abstained from feudal ties and territorial acquisition – even their holdings in the Adriatic were treated more like colonies than vassal cities.²⁵³ This was fundamentally because the Venetian state was not a territorial empire. Her security and economy depended upon trade, a mercantile, rather than an agrarian, system. Merchant rights mattered far more than vassal rights to the nobles of Venice.²⁵⁴ As Frederic Lane has said, Venice was truly a “Maritime Republic.”

Accordingly, continental conceptions of honor are difficult to apply to any of the Italian communes, but most especially to Venice. Land meant less to the Venetians than it did to other Italians. Territorial acquisition was only valuable in so much as it could produce a means for trade, for trade meant wealth and wealth meant the security of the Venetian state. Wealth bought the food and other supplies needed to sustain the city. Wealth bought the wood needed to build new ships. And ships brought in the wealth to sustain this dynamic cycle. It should come as no surprise, then, that the Venetians, as Nicol

²⁵² Thomas N. Bisson, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009, pp. 46-48. Bisson argues that the prevalence of violence for control of land and secular offices helped to craft the reality of chivalric culture in a fractured society. For a more expansive, although older, view on chivalric culture as it pertained to property and titles, see Marc Bloch, “Vassal Homage” and “The Nobles as a *De Facto* Class” in *Feudal Society*, trans. L.A. Manyon, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 145-162; 283-292.

²⁵³ Most Venetian colonies functioned under a *podestà* system, in which the local ruling class, under an officially appointed *podestà*, would handle local government affairs with very little involvement from Venice proper. For the most in-depth analysis of the *podestà* system in the Middle Ages, see Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 195-197.

²⁵⁴ Lane, *Maritime Republic*, pp. 58-65; 68-72. Lane’s *magnum opus* remains one of the most important economic histories of the Most Serene Republic.

smirks, “applied for every pound of flesh” from those who were in their debt.²⁵⁵ Their very existence depended upon it.

All of the honor and personal attachment which is ascribed to Continental lords and their landed holdings, then, should rightly be applied to the Venetians and their mercantile enterprises. As the Venetians ambassadors had explained to Innocent III, contrasting the primary economies of the land with those of sea, the Venetian state “does not engage in agriculture but, rather, is involved in shipping and commerce.”²⁵⁶ The Venetians would then be expected to guard their trading enterprises with the same zeal which a more traditional knight would exhibit over his lands. Crusader histories, as has been noted above, abound with lords interested in territorial expansion, even when prosecuting holy war: Alexios I, Bohemond of Toronto, Conrad of Montferrat, and others. In fact one could argue that all who accepted lands in Outremer were pursuing material gains while battling for the celestial. These men, in securing their rights, had even allowed the stability of the crusader states to be jeopardized, threatening the holy war itself. Honor demanded it.

One should not, then, chide the Venetians for similar action, even though they insisted that their monetary, rather than territorial, rights be respected. The average Western noble had little experience with money – the only movable wealth in ready circulation on the Continent consisted of jewelry, arms, or household goods. The majority of his wealth was in land, and money itself was a dirty thing.²⁵⁷ Coins were only rarely employed in property and mercantile transactions. This attitude may account for some of the criticism leveled at the Venetians by the Western sources. They may have misread the Venetian insistence upon ready payment as being greedy, when really it was in pursuit of what belonged to the

²⁵⁵ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 410. In this passage Nicol refers only explicitly to the debt of the Byzantine emperors to the Venetians but this characterization is consistent throughout his work.

²⁵⁶ *Reg. 1:536 (539)*.

²⁵⁷ Bloch, *Feudal Society*, 65-68. As Bloch stresses, however, even “feudal” economies had a “currency” in the form of bartering which corresponded to an abstract concept of value – produce, for instance, was often “grouped” into unit equal to a pound of silver or gold. As Stephen White has noted, a cultural distaste for money in the chivalric societies of France can be found in the popular lay stories of the time. In *Guillaume in the Monastery*, the titular heroic knight is given money to buy goods, but he has no desire to use it: “He takes his chest and opens it quickly,/ But it annoys him to count out the coins/ So he throws them about by the handful,” *Guillaume in the Monastery*, in *Guillaume d’Orange: Fourth Twelfth-Century Epics*, trans. Joan M. Ferrante, New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, ch. XVII, lns. 417-419, p. 293.

Venetians by right.²⁵⁸ Villehardouin, who perhaps understood the Venetians best, lays no such charge upon the doge or his retainers. The marshal of Champagne, however, was certainly not naïve in this regard. He knew that men would set aside crusading zeal to bicker over power – he recounts such an episode during the First Crusade which nearly destroyed the nascent kingdom of Jerusalem.²⁵⁹ It is telling that he ascribes no such motives to the Venetians. In recommending the attack on Zara, it seems, Dandolo was merely attempting to ensure the security, stability, and station of his men. One would expect nothing less in his capacity as doge.

Such an opinion, however, was not shared by all and there was a great tumult in the crusader camp. These men had agreed to do battle against the infidel, not fellow Christians. The issue was further exacerbated by the fact that Zara was under the protection of King Emeric of Hungary, the only crowned head in Europe who had taken the crusader's cross. When Innocent heard that the crusaders were considering attacking a Christian city, he dispatched his legate, Pietro da Capua, to stop them.

Pietro da Capua had been in Venice in July of 1202 but had left after Dandolo said that while he was welcome to join the crusade in his pastoral capacity, Venice would not recognize him as a full papal legate.²⁶⁰ As has been noted, the Venetians were not willing to engage with the Holy See through intermediaries. One must note, however, that in a letter dated around the middle of 1204, Dandolo refers to Peter as a “legate.”²⁶¹ In that instance, however, Dandolo was referring to Peter's ability to absolve the excommunication suffered by the Venetians. It is possible that the Venetians, in June of 1202, were merely attempting to define Peter's capacity as legate: he was welcome to represent the pope in a religious capacity, but in the secular business of making war, he would have no say. This seems to reflect

²⁵⁸ This topic has not been widely explored in modern scholarship regarding the medieval period, although some research has been done when referring to the Early Modern. See the above-mentioned chapters in Lane and “A City Wed to the Sea” in Elisabeth Crouzet-Pavan, *Venice, Triumphant: The Horizons of a Myth*, trans. Lydia G. Cochrane, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002, pp. 46-96.

²⁵⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XIII, p. 95. Villehardouin refers to the argument between Godfrey of Bouillon and the Count of Saint-Gilles. He notes that the leaders of the Fourth Crusade strove to avoid a similar disagreement in their own ranks, although, as will be noted, factionalism still persisted.

²⁶⁰ Innocent III, *Reg. 6:48*, dated April 21, 1203. This letter was actually written long after Peter had been rejected as the papal legate and mentions it only in passing – the letter which would have referred directly to the event has been lost.

²⁶¹ *Reg. 7:202*

the duties of Adhemar of le Puy, the first papal legate to the crusades, as indicated by Urban. It is possible that, by insisting that Pietro function in a religious, rather than military, capacity, the Venetians were actually in keeping with the more traditional role of the papal legate in relation to the leaders of the crusade. Usually, papal legates were considered little more than messengers, and would not have had the authority to dictate papal will.²⁶² Innocent, however, certainly did not see it this way.

Pietro da Capua returned to the crusaders, bearing with him a letter from Innocent which expressly forbade the attack on Zara. The author of the *Gesta Innocentii* went on to assert that the Venetians had always intended to force this diversion to Zara, “which they had evilly conceived.”²⁶³ According to Gunther of Pairis, the more pious members of the crusade were loath to spill Christian blood. Martin of Pairis, and presumably others who were opposed to the diversion, also believed that Zara was a legitimate holding of the king of Hungary and that the Venetians only wished to attack it to stymie the pirate raids being launched from near that port.²⁶⁴ Abbot Martin even begged Peter to release him from his crusader vows after Peter was convinced to allow the diversion to Zara. Peter, however, would not allow Martin, or any of the others to depart.²⁶⁵ He believed that, as the crusaders had already entered into a pact with the Venetians, and the Venetians would not depart unless this agreement was met, the attack on Zara was the only way to ensure that the crusade held together.

²⁶² Donald Queller, *The Office of the Ambassador in the Middle Ages*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967, pp. ix, 2-4, 6-9, as cited by Noble, *The Republic of St. Peter*, p. 239.

²⁶³ *Gesta*, ch. LXXXIII, p. 131. Again, the anonymous author of the *Gesta*, in an effort to defend Innocent, launches unfounded attacks against the Venetians. While the Venetians certainly had a vested interest in subduing Zara, as they had been attempting to do on several occasions, there is no reason to think that they corrupted the efforts of the crusade for this express purpose. Venetians had, in the past, employed crusading forces to settle secular struggles in the past, especially in their wars with Byzantium. Other crusaders were also prone to such actions, including Richard I, as noted above, Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 129. The Venetians, however, did not raise this prospect until the French announced that they would be unable to pay for the fleet. The Venetians, who, as has been argued above, would have no way to know that the French would come up short in the reckoning, only then suggested attacking Zara as a compromise. As noted above, some have argued that the Venetians intended to divert the crusade from Egypt, due to an existing trade agreement, but see Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 55-57, and above.

²⁶⁴ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. VI, p. 77. Robert of Clari seems to follow a similar train of thought, in that he makes no mention of any treaty or allegiance due to Venice by the Zarans but rather that Dandolo wished to attack them for doing “much harm” to Venice, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XIII, p. 179. In all likelihood, these two northern sources were simply unaware of the long history shared by Zara and Venice. Choniates, who may certainly not be considered a “pro-Venetian” historian, says that Zara was attacked for “supposedly violating ancient treaties,” Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 540. Although Dandolo may certainly have been concerned about pirates, it seems likely that his primary concern was the overlordship which he believed Venice held over that city.

²⁶⁵ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, pp. 78-79.

Villehardouin frames the attack on Zara in different terms. He says that while there was initial disagreement, the barons concluded that an attack on Zara was the only way to ensure that the crusade finally get under way and that, more importantly, they were honor-bound to aid the Venetians in any capacity they could. Being men of God, it was their duty to right any wrongs they encountered.²⁶⁶

Villehardouin then relates how Doge Enrico Dandolo assembled all of the Venetians together for a parting Mass at Saint Mark's, the majestic church which served as the personal chapel of the doge. There, Villehardouin tells how Dandolo gave a rousing speech exhorting the Venetians to allow him to join crusade also, so that he could better direct the activities of the holy undertaking. As one, the people crowded around the doge and gave their assent while many others agreed to take the cross themselves, something that, Villehardouin says, few had agreed to do until then.²⁶⁷ He goes on to praise the venerable Dandolo, directly contrasting the bravery of this aged statesman who was effectively saving the crusade to the cowardice of the men who had nearly doomed it: “[Dandolo] was a man of great heart. Ah! How little like him were those who had gone to other ports to escape danger!”²⁶⁸ The crusade, summoned to defend the Holy Land, would first strike out against an enemy of the Venetian Republic.

Naturally, modern historians critical of the Venetian crusaders have seized upon this episode as proof that Venetian self-interest, and not piety, prompted their involvement in the Fourth Crusade. Marco Meschini has noted that, as presented in the source material, the Venetians, and Dandolo in particular, did not take up the cross until after Zara was accepted as the target. He concludes, therefore that “the vow of the crusade was for them a pious veil behind which they hid their diverse interests, enjoying all the while the advantages of their new status.”²⁶⁹ It is true, as Villehardouin attests, that few Venetians joined the

²⁶⁶ This same mindset would prove very important regarding the diversion to Constantinople.

²⁶⁷ Queller believes that Dandolo was directly mirroring the Mass at Saint Mark's in 1121, when Doge Domenico Michiel took the cross to defend the Holy Land. Dandolo would likely have been present at that mass, and his father, brother, and uncle were all involved with the great victory which the Venetians won against the Egyptian navy. While Villehardouin did not recognize this “subtext,” Queller believes that the Venetians would have and so the display would have added another pious dimension to this holy mission, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 60.

²⁶⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 44. McNeal believes that this beautifully arrayed scene also owes its function to the *conte* tradition, McNeal, *Chronicle*, pp. 111-112. Again, the author must stress that while the poetic style may inform the exchange, it does not mean that it is fabricated.

²⁶⁹ Meschini, “Four Crusades,” p. 36. For a similar sentiment, see Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 131.

crusade before Dandolo himself took the cross.²⁷⁰ One should be careful, however, to note that the Venetians did not join the crusade because it was going to Zara, but because they were moved by the pleas of their aged doge.

Villehardouin sets the scene for Dandolo's speech in St. Mark's church with great care. The oration is the climax of Chapter IV and the last major event in Venice before the departure of the crusaders. Although the High Mass is framed chronologically as taking place a short time after the meeting between Dandolo and the crusaders over the diversion to Zara, Villehardouin does not say that the one precipitated the other. The diversion to Zara, in fact, does not even figure into the speech. Rather, Dandolo merely asks the people if they would consent to his laying down his duties as doge to join in the crusade and lead his people there.

Considering that throughout the accounts of Villehardouin and Clari there are references to Dandolo constantly meeting and deliberating with other members of the Venetian government, it is unlikely that he placed the issue of his own departure and the association of his son Renier with him upon the ducal throne exclusively before the people without first discussing it with his own councilors. In fact, considering the Venetian constitutional reforms which took place before and during the reign of Doge Sebastiano Ziani, it seems highly unlikely that Dandolo could have done so, even if he wished to.²⁷¹ A transfer of governmental authority on that scale would have been unprecedented in the late 12th century. That no such deliberations are mentioned by the French sources is to be expected. While Villehardouin was kept abreast of affairs as they concerned the French, there is no reason to think that the Venetians, who largely kept their crusading preparations to themselves, would have informed the marshal of all of their undertakings.²⁷² The implication is that Dandolo had always intended to lead the Venetian crusaders

²⁷⁰ "Numbers of Venetians now began to come up in crowds to take the cross. Up to that day very few had done so," Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IV, p. 44

²⁷¹ See above. Also, for more on the medieval dogeship, see Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 90-104

²⁷² All of the French sources show a distinct lack of information about the Venetian crusade at large in regards to specifics. Other than Dandolo, no other Venetian crusader is named, although they played prominent parts as advisers, electors, and warriors in the crusade. The implication is that while the two sides certainly interacted on a regular basis, their administrative authorities colluded on only a few special occasions.

who had been slated to serve as sailors on the transport, along with the crews of the fifty galleys which the Venetian Republic would personally outfit.

If Dandolo had always intended to lead the Venetian crusaders, the decision to attack Zara merely made it possible for the fleet to get underway, and it was not the processor for Venetian support in the endeavor. Pursuant to this point, the number of Venetians participating in the crusade would also have been fixed, in that a certain number of men would have naturally been tasked with crewing the ships for transportation. Those men, however, who were moved to join the crusade during the mass in St. Mark's, however, would have served in addition to the men already slated for the crews. Even if Dandolo had not joined the crusade, a sizable portion of men would have been needed to maintain the transports hired by the crusaders.²⁷³

Either these men had planned, in some large ceremony, like the mass at St. Mark's, to officially proclaim their oath to go on crusade, along with their doge, or else the men who took the cross on that day did so in addition to the men already committed to the crusader fleet. If the former is the case, it is not out of the question to assume that Dandolo had also always intended to take the cross publically, regardless of the deliberations over Zara. If the latter is correct, Venetian crusader zeal is even greater than was previously assumed, in that the Venetians not only participated out of their contractual obligations but also exclusively out of genuine devotion.²⁷⁴ These do not seem like the actions of men using their faith as

²⁷³ The exact size of the crew of a medieval vessel varied widely according to ship type and purpose. Frederic Lane argues that the 50 galleys alone would require 6000 men to man them. To account for the crews of the other ships would require about half of the male population of Venice at that time, causing Lane to assume that many of the sailors, the oarsmen, in particular, would have drawn from Venetian colonies in Istria and Dalmatia, Lane, *Maritime Republic*, p. 36. John H. Pryor has placed the figure at just over 30,000 men, Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 130.

²⁷⁴ These points remain largely dependent upon supposition, as explicit evidence in support or to the contrary is lacking. Villehardouin's point that few Venetians had joined the crusade before the mass in St. Mark's seems to support the view that the ceremony was intended for the men who would crew the ships. If these men had already taken the crusader vow, they would have done so in very great numbers. The account of the bishops of Halberstadt, however, says that the Venetians "would go with the pilgrims" only after the diversion to Zara had been agreed upon, Anonymous, *The Deeds of the Bishops of Halberstadt*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 250. This seems to imply that no Venetians, save those who would crew the ships, had agreed to go on the crusade until Zara was named as the target. The author of the *Deeds of the Bishops* refers to no speech by Dandolo and the implication is that the Venetian "crusaders" were only there to carry out their interests at Zara. Such a characterization of the Venetians, however, does not appear in the more informed accounts. This anonymous author, therefore, can only be taken as referring to his own opinion of the Venetians and perhaps not the historical reality.

a “veil.”²⁷⁵ While an attack on Zara behooved the Venetians, one should not assume that it was the deciding factor for their participation in the crusade.

When the crusaders, both the willing and the unwilling, finally reached Zara, they pitched their tents and prepared to besiege the city. They were met by the Zarans, who had acquired from Innocent III a letter reiterating their protected status as a crusader state. Dandolo, however, encouraged the barons to continue their attack. Zara, as far as the Venetians were concerned, was a rebel territory and as such the Venetians were fully within their rights to reclaim it. Furthermore, both the current king of Hungary, Emeric, and Bela III, to whom the Zarans had appealed for support, had taken the cross but never actually gone on crusade.²⁷⁶ In Dandolo’s eyes, they were corrupting this holy endeavor and so were worthy of punishment.

At this point, the narrative diverts in twain and each variation has its own interpretation of Venetian involvement in the affair. Villehardouin says that the leading men of Zara agreed to capitulate to Dandolo but that the doge was unwilling to accept their offer before he consulted with his French allies. While Dandolo was occupied, however, the nefarious element within the crusader camp struck. Led by Robert de Boves, they told the Zarans that the French had no desire to attack the city and that the locals would only have to contend with the Venetian element. Heartened by this news, the Zarans returned to their city and prepared to resist the Venetian attack. Outraged, Dandolo ordered the French to assist him in taking the city which the interloping of the French “had taken” from him. Despite protests from the Abbot of Vaux, who said that the city was under papal protection and so could not be stormed, the French barons believed it would be more honorable to abide by their treaty with the Venetians.²⁷⁷ After five days of battering the walls with catapults and other engines of war, the assaulters ordered their sappers to

²⁷⁵ Again, see Queller and Madden for similar arguments.

²⁷⁶ Dandolo initially expressed these arguments himself in a letter which does not survive but must have been written in late 1203 or early 1204. Innocent’s response, however, does survive, and so it is possible to piece together what Dandolo’s arguments must have been, Innocent III, *Reg. 7:18*. It has been noted that Innocent III, despite the pious statements he makes regarding Emeric in his letters addressed to the doge, was also concerned about the Hungarian king’s tardiness, Innocent III, *Reg. 5:102 (103)*. Dandolo’s defense, as it appears in a slightly later letter, will be examined further below.

²⁷⁷ Madden, “Vows and Contracts,” pp. 441-442.

undermine the walls of the city. The terrified citizens then capitulated to Venice “on the very terms they had previously rejected by the advice of those who wished to break up [the] army.”²⁷⁸

Robert of Clari tells a slightly different story. He makes no mention of any delegation from the city. Instead, the people of Zara displayed their letter of protection from the pope, which is not mentioned in Villehardouin’s account. The doge, however, was infuriated by their rebellion and so said that “not for all the Pontiff’s excommunication would he refrain from avenging himself on them of the city.”²⁷⁹ Gunther of Pairis does not mention the proceedings before the attack on Zara but says only that French quickly conquered the city, so that this “odious and personally detestable business” would not distract from the trek to the Holy Land and that, once the city fell, “the Venetians, out of pitiless hatred, razed it to its foundations.”²⁸⁰

In Villehardouin’s account, the episode of Robert of Boves effectively frees Dandolo from blame – although the crusaders did attack the city, despite the papal injunction, they only did so because it was prevented from freely surrendering by a dangerous faction.²⁸¹ One must assume that if the negotiations with the Zarans had succeeded, the crusaders would have continued on their way and Dandolo would have secured the loyalties of the city without shedding Christian blood. As Queller notes, the Venetians stopped at many cities along the Adriatic, renewing local loyalties and making it perfectly clear to other towns which, like Zara, may have considered declaring themselves independent from the republic, that Venice was perfectly capable of enforcing her will.²⁸² All of these visits were accomplished without bloodshed. Presumably, had the doge had his way, the same would have transpired at Zara.

²⁷⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. V, pp. 46-49.

²⁷⁹ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XIV, p. 180.

²⁸⁰ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. VII, p. 80.

²⁸¹ It would be easy to dismiss this episode as poetic license on the part of Villehardouin, who wished to provide a dash of intrigue to the storming of Zara, McNeal, *Chronicle*, pp. 110-111. The author would like to stress, however, that of all the sources commenting on Zara, only Villehardouin would have been privy to these actual transactions. Robert of Clari and Martin of Pairis, and even the Abbot of Vaux, for that matter, would have not been involved with any deliberations with the Zarans. The fact that this event does not appear in the other resources does not mean that Villehardouin was fabricating it, only that the other resources were not aware of it.

²⁸² Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 71, n. 84. The *Devastatio Constantinopolitana* directly mentions this voyage for intimidation: “The Venetians, in company with the pilgrims, made their way across the sea and arrived in Istria. They forced Trieste and Mugla into submission, they compelled all of Istria, Dalmatia, and Slavonia to pay tribute,” *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, p. 215. The anonymous author of this work implies that Venice conquered these

Robert of Clari, however, offers an account which paints the doge in a very different light. Even before reaching Zara, Robert has the doge vow to “avenge” himself on the Zarans. He also promises the crusaders that Zara was “a right goodly city, and full of all manner of riches.”²⁸³ It is clear, therefore, that Dandolo intended to sack Zara from the beginning, according to Robert. The absence of the episode involving Boves further illustrates that no peaceful resolution to the proceedings existed. Since Robert of Clari could, and Martin of Pairis certainly did, believe that Dandolo was actually exacting justice against pirates in the rightful dominion of King Emeric, their depiction of the doge is considerably more tarnished. As the author has asserted, however, Villehardouin’s readings of events is likely the more accurate and while the previous accounts may illustrate important characterizations about the Venetians, they do not necessarily illustrate the historical facts of the matter.²⁸⁴

Whatever the machinations behind the assault, Zara fell and suffered more or less at the hands of the Venetians in late November of 1202.²⁸⁵ As it was winter, the crusaders established quarters at Zara and prepared to wait for the next tide. Sometime soon after the assault, there arose between the French and the Venetians contention which quickly escalated from brawling to open combat. Villehardouin, Robert of Clari and the author of the *Devastatio* mention the fray and the extent of its violence, which took place all across Zara and lasted for more than a day. The violence could only be quelled after the leaders of the crusade personally intervened and put a stop to it. The French barons and the doge then attempted to mend the ill feelings, with some success, as Robert of Clari, who would have been most attuned to the feelings of the lowly warriors who had started the brawl, said that “they established so good

regions, but following Andrea’s supposition that the author is German, he would not be aware of Venetian authority in the region.

²⁸³ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XIII, p. 179.

²⁸⁴ Of course, nothing may be said with certainty about the reasoning behind Dandolo’s attack on Zara and the events as they proceeded at the city.

²⁸⁵ Historical sources do not agree on the extent of damage done to the city following the assault, as accounts range from assertions that certain leading men were executed and the walls torn down to that the entire city was sacked, with even churches being destroyed, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 77. As Queller notes, the sources which attest to the greatest damage and dishonor done to Zara, Innocent III and Archdeacon Thomas of Spalato, were not present for the event. Thomas, who refers to towering piles of unburied corpses, would not even write his account until after 1268 and he would have been an infant at the time of the events.

a peace between them that never thereafter did they fall out one with the other.”²⁸⁶ Neither source, however, accounts for this disagreement.

Queller has concluded that the riot was caused by economic concerns. The Venetians were entitled to one half of the spoils from Zara and, as the French still owed them a sizable debt, the majority of loot would have been reserved for them. The *Devastatio* especially mentions that the “barons kept the city’s goods for themselves, giving nothing to the poor. The poor labored mightily in poverty and hunger.”²⁸⁷ When the French saw their supposed allies hoarding an unfair share of the loot, they were enraged and attacked.²⁸⁸ This is certainly a probably explanation, as both Villehardouin and the *Devastatio* place the riot at three days after the assault, when the most valuable loot would have been gathered and handed over to the Venetians.

The *Devastatio*, however, mentions the poverty of the crusaders after the riot, not before, and that the riot took place between the Venetians and the Frenchmen while the poverty of the crusaders was due to the wealthy barons. Furthermore, Robert of Clari, who is otherwise well aware of incidents in which the poorer crusaders felt cheated by the wealthier, makes no mention of unfair loot distribution in this instance. Finally, all of the resources agree that the leading men of the crusade were the ones who ended the fight. If the crusaders felt mistreated by their wealthy leaders, would not their presence only exacerbate the issue?

The author would like to suggest that the animosity between the French and the Venetians was the direct result of the assault on Zara itself. The French were fearful that, in attacking a city with papal protection, they had effectively damned themselves. Pursuant to Innocent’s letter, any who raised arms against Christians, especially the men of Zara who were, ostensibly, members of the crusade, would be excommunicated.²⁸⁹ As even Martin of Paris recounts, however, the crusaders had received permission

²⁸⁶ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XV, p. 181; Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. V, p. 49.

²⁸⁷ *Devastatio*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 215.

²⁸⁸ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 79-80.

²⁸⁹ The letter is now lost but its contents have been pieced together from the extant record, A.J. Andrea & Ilona Motsiff, “Pope Innocent III and the Diversion of the Fourth Crusade Army to Zara,” *Byzantinoslavica*, 33 (1972): 11-18.

from Pietro da Capua, the papal legate, to attack Zara for the good of the crusade. Accordingly, the crusaders were confused as to whether or not their actions had merited punishment. Robert of Clari and Villehardouin say that a delegation of French and German crusaders went to Rome to ascertain the specifics of their excommunication and, assuming the worst, in what way they could free themselves of it.²⁹⁰ The Venetians dispatched no envoys, because they believed that they had done nothing wrong.²⁹¹ The author would suggest that the in-fighting between the two groups arose because the French feared that they had incurred divine wrath, while the Venetians asserted that their actions were entirely justified. The French, infuriated by this viewpoint, were driven to attack the men whom they blamed for this debacle. When the ruling barons intervened, they were able to convince the French pilgrims that all parties had acted in good faith.²⁹²

Pope Innocent, however, would take a very different view of the actions of the Venetians. He received the French and German delegates and welcomed them back into the Christian fold – he had no interest in delaying the crusaders and he recognized that the French had been forced to attack Zara by the Venetians. Dandolo, however, dispatched no ambassadors.²⁹³ The fact that Venice felt no need to seek absolution clearly disturbed the pope. In his letter, he outlines a relatively simple process by which the French could receive absolution. He makes no mention of the Venetians, however, and in April of 1203

²⁹⁰ Robert of Clari, ch. XV, p. 181; Villehardouin, ch. VI, p. 53. Robert of Clari says that the delegates were dispatched just after the riot – he relates both events, in fact, in the same chapter. Villehardouin says that the delegation was sent “in the course of the winter” but he refers to it long after the riot. Gunther of Pairis makes no mention of the riot – he moves directly from the sacking of Zara to the envoys dispatched to the pope, Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. VII, p. 80. One could assume, therefore, that he was not present for the riot and that the envoys, with whom Martin traveled, departed very soon after Zara was conquered. This is not supported, however, by the evidence in the other sources.

²⁹¹ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, pp. 80-81; Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, pp. 81-82.

²⁹² The author acknowledges that this is merely supposition but wishes to comment upon the possibility.

²⁹³ As has been noted, Dandolo believed that he was entirely justified in attacking Zara and so did not beg forgiveness for his actions. Thomas Madden, however, has identified another factor which may have kept Dandolo from acting. The doge would have known that any act of restitution would require ceding Zara to the king of Hungary, something which Dandolo would not personally want to do and could not do legally – the doge was no autocrat and could not give up Venetian territory without governmental approval, especially after the reforms which had severely curtailed ducal authority in the 12th century. Dandolo could not in good faith request absolution from the pope when he knew that he would be unable to fulfill the terms of the penance, Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 145. In Donald Nicol’s reading of events, the pope would not have agreed to forgive the Venetians even if they will it: “the delegates pleaded with [Innocent] to grant absolution to the Venetians as well. But on this he was firm,” Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 133. Innocent, as is argued bellowed, was actually very willing to forgive the Venetians, provided that they appeal to him directly. Nicol is clearly distorting the situation to aid his own reading of events.

the crusaders would receive notice that the Venetians had been formally anathematized.²⁹⁴ In a letter dated to December of 1202, just after the attack on Zara, Innocent implicitly refers to the Venetians as the thieves in the episode of the Good Samaritan, having stripped the “mantle of virtue” from the crusaders.²⁹⁵

Such harsh language, however, was likely the product of confusion and miscommunication. Innocent had intended, from the beginning, to exercise direct authority in the crusade. Innocent, unlike Urban II or Gregory VIII, refused to give the crusader leaders free rein – he had intended to keep the entire enterprise under his direct control. As Bruce Shelley has noted, this desire for control was fundamental to Innocent’s papal policy. The ambitious pope had famously declared that the Vicar of Christ was the sun and the lay monarchs merely moons.²⁹⁶ After the dismissal of his legate, he began to fear that the crusade was slipping out of his control. The attack on Zara, which he had strictly forbidden, only confirmed his fears.²⁹⁷ The stern wording of this letter was meant to bring the crusaders to heel, and it seems to have worked. After the French and German crusaders dispatched their envoys, begging papal forgiveness, Innocent dispatched a much more amicable letter in February of 1203, outlining a simple process by which the crusaders could be returned to the fold.²⁹⁸ Innocent had been afraid that he had lost

²⁹⁴ Innocent III, *Reg. 5:161 (162)*. As Andrea has noted, Innocent seems to have been involved in writing a letter to the crusaders when the delegates arrived. This missive, *Reg. 5:160 (161)* is considerably more caustic. In it, he accuses the crusaders of having been seduced by Satan himself to attack Zara. Some readers may assume that Innocent is conflating the Venetians with Satan in this passage, but the author would argue against such a reading. In penning *Reg. 5:160*, Innocent would not have known that the French were acting under obligation to the Venetians. If anything, he would have been more antagonistic to the Venetians in *Reg. 161*, as he would have been told the details of the event. In this letter, however, he refers only to the “certain necessity” which compelled the French to attack Zara.

²⁹⁵ *Reg., 5:160 (161)*.

²⁹⁶ Shelley, *Church History*, p. 185. Shelley identifies this conception of the papacy in keeping with the reforms of Gregory VII, which vastly increased papal authority in the late 11th century. While Urban II and Gregory VIII certainly endorsed the spiritual authority of the pope, they were less willing to involve themselves directly in earthly, especially military, affairs. One wonders if perhaps Innocent III was overstepping his bounds, and his abilities, in attempting to “micromanage” the Fourth Crusade. Runciman was one of the first modern historians to identify Innocent’s intention to hold direct sway over the crusade itself, Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. III*, pp. 107-108. As has been noted above, earlier crusader popes had allowed the military leaders of the crusade to carry over its martial endeavors while the clergy saw to the spiritual arms of the pilgrims. Other than Adhemar of Puy, who was more of a figurehead than a leader, papal legates had a very minor role in the crusades.

²⁹⁷ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, p. 81.

²⁹⁸ *Reg., 5:161 (162)*. It must be noted, however, that while the other crusaders would be given full forgiveness, they did not actually merit it. The French crusaders, as had been noted by Bartlett, Queller, and Madden, did not actually abide by all of the clauses of their absolution as defined by the pope.

control of the crusade, a fear which would prove pervasive. The envoys from the crusaders alleviated his fears, although the absence of any Venetian ambassadors greatly troubled Innocent. The pope could not be sure that the Venetians would obey his wishes and so his opinion of the Venetians would remain low until the fall of 1203, when Dandolo finally sent his own account.

This is not to say, however, that Innocent completely despaired of the Venetian crusaders in the early days of 1203. Villehardouin states that in the documents absolving the non-Venetian crusaders, he gives full authority to the Bishop of Soissons and Jean de Noyon “to bind and to loose” the crusaders.²⁹⁹ Innocent must certainly be referring to the Venetians in this sentiment, illustrating that he still hoped that they could be enjoined to accept papal authority and beg forgiveness. Around March of 1203, Pietro da Capua sent an apparently obtuse, and now lost, missive reporting on the situation in the crusader camp. He was afraid that the Venetians would refuse papal absolution and so he requested further advice from the pontiff.³⁰⁰ Innocent, however, remained hopeful that the Venetians would see reason.

In *Reg. 6:102*, an oft discussed, unsealed letter of advice to the non-Venetian crusaders dated around late June of 1203, Innocent lays out his plan for the crusaders as they make their way to the Holy Land. He gives them permission to take ship with the Venetians, even if the Venetians refuse to offer their apologies and remain excommunicated, and also outlines ways in which the crusaders could secure supplies from Emperor Alexios III, “our beloved son in Christ.”³⁰¹ That Innocent would detail such explicit plans for carrying on with the excommunicated Venetians implies that he recognized they would not accept his authority, although he opens the letter still hoping that the Venetians would accept absolution. Despite the opinion of Pietro da Capua, even late in 1203, Innocent believed that the Venetians might still accept papal entreaties.

²⁹⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 53.

³⁰⁰ *Reg. 6:48*. Innocent tells Pietro that he may absolve and travel freely with the Venetians if they accepted the terms for forgiveness which the French had likewise accepted and if they swore to leave off attacking other Christians. In this respect, Innocent was anticipating the diversion to Constantinople, see below.

³⁰¹ *Reg., 6:102*. Alfred Andrea had written extensively on the dating issue of this letter, which could have been sent anytime from early to the middle of 1203. For more on the controversy, see Alfred Andrea & John C. Moore, “The Date of *Reg. 6:102*: Pope Innocent III’s Letter of Advice to the Crusades,” in *Medieval and Renaissance Venice*, ed. Ellen E. Kittell & Thomas F. Madden, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999, pp. 109-123.

The diversion to Zara, however, remains one of the key points of the Fourth Crusade, especially when one wishes to characterize the Venetians. The Western sources seize upon this incident as proof that the Venetians were disingenuous in their crusading efforts, more eager to advance their own positions than the will of Christ.³⁰² It must be conceded that that attack on Zara was self-serving. As has been argued above, the interests of the crusade were not advanced, in any really way, by the diversion. It was compensation for the Venetians, recompense for the failure of the French crusaders to hold up their end of the bargain. They had violated their contract and so had to offer up an alternative payment. By attacking Zara, the French offered up economic and honorific deference to their host, restoring Venetian stability and Venetian esteem. For many of the French, including Villehardouin, the issue was moral in nature. Whether or not the crusade was helped by Zara, whether or not the city was protected by Innocent, and whether or not the Zarans deserved to be punished, the knights were bound by their oaths to aid the Venetians. It was a purely a question of honor. The envoys to Innocent said as much in their defense, and the pontiff graciously accepted this justification.

Dandolo, however, could not claim that he was forced into the diversion at Zara by any outside source. He had opted to make the seizure of a city protected by the pope the terms for continued Venetian participation in the crusade and in doing so had earned Innocent's ire. Dandolo, accordingly, stressed that in attacking Zara he was actually doing the right thing, regardless of outside appearances. He argued that Emeric, protector of Zara, was merely hiding behind his crusader's vows to secure a city illegally seized. He noted that Zara was rightfully a Venetian holding and so the doge was totally within his rights to retake it. Dandolo does not, however, make any real mention of the economic necessity of attacking Zara. While, as Queller and Madden have argued, the issue must have been on his mind, the doge did not feel the need to air this grievance before the pope. Rather, he stresses that the Venetians were morally in the right, simply carrying out their duties as masters of Zara.

³⁰² Interestingly enough, Martin of Pairis, Innocent III, and even Robert of Clari treat the Venetians more harshly in the affair at Zara than the attack on Constantinople.

This letter, Register 7:202, is strongly indicative of the papal-Venetian relationship mentioned above – one of equals, or near equals, whose insights and opinions must be taken into consideration. Dandolo had already written to Innocent late in 1203 attempting to justify the diversion to Zara. Although this letter does not survive, its content may be divined from Innocent’s replay in February of 1204.³⁰³ It is very telling that in 7:202 Dandolo is effectively restating all of the points mentioned in his letter of 1203, many of which Innocent had simply ignored in his reply. Innocent did not believe that punishing Zara, even if it was justified, was an acceptable action for the crusaders.³⁰⁴ Dandolo does not accept this reading but instead confronts Innocent, reasserting that the criminal behavior of the Zarans merited punishment and that any good man who claimed to serve God would likewise serve what was right.³⁰⁵ Dandolo even goes so far as to say that he had refused to believe that Innocent would grant his protection to sinners like the Zarans.³⁰⁶ The doge is effectively accusing the pope of wrongfully protecting criminals, forsaking morality in a misguided desire to liberate Jerusalem as quickly as possible. Naturally, one would expect such an opinion from the pope whose greatest goal at the time was the success of the crusade.

Innocent had little to lose and much to gain in the crusade and so he could afford to be dogmatic in his goals. Dandolo, however, had other duties, to his state and to the stability of the crusade. He could not afford to single-mindedly pursue the liberation of Jerusalem.³⁰⁷ While such exclusive devotion might initially seem to be expected of any crusader, as the above history of the crusades illustrates, even a warrior pilgrim had to remain attuned to the realities of his situation. Before taking Jerusalem, the barons of the First Crusade had to secure Nicaea and Acre. Before retaking Jerusalem, which he did not actually achieve, Richard I had to ensure stability within his own kingdom. Before prosecuting the crusade, Dandolo had to prosecute the criminals of Zara. This should not be seen as a distraction or conduct

³⁰³ *Reg. 7:18.*

³⁰⁴ Innocent would take a similar position regarding Constantinople, noting that while the behavior of Alexios III may have been reprehensible, it was not the duty of the crusaders to punish sins but to avenge Christ, see below.

³⁰⁵ Dandolo stresses that he and the Venetians “labored for the honor of God and of the Holy Roman Church,” *Reg. 7: 202.*

³⁰⁶ “Indeed, because, as it was rumored, [Zara] was under your protection, which I did not for that reason believe because I do not think you or your predecessors would protect those who only assume the Cross in order to wear it...to acquire possessions of another and to criminally hold them,” *Reg. 7:202.*

³⁰⁷ Nor, indeed, could the other crusaders who “subverted,” as Meschini argues, the final goal of Jerusalem for the immediate goals of Zara and Constantinople.

unbecoming of a crusader. It is, rather, an acknowledgement of the realities of the situation.³⁰⁸ Dandolo believed that the attack on Zara was justified, both by necessity and morality. Jerusalem was the ultimate goal, but it was merely one of many. No crusade, despite the rhetoric surrounding it, had functioned exclusively for the liberation of Jerusalem. The Fourth Crusade was no different.

³⁰⁸ As is argued below, a similar rationale would be employed by the other crusaders for the attack on Constantinople.

Part V B: From Zara to Constantinople

As the crusaders spent the winter at Zara, they prepared for their next move. The delegation to Innocent had already been dispatched and although it was not evident how the pope would take the obstinacy of the Venetians, the French and Germans had faith in their own contrite apologies. Any animosity between the Venetians and their fellows, however, did not make it into the extant resources. Other than the riot, there are no other accounts of violence within the crusader camp. It was with united fervor that the crusaders planned their next route, which would surely have been a direct course to either Egypt or Jerusalem. Although the Venetians had insisted upon the diversion to Zara, having brought the rebels to heel, they were prepared to continue on the journey.

The situation at the camp, however, would then take a dramatic turn. Boniface of Montferrat had been noticeably absent during the campaign – he had departed from Venice on his own to settle his “affairs,” a poorly veiled attempt to remain uninvolved with the diversion. Boniface had no interest in advancing Venetian power in the Adriatic and, furthermore, as leader of the crusade, he did not wish to sully his position by aiding in the attack on Zara.³⁰⁹ He returned, however, in December of 1202, and soon after his arrival the crusaders also played host to a delegation of ambassadors from the court of Philip of Swabia. Alexios the Younger was once again making a bid for his throne.

The German ambassadors were received in a palace seized by Dandolo.³¹⁰ They said that their lord, Philip, wished to commend to the protection of the crusaders Alexios, rightful emperor of Constantinople and Philip’s brother-in-law. The ambassadors enjoined the crusaders, in so much as they were “on the march in the service of God, and for right and justice” that it was their duty “to restore their possessions to those who have been wrongfully dispossessed.” If the crusaders would aid Alexios in retaking his throne, he was prepared to offer 200,000 silver marks, provisions for the entire crusade, a detachment of 10,000 Byzantine warriors, led by himself, a permanent battalion of 500 men to be

³⁰⁹ Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 71.

³¹⁰ It should be noted that, accordingly to Robert of Clari, Boniface suggested to the crusaders, while they were camped at Zara, that their low supplies could be replenished if they aided Alexios the Younger in regaining his lost throne. The crusaders then dispatched envoys to Germany, who brought the young prince to the crusader camp, where he offered terms, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XXXI, p. 192.

stationed in the Holy Land, and, perhaps most enticing of all, Alexios would “place his whole empire under the authority of Rome.”³¹¹

The crusaders were at an impasse. Boniface of Montferrat, and all of the other Germans loyal to Swabia or the Hohenstaufen cause, had effectively been commanded to aid Alexios in his endeavors. The ambassadors themselves, furthermore, had provided a justification for the diversion for the army at large: Alexios III was a traitor and enemy of the faith. All good knights, especially those on a holy quest, should attempt to do him harm. Finally, the terms Alexios the Younger offered were staggering. Not only would the crusaders have more than enough money to pay off the Venetians, they would have access to a fresh army, new allies, and best of all, the opportunity to finally unite the Catholic and Orthodox Churches.³¹² Bartlett argues that Alexios the Younger had no intention to honor his debts – he could not guarantee that the Orthodox churches would follow his injunction and the Byzantine treasury could never satisfy such lofty sums. The emperor would have to tax his empire dry to gather such a sum.³¹³

The crusaders, however, would have had little reason to doubt Alexios. The wealth of Constantinople was famed across the world. The French had not balked at the idea of raising 80,000 marks for their transportation to the Holy Land. Surely, then, the emperor of the wealthiest nation in the world could easily grant them just over twice that sum. Furthermore, as has been shown, the crusaders

³¹¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 50. Robert of Clari offers a very different interpretation of events. He says that the crusaders were in dire straits at Zara and in need of supplies. Dandolo then addressed the people, saying that he knew Constantinople to be a rich land where the crusaders could gain food and “other things” if only someone could produce a reason to go there. At this point, Boniface stood up and said that he was aware of Alexios, a young prince of Constantinople and that “whosoever could have this youth, he could right easily go to the land of Constantinople and get victuals and other things, for this youth is the rightful heir thereto,” Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XVII, p. 182. McNeal believes that this somewhat contrived exchange is certainly the product of the *conte* style, McNeal, *Chronicle*, p. 111.

³¹² Choniates asserts that the crusaders had in fact “laid hold” of Alexios the Younger, a “juvenile in mind rather than in age,” and convinced him to grant them “seas of money” and “heavy-armed Roman troops,” and, worst of all, they persuaded Alexios to embrace the Roman church and to accept “the innovations of the papal privileges and to the altering of the ancient customs of the Romans,” Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 540. Robert of Clari implicitly agrees with Choniates, in that he claims that Alexios promised the crusaders “whatever they might desire,” Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XXXII, p. 192. Like Choniates, however, Robert was not actually privy to these deliberations.

³¹³ Bartlett, *Ungodly War*, pp. 81-82. Queller ignores the plausibility of Alexios’ terms, saying only that desperate men are inclined to promise anything, Queller, *The Fourth Crusade*, p. 83.

had often felt, since the time of Alexios I, that if the Byzantines had wholly dedicated their army to the crusade, the Holy Land could be won easily.³¹⁴

The prospect for new supplies and reinforcements must also have appealed to a destitute force, running low on food and lower on men as every day the number of desertions increased.³¹⁵ In a letter home, Hugh, count of St. Pol, recounts how he and his peers who endorsed the diversion to Constantinople explained the situation: “We all clearly demonstrated to the entire army that the journey to Jerusalem was fruitless and injurious for everyone, insofar as they were destitute and low on provisions, and no one among them could retain the services of the knights and pay the men-at-arms...”³¹⁶ Finally, the prospect of uniting the two faiths, while perhaps less enticing to the common crusaders, would have greatly excited the clergy present. Since Gregory VII, the Roman Catholic Church had longed to join once again with the Orthodox Church. It was widely held, with cause, that the emperor, as the head of that faith, could undo years of discord and forge, once again, a whole and happy Christian religion.³¹⁷

But there were other, perhaps more nefarious, justifications for providing aid to the young Alexios. As has been noted, Philip of Swabia, and thus his bannerman, the marquis of Montferrat, had vested interests in the imperial throne through Philip’s wife, Irene, daughter of the deposed Isaac and sister to the young Alexios. Both Philip and Boniface had approached Pope Innocent, requesting papal support for a war to return the young prince to his rightful throne. Now, despite the pope’s protests to the earlier adventure, they had justification for just such a campaign. The author of the *Gesta* believes that this agreement was the product of the “clever meditation” of Boniface of Montferrat.³¹⁸ It is certainly true

³¹⁴ The leaders of the First Crusade, for instance, had insisted that Alexios join in their endeavor, for surely imperial troops could tip the scales in favor of the Christians.

³¹⁵ “During this time many men from the lower ranks deserted and escaped in merchant ships,” Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 52.

³¹⁶ “Count Hugh of Saint Pol’s Report to the West,” in *Sources*, Andrea, p. 189. Hugh goes on to relate that the others were grudgingly convinced by this argument.

³¹⁷ Shelley, *Church History*, pp. 149-150. Western ideas about leadership in the Christian East still revolved around a caesaropapist understanding of that faith. While Emperor Constantine I had indeed exerted great control over the Orthodox Church, by the 11th century the Patriarch of Constantinople had already defined his position as effective head of the church. This is especially evident in the fact that the excommunication of 1054 had come about, not because of the emperor, but the patriarch, Michael Cerularius. See above.

³¹⁸ *Gesta*, ch. LXXXIX, p. 150. A similar sentiment appears in Robert of Clari’s account: “Now the Marquis of Montferrat was more eager than any other that was there to go against Constantinople, because he desired to avenge

that Philip, and thus Boniface, had a great deal to gain from the return of Isaac, or at least the placement of Alexios the Younger, on the throne. That the primary sources, almost unanimously, assert that Alexios came to the crusaders by way of Philip's court indicates that Philip, despite the pope's warnings, wanted to engineer a coup in Constantinople.³¹⁹ Whether Boniface kept his lord apprised of the situation in the crusader camp and believed that the wintering at Zara was the ideal time to present the young prince to the lords, cannot be determined. While such machinations are not improbable, they cannot be proven. The more conservative position, therefore, should be assumed: envoys from Philip met with the crusaders and Zara and learned of their dearth of supplies. Accordingly, the envoys extended the offer of the young prince as a means to secure new resources and augment the shrinking ranks of the crusaders.

Even if the lords loyal to Philip engineered the diversion to Constantinople, their actions were not entirely self-serving. The crusaders, after all, could rightly argue that the army needed supplies and fresh troops, and those levies could be found in Constantinople. Furthermore, as the case was presented by the Swabian envoys, Alexios the Younger was the victim of an egregious crime and it was only natural that the chivalrous young nobles would wish to see justice served. Technically speaking, they would not even have to violate the terms of Pope Innocent regarding attacking a Christian nation: Alexios assured that crusaders that the people of Constantinople would welcome him with open arms. No battle would even be necessary.³²⁰ The holy crusade, refreshed with troops from the Byzantium Empire, which would have become Catholic once more, could then return to God's holy work and the liberation of Jerusalem.

himself of a wrong the Emperor . . . had done him," Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XXXIII, p. 193. Robert goes on to detail how Conrad of Montferrat, Boniface's brother, had been betrayed by the emperor. This aside, and the chivalric feud associated with it, although grounded in fact, has strong romantic elements added by Robert de Clari, no doubt, to heighten the drama.

³¹⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 50; Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XXXIX, p. 193; *Gesta Innocenti*, ch. LXXXIX, p. 150; *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, p. 216; *The Deeds of the Bishops of Halberstadt*, Alberic of Trois Fontaines, *Chronicle*, in *Sources*, Andrea, p. 295. All of these sources explicitly state that Philip of Swabia or Boniface of Montferrat recommended Alexios to the crusaders. The *Anonymous of Soissons* and Hugh of St. Pol state that Alexios himself presented the offer, *Sources*, Andrea, pp. 216, 233.

³²⁰ As Villehardouin and Robert of Clari claim, when the crusaders reached Constantinople, they presented the young Alexios to the people and asked them to recognize him as their rightful lord, see below. It is clear, then, that crusaders intended to present Alexios to the people, secure any outlying rebels, and be on their way to the Holy Land. That Pope Innocent III actually favored Alexios III and did not wish to see him deposed was likely unknown to the crusaders, save those who had been privy to the pope's prohibitions to Philip and Boniface against aiding the young prince.

While, then, even the machinations of the Germans can be viewed in a good light, a similar charge against the Venetians cannot be thusly dismissed. As has been noted, a small but vocal section of modern historians believe that Venice intended, from the beginning, to use the crusade to gain control of Constantinople. This argument was first presented by Niketas Choniates. His account merits a full exposition:

The doge of Venice, Enrico Dandolo, was not the least of horrors; a man maimed in sight and along in years, a creature most treacherous and extremely jealous of the Romans, a sly cheat who called himself wiser than the wise and madly thirsting after glory as no other, he preferred death to allowing the Romans to escape the penalty for their insulting treatment of his nation.... Realizing that should he work some treachery against the Romans with his fellow countrymen alone he would bring disaster down upon his own head, he schemed to include other accomplices, to share his secret designs with those who he knew nursed an implacable hatred against the Romans and who looked with an envious and avaricious eye on their goods. The opportunity arose as if by chance when certain wellborn toparchs were eager to set out for Palestine; he met with them to arrange a joint action and won them over as confederates in the military operation against the Romans.³²¹

According to Choniates, the twisted old villain, Dandolo, engineered the entire diversion from the very beginning of the Fourth Crusade, all to seek vengeance for the “insults” heaped upon his nation by the Greeks. His “accomplices,” likely Philip of Swabia and Boniface of Montferrat, who “nursed an implacable hatred against the Romans,” made it possible for him to hijack the entire movement from the very beginning, even before the attack on Zara.

To say that Choniates account is fanciful is a gross understatement. As has been noted, to engineer such an undertaking would be a super-human feat on the part of the Venetian doge. Not only would Dandolo have had to entice the French to contract Venetian ships, he would have to contrive against their envoys, in this case the leading men of French nation, including Geoffrey Villehardouin, so as to force them to charter a fleet larger than they could afford. Dandolo would then need to provide such a fleet, attempting one of the greatness feats in nautical history, to fulfill his end of the bargain and then hope that the French could find some way to pay for it and that they would not simply back out of the deal, as many, in fact, wished to do. Not even Gunther of Pairis accuses Dandolo of such byzantine

³²¹ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 538, p. 295.

machinations, stating only that the Venetians, in addition to the other benefits of assisting Alexios the Younger, “were particularly urging it, partly in hope of the promised money (for which that race is extremely greedy) and partly because their city, supported by a large navy, was, in fact, arrogating to itself sovereign mastery over that entire sea.”³²² Choniates, however, wished to pain the destruction of his city as a tragic epic, the monumental climax of a struggle between good and evil. And for that, he would need a villain.

Even without Dandolo’s machinations, the formal excommunication of the Venetians and the raging debate over the diversion to Constantinople deeply troubled the French barons. Already, several leading members of the crusade had abandoned the expedition and sought out the Syrian shores on their own initiative.³²³ Martin of Pairis completely ignored the issue of Constantinople and set sail directly from Rome after the meeting of the French envoys with Innocent. He sailed to Acre, where he remained until 1204.³²⁴ From the beginning, however, the crusade had been marred with factional strife amongst its leaders, although an unusually large number of men seemed opposed to this diversion. Villehardouin concedes, grudgingly, that only 12 men agreed to aid the young prince.³²⁵ The Venetians were amongst those who supported the attack.

³²² Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. XI, pp. 90-91. This somewhat cryptic statement implies that the Venetians either believed that an alliance with Alexios the Younger would ensure their supremacy over the Mediterranean or that they anticipated the opportunity to seize control of Byzantium directly. The former is simply not true, as specific economic or political gains for Venice were not mentioned by Alexios the Younger, and the latter impossible to assert – while wintering at Zara, the Venetians would have had no way to know that they would have to conquer the city and rule it outright, rather than simply aid Alexios the Younger in regaining his throne and starting his own rule.

³²³ Villehardouin states that Robert of Boves, who had travelled with the delegation to Rome, did not return with the rest of the envoys but instead set out for the Holy Land by himself, contrary to an oath that he had sworn to his fellows. He also claims that several leading men, Simon and Guy of Montfort, Simon of Neauphle, Robert Mauvoisin, and the abbot of Vaux sided with Emeric, king of Hungary, and left the crusaders to join with him, Villehardouin, ch. VI, pp. 53-54. In saying that these defectors “went over to” Hungary’s side, Villehardouin likely means that they had an agreement with the king by which he would allow them to continue on their way to Syria. Nevertheless, the episode is reminiscent of the *conte* influences which McNeal finds in the account and Villehardouin, in turn, castigates these deserters for attempting to upset the crusading endeavor.

³²⁴ Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. IX, pp. 85-86. Martin originally asked for permission from Innocent III to return to Pairis but the pope was adamant that he fulfill his vow. At Benevento he met Pietro da Capua, the papal legate, who was apparently no longer monitoring the crusaders directly. The two clerics traveled, after a “lengthy and distressing journey,” to Acre together.

³²⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. 6, p. 51.

To concede that Dandolo and his fellows endorsed the diversion to Constantinople, however, does not mean that they were the designers of such a plan. In addition to Choniates, however, Pietro da Capua offers just such an appraisal. The pope was aware of Alexios' offer to the crusaders while the French and Germany envoys were in Rome, early in 1203 – he instructs one of his bishops to verbally warn them against any attack on Constantinople.³²⁶ By March of 1203 Pietro da Capua was back in the crusader camp and was privy to their deliberations over the actual offer of Alexios the Younger. Although the letter, mentioned above, does not survive, Innocent's response does. He notes that his legate was especially concerned because the Venetians, "as [he] had learned for certain, would wish to depart for Greece with the son of the former emperor of Constantinople, whom they are intent on conducting there with them."³²⁷ da Capua's opinion is patently clear: the Venetians were primarily interested in conducting Alexios the Younger to Constantinople. That da Capua does not mention French involvement is not unexpected: as stated above, Villehardouin concedes that only twelve of all of the assembled barons agreed to go to Constantinople.³²⁸ One must note, however, that da Capua almost certainly had no real access to the deliberations on which he is writing.

Villehardouin, Robert of Clari, and Gunther of Pairis all include references, in some way, to the discussions over the diversion to Constantinople. As Gunther notes, however, Martin of Pairis, his source, had already left for Acre when Philip of Swabia's messengers were in the camp.³²⁹ While Robert of Clari was with the crusaders at Zara, he would not have had access to the deliberations, which Villehardouin notes were privately held, and about which Robert of Clari is strangely misinformed: he believed, as noted above, that Boniface of Montferrat and Enrico Dandolo had invited the young emperor

³²⁶ *Reg. 5:161 (162)*. It is not, however, explicitly clear to what Innocent is referring. After warning the crusaders that, after Zara, they are to attack no other Christians, unless necessity demands it, he says "As for the rest, we have placed in the mouth of the said bishop certain words, which he can faithfully relate to you." Alfred Andrea, and most other scholars, believes that this reference must have been to Constantinople.

³²⁷ *Reg. 6:48*.

³²⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 51. Quiet tellingly, however, the Marquis of Montferrat is at the head of this list. Dandolo's name does not appear and the Venetians are in fact strangely absent from Villehardouin's account of the episode, especially considering how prominent they are in the writings of Robert of Clari and Gunther of Pairis.

³²⁹ Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. XI, p. 85.

to explain his cause to them, rather than that the ambassadors came to the crusaders.³³⁰ Villehardouin was the only source with ready access to the actual meeting between the ambassadors and the crusader leaders and their subsequent meetings. Villehardouin lists several lords and members of the clergy who were present but he makes no mention of Pietro da Capua. As has been noted, the papal legate held very little power within the crusade. Villehardouin, however, carefully notes those who were opposed to the diversion to Constantinople, including the abbot of Vaux. One would assume, therefore, that if Pietro da Capua had been present for these meetings, his name would have appeared in Villehardouin's history. That it does not implies that, like Robert of Clari and Martin of Pairis, da Capua was not present. His report to Innocent III was based on hearsay and the legate's own efforts to piece together what had transpired in the camp during his absence.

If Pietro da Capua was not privy to the negotiations with Alexios' representatives, his belief that the Venetians were the primary instigators of the diversion must have originated from a different source. Because Robert of Clari attributes the diversion more to Boniface of Montferrat, pinning to the doge only an interest in the undertaking, it is unlikely that the common people, whom Robert of Clari best represents, believed that the Venetians were responsible for the diversion.³³¹ As Villehardouin notes, the deliberations with the envoys took place within Zara at the palace held by Enrico Dandolo, deep within the Venetian quarter of the city.³³² Pietro da Capua, already offended by the Venetians for rejecting his political influence as papal legate, exiled, either intentionally or unintentionally, from the actual deliberations, knew only that the Venetians, the French, and Byzantine envoys were discussing a matter of some import in secret. Since the Venetians had already caused the diversion to Zara, and it would have

³³⁰ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, Chs. XXIX-XXX. Villehardouin's opinion must be held over Clari's because the young knight would not have been privy to the deliberations of the council. Clari's account is also very vague outside of the conversation which he puts in the mouths of Dandolo and Montferrat. Villehardouin, however, provides the names and opinions of several members of the deliberations. Most importantly of all, Villehardouin, as one of the founding members of the crusade, would certainly have been included in any council regarding the diversion to Constantinople. Clari, on the other hand, was a minor knight in service to Peter of Amiens.

³³¹ This is not to imply that Robert of Clari is the sole judge of popular opinions within the crusader camp. One would think, however, that if the rumor had spread throughout the camp that the Venetians were attempting to engineer a diversion to Constantinople, that Clari would have heard of it.

³³² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VI, p. 50.

been well-known at the time that the Byzantine and Venetians had extensive dealings, da Capua might have reasonably assumed that the Venetians caused the entire affair.

Such an opinion does not appear in any of the other Western sources and even Pope Innocent III seemed suspicious of it. In a letter to King Philip II, dated May of 1203, just a few weeks after his response to Pietro da Capua, Innocent informed the French king that his barons had defied his orders in attacking Zara and “planned to try worse things,” making no reference to the Venetians and implying that the French acted on their own.³³³ In his implication of the Venetians, da Capua was grasping in the dark, attempting to unravel a situation he barely understood. The poor legate, unsurprisingly, quickly tired of his position as a non-entity amongst the crusaders. By the end of 1203 he left them, setting out for the Holy Land on his own.

The arguments for the attack on Constantinople should naturally recall the similar debate over Zara. Each, it seems, hinged upon necessity. If the crusaders wished to leave Venice, they would have to attack Zara to compensate their hosts for the payments they could not meet. If the crusaders wished to reach the Holy Land, they would have to aid Alexios, who could either provide them with needed men and supplies or whose plight was so serious as to require the assistance of any men who claimed to serve God. Runciman sees in the crusaders, and especially the Venetians, only greed and ambition: if their true goal was the liberation of the Holy Land, they would have forsaken all other political and economic concerns and struck out against the Muslims, either in Egypt or Jerusalem.³³⁴ Nicol echoes these sentiments, arguing that Venetian negotiations before Zara had been crafted “in the guaranteed certainty that the Venetians would gain and not lose from its making,” with a similar understanding of the attack on Constantinople.³³⁵ The implication is that the less pious French crusaders, and effectively all of the Venetians, were more concerned with material and political advancement than the crusade itself.

Refuting this claim, as has been stated, was a primary function of the research of Donald Queller and Thomas Madden. The fact remains, however, that whatever their intentions, the crusaders did, in fact,

³³³ *Reg.*, 6:68.

³³⁴ Runciman, *Crusades*, Vol. III, pp. 113, 115-116

³³⁵ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 128, 134.

set aside the goal of the Holy Land in favor of subsidiary, if very important, diversions. Pope Innocent III's letters, and the constant stream of deserters flowing from the crusade, all indicate that certain contemporary observers believed that the temporary goals of the crusaders – Zara, Constantinople – were distractions from the ultimate goal.³³⁶ The best explanation of the crusader intentions has been neatly offered by Marco Meschini:

The commanders methodically subordinated the interests of the crusade to their own, more immediate and tangible problems. This does not mean that they lacked the intention and perhaps also the pious desire to devote themselves to the cause of the crusade in the Holy Land. But it does indicate a disposition toward the postponement of the principal aim for other immediate benefits always thought of and presented as provisional, but in reality capable of substantially affecting the primary objective(s) of the crusade.³³⁷

One must be careful to recall, however, that the “subordination” of Jerusalem is presented in the primary resources as being an action of necessity. Hugh of St. Pol, Geoffrey Villehardouin, and Robert of Clari all discuss the dire circumstances which necessitated the diversions to Zara and Constantinople. Even Gunther of Pairis, who was strongly opposed to the attack on Zara, saw Constantinople as something of a required target because the city was effectively in open rebellion against papal authority. The reader should not then assume ill-will on the part of the crusaders who endorsed the attack on Constantinople – they were responding to the dynamic shifts in circumstances which beset any major undertaking.

Whether by fair means or foul, the leading men of the crusade consented to the diversion to Constantinople, although, as has been noted, the majority outright refused. These men, led by Simon de Montfort and his brother, along with the abbot of Vaux and several other prominent lay and clerical leaders, departed the crusade.³³⁸ Hoping to prevent further strife, Boniface of Montferrat suppressed the formal papal bull of excommunication against the Venetians as part of his efforts to keep the crusade together. In a letter to Pope Innocent, Boniface explains that he had done so “lest our army be

³³⁶ Innocent, *Reg. 5:160 (161), 6: 229 (230), 7:18*. While Innocent does make allowances for “necessary” diversions in the event of desperation or conflict, it is clear that he considered the moves to Zara and Constantinople superfluous, as has been indicated above.

³³⁷ Meschini, “Four Crusades,” p. 34.

³³⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquete*, ch. VI, p. 54. Villehardouin especially remarks upon the loss of the retainers of these men, many of whom elected to follow their lords. The anonymous author of the *Deeds of the Bishops of Halberstadt* mentions an episode in which “some of the abbots” and “quite a few of the pilgrims” passed over to the king of Hungary, although in this account the defectors depart because of the attack on Zara and not the diversion to Constantinople, *Halberstadt*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 252.

immediately dissolved and the fleet disbanded.” Interestingly enough, Boniface notes a concern which he had had with the pope over Venice dissolving the fleet.³³⁹

Alfred Andrea believes that this position is disingenuous, stating that the Venetians had no intention of dissolving the crusade but that Boniface, and his Venetian allies, were afraid that the knowledge of the papal bull would erode all support for the diversion to Constantinople. In this same letter, however, Boniface states that Venetians had dispatched their own envoys to treat with the pope directly, although they apparently never arrived. As Thomas Madden has pointed out, however, that whatever one would believe about Dandolo, it is unlikely that the common Venetians, who had likely undertaken the crusade with pious intentions, would continue on their journey without receiving absolution.³⁴⁰ If no envoy to the papacy was dispatched, this issue could be the one, as Madden says, to which Boniface was referring when he said that the Venetians would “dissolve” the crusade. Dandolo understood that he could not keep his forces together if word got out that the Venetians were formally excommunicated. Both the French and the Venetians might quit the endeavor.

Innocent responded to the crusaders in June of 1203. He opens with a highly metaphorical lament, chastising the French for allowing themselves to be misled in their holy endeavor. Innocent bemoans because “unexpectedly a person hostile to our harvest has sown over it cockles and thus tainted the seeds so that the wheat would seem to have degenerated into weeds.”³⁴¹ Although an initial reading would imply that Innocent was referring to the Venetians in this metaphor, the vagueness is likely intentional. Innocent only mentions Dandolo and the Venetians at the end of his letter, telling Boniface to present the bull of excommunication so that “they cannot find an excuse for their very sins.” It is not clear what Innocent hoped to accomplish in this move, but it is likely that he was trying to force the Venetians to seek absolution.

³³⁹ “Remembering your advice that much must be concealed at this time and place if the Venetians should aspire to dissolve the fleet, in consideration of divine love and also out of reverence for the Apostolic See, from which the fleet had its origin and afterwards its support, I received advice to suppress that letter,” *Reg. 6:100*.

³⁴⁰ Madden, *Dandolo*, p. 151.

³⁴¹ *Reg. 6:101*. The imagery can be traced to Matthew 13:25-26.

Innocent, having been informed by both Boniface and the other crusader leaders that publishing the bull of excommunication would destroy morale in the crusader camp, most have understood the seriousness of his request. To risk the collapse of the crusading enterprise, either due to the revolt of the common soldiery or the departure of the Venetians, would necessitate some sort of great benefit for the pope. While Innocent surely did not desire for the crusade to collapse, it is possible that he wanted the Venetians to depart.³⁴² This seems unlikely, however, as Innocent, in a subsequent letter, notes that the crusaders remained, and would remain, wholly dependent upon Venice for transportation.³⁴³ His demand, therefore, must be taken at face-value: he wanted the Venetians to take responsibility for their actions and secure papal forgiveness. While such action would improve, as Innocent imagined it, the standing of the crusaders in God's eyes, it would also compel the Venetians to enter into communications with the papacy, either to Innocent himself or his legates. As is noted below, Innocent's opinion of the Venetians improved dramatically in late 1203, when Dandolo finally dispatched his own version of events to the pope. One may thus rightly assume that Innocent would have warmly regarded any correspondence with the doge by which he could determine exactly what the intentions of the Venetians were. Innocent was not opposed to the Venetians: only to the perceived obstinacy in their refusal to contact him and seek his forgiveness, thereby tacitly rejecting his authority.

These considerations, however, were clearly of little import to the crusaders. Only a handful of the men who abandoned the crusade did so out of concern for the papal position. The rest were simply interested in fulfilling their vows, completing the pilgrimage to the Holy Land and then, in all likelihood, returning home. Those who remained did so in the interest of keeping the army together, pragmatically reasoning that a larger force, reinforced with imperial forces and supplies, could not only reach the kingdoms of Outremer but also retake Jerusalem itself.

³⁴² Innocent, in *Reg. 6:101* and *6:102*, compared the Venetians to unclean entities which could corrupt the entire crusading endeavor.

³⁴³ *Reg. 6:102*.

Those who opted to remain at Zara left in the early summer of 1203. They were joined by the young Alexius himself, who was, according to Villehardouin, given his own ship by Dandolo.³⁴⁴ In preparation for the final move to Constantinople the crusaders stopped on the island of Corfu. There, a new setback would present itself. The common soldiers, either riled up by those who wished to end the crusade, as Villehardouin asserts, or simply sick of the constant diversions away from their stated goals, abandoned the main camp and moved into a nearby valley, refusing to go any further. These deserters, who constituted most of the army, then intended to gain transport to the Holy Land.³⁴⁵ What Villehardouin has feared the most was coming to pass – the crusade was collapsing.

Desperate, Boniface of Montferrat assembled the leaders of the crusade and all of the abbots and bishops and travelled to the valley where the common soldiers were encamped. There, they begged the men to return to their posts and aid in the holy endeavor. Moved “at the sight of their lords, their relations, and their friends on their knees before them,” the soldiers agreed to depart for Jerusalem, with the understanding that after the diversion to Constantinople they would be provided with sufficient ships to reach the Holy Land without any “double-dealing.”³⁴⁶ The leaders agreed and the entire force continued on its way to Constantinople.

This diversion, however, directly violated the orders of Pope Innocent III. In *Register 6:101*, he expressly forbade the crusaders “to occupy or prey upon the lands of the Greeks.” Innocent acknowledged that although Alexius III may have usurped his brother’s throne, “it is still not [the crusaders’] business to

³⁴⁴ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, Ch. VI, p. 54. Before reading too much into Dandolo’s largess, it must be recalled that all of the ships used by the crusaders were administered by the Venetian doge. It is unlikely that these ships were a personal gift from Dandolo to Alexius but rather a courtesy extended on behalf of all of the Western crusaders.

³⁴⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquete*, Ch. VI, p. 55. In typical fashion, Villehardouin identifies, once again, a cabal of dissidents eager to dissolve the crusade. He provides, however, an extensive list of names, lending some credence to his claims.

³⁴⁶ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, Ch. VI, pp. 55-56. This entire episode is absent from Robert of Clari’s account, which is very strange, as Villehardouin implies that the common soldiers, under the leadership of certain notables, engineered the desertion. The only comparable scene in Clari involves the summoning of the bishops and abbots to determine if it were a sin to attack Constantinople, which the clergy say that it would not, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, Ch. XXXIX, p. 198. Since Villehardouin mentions that clergymen in the party who attempted to reunite the army, it is possible that Clari fused the two events into one, either due to carelessness or to streamline the narrative. He does not, however, mention any major grumblings within the ranks. It is possible, therefore, that this desertion really was the work of a faction and not the product of mass popular unrest.

judge [his] crimes.”³⁴⁷ Innocent, as has been noted, was a close ally of Alexius III. He had no desire to see the emperor displaced, especially if such an undertaking would rob the Holy Land of valuable soldiers. Jerusalem remained, as it had been from the beginning, the only thing on Innocent’s mind. One of his legates, Cardinal Soffredo, was already in Acre by August of 1203 and another, Pietro da Capua, was on his way. In his letter to Soffredo, Innocent urges his trusted friend to remain strong even in the face of mounting Saracen victories in the East. The pope asks his legate to not “despair that the army of crusaders is said to have diverted to Greece,” because he would provide “aid” to the Holy Land.³⁴⁸ It is not clear whether Innocent was referring to aid he had attempted to garner from King Philip II and King John or to the eventual arrival of the itinerant crusaders to the Holy Land.

In late January of 1204 Innocent dashed off another letter, this one to his other legate, Pietro da Capua. It is not clear exactly where da Capua was when he wrote to the pope, as the original letter is missing. In this reply, however, Innocent makes it clear that he had become better informed about the crusader movements, likely by da Capua himself, and so he was better able to advise his legate. Having learned, unequivocally, that the crusaders were bound for Constantinople, Innocent largely passes over what he terms the “business regarding the empire of Constantinople” and instead answers his legate’s question regarding communication with the Venetians. Innocent tells da Capua “You should urge and exhort the doge and the Venetians that, to the extent they repent what they have done, they seek the benefit of absolution in accordance with the formula prescribed by the Church.”³⁴⁹ Innocent goes on to give da Capua the right to offer absolution on his own initiative, as he was better informed about affairs within the crusade itself. This allowance, coupled with Innocent’s effective dismissal of the “business” in Constantinople, seems to indicate the pope’s willingness to let the crusaders tarry in Byzantium, with the

³⁴⁷ *Reg.*, 6:101.

³⁴⁸ *Reg.*, 6:130.

³⁴⁹ *Reg.*, 6:208 (209). The “formula” to which Innocent refers is interesting. If he is referring to the terms of absolution laid down in *Reg.* 5: 161 (162), he is simply reiterating what he commanded previously. That he refers, however, not to the terms of that letter but to the “formula prescribed by the Church,” one wonders if Innocent had not softened his position somewhat. Having recognized that Dandolo would not abide by the terms already established by the pope, in the interests of keeping the crusade together, Innocent was willing to accept a more general penance by the Venetians.

understanding that they would eventually resume the crusade. Innocent, as noted above, had attempted to find other allies for the Holy Land but had come up short. Pragmatically, he would do well to keep the existing crusader army together, rather than attempting to raise a new one. If this required a diversion to Constantinople, Innocent, finally, seemed willing to allow it.

Gunther of Pairis, such a caustic enemy of the Venetian diversion to Zara, seems to have followed the pope's apparent new train of thought, attributing the attack on Constantinople only vaguely to political or economic motives, but explicitly to the will of God:

We believe, another far older and more powerful reason than all of these, namely the decision of Divine Goodness which so arranged, through this pattern of events, that this [Byzantine] people, proud because of its wealth, should be humbled by their very pride and recalled to the peace and concord of the holy Catholic Church. It certainly seemed proper that this people, which otherwise could not be corrected, should be punished by the death of a few and the loss of those temporal goods with which it had puffed itself up; that a pilgrim people should grow rich on spoils from the rich and the entire land mass pass into our power; and the Western Church, illuminated by the inviolable relics of which these people had shown themselves unworthy, should rejoice forever. It is, in any case, significant that the oft-mentioned city, which had always been faithless to pilgrims, following (by God's will) a change of citizenry, will remain faithful and supportive and render us aid in fighting the barbarians and in capturing and holding the Holy Land.³⁵⁰

An attack on Constantinople, then, would be a blow to avenge all of the crusaders who, in Western eyes, had been failed by the Byzantine emperors who had not adequately supported war against Islam. The diversion to Zara, according to Gunther, had been a gross corruption of the crusading ideal. The diversion to Constantinople, however, would be God's will.³⁵¹

The crusaders arrived in Constantinople in early July of 1203. Due to the constricting nature of the local coastline, they were forced to land north of the city, near the imperial palace at Chalcedon. Dandolo, who rightfully noted that he was familiar with the areas, advised the crusaders to forage, not upon the Greek mainland, but the smaller islands off the coast, as it would be easier to maintain control of

³⁵⁰ Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. XI, p. 91. Gunther asserts that because of the "rebellion" of the city Innocent hated it. Gunther refers to the killing of Cardinal John, who had murdered during the Massacre of 1182. For this reason, "the pope hated that city, as we said, and hoped, if it were possible, for it to be captured without bloodshed by a Catholic people, as long as he did not have to fear the destruction of our army. Yet he did not expect our people to accomplish this," Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. VIII, p. 84. This opinion was likely either entirely fanciful or derived from papal opinions published after the successful conquest of the city. As has been noted, Innocent seems to have been Alexios III's ally.

³⁵¹ A similar opinion may be found in Hugh, "Report," in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 199.

the army in the less populated regions.³⁵² In this speech, Dandolo warns that any attempt to attack Constantinople would be a trying effort, implying that the imperial army, as it did, would attempt to prevent the crusaders from reaching the city and presenting Alexios the Younger to the people. Heeding the doge's advice, the crusaders brought their forces to the very edge of the Straits of St. George, directly across from the gleaming city of Constantinople, its walls and towers so magnificent and terrifying that "there was indeed no man so brave and daring that his flesh did not shudder at the sight."³⁵³

Emperor Alexios III, as can be imagined, was curious about the arrival of these crusaders. Although Choniates, almost certainly erroneously, claimed that Innocent III endorsed the attack on Constantinople, Alexius had received the pope's assurances that he would keep the Latins under control and that, if the crusaders came to Constantinople at all, it would only be to gain new supplies.³⁵⁴ Villehardouin and Robert of Clari mention a delegation from the emperor led by Nicolas Roux, a Lombard expatriate, who inquired of the crusaders why they had come. The ambassador assured the crusaders that if they needed supplies, the emperor would be happy to furnish them, but that if they intended to harm Alexius III, they would be harshly treated: "Were you twenty times as many as you are, you would not ... be able to leave this country without losing many of your men and suffering defeat."³⁵⁵ In answer to this threat, the crusaders retorted that they "desired naught of his gold or of his silver, rather, they desired that the emperor should abdicate his office, for that he held it neither by right nor by law."³⁵⁶ With both sides aware of the situation, it was time for battle.

³⁵² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VII, p. 59. Dandolo explicitly states that this was to prevent desertions, although one wonders if the doge was not also interested in preventing feuding with the locals.

³⁵³ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VII, p. 59.

³⁵⁴ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 540, p. 296. The Greek historian claims that the crusader had certain "letters from the pope of Elder Rome," indicative of Choniates' belief that the attack on his city was orchestrated by all the malevolent enemies of his beloved city. No such letter directly advocating the attack on Constantinople exists. Innocent's letter to Alexios III is *Reg. 5:121 (122)*.

³⁵⁵ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, xh. XLI, p. 199; Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VII, p. 63. Roux's threat illustrated an important aspect of the attack on Constantinople which is often overlooked: by all accounts, the might of the Byzantine armies and, more importantly, the strength of the city's fortifications should have been able to easily repel any attack.

³⁵⁶ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XLI, p. 199. Villehardouin quotes a longer, but very similar, rebuttal which ascribes to Conon of Béthune.

Hoping to avoid excessive bloodshed and resolve their undertaking quickly, the crusaders, according to Robert of Clari, at the prompting of Dandolo, resolved to show the young prince to the citizens, hoping that the sight of their natural lord would inspire the people to rebel. Instead, the young prince was greeted with jeers – the people of Constantinople would not risk their lives for the sake of Alexios the Younger. Villehardouin believes that the masses were simply cowed by Alexios III, but one wonders if perhaps the people were loath to accept as their leader a young exile who openly cavorted with Latins.³⁵⁷ Alexios the Younger had clearly exaggerated his popularity when he brought the crusaders into his scheme. Donald Nicol actually goes so far as to claim that the entire display had been a façade to force the crusaders into attacking the city, making it evident that the people would not accept Alexius willingly. Considering, however, that whether Alexius the Younger was acclaimed by the people or installed by force, the end result would be the same for the crusaders, one wonders why Nicol would ascribe such an opinion to the, as he terms him, “wily old Dandolo.”³⁵⁸ Regardless, the time for diplomacy was past. It was now evident that only war could return the prince to his throne.

Interestingly enough, Choniates does not mention any of these deliberations. His account of the crusaders’ arrival at Constantinople begins immediately with a sortie and there is mention of neither the embassy of Nicolas Roux nor the presentation of Alexios the Younger to the people. Choniates instead harangues Alexios III for his inadequate preparations for the Latin attack, as he had not begun to prepare the city for the coming storm until the invaders were nearly upon them. In July, after the presentation of Alexios the Younger, the Latins redoubled their efforts. The French attacked the main gates while the Venetians arrayed themselves against the sea-wall, using their ships as floating siege towers.³⁵⁹ Although the land forces were not able to make any progress, the Venetians were able to seize a large segment of

³⁵⁷ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VII, pp. 63-64.

³⁵⁸ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 136. Nicol calls Dandolo the “stage-manager” of the presentation to “prove the point that now the crusade would have to fight to achieve what it had come to do.” The doge, however, had nothing to gain in an attack, unless one believes that the aged Dandolo simply wanted to watch Constantinople burn. Any material or political gains would have been secured whether Alexios the Younger became emperor peaceably or not.

³⁵⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. VIII, pp. 67-68.

the walls, despite the best efforts of the defenders, including Pisans who were living in the city.³⁶⁰ This assault was the first great victory of the battle.

Villehardouin describes the attack on the walls by the Venetians in triumphant terms. His exposition is worth quoting at length:

Let me tell you here of an outstanding deed of valor. The Doge of Venice, although an old man ... stood at the bow of the galley, with the banner of St. Mark unfurled before him. He cried out to his men to put him on the shore, or else he himself would deal with them as they deserved. They obeyed him promptly, for the galley touched the ground and the men in it leapt ashore, bearing the banner of St. Mark before the Doge. As soon as the other Venetians saw this banner on land, every man of them felt deeply ashamed, and all made for shore..... Geoffrey Villehardouin, author of this chronicle, here affirms that more than forty people solemnly assured him that they had seen the banner of St. Mark flying from the top of one of the towers, but not one of them knew who had planted it there. Now let me tell you of an event so marvelous that it might be called a miracle. The people within the city fled, abandoning the walls to the Venetians....³⁶¹

This account is one of many detailed battle accounts which Villehardouin relates. That he should include this episode speaks to his desire to celebrate the Venetians as both the transporters and the warriors of the crusade. That they participated in such a key victory illustrates their value to the holy movement.

Other Western sources praise the Venetians and their doge. Hugh of St. Pol offers a similar appraisal of the doge during the Fourth Crusade. He says “We truly have very much to say in praise of the doge of Venice, a man, so to speak, who is prudent, discreet, and skilled in hard decision-making.”³⁶² Gunther of Pairis, a caustic critic of Doge Enrico Dandolo during the early days of the crusade, had apparently softened his opinion of the aged leader during his time at Acre. He says “There was, however, a certain, especially prudent man there, namely the doge of Venice. He was, to be sure, sightless of eye but most perceptive of mind and compensated for physical blindness with a lively intellect and, best of all, foresight. In the cast of the matters that were unclear, the others always took every care to seek his

³⁶⁰ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, secs. 540-545, pp. 296-298. Choniates makes several references to the members of the Pisan quarter who defended their host home.

³⁶¹ Villehardouin, *Conquete*, ch. VIII, p. 71. Robert of Clari recounts how the Venetians gained the walls but does not mention the heroism of Enrico Dandolo. Because his account, however, provides great details about the crusaders who were fighting on the land, one assumes that Robert of Clari was simply not present to witness the doge's actions, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XLVI, p. 203.

³⁶² Hugh, “Report,” in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 199.

advice, and they usually followed his lead in public affairs.”³⁶³ The emerging figure of the doge seems far removed from the caricature produced by Byzantine historians and some modern historians.

Dandolo’s advice would prove key in securing the city. The imperial army, although a shadow of its former power, remained a formidable fighting force. It should come as no surprise that Robert of Clari, Villehardouin, Gunther of Pairis, and Baldwin and Dandolo in their letters to Innocent, all remark upon the apparent impossibility of any attack upon the ancient walled city. Alexios III, however, had been neglectful of his armed forces.³⁶⁴ This neglect explains the relatively easy advance of the crusaders up until they reached the walls of Constantinople itself. The success of the Venetian attack, however, goaded Alexios III into action. He assembled his armies and arrayed them for battle, preparing to attack the land-side crusaders. Although ill-equipped and poorly trained, the imperial forces must have been an impressive sight, because the Venetians abandoned the towers which they had seized and came upon the field to aid their allies. Dandolo himself proudly proclaimed that he would “live or die in the company of the pilgrims.”³⁶⁵ The Venetians would stand firmly with their allies in the face of the Byzantine storm.

Alexios III, however, would not offer battle. He quit the field and withdrew his armies into the city. Some historians believe that Alexios had never actually intended to give battle and that the show was merely meant to force the Venetians out of the towers which they had conquered. The emperor’s following action, however, belies this. The night after the battle, he packed up the treasury, the imperial raiment, and all movable wealth he could find, and fled the palace. Choniates says that “it was as though he had labored hard to make a miserable corpse of the City, to bring her to utter ruin in defiance of her

³⁶³ Gunther, *Hystoria*, ch. XIV, p. 97. Although Gunther is referring to the doge generally, he places this praise in relation to the Latin response to the deposition of Isaac II and Alexios IV, see further below. The editor of the text, Alfred Andrea, believes that Dandolo did not actually influence the crusaders in their response to the deposition, as such an account is noticeably absent in Clari and Villehardouin. Gunther is clearly, however, referring to a general role as adviser and statesman which Dandolo played amongst the crusaders.

³⁶⁴ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 540 p. 296. Choniates laments that as the Latins approached, the emperor “indulged in after dinner repartee and willful neglect of the reports on the Latins; he busied himself with building lavish bathhouses, leveling hills to plant vineyards, and filling in ravines, wasting his time in these and other such activities.”

³⁶⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IX, p. 72. Robert of Clari says that the Venetians did not arrived late but he frames the passage in amicable terms, having the two crusader factions inquire of their respective deeds, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. XLIX, p. 206.

destiny, and he hastened along her destruction.”³⁶⁶ The emperor had fled, driven away, as Choniates retorts, by “no one.” Although they did not know it yet, the Latins were masters of Constantinople.

Hoping to preempt any attempt by the Latins to justify a sack, the Byzantines dragged Isaac II out of his dank cell and placed him on the imperial throne. As the morning of July 18th dawned imperial ambassadors went to the crusaders and informed them that the cause of their coming, the deposition of the usurper Alexios III in favor of the rightful ruler, had been accomplished. Isaac was once more on his throne. Donald Nicol believes that most of the crusaders would have distrusted this appointment, mindful of the assistance that Isaac II had provided to Saladin during the Third Crusade. The Venetians, however, would have recalled the very fair treatment they had received in 1187.³⁶⁷ Villehardouin, apparently, did not bear the ill-will which Nicol ascribes to the Latins: he says that the news of Alexios III deposition was like one of the “miracles of the Lord” and that entire camp rejoiced with the news.³⁶⁸

The Latins, however, were rightfully suspicious of the Greeks and refused to accept these terms until Isaac received his son as co-emperor and ratified the agreement Alexios had made with the crusaders.³⁶⁹ Choniates reiterates that these terms were completely unreasonable, the product of the prince’s naïve mind, “a witless lad ignorant of affairs of state, neither comprehending any of the issues at stake nor reflected for a moment on the Roman-hating temperament of the Latins.”³⁷⁰ Even Villehardouin concedes that the terms which Alexios agreed to, as Isaac reckoned them, were “very hard.”³⁷¹ The emperor, however, was bound to his promise and, with the treasury empty and the loyalties of the imperial army highly suspect, he would depend upon the Latins to prop up his rule. The crusaders, however, were well-aware of their rights. Likely hopeful, according to the terms established at Corfu, to hurry to the Holy Land, they demanded payment from the emperor.

³⁶⁶ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VI.II, sec. 547, p. 299.

³⁶⁷ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 137.

³⁶⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. IX, p. 73; Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LII, p. 207. Gunther of Pairis is slightly less diplomatic, saying that the people still favored Alexios III but were forced to accept the younger Alexios by the crusader, Gunther of Pairis, *Constantinople*, ch. XIII, p. 94. In a letter home, Count Hugh of St. Pol calls the abdication of Alexios III the “handiwork of God,” Hugh, “Report,” p. 198.

³⁶⁹ Villehardouin, *Conquete*, ch. X, pp. 74-75.

³⁷⁰ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VII, sec. 551, p. 302.

³⁷¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. X, p. 75.

Alexios III had fled with almost all of the wealth of Constantinople stored within the imperial palace. His successors, Alexios IV and Isaac II, turned to other means to generate the needed funds. Somehow the emperors managed to collect 100,000 silver marks, half of the agreed upon price.³⁷² Desperate to garner the remaining funds, Alexios and his father imposed draconian new taxes and even, as Choniates put it, even worse measures:

Since the [crusaders] considered the [given] sum to be but a drop (for no nation loves money more than this race)...in utter violation of the law, [Alexios] touched the untouchable, when, I think, the Roman state totally subverted and disappeared. Because money was lacking, he raided the sacred temples. It was a sight to behold: the holy icons of Christ consigned to the flames after being hacked to pieces with axes and cast down, their adornments carelessly and unsparingly removed by force, and the revered and all-hallowed vessels seized from the churches with utter indifference and melted down and given over to enemy troops as common silver and gold.

The alliance between Alexios and his Western backers was onerous enough for its political and economic ramifications. That Constantinople now had to render up its most beautiful works of art and holy images to placate the swaggering barbarians was too much. And word of another outrage would soon reach the ears of the Greek locals - their new emperor intended to supplant the traditional orthodox churches of the East in favor of the Catholic Church of the West.

In August of 1203 Innocent received three letters from the crusaders: one from Emperor Alexios IV, one from Boniface of Montferrat, and one from Enrico Dandolo, which no longer survives. In Alexios' letter, the young potentate promises to the pope "Every devotion to you and your canonically elected successors that our imperial Catholic predecessors are known to have shown from ancient time to your predecessors," and that the emperor would "prudently and with all [his] might influence the Eastern Church toward the same end."³⁷³ In exchange for this vague concession, Alexios expected papal support for his rule to oppose the rebels operating in Greece. Innocent seems to address the vagueness of Alexios' letter in his reply to the young emperor. The pope, completely ignoring any mention of how Alexios seized power, focuses entirely upon the promise of church reunification. Innocent unequivocally states

³⁷² Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 138; Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LVI, pp. 209-210.

³⁷³ *Reg. 6:209 (210)*. As Alfred Andrea has noted, this promise is extremely vague and it is almost impossible to ascertain exactly what Alexios was giving to Innocent.

that Alexios must accept the dominance of Rome and enforce it throughout the Byzantine Empire or else, as Innocent concludes, “not only will you not be able to put down a revolt of your enemies, you will not stand up to them.”³⁷⁴ Innocent wanted the orthodox faith brought to heel and would not mince words in this undertaking. It fell to Alexios to enforce this unpopular policy in the empire.

If Innocent’s letter to Alexios was icy, his reply to the crusader captains was positively frigid. The message from the French crusaders was the first in which Innocent was provided with a straightforward account of what had transpired to bring the crusaders to Constantinople. The leaders provided many of the same justifications which have been mentioned here above, assuring Innocent that they had acted out of necessity and Christian goodness. Innocent, however, was not convinced. The pope opens with the warning that the crusaders might very well have incurred excommunication a second time for violating his prohibition against attacking Christians. While Innocent appreciated the opportunity to reunite with Byzantium, he longed “with a greater intensity for the relief of the Holy Land,” and so he urged the crusaders to convince Alexios to accept papal authority quickly, so that the crusaders themselves might hurry on to Jerusalem.³⁷⁵

Innocent, from the beginning, had worried that the diversion to Zara had indicated his inability to control the crusaders. After Venice failed to beg his forgiveness, he may have hoped that he could still exercise control over the French. If he had lost the Venetians, he could at least depend on the other crusaders to keep the mission holy and rely on the excommunicates in their midst for transportation alone, as he advised in *Reg. 6:102*. Now, however, Innocent recognized that he could not depend upon the non-Venetians either. The crusade was embroiled in Byzantine affairs, a thing the pope had fought to avoid either to keep the Holy Land as the only goal of the operation or to safeguard his ally, Alexios III. Now Innocent realized that it was not only the Venetians who were willing to defy him. The others, although they had dispatched envoys after Zara, proved just as willingly to subvert the stated goals of the crusade.

³⁷⁴ *Reg. 6:228 (229)*.

³⁷⁵ *Reg. 6:229 (230)*. Innocent seems to have believed that the crusaders were not genuine in their desire for the reunification of the Church. He expresses as much in a letter to the bishops of Soissons and Troyes, intuiting that if church unity were on the crusader’s minds, they would have demanded more concrete assurances from Alexios binding the two faiths back together, *Reg. 6:230 (231); 6:231 (230)*.

Innocent's letter to Dandolo, however, assumes a very different tone. Granted, the pope remained stern in his dealings, mindful of the fact that he had had no direct communication with the Venetians since before the incident at Zara in 1202. Innocent opens by reminding the doge of the many favors which had been bestowed upon his city: "Continuing in the footsteps of our predecessors, who honored the city of the Venetians in many ways, we have its honor and interests in mind, and we have not proved uncaring when it comes to offering our solicitations for that city."³⁷⁶ This warm opening, however, quickly descends into a polemic about the sinfulness of the attack on Zara, for which the Venetians had yet to atone.³⁷⁷

Just as Innocent had stated in his letters to the French, however, he once again offers Dandolo the opportunity to accept penance and join the crusade once more: "We command you and the Venetians to atone for the blemishes of your sins with tears of repentance....In this way, purged of the stain of your offenses, you can fight the Lord's battle with purity of heart and body."³⁷⁸ Innocent closes his letter with a warning to the Venetians that while, despite divine disfavor, they had achieved many victories, they must take care lest the weight of their sins reverse their many gains. Innocent concludes with the assurance that he would provide what appears to be "useful" for the Holy Land, apparently with or without the support of the crusaders. One can assume, however, that as Innocent's correspondence with Dandolo would only increase in the coming months, that the pope was glad to have resumed communication with the doge, hoping that the crusade could still be achieved.³⁷⁹

While Innocent berated his crusaders, however, the Byzantine emperors suffered at the hands of their followers. Perhaps in deference to the pope, Alexios IV, following a brief series of campaigns across

³⁷⁶ *Reg. 7:18*.

³⁷⁷ Innocent repeats many of the same issues already discussed above regarding papal protection over Zara and the open defiance of the Venetians in the face of papal authority.

³⁷⁸ *Reg. 7:18*. According to the author of the *Gesta Innocentii*, the Venetians sought absolution from Pietro da Capua immediately after the first attack on Jerusalem in July, which they received. That Innocent is unaware of this could indicate that Pietro failed to inform the pope of this development or that the author of the *Gesta* confused his dates. Considering that Dandolo, in a later letter to Innocent, refers to seeking absolution from Pietro da Capua, the latter is most likely the truth, *Gesta*, ch. XC, p. 155.

³⁷⁹ As in his letter to the other crusader leaders, Innocent worried that the reunification of the two churches, which Dandolo mentions, was of little import to the doge himself. That the letters to both the Venetians and the French are characterized by the same terseness and frosty tone indicates that Innocent bore no special grudge against the Venetians. As ever, he was willing to receive them as pious crusaders, provided that they offer absolution for Zara.

Asia Minor with his crusader allies to pacify rebel cities, had begun to enforce the reunification of the churches. At the same time, as Choniates reports, the Greeks, resentful of the foreigners crowding their streets and robbing their holy places, began to attack the Latin quarters of the city. The crusaders retaliated and a force of “certain Frenchmen...Pisans, and Venetians” attacked the mosques in the city, looting them. The local Greeks came to the aid of their Muslim neighbors and in the ensuing struggle a fire began which quickly destroy large swaths of the city.³⁸⁰ Alexios was losing his grip on the city. He must have slowed, or suspended entirely, his payments to the crusaders. The emperor understood that Constantinople was teetering on the edge of open rebellion.

The crusaders, however, had no time to wait for Alexios or his father to secure their reigns. Although the emperors had agreed to prolong the contract between the crusaders and the Venetians, that the Latins might remain to help them consolidate their holdings, March of 1204 was the scheduled departure time. Accordingly, Boniface, whom Villehardouin rightfully identifies as a close friend of the young emperor, begged Alexios to honor his debts to the crusader. The little emperor, however, “adopted a haughty attitude with the barons and those who had done him such great service.”³⁸¹ The crusaders began to grow angry at their Greek hosts. Every day, the visiting crusaders marveled at the munificent beauty and splendor of Constantinople. That such a fantastical civilization could not prepare for them the remaining sum would have likely seemed preposterous. An assembly, consisting of three Frenchmen and three Venetians, was dispatched to treat with the emperor directly.³⁸² At the tense meeting, the crusaders demanded their money, threatening to take it by force if necessary. The Greek courtiers, shocked at this barbaric display, turned upon the envoys, forcing them to flee the hall. Alexios, who had been placed on his throne by the Latins, now allowed them to be turned out.

³⁸⁰ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VII, secs. 552-555, pp. 302-303.

³⁸¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XI, p. 81. In all fairness, Alexios might have very well been afraid to be seen as too friendly to the Latins in a desperate attempt to secure his reign.

³⁸² This account comes from the above reference in Villehardouin. Robert of Clari paints a fanciful picture of the doge himself, astride a galley, shouting at the emperor for his betrayal. When Alexios refused to pay the Venetians for their services, Dandolo said “Naughty lad! We have raised thee off the dunghill, and on the dunghill will we cast them back again! I disown thee!” Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LIX, p. 212. That Clari would make the doge the leader of this clearly fanciful accounts indicates that while Dandolo may not have had any particular ties to Alexios himself, even the French recognized the strong ties between the Byzantine and Venetian states.

It has been assumed that Alexios' inability to raise the required funds was also part of the larger plot to destroy Constantinople. When the young prince agreed to pay 200,000 silver marks, he was effectively selling his soul to the Latins. He would either place his entire empire in hoc to pay his debts or he would renege, providing the crusaders with an excuse to attack and seize the empire for themselves.³⁸³ Dandolo, in particular, would have recognized that the young Alexios could never afford such a sum and so, like the French, he roped the prince into a bargain he could not afford. Such a reading, however, assumes that Dandolo had the power of clairvoyance. As has been noted, the imperial treasury was stolen when Alexios III fled. In that Alexios IV and his father were able to raise 100,000 silver marks, one assumes that if they had access to the treasury they could almost certainly have completed their debts.³⁸⁴ It is highly unlikely, then, that Dandolo could have foreseen the emperor's inability to pay. He would have, like the other crusaders, assumed that Alexios IV would honor his debts and that the crusaders would be on their way to Egypt with full Byzantine support. That this did not occur was the fault of the young Alexios and not his Latin allies, who had now become his enemies.

A series of protracted struggles began as each side jockeyed for control. While the French raided around the city, the Venetians began to launch raids against the city from the sea.³⁸⁵ The Greeks attempted to launch fire ships against the Venetian fleet, but as Villehardouin put it, "no men ever defended themselves more gallantly on the sea than the Venetians," as the sailors used poles and grappling lines to drag the burning hulks away from their ships.³⁸⁶ With quick thinking, the Venetians had saved their fleet, and, by association, the crusade itself.

While the crusaders celebrated their victory, the Greeks mulled over their inevitable defeat. Alexios, hated because of his associations with the Latins, became more and more detached from reality. His father, resentful of the honorifics which Alexios gave to himself, disowned his son and attempted to

³⁸³ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 139-141.

³⁸⁴ Consider, for instance, that Alexios III was able to fully fund a rebel movement from his new capital at Adrianople, all with the funds secured from the imperial treasury.

³⁸⁵ Villehardouin refers to these protracted raids as part of the "war" against Alexios IV. As Queller argues, in the eyes of the French nobles and the Venetians, these attacks were a justifiable means of recuperating the money still owed them by the emperor, Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, p. 172.

³⁸⁶ Villehardouin, *Conquete*, ch. XI, p. 83; Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LX, p. 212.

rule by himself. Choniates says that Isaac became more and more reclusive, associating with mystics and fortune tellers. A similar mood swept through the city as fear and paranoia prompted a crazed mob to tear down an ancient statue of Minerva because it faced towards the crusaders camp, as if the goddess were inviting the invaders to take the city.³⁸⁷ In such an environment of distrust, it was only a matter of time before the people turned on their leaders.

In January of 1204, a mob proclaimed an unwilling noble the new emperor. Fearing his loss of power, according to Choniates, Alexios IV went crawling back to his old ally, Boniface, asking the Latins to enter the city and restore order.³⁸⁸ It was the last order Alexios IV would ever give. As he slept, Alexios Doukas, called “Mourtzouphlos” because of his long, shaggy unibrow, entered the imperial chambers late at night and strangled the young emperor. His father and co-emperor, Isaac II, died, either from shock at the news of his son’s demise or by more nefarious means.³⁸⁹ The crusaders had lost their only ally in the city to a foul coup. All-out war was inevitable.

The Westerners responded to the deposition of Alexios IV with shock and indignation. Gunther of Pairis refers to the “vicious parricide” committed by the man “noxious and harmful to innocent kings.”³⁹⁰ Robert of Clari bemoans the “traitors” who placed Alexios Doukas on the throne with the understanding that he would terminate their obligations to the Latins, while the *Devastatio* remarks upon the “great treason” wrought by the usurper.³⁹¹ Villehardouin, however, saw the deposition most clearly, in that he realized that no cabal, but the will of the Greek people themselves had removed Alexios IV. He caustically remarks “Have you ever heard of any people guilty of such atrocious treachery?”³⁹² The first assault on Constantinople had been justified by the righteous cause of the displaced exile Alexios the

³⁸⁷ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VII, secs. 556-560, pp. 304-306.

³⁸⁸ That such a strong tie still remained between these two figures strongly indicates, as has been argued above, that if any unusual impetus for the diversion to Constantinople was exerted, it was done so by Boniface, the emperor’s trusted friend, and not Dandolo. This event, however, does not appear in Villehardouin, Robert of Clari, or Gunther of Pairis, implying that Boniface kept his proceedings with the emperor a secret. As Choniates, also, says that the letter to Boniface was intercepted, it is possible that the marquis never realized his old friend was asking for his help. The account of these overtures does appear, somewhat inexplicably, in the *Anonymous of Soissons*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 234.

³⁸⁹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 140.

³⁹⁰ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. XIV, p. 96.

³⁹¹ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LXI, p. 213; *Devastatio*, in *Sources*, ed. Andrea, p. 220.

³⁹² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, XI, p. 84.

Younger. Now the crusaders would once again turn their arms against Constantinople, eager to avenge the gross treachery and vileness of the Greek race. Centuries of anti-Byzantine sentiments, recently stoked by the Massacre of 1187, would soon come to full fruition.

With the coronation of Alexios V, the crusaders had little recourse but to prepare for a second assault on the city. The new emperor entirely repudiated his predecessors' debts to the Latins, not only for the money but also supplies and troops. Although the crusader army had been greatly swollen by Latin refugees fleeing the violence in Constantinople, their numbers were still small. Also, having been camped outside the gates of the city for months, one assumes that the crusaders were even lower on supplies than they had been before the diversion. Accordingly, the crusaders launched a series of short raids into the suburbs, gathering up what supplies they could. The final showdown, however, would be at Constantinople.

In the spring of 1204 the crusaders resolved to directly attack the city. Villehardouin references a number of conferences during which the crusaders debated strategy and, interestingly enough, how to divide up the Byzantine Empire if they should be successful. These deliberations were known as the Pact of March, a copy of which survives in the Register of Innocent III.³⁹³ A body made up of an equal number of Venetian and French representatives would elect a new emperor.³⁹⁴ Whichever faction received the nomination for emperor, the other would be given the patriarchate of the city. This council also fundamentally shifted the goals of the crusade. As Robert of Clari reports, during the long fighting between the imperial and the crusader forces, the Western armies began to despair. To enliven the fighting men, the bishops and clerks of the host reminded them that

The battle was a righteous one, and that they ought in sooth to attack the Greeks; for in olden times they of the city had been obedient to the religion of Rome, but now were they disobedient thereto, since they said that the religion of Rome was of no account, and that all they who believed in it were dogs. And the bishops said for this reason the Greeks ought to be attacked, and that this was no sin, but rather it was a good work and of great merit. ...And the bishops said that they absolved, in the name of God and of the Pontiff,

³⁹³ *Reg.* 7:205.

³⁹⁴ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XII, p. 88. Such deliberations over dividing the empire may seem premature, but the crusaders were clearly eager to avoid internal bickering in the event that they seized the city. Such in-fighting would be disastrous, as would actually be the case, see below.

all those that should attack the Greeks...and let them not be at all afraid to attack the Greeks, for these were God's enemies.³⁹⁵

It was as if the destination of the crusade had been changed.³⁹⁶ As the situation was presented to the common soldiers, Constantinople, an ancient Christian city, was, like Jerusalem, held by God's enemies. To kill a Greek, then, was not a sin. It was the pathway to heaven.

The assaults upon the walls began in April of 1204. Robert of Clari and Villehardouin fill their accounts with the valiant deeds of the crusaders as they assailed the mightiest citadel in the medieval world.³⁹⁷ Having learned from the Venetians the benefit of attacking from both the sea and land-ward walls, the crusaders agreed to follow the Venetian tactic of assembling mobile siege towers along the masts of the ships from which to attack. After a series of abortive attacks in early April, on the 12th day of the month the crusaders rallied for another assault. Favored by a strong north wind, the Venetians vessels were able to move very close to the walls of Constantinople. Villehardouin recounts however, together, a Venetian soldier and a French knight, Andre Durboise, were the first men to breach the defenses.³⁹⁸ According to Gunther of Pairis, the crusaders, as they fought all the walls of the city, set fire to the city, to draw the defenders away from the walls.³⁹⁹ The crusaders then entered the outer defenses where they met, and quickly routed, the imperial army, which retreated into the inner city. The weary soldiers then rested, and a French count took up residence in the scarlet tent the emperor had abandoned on the field.

That night, a terrified Alexios V fled the city. On April 13th, 1204, Palm Sunday, as reckoned by Martin of Pairis and therefore a most auspicious date, the Western crusaders entered Constantinople. Expecting resistance, they found that the city had largely been surrendered to them.⁴⁰⁰ The initial conquest

³⁹⁵ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LXXII-LXXIII, p. 220.

³⁹⁶ As Queller notes, the clergy of the crusade were directly contradicting Innocent's orders to avoid attacking Christian cities. For this reason, no clerical account of the Fourth Crusade refers to this issuance of absolution, Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 173-174. Innocent, however, would himself extend absolution to those who served the new empire, see below. Thus, the clerics were vindicated in their initiative.

³⁹⁷ Robert of Clari actually dedicates an entire chapter to his brother, Aleaume the Clerk, who entered the walls by breaking through a bricked-up postern gate and charging, and routing, a Greek battalion by himself, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LXXVI, p. 223.

³⁹⁸ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XII, p. 90.

³⁹⁹ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. XVII, p. 105.

⁴⁰⁰ Queller argues that the Greeks formulated the Latin move, not as a conquest, but a coup. Accordingly, they in no way anticipated the sack of their city, Queller, *Fourth Crusade*, pp. 190-192.

of the city had seemed impossible, and in that endeavor the Latins had been spared the need to actual breach the walls of the city. That Constantinople, largest and wealthiest city in Europe, once home to the mightiest armies and proudest navies in all of Christendom, could be taken, that its miles of concentric walls and hundreds of towers could be stormed, had seemed impossible. Villehardouin breathlessly recounts the euphoria of the crusaders as they considered their great accomplishment:

They all rejoiced and gave thanks to our Lord for the honor and the victory He had granted them, so that those who had been poor now lived in wealth and luxury. Thus they celebrated Palm Sunday and the Easter Day following, with hearts full of joy for the benefits our Lord and Savior had bestowed on them. And well might they praise Him; since the whole of their army numbered no more than twenty thousand men, and with His help they conquered four hundred thousand, or more, and that the greatest, most powerful, and most strongly fortified city in the world.⁴⁰¹

Constantinople had fallen.

Villehardouin, Robert of Clari, and Gunther of Pairis all provide comparable accounts of the following days. Villehardouin says that the soldiers were given license to loot but that they were to avoid violence and rapine. Three churches were designated where the men could deposit the wealth they collected before dividing it equitably amongst the host. By the marshal's accounting, the French gained over 400,000 silver marks, 50,000 of which were given to the Venetians to settle their debts. 100,000 was parceled out to the crusaders according to rank and the rest constituted personal spoils equal to over 400,000 silver marks, along with 10,000 different breeds of horses. Villehardouin laments, however, that several hundred thousand more silver marks were erroneously held back from distribution.⁴⁰²

Robert of Clari offers a similar appraisal of the immense wealth of loot which was collected: "And when the booty was brought thither, which was so rich and contained such wealth of gold and silver and of cloth of gold, and so many rich jewels, it was a fair marvel to behold the great riches that had been brought thither – then, never since the world was established was so great wealth, or so noble, or so magnificent, either seen or won – no, not in the days of Alexander, or of Charles the Great, or before, or

⁴⁰¹ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XII, p. 93.

⁴⁰² Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XIII, pp. 94-95.

after.”⁴⁰³ Robert, perhaps more sympathetic to the plight of the common soldiers, says that if there was any holding back of wealth, it was only because “the rich men did every one take ... whatsoever liked him best ... so that no division thereof was ever made amongst the commonalty of the host ... save only for coarser silver.” Regardless, the wealth was so effusive and the looting so rampant that even the holy abbot of Pairis, Martin, “lest he remain empty-handed while everyone else got rich, he resolved to use his own consecrated hands for pillage.”⁴⁰⁴ As Urban II had predicted at Clermont, those who took up the cause of Christ would find immense wealth in the East.

While the crusaders exalted, the people of Constantinople suffered mightily at the hands of their invaders. Villehardouin says that a great “massacre and pillage” took place after the crusaders first breached the walls and that “so great was the number of killed and wounded that no man could count them.”⁴⁰⁵ The multitude of rapes, assaults, and murders which would have accompanied any sack were augmented, as Choniaties reports, by horrible acts of desecration. After the flight of Alexios V, the citizens of Constantinople flocked to the main gate to propitiate the crusaders, holding aloft icons and crosses. The conquerors, eager for booty, fell upon the locals and robbed them of their venerable objects. The crusaders, in their mad lust for wealth, then attacked the churches themselves, smashing statues, icons and relics, all to collect the precious stone and gold-work.⁴⁰⁶ The more egregious defilements, including crusaders tripping over themselves in their hurry and cutting open their bowels, spilling excrement on the floors, or that a lewd woman sat in the patriarch’s throne and sang bawdy songs and danced, are likely

⁴⁰³ Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LXXI, p. 226.

⁴⁰⁴ Gunther of Pairis, *Hystoria*, ch. XIX, p. 109. It should be recalled that Gunther’s history is a *translatio* first and a historical panegyric second. In his search for loot, Martin would come across the relics which he would bring back to Pairis.

⁴⁰⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XII, p. 91. Compare, however, the accounts of Clari and Gunther, who mention no great of the civilian population, but only of the soldiers, Robert of Clari, *Constantinople*, ch. LXXX, p. 225; Gunther of Pairis, *Constantinople*, ch. XVIII, pp. 106-107. It is possible, therefore, that Villehardouin’s account refers only to the attacks on the imperial soldiers who fled the walls and scattered through the city, likely sporadically engaging the crusaders were possible.

⁴⁰⁶ Choniaties, *Byzantium*, Book VIII, sec. 573-575, pp. 314-315. Choniaties relishes the opportunity to recount barbarisms committed by Westerner invaders. An earlier episode, involving the Sicilian attack on Thessalonica, includes similar images of desecration on an almost satanic scale. Harry J. Magoulias, the editor of *O City of Byzantium*, believes that such episodes are meant to be taken figuratively rather than literally. Book IX of the history, which follows directly after the account of the sack of Constantinople at the end of Book VIII, begins with a second account of the sack. It is almost as if Choniaties provided one section, filled with hyperbole and hearsay, and another, more factual, account.

artistic license on the part of Choniates, but never the less capture the revulsion which the Greek historian felt at the Latin crusaders plundering his beloved city.

Such plundering, in Choniates' reckoning, illustrated that not only the Venetians, whom he had identified as the ancient enemies of Byzantium all along, but all of the crusaders were enemies of Christ and traitors to their crusader oaths: "In truth, they were exposed as frauds. Seeking to avenge the Holy Sepulcher, they raged openly against Christ and sinned by overturning the Cross with the cross they bore on their backs, not even shuddering to trample on it for the sake of a little gold and silver." Choniates goes on to note that even the "sons of Ishmael" behaved more decorously in 1187 when they reconquered Jerusalem from the Christians.⁴⁰⁷ The closing sections of Choniates' account of the destruction of Constantinople illustrate the literary nature of his history as he bemoans the fate of the "prolific City, once garbed in royal silk and purple and now filthy and squalid and heir to many evils." His city, suffering for the sins of its decadent and corrupt emperors, was handed over to the ravages of a demonic army of Latin warriors.⁴⁰⁸ Justice had appeared "as a zealous avenger" and the light of the Greek world, Constantinople, was extinguished.⁴⁰⁹

To the Latins, however, it was as if Constantinople had finally been illuminated again. After a brief debate, the twelve electors chose Baldwin, count of Flanders, to be the emperor of the Latin East. Baldwin of Montferrat had been a contender for the throne, but the Venetians had opposed him because of his strong ties to Genoa, one of Venice's greatest commercial rivals. By some accounts, Dandolo was considered, but he had no desire to rule an empire across the sea from his home. He was more interested in the favorable terms he had won for his city in the Pact of March. Pursuant to the treaty, a Venetian, Tammaso Morosini, was made patriarch and Dandolo accepted, on behalf of the Venetian Republic, "one

⁴⁰⁷ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book VIII, sec. 576, p. 316. Choniates says that the Muslims allowed every Christian to leave the city unharmed if they were given "a few gold coins." Choniates fails to mention that the baron of Ibelin could only secure those terms after threatening to destroy the holy sites of the Muslims and that all who could not pay their ransoms were killed or enslaved, see Appendix III.

⁴⁰⁸ Choniates does not spare the Greeks themselves when speaking of the fall of Constantinople. He notes that the emperors "were nurtured in indolence" and the citizens "were concerned only with the business of commerce," Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book IX, secs. 583-585, p. 321.

⁴⁰⁹ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book IX, sec. 586, p. 322.

quarter and one half of a quarter” of the Byzantine Empire.⁴¹⁰ These lands, however, would not become a part of the Venetian Republic, as Dandolo did not have the right, without the support of the Great Council, to acquire territory on his own initiative. Instead, the Venetians would be allowed to create effectively self-governing communities which would swear fealty to the new Byzantine Empire, stretching along the Mediterranean south of Durazzo, the western coast of Greece and its isles, and Crete, which Dandolo actually purchased from Boniface before it was even conquered.⁴¹¹

Any Venetian who owned land in the region, except for Dandolo himself, who likely insisted upon his exemption in his capacity as doge of Venice, would take an oath the emperor. The communities, however, would be under Venetian law and be given freedom to trade throughout the empire.⁴¹² Dandolo, one of the leading figures behind the successes of the crusade, few as they were, was able to secure an even greater and more lasting success for his native land. From these holdings in Asia Minor, the Venetian Mediterranean holdings would continue to grow and thrive, enduring well into the Modern Period.⁴¹³

The other crusaders had also gained a great deal and he who had gained the most, Baldwin, was quick to capitalize on his success. He began to launch a series of campaigns to pacify the surrounding area, although he was stymied in his efforts by Boniface. Still upset over failing to gain the imperial throne himself, he was feuding with the emperor over the lordship of Thessalonica. This debate, however, would simmer for several months. In May of 1204 Innocent had received word from Emperor Baldwin himself of the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins. In this effusive letter, copies of which were sent all across the West, the imperial scribes were careful to stress to the pope that by their actions, necessitated by the perfidy of Alexios V, Constantinople, and all of the Byzantine Empire, was once again secure under the aegis of the bishop of Rome.

⁴¹⁰ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 139-140.

⁴¹¹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 149-151. Although, as has been noted above and below, Dandolo was on better terms with Baldwin than Boniface, this treaty illustrates that relations between the two lords were at least cordial. Madden agrees, Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 184-185.

⁴¹² Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 170-171.

⁴¹³ These holdings have sometimes been referred to as the “Venetian Empire,” although the term is misleading. The Venetian government exerted little direct control over these holdings, which were effectively self-governing.

Although rhetorically and metaphorically crafted, with a strong Biblical bent, the letter to Innocent did not mince words. The crusaders were honest with the emperor about the horrors of the combat and the looting of the city, which they held to be their right.⁴¹⁴ After closing his letter with the hope that Innocent would accept Latin Byzantium into the Catholic fold, Baldwin commends, “for the merit of his probity, a man esteemed by us and rightly esteemed, along with our friends and allies, the Venetians, whom we find to be faithful and diligent in all circumstances.” As has been noted, Baldwin’s coronation had probably been assured by the Venetians. One should not assume, however, that his praise was purely sycophantic – many other leaders of the crusade, who gained nothing from the Venetians save their devotion to the endeavor, offer comparable celebrations of the wise old doge.

Innocent received the news of the coronation of Baldwin with all of the euphoric joy which had been lacking in his letter regarding the coronation of Alexios IV.⁴¹⁵ The ecstatic pope immediately placed the entire Latin Byzantine Empire “under primary protection of St. Peter and under our special protection.” Following upon the very message communicated by the clerics of the crusade, Innocent also made the security of the new empire an integral part of the crusader’s vow: “We also charge and command all clerics, as well as the lay crusaders who are with you in the Christian army by reason of hope for remission [of sins] and the indulgence that the Apostolic See offers them, to assist you prudently and mightily in defending and holding onto the empire of Constantinople.”⁴¹⁶ A secure Constantinople would facilitate the crusaders as they prepared for their final charge against the Holy Land. Even at this late hour, Innocent still believed that the crusaders would eventually depart for Jerusalem.

⁴¹⁴ *Reg. 7:152.*

⁴¹⁵ This joy would evaporate, however, when Innocent heard rumors of the horror of the sack of Constantinople, as expressed in letters to his legates in the summer of 1205, *Reg. 8:127 (128)* and *Reg. 8:134 (133)*. As has been argued above, many accounts were likely grossly exaggerated. By 1205, however, Innocent was attempting to bring the Greek priests under his authority. When he found them obstinate, he may have assumed their hatred of the Western rites were the residual effect of the terror of April 13th, 1204. Innocent, who, as his letters with Alexios III reveal, never fully appreciated the doctrinal issues which separated the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, could not understand why his Eastern brothers would not recognize papal authority. In lambasting the nature of the assault on Constantinople, he may have been grasping for an explanation.

⁴¹⁶ *Reg. 7:153.*

Innocent was also interested, however, in the return of the Greeks to the Latin rite. The effort to convert the Orthodox adherents to the Catholic faith would become a primary concern for the pope.⁴¹⁷ The issue had already been broached to Alexios IV and now that a more tractable, and certainly more catholic, emperor was on the throne, Innocent could initiate his program. To some extent, the desire to unite the Eastern and Western churches had been integral to the crusading movement from the beginning.⁴¹⁸ Innocent had finally achieved that goal, although it had required open warfare between the two faiths. Although the pope would not be successful in his efforts to bring the Orthodox adherents under papal control, he would dedicate the rest of his career to the endeavor.

A more immediate challenge, however, remained to be faced: the absolution of the Venetians in the eyes of the pope. Baldwin knew that the Venetians would be of paramount importance to his new empire. Accordingly, in June of 1204, he dispatched a letter to Innocent which included a copy of the Pact of March, that the pope might ratify the document, especially the section which allowed the Venetians to claim the patriarchate for themselves, which was technically the pope's domain and not the crusaders'.⁴¹⁹

Boniface stresses that he had enjoyed "a good and faithful association with the aforementioned doge and the Venetians, and we have found them to be very honorable colleagues and zealous for the honor of God, of the Holy Roman Church, and of our empire, as these deeds demonstrate, and we desire to have them as such in the future." Granted, Baldwin was a firm ally of the Venetians and especially at this junction was eager to praise them before the pope. As Alfred Andrea has noted, however, Baldwin appears to be a deeply pious man with a true and reverential awe of the papacy. To say that he would knowingly mislead the pope to advance his political interests, therefore, seems unlikely, especially when,

⁴¹⁷ *Reg. 7:203*.

⁴¹⁸ Baldric of Dol, in his version of the speech at Clermont, stresses that St. Peter, who was hailed as the first pontiff, had first been Bishop of Antioch, Baldric of Dol, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 7. Baldric goes on to stress that for the sake of St. Peter that holy site must be cleansed. The implication is that because Antioch had originally belonged to St. Peter, it must be cleansed in his name. As heirs to St. Peter, the popes were expected to avenge this affront and, perhaps more important, reassert their authority amongst the Eastern churches.

⁴¹⁹ *Reg. 7:201*. It should be noted that the Pact of March did not promise the patriarchal throne to the Venetians, only to the faction which did not gain the title of emperor in the election.

as has been argued in this paper, most of what he had said regarding Venetian involvement in the crusade was likely true.

To bolster Baldwin's letter, Enrico Dandolo himself penned a missive which was likely dispatched to Rome at the same time. The portions of this regarding the diversion to Zara have been cited above – they appear in this letter because in the last letter Innocent had sent to the doge, Reg. 7:18, the pope had either ignored or failed to comprehend the arguments as laid out in Dandolo's lost letter to the pope of 1203, as noted above. Dandolo goes on to say that he and his people had already been granted absolution by Pietro da Capua, in accordance with the papal injunction. Dandolo closes with the assurance that he, and the Venetian crusaders, had entered the crusade with holy intentions in service to Christ:

Therefore, Your Holiness should know that I, together with the Venetian people, in whatever we did, we labored for the honor of God and of the Holy Roman Church and for your honor, and likewise we know we labor of our free will. For this reason I implore Your Holiness that Your Holiness graciously deign to hear favorably and to grant the petitions that my messengers ... will communicate.⁴²⁰

These “petitions” were revealed in Innocent's response to the doge. Dandolo, now well into his late eighties or early nineties, requested permission to abandon his crusader's vow due to his extreme old age. Innocent's reply, dated to late January of 1205, forbids the doge from doing so because Innocent knew that the crusaders in Byzantium relied heavily upon the old man's advice. Innocent was also concerned that the Venetians might abandon their own vows if their leader left them. Finally, Innocent did not wish for anyone to claim that Dandolo “took up the sign of the Cross not out of homage to Him Crucified, if, having now avenged the injury done to you and yours, you do not avenge the dishonor done Jesus Christ.” Innocent closes by advising Dandolo to forsake secular service in favor of the celestial and that if the Venetians show themselves truly interested in the cause of Christ, the papacy would “work effectively for [their] honor.”

⁴²⁰ *Reg.* 7:202.

Innocent would not, however, endorse the terms of the Pact of March, as it permitted church property to be distributed to secular lords. As Alfred Andrea has noted, the letter to Dandolo, unlike the letter to Emperor Baldwin, included a warning that any who attempted to distribute church property would be promptly excommunicated.⁴²¹ As Andrea concludes, while Innocent was willing to work with the Venetians, he remained suspicious of their motives. It is also possible, however, that Innocent, recognizing the extreme tractability of Baldwin, felt no need to threaten him. Dandolo, on the other hand, had proved far more obstinate, and Innocent acted accordingly.⁴²²

In the new Byzantine Empire, however, there were more pressing concerns. Much to the pope's chagrin, the absolution granted to those who served the new empire was syphoning off crusaders from the Holy Land, who much preferred the chance to secure fiefs for themselves in the pleasant fields of Greece, rather than the deserts of the Middle Orient.⁴²³ The feud between Baldwin and Boniface had heightened, forcing Dandolo to intervene and reconcile the two crusader leaders. The unity of the army would be needed to ensure success against the Greek partisans scattered throughout the empire who were gaining ground against their invaders.⁴²⁴ To make matters worse, Baldwin had foolishly dishonored Tsar Kalojan of the Bulgars, called "Ioannitsa" by the Latins. The tsar had hoped to aid the Westerners in their war against the Greeks, his ancient enemies. In refusing the offered alliance, Baldwin made a foe of his potential friend. The Bulgars invaded Thrace and a desperate Baldwin marched out to meet them. In 1205, like Valens before him, he was defeated and captured by the barbarians near Adrianople. He would spend the rest of his life in prison, dying in chains.

The Latin Byzantine Empire was threatened with destruction just after its inception. The remains of Baldwin's army made their way to Constantinople, eluding the Bulgars thanks to a clever ruse by Dandolo: while one section of the army was drawn up as if for battle, the supplies and the other soldiers would flee, their movements screened by their comrades. Although the doge was able to bring the army

⁴²¹ *Reg.* 7:208.

⁴²² As argued above, however, this obstinacy need not be considered impiety, but rather, a different view on how secular and religious powers should interact.

⁴²³ Runciman, *Crusades III*, p. 129.

⁴²⁴ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 145.

safely to Constantinople, this valiant deed would be his last service to the crusaders. He died in June of 1205, and as Villehardouin put it, the crusaders “suffered a great loss in the death, through illness, of Enrico Dandolo. He was buried with great honor in the Church of Saint Sophia.”⁴²⁵ It was the end of an era.

With Dandolo’s death, most accounts of the Venetians in the Byzantine Empire evaporated. He had been the face of the Venetians crusaders, and besides, the Venetians lived in small communities mostly on the periphery of the Empire, far removed from the fighting against the Bulgars or Greeks. Eventually, Henri, Baldwin’s brother, was acclaimed as the new emperor. His rule brought stability to the Latin kingdom, heralding a new age of growth and prosperity.⁴²⁶ In 1261 however, faced with a redoubled Greek offensive and waning interest in empire from the West heralded the end of Latin Byzantium.

The crusaders never made it to Egypt or Jerusalem. They remained in Latin Byzantium, desperately trying to prop up Henri and his successors. Some scholars have taken this as proof of crusader disinterest in the holy cause – having gained Byzantium, they ended their quest and settled into a life of luxury in Asia Minor. One must recall, however, that even Innocent III saw the continued security of the Western state in Byzantium as a paramount aspect of the holy crusade. In 1215, as part of the Fourth Lateran Council, a clause refers to the slow integration of the Greeks into the Latin rites, although their persistent heresy was beginning to vex the papacy:

Although we should like to cherish and honor the Greeks, who in our time are returning to the obedience of the apostolic see, by maintain as much as we can under the Lord their customs and rites, we neither want to nor should defer to them in things which breed danger to souls and detract from the decorum of the church. For after the Greek Church withdrew with certain associates and supporters from the obedience of the apostolic see the Greeks began to loathe the Latins so much....⁴²⁷

Even a decade after the success of the Fourth Crusade, Innocent was still desperately attempting to reign in his newly acquired flock. Politically, the Greeks would prove equally obstinate, launching several

⁴²⁵ Villehardouin, *Conquête*, ch. XVII, p. 129. Dandolo is the only man who was ever interred in the *Hagia Sophia*. A plaque erected in the 19th century marks his sarcophagus.

⁴²⁶ David Jacoby, “The Latin Empire in Constantinople and the Frankish States in Greece,” in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. V, ed. David Abulafia, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 528-530.

⁴²⁷ *The Fourth Lateran Council*, #4, in *Readings in Medieval History*, ed. Patrick J. Geary, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010, pp. 433-434.

guerilla wars and revolutions throughout the early and mid-13th century.⁴²⁸ The maintenance of the Latin Byzantine Empire had been so important to Innocent that he extended the crusader's absolution to those who fought to defend the nascent state. In continuing to fight against the Greeks, both the French and the Venetians were actually continuing their crusader duties. They had not abandoned the cause, only changed its nature. A strong and dependable Western bulwark against the Muslims was very valuable to the security of the Holy Land.

For Venice, however, the repercussions would be far greater. After the death of Dandolo, the Venetians in Constantinople elected a new *podestà* to lead their community, Marino Zeno. These expatriates, however, remained loyal to the fatherland and they assured Ranieri Dandolo, Enrico Dandolo's son and co-doge in Venice, that they would abide by whatever decision he made regarding the rule of the new territories in the East. Dandolo, allaying some modern fears that Enrico Dandolo had hoped to establish a hereditary monarch by making his son doge when he left for the crusade in 1202, abdicated his position so that the Venetian government could take its course and elect a new doge. The new doge, Pietro Ziani, son of Sebastiano Ziani, confirmed Zeno as *podestà* and granted the holdings in the East effective autonomy from the Venetian state. As Madden argues, Venice did not wish to embroil herself in foreign escapades.⁴²⁹ Except for a few locations along major trade routes, including Corfu, Durazzo, and, most importantly, Crete, Venice would remain aloof from the affairs of the Latin Empire, although Ziani gave Venetian citizens the right to accept fiefs in the area, provided that they abide by the oath of loyalty to the emperor, as set down by Enrico Dandolo.

Subsequent doges would continue this policy, employing the Latin Empire as a valuable trading partner, but fundamentally maintaining a separate political identity. As a result, when the Latin Empire fell in 1261, Venice avoided any catastrophic repercussions.⁴³⁰ It did, however, lay the foundation for the massive "Maritime Empire" over which Venice would rule during the Late Medieval and Early Modern

⁴²⁸ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 151-152.

⁴²⁹ Madden, *Dandolo*, pp. 196-197.

⁴³⁰ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 148-151.

Periods.⁴³¹ In time, Venice would even repair her relations with the reformed Byzantine Empire. By the start of the 14th century, due to Venetian economic hegemony in the Mediterranean, the Greeks had little recourse but to welcome the Venetians back into Constantinople. The Venetian Quarter, which had only grown stronger after the events of 1204, would be a major facet of life in the city for centuries to come.⁴³²

Perhaps of greater import than the economic domination resulting from the Fourth Crusade, however, was the cultural ramifications. At her inception, Venice had been a Byzantine protectorate, although Venetian sources would stress the city's independence from any imperial dominance. As the Maritime Republic flourished, she ran afoul of the more august Byzantium, which looked down at her growth. When Venice aided in the destruction of Byzantium, however unintentionally, she effectively eclipsed, and became, the old empire. It should come as no surprise that during the 13th century, the architectural program of the Ducal Palace, erected as a model of imperial grandeur in the West, would become, as Cardinal Bessarion would comment in 1468, "almost another Byzantium."⁴³³ The modern historian Fabio Barry argues that this program became even more elevated in the 1250s and 1260s, when the demise of the Latin Empire threatened Venetian identity as a naval super power.⁴³⁴ The renovations to St. Mark's to display the beautiful bronze horses from the hippodrome of Constantinople and the statue of the tetrarchs, which was embedded into the Ducal Palace itself, made the city of Venice a reliquary for the *spoila* of the Byzantine Empire. For centuries, Venice had conceived of herself in the imperial mold of splendor and prominence. Like a phoenix, the new Queen of Cities arose from the ashes of the old.

⁴³¹ Lane, *Venice, a Maritime Republic*, pp. 42-42. As Madden has argued, the Venetians did not enter the Fourth Crusade with the intent to seize an empire, as their subsequent inactivity illustrates. That future Venetians, acting centuries later, would capitalize on Dandolo's successes does not indicate, despite what some modern historians would claim, nefarious motives.

⁴³² Eric R. Dursteler, *Venetians in Constantinople*, Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006, pp. 23-24.

⁴³³ H. Omont, *Inventory des manuscrits grecs et Latins donnés à Saint-Marc de Venise par le cardinal Bessarion en 1468*, *Revue des bibliothèques* vol.4 (1894), p. 138.

⁴³⁴ Fabio Barry, "Disiecta membra," in *San Marco, Byzantium, and the Myths of Venice*, ed. Henry Maguire & Robert S. Nelson, Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, 2010, pp. 7-11. In the same collection, also see Thomas E. A. Dale, "Cultural Hybridity in Medieval Venice: Reinventing the East at San Marco after the Fourth Crusade," pp. 151-192 and Holger A. Klein, "Refashioning Byzantium in Venice, ca. 1200-1400," pp. 193-226.

Part VI: Conclusions

Venetian involvement in all of the crusades, but most especially the Fourth, has been fundamentally misunderstood for centuries. Commentators, seizing upon the Venetian propensity for augmenting her own power while on crusade, have assumed that self-interest motivated these enterprises. Such a reading seems particularly obvious in the case of the Fourth Crusade, when Venice clearly gained a very great deal yet never achieved the stated goal of the holy undertaking. It has been assumed that, because Venice destroyed Zara, conquered the Byzantine Empire, and created a massive new trading network, this was her intention the entire time.

Such notions have prompted the “conspiracy theory” of the Fourth Crusade. The nefarious Dandolo roped the naïve French into purchasing a fleet they could not afford so that he could corrupt the holy enterprise to achieve his own goals. Such action was supposedly in keeping with the longstanding Venetian tradition of employing crusades as a vehicle to advance her own material and political position.

Such a reading, however, is far too simplistic. It must certainly be said that the Venetians utilized their crusading position to augment their own. Such should not be seen, however, as a corruption of the crusader ideal. Although Innocent III clearly believed that any deviation from the stated goals of a crusade was a vile subversion, such an understanding of the crusades was not universal. One should not allow the opinions of one pontiff to cloud the issue. Urban II, in calling for the First Crusade, clearly understood the potential for temporal gains on a holy quest. Many of the great leaders of the crusades – Godfrey of Bouillon, Bohemond of Taranto, Conrad of Montferrat – established their own kingdoms while securing the Holy Land. Even during the Fourth Crusade one notes that Boniface and Baldwin had no qualms with dividing up the Byzantine Empire and ruling it, all while Jerusalem remained untaken. The Venetians were not the first to gain materially from the crusades and they would not be the last.

To say that Venice sought particularly to gain from the destruction of Byzantium is also unsubstantiated by the facts. It is true that in the years preceding the Fourth Crusade the relations between these two powers were strained. As has been demonstrated, however, Venice and Byzantium had a long and complex relationship. Although the events of the late 12th century, especially the mass arrests of

1171, had pushed these relations almost to the breaking point, by the dawn of the 13th century both parties were interested in normalizing their interactions. Venice depended upon Byzantium as a gateway for trade while Byzantium depended upon Venice to disperse its trade goods and to serve as a staging point in the West. This symbiotic relationship benefited both sides and it should not be surprising that during the reigns of Isaac II and Alexios III the Venetians were actively attempting to completely rectify the two states – by the reign of Alexios III, they had largely succeeded.

One should not then conclude, however, that in recognizing her dependence upon Byzantium Venice thought it would be more efficient to simply supplant her old ally. Up until the moment that the crusaders entered the gates of Constantinople the capture of the city had seemed impossible. Even with the aid of their French allies, the Venetians had little hope of bringing low the greatest city in Western Europe. If the Greeks, in fact, had fought until the last man, rather than surrendering their city after the flight of their emperor, it is entirely possible that Constantinople would never have fallen. To claim, therefore, that the Venetians had misrepresented themselves to the French, constructed the greatest navy ever assembled in the Middle Ages, and struck out on an adventure which up until the last seemed totally infeasible, is risible. It seems clear that when Dandolo departed with his fellow Venetian crusaders in 1202, he fully intended to eventually reach Egypt to aid in the reconquest of the Holy Land. Such a target was viable and presented obvious gains. An attack on Constantinople, however, was practically impossible and while it would have presented magnificent new opportunities, these almost certainly would not have been worth the risk.

To blame Venetian involvement for the sack of Constantinople is also to overlook the fundamental disjoint between the East and West in this period. Even though Alexios had effectively initiated the crusades when he wrote to Urban II for his assistance, from this point onwards the crusaders and their Byzantine hosts had been at odds. The Greeks found the crusaders barbaric and destructive, more concerned with establishing their own positions and retaking their holy sites than the delicate political balance of the Middle Orient. To the crusaders, the Greeks were aliens, decadent and strange with questionable morals and allegiances. The firestorm of 1204 need not be attributed to Venetian

machinations. Years of hostility, culminating in the massacres of 1182, had convinced the Westerners that they could not depend upon the Greeks. Unlike the Venetians, who had interacted with and drawn from Byzantine culture for generations, the majority of the other Latins saw them merely as outsiders. To alter the goals of the crusade from killing Muslims to killing Greeks was a simple task. Both were strangers and so both were enemies.

The Venetians, however, would never succumb to such a simplistic understanding of the Byzantines, nor the Byzantines of the Venetians. The two states had a long history – the events of 1204 were the lowest point of these relations but they were one experience of many. Neither side would be turned permanently against the other. In 1265, the Byzantine emperor asked the doge of Venice to renew political relations. By 1277 the Venetians had received, once again, their right to trade as well as expanded markets in the Black Sea.⁴³⁵ Even Choniates concedes that it was a Venetian family which gave him shelter during the sack of Constantinople.⁴³⁶ In time the Byzantines and Venetians would return to normal relations, despite the events of 1204.

It is certainly true that Venice advanced her interests through the crusades and perhaps through the Fourth Crusade most of all. This did not stop her, however, from advancing the interests of the crusades also and it is short-sighted to assume that the two are mutually exclusive. While Innocent sought only the liberation of Jerusalem, men like Boniface, Villehardouin, Hugh of St. Pol and Dandolo understood that the overall position of the crusader states depended upon the Christian presence in the East at large. Hence, the interest in securing Byzantium, first as an ally and then as a client state, was constructed as aiding the overall goal. A similar appraisal could be made of the diversion to Zara. By strengthening Venetian security and prestige, it was possible to ensure the full involvement of the Venetians and so, in the long run, the successful conquest of Constantinople and the establishment of the Western Byzantine Empire, a goal which even Innocent found worthy of the status of crusade.⁴³⁷

⁴³⁵ Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 413.

⁴³⁶ Choniates, *Byzantium*, Book IX, sec. 588, p. 323.

⁴³⁷ Innocent, it should be recalled, extended the benefits of crusader absolution to the Western knights who agreed to travel to Byzantium and aid in its conquest and consolidation.

Furthermore, long after crusading fervor had begun to wane in the West the Venetians remained ever vigilant, fighting, sometimes alone, to repel the encroaching Turkish threat.⁴³⁸ Nicol has written off this involvement as petty self-interest, in that the Venetians fought only to preserve their trading position and territory.⁴³⁹ Naturally self-interest played a role, but interest in preserving material wealth need not imply disregard for the spiritual. The battle to defend the Christian faith and the battle to defend Venetian power were one and the same. The Venetians fought to save themselves and their beliefs, the way of their spiritual and material life. In doing so, they saved their God, and fought, as Dandolo claimed, for the honor of God and of the Holy Roman Church.

One might argue, after all, that all crusaders were self-interested. Even if one assumes the most pious of intentions – the salvation of one’s soul – the crusaders were still fighting, effectively, for themselves. To win one’s place in heaven by the sword need not be considered altruistic action. To assume, then, that the Venetians, who clearly fought for religious motivations but also the advancement of their state, are not somehow “true” crusaders is misguided. The two goals were not exclusive. Venice’s gain was not Jerusalem’s loss.

So to for Constantinople. The Venetians did not have to destroy their ancient ally to improve their own position. The two had prospered together and different circumstances could have ensured their continuity amity. The nefarious actions of the Byzantine emperors, however, guaranteed their enmity. The destruction of Constantinople, then, cannot be attributed to the will of Enrico Dandolo, although he has gained unmerited blame for the event. The will of no man could set in motion the monumental, and disparate, events which precipitated the fall of the greatest city in Christendom. If any will must be blamed, let it be that will which launched the crusades, which sent tens of thousands of men thousands of miles from their homes, seeking salvation in the holy places of the East at the tip of their swords, for thus ran the clarion call of the crusades: *Deus vult!*

God wills it.

⁴³⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 187-194, 198-201.

⁴³⁹ Nicol, *Byzantium*, pp. 408-409.

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Appendix I: Personae Dramatis of the Fourth Crusade

Alexios III Angelos (c.1153-1211): Emperor of the Byzantines after seizing power from his brother,

Isaac, Alexios' reign was characterized by lethargy and inaction, all to the detriment of the Empire. Although able to maintain a warm relation with the West through the support of Pope Innocent III, Alexios was in a very tenuous position in his own empire. After his flight following the arrival of the crusaders at Constantinople, he established a government-in-exile and spent the remaining years of his life desperately trying to regain his lost throne.

Alexios IV Angelos (c. 1182-1204): The son of the deposed Emperor Isaac II, Alexios fled the court of his uncle, Alexios III, and sought allies in the West to aid him in his quest to regain his throne.

Although Pope Innocent III was unsympathetic to Alexios' plight, the young prince found an ally in Philip of Swabia, who was married to the young Greek's sister, Irene. Alexios was placed in the care of the men of the Fourth Crusade, many of whom agreed to help him gain his throne in exchange for political and religious concessions from the young emperor. After receiving the throne from his Western friends, however, Alexios could not honor his debts and soon his pro-Latin stance earned him the enmity of his people. He was deposed and killed by Alexios Doukas.

Alexios V Doukas (????-1205): A palace official who had been jailed during the political purges under Andronicus, Alexios Doukas was freed when Isaac II regained his throne. The pro-Western sentiments of the new emperor and his son, however, made it possible for Alexios to engineer a coup. He killed the young emperor, Alexios IV, and may have also killed Isaac. These murders, however, prompted the final attack on Constantinople by the crusaders. Alexios fled but was later captured by the Latins and brought back to the capital, where he was executed.

Baldwin of Flanders (1172- c. 1205): Perhaps the wealthiest and most famous of the men to join the Fourth Crusade, Baldwin had been a contender for the leadership of the endeavor. Although this

honor passed to Boniface of Montferrat, Baldwin remained an influential figure in the crusade because of his military skill, charisma, and deep personal piety. These qualities, in addition to support from the Venetians, led to the election of Baldwin as the first emperor of the Latin Byzantine Empire. His reign, however, was short, as Boniface led the nascent Empire into a disastrous war with the Bulgars. The emperor was captured and would spend the rest of his short life as a prisoner.

Boniface of Montferrat (c. 1150-1207): A famed marquis celebrated for his youthful exploits, Boniface joined the crusade relatively late but was hailed as leader of the undertaking following the death of Count Thibaut of Champagne. His family had a long history of involvement in both the crusades and politics in the Eastern Empire. Also, as cousin and vassal of Philip of Swabia, a major supporter of Alexios IV, Boniface was likely instrumental in the diversion of the crusade to Constantinople. After the seizure of the throne, Boniface was a primary contender for the imperial crown. He was rejected, however, by the Venetians and after a brief feud with Baldwin of Flanders he became king of Thessalonica.

Enrico Dandolo (c.1107-1205): Enrico Dandolo came from a wealthy but relatively newly established Venetian patrician family. His uncle had served as Patriarch of Grado and his father was a major diplomat and ambassador during the reign of Doge Vitale Michele II. He was elected doge of the Venetians in 1191, in keeping with the tradition of only advancing the most senior statesmen to the position of supreme executive authority in the Republic. Dandolo spent most of his career securing Venetian hegemony in the Adriatic and reforming the infrastructure, both political and economic, of the state. His monetary reforms, next to his involvement in the Fourth Crusade, were perhaps his most important contribution to Venice.

Innocent III (1160-1216): Elected to the papal tiara at a very young age, Innocent instituted a policy of expanding papal authority unrivaled since the pontificate of Gregory I. Innocent sought to augment papal religious authority with expanded control over secular affairs, especially through the manipulation of great lay nobles. The reconquest of Jerusalem would become one of

Innocent's many projects and would occupy his intentions through his pontificate. Although Innocent had a very rocky relation with many of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade, especially Enrico Dandolo, this friction depended more upon Innocent's efforts to expand papal authority than the personalities and actions of his compatriots.

Isaac II Angelos (1156-1204): Isaac Angelos was a minor official during the reign of Andronicus until the paranoid emperor attempted to have him executed. Isaac escaped his captors and instigated an impromptu riot which turned into a coup. His own reign, however, would be short and bitter. After being deposed by his brother Alexios, Isaac was blinded and put in prison. Although Isaac was freed by his son, Alexios, and acclaimed as co-emperor, his son's relations with the Latins soon created friction between the joint rulers. Isaac was either killed or committed suicide after the execution of his son.

Philip of Swabia (1177-1208): One of the most powerful dukes in the Holy Roman Empire, Philip had dreams of securing the imperial diadem. He opposed the papal candidate, Otto IV, and touched off an intense rivalry as the figurehead of the Hohenstaufen faction. This friction compromised Philip's relationship with the papacy, especially Innocent III, who endorsed Otto. Philip also had connections to the Eastern Empire through his wife, Irene, daughter of the deposed emperor Isaac II and sister to Alexios the Younger. Alexios visited his brother-in-law in October of 1202 and it is very likely that Philip was the one who first introduced Alexios to the crusaders, touching off the diversion to Constantinople.

Appendix II: Timeline of Events during the Fourth Crusade

1193

January 1: Enrico Dandolo elected to the dogeship

1195

April 8: Isaac II, Byzantine emperor, deposed by his brother, who is crowned Alexios III.

1198

January 8: Innocent III becomes Pope.

August 15: Innocent publishes an encyclical prompting a new crusade. Legates dispatched to the courts of King Richard I of England and Philip II of France and to the Republic of Venice.

December 3: Innocent approves Venetian request for non-strategic trade with Muslims

1199

Noblemen across France and Germany assume the Cross, led by Count Thibaut of Champagne, moved by the preaching of Foulques of Neuilly.

1201

March: Delegates from the crusade arrange for transportation from Venice.

May 24: Count Thibaut of Champagne, *de facto* leader of the crusade, dies.

Late Spring: Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat, elected as leader of the crusade.

October: Alexios the Younger, having escaped Byzantine, spends time in the West at the court of Philip of Swabia and in Rome with Pope Innocent.

1202

June: Crusaders are supposed to leave Venice but find that enough men have not yet arrived.

August: The crusaders renegotiate their contract with the Venetians and agree to go to Zara.

Pietro da Capua threatens crusaders with excommunication.

November: Crusaders reach and storm Zara, establishing winter quarters.

Early December: French and German crusades dispatch delegates to plead their case before Pope Innocent III, fearing excommunication. The Venetians refuse to participate.

Late December: Boniface of Montferrat rejoins the crusaders at Zara. Delegates from Philip of Swabia present the case and terms of Alexios the Younger. The crusaders then debate the merits of the diversion to Constantinople.

1203

February: Pope Innocent lays out a simple method by which the French and German crusaders could receive papal absolution.

March: The leaders of the crusade agree to aid Alexios the Younger. Many members of the crusade, especially the clergy, desert the cause.

April: The crusaders receive formal confirmation that the Venetians have been excommunicated. Boniface of Montferrat suppresses the writ.

Early Summer: Crusaders depart for Asia Minor and are joined by Alexios the Younger.

June: In a caustic letter, Innocent III laments that the crusaders are so willing to subvert the crusade to their own advancement.

July: Crusaders arrive at the walls of Constantinople.

July 18: After a failed attempt to engage the crusaders, Alexios III flees Constantinople.

July 19: The crusaders enter and secure Constantinople for Alexios the Younger, only to find that Alexios III had fled and Isaac II had been returned to the throne.

August 1: Alexios IV officially crowned as co-emperor with Isaac II.

August: Enrico Dandolo dispatches a now-lost letter and possibly envoys to Pope Innocent III to explain his conduct. The pope does, however, receive word about the conquest of Constantinople and the elevation of Alexios IV.

December: Hostilities re-emerge between the Greeks and Latins over Alexios desperate attempts to raise the funds he had promised the crusaders.

1204

Late January: Isaac II and Alexios IV are overthrown.

February 5: Alexios V acclaimed as new emperor and he immediately prepares for a new campaign against the crusaders.

February: Innocent III and Enrico Dandolo reopen their lines of communication officially.

March: Crusaders prepare a pact to settle the distribution of the Byzantine Empire should they be successful in their efforts to seize it.

April 12: Crusaders breach the outer walls of Constantinople and prepare to enter the main city.

Alexios V flees in terror.

April 13: Crusaders enter and sack the largely undefended city of Constantinople.

May 16: Baldwin of Flanders becomes first emperor of the Latin Byzantine Empire.

June: Crusaders attempt to convince Innocent III to ratify the terms of the Pact of March.

1205

January: Innocent III refuses Dandolo request to set aside his crusader vows.

Early Spring: Latin Byzantine Empire begins war against both Greek rebels and the Bulgars.

April 14: Emperor Baldwin is captured by the Bulgars.

June 21: Enrico Dandolo dies.

Appendix III: A Brief History of the Crusading Movement, 1095-1198

The desire to liberate Jerusalem from Muslim control had been well-developed by the time of the Fourth Crusade. Extending almost from the first major conflict between the West and Islam in the 8th century AD, when Charles Martel defeated an expeditionary force from the Umayyad Caliphate at the famed Battle of Tours, Christians had imagined retaking the extensive swaths of land which had since come under Muslim control.⁴⁴⁰ It was not until the pontificate of Gregory VII, however, that any coherent arrangement began to materialize.

Gregory intended to raise an army of armed pilgrims to march upon Jerusalem and liberate the holy capital from Muslim control. In a letter to Emperor Heinrich IV, Gregory even stated his intention to lead the crusade himself.⁴⁴¹ Gregory was kept informed of affairs in the East by Emperor Michael VII, who appealed for papal assistance against both the Muslims and the Normans.⁴⁴² The Byzantines had been sporadically fighting the Muslim nations for centuries and had nearly achieved a decisive victory under the reign of Emperor Romanus IV, who had ruled the empire before Michael. At the Battle of Manzikert in 1071, however, the Byzantines suffered a serious, and crippling, defeat at the hands of the Seljuk Turks.⁴⁴³ Michael, a poor substitute for the charismatic and cunning Romanus, was eventually deposed and after a series of brief but bloody struggles the throne was seized by the young general Alexios Comnenus, who was crowned as Alexios I. As Alexios' biographer, his daughter, Anna, notes, the young emperor had always been eager to make war upon the adherents of Islam and active war with the Turks became a focal point of Alexios' reign.⁴⁴⁴

⁴⁴⁰ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 1-5. For Christo-Muslims relations during the Carolingian Period and the germination of the crusading idea, see Henri Pirenne, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*.

⁴⁴¹ "Quam ammonitionem Italicis et ultramontani Deo inspirante, ut reor immo etiam omnino affirmit, libenter acceperunt et iam ultra quinquaginta milia ad hoc se preparant ut, si me possunt in expeditione pro duce ac pontifice habere, armata manu contra inimicos Dei volunt insurgere et usque ad sepulchrum Domini ipso ducente pervenire," from Register Gregors VII. II, 31.

⁴⁴² Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. II*, p. 1-2.

⁴⁴³ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. II*, p. 337-357.

⁴⁴⁴ Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book I, p. 9: "And the ambition of the young Alexios threatened the barbarians: he made it clear that one day he would come to grips with them, and when that happened his sword would have its fill of blood." For Alexios' wars against the Turks, see the pertinent chapters in Norwich, *Byzantium: Decline and Fall*.

The papacy, however, was no longer in a position to render assistance: Gregory found himself embroiled in the Investiture Controversy with his former ally, the German emperor, Heinrich.⁴⁴⁵ Even during the reign of the following pope, Urban II, internal crises in the Church prevented efforts to render aid to the Byzantines.

This situation changed, however, when Urban II had firmly established his position in Rome and his authority in Christendom. He renewed relations with Alexios, who had been actively seeking military aid from the West since 1094. Alexios hoped for an elite corps of Western knights, loyal to him, with which he could launch an assault deep into Seljuk territory. Byzantine envoys presented this plan to the lords of the West, including the pope himself, at a church council at Piacenza. The envoys took care to stress the atrocities which the Muslims were committing both against the Christians and their holy sites in Asia Minor, in addition to hinting at the remarkable wealth and land which could be acquired in war against the Turks.⁴⁴⁶

Urban II, however, envisioned a far greater ambition than the mere security of the Byzantine Empire: he desired the realization of Gregory's dream, the liberation of Jerusalem itself. Urban called a massive church council at Clermont, and on November 27, 1095, drawing upon the horrific accounts provided by the Byzantine envoys, he issued his clarion call for holy war.

The response was monumental. Tens of thousands of Christians, not just warriors, but also noblemen, clergymen, and peasants, both male and female, took the crusader's vow and prepared to march to Jerusalem. As the modern historian Thomas Asbridge has said, it appeared as if "Pope Urban's sermon at Clermont had an almost miraculous impact, that his words fell like fiery sparks upon bone-dry tinder, instantaneously igniting the imagination and enthusiasm of Latin Christendom to produce an extraordinary, unprecedented, perhaps even inexplicable, response."⁴⁴⁷ In addition to the warriors whom Urban had directly addressed, women, children and the elderly also assembled to participate, despite the pope's protests that only those fit for battle should assay the arduous journey. Urban's decision to couch

⁴⁴⁵ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁶ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. I, pp. 29-31.

⁴⁴⁷ Asbridge, *The First Crusade*, p. 40.

this crusade as an evolution of the pilgrimage, however, made it difficult to justify the exclusion of non-combatants. Peter the Hermit, an itinerant monk who was immensely popular amongst the French and German peasantry and a leader of the popular crusading movement, even actively sought “civilians” for the crusading.⁴⁴⁸ With every man bearing a sword, there was a woman with babe in arms, an old man with his walking stick, and children playing at war.

The Byzantines, who had anticipated a more cohesive, and certainly a much smaller, fighting contingency, were horrified. Anna Comnenus commented on the monumental size of the crusader host in a typically hyperbolic tone: “The whole of the West and the entire people living between the Adriatic and the Straits of Gibraltar migrated in a body to Asia, marching from one end of Europe to another with their whole households in tow,” like a veritable “plague of locusts.”⁴⁴⁹ Alexios was furious. He had expected an army to help him fight in Asia Minor and not a horde bent upon seizing Jerusalem, a city which he still considered to rightly be a part of the Byzantine Empire. Furthermore, this new burden would distract him from his most recent campaign in Anatolia – it would be necessary to outfit the Latins with supplies to prevent them from looting and pillaging on their way to Constantinople.⁴⁵⁰

The first groups of crusaders, most of whom were peasants travelling with Peter the Hermit, lodged briefly in Constantinople while they waited until for the rest of the army until their atrocious conduct led to their exile on the far side of the Bosphorus. They would not survive long in that alien and indefensible position: the pilgrims were massacred during their first real battle with the enemy. Peter returned to Constantinople with the few survivors he could muster.⁴⁵¹ It should come as no surprise that the Westerners believed that the pilgrims had been sent out to die by their Eastern hosts. This setback was but the first of many incidents which would dramatically affect relations between these two groups of Christians.

⁴⁴⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁴⁹ Comnenus, Book X, p. 275.

⁴⁵⁰ Norwich, *Byzantium: Vol. III*, 32-33.

⁴⁵¹ Asbridge, *First Crusade*, pp. 100-102

After the rabble, however, came the army. One by one, the noble members of the First Crusade entered Constantinople with their households and their soldiers. These were not the sweepings of Germany and France which had formerly crowded the streets of the Queen of Cities. The longstanding tradition that most crusaders were “second-sons” or petty lords seeking new opportunities in the East has largely been discounted.⁴⁵² Hugh, count of Vermandois, was the younger son of King Henri I of France and a Scandinavian princess, Anne of Kiev and was one of the most gently born of the pilgrims.⁴⁵³ Godfrey of Bouillon, who had recently been named duke of Lower Lorraine, held large tracts of land in Europe and held great prospect at court but chose to pursue the crusade instead.⁴⁵⁴ Perhaps the most powerful lord, however, was Count Raymond of Toulouse. Raymond had spent his entire adult life bringing to heel the disparate counties of southern France. By the time of the crusade, he controlled nearly the entire region and led an army which dwarfed many royal forces. When he took the cross, he ceded the land to his son and set out for the East, accompanied by his wife and Adhemar, bishop of Le Puy and a papal legate - Adhemar’s presence has long been interpreted as a sanction by Urban for Raymond to lead the crusade. Finally there was the Bohemond of Taranto, the son of the famous Norman conqueror Robert Guiscard. Although formerly master of an expansive empire on the eastern coast of the Adriatic, Bohemond had lost nearly all of his holdings following a disastrous war against Byzantium and its Venetian allies.⁴⁵⁵ The plague of locusts was replaced by a pack of wolves.

Alexios had trouble controlling the mobs under Peter the Hermit. These noblemen would present an even greater problem. Alexios would have to act quickly if he was to ensure the good behavior of his Western “guests.” Fortunately, the circumstances provided him with just such an opportunity. The major crusader lords had all departed at different times and so Alexios would be able to treat with each individually, ensuring that his terms were met before granting any of them access to the city. This came in

⁴⁵² Both Asbridge and Madden acknowledge, and refute, these assumptions about crusaders in their very informative and useful examinations of crusader motivations. See Asbridge, p. 66-76 and Madden, p. 11-13.

⁴⁵³ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. I*, p. 142.

⁴⁵⁴ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 19-20.

⁴⁵⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. III*, pp. 22-25. Norwich devotes the second chapter of this text to chronicling Alexios’ war with the Normans. For more on Byzantine-Venetian relations in this period, see Section IV of this paper.

the form of an oath to endorse the emperor's claims to land formerly held by the Empire and a far more nebulous clause which either established a formal alliance between the crusaders and the emperor or put the former under vassalage obligations to the latter.⁴⁵⁶ Alexios believed that he was acting prudently in the face of a very serious threat. The crusaders had different opinions.

Hugh was the first to reach Asia Minor and was conducted by imperial agents to capital, which he reached in 1096. He was feasted by the emperor but kept under house arrest in the palace until agreeing to the terms, swearing an oath before the emperor. Godfrey, who arrived on December 23rd of the same year, outright refused to even treat with the emperor and, after Alexios cut off his supplies, actually attacked the city. After his forces were repulsed, Godfrey capitulated to the emperor's terms.⁴⁵⁷ Bohemond arrived just after Godfrey's men were taken across the Bosphorus. Despite past relations with the Byzantines, Bohemond readily agreed to meet with Alexios. According to the *Gesta Francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum*, a Norman chronicle penned by an anonymous companion of Bohemond, Bohemond would agree to the emperor's oath in exchange for his own lands *ab Antiochia retro*.⁴⁵⁸ It is also possible that Bohemond requested for the emperor to endorse him as the leader of the crusade, as no commander had been officially agreed upon.⁴⁵⁹ This did not sit well, however, with Raymond, who also aspired to lead the crusade. The aging count had vowed to never return to the West, and it was quite possible that he intended to spend the rest of his life in the Holy Land. Raymond resisted the entreaties of the emperor, fearing that Alexios intended to sanction Bohemond's rule. It was not until April that Raymond could be convinced to swear a modified oath, drawn from traditional oaths in southern France, to respect the emperor's person and property, that his forces were allowed to cross the Bosphorus.⁴⁶⁰ Soon, the other crusaders filed into the city. In May of 1097, the majority of the crusaders set out for Nicaea.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁶ Asbridge, *First Crusade*, pp. 109-111. Asbridge concisely outlines the confusion inherent within this clause and its potential readings.

⁴⁵⁷ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 20-22.

⁴⁵⁸ Anonymous, *Gesta Francorum*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 136.

⁴⁵⁹ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 22.

⁴⁶⁰ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. I*, pp. 159-160, 163.

⁴⁶¹ Asbridge, *First Crusade*, p. 118.

After departing Constantinople, the crusaders prepared for their attack on Jerusalem. To accomplish this, they would first have to secure a chain of castles and cities leading to their target. The first of these was the city of Nicaea, capital of the Turkish sultanate. Following a fierce battle, the crusaders invested the city in preparation for a siege. In the interim, the Turkish sultan, Kiliç Arslan, arrived with a relief force but was soundly defeated on May 21st. It appeared as if the city was destined to fall to the crusaders.⁴⁶²

As Anna Comnenus admits, the emperor had been in secret negotiations with the citizens of Nicaea for some time. Fearful of the pillaging which would occur if the crusaders stormed the walls, the Nicaeans surrendered in secret to Alexios' men on the eve of the crusaders' assault. The emperor, however, wished to mask his "drama of betrayal" and make the crusaders think that his men had seized the city during the fighting.⁴⁶³

From here, the crusaders continued on to Antioch, an ancient and sacred city in the Christian faith. During a protracted siege which featured atrocities on both sides, including the public torturing of the city's Orthodox bishop by the Turks and the mutual catapulting of severed enemy heads into their respective camps, the Christians found themselves in dire straits.⁴⁶⁴ Emperor Alexios had set out to Antioch with fresh troops but was met by a crusader, Stephen of Blois, who had abandoned the siege, thinking the situation to be hopeless, and he advised the emperor to do the same. Both would be roundly criticized for this action.⁴⁶⁵ When Antioch finally fell to the crusaders, with the help of a traitor in the city whom Bohemond had bribed, the crusaders were quick to recall that this victory had been all the more hard-won because the Imperial troops had not been present.

Alexios would not return to aid his Western allies. He would remain at Constantinople while the crusaders pressed beyond Antioch. Although the two factions would have no further interaction during the First Crusade, the damage to their relations had been done. To the Greeks, the Latins were little more

⁴⁶² Madden, *Crusades*, p. 24.

⁴⁶³ Comnenus, *Alexiad*, Book X, pp. 301-302.

⁴⁶⁴ Asbridge, *First Crusade*, pp. 168-170.

⁴⁶⁵ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 28.

than land-mad barbarians bent on destruction and death. To the Latins, the Greeks were more concerned with their own economic position and imperial power than the holy objectives of the crusade. Furthermore, each side had been convinced that the other could not be trusted. Each side also learned just how different they each were. The Westerners, in particular, who had set out to aid their “Eastern brothers” would have found, especially during their encampment at Constantinople, that the Orthodox faith bore little resemblance to their own. Greek customs, religious and cultural, would have appeared as alien to the crusaders as those of the dreaded “Saracens.”⁴⁶⁶ The supposed perfidy of the Greeks and their effectively schismatic religious beliefs had convinced many of the crusaders that the Byzantine Empire was no ally to the crusading movement. The gulf between the two branches of Christianity was widening and when the maw was finally fully open, it would mean, as during the Fourth Crusade, open war which would cast Gregory VII’s dream of a unified church into the black abyss.

After Antioch, the goal of Jerusalem was finally within their crusaders’ grasp, just three weeks march away. After petty squabbles over rulership within the recently conquered lands and a series of skirmishes with the Egyptian and Turkish armies, which were themselves locked in battle for control of the area, the crusaders reached Jerusalem in early June of 1098. Held by the Egyptian fatimids, the crusaders realized that Jerusalem would be a difficult nut to crack. A local hermit urged an immediate assault on the walls, but this was repulsed.⁴⁶⁷ The crusaders prepared for an extended siege but soon realized that time was not on their side – a relieving force of Egyptian soldiers approached Jerusalem by way of Ascalon. The fortuitous arrival of English and Genoese ships provided the crusaders with building supplies. By early May, they were prepared to storm the walls.⁴⁶⁸

On July 14th, 1099, the crusaders launched what would be a two day battle for control of Jerusalem. Attacking the city from two sides with massive siege towers, commanded respectively by Godfrey and Raymond, the crusaders made slow progress against their foes. When Godfrey’s men finally

⁴⁶⁶ For more on the disjoint between Eastern and Western Christianity and the pursuant theological and culture strife, see “Somewhere Between Heaven and Earth: Eastern Orthodoxy” in Shelley, *Church History*, and Asbridge, *First Crusade*, pp. 96-100.

⁴⁶⁷ Runciman, *A History*, Vol. III, p. 281.

⁴⁶⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 33-34.

breached the walls, however, it set off a chain reaction. As Fulcher puts it, “All the heathen, completely terrified, changed their boldness to swift flight through the narrow streets of the quarter. The more quickly they fled, the more quickly they were put to flight.”⁴⁶⁹ Enflamed by their victory and the long suffering that they had endured over the years of their journey, the crusaders engaged in a ruthless sack of the holy city.⁴⁷⁰ Fulcher almost sheepishly states “What more shall I say? Not one [of the Muslims at the Temple of Solomon] was allowed to live. [The crusaders] did not spare the women and children.”⁴⁷¹ Albert of Aachen speaks of the “very great and cruel slaughter” and the *Gesta* includes the oft-quoted citation that the crusaders “waded in blood up to their ankles.”⁴⁷² While Albert says the violence was predicated upon the continued fighting in the streets by the citizens of Jerusalem, stirred up by Egyptian officers, Robert the Monk attributes the violence to a different source: “Duke Godfrey had no desire for the citadel, the palace, gold, or silver or any kind of spoils. Instead at the head of his Franks he was desperate to make the enemy pay for the blood of the servants of God which had been spilt around Jerusalem, and wanted revenge for the insults they had had heaped on the pilgrims.”⁴⁷³ As Fulcher of Chartres put it, with the liberation of Jerusalem, “what the Lord wished to be fulfilled, I believe, by this people so dear, both His disciple and servant and predestined for this task, will resound and continue in a memorial of all the language of the universe to the end of the ages.”⁴⁷⁴ That day would indeed live in infamy.

The news of the reconquest of Jerusalem elicited celebration in the Christian world and horror in the Islamic. Alexios would surely have been grateful to learn that the holy city was once more in the hands of the faithful, although it was too remote and too exposed to serve as a countermeasure against his own Turkish troubles.⁴⁷⁵ The crusaders also established their respective kingdoms with a decidedly political slant which must have unnerved Alexios. Bohemond had claimed Antioch for himself and

⁴⁶⁹Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, ch. XVII, p. 77.

⁴⁷⁰ It is not the purpose of this article to debate the veracity of the claims of violence ascribed to this sack. Madden argues that the crusader and Muslim accounts of the massacre have been greatly exaggerated, while Asbridge and Runciman believe them to be accurate.

⁴⁷¹ Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, ch. XXVII, p. 77.

⁴⁷² Albert of Aachen, *Historia*, p. 431; *Gesta*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, p. 209.

⁴⁷³ Robert the Monk, *Historia*, Book IX, ch. VII, p. 200.

⁴⁷⁴ Fulcher of Chartres, *Deeds*, in *First Crusade*, ed. Peters, ch. XXIX, p. 78.

⁴⁷⁵ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 43.

established his own principality, despite the fact that, pursuant to his oath, he should have surrendered the city to Imperial control. At Jerusalem, Godfrey was proclaimed ruler of the Holy City but, famously refusing to be “crowned with gold where Christ was crowned with thorns,” he instead took the title *Advocatus Sancti Sepulchri*.⁴⁷⁶ A Christian lord now ruled in the most Christian of cities. But it was not to last.

Godfrey died shortly after securing his throne and his brother, Baldwin, was crowned as the first king of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was fortified with new supplies from Pisa and Venice, the only two “nations” to join the crusade, and the now torrential wave of Christians who, previously hesitant, now adamantly believed in the manifest destiny of the crusade.⁴⁷⁷ The tide of Westerners, however, began to grate upon the Byzantines. Originally, Alexios had hoped to use the crusade to re-establish his rule over Asia Minor. He now found himself surrounded by petty princelings and monarchs from the West. Bohemond, as has been stated, and his Normans remained a problem but Alexios was confident that they would remain occupied battling the Muslims, who were galvanized against the crusaders by the slaughter at Jerusalem. For the moment, Alexios could rest. Although the last years of his reign would be marked with internal strife, the glories of his tenure allowed him to depart the earth in peace on August 15th, 1118.⁴⁷⁸

Outremer would soon slide back into turmoil. Baldwin II, who was elected to replace Baldwin, the brother of Godfrey, was a pious but ineffective leader. His forces were crushed by the Turks at the so-called “Field of Blood” in 1119. The king of Jerusalem requested aid from Pope Calixtus II, who passed the summons on to the Venetians. A might fleet, personally led by the Venetian doge, Domenico Michiel, sailed for the Orient to attack Tyre, a major Egyptian power center. On its way, however, the fleet attacked the Byzantines holdings of Emperor John II, Alexios’ heir, with whom they were embroiled in an economic dispute. The Venetians were instrumental in the taking of the city and received control of one

⁴⁷⁶ Runciman, *History*, Vol. I, pp. 292-295.

⁴⁷⁷ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 39-40. Venice had little interest in the First Crusade but for its assistance at Acre received important trading rights.

⁴⁷⁸ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 60-61.

third of the city – the banner of St. Mark was raised next to the standard of the king of Jerusalem over Tyre.⁴⁷⁹

John II, naturally perturbed by the nescient Eastern power of Venice, which for centuries had been a Byzantine vassal, was also having difficulties with other Latins in the Holy Land. Hoping to secure Antioch, he began a protracted campaign against Raymond of Poitiers, its current prince. After a brief siege, John eventually forced Raymond to recognize imperial authority after Fulk, who had succeeded Baldwin II as the reigning king of Jerusalem, mediated the conflict.⁴⁸⁰ John, a consummate warrior, now called upon Raymond and Joscelin II of Courtenay, count of Edessa, to assist him in a campaign against the Muslims: Zengi, *atabeg* of Mosul, had been solidifying his power in Syria and was now strong enough to threaten the crusader kingdoms and Byzantium. John and his two allies met Zengi's forces at Aleppo, a major satellite city of Zengi's might. Although the Byzantine forces fought bravely, both Joscelin and Raymond refused to commit their forces to the battle. The crusaders were soundly defeated.⁴⁸¹

It was becoming clear to John that he could not depend upon his Western allies. In 1142, he entered Antioch and demanded that the city be given over to his full control. Raymond, desperate, stalled for time. John resolved that war was his only alternative and began to plan a campaign to take place the following spring. Alas, he did not have such time. During a hunting trip in March 1143 the emperor cut his hand. The wound became infected and he died soon after, naming his son, Manuel I, emperor of the Byzantine Empire.⁴⁸²

While the Byzantines and Latins had been busy fighting each other, Zengi's power had been growing. The distrust planted during the First Crusade had blossomed into open violence and hatred, and

⁴⁷⁹ Norwich, *Venice*, pp. 87-91.

⁴⁸⁰ Runciman, *History*, Vol. II, p. 212-214. Runciman includes the text of Fulk's letter to Raymond, found in Odericus Vitalis, XIII, 34, which references both the long history of Byzantine control in Antioch and the oath sworn to Alexios during the First Crusade: "We all know and our elders have long taught us that Antioch was part of the Empire of Constantinople till it was taken from the emperor by the Turks...and that the emperor's claims about the treaties made by our ancestors are correct. Ought we then to deny the truth and oppose what is right?"

⁴⁸¹ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, pp. 79-81.

⁴⁸² Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 84.

while Christian fought with Christian, the Muslim grew stronger. When King Fulk of Jerusalem died, like John, in a hunting accident in November of the same year, Zengi struck. He attacked and captured Edessa, the first crusader state to be established, in 1144. The news shocked the Western world, which for nearly a generation had enjoyed the benefits of a strong and relative secure hegemony in the Holy Land. Immediate action would have to be taken.⁴⁸³

Hugh, bishop of Jabala and a firm critic of the late Emperor John and the Byzantine Empire, reached the West in 1145 and immediately sought an audience with Pope Eugenius III, who happily obliged and began preparations for a new crusade. Although Hugh went on to visit the courts of King Louis VII of France and King Conrad of Hohenstaufen, Eugenius was adamant that Conrad remain in Europe – Conrad was a useful ally whom Eugenius hoped to exploit to solidify his own position on the Italian peninsula, which was incredibly weak.⁴⁸⁴ Louis, however, could easily be spared and, being of a pliant and pious demeanor, readily acquiesced.

The Second Crusade, like the First, would, however, require a popular figure to rally the faithful in Europe to take the cross once more. The fervor from the First Crusade had declined considerably and the miniscule trickle of pilgrims from Europe to the East had contributed to the decline of the crusader states. While the loss of Edessa was a sufficiently galvanizing experience, the flames of crusader ardency were expertly fanned by the famed holy man and Cistercian reformer, Bernard of Clairvaux. Bearing with him Eugenius' papal bull, *Quantum praedecessores*, Bernard stirred up the entire Western world to emulate the heroes of the First Crusade and liberate the Holy Land once more. As William of Tyre notes, Bernard's skills entranced every level of society: "Not alone with the throngs of common people were his persuasive words effective, but even with the supreme rulers of the world and those who occupied the highest pinnacle of the kingdom."⁴⁸⁵ In some respects, Bernard was too effective.

Despite Eugenius' desire to keep Conrad out of the Crusade, the Germans were clamoring for his involvement, especially after the radical Cistercian monk, Radulf, fomented anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic

⁴⁸³ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 51-52.

⁴⁸⁴ Runciman, *Crusade, Vol. II*, pp. 247-249.

⁴⁸⁵ William of Tyre, *History*, Book XVI, chp. 18, p. 164.

sentiments amongst the German peasants. Bernard responded to the demands of the people and visited Conrad, convincing him to join the crusade in December of 1146. The crusade now had two strong, crowned heads to lead it. Louis and Conrad departed for the East.⁴⁸⁶

Conrad was the first of the two monarchs to reach Constantinople. Manuel had been informed of the arrival of the crusaders by Louis, who had requested the emperor's assistance. Manuel had somewhat grudgingly agreed to aid the crusaders, although he demanded terms and oaths similar to those which had been given to Emperor Alexios. The Germans proved as rowdy as the members of the First Crusade, pillaging and brawling across the Byzantine Empire as they made their way to Constantinople. Although Louis' coming was more peaceable, Manuel still had to be wary: there were rumors that Godfrey, bishop of Langres and brother to Bernard, had begged the king to attack Constantinople outright, lest the Byzantines betray the crusade.⁴⁸⁷

Upon departing from Constantinople, the crusade met almost immediate ruin. Conrad had set off first but was ambushed by a Turkish advance force – the Western emperor barely escaped with his life and a few of his retainers. William of Tyre directly accused the Greek guides who had been assigned to Conrad by Manuel of complacency with Turks. When Louis arrived, Conrad committed his few remaining forces, and himself, to the French king's host.

Louis, however, would fare little better. The French crusaders were travelling overland in Anatolia and were incessantly harassed by Turkish raiders, even though the area was nominally under Byzantine control. Once clear of Anatolia, the crusaders would find a new reason to despise the Greeks. Manuel had promised that Imperial vessels would convey the pilgrims to Antioch, but when the crusaders met these ships, there were far too few of them. The clergy were given precedence and allowed to board first. The remaining ships were given over to Louis and his court.

⁴⁸⁶ Madden, *Crusade*, pp. 54,57.

⁴⁸⁷ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. III*, pp. 94-95. King Roger II of Sicily had offered a similar deal to King Louis, promising to help him destroy the Byzantine Empire and providing him with ships to reach Jerusalem after Manuel was defeated. Roger, however, was on poor terms with Pope Eugenius, and so Louis refused, Madden, *Crusade*, p. 56.

Carried safely in their ships, this party would reach Antioch in 1148. There, they were gladdened to hear that Zengi, Muslim scourge of the West, had been stabbed by a slave angry over a glass of wine. Far more dire news would soon arrive, however, when it was reported that almost all of the French soldiers who had attempted to march to Antioch had been slain by the Turks at Laodicea. The people of Antioch, who had expected the arrival of a huge relieving force, were instead greeted by a bedraggled monarch and his minuscule retinues. After a brief rest, Louis joined Conrad in Jerusalem, where the latter had assembled a small mercenary army.⁴⁸⁸

The crusade would end on a similarly blundering note. Zengi's son, Nur ed-Din, was even more dangerous than his father. When the crusaders met at Acre, under the aegis of King Baldwin III and his queen-mother, Melisende on June 24, 1148, they knew that Nur would be too great a foe. Desperate for an easy but valuable victory, the crusaders resolved to attack Damascus. The city was wealthy, and its loss would divide the Muslim world in two. These small benefits, however, should have seemed trivial when compared to the folly of the attack. Damascus was at war with Nur and was one of the few Muslim powers on friendly relations with the Latins. When the crusaders reached Damascus, they surrounded the city without issue but soon found themselves surrounded by enemy reinforcements. Much to the chagrin of Louis and Conrad, the lords of Outremer recommended retreat and the Western monarchs had no choice – the army returned to Jerusalem. Conrad immediately departed for Constantinople, where he spent some time at the imperial court. Louis remained in the Holy Land for a while longer but was soon forced to return to France to answer several domestic crises. The Second Crusade was an abysmal failure.⁴⁸⁹

The situation in the Holy Land soon mirrored that of the most recent crusade. Nur ed-Din continued to expand his own holdings and became an even greater threat to the crusader states. These beleaguered powers were not likely to receive any further assistance from the West, as Roger II of Sicily was busy stirring up anti-Byzantine sentiments, now aided by Louis, who was widely blaming the failure

⁴⁸⁸ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 58-60.

⁴⁸⁹ Runciman, *Crusade, Vol. II*, pp. 280-286.

of the Second Crusade on Manuel.⁴⁹⁰ In the Holy Land, Baldwin III, the young king of Jerusalem, attempted to belie the anti-Imperial tendencies of the West by fostering a good relationship with Manuel.⁴⁹¹ Together, they attempted to beat back Nur's meteoric rise to power. In 1159, however, Manuel was informed of intrigues against him and Byzantium and was forced to enter into a truce with Nur. This blackened his relationships with the Latins and brought back suspicions that perhaps Manuel had in fact been working with the Turks during the Second Crusade and was now aligned with Nur.⁴⁹²

Baldwin died a short time later and was succeeded by his younger brother, Amalric. Hoping to capitalize on the weakness of the Fatimid caliphate, which was battling against Nur, he, with his Byzantine allies, attacked Egypt with a massive. Despite a few early victories, however, the crusaders were repulsed after the Fatimid caliph allied himself with Nur. While the crusaders were licking their wounds, Nur was training his protégé, his nephew, whom he had just named vizier of Egypt, al-Malik al-Nasir Salah ed-Din. In the West, he was called Saladin.

Amalric would again attack Egypt a few years later, launching a joint assault on Damietta with Emperor Manuel. Bickering between the two rulers, however, doomed the expedition and revived existing animosity between the two states. The middle of the 12th century had seen countless alliances between the Greeks and Latins disintegrate because of mutual revulsion and paranoia. The half-hearted assistance provided by the Greeks, and their disturbing propensity for uniting with the Muslims during desperate times, had convinced the Western crusaders and the lords of Outremer that the Byzantine Empire was not dependable. This fracturing of the Christian powers would generate the perfect storm for the rise of Saladin.

Nur, meanwhile, died, and Saladin seized control at the capital, Damascus. The caliphate of Egypt and that of Damascus were now united under one ruler. When Amalric died on July 11, 1174,

⁴⁹⁰ Norwich, *Byzantium, Vol. III*, p. 104. Roger nearly succeeded in rallying the nations of Europe together in an "anti-Byzantine" league, but Conrad, former guest and ally of Manuel, had resisted Roger's advances and so the movement came to naught.

⁴⁹¹ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 64-65. Baldwin famously allied with Manuel to defeat Reynald de Châtillon, a raider and swashbuckler who had arrived in the Holy Land as part of the Second Crusade and remained, making his living by plundering from both Muslims and Christians.

⁴⁹² Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. II*, p. 354.

leaving behind his teenage son, Baldwin IV, who was stricken with leprosy, it appeared as if nothing could stop Saladin.⁴⁹³

And nothing could. Although Baldwin IV, after securing a spectacular victory against Saladin early in his reign, managed to maintain an uneasy peace between Muslims and Christians, the ambitious ruler of Egypt and Syria longed to remove the Christians from the Holy Land. His reign, like that of Zengi and Nur, was predicated upon *jihad* against the infidel and Saladin could not rest easy until Jerusalem was again in Muslim hands. He had his pretense for war in the guise of petty Christian raiders who disrupted Muslim trade for personal gain.⁴⁹⁴ The weak and ineffectual emperor of Byzantine, Andronicus, was more than happy to step aside and allow Saladin to attack the Latins, continuing the imperial policy which had taken hold after the reign of Alexios: unable to repel the Muslim, Byzantine was forced to work with him. The two signed a peace treaty in 1185 and Andronicus shifted his focus away from his new ally and towards the Sicilian Normans. Andronicus' willingness to ally with Saladin, however, and his pathetic efforts to battle the Normans, however, were his doom. He was deposed, ending the reign of the Comnenus emperors, and Isaac Angelus, a distant cousin of the imperial family, was made emperor. Like Andronicus, however, Isaac was either unable, or unwilling, to aid the kingdom of Jerusalem.⁴⁹⁵

Baldwin attempted to preempt Saladin's advances but was stymied by affairs at court. His sister, Sybilla, was married to an ambitious outcast from Europe, Guy de Lusignan. As Baldwin's leprosy grew worse, upon the advice of his sister and the patriarch of Jerusalem, Heraclitus, he granted more and more power to Guy. Although the two quarreled, and Baldwin even attempted to make Sybilla annul her marriage to Guy, when Baldwin succumbed to his affliction and Sybilla's only son died, Guy was named king.⁴⁹⁶ Hoping to ensure the loyalties of his wavering vassals, Guy immediately took the offensive. He assembled a grand army of his greatest knights and soldiers and marched out to meet Saladin, bearing a piece of the True Cross at the head of the column.

⁴⁹³ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 65-68.

⁴⁹⁴ Reynald de Châtillon and his ilk, who declared that they were free from the rule of King Baldwin and could prey upon any caravans that entered their kingdom around the Transjordan, Madden, p. 71.

⁴⁹⁵ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. II*, pp. 428-429.

⁴⁹⁶ Runciman, *Crusades, Vol. II*, pp. 446-451.

He had sprung the caliph's trap. The crusader army was ill-equipped for desert combat and was ambushed near the Horns of Hattin. Despite a valiant hill-top defense effort, the crusader army was completely destroyed. Guy was captured and had to be ransomed back at ruinous expense, along with dozens of other nobles. With no army left to defend Jerusalem, Saladin marched on the capital, but not before having the True Cross sent to Damascus, where it was carried through the streets upside down.⁴⁹⁷

Jerusalem was left with a token garrison and little hope. The famous Balian of Ibelin, working with the patriarch, Heraclitus, orchestrated a brilliant defense of the city but it was too little too late. The baron was forced to offer terms. According to the contemporary Arab historian, Ibn al-Athir, Saladin vowed to massacre all of the Christians in Jerusalem, promising Ibelin "We shall deal with you, just as you dealt with the population of Jerusalem when you took it in 1099." The baron, however, threatened to destroy all of the wealth of Jerusalem and put all of its citizens to the sword, in addition to tearing down the Dome of the Rock, if Saladin would not allow the Christians to buy their freedom or to leave peaceably.⁴⁹⁸ Fearful of the high cost of taking Jerusalem by force, Saladin acquiesced.

The effects of the fall of Edessa before the Second Crusade were felt with even greater urgency when Jerusalem fell in 1187. As the modern historian Jonathan Riley-Smith has observed, the crusading movement "thrived on disaster:" Pope Urban III supposedly died of grief upon hearing of the fall of Jerusalem and immediately upon assuming the pontificate his successor, Pope Gregory VIII, issued his *Audita tremendi*.⁴⁹⁹ This beautifully crafted, immensely important document laid the foundations for a full-fledged crusade, including a holistic declaration of peace between all crusaders. The response was impressive and soon many of the crowned heads of Europe, including King Henry II of England, King Philip II of France, and Emperor Frederick I of the Holy Roman Empire were preparing to embark on the Third Crusade.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁷ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 75-76.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibn al-Athir, "Negotiations for the Surrender of Jerusalem," in *Competing Voices*, ed. Holt & Muldoon, pp. 119-120.

⁴⁹⁹ Jonathan Riley-Smith, "The Crusades, 1095-1198," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, Vol. IV, part I, ed. David Luscombe & Jonathan Riley-Smith, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, p. 557.

⁵⁰⁰ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 79-80.

Isaac II, the Byzantine emperor, was perhaps the most loath of all the imperial heads of Byzantium to treat with the crusaders. He was especially worried about Frederick, who had taken to referring to himself as the true Roman emperor and seemed to have aspirations for Byzantium. When German legates reached Constantinople to announce the arrival of their emperor, Isaac had them arrested, perhaps as hostages for Frederick's good behavior.⁵⁰¹ Isaac was not helped by the fact that he had entered into negotiations with Saladin as a counter-measure to the possibility of the crusaders allying against him and attacking the capital.⁵⁰²

Fortunately for Isaac, the two other major leaders of the crusade, Philip and Richard I, who was fulfilling the vow of his father, Henry II, opted to reach the Holy Land by ship. France and England had been at war for years and were only embarking upon the crusade through the mediation of Pope Gregory. Richard sailed for the Holy Land via Cyprus, a Byzantine holding, which he conquered and made a Latin vassalage. There he was approached by delegates of Guy of Lusignan, who brought word of Philip's scheming in Acre – the French monarch was trying to put Conrad of Montferrat, a local crusader lord, on the throne of Jerusalem. Richard settled his affairs with Isaac with a treaty and set off for the Holy Land.⁵⁰³

Political machinations over the crown of Jerusalem quickly dominated the crusading effort. Despite a brilliant victory at Acre, Richard found himself embroiled more and more in politics and less and less in battle. Philip, meanwhile, seemed far more interested in securing his man on the throne of Jerusalem. As this became less and less likely, Philip became less and less inclined to remain in the Holy Land. He returned to France in 1191, complaining that the Levant was affecting his health.⁵⁰⁴ Richard then had to face Saladin alone.

He would prove to merit his name "Lionheart." Rather than striking out directly against Jerusalem, Richard set about fortifying and securing the coast. He then determined that the best way to

⁵⁰¹ Norwich, *Byzantium*, Vol. III, p. 161.

⁵⁰² Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 115.

⁵⁰³ Gillingham, *Richard*, pp. 146-147, 150-151.

⁵⁰⁴ Madden, *Crusades*, p. 88.

secure Jerusalem was to attack Egypt, the base of Saladin's power, employing the maxim that "the keys to Jerusalem are to be found in Cairo."⁵⁰⁵ Richard would not be able, however, to put his plan into action. He fell ill and was receiving distressing reports about his younger brother, John, in England. Saladin, impressed by Richard's martial valor, agreed to a three year truce, which Richard hoped would allow him enough time to settle his affairs and then return.⁵⁰⁶ Richard, however, would have no such opportunity. He was killed while surveying a siege in France and died of his wounds.

The Third Crusade did not end with the death of Richard. Heinrich VI, son of the later Emperor Frederick, dispatched a massive force to supplement the gains which Richard had won along the coast. Heinrich died, however, and most of his army returned home. Although unable to secure Jerusalem, the Third Crusade had managed to reverse most of Saladin's military gains in the Holy Land. When Saladin himself died in 1193, his mighty empire collapsed into chaos.⁵⁰⁷ The way was clear for a new crusade.

⁵⁰⁵ Gillingham, *Richard*, p. 182.

⁵⁰⁶ Riley-Smith, *Crusades*, p. 560-563.

⁵⁰⁷ Madden, *Crusades*, pp. 94-95.