

10 april 1204 Précis de l'histoire du moyen âge**§ II. QUATRIEME CROISADE.**

Empire franc de Constantinople.

5 Jean de Brienne était roi nominal de Jérusalem lorsque l'Occident prépara un nouveau secours pour la Palestine. En 1197, une quatrième croisade avait été publiée par de pape Innocent III. Les rois ne répondirent pas à cet appel, mais les princes secondaires s'armèrent: les croisés virent à leur tête Baudouin IX, comte de Flandre; Dandolo, doge de Venise; Boniface II, marquis de Montferrat. Le résultat de cette croisade fut la destruction de l'empire grec.

10 Les empereurs de Byzance, après avoir si souvent imploré le secours des Occidentaux contre les mahométans, avaient employé ensuite tous leurs efforts pour entraver le mouvement des croisades. D'une part, ils craignaient que les richesses de Byzance ne tentassent les guerriers de l'Occident, et c'est pourquoi ils s'efforçaient de leur nuire; d'un autre côté, ils voulaient enlever aux croisés le fruit de leurs combats.

15 Cependant des révolutions continuelles troublaient le palais de Byzance; le crime était devenu le marchepied du trône. En 1180 Andronicus, après avoir assassiné Alexis II, se fit nommer empereur; cinq ans après, il fut renversé lui-même par Isaac l'Ange; enfin ce dernier, en 1195, est également dépouillé de la pourpre par son frère Alexis III et jeté en prison, après avoir eu les yeux crevés. Alexis l'Ange,

20 fils d'Isaac, se rend en Europe afin de rétablir son père sur le trône par l'intervention des Occidentaux.

Ceux qui avaient promis de tenter une quatrième expédition en faveur de la terre sainte étaient alors réunis à Venise, mais dépourvus de moyens de transport. La république met ses vaisseaux à leur disposition, à condition qu'ils l'aideront

25 d'abord à reprendre Zara, en Dalmatie, tombée au pouvoir du roi de Hongrie. Cette expédition terminée, les Francs par enthousiasme, et les Vénitiens par intérêt, cèdent aux instances d'Alexis, qui les conjure de tourner leurs forces contre l'usurpateur du trône de Byzance. Le désir de punir un peuple sans foi et le vague espoir d'arborer leurs bannières dans la ville de Constantin, l'emportèrent sur toute

30 autre considération, même sur les exhortations du pape, désireux seulement de délivrer Jérusalem (1202). La flotte cingle vers Constantinople, force l'usurpateur à s'enfuir et les habitants à se rendre. Isaac l'Ange ayant été rétabli, les croisés revinrent dans leur camp, situé au delà du port. De là ils admiraient la beauté de la Propontide et pouvaient embrasser l'étendue de Constantinople: cette immense capitale

35 apparaissait sur le rivage avec ses hautes murailles, les dômes élancés de ses palais, ses trois cent quatre-vingt-six tours, églises et couvents. C'était vraiment la cité souveraine, car elle surpassait toutes les villes de l'Occident en magnificence, présentaient la tradition graduelle du goût sévère des anciens aux combinaisons plus variées et plus brillantes du genre oriental. L'église de Sainte-

40 Sophie, cathédrale du rit grec, surpassait tous ces édifices par la magnificence de son architecture et la somptuosité de ses ornements (2). Les places publiques étaient décorées des monuments de l'empire de Rome et de l'ancienne Grèce. Sur la place de Constantin, on admirait la statue en bronze de Junon et celle de Paris offrant à Vénus le prix de la beauté; sur celle du mont Taurus une statue équestre représentant

45 suivant les uns Josué, suivant d'autres Bellérophon et Pégase. Dans l'hippodrome, on remarquait une colossale statue d'Hercule, attribuée à Lysippe; une des colonnes du cirque supportait un autre chef-d'œuvre de l'art antique: c'était l'image d'une jeune femme, les cheveux tressés sur le front et noués par derrière; elle portait à la main droite un cavalier dont elle tenait le cheval par un pied; le cavalier couvert d'une

50 cuirasse, le cheval hennissant, semblaient écouter la trompette guerrière et ne respirer que les combats.

L'inexécution des promesses faites aux Latins par Isaac l'Ange et l'usurpation de Dumas Murtzuphle, déterminèrent la reprise des hostilités. Après un siège de trois mois, Constantinople fut prise d'assaut et livrée au pillage (10 avril 1204). Dans

55 leur aveugle fureur, dans leur ignorance, les rudes Occidentaux brisèrent même ces bronzes que l'art antique avait fait vivre.

Tous les croisés, dit Michaud, se laissèrent entraîner à la soi du butin, et les chefs, comme les soldats, exercèrent, sans ménagement et sans scrupules, le droit que leur donnait la victoire de dépouiller les vaincus. Les chefs rétablirent enfin

60 l'ordre dans la cité de Constantin, en proclamant empereur Baudouin, comte de Hainaut et de Flandre: suivant l'ancienne coutume des Francs, il fut élevé sur un bouclier et porté en triomphe dans Sainte-Sophie. L'empire fut ensuite partagé entre les Francs et les Vénitiens. Les premiers obtinrent la Bithynie, la Romanie ou la Thrace, Thessalonique, toute la Grèce, depuis les Thermopyles jusqu'au cap Sunium, et les

65 plus grandes îles de l'Archipel. Le lot des Vénitiens se composait des Cyclades et des Sporades dans l'Archipel, des îles et de la côte orientale du golfe Adriatique, des côtes de la Propontide et de celles du Pont-Euxin, des rives de l'Hèbre et du Vardas, des villes de Cypsède, de Didymatique, d'Andrinople, des contrées maritimes de la

Thessalie, etc. "Mais des circonstances qu'on n'avait point prévues, la diversité des intérêts, les rivalités de l'ambition, toutes les chances de la fortune et de la guerre, apportèrent bientôt, suivant la remarque d'un historien, des changements à cette division du territoire. On entreprendrait en vain de suivre les conquérants dans les provinces tombées en leur pouvoir; il serait plus facile de marquer le cours d'un torrent débordé et de retracer le chemin des tempêtes, que de fixer l'état des possessions incertaines et passagères des vainqueurs de Byzance (1)". Ce fut d'ailleurs une triste domination que celle des empereurs latins. Sans être aussi méprisables par leur caractère personnel que les anciens souverains de Byzance, ils restèrent au-dessous de leurs prédécesseurs par leur faiblesse politique. Ils devaient lutter à la fois contre des vassaux aussi puissant qu'eux-mêmes; contre les Bulgares, qui avaient recouvré leur indépendance peu de temps avant la prise de Constantinople; enfin contre les Grecs qui supportaient impatiemment la domination étrangère et qui appelaient de leur vœux le jour de leur délivrance. Quelques lambeaux de l'empire étaient restés à des princes byzantins. Théodore Lascaris, gendre de l'empereur Alexis III, se rendit successivement maître de la Bithynie, de la Lydie, d'une partie des côtes de l'Archipel et de la Phrygie; sa capitale était Nicée où il se fit couronner empereur en 1204. David Comnène, petit-fils de l'empereur Andronic, s'empara de la cote de la mer Noire, depuis Sinope jusqu'au delà de Trébizonde dont il fit sa capitale; cet État subsista jusqu'en 1461. Enfin Michel l'Ange Comnène se créa une principauté également considérable: elle s'étendait depuis Durazzo jusqu'au golfe de Lépante, et comprenait l'Épire, l'Acarmanie, l'Étolie et une partie de la Thessalie. Le règne de Baudouin Ier fut court: tombé en 1206 au pouvoir des Bulgares, on ne le vit jamais reparaître, soit qu'il eut été massacré, soit qu'il languit dans les fers jusqu'à la fin de ses jours. La couronne impériale avait été remise à son frère Henri: Celui-ci repoussa les Bulgares, mais il ne put s'opposer aux progrès de Lascaris. Ayant été empoisonné en 1216, les barons lui donnèrent pour successeur son beau-frère, Pierre comte d'Auxerre, de la maison de Courtenai. Il ne vit pas Constantinople: en traversant les montagne[s] de l'Albanie il tomba au pouvoir de Théodore Comnène, successeur de Michel, dont il venait d'assiéger la capitale (Durazzo); et il fut assassiné dans sa prison (1219). Son fils, Robert de Courtenai, lui succède. Ce règne est marqué par de nouveaux désastres; chaque jour le territoire latin est resserré par les princes grecs régnant à Nicée, à Trébizonde et en Épire. Robert ne laissa qu'un fils âgé de neuf ans. Or, les barons, ayant besoin d'un chef, résolurent de décerner à Jean de Brienne, pour toute sa vie, le titre d'empereur, qui retournerait à sa mort au jeune Baudouin. Les Latins firent alors un prodige: une armée de cent mille hommes, Bulgares et Grecs de la Thrace, s'était présentée devant Constantinople; avec cent soixante chevaliers portant bannière, et quelques sergents, Jean de Brienne dispersa les barbares, tandis que la flotte vénitienne s'emparait de leurs vaisseaux. A la mort de Jean de Brienne (1237), Baudouin se trouvait en Europe pour solliciter l'assistance des Occidentaux; dans leur triste position, les barons de Constantinople étaient obligés d'aliéner les plus précieux trésors de l'empire; Baudouin lui-même engagea le comté de Namur pour 50000 livres parisis, au roi de France (Louis IX). Les faibles secours arrivés de l'Occident ne purent sauver cet empire, qui fut enfin réduit à sa seule capitale.

Michel Paléologue, élu empereur de Nicée en 1258, résolut de chasser les Latins. Telle était leur détresse, qu'ils ôtaient de plomb qui couvrait les églises pour en faire de la monnaie et qu'ils démolissaient les palais pour se procurer du bois. Après s'être emparé de tous les châteaux qui environnaient Constantinople, Michel Paléologue entra dans la capitale le 25 juillet 1261. Les Grecs effacèrent alors des fastes publics le règne éphémère des empereurs latins, dont le dernier venait de se réfugier dans l'île de Négrepont. L'empire grec restauré par les Paléologues ne put toutefois se relever du coup fatal qui lui avait été porté. Quelques provinces bornées en Asie par le Méandre et le Sangarus, en Europe par le mont Hémus et la chaîne du mont Oeta: tel était le patrimoine amoindri des héritiers de la puissance romaine. La plupart des îles de l'Archipel, et les provinces de la Grèce proprement dite au midi de la Thessalie, restèrent au pouvoir des Latins. Quant à la richesse et à la force morale de l'empire, elles passèrent entre les mains des républiques maritimes d'Italie. Venise, Gênes et Pise reconnaissaient à peine, dans Constantinople, le pouvoir de l'empereur.

(1) On a évalué cette population à un million d'habitants.

(2) "Que de trésors de tous genres en marbres, en porphyre, en granit, dans l'intérieur, qui avait deux cent quarante pieds de longueur sur deux cent treize de largeur! Quelle splendeur dans les colonnes, les plus belles de tous les temples célébrés du paganisme! quel art dans les mosaïques qui ornaient les murs et même les voûtes! La coupole, éclairée par vingt-quatre fenêtres, s'élève sur quatre piliers semblables à des tours, à une hauteur de cent quatre-vingts pieds; les lignes ondoyantes du pavé de marbre représentaient les quatre fleuves du paradis, qui, comme des ruisseaux, apportant la bénédiction et la fertilité à toutes les

contrées du monde, paraissaient rouler leurs eaux vers les quatre portes ouvertes". HURTER, Hist. du pape Innocent III et de ses contemporains, liv. VII.

- 140 (1) Nous devons pourtant indiquer les principales seigneuries féodales érigées dans l'empire grec. - Le marquis Boniface de Montferra reçut en partage l'île de Candie et tout ce qui appartenait à l'empire au delà du Bosphore. Plus tard, il échangea ses domaines contre le district de Salonique, qui lui fut accordé à titre de royaume; et en 1205 il vendit ses droits sur Candie aux Vénitiens, qui, deux ans après, prirent possession de cette île. Le principauté d'Achaïe et de Morée échut à Guillaume de Champlite qui la laisse en mourant à Geoffroy de Villehardouin, historien de la quatrième croisade. Athènes fut érigé en duché en faveur d'Othon de la Roche, dont la petite fille le transmet à la maison de Brienne. - De leur côté. les Vénitiens, pour rendre plus facile la conquête des îles qui leur étaient tombées en partage, offrirent à leurs concitoyens l'investiture de celles qu'ils pourraient conquérir. C'est ainsi que les familles les plus puissantes de Venise se répandirent dans l'Archipel. Les Sanuto s'emparèrent de Naxos et des îles voisines, et en furent investis sous le titre de ducs de Naxos. Les Carceri de Vérone s'approprièrent Négrepont (l'Eubée des anciens), et leur exemple fut suivi par plusieurs autres nobles. Voy. KOCH, 4e période.

(1) Voici, en suivant l'ordre chronologique, la liste de ces empereurs francs ou latins:

- 155 MAISON DE FLANDRE. 1. 1204-1206, Baudouin Ier,
2. 1206-1216, Henri, son frère,
MAISON DE COURTENAY. 3. 1216-1219, Pierre, comte d'Auxerre,
4. 1219-1228, Robert, son fils,
MAISON DE BRIENNE. 5. 1228-1237, Jean de Brienne, empereur viager,
160 MAISON DE COURTENAY. 6. 1237-1261, Baudouin II.

Geoffroy de Villehardouin

- Jusqu'au XIV^e siècle, existe à Troyes, la rue de la Grande Masquerie (boucherie). Au siècle suivant, en raison d'une auberge qui s'y tient, elle prend le nom de rue de la Pie. Le Conseil municipal du 23 août 1890, lui attribue le nom de Geoffroy de Villehardouin. Geoffroy seigneur de Villehardouin, célèbre chroniqueur, naît à 30 km de Troyes, vers 1150.

- Vassaux du comte de Champagne, les Villehardouin ont suffisamment d'influence pour qu'en 1185, Geoffroy devienne maréchal, fonction enviée. Il devient le conseiller de la comtesse Marie, fille de Louis VII et d'Aliénor d'Aquitaine, veuve d'Henri 1er le Libéral. La charge de maréchal impose à son titulaire qu'il accompagne son suzerain dans ses déplacements, à plus forte raison lorsqu'il s'agit d'une expédition lointaine en Terre sainte. Thibault III, jeune homme de 18 ans, est le puissant comte de Champagne au moment où le pape Innocent III, organise une 4^{ème} croisade, pour reprendre Jérusalem aux musulmans.

- 175 Villehardouin, dans La conquête de Constantinople, nous dit que le 28 novembre 1199, au tournoi d'Ecry-sur-Aisne, le prêtre Foulques de Neuilly, mandaté par le pape, appelle les chevaliers à se croiser. Thibault III, Villehardouin, l'évêque de Troyes Garnier de Traînel, prennent la croix. Le pape est partisan d'un transport maritime de l'armée jusqu'en Égypte d'où elle marchera vers la Palestine. Le rôle du maréchal de Champagne commence à se préciser. Ayant l'entière confiance de son suzerain, il est chargé de négocier à Venise le passage des croisés. Il y part en février 1201, et se montre bon ambassadeur. Les Vénitiens acceptent son marché, ils construiront des navires capables d'embarquer 4.500 chevaux, autant de chevaliers, 9.000 écuyers et 20.000 hommes d'armes. Les vivres seront assurés pour 9 mois. 50 galères vénitiennes escorteront le convoi.

- Le coût total de l'opération est fixé à 85.000 marcs d'argent dont 25.000 payables immédiatement à titre d'arrhes. De retour à Troyes, au début du mois de mai 1201, Villehardouin trouve le comte Thibault malade. Il meurt le 24 mai. Notre chroniqueur choisit son ami Boniface de Montferrat comme chef de la croisade.

- 190 En mai 1202, les croisés partent pour Venise. N'ayant pas suffisamment d'argent pour régler le solde du transport, ils acceptent d'aider les Vénitiens à prendre la ville de Zara, en novembre, après 5 jours de siège.

Fin juin 1203, la flotte, impressionnante armada de nefes, de galères, arrive en vue de Constantinople, la plus riche cité de la chrétienté.

- 195 40.000 hommes assiègent la ville qui tombe le 17 juillet. Mais l'empereur de Constantinople ne tient pas ses engagements et les croisés font un nouveau siège de la ville du 9 au 13 avril 1204. La vieille cité est saccagée. Massacres (n'épargnant ni les femmes ni les enfants), incendies, pillages font de Constantinople un enfer. Les statues sont fondues pour récupérer le bronze, les pièces d'orfèvrerie écrasées à coup de masse pour en récupérer les pierres précieuses, l'or et l'argent sont transformés en monnaie. Villehardouin avoue lui-même: "Le gain fait fut si grand que nul ne vous en saurait dire le compte, d'or et d'argent, de vaisselle et de pierres précieuses, de satin et de drap de soie et de robes de vair et de gris et d'hermine et de tous les biens précieux qui jamais furent trouvés sur terre".

- 205 On n'épargne ni les sanctuaires, ni les églises et les religieux font main basse sur les précieux reliquaires renfermant les fragments du bois de la vraie Croix ou le fer de la sainte Lance pour les expédier en Occident (une partie peut être admirée dans

le trésor de notre cathédrale).

Le 16 mai 1204, Baudoin de Flandre est couronné empereur, et les barons se taillent des fiefs en s'emparant des possessions byzantines de Grèce.

210 Boniface de Montferrat devient roi de Thessalie et confie le fief de Messinople, en Thrace occidentale, à son ami et protégé Geoffroy de Villehardouin qui a été nommé maréchal de Romanie et prince d'Achaïe, dès l'automne 1204.

C'est là qu'il compose sa Chronique de la conquête de Constantinople, la 1ère écrite en prose. Cet ouvrage important offre un mélange de naïveté et de grandeur qui
215 procède de l'émotion d'une âme forte à la vue des grands faits dont elle est le témoin.

Geoffroy se fixe à Kalamai où il édifie un château franc en 1208. Le 1er août il participe à la bataille de Philippopoli contre les troupes du roi bulgare Boril. Il harangue les croisés avant le combat alors que des flottements se font sentir dans
220 leurs rangs et évite la catastrophe.

Geoffroy de Villehardouin décède à Messinople en 1218.

Quoique éloigné Troyes, il ne l'oublia jamais. Il dota l'abbaye de Foicy et celle de Notre-Dame-aux-Nonnains, où ses sœurs et ses filles étaient religieuses.

Constantinopel en Constantijn, de Kruistochten

225 Capitulum XX. De Constantinopolitana urbe. [p. 750]
INDEX GENERALIS QUO NOMINA, QUAE AD RES, LOCOS ET HOMINES PERTINENT, COMPREHENDUNTUR
en Bibliothèque de l'École des chartres

Histoire de [person] Jean de Brienne, roy de Jérusalem et empereur de Constantinople [1727] en Maandelyksche berichten uit de andere waerelt; of de spreekende dooden.

230 BRIENNE (Jean de) Vassal des Comtes de Champagne

4. Fils d'Erard II & d'Agnes de Montbeliard,

4. Est fort negligé par son Pere,

7. Il se dérobe & se retire à Clairvaux,

10. Rencontre Simon de Broyes Seigneur de Château Villain,

235 11. qui l'enlève,

ibid. Il reçoit l'Ordere de Chevalerie & entre dans le monde

17. Son air, sa taille,

18. Il brille dans les Tournois,

20. Son arrivée à Rome,

240 42. Son retour à Paris, & ensuite à Rome,

46. Il va seul joindre l'Armée des Croisez,

62. & se distingue aux deux sieges & à la prise de Constantinople,

74. Digression, scavoir si Jean de Brienne étoit aux deux sieges de Constantinople,

75. jusq. 90. Il apprend la mort de Gautier de Brienne,

245 96. regrette sa perte, arrive en Italie, y trouve un changement total & repasse en France,

98. On députe l'Eveque d'Acre pour demander en mariage Jean de Brienne pour la Reine de Jerusalem,

106. Il se rend à la Cour,

250 110. accepte l'offre,

111. Le contract est signé,

ibid. Il va à Rome,

112. emprunte 40000. livres sur sa Comté de Brienne,

114. Le Roi Auguste lui donne pareille somme & 300. hommes d'armes,

255 ibid. Il arrive à Constantinople,

115. Prend la route pour aller à Acre, où il est reçu par le Patriarche,

116. & conduit à la Cathedrale pour accomplir son mariage avec la Reine,

117. Jean de Brienne, avec sa nouvelle Epouse va à Tyr, ils sont couronnez

117. 118. Dans quel état se trouver alors le Roïaume de Jerusalem,

260 118. & suiv. Corradin attaque Acres, mais inutilement,

130. 131. Jean de Brienne met le siege devant la forteresse de Jusse, d'où il emporte un grand butin,

133. Les Sarrasins lui demandent une trêve,

ibid. Pendant la paix il regle son état,

265 134. Il reçoit & suit les conseils de Gautier de Montbeliard,

135. Il perd sa femme,

147. demande Isabelle fille de Lieveon en mariage, & l'épouse à Acres,

153. Il sollicite du secours de la Chretienité contre Corradin,

156. Seigneurs & Princes qui arrivent à Acres,

270 156. Avec ce renfort il se met en marche pour aller assieger de Sultan à Damas,

167. Il abandonne cette entreprise,

170. tué de sa main deux Emirs,

172. La mesintelligence se met dans son Armée
 173. Il songe au siege de Damiette,
 275 183. y arrive,
 188. Les ordres qu'il donne pour faire réussir son entreprise,
 191. Il attaque la Tour du Nil,
 192. l'emporte,
 204. Les Allemans le quittent, il lui arrive un nouveau secours avec le Cardinal
 280 Pelage,
 206. Chagrin que lui causent les caprices de ce Prelat,
 212. Il veut forcer la levée que Meledin avoit fait construire,
 225. Le Sultan fuit, il court sur les Sarrasins,
 229. investit Damiette,
 285 231. Corradin vient au secours avec une puissante armée,
 232. Action generale du jour des Rameaux,
 237. Autres attaques des Sarasins,
 241. Actions très valeureuses du Roi,
 250. Prise de Damiette,
 290 261. Il se rend maître de Tunis,
 268. Le Legat lui fait donation de la Ville de Damiette,
 274. Il s'en retourne dans la Palestine,
 277. Corradin assiege le Fort des Pelerins,
 282. Honorius confirme les droits du Roi Jean sur la succession du Royaume d'Armenie,
 295 292. Il se rend au Camp devant Damiette,
 294. est forcé par le Legat d'aller contre Meledin,
 299. Sa Flotte est battuë & il se retire contre Damiette,
 303. terrible situation de son armée par l'inondation du Nil,
 307. Il est forcé de rendre Damiette & Tunis, de servir d'otage avec le Legat,
 300 313. Le Roy revient à Acre,
 317. Il demande à l'Empereur sa fille en mariage
 319. va pour cette affaire en Italie,
 330. vient en Sicile,
 331. puis à Rome,
 305 332. Il s'accorde avec l'Empereur sur le mariage de sa fille Isabelle,
 336. Il vient en France, voit mourir Philippe Auguste,
 339. Il va prendre le Bourdon de Pelerin à Tours,
 343. Il va en Galice, palle par la Castille,
 345. On lui accorde en mariage Berangere,
 310 346. Il revient à Paris,
 ibid. Il passe en Angleterre,
 347. En Allemagne, de-la en Italie,
 348. Il voit marier & couronner sa fille à Rome,
 351. L'Empereur toujours perfide lui demande un désistement du Royaume de Jerusalem,
 315 352. De Brienne dépouillé, se sauve avec Gautier son neveu,
 353. Le Pape le nomme son Vicaire ou Lieutenant General dans l'Etat Ecclesiastique,
 356. Heureux succès du voyage du Roy Jean dans les Cours de l'Europe,
 361. Armée de 60000. hommes se trouvent à Brindes,
 362. Le Pape le nomme Generalissime de ses troupes,
 320 386. Il le met à la tête d'une armée,
 ibid. Les Grands du Royaume d'Orient, envoient des Ambassadeurs au Pape pour demander
 le Roy Jean pour Empereur,
 412. Le Pape lui dépêche un Courrier, il arrive à Rome,
 413. On regle son Traité avec les Ambassadeurs,
 325 ibid. Il passe en France, revient à Rome, va à Venise, s'embarque pour
 Constantinople, y arrive heureusement, & est couronné avec Berangere sa femme, à
 Sainte Sophie,
 427. Il est deux ans dans Constantinople sans rien faire,
 422. [432?] Recommence la guerre, s'empare du Fort de Ceramide, & se rend maître de
 330 Riga,
 433. Crainte de l'Empereur, il s'adresse au Pape pour avoir du secours,
 437. Il fait reparer avec soin Constantinople,
 440. Asen & Vatace mettent une armée sur pied,
 441. Ils attaquent Constantinople,
 335 443. L'Empereur sort de la Ville, met en desordre l'armée ennemie,
 450. L'Infanterie de son mouvement va dans le Port & dissipe la Flotte,
 452. L'année suivante la Ville se trouve encore assiegée,
 456. Le siege est levé,
 457. De Brienne envoie Baudoin son gendre en Italie & en France,
 340 458. Il travaille à diviser Asen & Vatace,
 464. Il y réussit,

466. Il meurt,
 467. Ses vertus,
 475. Ses femmes,
 345 489. Ses enfans,

II – LE PILLAGE DE CONSTANTINOPE PAR LES CROISÉS DE 1204.

Si l'on n'écoutait que les lamentations de Nicéas sur la seconde prise de Constantinople, la ville impériale, théâtre d'abominations sans égales, aurait vu périr, en 1204, sous les coups de Barbares ignorants, aussi bien tous les chefs-
 350 d'œuvre de l'art antique qui s'y trouvaient rassemblés que les plus précieux et les plus vénérables des objets consacrés par les souvenirs du christianisme. Heureusement, sur tous ces faits, il faut se garder de prendre à la lettre tant le récit de Nicéas, déplorant la destruction de monuments qui existent encore
 355 aujourd'hui, que les assertions de Nicolas d'Otrante, se plaignant de la disparition des reliquaires de la Passion qui, en réalité, ne quittèrent le palais du Bucoléon que pour passer, trente ans plus tard, dans le trésor de la Sainte-Chapelle. Mais, tout en faisant la part des exagérations des vaincus, il est impossible de nier qu'à la suite du dernier assaut donné à Byzance par les Latins, et malgré l'accueil si
 360 humble qu'ils reçurent des Grecs, et surtout du clergé, des scènes horribles de meurtre et de pillage se succédèrent dans la malheureuse ville. Seulement, il faut distinguer deux périodes différentes dans l'histoire de ces faits regrettables: la première, courte et violente, dura du 14 au 16 avril 1204; c'est pendant ces trois jours qu'eurent lieu les profanations dont les Grecs se plaignirent si justement au pape dans un curieux mémoire qui nous a été conservé, et dont trois lettres
 365 d'Innocent III sont l'écho indigné. C'est à peine si la garde mise par les chefs de l'armée dans les palais impériaux put préserver les chapelles de ces palais de la rapacité des soldats; aucun sanctuaire ne paraît avoir été épargné, et Sainte-Sophie dut à ses trésors merveilleux et à l'immense renom dont ils jouissaient de se voir le théâtre d'excès plus odieux que partout ailleurs. Aux profanations des églises
 370 vinrent s'ajouter celles des tombes impériales, dont Nicéas ne craint pas d'accuser Thomas Morosini, patriarche latin élu, mais qui durent être stériles, Alexis III s'étant chargé, sept ans plus tôt, de les dépouiller de tous les bijoux qu'elles contenaient.

Dans les premiers moments, la rage des conquérants paraît avoir été extrême. «Quant li Latin, dit Ernoul, orent prise Constantinoble, il avoient l'escu Damedieu enbracé, et, tantost come il furent dedens, il le geterent jus, et embracerent l'escu au diable; il corurent sus a sainte Iglise premierement, et briserent les abbaies et les roberent.» Les châsses des saints, dont beaucoup étaient en cuivre émaillé, et par
 380 conséquent sans valeur pour les pillards, furent brisées. On arrachait les pierreries et les camées qui en faisaient l'ornement, et l'on en jetait au loin les reliques. Un nombre infini de ces reliures de métal si somptueuses qui recouvraient les livres de chœur eurent un sort pareil; les images des saints furent foulées aux pieds ou lancées à la mer. Au bout de quelques jours, les Latins paraissent avoir eu honte de ces scandales et même redouté la colère divine. Le conseil des chefs se réunit, et
 385 l'on prit des mesures sévères pour arrêter tous ces excès. Les évêques de l'armée fulminèrent l'excommunication contre tous ceux qui se rendraient coupables de nouveaux sacrilèges, et aussi contre ceux qui ne viendraient pas mettre, en des lieux désignés à cet effet, le butin déjà recueilli. Quelques jours plus tard, d'ailleurs, l'élection et le couronnement de Baudouin Ier (16 mai) vinrent substituer un pouvoir
 390 régulier à l'anarchie; les différents corps de l'armée furent cantonnés dans les divers quartiers de la ville, et un ordre au moins apparent vint succéder aux scènes de violence des premiers jours. Mais là commence, surtout en ce qui concerne les trésors des églises et des reliques, la seconde période du pillage, celle de la spoliation régulière et méthodique; cette période paraît avoir duré plusieurs mois, plusieurs années, je dirai même presque autant que l'empire latin d'Orient.
 395 Il n'est pas impossible d'entrer dans quelques détails sur la nature des objets sacrés plus particulièrement recherchés par les Latins; il semble que ces objets peuvent se diviser en deux classes: les reliques et les ornements ecclésiastiques; mais, pour les uns comme pour les autres, les croisés ne paraissent point avoir agi à
 400 l'aventure. Parmi les reliques, ce sont les fragments du bois de la Vraie Croix, depuis longtemps objet d'une vénération spéciale en France, qui semblent avoir excité le plus vivement leur convoitise. Constantinople avait sur ce point de quoi les satisfaire; sans parler des reliques insignes, des τῆματα Εὐλα, grand était le nombre de ces
 405 phylactères, de ces encolpia, destinés à être portés au cou, et dont l'usage, parmi les familles riches, était déjà général du temps de saint Jean Chrysostome; tous contenaient, avec d'autres reliques, une parcelle plus ou moins importante du bois de la Vraie Croix. Les palais des familles princières, les couvents, renfermaient d'autres croix plus grandes; les «couronnes de lumière» des églises en portaient

410 souvent de suspendues au-dessus des autels. Au retour des croisés, les sanctuaires de l'Europe en reçurent un grand nombre, presque toujours gratifiées, soit par ceux qui les rapportaient, soit par ceux qui les recevaient en dépôt, de quelque origine plus ambitieuse qu'authentique. Presque toutes étaient censées avoir appartenu à Constantin, à sainte Hélène ou tout au moins à Manuel Comnène.

415 Après la Vraie Croix, c'étaient les reliques de l'Enfance et de la Passion du Christ, celles de la Vierge, des Apôtres, de saint Jean le Précurseur, du protomartyr saint Étienne, de saint Laurent, de saint Georges et de saint Nicolas que les Latins recherchaient avec le plus d'avidité. Une idée dont ils paraissent aussi avoir été pénétrés et qui leur avait été sans doute suggérée dès avant leur départ, c'est

420 l'intérêt que pouvaient avoir certaines grandes églises de l'Europe à posséder des reliques considérables et authentiques des saints orientaux sous le vocable desquels elles avaient été dédiées; c'est ainsi que les cathédrales de Châlons-sur-Marne et de Langres, qui reçurent chacune, pendant le temps des croisades, trois envois successifs des restes de saint Étienne et de saint Mammès, leurs patrons respectifs,

425 furent redevables à la prise de Constantinople des plus considérables de ces envois. Quant aux objets destinés au service du culte et à l'ornementation des églises, il suffit de parcourir les listes des présents adressés à cette époque de Constantinople en Occident pour être étonné de la quantité considérable de vases sacrés en or et en argent, d'encensoirs, de croix processionnelles, de parements d'autels et de

430 vêtements ecclésiastiques, même de tapis et de tissus neufs d'or, d'argent et de soie, qui prirent le chemin de l'Italie, de la France et de l'Allemagne. Les dyptiques, les tables d'ivoire qui devaient servir à enrichir les couvertures des manuscrits de l'Occident, figurent aussi en grand nombre parmi les objets recueillis par les croisés. Enfin, ce ne dut pas être sans penser de loin à l'ornementation des

435 chasses encore barbares de leurs saints que les clercs de l'armée latine firent si ample provision de ces anneaux, de ces pierres antiques, dont ils remplirent, à leur retour, les trésors de leurs cathédrales, et que, sans le vouloir, ils ont ainsi sauvés d'une destruction presque certaine.

Que devint tout ce butin religieux? Une partie considérable dut en être détournée, ainsi que nous le verrons plus loin; mais le reste, à la suite des mesures prises, vers Pâques, par les chefs de l'armée, fut-il, avec les autres dépouilles de la ville, rapporté aux lieux désignés à cet effet—trois églises, suivant Villehardouin, un monastère, selon Clari—et mis en commun sous la garde de dix chevaliers et de dix Vénitiens? Il n'y a guère lieu d'en douter en ce qui concerne les ornements d'église

445 et les vases sacrés. Pour les reliques, il est certain qu'un grand nombre fut rapporté, mais il y a lieu de penser qu'elles furent dès l'origine séparées du reste du butin, car on voit qu'à l'exemple des croisés de 1097, ceux de 1204 confièrent au doyen des évêques, à Garnier de Trainel, évêque de Troyes, la charge qu'avait remplie à Jérusalem Arnould de Rohas, celle de procurator sanctarum reliquiarum, et que ce

450 fut dans la maison habitée par Garnier que tous ces objets sacrés trouvèrent un asile.

Un premier partage du butin fut fait entre le 22 avril et le 9 mai. Il est à croire que les Vénitiens se remboursèrent de leur double créance contre les croisés et contre les Comnènes, et qu'une fois les sommes prélevées, il fut fait, comme le dit

455 Sanudo, deux parts égales, l'une pour les Latins et l'autre pour Venise, parts dont un quart retourna, après le couronnement de Baudouin Ier, au trésor impérial: suivant Villehardouin, les trois huitièmes des croisés montèrent à la somme de 400.000 marcs (20.800.000 francs). Mais le maréchal de Champagne ne parle pas d'un second partage raconté en détail par Robert de Clari. Suivant Robert, ces deux premières

460 répartitions n'auraient porté que sur le gros argent, la monnaie et la vaisselle massive; quant aux bijoux, aux tissus d'or et de soie, ils auraient été, vers le mois d'août, furtivement enlevés par les chevaliers restés dans la ville pendant la campagne de Baudouin Ier contre Boniface de Monferrat, et divisés entre ces traîtres pour lesquels Clari ne trouve pas d'injures assez fortes. C'est donc entre les mains

465 de ces chevaliers félons, et probablement sur l'ordre et au profit du doge, qui commandait dans la ville en l'absence de l'empereur, que tombèrent tous les trésors enlevés aux églises, et rien ne nous indique de quelle manière Vénitiens et Francs se les partagèrent entre eux.

Quant aux reliques, il semble bien que les évêques latins, l'empereur et les

470 Vénitiens en aient eu chacun une part. — Garnier de Trainel, qui disposa pendant près d'une année des reliques mises en commun, en envoya de très précieuses à Troyes par Jean L'Anglois, son chapelain; c'est de lui que l'archevêque de Sens reçut le chef de saint Victor. Nivelon de Cherisy, évêque de Soissons, enrichit de reliques Soissons, la célèbre abbaye de Notre-Dame, et un grand nombre de sanctuaires des contrées

475 voisines. Conrad de Halberstadt ne paraît pas avoir été moins bien partagé que Nivelon, si l'on en juge par la valeur des objets rapportés par lui, dont la plupart existent encore aujourd'hui au trésor de la cathédrale d'Halberstadt. — Le premier empereur latin de Constantinople adressa de son côté en Europe quantité d'objets

précieux, et Baudouin Ier obéit en cela aux conseils d'une politique éclairée. Devenu le chef d'un État aussi mal affermi, il avait besoin d'autres sympathies et d'autres alliances que celles dont avait pu se contenter le comte de Flandre, et devait oublier le temps où, soutien de Philippe de Souabe et vassal turbulent du roi de France, il avait eu à se plaindre des deux personnages les plus influents de l'époque, Innocent III et Philippe Auguste; aussi est-ce précisément à eux les premiers qu'il notifie son avènement, joignant aux lettres qu'il leur adresse des présents considérables. Barozzi, maître du Temple en Lombardie, est chargé par lui de porter au pape un véritable trésor, dans lequel figure une statue d'or et une d'argent avec un rubis acheté 1000 marcs, et de nombreuses croix. Philippe Auguste reçoit, outre des reliques de son patron et une croix admirable, deux vêtements impériaux et un rubis d'une grosseur extraordinaire. Après la défaite d'Andrinople, le successeur de Baudouin Ier, Henri Ier, continua les envois commencés par son père, dans l'espoir que ces libéralités lui concilieraient les sympathies de l'Occident. Les princes laïques ou ecclésiastiques qui avaient pris la croix, mais qui ne s'étaient pas encore acquittés de leur vœu, furent naturellement l'objet des premières libéralités de l'empereur. C'est ainsi que le duc d'Autriche reçut un fragment de la vraie croix. La Belgique et le Nord de la France, d'où il avait lieu d'espérer les secours les plus efficaces, reçurent de nombreuses marques de sa munificence: Clairvaux, où se trouvaient les tombes de sa maison, Namur, où régnait son frère, Bruges, Courtrai, Liessies conservèrent longtemps ou conservent encore les richesses qu'il leur envoya. Après Henri Ier, il faut descendre jusqu'aux années lamentables de Baudouin II pour voir reparaître en Occident de nouvelles reliques byzantines; malheureusement, alors, il ne s'agit plus de dons gracieux, mais de vulgaires engagements. Après avoir vendu, pour soutenir son armée, jusqu'au plomb des toits de son palais, l'empereur se voit réduit à abandonner en nantissement aux Vénitiens les joyaux religieux de la couronne impériale. C'est en 1239 que saint Louis rachète le plus précieux de tous, la Couronné d'épines; puis, en 1241, la Grande Croix, la Lance et l'Éponge, jusqu'à ce que, en 1247, Baudouin II vienne solennellement confirmer le transfert, dans la Sainte-Chapelle de Paris, des grandes reliques impériales du Bucoléon. —Quant aux Vénitiens, familiers de longue date avec le martyrologe byzantin, ils n'éprouvaient pas, comme les Latins, de difficulté à déchiffrer les inscriptions des reliquaires, et leur choix dut être promptement et bien fait. On voit par les récits des pèlerins qui, dans les siècles postérieurs, s'embarquèrent à Venise pour se rendre en Palestine, que cette cité était devenue, depuis 1204, comme une ville sainte, tant était grand le nombre des objets sacrés qu'elle offrait à la vénération des fidèles. Ce que, d'ailleurs, même après l'incendie du trésor de Saint-Marc en 1231, la basilique ducale contient encore de reliques de premier ordre et de spécimens sans prix de l'orfèvrerie byzantine peut donner une idée de ce que ce sanctuaire reçut de Constantinople après la quatrième croisade.

Mais en dehors du butin mis en commun, qui fut l'objet d'un partage régulier, le récit du pillage a déjà montré qu'il y eut un immense butin détourné par les vainqueurs indisciplinés. Hugues de Saint-Paul fit bien pendre, l'écu au col, des chevaliers coupables de n'avoir pas rapporté leur butin particulier à la masse commune; mais en fait de reliques, on croyait faire une bonne œuvre en volant les Grecs. Martin de Pairis se laissait traiter par son biographe de *prædo sanctus*; il dut donc y avoir sur ce point une certaine tolérance, qui d'ailleurs devint légale le 22 avril 1205, terme assigné à l'obligation du rapport des objets trouvés. Or, quelques semaines plus tard (juin), abordaient de toutes parts, de Syrie aussi bien que des divers pays de l'Occident, une foule de gens qu'avait attirés la nouvelle inattendue de la prise de Constantinople, et qui venaient demander leur part des dépouilles de la ville impériale. Deux ans après (sept. 1207) est signalée l'arrivée des renforts amenés jusqu'à Bari par Nivelon de Cherisy; ce furent de nouvelles convoitises à satisfaire; enfin, pendant tout le règne de Henri, il paraît y avoir eu entre l'Occident et Constantinople un mouvement non interrompu de gens d'armes qui venaient chercher aventure en Roumanie et ne s'en retournaient jamais les mains vides. Nous voyons ainsi Dalmase de Sercey et Ponce de Bussière passer un hiver entier à combiner le vol du chef de saint Clément. Comment d'ailleurs expliquer autrement que par des soustractions frauduleuses le fait que de petits chevaliers portant à peine bannière, comme Henri d'Ulmen, aient pu obtenir des trésors tels (à parler seulement de leur valeur intrinsèque) que ceux dont ce seigneur des environs de Trèves a enrichi toute la Basse-Lorraine?

D'après M. le comte Riant, Des dépouilles religieuses enlevées à Constantinople au XIIIe siècle, dans les Mémoires de la Société des antiquaires de France, 4e série, t. VI (1875).

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The Sack of 1204, what happened?

By Mark Bonocore

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I've recently been reading a book by John J. Robinson called "Dungeon, Fire, and Sword - a history of the Crusades". Robinson is clearly no friend of the Roman Catholic Church, and I will even go so far as to say that he is anti-Catholic in his point of view, but he does give an interesting account of the Crusader's sack on Constantinople in 1204. I thought I'd share this with you, so that we might explore the history. This is why I'm using "anti-Catholic Robinson" as the source. While I am certainly not defending the atrocities committed, I think many will find it enlightening that the sack of Constantinople was not a "diabolical plan" sponsored by the papacy. It was a very sad story all around.

The Crusades began in the 1090's - that is, 40 years after the Orthodox desecrated the Latin Eucharist and holy books (because they were in Latin rather than Greek). The Byzantine patriarch attacked the Latin churches in Constantinople itself - Latin-speaking churches which existed since the time of Constantine; and he declared that their Eucharist was invalid because the Romans use unleaven (rather than leaven) bread - something that the Western Church (along with the Armenian Church) has always done since the time of the Apostles (Jesus Himself used unleaven bread at the Last Supper, since it was a Passover feast and there would not have been any leaven bread in Jerusalem at the time). But, the Eastern Patriarch Cerularius tried to force the Byzantine rite on the Romans living in the Eastern Empire. So, he took armed soldiers into the Latin churches in Constantinople, and had them open the Tabernacles and throw the consecrated Eucharist in the streets. This is discussed by both Kallistos Ware and by Meyendorff in their books. This is the origin of Rome (a church which continued to permit and encourage Byzantine worship in its own city) serving Cerularius with a bull of excommunication in 1054. Cerularius did this because the Franks who were vassals of the Roman Empire were gaining political power in the Balkans and so the Emperor and Patriarch wanted to brand them as heretics and thus reject their authority in the Balkans.

Around 1201, Count Tibald of Champagne approached Pope Innocent III with the idea of a new crusade to the Holy Land. Innocent agreed to the proposal, especially since Tibald was not a king or emperor, and wouldn't try to usurp authority and use the crusade for his own purposes, as the kings of the 3rd Crusade had done. In the following year, the Crusade leaders met to plan strategy. It was agreed that the point of attack would be Egypt, which Richard the Lionheart himself had called the "soft underbelly of Islam". The leaders therefore began negotiations with Venice - the only naval force in the world at the time who could transport a Christian army to that location.

The Grand Council of Venice agreed to provide transport for 4500 knights, 9000 squires and sergeants, 20000 foot soldiers, and 20000 horses. They would also provide enough food for 1 year, and supply 50 war galleys manned with Venetian troops to fight alongside the Crusaders in the Nile delta. In payment, the Venetians would receive 85000 silver marks, plus 50% of all loot collected from the Muslims.

The plan was for the Crusading armies to assemble at Venice by June of 1202. But, with the deal newly struck, Count Tibald died, and the Crusaders elected Boniface of Monferrat as their new leader. The choice of Boniface had to do with his being the uncle of Princess Maria of Jerusalem; thinking that this would assure good relations with the barons of the Holy Land.

But, as fate would have it, Boniface spent that winter in Germany with Philip of Swabia - the same prince from whom Pope Innocent had recently denied the imperial crown. Philip's wife, however, was the Byzantine princess Irene Angelina: the daughter of Byzantine emperor Isaac Angelus, who had recently been deposed and blinded and was languishing in a dungeon in Constantinople.

Irene was concerned about her father, and even more about her younger brother Alexius. He had not been imprisoned, but was living under house arrest with their uncle Alexius III, who had seized the throne for himself. Irene asked Boniface to find out what he could about her brother while in the East.

But, ... as fate would have it again, Irene's brother Alexius arrived at Philip's court before the end of the winter. He had escaped to Sicily with the help of some friends, and was then taken safely to his sister in Germany. The young heir to the Byzantine throne thereafter decided to join the Crusade, seeing Boniface of Monferrat as an ally who might help him regain his kingdom.

But, meanwhile, the Venetians were up to intrigue of their own. They by no means wanted a crusading army attacking Egypt, which would cut off their lucrative trading centers there. So, while still negotiating with the French crusaders, Venetian envoys were in Cairo making even more favorable concessions. In an agreement signed in April of 1202 - only 2 months before the launch of the Crusade - the Venetians promised

Sultan al-Adil that the crusaders would never reach Egypt.

By June, the Crusade was assembled, but not their money. For the next three months
 615 they camped on an island in the Venetian lagoon, hard pressed by their Venetian
 hosts, who refused to budge until they were paid the remaining 35000 marks owed them.
 Meanwhile, the crusade leaders negotiated with the elderly Doge of Venice, Enrico
 Dandolo, who was especially interested in the relationship of Boniface Monferrat and
 620 young Prince Alexius. Dandolo had always hated the Greeks - not only because they
 were Venice's commercial rivals, but because as a youth he had suffered a face wound
 in the streets of Constantinople that had almost totally blinded him. The usurper
 Alexius III had taken a hard line with Venetian traders, who depended upon the Greek
 trading stations to get furs from Russia and silks from China, so the Doge was very
 "sympathetic" to his young Byzantine guest.

625 In September, the Doge revealed the first part of his plan. The Venetians had lost
 the fortified city of Zara (on the Dalmatian coast) to the king of Hungary. Venice
 wanted it back. The crusaders objected bitterly to attacking fellow Christians, but
 had little choice if they wanted to continue eating. So, in November of 1202, they
 sacked Zara and retook it for the Venetians after much fierce fighting. (So, note
 630 that this first battle of the 4th Crusade was against Western Christians, not Eastern
 ones).

Upon hearing this in Rome, Innocent III excommunicated the Crusaders, but lifted the
 excommunication once he learned that they were pressed into it by the Venetians.
 The Crusade wintered in Zara, and during that time Doge Dandolo, Prince Alexius, and
 635 Boniface of Monferrat formed a plan. If the Crusade would go to Constantinople and
 help Alexius regain the throne, the young prince would assure the success of the
 Egyptian invasion. He would pay the Crusaders' debt to Venice, as well as fortify the
 Crusading army with 10000 Byzantine soldiers; and once the war was over, he would
 maintain 500 mounted men in the Holy Land to help the Christians hold Egypt. And,
 640 most important of all, he would guarantee that the Greek Church would recognize the
 primacy of Rome. It seemed like a very good deal... Especially to the Venetians, who
 had their own ideas.

The Crusade left Zara in April of 1203, arriving before the walls of Constantinople
 two months later. After a few skirmishes, the Venetians managed to break the chain
 645 that barred the harbor and surround the city with their navy.

Surprised by the Venetians' strategy, the usurper Alexius III fled the city; and the
 officers of the court quickly took the sightless Isaac from the dungeon, bathed and
 dressed him in imperial purple, and sent word to the crusaders that the rightful
 emperor had been restored to his throne. But, the crusaders' contract was with his
 650 son, Alexius; and it was soon negotiated that the youth would reign as co-emperor
 with his father; and so he was crowned Alexius IV in Hagia Sophia on August 1, and
 the gates of Constantinople were opened to the victorious crusaders.

But, now that it was time for Alexius VI to keep his promises, he found that this was
 impossible to do. Not only did the Greek patriarchs refuse to recognize the authority
 655 of Rome, but Alexius III had raped the imperial treasury of most of its money. Paying
 the crusaders' debt and financing their Egyptian expedition was now out of the
 question (or at least that's what the imperial court claimed). To raise some of the
 capital, Emperor Alexius sent parties of soldiers to seize gold and silver objects
 from the churches - something the Crusaders would later imitate.

660 This attempt to raise the money continued throughout the rest of the year, while the
 Westerners wandered through the streets of the capital drinking, whoring, and
 brawling. A band of "impatient" French soldiers set fire to a mosque used by local
 Muslims, and the fire spread, destroying an entire section of the city.

In January of 1204, 5 months after the crusaders were admitted to the city, the son-
 665 in-law of the usurper Alexius III, Alexius Marzuphlus - apparently trying to make a
 play for the crown himself - organized a riot against the unwanted Westerners. A few
 weeks later, an embassy of the Crusaders was attacked by the crowd as they left the
 imperial palace. Soon after, a mob of Byzantine citizens flooded into Hagia Sophia
 and declared that Alexius IV was deposed, nominating a nobleman named Nicholas
 670 Canabus in his place. But, Marzuphlus, the usurper's son-in-law, had no intention of
 letting someone else reap the rewards of the uprising he started. With a band of
 armed soldiers, he stormed the imperial palace, and both Canabus and Emperor Alexius
 IV were dragged off into prison - the young Alexius being immediately executed;
 strangled to death with a bowstring! ... As meanwhile, his blind father, Emperor

675 Isaac, was savagely beaten; dying a few days later.

With the deaths of their imperial candidates, the crusaders camped outside the city
 now knew they had no other choice but to storm the walls of Constantinople. The
 attack began on April 6 1204, and lasted just six days, with final victory coming
 about through a strangely-built Venetian siege machine and a mysterious fire, which
 680 many believe was started by Venetian agents inside the city.

With victory in sight, the Crusaders took council to choose their own Catholic

emperor to rule when the city was theirs. The Venetians had only one condition. If the new emperor was to be a Frankish crusader, the new Roman patriarch must be a Venetian. With this agreed, they divided up the spoils. The imperial palace, along with 25% of the city and Byzantine lands would go to the new emperor. The other 75% would be divided between the Crusaders and the Venetians equally. There was no mention of any expedition to Egypt.

All seemed in reasonably good order that night when the Venetian Doge and the crusading nobles gathered in the imperial palace. Then the Doge made his announcement - his final act of vengeance on the Greeks for the blinding facial wound he had received as a youth. As a reward for all their suffering and hardships, the army would have three days to plunder the city! This they did with wanton abandon - killing, desecrating, raping, burning, destroying.

After the 3-day debauchery, the army was brought to a reasonable state of control, although many resisted the order that their plunder should be delivered to three collection points throughout the city. A French count hanged one of his own knights for hoarding some loot; and Greek citizens were routinely tortured for hiding treasure.

The first payment made from the plunder was the money owed to the Venetians: the Crusader's debt, which Emperor Alexius had promised to pay. This rest was divided equally with the Venetians, a sum of 400000 marks, which one chronicler noted was seven times the annual royal revenue of the entire kingdom of England.

Next came the division of the land. With the whole empire to hand out, there was more than enough. Commander Boniface of Monferrat (the patron of the late Alexius) received broad territories, including the island of Crete, which the Venetians were more than happy to buy from him with part of their treasure.

Then, on May 16, 1204, in the restored cathedral of Hagia Sophia, the imperial crown of Constantinople was placed on the head of Count Baldwin of Flanders. This was the beginning of the Latin Empire of Constantinople. The Egyptian Crusade was a dim, distant memory, and the entire crusading army found itself excommunicated by Pope Innocent III ... an excommunication which he was eventually persuaded to revoke.

The **Varangian Guard** was only used in battle during critical moments, or where the battle was most fierce. Contemporary Byzantine chroniclers note with a mix of terror and fascination that the "Scandinavians were frightening both in appearance and in equipment, they attacked with reckless rage and neither cared about losing blood nor their wounds". The description probably refers to berserkers, since this state of trance is said to have given them superhuman strength and no sense of pain from their wounds. When the Byzantine Emperor died, the Varangians had the unique right of running to the imperial treasury and taking as much gold and as many gems as they could carry, a procedure known in Old Norse as *polutasvarf* ("palace pillaging"). This privilege enabled many Varangians to return home as wealthy men, which encouraged even more Scandinavians to enlist in the Guard in *Miklagarðr* (Swedish: *Miklagård* = 'The Great City', i.e. Constantinople)

Sack of Constantinople, 1204

Isaakios II Angelos (1185-1195) belonged in the family of Angeloi, which descended from Philadelphia of Minor Asia. Isaakios was crowned emperor in 1185 but he proved incompetent, lavish and corrupted. He imposed taxes in the popular classes, favored the aristocracy and was indifferent for the proper organization of his empire. He spent most of his time hunting. Nevertheless, his brave general Alexius Vranas defeated the Normands who devastated Macedonia, on 7th November 1185.

In 1187, during his administration the Third Crusade took place, against Arabs, headed by Saladin, who had conquered Jerusalem on 3rd October 1187. Saladin proved generous and did not harm the Christian populations. The Crusade was headed by Frederic Barbarossa of Germany, Philip II of France and Richard Lionheart of England. Richard invaded Cyprus in 1191 and later the crusaders occupied Palestine and massacred the whole population. In March, 1195 Isaac II Angelos conducted an expedition against the Bulgars, in Thrace. But he was arrested and blinded by his brother Alexius III Angelos, who became emperor of the Greek Empire, in April 1195. Isaac and his son Alexius were thrown in jail.

Pope Innocent III, (1198-1216) despite manifold problems in the West, was the first pope since Urban II to be both anxious and able to consider the Crusade a major papal concern. In 1198 he broached the subject of a new expedition through legates and encyclical letters. In 1199 a tax was levied on all clerical incomes - later to become a precedent for systematic papal income taxes - and Fulk of Neuilly, a popular orator, was commissioned to preach. At a tournament held by Thibaut III of Champagne, several prominent French nobles took the cross, and others joined later. Among them was Geoffrey of Villehardouin, who was to write one of the principal accounts of the Crusade. Contact was made with the aging and blind but ambitious Doge Enrico Dandolo

of Venice to provide transport. The republic of Venice had acquired considerable trading privileges within the Byzantine Empire, and the growing number of Venetian merchants had long incurred the hostility of the Greeks. The Crusade was supposed to be directed against Egypt. An agreement was made providing for payments to the Venetians for transportation of 30.000 men and 4500 horses and an equal division of conquests.

Alexius, son of Isaac, managed to escape during a campaign against the insurgent Emmanuel Camitzes, and sailed to Ancona. From there he rode to Germany, to his sister Irene who was wife of King Philip of Germany. Promising funds, supplies, and troops to conquer Egypt, the maintenance of 500 Western knights in the Holy Land, and submission of the Byzantine church to Rome, Alexius convinced Philip, Crusade leader Boniface of Montferrat, and their Venetian allies to divert the Fourth Crusade to Constantinople in order to reinstate Alexius and his father as co-emperors. The crusader army that arrived at Venice in the summer of 1202 was somewhat smaller than had been anticipated, since some of the crusaders were travelling directly from France. Even so, there were not sufficient funds to pay the Venetians. Accordingly, the crusaders accepted the suggestion that in lieu of payment they assist the Venetians in the capture of the Hungarian city of Zara. This was done despite the opposition of many crusaders both to the diversion of the enterprise and to the attack on a Christian city. Innocent was informed of the plan, but his veto was disregarded. Here is how Geoffrey de Villehardouin (1160-1213) describes the departure from Venice in his Memoirs or Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade and The Conquest of Constantinople:

Then were the ships and transports apportioned by the barons. Ah, God what fine war-horses were put therein. And when the ships were fulfilled with arms and provisions, and knights and sergeants, the shields were ranged round the bulwarks and castles of the ships, and the banners displayed, many and fair. And be it known to you that the vessels carried more than three hundred petraries and mangonels, and all such engines as are needed for the taking of cities, in great plenty. Never did finer fleet sail from any port. And this was in the octave of the Feast of St. Remigius (October) in the year of the Incarnation of Jesus Christ twelve hundred and two. Thus did they sail from the port of Venice, as you have been told. On the Eve of St. Martin (10th November) they came before Zara in Sclavonia, and beheld the city enclosed by high walls and high towers; and vainly would you have sought for a fairer city, or one of greater strength, or richer. And when the pilgrims saw it, they marvelled greatly, and said one to another, "How could such a city be taken by force, save by the help of God himself?" The first ships that came before the city cast anchor, and waited for the others; and in the morning the day was very fine and very clear, and all the galleys came up with the transports, and the other ships which were behind; and they took the port by force, and broke the chain that defended it and was very strong and well-wrought; and they landed in such sort that the port was between them and the town. Then might you have seen many a knight and many a sergeant swarming out of the ships, and taking from the transports many a good war-horse, and many a rich tent and many a pavilion. Thus did the host encamp. And Zara was besieged on St. Martin's Day (11th November 1202).

Zara surrendered to the mercy of the Doge, on condition only that all lives should be spared. The Venetians took the part of the city towards the port, where were the ships, and the Franks took the other part. A month later came envoys from Germany, sent by King Philip and the heir of Constantinople, Alexius who was brother of Philip's wife, Irene. According to the Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade: The knights and the Doge of Venice assembled in a palace where the Doge was lodged. And the envoys addressed them and said: "Lords, King Philip sends us to you, as does also the brother of the king's wife, the son of the emperor of Constantinople. "Lords," says the king, "I will send you the brother of my wife; and I commit him into the hands of God - may He keep him from death! - and into your hands. And because you have fared forth for God, and for right, and for justice, therefore you are bound, in so far as you are able, to restore to their own inheritance those who have been unrighteously despoiled. And my wife's brother will make with you the best terms ever offered to any people, and give you the most puissant help for the recovery of the land overseas. And first, if God grant that you restore him to his inheritance, he will place the whole empire of Romania (Eastern Empire) in obedience to Rome, from which it has long been separated. Further, he knows that you have spent of your substance, and that you are poor, and he will give you 200,000 marks of silver, and food for all those of the host, both small and great. And he, of his own person, will go with you into the land of Babylon, or, if you hold that that will be better, send thither 10,000 men, at his own charges. And this service he will perform for one year. And all the days of his life he will maintain, at his own charges, five hundred knights in the land overseas to guard that land. Lords, we have full power," said the envoys, "to conclude this agreement, if you are willing to conclude it on

your parts. And be it known to you, that so favourable an agreement has never before been offered to any one; and that he that would refuse it can have but small desire of glory and conquest." The barons and the Doge said they would talk this over; and a parliament was called for the morrow. When all were assembled, the matter was laid before them.

The knights had dispute about the outcome of the campaign. One party did not like to attack a Christian city and wanted to sail immediately to Syria, and the other party insisted to sail to Constantinople to gain all those who had promised the thoughtless young prince. Innocent was aware of a plan to divert the Crusade to Constantinople in order to give the throne to Alexius. Accordingly, Innocent ordered Boniface of Montferrat to publish immediately his original letter excommunicating the Venetians, which he had refused to do, and forbade any attack on Constantinople. But the papal letter arrived after the fleets had left Zara.

On 7th April 1203, the crusaders destroyed the city and sailed to Dyrachion, port of the Greek Empire. The city surrendered and swore submission to the heir of throne. The fleet departed and came to the island of Corfu. The inhabitants did not recognize Alexius as legal heir and kept the gates of the city closed. The crusaders pillaged the area around the city which was well fortified and burnt most of the villages and fields of the island. They departed from the port of Corfu on 24 May 1203 and reached the island Andros, in Aegean Sea. The knights again pillaged the island and destroyed most of the villages. Later the huge fleet entered the passage of Ellispontus or Dardanelles, and reached to a city called Abydos. The Latins stayed there a week, stole corn from the land, and sailed to the monastery of St Stephen, on 23rd June 1203. Geoffrey de Villehardouin describes the scene in his Chronicle.

There had those on board the ships and galleys and transports full sight of Constantinople; and they took port and anchored their vessels. Now you may know that those who had never before seen Constantinople looked upon it very earnestly, for they never thought there could be in all the world so rich a city; and they marked the high walls and strong towers that enclosed it round about, and the rich palaces, and mighty churches of which there were so many that no one would have believed it who had not seen it with his eyes - and the height and the length of that city which above all others was sovereign. And be it known to you, that no man there was of such hardihood but his flesh trembled: and it was no wonder, for never was so great an enterprise undertaken by any people since the creation of the world.

On 24 June 1203, the crusaders landed at Chalcedon. Chalcedon is a place in the Asiatic side of Bosphorus. There was a palace of the Emperor Alexius. The counts and barons landed and lodged themselves in the palace. Emperor Alexius saw this provocation and sent 500 men to face the Latins. But the fight lasted a while and the Greeks retreated leaving their horses and tents. Alexius III Angelos proved incompetent and less worthy than his predecessor. The corruption of his court was enormous and the moral of the army low. When the leader of the army is coward then the army is ineffective. His admiral Michael Strufnos was so wicked that he sold the gear of his fleet and increased so his personal fortune. The Greek fleet was in miserable condition. The situation of the empire couldn't be worst. The two emperors, Isaac and Alexius III Angelos, managed in some years to destroy the work of the Comnenus' dynasty. Two personalities who brightened the dark years of Angelos' dynasty were the brothers Michael and Nicetas Choniates. Nicetas' history is the main source of the events which took place during the 4th crusade.

July 2 1203, the Emperor Alexius sent an envoy, under Nicholas Roux with letters to the counts and to the barons. The envoy was received in a palace of Scutari (Chrysoupolis), where the crusaders were holding a council. Nicholas Roux, a Franc who lived for years in the Greek capital, read the letters: Lords, the Emperor Alexius would have you know that he is well aware that you are the best people uncrowned, and come from the best land on earth. And he marvels much why, and for what purpose, you have come into his land and kingdom. For you are Christians, and he is a Christian, and well he knows that you are on your way to deliver the Holy Land overseas and the Holy Cross, and the Sepulchre. If you are poor and in want, he will right willingly give you of his food and substance, provided you depart out of his land. Neither would he otherwise wish to do you any hurt, though he has full power therein, seeing that if you were twenty times as numerous as you are, you would not be able to get away without utter discomfiture if so be that he wished to harm you. The Latins answered that he should deliver the power to his nephew, Isaac's son who was the legal successor of the throne.

On 3rd July, the Doge of Venice and the Marquis of Montferrat entered into one galley, took with them Alexius, the son of the Emperor Isaac and sailed close to the walls of Constantinople to show the young prince to the Greeks. There was no sympathy for the prince and the Latins returned back and decided to attack Constantinople. First they attacked the port. Their leaders were: Baldwin of Flanders, his brother Henry, Matthew of Wallincourt, Baldwin of Beauvoir, Peter of Amiens, Count Louis of

Blois and Chartres, Matthew of Montmorency, Robert of Ronsoi, Otho of la Roche, Richard of Dampierre, and Marquis of Montferrat. They easily seized the port, because the Greeks under their ruler Alexius, again retreated; The united European forces (Germans, Italians, Belgians and French) who fought bravely, managed to capture the tower of Galatas; where they broke the chain that closed the Golden Horn (Chresus Keras), and came closer to the sea walls of Constantinople. Theodoros Lascaris, who later would become the emperor of the empire of Nicaea, tried without success to drive back the enemy.

So was the tower of Galata and the port of Constantinople taken. The French advanced to the land walls, while the Venetians reached by sea to the palace of Blachernae. The two allied armies stayed close one to another. The Greeks under Theodoros Lascaris ceased not to attack them, but without achieving a final blow to the besiegers. During a fight, Constantine Lascaris, brother of Theodoros was taken prisoner. A knight whose name was William of Gi was killed. On 17th July 1203 everything was ready for the assault. The Marquis Boniface of Montferrat guarded the camp towards the fields, with the division of the Burgundians and the division of the men of Champagne. Count Baldwin of Flanders and his brother Henry, Count Louis of Blois and Chartres and Count Hugh of St. Paul went to the assault. The Italians under the semi blind Doge attacked to the sea walls and after fierce fighting they captured twenty-five towers. They set fire, that spread so quickly destroying houses and churches of a large part of the Polis. Again the coward Emperor Alexius III came out of the Adrianople Gate with huge forces, but despite the urging of Theodoros Lascaris, he dared not to attack. That night the Emperor Alexius of Constantinople took of his treasure as much as he could carry, and abandoned his city, his people and his family. Emperor Isaac and his wife Margarita of Hungary were liberated, while Alexius' wife, Eufrosine was arrested. Isaakios sent envoys to the Latins to announce the news of his return to the throne. They demanded of the emperor to ratify the treaty made by his son; and on 1st August 1203 Alexius IV was crowned co-emperor. Here is how Geoffrey de Villehardouin describes the entry of the Franks in the city:

Now you must know that many of those in the host went to see Konstantinoupolis, and the rich palaces and great churches, of which there were many, and all the great wealth of the city-for never was there city that possessed so much. Of relics it does not behove me to speak, for at that day there were as many there as in all the rest of the world. Thus did the Greeks and French live in good fellowship in all things, both as regards trafficking and other matters. By common consent of Franks and Greeks it was settled that the new emperor should be crowned on the feast of our Lord St. Peter (1st August 1203). So was it settled, and so it was done. He was crowned full worthily and with honour according to the use for Greek emperors at that time. Afterwards he began to pay the moneys due to the host; and such moneys were divided among the host, and each repaid what had been advanced in Venice for his passage. Alexios IV confiscated the lands of Eufrosine, emptied the public treasury, imposed taxes and gathered 100000 marcs to give to the Latins. This was only one half of the promised sum. This attitude increased more the hatred of Greeks for Latins. A hatred that would last for centuries, during the middle ages. Among the Crusaders was dispute about the course of the campaign. Should they continue to the Holy Lands or should they stay to take all the money promised by young Alexios? The Venetians insisted to take all the sum that Alexius had promised, and so the young emperor left his capital, escorted by Frankish knights, for the provinces in a desperate attempt to find the promised money. While the Emperor Alexius was away, a conflict arose between the Greeks and the Latins. The Latins again set fire to the city, a fire which destroyed a large part of the capital near the church of St. Sophia. It lasted two days and two nights, nor could it be put out by the hand of man. And the front of the fire, as it went flaming, was well over half a league broad. What was the damage then done, what the possessions and riches swallowed up, could no man tell - nor what the number of men and women and children who perished - for many were burned. All the Latins, to whatever land they might belong, who were lodged in Constantinople, dared no longer to remain therein; but they took their wives and their children, and such of their possessions as they could save from the fire, and entered into boats and vessels, and passed over the port and came to the camp of the pilgrims. Nor were they few in number, for there were of them some fifteen thousand, small and great; and afterwards it proved to be of advantage to the pilgrims that these should have crossed over to them.

The Emperor Alexius remained for a long time in Thrace and returned to Constantinople in 11 November 1203. Nevertheless he did not manage to gather enough money to satisfy the greed of the Franks. The crusaders had an embassy sent to the emperor, to his palace of Blachernae, lead by Conon de Bethune and Geoffry of Villehardouin. They dismounted at the gate and entered the palace, and found the Emperor Alexius and the Emperor Isaac seated on two thrones, side by side. And near them was seated the empress, who was the wife of the father, and stepmother of the son, and sister to the

955 King of Hungary - a lady both fair and good. And there were with them a great company
 of people of note and rank, so that well did the court seem the court of a rich and
 mighty prince. By desire of the other envoys Conon of Bethune, who was very wise and
 eloquent of speech, acted as spokesman: "Sire, we have come to thee on the part of
 960 the barons of the host and of the Doge of Venice. They would put thee in mind of the
 great service they have done to thee - a service known to the people and manifest to
 all men. Thou hast sworn, thou and thy father, to fulfill the promised covenants, and
 they have your charters in hand. But you have not fulfilled those covenants well, as
 you should have done. Many times have they called upon you to do so, and now again we
 call upon you, in the presence of all your barons, to fulfill the covenants that are
 965 between you and them. Should you do so, it shall be well. If not, be it known to you
 that from this day forth they will not hold you as lord or friend, but will endeavour
 to obtain their due by all the means in their Power. And of this they now give you
 warning, seeing that they would not injure you, nor any one, without first defiance
 given; for never have they acted treacherously, nor in their land is it customary to
 970 do so. You have heard what we have said. It is for you to take counsel thereon
 according to your pleasure." Much were the Greeks amazed and greatly outraged by this
 open defiance; and they said that never had any one been so hardy as to dare defy the
 Emperor of Constantinople in his own hall. Very evil were the looks now cast on the
 envoys by the Emperor Alexius and by all the Greeks, who aforetime were wont to
 975 regard them very favourably. Great was the tumult there within, and the envoys turned
 about and came to the gate and mounted their horses. When they got outside the gate,
 there was not one of them but felt glad at heart; nor is that to be marvelled at, for
 they had escaped from very great peril, and it held to very little that they were not
 all killed or taken. So they returned to the camp, and told the barons how they had
 980 fared.
 So there was war between the Greeks and the Franks, on November 1203. The Greeks
 under the command of Alexius Ducas Murtzuphlus tried to burn the European fleet,
 using fireships, but without success. The Venetians were masters in the seamanship
 and seized the fireships, using hooks. Only one merchant ship from Pisa was burnt. In
 985 these difficult events the young emperor proved incompetent like his uncle. Three men
 had the courage to face the barbarians: Alexius Ducas Murtzuphlus, Constantine
 Lascaris and his brother Theodorus Lascaris. The Greek people were furious with the
 inefficiency of the young emperor and a revolution broke in 25th January 1204.
 Alexius IV was thrown in jail and on 5 February 1204, Alexius V Ducas Murtzuphlus was
 990 crowned emperor of the Eastern Empire. Alexius IV was strangled in his jail on 8
 February 1204 and Isaac died in prison a few days later. So ended the worst dynasty
 that ruled the Empire and disorganized the state to such extent that after 2 months
 this state was to meet its destiny and fall to the crusaders. A fall that would
 prepare the ground for the Turks to come and destroy definitely the Greek medieval
 995 state.
 The Franks rode to the north and attacked to a city of Euxenus Pontus, named Philea.
 They pillaged and destroyed the rich city and when they returned back, the emperor
 assaulted them. But again the crusaders defeated the Greek imperial army and not only
 the emperor Alexius V was almost taken captive, but the holy icon of the Virgin Mary
 1000 that was made by Apostle Lucas was stolen by the Latins. This icon was very important
 for the Orthodoxy and the Greeks grieved for the loss of it.
 Well had these prepared all their engines, and mounted their petrarries, and mangonels
 on the ships and on the transports, and got ready all such engines of war as are
 needful for the taking of a city, and raised ladders from the yards and masts of the
 1005 vessels, so high that they were a marvel to behold. And when the Greeks saw this,
 they began, on their side, to strengthen the defences of the city which was enclosed
 with high walls and high towers. Nor was any tower so high that they did not raise
 thereon two or three stages of wood to heighten it still more. Never was city so well
 fortified. Thus did the Greeks and the Franks bestir themselves on the one side and
 1010 the other during the greater part of Lent. Then those of the host spoke together, and
 took counsel what they should do. Much was advanced this way and that, but in the
 end, they devised that if God granted them entry into the city by force, all the
 booty taken was to be brought together, and fittingly distributed; and further, if
 the city fell into their power, six men should be taken from among the Franks, and
 1015 six from among the Venetians, and these twelve should swear, on holy relics, to elect
 as emperor the man who, as they deemed, would rule with most profit to the land. And
 whosoever was thus elected emperor, would have one quarter of whatever was captured,
 whether within the city or without, and moreover would possess the palace of Bucoleon
 and that of Blachernae; and the remaining three parts would be divided into two, and
 1020 one of the halves awarded to the Venetians and the other to those of the host. And
 there should be taken twelve of the wisest and most experienced men among the host of
 the pilgrims, and twelve among the Venetians, and those twenty-four would divide
 fiefs and honours, and appoint the service to be done therefor to the emperor. This

1025 covenant was made sure and sworn to on the one side and the other by the Franks and the Venetians; with provision that at the end of March, a year thence, any who so desired might depart hence and go their way, but that those who remained in the land would be held to the service of the emperor in such manner as might be ordained. Thus was the covenant devised and made sure; and such as should not observe it were excommunicated by the clergy.

1030 So the Latins decided to divide the Eastern Empire. The men who had sworn before the Holy Cross to go and liberate Jerusalem from muslimans, had preferred to act like common thieves and attack to a Christian city with only one purpose.

The sack.

1035 The Europeans attacked the sea walls on 8th April 1204. The ships drew near to the city, and a fierce battle began in more than a hundred places. The crusaders were repulsed in that assault, and those who had landed from the galleys were driven back. After the defeat, the Doge of Venice and the other barons were assembled in a church on the other side of the straits and discussed. The Venetians insisted that they should repeat the attacks to the same place, but this time the ships should be bound together in order to reach the high towers. The preparations lasted some days and the final assault was repeated on 13th April 1204. The Greeks defended the towers with success, but suddenly the wind changed and blew from the north. Two ships that were bound together, the Pilgrim and the Paradise, approached so near to a tower, that the ladder of the first vessel joined on to the tower. Immediately a Venetian, and two 1045 French knights, whose name was Andrew of Durboise and John Choisy, entered into the tower. This was the beginning of the end. The tower was taken and many other crusaders raised their ladders and conquered many other towers. In vain the emperor Alexius Murzuphlus tried to encourage his soldiers to counterattack. They fled and Alexius ran to the castle of Bucoleon. He took with him Eufrosine and her daughter 1050 Eudokia and left the Byzantine capital through the Golden Gate. The Latins set again fire to the city.

And the city began to take fire, and to burn very direfully; and it burned all that night and all the next day, till vesper-time. And this was the third fire there had been in Constantinople since the Franks arrived in the land; and more houses had been 1055 burned in the city than there are houses in any three of the greatest cities in the kingdom of France.

When Alexius V left the City, Constantine Lascaris one of the city's leading defenders, was proclaimed emperor in the Cathedral of St. Sophia. He tried with his brother Theodoros Lascaris to drive the Varagkoi (Vikings mercenaries) against the 1060 invaders, but again the attempt had no result and the two brothers fled the city. In Nicaea, Theodoros Lascaris would later create a new Byzantine state, the Empire of Nicaea. One of his successors Michael VIII Paleologus in 1261, would liberate the Greek capital.

1065 The richest city of the world was at the mercy of the Europeans. The barbarians did horrible things that are beyond imagination. They tortured and massacred a large part of the population, destroyed churches, palaces, monasteries and even sculptures made by Phidias and Praxiteles, stole thousands of priceless icons, relics and other things, raped young girls and boys. Not to mention the countless manuscripts of ancient Greek philology which were burnt by the ignorant and illiterate Franks. So 1070 much was the hatred of the Europeans for the Greek Empire! Nicetas Choniates or Acominatus describes in his chronicle the detestable actions of the barbarians. Nicetas experienced the looting of Constantinople and with the help of a Venetian merchant, he managed to escape with his family, to Nicaea, capital of a new Greek state, where he wrote the 21-volume "History of the Times," a record of the rise and 1075 fall of the 12th- and 13th-century Byzantine dynasties, beginning with the Greek emperor John Comnenus (1118-1143) and concluding with the intrusion of the first Latin Eastern emperor, Baldwin I of Flanders (1204-1205). Geoffrey de Villehardouin gives his point of view:

1080 The Marquis Boniface of Montferrat rode all along the shore to the palace of Bucoleon, and when he arrived there it surrendered, on condition that the lives of all therein should be spared. At Bucoleon were found the larger number of the great ladies who had fled to the castle, for there were found the sister [Agnes, sister of Philip Augustus, married successively to Alexius II., to Andronicus, and to Theodore Branas] of the King of France, who had been empress, and the sister [Margaret, sister 1085 of Emeric, King of Hungary, married to the Emperor Isaac, and afterwards to the Marquis of Montferrat] of the King of Hungary, who had also been empress, and other ladies very many. Of the treasure that was found in that palace I cannot well speak, for there was so much that it was beyond end or counting. At the same time that this palace was surrendered to the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, did the palace of 1090 Blachernae surrender to Henry, the brother of Count Baldwin of Flanders, on condition

that no hurt should be done to the bodies of those who were therein. There too was found much treasure, not less than in the palace of Bucoleon. Each garrisoned with his own people the castle that had been surrendered to him, and set a guard over the treasure. And the other people, spread abroad throughout the city, also gained much
 1095 booty. The booty gained was so great that none could tell you the end of it: gold and silver, and vessels and precious stones, and samite, and cloth of silk, and robes vair and grey, and ermine, and every choicest thing found upon the earth. And well does Geoffry of Villehardouin the Marshal of Champagne, bear witness, that never,
 1100 since the world was created, had so much booty been won in any city. Every one took quarters where he pleased and of lodgings there was no stint. So the host of the pilgrims and of the Venetians found quarters, and greatly did they rejoice and give thanks because of the victory God had vouchsafed to them - for those who before had been poor were now in wealth and luxury.

For four days the great City was subjected by the rank and file to pillage and
 1105 massacre. When order had been restored, the crusaders and the Venetians proceeded to implement their agreement; Baldwin of Flanders was crowned emperor in the church of St. Sophia and the Venetian Thomas Morosini was chosen patriarch. But the lands parcelled out among the leaders did not include all the former Byzantine possessions. The imperial government continued in Nicaea, and an offshoot Empire of Trebizond, at
 1110 the eastern end of the Black Sea, lasted until 1461. There was also established a Byzantine Despotate of Epirus, and the Bulgarians under Skylogiannis or Ioannitzes remained hostile. The rift between the Eastern and Western churches widened, and Greek popular resistance to any schemes of reunion with the empire intensified. The Byzantine Empire, for centuries a bulwark against invasion from the East, was damaged
 1115 beyond repair. The Greeks never forgave the Europeans for the destruction of their state. A destruction that would bring the final end of the Greek Empire with the invasion of the Turks. An invasion that had as result the slavery of the Greeks for 5 centuries and the irrevocable loss of ancient Greek lands. Marquis Boniface of Montferrat married the empress who had been the wife of the
 1120 Emperor Isaac, and was sister to the King of Hungary. He asked from Baldwin the city of Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia, which was granted to him. Alexius Murzuphlus who had taken with him the empress, wife of the Emperor Alexius III, and his daughter Eudokia, reached Messinopolis, a city of Thrace. There, the former emperor received him and told him that he should be as welcome as if he were
 1125 his own son, and that he would give him his daughter to wife, and make of him his son. But when he found the chance he blinded him. Later Alexius V Murzuphlus was arrested by the Latins who murdered him by casting him from the top of a column in Constantinople. This was the end for the man who tried without success to fight the Frankish invaders. Alexius III Angelos was also arrested by the crusaders. On 1205,
 1130 Baldwin and later Boniface were killed by the king of Bulgars, Ioannitzes. The Empire of Nicaea which faced three enemies: the Latins, the Bulgarians, and the Seljuk sultanate, proved worthy of the Byzantine traditions of fighting on many fronts at once and of skillful diplomacy. Theodore Lascaris and his son-in-law John III Vatatzes built up at Nicaea a microcosm of the Byzantine Empire and church in exile.
 1135 The Latins were thus never able to gain a permanent foothold in Anatolia.

CONSTANTINE XI PALAEOLOGUS (1449-1453)

FALL OF CONSTANTINOPLE "Ealo h Polis"

Constantine XI Palaeologos (1404-1453), also called Dragases, last Byzantine emperor, was born in 1404 in Mistra, was the son of Emperor Manuel II. He was trained as a
 1140 soldier, and in 1430 liberated the peninsula of Morea in Greece, which had been under the Frankish principality of Achaia, a state established by the Crusaders. In 1442 Turks under Murad, sieged Constantinople which was defended by emperor John VIII Palaeologos, while Constantine fought Turks in island of Limnos. There he lost his wife Katherine. Constantine XI was actually married twice and Katherine was his
 1145 second wife. In 1444 Constantine with his brother Thomas Palaeologos and a small army liberated Roumeli and Thessalia. The Greek populations loved and admired their leader. They called him "Drakos". Those were the last victories of Byzantium. His friend was George Plithon or Gemistos a philosopher who created school of
 1150 Philosophy in Athens. He was teaching Greek Philosophy in Mystras. He advised Constantine to take the property from church and rich men and to give it to the poor farmers. When John VIII travelled in Florence, he escorted him together with other Byzantine intellectuals. There Europeans argued with the Greeks about religion and Plithon told them:
 1155 Why are you arguing to unify the two churches? In the future there will be only one religion, and this is the union of Christianity and the ideas of ancient Greeks. In 1446, the Turkish ruler Murad II reconquered and devastated these lands. The Turks

had begun their invasions of the Balkans nearly a century before, and now began to close in on Constantinople.

1160 Constantine was crowned emperor on Jan. 6, 1449, succeeding his brother, John VIII. The last Christian Greek Emperor entered, two months later, on March 12, the isolated Imperial capital. A little less than three years later, on Dec. 12, 1452, the union of the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches was proclaimed in Constantinople in the presence of the papal legate and the Patriarch Gregory. Constantine had been a
1165 strong advocate of this union, but the people were generally opposed to it, and riots ensued. The popular insistence on Byzantine religious autonomy furthered the estrangement between eastern and western Roman Christendom and weakened Byzantine resistance to the Turks. Catholics never sent army or navy as they were committed to their agreement. They preferred the most glorious Christian city to be destroyed and
1170 pillaged from the Muslims.

In 1452 the sultan demolished the old church of Archaggelos Michael and constructed at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus strait, a huge complex of strong fortifications, Rumeli Hisar, whose task was to shut completely, by its artillery, the route of western and Byzantine vessels to and from the Black Sea (Euxeinos Pontus). Indeed, on 26 November 1452, according to the Venetian doctor Nicolao
1175 Barbaro, a Venetian vessel under the command of Antonio Ritzo attempted to pass without paying the required tolls. It was sank by the new fortress's guns, its crew of thirty men was taken prisoners in Adrianople (Eridne). The officers and sailors were brought in front of Mehmed, who ordered their immediate impalement.

1180 The Turkish sultan, Mehmed II, advanced on Constantinople in the beginning of 1453. Troops came from every region of the Empire, including thousands of irregulars, from many nationalities, who were attracted by the prospect of looting. The regular troops were well equipped and well trained. The elite corps of the Janissaries composed of abducted Christian children, forcibly converted to Islam, and subsequently trained as
1185 professional soldiers, constituted the spear-head of the Ottoman army. The besieging army included a number of artillery pieces, which were made with the help of a Hungarian named Ourvanos. The hugest canons faced the Military Gate of St Romanus, and were expected to cause heavy damage to the 1000 year old walls in that area. The army, accompanied by crowds of fanatic Dervishes, started moving slowly towards
1190 Constantinople. A few towns, still in Greek hands, near the capital were soon occupied by the Sultan's army. Of those towns Selyvria resisted longer. His army included 200000 soldiers (29.000 of them were Europeans).

Constantinople was defended only by 10.000 soldiers (3.000 of them were Europeans mostly Italians). Among the Europeans, who had come to help, was the brave Giovanni
1195 Giustiniani. He was from Genoa where he had recruited 400 men and another 300 on the island of Chios. Others were the cardinal Isidoros, who was of Greek origin, the latin bishop of Chios, Leonardos, the Venetian captains Kokkos, Trevizas, Aloisio, Contarini and a lot more people. Also, the help provided by the German engineer Johannes Grant was of great importance. Grant managed to destroy all the tunnels that
1200 the Sultan had attempted to build in order to enter the city. So the greatest Christian city was defended only by some Greeks and some Italians. No other European leader accepted the emperor's appeal for help.

The defenders lacked in training and armament but were possessed by fighting spirit. Indeed, most of them were killed fighting. The civilian population supported the
1205 emperor overwhelmingly. The people, men and women, participated in the repairs of the walls and in the deepening of the moat, volunteers manned observation posts, food supplies were collected, gold and silver objects, held in the churches, were melted to make coins in order to pay the foreign soldiers. With the exception of about 700 Italian residents of the city, who fled on board seven ships, on the night of
1210 February 26, no one else imitated them. The rest of the population, Greeks and foreigners, fought until the end. On April 2, 1453 the city's harbor, the Golden Horn, was shut by a huge chain, and ten galleys were put behind to protect it.

During the first week of April, the Ottoman troops began taking their assigned positions in front of the city walls. The Sultan had his tent installed north of the
1215 Gate of St Romanus, near the river Lycus. He ordered the big canon to be installed in the same area. To protect the troops, a protective trench was opened in front of the Ottoman units, the soil from it was accumulated on the city side and on top of it was erected a palisade. On the 12th arrived from Gallipoli the Ottoman fleet. Composed of approximately 200 ships of various sizes and displacements, it sealed the byzantine capital from the sea. Mehmed's admiral was the Bulgarian renegade Suleiman Baltoghlu. On his side the emperor distributed his troops as best as he could. It was
1220 impossible, with the available garrison, to cover the entire walled circumference of the capital, about fourteen miles long. However, it was clear to all that the main attack would be delivered by the enemy along the land-walls, about four miles long.

1225 With the exception of the Blachernae section of the walls, at the north-eastern end of the land side, the city was protected, on the land side, by a triple wall, with a

deep moat in front of it. On the sea side, including the Golden Horn port area, the city was protected by a single wall.

1230 Given the availability of troops and the critical sections of the walls, Giustiniani, with most of his men, as well as Constantine Palaeologus and his best troops, took position in the St Romanus's Gate sector, where heavy damage was expected to be inflicted by the canon and the main Ottoman assault to be launched. The Venetian Bailo (the Head of the Venetian Community at Constantinople) Girolamo Minotto and his countrymen were charged with the defence of the region of Blachernae, where the

1235 Imperial Palace was located. Minotto and his men faced the European troops of Karadja Pasha. Across the Golden Horn, to the left of Pera, ready to intervene, stood the troops of Zaganos Pasha. Along the southern section of the land-walls the defenders faced the Anatolian troops under the command of Ishak Pasha. The Grand Duke Luke

1240 Notaras and Alexios Disipatos with a reserve unit took position near the walls, at the Petra neighborhood, in the north-eastern section of the city. Another reserve unit of 700 men under the command of Theofilos Palaeologus, Demetrius Cantakouzenos and Nicephorus Palaeologus was stationed near the church of the Holy Apostles, at the center of the city. Most units were positioned on and behind the land-walls. The sea-walls were thinly manned. To protect the entrance to the port, the Venetian commander

1245 of the small fleet of the defenders, Alviso Diedo, ordered ten ships to take position behind the chain.

According to Islamic tradition the Sultan, before the beginning of hostilities, demanded the surrender of the city, promising to spare the lives of its inhabitants and respect their property. In a proud and dignified reply Constantine XI rejected

1250 Mehmed's demand.

Almost immediately the Ottoman guns began firing. The continuous bombardment soon brought down a section of the walls near the Gate of Charisius, north of the Emperor's position. When night fell, everyone, who was available, rushed to repair the damage. Meanwhile Ottoman troops were trying to fill the fosse, particularly in

1255 areas in front of the weak sections of the walls which were now constantly bombarded. Other units began attempts to mine weak sections of the wall. On the port area a first attempt by the Ottoman fleet to test the defenders' reaction failed.

Until the end of the siege the Ottoman guns did not stop pounding the walls. Heavy damage was inflicted. The defenders did their best to limit it. They hanged bales of

1260 wool, sheets of leather. Nothing could help. The section of the walls in the Lycus valley, near the Emperor's position, was heavily damaged. The fosse in front of it was almost filled by the besiegers. Behind it, the defenders erected a stockade. Night after night men and women came from the city to repair the damaged sections. The first assault was launched during the night of April 18. Thousands of men

1265 attacked the stockade and attempted to burn it down. Emperor and his Greek comrades fought valiantly. Well armed, protected by armor, fighting in a restricted area, they succeeded after four hours of bloody struggle to repulse the enemy.

On Friday, 20 April, in the morning, appeared in the sea of Marmara, near Constantinople, five large vessels loaded with provisions for the city. Four were

1270 Genoese and one, a big transport, was Greek. The Greek captain's name was Flantanellas. Baltoghlu dispatched immediately his fleet to attack and capture the ships. The operation seemed easy and soon the ships were surrounded by the smaller Ottoman vessels. Everyone in the city, who was not busy with the defence, rushed to the sea-walls to watch the spectacle. The Sultan on horseback, his officers and a

1275 multitude of soldiers, rushed to the shore to watch the battle. Excited and unable to restrain himself, screaming orders at Baltoghlu, the young Sultan rode into the shallow water. Fighting, the big ships continued pushing the smaller ones, and helped by the wind they were now close to the south-eastern corner of the city. Then the wind dropped and the current began pushing them towards the coast on which stood the

1280 Sultan and his troops. Fighting continued, with the Christian sailors hurling on the enemy crews stones, javelins and all sorts of projectiles, including Greek Fire. Eventually the four vessels came so close to each other that they became bound together, forming a floating castle. Around sunset the wind rose and the big ships, pushing their way through the mass, and the wrecks, of the enemy vessels, hailed by

1285 thousands of people who were standing on the walls, entered the Golden Horn. Next morning Baltoghlu was dismissed by the Sultan, who was so furious that he ordered the beheading of his admiral. The unlucky admiral was replaced by a favorite of Mehmed, Hamza Bey.

This event convinced the Sultan and his commanders that the city had to be more tightly besieged and that the naval arm of the besieged had to be neutralized. Mehmed's ingenious plan, formulated before the events of April 20, consisted in bringing part of his fleet into the Golden Horn. Indeed, thousands of laborers had been building, for some time, a road overland from the Bosphorus, alongside the walls of Pera, to a place called Valley of the Springs, on the shore of the Golden Horn,

1295 above Pera. On April 22 to the horror of the besieged a long procession of ships,

- sitting on wooden platforms were pulled by teams of oxen and men, over the road, into the port area. About seventy boats entered the Golden Horn. The leaders of the defence held immediately an emergency meeting. Various plans were discussed and it was finally decided to attempt to burn the enemy boats, which were in the Golden Horn. After a succession of postponements the attempt was carried out during the night of April 28. Betrayed by Italians from Pera, it failed miserably. Hit by Ottoman guns the Christian ships suffered heavy damage. About forty sailors captured by the enemy were tortured to death.
- Despite this failure the situation in the Golden Horn became, more or less, stable. Superior naval training, and better naval construction, eventually prevented Hamza's ships from inflicting serious damage on the allied units. However, the Sultan's idea was a military success. Indeed, in 1204 the Crusaders had assaulted the city from the sea-walls and the Greeks had not forgotten it. They feared a repetition of that assault.
- On the land side the bombardment continued, more walls collapsed, and when night fell everyone rushed to close the gap, reinforce the stockades, build here and there. Moreover, food was wanting and the authorities did their best to distribute it equally. Worse, help was not coming. Everyone was watching and waiting for the sails of the Western ships to appear coming out of the Dardanelles. In early May a fast boat "Byzantine dromon" was sent out, to seek the allied fleet in the Aegean and tell its commanders to hurry.
- During the night of May 7 a new assault was launched against the damaged section, where Giustiniani stood. It failed again and then in the night of May 12 another came and failed. It was launched at the junction of the Blachernae wall and of the old Theodosian one. During that time mining and counter-mining continued. Sometimes fighting went on underground. Sometimes the tunnels collapsed and suffocated the miners. The German engineer Grant with barrels filled with water all around the walls, managed to discover the underground tunnels.
- On May 23 the dromon that had been sent out to locate the Christian fleet returned to the city. Its crew brought bad news. Nothing was in sight. The defenders were alone, no help was coming. The men of the crew, obeying their duty, decided to return to the doomed city. Realizing that everything was lost Constantine's chief advisors begged him to leave the city. He could still get out and seek help. His father Manuel II had done the same in 1399, at the time of the blockade of the city by Sultan Bayazid. The Emperor refused to discuss the issue. He had already decided to stay in his capital, fight for it and perish.
- Meanwhile, rumors were circulating in the Ottoman camp about the Venetians finally mobilizing their fleet, or about the Hungarians preparing to cross the Danube. The siege was going on without end in sight. The Sultan's Vizier Halil Chandarli, who was also informer of the emperor, had strong reservations about the siege from the beginning. He was worried about western intervention and he looked upon the whole operation with anxiety. During a meeting of the Sultan's advisors, held on May 25, the Vizir told Mehmed to raise the siege. Pursuing it might bring unknown consequences to Ottoman interests. The Sultan, also depressed because of the prolongation of the operation, finally decided to launch a grand scale final assault on the city. He was supported by younger commanders like Zaganos Pasha, a Christian converted to Islam. Halil was overruled and all present decided to continue the siege.
- While the artillery continued pounding the walls without interruption, preparations for the big assault, which was to take place on Tuesday 29 May, were accelerated. Material was thrown into the fosse which faced the collapsed ramparts, scaling-ladders were distributed. The Magistrates of Pera were warned not to give any assistance to the besieged. The Sultan swore to distribute fairly the treasures found in the city. According to tradition the troops were free to loot and sack the city for three days. He assured his troops that success was imminent, the defenders were exhausted, some sections of the walls had collapsed. It would be a general assault, throughout the line of the land-walls, as well as in the port area. Then the troops were ordered to rest and recover their strength.
- In the city everyone realized that the great moment had come. During Monday, May 28, some last repairs were done on the walls and the stockades, in the collapsed sections, were reinforced. In the city, while the bells of the churches rang mournfully, citizens and soldiers joined a long procession behind the holy relics brought out of the churches. Singing hymns in Greek, Italian or Catalan, Orthodox and Catholic, men, women, children, soldiers, civilians, clergy, monks and nuns, knowing that they were going to die shortly, made peace with themselves, with God and with eternity.
- When the procession ended the Emperor met with his commanders and the notables of the city. In a philosophical speech he told his subjects that the end of their time had come. In essence he told them that Man had to be ready to face death when he had to

1365 fight for his faith, for his country, for his family or for his sovereign. All four reasons were now present. Furthermore, his subjects, who were the descendants of Greeks, had to emulate their great ancestors. They had to fight and sacrifice themselves without fear. They had lived in a great city and they were now going to die defending it. As for himself, he was going to die fighting for his faith, for his city and for his people. He also thanked the Italian soldiers, who had not abandoned the great city in its final moments. He still believed that the garrison could repulse the enemy. They all had to be brave, proud warriors and do their duty. He thanked all present for their contribution to the defence of the city and asked them to forgive him, if he had ever treated them without kindness. Constantine asked

1370 Guistiniani to take his beloved Anna Notara to his ship, so that she would not fall in the hands of the enemy. Everyone knew the fate of those who would be alive when Turks entered in the city.

1375 Meanwhile the great church of Saint Sophia was crowded. Thousands of people were moving towards the church. Inside, Orthodox and Catholic priests were holding mass (THE LAST CHRISTIAN SERVICE AFTER 1000 YEARS). People were singing hymns, others were openly crying, others were asking each other for forgiveness. Those who were not serving on the ramparts also went to the church, among them was seen, for a brief moment, the Emperor. People confessed and took communion. Then those who were going to fight rode or walked back to the ramparts. They prayed and chanted for the last time the "Akathistos Hymn" in front of the holy icon of "Odigitria", an icon of

1385 Virgin Mary, made by Apostle Loukas. The next day most of them would be dead. From the great church the Emperor rode to the Palace at Blachernae. There he asked his household to forgive him. He bade the emotionally shattered men and women farewell, left his Palace and rode away, into the night, for a last inspection of the

1390 defence positions. Then he took his battle position. The assault began after midnight, into the 29th of May 1453. Wave after wave the attackers charged. Battle cries, accompanied by the sound of drums, trumpets and fifes, filled the air. The bells of the city churches began ringing frantically. Orders, screams and the sound of trumpets shattered the night. First came the

1395 irregulars, an unreliable, multinational crowd of Christians and Muslims, who were attracted by the opportunity of enriching themselves by looting the glorious city, the great capital of the East Roman Empire. They attacked throughout the line of fortifications and they were massacred by the tough professionals, who were fighting under the orders of Giustiniani. The battle lasted two hours and the irregulars withdrew in disorder, leaving behind an unknown number of dead and wounded.

1400 Next came the Anatolian troops of Ishak Pasha. They tried to storm the stockades. They fought tenaciously, even desperately trying to break through the compact ranks of the defenders. The narrow area in which fighting went on helped the defenders. They could hack left and right with their maces and swords and shoot missiles onto the

1405 mass of attackers without having to aim. A group of attackers crashed through a gap and for a moment it seemed that they could enter the city. They were assaulted by the Emperor and his men and were soon slain. This second attack also failed. But now came the Janissaries (what an irony that they were born Greek Orthodox), disciplined, professional, ruthless warriors, superbly trained, ready to die for their master, the Sultan. They assaulted the now exhausted defenders, they were pushing their way over bodies of dead and dying Muslim and Christian soldiers. With tremendous effort the Greek and Italian fighters were hitting back and continued repulsing the enemy. Then a group of enemy soldiers unexpectedly entered the city from a small sally-port called Kerkopoorta, on the wall of Blachernae, where this wall

1410 joined the triple wall. Fighting broke near the small gate with the defenders trying to eliminate the intruders.

1415 It was almost day now, the first light, before sunrise, when a shot fired from a calverin hit Giustiniani. The shot pierced his breastplate and he fell on the ground. Shaken by his wound and physically exhausted, his fighting spirit collapsed. Despite the pleas of the Emperor, who was fighting nearby, not to leave his post, the Genoese commander ordered his men to take him out of the battle-field. A Gate in the inner wall was opened for the group of Genoese soldiers, who were carrying their wounded commander, to come into the city. The soldiers who were fighting near the area saw the Gate open, their comrades carrying their leader crossing into the city, and they

1425 thought that the defence line had been broken. They all rushed through the Gate leaving the Emperor and the Greek fighters alone between the two walls. This sudden movement did not escape the attention of the Ottoman commanders. Frantic orders were issued to the troops to concentrate their attack on the weakened position. Thousands rushed to the area. The stockade was broken. The Greeks were now squeezed by crowds of Janissaries between the stockade and the wall. More Janissaries came in and many

1430 reached the inner wall. Meanwhile more were pouring in through the Kerkopoorta, where the defenders had not been able to eliminate the first intruders. Soon the first enemy flags were seen on

- 1435 the walls. The Emperor and his commanders were trying frantically to rally their troops and push back the enemy. It was too late. Waves of Janissaries, followed by other regular units of the Ottoman army, were crashing through the open Gates, mixed with fleeing and slaughtered Christian soldiers. Then the Emperor, realizing that everything was lost, removed his Imperial insignia, and followed by his cousin
- 1440 Theophilus Palaeologus, the lord Branas, the Castilian Don Francisco of Toledo, Katakouzinos, Mathaios Sgouromalis and John Dalmatus, all seven holding their swords, charged into the sea of the enemy soldiers, hitting left and right in a final act of defiance. They were never seen again.
- Now, thousands of Ottoman soldiers were pouring into the city. One after the other the city Gates were opened. The Ottoman flags began appearing on the walls, on the
- 1445 towers, on the Palace at Blachernae. Civilians in panic were rushing to the churches. Others locked themselves in their homes, some continued fighting in the streets, crowds of Greeks and foreigners were rushing towards the port area. The allied ships were still there and began collecting refugees. The Cretan soldiers and sailors, manning three towers near the entrance of the Golden Horn, were still fighting and
- 1450 had no intention of surrendering. At the end, the Ottoman commanders had to agree to a truce and let them sail away, carrying their arms.
- Bands of Ottoman soldiers began now looting. Doors were broken, private homes were looted, their tenants were massacred. Shops in the city markets were looted. Monasteries and Convents were broken in. Their tenants were killed, nuns were raped,
- 1455 many, to avoid dishonor, killed themselves. Killing, raping, looting, burning, enslaving, went on and on according to tradition. The troops had to satisfy themselves. The great doors of Saint Sophia were forced open, and crowds of angry soldiers came in and fell upon the unfortunate worshippers. Pillaging and killing in the holy place went on for hours. Similar was the fate of worshippers in most
- 1460 churches in the city. Everything that could be taken from the splendid buildings was taken by the new masters of the Imperial capital. Icons were destroyed, precious manuscripts were lost forever. Thousands of civilians were enslaved, soldiers fought over young boys and young women. Death and enslavement did not distinguish among social classes. Nobles and peasants were treated with equal ruthlessness.
- 1465 According to Historian Frantzis the invaders broke the heads of those women who resisted, on the floor of the churches and they raped them dead. The famous icon of Apostle Loukas was totally destroyed. The sultan asked for the young sons of Duke Loukas Notaras. Their father refused and Mehmed was ready to take their heads. Notaras asked him to kill him after his sons so that he was sure that they were dead
- 1470 and not disgraced from the pervert sultan. And this is what happened.
- In some distant neighborhoods, especially near the sea walls in the sea of Marmora, such as Psamathia, but also in the Golden Horn at Phanar and Petrion, where local fishermen opened the Gates, while the enemy soldiers were pouring into the city from the land Gates, local magistrates negotiated successfully their surrender to Hamza
- 1475 Bey's officers. Their act saved the lives of their fellow citizens. Furthermore their churches were not desecrated. Meanwhile, the crews of the Ottoman fleet abandoned their ships to rush into the city. They were worried that the land army was going to take everything. The collapse of discipline gave the Christian ships time to sail out of the Golden Horn. Venetian, Genoese and Greek ships, loaded with refugees, some of them having reached the ships swimming from the city, sailed away to freedom. On one of the Genoese vessels was Giustiniani. He was taken from the boat at Chios where he died, from his wound, a few days later.
- By the evening of the first day of looting there was left nothing else to steal. The
- 1485 Sultan, with his top commanders and his guard of Janissaries, came into the city in the afternoon of the first day of occupation. Constantinople was finally his and he intended to make it the capital of his mighty Empire. He toured the ruined city. He visited Saint Sophia which he ordered to be turned into a mosque. He also ordered an end to the killing. What he saw was desolation, destruction, death in the streets, ruins, desecrated churches. It was too much. It is said that, as he rode through the
- 1490 streets of the former capital of the Christian Greek Empire, the city of Constantine, moved to tears he murmured: "What a city we have given over to plunder and destruction".
- The sultan show in front of many houses the symbol of half moon. He asked why was this symbol everywhere, and they told him that this symbol was dated from the time of
- 1495 340 b.c. when Philipos Macedonian did not manage to take Byzantium. Ancient Byzantines has since that victory, preserved this symbol. Sultan liked it and added to it a star. So was formed the Turkish flag which terrorized for many centuries the Christian states.
- So a civilization of 1100 years old was lost in some days. The barbarians didn't
- 1500 respect anything holy icons, books, paintings, mosaics. They demolished and vandalized churches, ancient monuments, palaces dated from 4th century. Nevertheless the ideas did not vanished. Turks didn't manage to vanish the Hellenic spirit. Many

1505

Greeks like Byssarion, Dimitrios Kavakis, Georgios Xaritonimos, Ieronimos of Sparta fled to Europe where they spread the ideas of Socrates, Platon, Aristotelis, Aeschylus, Archimidis, Homer, Euripides, Solon.

Turks must be grateful to the "civilized" Europeans for helping them taking and still keeping this City.

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