CHAPTER 2

The Fourth Crusade and its Aftermath

Background for the Fourth Crusade

During the last decades of the twelfth century tensions had increased between East and West. They resulted from increased contacts as greater numbers of Westerners appeared in the East, including crusaders, Western mercenaries, and Venetian and other Italian merchants. These tensions led to various incidents that in turn led to more serious major events: the 1171 mass arrest of Venetians throughout the empire followed by over a decade of war between Venice and Byzantium; the 1182 massacre of Westerners (particularly Italians) residing in Constantinople by the local population preceding Andronicus’ takeover; the 1185 massacre-sack of Thessaloniki by the Normans; and the near assault on Constantinople by Frederick Barbarossa’s Third Crusade in 1189. Increased contacts engendered feelings of hostility over differences in customs and among Greeks produced jealousy of the Westerners who were favored by the last Comnenus emperors and of the Italians who had acquired dominance over Byzantine commerce and naval defense. Thus friction was common between foreign and local merchants as well as between Greek and Latin priests over differences in ritual. Rome, moreover, applied steady pressure on the East to accept Church Union under an autocratic pope. It seemed probable that it was only a matter of time before the West attacked schismatic and (probably more important) wealthy Constantinople.

After Isaac II was overthrown and blinded in 1195, Frederick’s successor Henry VI threatened to intervene to avenge Isaac, with whom Frederick had been bound by treaty. It was necessary to buy Henry off; to do so Alexius III had to levy a special “German” tax, which still failed to raise the exorbitant amount Henry was demanding. Henry began preparing to attack Constantinople; the pope sought to dissuade him since he preferred a campaign to recover Jerusalem that would be indefinitely delayed should the crusaders attack Constantinople instead. Henry then died in 1197, and the empire was spared from his threatened attack. Innocent III, who became pope in 1198, however, immediately upon his succession began pressing for a full-scale
crusade to the East. His objective too was Jerusalem. But he also wanted the Byzantine Empire to submit to the papacy and recognize papal supremacy on his terms and thereby unite the Churches, after which the Eastern and Western Christians could mount a joint crusade against Muslim-held Jerusalem.

The Venetian doge Dandolo, over eighty and blind, became one of the prime movers for the crusade, but one who never lost sight of Venice’s material interests. He hated the Byzantines and felt that Venetian trade was in danger as long as the empire survived. He feared that at any time some emperor might repeat the 1171 arrests and property seizures. Furthermore, in an attempt to escape from Venice’s stranglehold on its economy, trade, and naval defense, the empire had been granting privileges to other Italian cities—Genoa and Pisa, Venice’s rivals. A conquest of Constantinople by a Venetian-led crusade could give Venice a monopoly over Eastern trade. Thus the Germans, Normans, and Venetians, the manpower being mobilized for the new crusade, were all hostile to Byzantium.

Venice rapidly acquired a leading role in the crusade through its role in transport. After the failures of recent crusades that had taken the overland route across Anatolia, a territory divided between the empire and various Muslim states, it made sense to travel to the Holy Land by sea. Venice, however, expected the other crusaders to pay their passage. Not surprisingly, the crusaders did not have the cash to pay Venice’s high prices; so, unknown to the pope, Venice sought services in lieu of the debt. The first service demanded was the recovery of Zadar from Hungary for Venice. The Hungarians had retaken this Dalmatian city from Venice in 1181. That the King of Hungary was a Catholic who had already agreed to go as a crusader to the Holy Land himself was immaterial. So, the crusaders, aboard Venetian ships, sailed up to the walls of Zadar. Its citizens, also Catholic (though some accounts try to give the impression that Zadar was a hotbed of heresy—a heresy whose nature is not specified) hung their walls with crosses. In November 1202 the crusaders took Zadar, turned the city over to Venice, and spent winter 1202–03 there.

Meanwhile, in 1201 the son of the blinded Isaac II Angelus, named Alexius (and referred to as the Young Alexius to distinguish him from his uncle who then ruled the empire) had escaped from Constantinople. He headed west, trying to mobilize support to restore his father and himself to the throne. He talked to the German emperor, who was non-committal, and to the pope, who was opposed because he did not want any diversion to delay the campaign for Jerusalem. In fact, Innocent forbade any action by the crusaders against Constantinople. But the Doge of Venice jumped at the chance; he agreed to restore Isaac and Young Alexius to the throne in exchange for a huge cash pay-off to be delivered upon their restoration. Furthermore, to placate the pope the doge insisted that Young Alexius agree to reunite the Churches and then to add Byzantine forces to the crusading armies when they moved on to the Holy Land. The crusaders, easily persuaded by the huge pay-off, sailed to Constantinople, arriving there in July 1203. Having bungled the city’s defenses,
Alexius III panicked and fled on 17 July 1203, taking most of the state treasury and crown jewels with him. A coup in the city hauled Isaac out of prison and put him back on the throne.

The Conquest of Constantinople by the Crusaders

The Young Alexius (now Alexius IV) and his blind, and it seems also senile, father Isaac mounted the throne as co-emperors. The crusaders remained camped outside the walls waiting for their puppet to deliver the goods. Soon it became clear that Alexius IV’s looted treasury did not contain the amount promised. The crusaders refused to reduce their price. Moreover, the population of Constantinople was still strongly anti-Latin and had no desire to unite the Churches. Having reached an impasse, the crusaders issued an ultimatum that Alexius deliver on his promises immediately or else they would re-take the city. The populace got wind of the situation and, already angry at Alexius IV for bringing the crusaders thither, in January 1204 engineered a counter-revolution. They murdered Alexius IV, and the anti-Latin party came to power installing its leader Alexius V Murtzuphlos as the new emperor. Various incidents followed between Greeks and Latins, including the murder of some Latins in the city, until finally matters came to a head and the crusaders took the city on 13 April 1204. They massacred a large portion of its population and thoroughly looted the city, whose treasures, accumulated over nearly a thousand years, were seized and many of which were taken back west.

The conquest followed an agreement among the crusaders as to how they were to partition the empire. Having taken Constantinople, the crusaders then set about carrying out its terms. However, most of the empire was still in the hands of the Byzantines. Thus a man awarded a given territory usually had to capture it. In some instances, when this proved impossible, various adjustments of the treaty had to be made.

The crusader agreement divided both the empire and the city of Constantinople into eighths. The new Latin emperor was to obtain a fourth of the city and a fourth of the empire, including eastern Thrace, vital for the defense of the capital. Venice acquired a fourth of Constantinople and three-eighths of the empire, including most of Epirus. Venice immediately adjusted its acquisitions, trading most of its inland territories for a series of islands and ports. Thus acquiring dominance over ports throughout the empire, Venice came to control the waterway between Venice and Constantinople. It also gained a trade monopoly in these ports. The other Italian cities were excluded from trade with the empire, now called by scholars the Latin Empire of Constantinople. The final three-eighths was divided into fiefs assigned to the leading knights. Needless to say, many of these fiefs existed only on paper, because most of this territory remained—and was to remain—in the hands of Greeks or was to be picked off by Kalojan of Bulgaria.

The negotiators consisted of two parties, the Venetians and the knights. They agreed that whichever party did not obtain the throne should have the patriarchate. Since the knights obtained the throne for one of their number,
Baldwin of Flanders, the Venetians received control of the Church. They appointed Thomas Morosini as Patriarch of Constantinople. To try to placate the pope, Thomas immediately declared the Union of the Churches. This policy was to be enforced in Constantinople and wherever else the crusaders were able to acquire control. Needless to say, the Greeks throughout the East did not recognize this union, and though some in conquered cities grudgingly accepted it, many others did not.

Boniface of Montferrat, the most powerful knight, had hoped to become emperor. To advance his claims he had, after the conquest, married Margaret, the daughter of Bela III of Hungary and the widow of Isaac II. Opposed by Venice and a minority of the knights, he lost the throne to Baldwin who then assigned Boniface a large fief in Anatolia. However, Boniface wanted a fief in Europe and demanded Thessaloniki, which he claimed as a family right: His brother Renier, having served Emperor Manuel Comnenus, had married the emperor’s daughter; as a result Manuel had granted Renier the title caesar and a large estate in the territory of Thessaloniki. At first Baldwin agreed, but soon he reconsidered and took Thessaloniki before Boniface could arrive there. Furious, Boniface took Demotika (Didymotichus), one of Baldwin’s cities, and besieged Adrianople. Peace was soon mediated and Baldwin exchanged Thessaloniki for Demotika. Now, as King of Thessaloniki Boniface set about creating his own state in the region of Thessaloniki, which he extended northward into Macedonia and southward into Thessaly.

Many knights received fiefs in Anatolia. Some set out to try to obtain them; others, annoyed and pessimistic about their chances of acquiring them, simply remained in Constantinople and griped. The Latins practiced subinfeudation; this meant that many knights did not obtain their fiefs from, and therefore owe their service to, the emperor directly, but instead received fiefs from, and owed service to, intermediate lords like Boniface. As a result, the Latin Empire was to be weak militarily. For if the intermediate lord did not answer a call from the emperor, then the lord’s knights did not either. Baldwin immediately suffered from this system. For Boniface and his men, no longer in the capital, were not available either to defend it or to contribute to Baldwin’s campaigns to expand his or his knights’ holdings in Thrace or Anatolia. Baldwin was obliged to campaign in Anatolia to win the lands assigned to his knights, but without the help of Boniface and his men Baldwin’s chances of success were slight. And Boniface, angry at being passed over for emperor, was not to be the most faithful vassal and moreover had no interest in Anatolia. His ambition was to acquire Thessaly and the regions south of it and attach these lands to his own kingdom as fiefs for his own servitors. So instead of helping Baldwin acquire Bithynia across the straits from Constantinople in Anatolia, vitally important for the security of Latin rule in Constantinople, Boniface mobilized his men and marched south into Thessaly leaving his wife to govern Thessaloniki.

Meanwhile, after the fall of Constantinople in April 1204, the former emperor Alexius III eventually made his way to eastern Thessaly where his wife Evrosina’s family had large estates. Presumably he hoped to establish a
base of resistance in this region. At Larissa he came into contact with Leo
Sgouros, who, having taken Thebes and most of Attica and Boeotia, was
pressing north into Thessaly. The two formed an alliance, probably early in
1205, and Sgouros married Alexius’ daughter Eudocia, the former wife of
Stefan of Serbia.

**Boniface’s Conquests and his Vassals**

In the fall of 1204 Boniface and his knights advanced through Thessaly
without meeting any opposition to speak of. And since the cities did not resist,
one suffered sacks or massacres as Constantinople had. Sgouros, realizing
he was no match for the crusading army, fell back before it, eventually
establishing a short-lived defense at the Isthmus of Corinth. In the course of
his southward march Boniface captured Alexius III, who had been with
Sgouros’ army. In October and November 1204 Boniface overran and con-
quered Boeotia, Euboea, and Attica. He took Thebes (probably Greece’s
largest city at the time) and Athens, which until then, under the command of
its archbishop Michael Choniates, had been under constant pressure and siege
from Sgouros. Athens was surrendered by Michael. Boniface turned its
churches over to the Latin clergy, who established a Latin archbishopric
there. Michael soon left his city for an island exile. Boniface installed a
garrison in Athens and then launched his offensive against the Isthmus of
Corinth, which was defended by Sgouros, who drove back Boniface’s first
attack. Boniface’s second attack, however, broke through, and soon—prob-
ably by January 1205—he had taken most of the northeastern corner of the
Peloponnesus, except for the cities of Argos, Nauplia, and Corinth, all of
which he besieged. The siege of Corinth, defended by Sgouros, was to last
five years. When it finally fell neither Boniface nor Sgouros was alive any
longer. Boniface, as we shall see, was to be killed in 1207, and in 1208
Sgouros, losing all hope, was to make a suicidal leap on horseback at full
gallop from the heights of Acrocorinth.

As he marched through Thessaly, Boniface expanded his own kingdom
and assigned most of the lands he captured in central Greece as fiefs to his
followers. Thus he succeeded in hacking out an independent, self-supporting
kingdom that needed no help from Baldwin; moreover, being involved in his
own affairs, he had little time for or interest in giving Baldwin the assistance
he needed. With his Greek ties Boniface made serious efforts to attract the
support of the Greek population. As he marched through Thessaly he won
acceptance from various Greeks of good family.

Most scholars believe that Boniface assigned Boeotia (including
Thebes), Attica (including Athens), the region of Opuntian Lokris to the north
of Boeotia, and the Megarid to one of his leading knights, Othon de la Roche
of Burgundy. Othon took the title Lord of Athens and paid homage to
Boniface for his extensive fief. By the end of the century Othon’s descendants
had acquired the title of duke. This Burgundian duchy was to survive for over
a century until conquered by the Catalans in 1311. Though usually called the
Duchy of Athens, the state’s capital was Thebes throughout both the Burgun-
dian and Catalan periods. This feudal state, having a large Jewish com-
mercial colony, was a rich center of industry (particularly textiles) and of com-
merce. Othon soon was to grant privileges to the Genoese, who thus obtained
a foothold in Greece, most of which was then falling under Venetian domi-
nance, if not monopoly. In addition, the plain of Boeotia was a fertile grain-
growing region. Othon expelled the Greek bishops and supported the newly
established Latin archbishops in Athens and Thebes. The major churches and
monasteries, together with their estates, were turned over to the Catholics.
The famous monastery church of Daphne was granted to the Cistercians. Most
of the major fiefs that Othon assigned within his principality were granted to
his own relatives. Thus he had more authority over his state than the Villehar-
douins—whom we shall soon meet—in the Morea (Peloponneseus), whose
prince had to govern in association with the leading barons.

Euboea was assigned by Boniface to three noblemen of Verona to hold in
fief. Of the three Ravanо dalle Carceri was the most prominent. Thus all
Greece east of the Pindus range and north of the Gulf of Corinth recognized
Boniface’s overlordship.

The Greek State of Epirus

While the Latins were moving from success to success and taking control of
eastern Greece, the Greeks were to succeed in maintaining themselves in
western Greece, where they established a strong state. Usually referred to as
Epirus, which made up the bulk of the state, its territory for most of its
existence also included Acarnania and Aetolia to the south of Epirus. Thus it
comprised most of western Greece. This state was established by a certain
Michael Comnenus Ducas. He seems to have been a son of Sebastocrator
John, who was an uncle of Isaac II Angelus. John, as noted, had played a
major role at court. Michael had risen to fairly high positions in the military
administration under Isaac but then had fallen on hard times under Alexius
and, having tried unsuccessfully to lead an uprising against Alexius, had fled
to the Sultan of Iconium. In 1204 he seems to have been in Constantinople
and amenable to co-operating with the Latin conquerors. Thus when Boniface
left the capital to assert control over Thessaloniki, Michael had joined his
suite. He then, according to the historian Villehardouin, joined Boniface in
his march through Thessaly. In the course of this campaign Michael deserted
and went to Arta in Epirus, where the Byzantine governor, not wanting to
submit to the crusaders, was preparing Arta’s defense. Michael then, accord-
ing to this account, married the governor’s daughter. Almost immediately the
governor died, and Michael succeeded to his territory. Soon his authority was
recognized in western Greece from Durazzo (though not including the city
itself, which had been taken by Venice in July 1205) down to Naupaktos
(Lepanto) on the Gulf of Corinth. Thus he succeeded in creating a Greek state
in this region before any crusaders had tried to take Epirus.

A second account, from the end of the thirteenth century (the Life of
Saint Theodora Petraliphina of Arta), states that Alexius III sent Michael to govern the Peloponnnesus. At that time the provinces north of the Gulf of Corinth, Aetolia and the Theme of Nikopolis (including Epirus), had been assigned to a governor named Senacherim. He and Michael had married first cousins, girls from the Melissenos family. After the fall of Constantinople in 1204 some locals revolted against Senacherim, who appealed to Michael. Michael responded, but before he could reach Arta the rebels had killed Senacherim. Michael arrived, put down the rebellion, punished the murderers, and, being by then a widower, married Senacherim’s widow. As a result he inherited Senacherim’s domains, which, with the fall of the Greek empire, seem to have become the private holding of Senacherim. Thus Michael obtained the government of Epirus. Soon he ransomed off—from a Genoese to whom he had been turned over—Alexius III, who had been taken captive by Boniface in his Thessalian campaign. Alexius supposedly then confirmed Michael in his rule over western Greece. Much of this account—that Michael was imperially appointed to govern the Peloponnnesus, came to Epirus to aid a second imperially appointed governor, and was confirmed in his rule of Epirus by Alexius III—may well be fiction invented to provide Michael and his family with a legitimate claim to rule this region. Thus probably the first and earlier account by Villehardouin is the more reliable one, though it seems likely that Michael did in fact pay the ransom for Alexius.

Having acquired control of western Greece, Michael left the existing local Byzantine administration in office and the local Greeks in possession of their lands. Then he built up the armed forces of the region. He thus established a principality of considerable size and strength in which life continued much as it had previously under the empire. In fact life probably improved, for the region’s taxes, no longer siphoned off to Constantinople, remained to be used at home. The rugged mountains of the region helped Michael to prepare the defense of his lands against crusader attack. He maintained good relations with the Albanian and Vlach chieftains in the area, and their men provided able troops for his army.

Shortly after Michael achieved control of Epirus, the Greeks of Sparta and Arcadia were attacked by the crusader forces of Villehardouin and William of Champlitle, whom we shall meet next. It is usually stated by scholars that these Greeks then sought aid from Michael, who in 1205 led an army under his own command into the Peloponnnesus, suffered a defeat, and returned to Epirus, leaving the crusaders to overcome the remnants of Greek resistance in the Peloponnnesus and take the whole peninsula. Recently Loenertz has raised doubts about this commonly held view. Loenertz believes that Michael would not have gone to the Peloponnnesus then, since in 1205 he still had not established himself securely in control of Epirus. Furthermore, had he at that time left Epirus with his army, it would have been an open invitation for Boniface to attack Epirus. Boniface, whom Michael had just deserted, presumably would have borne a strong grudge against Michael and have been waiting for such a chance to attack him. Michael of Epirus may have intervened in the Peloponnnesus later, at some time between the fall of
1207 and May 1209. Loenertz thus wonders whether the account of the 1205 intervention, which was written later, either pushed up the date of that intervention or confused a different Michael who was a Greek leader in 1205 with Michael of Epirus. In any case Loenertz concludes that the Michael who led the opposition to Villehardouin in 1205 was a local Peloponnesian; Michael of Epirus, he argues, did not intervene then at all, though he may have launched a brief and unsuccessful attack (to be discussed below) against the Peloponnesus several years later.

Loenertz also believes that the Theodore who was to lead the defense of Acrocorinth after Sgouros' suicide was not, as is usually held, Michael of Epirus' brother Theodore, but a second individual of that name. For, he argues, evidence exists to show that Michael's brother Theodore remained in Anatolia until 1205, when Michael of Epirus summoned him. It would make no sense for Theodore to leave Anatolia to answer this call only to shut himself up for several years in a doomed fortress which had no connection with Michael's holdings.

Thus if Loenertz is correct, Michael spent the first years of his reign in Epirus actively consolidating control over his own principality. His major concern had to be Venice, which had been assigned all Epirus in the 1204 partition treaty. The existence of this Venetian threat would have supplied a further reason for Michael not to have left Epirus for the Peloponnesus in 1205. In 1205 Venice also had acquired possession of Durazzo, the chief port for the northern Epirote-Albanian hinterland. To try to secure himself from attack by either the Latin Empire or Venice, Michael entered into negotiations with the pope, seeking papal protection by declaring himself willing to discuss Church Union. In this way he bought time.4

Eventually, in the summer of 1209, Michael made a treaty with the Latin Empire, sealed with a marriage between Michael's daughter and the brother of Emperor Henry (Baldwin's successor). This obligation was to mean little to Michael, for later, probably in 1210, when Henry went to war against the Greeks of the Nicean empire in Anatolia, Michael attacked Thessaloniki; his action angered Henry because Thessaloniki was then ruled by a government installed by and loyal to Henry. Henry soon was to attack Michael, forcing Michael to retreat. Loenertz wonders if Henry might not have had some Peloponnesian vassals in the army with which he relieved Thessaloniki. If so, this could explain a reference in the letter of Pope Innocent III of 31 October 1210 to Moreots (Peloponnesians) fighting Michael. If this should be the true explanation, then Michael may never have attacked the Peloponnesus and Innocent's reference to Moreots fighting Michael may have referred to them acting against him elsewhere. Otherwise, we should probably accept the commonly held view that Michael attacked the Peloponnesus without success at some time between 1207 and 1209, after the Franks had established themselves there.

The pope excommunicated Michael for this attack on Thessaloniki; the pope's action had little effect, however, because the two Churches were not united in Michael's state. And even though Michael employed various West-
ners in his army, they did not seem troubled by the excommunication either.

Shortly thereafter Michael entered into negotiations with Venice, and on 20 June 1210 he concluded a treaty with Venice that recognized Venetian overlordship over his lands—an overlordship which was to remain nominal—and granted Venice the right of free trade throughout his realm. This right was of course Venice’s primary concern. In this way Michael eliminated any cause that Venice might have had to attack him and thus gained for Epirus security from that potential danger.

In 1212 Michael invaded Thessaly and captured Larissa, thereby cutting off the Kingdom of Thessaloniki from the Burgundian state of Athens. Taking much of central Thessaly and expelling various Lombard fief-holders, Michael acquired a firm foothold in Thessaly. Then in 1213 he violated his agreement with Venice and captured Durazzo. In 1214 he conquered Corfu from Venice, whose forces had taken the island in 1207 after overcoming stout resistance by the Corfiots. Soon Michael began pressing northward into southern Macedonia and Albania. He conquered Kroja, and its lord Dimitri, having lost his lands, is heard of no more in surviving sources. Michael then tried to push up the coast into Zeta. He succeeded in taking Skadar, but his attempt to press beyond Skadar was stopped by the Serbs and by his own death. For late in 1214 or in 1215 Michael was murdered by a servant whose motives are not known. He was succeeded by his half-brother Theodore who had originally fled from Byzantium to Nicea but subsequently, in 1205, had come to Epirus at Michael’s request. The Nicaeans had permitted his departure after extracting from him an oath of loyalty to Theodore Lascaris of Nicea. Once he took power in Epirus Theodore soon forgot his oath. Theodore’s rule in Epirus will be discussed in the next chapter.

Thus in the last years of his reign Michael had significantly expanded the boundaries of his state. Theodore was to increase them still further. Epirus had considerable vitality and good prospects for the future. Many Greeks came thither to serve him. Thus his state was coming to be a serious threat to the ambitions of Nicea and a second potential base from which the Greeks might hope to recover Constantinople. However, under Michael no serious rivalry developed with Nicea. Only under Michael’s successor Theodore, who dreamed of obtaining Constantinople and becoming its emperor, did Epirus begin to question the theoretical foundations of the Nicean state, i.e., Nicea’s claims to have transferred to itself the empire, the patriarchate, and the right of jurisdiction over the Greek churches in western Greece.

Though modern historians frequently call Michael a despot and his state the Despotate of Epirus, this nomenclature is wrong. Only Western sources—and none earlier than the fourteenth century—refer to Michael as a despot. They claim Michael received the despot’s title from Alexius III when he came to Epirus after Michael ransomed him. Since the title despot must be granted by an emperor, Michael could have obtained the title in this way. However, no contemporary source ever calls Michael a despot; he seems to have called himself simply governor or lord of his principality. In fact no ruler of Epirus
was to bear the title of despot until the 1230s when Michael II of Epirus received the title, probably from Manuel of Thessaloniki. Soon after, in 1242, Thessaloniki’s Greek ruler John submitted to Nicea and received the title of despot from the Emperor John Vatatzes. This title reflected John’s submission and his rank in the Nicean court hierarchy and had nothing to do with his position as ruler of any territory. Thus there never was a despot of Epirus and the state was never a despotate. Even after 1236 and 1242 when some rulers in western Greece bore the title despot, it still would be incorrect to call them despots of Epirus. This fact has been demonstrated clearly by Ferjančić’s fine study on Byzantine and Balkan despots which appeared after Nicol’s excellent major work on Epirus was published. Nicol’s work, unfortunately written prior to the clarification of this title, not only erred in its discussion on the use of titles but even bore the incorrect title, The Despotate of Epirus.

Villehardouin in the Morea

Meanwhile Geoffrey Villehardouin, the nephew of the chronicler, was in Syria as part of the crusading force. Hearing of the capture of Constantinople, he decided to sail west to get in on the spoils. He was blown off course and landed in November 1204 at Modon (Methone) in the southern Peloponnesus. He and his followers at once began to hack out their own state. At first Geoffrey’s efforts were made easier by his entering into an alliance with a Greek archon (nobleman) from Messenia in the same general region, whose name has not survived but who had similar ambitions. Finlay believes the initiative was the Greek’s and Geoffrey and his retinue were first hired as retainers by the Greek. Almost immediately afterward the Greek died; his son, not partial to the Latins and not wishing to share the territory they were subduing, broke off the alliance.

Geoffrey, meanwhile, hearing of Boniface’s arrival in the northeastern Peloponnesus, rode up early in 1205 to join him at his siege of Nauplia. Boniface greeted him warmly. Geoffrey soon persuaded him that even though the northeastern part of the Peloponnesus was offering resistance the rest of the peninsula was ripe for the picking. Boniface thereupon appointed one of his leading vassals, William (Guillaume) de Champlitte, to hold the Peloponnesus as a fief from Boniface. Villehardouin then paid homage to William and the two, with one hundred knights given them by Boniface plus each leader’s own personal retinue, set off to conquer the rest of the Peloponnesus. They took Patras easily, then moved west along the north coast and then south along the west coast of the peninsula, obtaining submission from the Greek lords of Elis and Messenia, who, having submitted, were allowed to keep their lands, probably as fiefs from the new conquerors. William went out of his way to assure the Greek landlords that he was not opposed to them and that if they submitted, they could retain their lands and privileges. Thus the conquerors met with very little resistance from the Greeks.

Only in Arcadia were the crusaders resisted. This opposition was led by
landlords from Arcadia and Laconia (particularly the Chamaretos family) allied to the Slavic Melingi tribe. The resistance was soon joined by a certain Michael who, though most scholars believe he was, may or may not have been the Michael who was then creating his own principality in Epirus. The opposing forces met at Koundoura in northeast Messenia where the well-armed, well-disciplined Franks won an overwhelming victory over the much more numerous Greek forces. Villehardouin, the historian, claims the Greeks outnumbered the Latins ten to one. After this William and Geoffrey met no more serious resistance. Michael ceased to be a factor in Peloponnesian politics. If in fact he was Michael of Epirus, his disappearance is explained by the fact that he returned home. William subdued the rest of Arcadia, while Geoffrey took Kalamata. William then assigned Kalamata and Messenia to Geoffrey as a fief. By the end of the fall of 1205 William, having taken almost all the Peloponnesus, had assumed with Boniface’s blessing the title Prince of Achaea. The name was derived from the region of Achaea in the northwestern part of the peninsula, one of the first regions they had subdued. The Achaea in the prince’s title, however, was to refer to the whole Peloponnesus, and subsequently to whatever parts of the peninsula were held by William’s and Geoffrey’s successors.

In all these conquests in Greece, whether Boniface’s or William’s and Geoffrey’s, no opposition was met from any official Byzantine governor or force. The limited resistance that was offered came from certain Greek magnates and their private retinues. The majority of the landlords, however, preferred to submit and thus retain their lands and privileges as semi-autonomous vassals of the conquerors rather than resist and risk losing everything. Having only limited manpower, the Franks were quite willing to receive them. William and Geoffrey endeavored to discipline their followers to prevent pillaging and to maintain order, which encouraged the local Greeks to accept them. The crusaders lost nothing by guaranteeing these Greeks in their possessions, for there was plenty of other land for the Franks to take for themselves, including imperial lands, the lands of Greeks who had fled or refused to submit, and the land of absentee Greek landlords. Among the important Greek families who were not present to deal with the crusaders when they arrived and who prior to 1204 had possessed huge estates in the Peloponnesus were the Cantacuzenos and Branas families. By making many Greeks into allies the Franks were spared a prolonged state of war. The co-opting of Greek leaders not only prevented them from leading revolts but also increased the forces available to carry out further conquests under crusader command and to suppress the resistance that did exist. But it should be stressed that the small number of crusaders could not have taken the Peloponnesus so easily, if at all, had the Greeks put up serious resistance. However, most of the native population seems not to have involved itself and thus allowed the crusaders to take over by default. The Byzantine policy of preventing revolts and secession by not arming or recruiting the local population for military service aided the Franks in their conquest.
Finlay concludes: “Under such circumstances, it need not surprise us to learn that the little army of Champlitte subdued the Greeks with as much ease as the band of Cortes conquered the Mexicans; for the bravest men, not habituated to the use of arms, and ignorant how to range themselves on the field of battle or behind the leaguered rampart, can do little to avert the catastrophe of their country’s ruin.” And on the Franks’ positive contribution to the local populace Finlay states,

Anarchy and civil war had commenced. Champlitte assured the inhabitants of the Peloponnesus that he came among them as a prince determined to occupy the vacant sovereignty [vacant from the fall of Constantinople] and not as a passing conqueror bent on pillage. He offered terms of peace that put an end to all grounds of hostility; while the continuance of war would expose them to certain ruin, as the invading army must then be maintained by plunder. The Greek people, destitute of military leaders, freed from alarm by the small number of the French troops, and confiding in the strict military discipline that prevailed in their camp, submitted to a domination which did not appear likely to become very burdensome.8

Early in 1206 the Venetians, in a move to secure control of the key ports between Italy and Constantinople, seized Modon and Coron (Korone), expelling the Frankish garrisons and demanding that their right to the ports—granted to them by the 1204 partition treaty—be recognized. Since the garrisons were referred to as “pirates,” Loenertz wonders if they were not manned by Genoese who had been allied with Geoffrey; their support of him could well have been suppressed by subsequent writers, leading to their being so labeled owing to Venice’s hostility toward Genoa. Geoffrey, realizing that it made no sense to involve himself in a war with Venice, acquiesced, and William compensated Geoffrey by assigning him Arcadia. Geoffrey paid homage to the doge for the parts of the Morea he still held that the partition treaty had assigned to Venice. He also gave Venice the right to free trade throughout the Morea. Though Geoffrey’s relations with Venice may have been basically settled in 1206, Setton believes the actual treaty that legally established these relations was not signed by Venice and Geoffrey until June 1209.

Late in 1208, William de Champlitte heard of the death of his older brother in Burgundy and returned home to France to claim the family lands. He left Geoffrey as acting bailiff (baile) to administer Achaea (i.e., the whole principality) until William’s nephew Hugh should arrive to replace Geoffrey as bailiff. Thus Geoffrey took over the actual administration of the Peloponnesus. William, however, died en route home and Hugh died shortly thereafter, so Geoffrey became the titular bailiff. According to the story, the new Champlitte heir, named Robert, had a year and a day to travel to the Pelopo-
nessus and claim his inheritance. Most of the Peloponnesian knights, it seems, preferred Geoffrey, who knew the area, over a newcomer unfamiliar with Greece. Geoffrey was also ambitious to become the Prince of Achaea. All sorts of ruses, we are told, were used to cause delays in Robert’s trip east, and when he finally arrived in the Peloponnesus Geoffrey kept moving from place to place with the leading knights until the time had elapsed. Geoffrey then held an assembly that declared that the heir had forfeited his rights and elected Geoffrey hereditary Prince of Achaea. Setton and Runciman think the whole story is fictitious and Runciman even believes that Robert probably never existed. In any case, Geoffrey was recognized in the Morea as prince in the fall of 1209 and was recognized as such by both the pope and the Latin emperor in 1210. By then the Peloponnesus was coming more and more frequently to be called the Morea.

Geoffrey was to be succeeded by his son Geoffrey II. Since no source notes Geoffrey I’s death and since his heir bore the same name, resulting in documents that simply speak of the prince as “Geoffrey” into the 1240s, it is very difficult to determine when Geoffrey II succeeded Geoffrey I. Traditionally scholars have accepted 1218; recently, however, Longnon has advanced sound reasons to date Geoffrey II’s succession to 1228.9

The prince governed the Peloponnesus through a high court on which he and twenty other members sat. The first ten members of the court were the holders of ten major fiefs. The whole Peloponnesus had been divided into a total of twelve major fiefs, but two, Kalamata and Arcadia, were held by Prince Geoffrey himself.10 Thus the prince kept a large parcel of territory as his own direct holding. Besides the ten great secular noblemen holding the ten great fiefs, the other ten members of the court were the Archbishop of Patras (the major Latin cleric on the peninsula), the six bishops subordinate to him, and the local masters of the three military orders which were present in the area, the Templars, the Hospitalers, and the Teutonic knights. All the territory of the Peloponnesus was under the prince or one of the ten great barons. Each lesser knight was subordinate to one or another of these eleven lords; thus once again subinfeudation existed. These lesser knights included the Greeks who had submitted and been allowed to retain their lands. No lesser knight could construct a castle without authorization from the prince or relevant baron. Only the prince and great barons could freely build castles.

A commission of Frankish barons, Greek archons, and Latin clerics was established by William of Champlitte to assign the fiefs. It kept a register of these fiefs and what specific services were owed from each one.

The above-mentioned great council of twenty had political, judicial, and military duties. It had the obligation to manage the state in conjunction with the prince and to defend the state. Its armies were based on the retinues of the prince and the ten great barons (whose retinues included all their vassals). In theory, the council only advised the prince, but in fact major decisions were made jointly. Thus the council, presided over by the prince, made the major political decisions and served as the highest court, dealing with fiefs, the
obligations of their holders, and issues of inheritance. Only the council could impose the death penalty. Each vassal owed four months service a year in the field and four more on garrison duty and was on call at all times in emergencies. Each town had a local council that was under the supervision either of the prince or of the great baron who held as his fief the region in which the town lay.

Two different laws operated in the Peloponnesus and two different societies existed, overlapping only in places. The highest authority was the prince and his council. Relations among the Westerners were guided by feudal customs eventually codified in the Assizes of Romania. The conquerors took over existing castles or built new ones throughout the Morea and assumed control of the citadels of major towns, which they supervised and in which they established garrisons. Thus we may say they took over the functions of the now defunct Byzantine military structure. And as noted, the lands made into the Franks' fiefs were chiefly centered around rural castles and in general consisted of the former lands of the Byzantine emperor and of the magnates who had fled. The towns remained chiefly inhabited by Greeks, who retained their previous status and for whom, on the whole, day-to-day life remained as it had been. They simply rendered their former tax obligations to the new rulers and had their civil relations (civil suits, inheritance, marriages, contractual obligations, etc.) administered or judged by their own urban officials still operating under the laws of the former Byzantine Empire. The Greek landlords who remained also continued to enjoy their lands; they retained, as guaranteed by law, their former privileges and obligations but now owed the taxes and other obligations that had existed under Byzantine rule to the new prince or to the relevant baron. Only for a new fief would a Greek acquire Western-style obligations. The peasants also remained in much the same position as before, fulfilling their traditional obligations to their Greek lord or to a new Frankish lord.

It is often stated that pronoiōs (Byzantine fiefs) had been widespread in the Peloponnesus prior to the Frankish conquest; thus the new order under the Franks was more or less a continuation of the feudal order existing prior to the conquest. It is thus said that the Greek lords simply changed their suzerains; the only significant difference, it is said, was that all the Byzantine pronoiō holders had held their fiefs directly from the emperor, whereas after the Latin conquest they held them from a variety of different lords. Thus subinfeudation and a feudal hierarchy were post-1204 innovations. This view was generally held until it was recently questioned by Jacoby, who expresses doubts that pronoiōs existed in the Peloponnesus in 1204. He argues that the feudalization of the Morea occurred as a result of the Frankish conquest.

Assuming the absence of pronoiōs in the Peloponnesus, Jacoby then contends that since the Greeks retained their holdings according to Byzantine (Greek) custom these lands remained freeholdings, owing no service. He also notes that Greek lands, as specified in the Assizes of Romania, continued to be inherited according to the Greek custom of equal shares for all male heirs.
Thus the lands retained by Greeks from the days of the empire did not change their character or legal status. Military service in exchange for land as well as the Frankish custom of primogeniture in the inheritance of lands applied only to estates granted as fiefs after the conquest. Jacoby then argues that, by granting to the Greek landlords additional lands as Frankish-type fiefs, the conquerors were able to win the loyalty of Greeks and also to demand service from them, with that service being owed only from the new fief. It is not certain, however, when Greeks began receiving fiefs, as opposed to confirmations of their patrimonial estates.

Jacoby points out that when the Greek archons at first submitted they were admitted only to the lowest stratum of the feudal hierarchy, the equivalent of the French mounted sergeants who were not of noble descent. By the mid-thirteenth century, documentation mentions that Greeks were receiving new lands as fiefs. Possibly the awarding of fiefs to Greeks began earlier, perhaps even at the time of the conquest; if so, however, no evidence of such early grants has survived. Also found for the first time in the 1260s is documentation of Greeks’ being dubbed knights. But even though some Greeks were to be admitted to knighthood, none became barons.

In either case, whether the Greeks’ estates had all been freeholdings as Jacoby argues, or whether some had been pronoia fiefs, the sources make it clear that the Greek holders retained the same lands on the same terms as they had held them under the Byzantines. If some had actually been pronoias, the Greeks would have continued to hold them as fiefs with the only difference being a changed service obligation. In all cases they would have retained the same peasants on their lands who would have continued to render the same obligations to the lords as had existed earlier. Thus life on an estate would have been unchanged.

We do not know how many Greeks came to serve the Achaean or Morean state, or who they were, or what proportion of the Morean army they constituted, or what proportion of the land of the principality they held. Neither do we know whether Greek magnates were permitted to retain private armies, nor, if they were, whether limitations were imposed upon the size of their retinues. We do not know what, if any, role the Greeks had in the overall Morean government or even in local decision making. We are told that Greek estate holders were given equal status with the Latin knights; this clearly means the lesser knights, for no Greeks were to be found among the ten great barons. We also know that by law no greater demands were to be placed upon them than those imposed by the Byzantine emperor earlier.

Except for the Church issue, to which we shall next turn, there seems to have been little Frankish interference in the lives of the Greeks who submitted. However, though they were secure in their landed possessions, presumably they suffered some loss of influence in regional affairs. Moreover, they did face problems in religious matters. The Orthodox hierarchy, except for those willing to accept papal supremacy, which most bishops were not, was expelled. After its expulsion, the vacated Greek cathedral churches were
assigned to Latin priests, and Latin services were carried out in them. Most monasteries were also taken over by Latin orders. However, though the higher level Orthodox clergy was removed, the Orthodox parish priests were usually allowed to remain. Geoffrey did not interfere with them and willingly allowed parishes to retain their Church services unchanged.

Thus, two ways of life co-existed in the Morea. For while the Greeks followed their accustomed ways, the upper-class Westerners retained their own languages and customs. The Frankish elite, excluding a small number of German speakers, continued to speak French. In fact the Villehardouin court prided itself on speaking better French than that spoken in Paris. And troubadours appeared at the Morean courts as well. Therefore the Morea has been described as a bit of France transferred to Greece.

Though some nobles also learned Greek, they tended to feel themselves socially and culturally superior to the Greek population. They frequently lived in separate communities, or quarters, with other Westerners. And they usually imported their brides from Western Europe. Thus it was common to find a Latin quarter in a town’s citadel or acropolis. Others lived in a Western style in isolated castles or fortified rural mansions, maintaining an existence separate from Greek society and its activities.

Few Peloponnesian Greeks converted to Catholicism. However, many became bi-lingual, particularly those who entered military service. Greeks also remained important figures in the administration and bureaucracy, carrying out the state’s relations with the local population. Since many Byzantine laws and customs, including the Byzantine financial system, continued in practice, with Byzantine land lists still being used into the fourteenth century, it was necessary that the bureaucrats understand Greek. Thus native Greeks retained many administrative posts.

After 1212 this state included the whole Peloponnesus except for the isolated Greek outpost of Monemvasia and the two ports obtained by Venice, with which the principality of the Morea had good relations. The principality’s only other neighbor by land was the Burgundian principality of Athens, with which the Morean ruler also usually had excellent relations. Thus the Morean state enjoyed considerable security. However, despite the peace and security, matters were not entirely smooth. Dislikes and hostility sprang up frequently between Latins and Greeks. Close contact brought their differences in custom to the fore; and each side felt with certainty the superiority of its own ways. The Franks had also, as noted, proclaimed the Union of the Churches, and even when secular leaders tried to be tolerant of their Greek subjects the Latin clerics often were not. Thus when the Latins expelled the Greek hierarchy, replacing it with a Latin one, and tried to enforce Church Union, various Greeks resisted. Even some who had submitted and been confirmed in their lands became disgruntled over the attack upon their Church and emigrated to territory still under Greek control, either in Epirus or in Anatolia. Thus emigration of Greeks from the Peloponnesus, and from other Frankish-held lands in Greece, was a feature of this period.
Latin Religious Policy in the Conquered Greek Lands

The conquest of Constantinople presented Pope Innocent III with a dilemma. The crusaders had violated his express orders when they sailed to Constantinople. Thus he was angered by their disobedience in taking the city; he was also displeased at the violence that accompanied the conquest. The crusaders’ declaration of Church Union was not sufficient to pacify his wrath, and he excommunicated the crusaders. However, the potential gains for Catholicism were so great that, although he condemned much about it, Innocent soon “showed a determination to profit by the crime” and accepted the conquest, on condition that Church affairs in the East were settled according to his wishes. His wishes, though, were frequently disregarded. After all, the distance between Rome and Constantinople was great and the Venetians were never obedient subjects of any foreign authority. Innocent first objected that, adhering to the partition treaty, the Venetians had appointed one of their own men as Patriarch of Constantinople and were claiming the right to control the appointment of future patriarchs. Innocent believed the appointment of the patriarch of the second see of Christendom should be a papal prerogative. Though he was to fulminate over this, he and his less dynamic successors found they could not alter this Venetian prerogative. So, to make the situation more palatable and to assert his rights, Innocent issued his own appointment of the Venetian Morosini to the patriarchate.

The existing Greek ecclesiastical hierarchical system was retained under Latin rule. But to keep his post a Greek incumbent had to accept Church Union and submit to Rome. Almost none of them did. Thus the Greek bishops were replaced by Latins. Miller claims that the Latin hierarchs had the same titles, diocesan territories, and suffragan bishops under them as had their Greek predecessors at the time of the conquest. Wolff, however, has demonstrated that the Latins made major changes in every one of the above-mentioned aspects of ecclesiastical organization.\(^\text{13}\)

After the conquest, swarms of Catholic clerics entered the dominions of the Latin conquerors: Constantinople, Thessaly, Attica, and the Peloponnesus. They wanted to share in the spoils, and Innocent supported their claims. He and they both wanted for the Roman Catholic Church all lands that had belonged to the Orthodox Church. And these included the vast holdings of the Greek monasteries. Since fighting men were scarce, it was important for the Latin princes and dukes to award land to their followers and to use land as a means of attracting further support. Particularly in the Peloponnesus, where the Prince of Achaea was trying to maintain the good will of the Greeks by allowing those who submitted to retain their lands, it was important to make use of the lands of the Greek Church as fiefs for the Latin troops who had effected the conquest. Thus the disposition of land became a bone of contention between the pope (and the clergy on the ground) and the barons. The Latin emperor, in need of fighting men to defend Constantinople and unable to conquer enough territory in Anatolia to assign a significant number
of fiefs there, also found himself dependent on utilizing land of the Greek Church. He too was determined that no further land should fall into the hands of the Church.

In 1209 Emperor Henry, supported by his barons, issued an edict prohibiting the granting or willing of land to the Church or to monasteries. He permitted only donations of moveable property to the Church. Thus a would-be donor had to sell his land and then give the proceeds from the sale to the Church. In Achaea it was decreed that the prince alone could donate land to the Church; his vassals could make only temporary donations valid just for the lifetime of the donor. The pope regularly protested against these policies concerning the disposition of land; generally his protests did not have much effect. Three times between 1210 and 1233 popes excommunicated Geoffrey I Villehardouin, his successor Geoffrey II, and Othon de la Roche of Athens.

The excommunications of the Villehardouins also touched on a second issue, the prince’s demand that the Church hierarchy and the military orders should share in the cost of the principality’s defense. Thus at times the prince and other lords demanded and seized Church revenues to contribute to the cost of building fortresses, claiming that the clergy owed the land tax still in force from the Byzantine period. Geoffrey I (if Longnon’s dating of his reign is correct, otherwise Geoffrey II) had a major clash with the Church in about 1218 on this issue. For when he summoned his vassals for a major campaign to conquer Monemvasia, the clergy, who by then may have held as many as a third of the fiefs, refused to provide troops, claiming their fiefs were from the pope and not from Villehardouin. Geoffrey then seized the fiefs, providing subsistence pensions for those clerics with no other income. Geoffrey was excommunicated but after two or three years negotiated his way back into the papacy’s good graces; he expressed his willingness to restore the fiefs if the clerical holders would provide men for military service.

Further difficulties between crusaders and Church arose because the knights were very lax in paying their Church tithes. In fact the Venetians throughout adamantly refused to pay tithes. Geoffrey also did not pay tithes and made no effort to force his vassals to do so either. The pope, furthermore, insisted that the clergy and religious orders, and their lands and tenants, were to be exempt from civil jurisdiction; this in theory created a state within a state. Emperor Henry gave verbal assent to this last demand. But Geoffrey continually pressured clergy to be tried before secular tribunals.

The papacy, actively supported by the Latin clergy on the ground, demanded a policy to force the Greek population to accept Church Union. Needless to say the Greeks resisted. In order to keep their sees Greek bishops were required to accept papal supremacy, Filioque (the “and the Son” addition to the Nicene Creed), and unleavened bread for communion wafers. Few did. In fact the only known bishop from Greece proper to accept these terms was Theodore of Eu boea. That is why most of the Greek hierarchy was expelled and replaced by Latins. The great monasteries and their lands were
assigned to Catholic orders. In Constantinople the Greek population sought to resist by establishing a separate Orthodox Church in the city under its own Greek patriarch. When the pre-conquest Patriarch of Constantinople died in exile in 1206, the Greeks sought to elect a successor to him as Greek Patriarch of Constantinople. They expressed their willingness, if this request were granted, to recognize the political authority of the Latin emperor. The Latins refused, insisting there could be only one Patriarch of Constantinople, the Catholic one. In 1208, after two years of fruitless negotiations and bickering, the Greek leaders of Constantinople turned to Theodore Lascaris in Nicea and agreed to support his plans to create a new Ecumenical Greek patriarchate in Nicea.

But while these negotiations between the Greek leaders and the new crusader establishment continued, the Latins stepped up pressure upon the Greeks to accept Union, increasing the Greeks’ anger. To support the Roman Catholic clergy a tithe was instituted and levied on the whole population. The Greeks resisted this measure. Then the pope became impatient, ordering Emperor Henry to take strong measures, particularly against those Greek monks who opposed adopting the Catholic liturgy or resisted recognizing papal supremacy. The Cardinal legate Pelagius was sent to Constantinople to enforce the pope’s wishes. Various Orthodox churches were closed for resisting papal policy and large numbers of monks were imprisoned. These acts only increased the anger of the population. As the Greeks continued to refuse to pay the tithe, the pope ordered Henry to threaten the Greeks with direr penalties, including death.

Henry became increasingly unhappy with the situation. Faced with considerable dissent from his population and with a relatively popular Greek empire across the Straits, centered in Nicea, to which he did not want to lose the loyalty of his population (and a steady flow of emigrants from Constantinople to Nicea was already taking place), he realized that some sort of accommodation with the Greeks was necessary. In 1213 a delegation of Greek aristocrats from the capital presented Henry with a petition. It expressed the Greeks’ loyalty to Henry yet also stated they recognized him as the master of their bodies, but not of their souls. Promising continued loyalty to Henry, they requested religious freedom, which meant specifically the re-opening of their churches and an end to pressure upon them to accept Church Union and Catholic rites. Should their request be rejected, they asked for permission to depart freely to Nicea. Henry gave in and, in defiance of the legate Pelagius, ordered the Greek churches of the city re-opened and the many jailed Orthodox monks released. Thereafter he followed a policy of appeasing the Greeks. In this way he avoided an uprising but, of course, this did not put an end to the bitterness. And the bitterness was constantly stirred up by incidents between the Greek population and the Westerners, especially the Western clerics.

From the middle of the tenth century Mount Athos had been the center of Greek monasticism and a leading center of Orthodox spiritual life. It lay on
the Chalcidic peninsula, which belonged to Boniface of Montferrat. Saint Sava, the Serbian monk then at Hilandar, mentions that disorders reached even Mount Athos at the time of the conquest. Many scholars believe that these disorders were the cause of his leaving the Holy Mountain, for he returned to Serbia with Nemanja’s body during a winter, either in 1205–06 or 1206–07.

Since Athos was a major Orthodox center, Catholic leaders realized that its acceptance of Union was particularly important and would have profound impact on the attitudes of Greeks elsewhere. Considerable pressure was therefore put on the monks. A special papal legate, Benedict, whose assignment was to effect Church Union, arrived in near-by Thessaloniki in the summer of 1206. In response to this threat Greek clergics held a synod at Ohrid, presided over by Demetrius Chomatianus, Chancellor (Chartophylax) for the Archbishop of Ohrid, who later acquired prominence as Ohrid’s archbishop himself. An Athonite monk named Gregory Ikodomopoulos came to Ohrid to describe to the synod the efforts of Italian clerics, including a Latin cardinal (who probably was the above-mentioned Benedict), to pressure the Athonite monasteries to accept papal supremacy, insert the pope’s name in their services, and adopt various Latin rites. Despite this pressure, Gregory stated, the whole mountain remained firm, except for the monks of Iveron (the Georgian monastery). Iveron’s submission to Rome was the cause of Gregory’s appearance at Ohrid. The synod at Ohrid condemned such apostasy and concluded the other Athonite monasteries should break off relations with Iveron. No references exist to other monasteries’ yielding at this time, so scholars on the whole have concluded that, despite pressure, the other monasteries remained firm and rejected Union.

Needless to say, problems continued for the Orthodox monasteries on Athos. The mountain had been assigned to the jurisdiction of a Latin bishop, whose seat was in Sevastia or Samaria, near Thessaloniki. The bishop’s authority seems to have been recognized only by Iveron. Sources also mention that Latin “brigands” (crusaders? Italian pirates?) had sacked the monasteries. As a result the monasteries lost considerable wealth and also many documents from their archives. These archival losses meant the monasteries lost proof of their titles to various estates and in time caused confusion as to which monastery had rights to what. This led to many subsequent quarrels, in the course of which various forgeries were drawn up to replace lost charters that had supposedly demonstrated the rights of particular monasteries to particular lands.

Unable to defend themselves against the brigands, the monks appealed to Emperor Henry who, after Boniface’s death in 1207, had asserted himself as the dominant secular figure in the area. Henry had already reached the conclusion that he must reach some accommodation with the Greeks. They clearly were not going to accept Union; pressure from him to make them do so would only lead to greater disorder in his realm and further emigration of his subjects to Nicea or Epirus. Surrounded by two powerful Orthodox states, Bulgaria
and Nicea, he needed not only to avoid a fifth column within his realm but also to obtain the active support of his subjects. And so, as noted, he responded positively to the petition of the Constantinopolitan aristocrats and in 1213 granted them freedom of worship. From 1213 Henry also adopted an active policy of conciliation toward the Greeks, confirming both Greek nobles and monasteries in the possession of their lands and working to diminish the aggressive Unionist policy of the Venetian Patriarch of Constantinople.

In keeping with this policy, Henry also intervened on behalf of the Athonite monks. To try to restrain the brigands—the worst of whom at the time seem to have been Lombards, many of whom had come to serve the Montferrats in Thessaloniki—Henry extended imperial protection over Mount Athos. The exact date he took this action is uncertain; but it clearly occurred between 1210 and 1213. Most scholars place it nearer the later date. He expressed interest not only in the monks’ physical security, but also in their spiritual welfare. To promote the latter, he ordered an end to pressure on the monks to convert and removed the monasteries from the jurisdiction of the Latin Bishop of Sevastia. The monasteries were to be placed directly under the jurisdiction of the emperor, who in exchange demanded an oath of loyalty from the monks.

Imperial protection did not put an end to the looting of the monasteries, so in late 1213 some monks sought the protection of the pope, which was granted in 1214. Živojinović argues that if the monasteries received papal protection, they must have submitted to the pope—a fact which they clearly would have covered up subsequently. Papal letters also imply that papal protection was extended only to those monasteries that accepted Union. Protected monasteries included the Great Lavra, the largest and most important Greek monastery. The pope confirmed the submitting monasteries in possession of their lands and privileges. He stated that he wanted an end to violence, for the Latins who carried out such acts made a bad impression on the Greeks and thus were not acting in the interests of Church Union. Whether submission to the pope had been enough to satisfy the pope, or whether these monasteries had to adopt Latin customs (Filioque and unleavened bread), is unknown. Also unknown is whether all or only some of the monasteries submitted and which, if any, held out. This situation did not last long beyond the death of the zealous Innocent III in 1216. Honorius III (1216–27) took less interest in the Greek world and was ineffective in asserting his wishes in the lands of the Latin East. The Athonite monks who had submitted soon dropped any recognition of Church Union or papal primacy and entered into relations with the Ecumenical (Greek) Patriarch in Nicea. With the restoration of Orthodoxy (and also a reduction in brigandage), Sava felt able to return to Mount Athos in 1217.

Baldwin and Kalojan in Thrace

After the conquest of Constantinople many Greeks fled from the city and its environs to Anatolia, where they joined the Greek population already living
there. Several small Greek political centers sprang up, the most important of which was to develop in Nicea under the Constantinopolitan nobleman Theodore Lascaris, a son-in-law of Alexius III, who after a brief residence in Bursa (Brusa) established himself in Nicea. He soon was to claim the title emperor. As noted, western Anatolia had been parceled out on paper as fiefs for various knights in the partition treaty drawn up on the eve of the conquest. At the end of 1204 or early 1205, before Nicea or any other Greek center had had time to consolidate itself or prepare its defenses, the Latins invaded Anatolia to claim their fiefs. The crusaders had achieved various successes, and Nicea itself was threatened, when the Greeks of Anatolia were saved by events in the Balkans.

In Thrace the Latin barons had refused to confirm the lands (probably in many cases pronoias) of a large number of Greek landlords. The barons had wanted these estates in the vicinity of the capital for themselves and their followers. Their refusal set off a revolt by the Greeks of Thrace. Meanwhile Kalojan of Bulgaria was also interesting himself in Thrace. He had been taking advantage of the chaos following the events of April 1204 to expand into Thrace at the expense of the Thracean Greeks. He had occupied considerable Thracian territory before the crusaders had appeared there to seek their Thracian fiefs. About to receive a crown from the pope, with whom he was establishing good relations, Kalojan believed himself a natural ally of the crusaders against the Greeks. He sought to form an alliance with the crusaders, probably expecting to conclude a treaty defining a division of Thrace between the Latin Empire and Bulgaria. Seeing Kalojan annexing territory they believed should belong to the Latin Empire and thus threatening their ambitions, the crusaders turned down Kalojan’s proposal.

Rebuffed by the crusaders, the hot-tempered Kalojan was receptive to the request for help that came from the rebelling Greek lords of Thrace. He immediately (in February 1205) dispatched further Bulgarian forces to Thrace. Seeing this attack as a major threat to the new Latin Empire, Emperor Baldwin immediately ordered the recall of the crusading armies from Anatolia to campaign against Kalojan. Determined to expel Kalojan from Thrace and to suppress the Greek rebellion in Thrace, Baldwin then, without waiting the arrival of the armies from Anatolia, set out at once for Adrianople, whose Greek population had already driven out its crusader garrison and, having submitted to Kalojan’s suzerainty, was flying his flag. Baldwin laid siege to Adrianople. Kalojan soon arrived to relieve the siege.

The two armies met in a fierce battle on 14 April 1205 before the walls of Adrianople. Kalojan’s Bulgarians and Cumans not only won but also captured the emperor and carried him off to Bulgaria as a prisoner. Different stories about Baldwin’s fate are told: Greek sources (Niketas Choniates and Acropolites) state that Baldwin was killed after suffering great tortures on the orders of Kalojan. Niketas states that Baldwin was thrown over a precipice and his body left to the dogs and birds. However, Baldwin’s successor Henry, seeking papal intervention for Baldwin’s release, had written the pope in 1205
stating that the Latin prisoners were being treated with respect. Kalojan in his 1206 reply to the pope stated he could not release Baldwin because he had already died in jail; Kalojan gives no details as to when and how he died. One Frankish chronicle reports that Baldwin had died from his battle wounds.

The defeat at Adrianople, together with Baldwin’s capture, threw the Latin Empire into a major crisis. Months were to pass without word about Baldwin; was he alive or dead? Should they await word or should they elect a new emperor? The Latins also found themselves now with almost no territory in Thrace. Most of what they had conquered in 1204 was now annexed by the powerful Kalojan, and the territory assigned as fiefs by the treaty but not yet occupied was no longer in the hands of petty and disunited Greek lords but also belonged to the strong Bulgarian state. Thus acquisition and recovery would be difficult. The Anatolian campaign had been called off, leaving the crusaders only a small foothold there while a strong Greek state was beginning to take form around Nicea. Thus one year after the conquest of Constantinople, the Latin Empire was on the verge of collapse. It basically consisted of Constantinople itself, an island behind powerful walls, but surrounded by hostile states—Nicea, Bulgaria, and groups of hostile Greeks in Thrace—having only maritime communications with friendly powers. The other crusader states were distant. The closest one, that of Boniface of Montferrat in Thessaloniki and Thessaly, was not only far away but also had a leader hostile to Baldwin and thus could not be counted on. After Boniface’s death in 1207 this state was to become weaker and divided by factions until the Greeks of Epirus completed its conquest in 1224. The Morea (or Achaea) was at an even greater distance and like Thessaloniki had direct contact with the Latin Empire only by sea.

Furthermore, the number of Latins in the East was small. As Finlay observes,

The Franks formed a small dominant class of foreign warriors, many of whom were constantly returning to the lands of their birth, where they had ancestral estates and honors, while many died without leaving posterity. Their numbers consequently required to be perpetually recruited by new bodies of immigrants.  

Recruiting these new bodies entailed a constant effort by the Latin emperors, who often were unsuccessful in their attempts. Their weakness required them to be on the defensive rather than expanding—and thereby acquiring new territory to award as fiefs—and made the recruitment of new warriors from the West difficult. As a result the Latins in Achaea initiated a policy of making heirs to Achaean fiefs pay homage in person in Achaea. The requirement of personal appearance precluded possession of fiefs by heirs residing in the West who would provide no service. To make this policy more effective a second rule was instituted, namely, that no vassal could leave the principality
without the prince’s permission. Thus if the vassal appeared to claim his fief, he could not then depart and escape the service obligation.

The Adrianople campaign, followed by the Latin defeat that encouraged increased Bulgarian activity in Thrace near the capital, required the presence of every able-bodied Latin in the capital or Thrace to oppose the Bulgarians. Thus Nicea was saved. For by the time the crusaders were able to turn back to Anatolia again, the town of Nicea was well fortified and Lascaris had secured his hold over the other Greek centers in western Anatolia and had created a major state—in relative terms for that region at that time—that was growing rapidly in population as Greeks from Constantinople and other Latin-held parts of southeastern Europe migrated to it. Thus Kalojan’s victory at Adrianople and his activities in Thrace after that victory were crucial for the survival of the Greek state in Nicea, the state that in 1261 was to regain Constantinople.

Kalojan’s Activities after April 1205

Thrace was the meeting- and hence battle-ground among (1) the local Greek lords who had had estates there, (2) Kalojan, who had begun to annex as much of Thrace as he could immediately after the conquest of Constantinople, and (3) the Latin emperor and knights of Constantinople who wanted to add this region to the Latin Empire and award it as fiefs to the knights who had participated in the conquest of Constantinople. The Latins immediately alienated the Greeks there. Not only did they seize the lands of the Greek landed aristocracy but their religious policy antagonized Greeks of all classes. For upon conquest the Latins immediately expelled from Thrace the Greek hierarchy, replacing it with a Latin one and sending Latin priests into conquered areas to effect Church Union. Thus from the start many Greeks in Thrace preferred submission to Kalojan who, though he might replace Greek bishops with Bulgarian ones, was Orthodox and did not interfere with Orthodox beliefs and practices. Thus early in 1205 many Greeks in Thrace were already lined up with Kalojan and serving in his armies. Furthermore, Greek leaders in various crusader-held cities in Thrace, held by small garrisons, began in one city after another to organize revolts that expelled the Latin garrisons. In this way Demotika, Adrianople, and other towns were liberated. The leaders of such rebellions early in 1205 usually then acknowledged Kalojan’s suzerainty. Needless to say, such behavior caused great insecurity among the crusaders still in possession of other Thracian cities, for they constituted a small minority in cities with substantial Greek populations.

To isolate Constantinople as much as possible, Kalojan had decided on eastern Thrace as a battle zone and dispatched his armies into this region early in 1205. They took many fortresses, including the important Arcadiopolis, either from Greeks before the crusaders could obtain them or from the Latins before they had a chance to strengthen town defenses. This attack had led
Baldwin to call off the Anatolian campaign and to march into Thrace. His attempt to regain the major city of Adrianople, as noted, led to his defeat and capture on 14 April 1205. After this victory Kalojan’s armies were active throughout much of Thrace.

When a Bulgarian force moved into the vicinity of Constantinople, the crusaders elected Baldwin’s brother Henry as regent. A second Bulgarian force led by Kalojan himself moved toward Thessaloniki. On its way this army stopped in June 1205 to besiege Serres, which was held by a vassal of Boniface. This vassal surrendered the city after the Bulgarians had agreed to a treaty that promised the population’s safe departure together with their movable property. However, Kalojan broke his word immediately afterward and seized a large number of captives. He executed certain leaders and then sent the rest, numbered in the hundreds, off to Bulgaria as captives. Kalojan’s behavior at Serres was to have considerable influence on the attitude of the Greeks thereafter and caused many of them to become disillusioned with Kalojan and desert him as a result.

As Kalojan’s forces, led by the tsar himself, marched south beyond Serres, word that they were approaching Thessaloniki reached Boniface in the Peloponneseus. Leaving troops to carry on the siege of the three Peloponnesian cities, Boniface hurried back north to defend his capital. Meanwhile Kalojan split up his forces, leading a major force toward Philippopolis himself while sending the rest against Thessaloniki. The latter plundered the environs of Thessaloniki and seem to have taken the lower town briefly. Unable to take the city’s citadel and realizing that they were no match for Boniface, the Bulgarians departed before Boniface’s arrival. Having returned home and having, it seems, put down some sort of unrest in his city, Boniface thought to march out against the Bulgarians; but word of Baldwin’s fate apparently caused him to reconsider this plan and remain in his capital.

Early in 1205, meanwhile, the crusader Renier de Trit had succeeded in capturing the important city, assigned to him by treaty, of Philippopolis. When Kalojan appeared in Thrace part of the town’s population (including, according to Villehardouin, many Paulicians) hostile to Renier sent envoys to Kalojan inviting him to come and promising to assist him to take the town. Knowing that Kalojan was in the vicinity, and feeling insecure, Renier withdrew to a second fortress, Stanimaka (Stanimachus, Stenimachus), so as to avoid falling into Kalojan’s hands should he, as seemed likely, capture Philippopolis. However, word then reached Philippopolis of the Serres events, and a Greek party led by Alexius Aspietes and Theodore Branas seized control of Philippopolis. They, acting in their own interests, did not trust Kalojan and put an end to the plans to surrender the city to him. Kalojan, changing his plans (which may well have included an assault on Thessaloniki), marched north from Serres against Philippopolis. Overcoming the resistance of the local Greek leaders, he took the city and sacked it, destroying many palaces and executing those Greek leaders he was able to capture, who included
Aspietes and the town’s archbishop. He then established a Bulgarian administration in the town.

Next, the sources report, a revolt broke out against Kalojan in Trnovo, his capital. It is not certain whether the revolt coincided with the Philippopolis events or took place subsequently. In any case, Kalojan suppressed the Trnovo rising after his conquest of Philippopolis. This revolt in Trnovo, the exact date and causes of which are unknown, is usually dated by scholars to the second half of 1205 or even early in 1206. After dealing with the rebels brutally, according to the sources, Kalojan began to make war on the “treacherous” Greeks. And the sources list a whole series of Greek towns in Thrace, some nominally loyal to Kalojan, taken and destroyed by him in the fall of 1205 and during the winter that followed. Taking large numbers of prisoners, Kalojan generally executed the leaders while sending the rest as captives to Bulgaria.

Because Greek sources depict Kalojan’s actions against the Greeks as following upon his suppression of the Trnovo rebellion, some scholars have suggested that Greeks were somehow involved in, if not even leaders of, the Trnovo uprising. Other than the time sequence, having one event following the other, no evidence exists of Greek participation in the rebellion in the Bulgarian capital. In the absence of specific evidence, it makes more sense to associate Kalojan’s anti-Greek policy with the behavior of the Greek leaders in Philippopolis and in other Thracian cities that may have turned against him. In fact Niketas Choniates states that after the Philippopolis events, Kalojan, feeling great anger at the Greek nobles whom he had in prison in Trnovo, condemned them to death.

And the events in Philippopolis were scarcely unique. In the fall of 1205 and the winter that followed various Greek leaders of Thracian towns under Kalojan’s suzerainty, presumably in response to Kalojan’s actions in Serres and Philippopolis, turned against him and voluntarily submitted to the Latins. In early 1206 some Greek leaders from Adrianople and Demotika sent envoys to Theodore Branas, then in Constantinople, asking him to mediate their submission to Henry. Henry accepted their proffered loyalty and entrusted the two cities to Theodore Branas, who had been an ally of the Latins. The son of Alexius Branas, whom we met earlier, Theodore had been a leader of the Greek party in Philippopolis that opposed Kalojan. Having escaped when that city fell, he had returned to his family home in Adrianople. A leader of the anti-Bulgarian Greeks, he had close ties with the Latins. He was the husband of Agnes, the sister of King Philip Augustus II of France; left a widow in Constantinople by Alexius II and Andronicus, she had subsequently married Branas. Presumably he had had ties with the pro-Latin party in Adrianople prior to his departure from there to Constantinople; very likely he had gone to the capital to arrange with the Latin leaders the smooth transfer of authority over the town prior to the arrival of the official delegation.

Thus Kalojan’s ruthlessness should be seen as a major cause of Greek
desertions and of the loss of some of his Thracian cities, particularly those held by indirect rule under Greeks who, having submitted to him, continued to govern their towns.

As a result of the defection of these cities, Kalojan sent his forces back into Thrace in the spring of 1206. Many Greeks in his armies deserted during the campaign. The Bulgarians destroyed a number of smaller fortresses, while Kalojan himself directed sieges of Adrianople and Demotika. Emperor Henry led an army to the relief of Demotika, causing Kalojan to lift his siege and withdraw. Adrianople also held out. In the course of 1206 it became more and more common to find the Greeks of Thrace allied with the Latins against Kalojan. Kalojan responded to this development by unleashing greater and more brutal reprisals.

By the middle of 1206 the crusaders came to realize that the rumors they had heard about Baldwin’s death were true. So, they proceeded to elect Henry as emperor; he was crowned 20 August 1206.

Shortly after Henry’s coronation, Kalojan launched a new attack against Demotika, which was defended by Theodore Branas. This time the Bulgarians took the city, which suffered considerable destruction; large numbers of captives (the sources say, probably with exaggeration, twenty thousand) were taken. Emperor Henry marched out and, catching up with the Bulgarian armies en route home, procured the captives’ release. Kalojan did not try to hold Demotika. Instead he destroyed the fortifications to such an extent that they would be worthless in the future. He succeeded, for Henry concluded that the town could not be refortified with the resources at his command. By late 1206 Kalojan’s policy (presumably owing to the hostility, and hence unreliability, of the local populations) was not to try to hold eastern Thrace, but to sack its urban centers, destroy their fortifications, and then withdraw with as much booty and as many captives as possible. Thus he seems to have written off the conquest and retention of this area. In this way the Latin Empire secured eastern Thrace for itself, while Kalojan regarded the region as a raiding ground. His destruction of these cities’ fortifications left them vulnerable to subsequent raids, especially by the Cumans. The Adrianople region in particular suffered from their plundering. Large numbers of Thracians were killed, taken off to Bulgaria as captives, or forced to flee elsewhere. While Kalojan and his clients particularly ravaged the Adrianople region, the crusaders’ plundering was concentrated on the region of Philippopolis held by Kalojan. Near-by Berrhoia and its environs also suffered greatly from the activities of Henry’s men. Thus Thrace as a whole suffered great devastation and depopulation. Furthermore, all this activity disrupted the agriculture of Thrace, which was a fertile region and had long been a leading granary for Constantinople and Thessaloniki.

Meanwhile, Kalojan between 1204 and 1207 also procured control of most of Macedonia. The Bulgarian tsar, probably in 1205, established a governor named Eciismen in Prosek. Dobromir Chrysos, the previous holder of Prosek, is not mentioned in any source from this period. Whether he
submitted to Kalojan or whether Kalojan took Prosek by storm is not known. In any case Chrysos lost his fortress, and Prosek—and presumably any other territory he held as well—became Bulgarian.

In the winter of 1206–07, when Kalojan was active around Demotika, Boniface recovered Serres and repaired its fortifications. He also erected new and stronger fortifications for his town of Drama. In February 1207 Henry married Boniface’s daughter Agnes. Meanwhile, the Niceans concluded an alliance with Kalojan, who again marched into Thrace in March or April 1207, once again besieging Adrianople. But when summer approached without success, his Cumans refused to remain any longer, forcing Kalojan to lift the siege. At this time the Niceans were besieging various Latin-held fortresses in the northwest corner of Anatolia. Henry, torn between the necessity of campaigning in both Anatolia and Thrace, finally made peace with the Niceans, surrendering further Anatolian forts to them. That summer, after concluding this peace, Henry returned to Thrace. He arranged a meeting with Boniface, which took place at Kypseli, near the mouth of the Marica River; at it Boniface submitted to him.

Then, on his return to Thessaloniki from this meeting, Boniface and his small entourage were attacked on 4 September by a small Bulgarian raiding party. In the skirmish that followed Boniface was killed. After his knights were put to flight, Boniface’s head was recovered by the Bulgarians and sent to Kalojan. This unexpected encounter eliminated the strongest Latin warrior in the area. A power struggle for control of Thessaloniki followed, leading to the decline of what had probably been the strongest crusading state. Kalojan immediately brought his armies to besiege Thessaloniki. Despite the existence of factions and rivalries inside the city, however, all those inside did at least agree they did not want to fall to Kalojan; so an effective defense of the city was maintained until Kalojan died unexpectedly in October 1207. This brought the siege to an end. We shall turn shortly to the different rumors about the causes of Kalojan’s death and the succession question it created in Bulgaria.

The Kingdom of Thessaloniki after Boniface’s Death

Boniface’s heir in Thessaloniki was his infant son Demetrius, who, to acquire local support for the Montferrats, had been named for the patron saint of Thessaloniki. Boniface’s widow Margaret, also known as Maria, was to be regent for Demetrius. Opposition to Margaret immediately developed, and the leading local nobles and military types elected a Lombard count, Hubert of Biandrato, long a retainer of the Montferrat family, as bailiff and guardian to manage the kingdom. The count had no interest in recognizing the suzerainty of Emperor Henry and seems to have sought to tighten Thessaloniki’s ties to the Montferrats of Italy, possibly hoping to create an independent state that would include most of Greece. Hubert was accused by the court in Constantinople (and many scholars accept the accusation) of also not supporting
little Demetrius but of aiming instead to replace him with Demetrius’ much older half-brother William, who was then living in Italy. Though most scholars have accepted the accusation, over a century and a half ago Finlay plausibly argued that Hubert’s plans do not appear to have really extended beyond effecting a close union between the dominions of the two half-brothers—Thessaloniki and those in Italy—and recruiting more Lombards from Italy to garrison various fortresses in the Kingdom of Thessaloniki.

A large percentage of the Lombards in the kingdom supported Hubert. The revolt soon spread throughout much of northeastern Greece into Thessaly, Boeotia, Attica, and Euboea, and Hubert tried to assert his own direct control over certain cities assigned by Boniface to various vassals. These cities included Thebes, which Hubert’s supporters managed to gain and make into a center for his operations.

Either as a matter of principle or as a means to obtain allies, Demetrius’ mother Margaret was willing to establish closer ties with the emperor in Constantinople as long as the emperor supported the succession of Demetrius. Count Hubert made no move to recognize Henry as his suzerain and, in fact, did not respond when Henry summoned him to Constantinople to pay homage. So, in December 1208 Henry marched for Thessaloniki. In the cold of winter he and his army arrived at Kavalla (Christopolis), whose Lombard garrison refused to open its gates, leaving Henry to camp outside. The Lombards also refused to admit the emperor to Philippi. Henry, learning that Serres had also been ordered closed against him, avoided it and marched to Thessaloniki itself. The count refused to allow Henry to enter unless he recognized the ruler of Thessaloniki’s right to govern not only Thessaloniki but also the lands to the south—Thessaly, Boeotia, Attica, and Euboea—that had been conquered by Boniface. Thus Othon de la Roche and Ravano, Boniface’s former vassals who had received their fiefs from Boniface, would remain feudatories of Thessaloniki’s ruler and not be directly subject to the emperor. Henry apparently had had other plans for these fiefs in central Greece. Since it was winter and he, not expecting this resistance, had not brought a large army, Henry found himself in an uncomfortable position. However, his entourage urged him to accept the count’s terms since his clergy promised to absolve him whenever it suited him from any agreement he might conclude with Hubert. The agreement was duly concluded and Henry entered the city.

Henry was soon in touch with Margaret and her supporters. What exactly occurred is not certain, but Henry and Margaret’s faction seem to have quickly gained the upper hand. On 6 January 1209, Henry personally crowned little Demetrius king. As Thessaloniki submitted to Henry, Count Hubert and his leading supporters made their way south through Thessaly into Boeotia. Deciding to secure Thessaloniki’s northern possessions before moving against Thessaly and Boeotia, Henry sent his troops against Serres, which was taken. Then his troops moved against Drama. Near it they defeated a Lombard army and put its survivors to flight.
Having restored his and little Demetrius’ authority in the north and, presumably, having summoned more troops to re-enforce his army, Henry marched south in the spring of 1209 through Thessaly down to Athens, confirming in their fiefs the followers of Boniface who submitted to him. And it seems that many of these southern barons preferred Henry’s suzerainty to that of a Lombard ruler. These barons—including Othon de la Roche, the lord of Athens who held Attica and part of Boeotia, and Geoffrey Villehardouin, the bailiff of the Morea—came to a great parliament of feudal grandees which Henry held on 1–2 May 1209 at Ravennika near Lamia (Zeitounion) where they all paid homage to Henry.

The Lombard leaders were not present; they and their supporters, based in Thebes, still refused submission. Thebes, the last center of resistance, withstood an assault from Henry but then, as a result of negotiations and mediation, yielded a week later. Those surrendering at Thebes included Ravano, the leading triarch of Euboea. Thus Euboea now submitted to Henry. Henry allowed the rebels who paid homage to retain their fiefs. And Henry, it is generally believed, restored Thebes to Othon de la Roche, whom Henry invested also with Athens. Thus, according to the traditional view, the Kingdom of Thessaloniki was deprived of direct sovereignty over these southern lands—Boeotia, Attica, and Euboea—conquered by Boniface and over the Morea conquered by Boniface’s vassal; for the lords holding these lands submitted directly to Henry.

Longnon does not accept the traditional view, just presented, of Othon’s position. First, as noted earlier, he believes that Othon acquired Thebes for the first time only in 1211; thus anything occurring in 1209 affected only Attica and whatever other parts of Boeotia Othon may have held. Second, Longnon believes that Othon did not submit to the emperor’s direct suzerainty at Ravennika in 1209 but remained under that of the King of Thessaloniki. Since at this time Thessaloniki was weak, if Longnon is correct, then Othon’s choice of suzerain would reflect his own wishes and strength; thus Henry, deciding not to tangle with him, had to be content with having him only as an ally. Thereafter, as a result of Thessaloniki’s weakness, Othon was to enjoy considerable independence. Longnon believes that Othon accepted the direct suzerainty of the Latin emperor only after the fall of the Kingdom of Thessaloniki to Theodore of Epirus in 1224.

Count Hubert was captured in Euboea shortly after Henry’s conquest of Thebes and persuaded to submit to Henry; he then retired to Italy, leaving Thessaloniki under Margaret. She maintained close ties with Henry, who named Thessaloniki’s military commander and also concerned himself with Thessaloniki’s defenses.

At this time Michael of Epirus, realizing that Henry, supported by a large force of Greece’s barons, was now free to move against him, forestalled this threat by sending envoys to offer his submission. This was stipulated in the treaty, mentioned previously, concluded between Michael and Henry in the summer of 1209.
In 1210 Acrocorinth, which by this time was being besieged by Villehardouin, finally surrendered. Shortly thereafter—though possibly as late as 1212—Nauplia did so as well. And in 1212 Argos finally followed suit. Since Othon de la Roche had played a major role in the capture of these cities, Geoffrey granted him Argos and Nauplia as fiefs. Othon held these two cities from the Prince of Achaea. At the same time his other, and major, holdings (Attica-Boeotia) were held most probably from the Latin emperor or, as Longnon would have it, from the King of Thessaloniki. In Geoffrey’s Corinth, a Latin archbishop was installed. Monemvasia, behind its massive fortifications on the southern tip of the Peloponnesus, was now the only city in the Peloponnesus to hold out against the Latins.

**Nicea Proclaims Imperial Status**

As the state of Nicea expanded and consolidated its rule in northwestern Anatolia more Greeks left Europe to settle there. Lascaris soon drove the Latins from most of the little territory they had occupied in western Anatolia. He then erected, to the best of his ability, a duplicate of the Byzantine Empire, establishing a court modeled on that of the fallen empire and awarding to his courtiers the full array of Byzantine court titles. In the spring of 1205, after the crusaders’ withdrawal from their Anatolian invasion, Theodore Lascaris began calling himself emperor; however, many Greeks, including some in Anatolia, did not accept his claim. Theodore realized he needed a stronger foundation for his claim. He tried to persuade John Kamateros, who had been Patriarch of Constantinople at the time the city fell, to come to Nicea and carry on as patriarch. However, being elderly, John refused. He died shortly thereafter, in the spring of 1206, in Adrianople.

After much preparation, Theodore Lascaris convoked a Church Council in Holy Week 1208 in Nicea which elected a new Ecumenical Patriarch, Michael IV Autorianos. Then, on Easter Sunday 1208, this patriarch crowned Theodore Lascaris Emperor of the Romans. This, of course, was the title borne by the Greek emperors who had ruled in Constantinople; patriarchs of that city had borne the title Ecumenical Patriarch. Thus Lascaris had ceremonially sanctioned his claim that his state was the continuation of the Roman Empire, which had acquired a new seat in Nicea while its former capital of Constantinople was under temporary foreign occupation. Thus the Empire of the Romans was still held by the Greeks; in holding Constantinople, Henry was an illegal usurper. Theodore the legitimate emperor and Michael the legitimate Ecumenical Patriarch were now resident in Nicea.

Since most Greeks did not want to recognize the usurping crusaders in Constantinople as emperors and patriarchs, many were willing to accept Lascaris’ actions and claims and recognize his state as the direct continuation of the pre–April 1204 empire. However, there were legal problems. There had been a definite break after the conquest, and it had taken Lascaris over a year to emerge from being an exile leader to the head of a consolidated state.
Moreover, he had not been crowned in Constantinople. It was also necessary that the patriarch perform the coronation. Furthermore, a legitimate patriarch had to have been elected by an established procedure—by the resident synod of Constantinople and by the legitimate emperor. Thus a vicious circle existed, for it required a patriarch to create an emperor and an emperor to create a patriarch, but after the death of Patriarch John in 1206 the Greeks had neither. Not only was there no existing emperor to appoint the new patriarch to succeed John but also the entire resident synod had not moved to Nicea. The council convoked by Lascaris in 1208 in Nicea to create the new patriarch was large, but it was in fact only a random collection of bishops. Thus objections could be made, and were to be made, that the patriarch chosen in Holy Week 1208 was not legally elected, and, of course, if he was not legally elected, then his crowning of Lascaris could not be valid, and Lascaris could not be a true emperor. The Niceans replied that exceptional circumstances necessitated a flexible interpretation of the laws and even certain modifications in them. The right to do this was well established, Niceans would claim, by the Church’s established principle of Economy, which allowed flexibility in interpreting the law when emergencies required it as long as the spirit of the faith was retained.

**Boril in Bulgaria and Balkan Affairs, 1207–13**

The death of Kalojan before the walls of Thessaloniki in October 1207 is shrouded in mystery. According to Acropolites he died of pleurisy. However, legend has it that Saint Demetrius had returned to his city and brought about the death of its enemy through the hand of “Manastras” (?). This legend has caused various scholars to conclude that Kalojan was murdered. Some scholars suspect the Greeks, a group that clearly had reason to dislike Kalojan, though one with limited access to him. Other scholars place the blame closer to home, accusing his boyars. Clearly Bulgarian opposition did exist; the rebellion that had broken out the year before in Trnovo reflects such dissent. That rebellion had been repressed brutally, which could have stirred up further hatred. Of specific possible candidates for murderer the name Boril is frequently advanced, mainly because he profited and gained the succession.

However, other than his benefitting and his subsequent somewhat unprincipled behavior, there is no evidence against Boril. In fact there is no evidence to suggest he was even in the vicinity of Thessaloniki at the time of Kalojan’s death—though the possibility of his having hired a killer cannot be ruled out. Thus once again we must admit our ignorance. In any case, Kalojan’s heir should have been Asen’s minor son John Asen, then about eleven years old. But a quarrel erupted at once and Kalojan’s nephew Boril emerged as tsar. John Asen’s supporters, fearing for the boy’s safety, smuggled him out of the country, first to the Cumans and shortly thereafter to Galicia among the Russians. Boril is usually depicted as a usurper. But given the unstable conditions in Bulgaria, it is possible that he acted primarily to keep the family
in power by providing an adult for the throne. In any case, his actions do not prove he was involved in Kalajan’s death; he may well have simply taken advantage of the opportunity it provided. But whatever his initial reasons for assuming power, once in possession of power Boril decided to retain it. He married Kalajan’s widow, a Cuman princess, which not only enhanced his legitimacy but also presumably gained for him at least some Cuman military support. However, he was never to gain the support of the whole aristocracy or even that of his whole family.

Boril’s reign was to be marked by risings against him and by the secession of peripheral territories from what had been Kalajan’s Bulgaria. It is evident that Kalajan’s state lacked strong central institutions; it had been a federation of units (each under a local chief, be he a royal appointee or a local) that had supported Kalajan either for the booty to be gained from his campaigns or from fear of punitive attack. After Kalajan’s death there was little to hold the state together unless a successor were able to win boyar support and assert control over the outlying provinces. In fact, the frequency and ease with which outlying territories split away from Tarnovo’s rulers in Bulgaria, as well as from the rulers of other medieval Balkan states, show that these territories were not parts of anything resembling truly integrated national states (even though they are sometimes treated as such by modern scholars).

In fact it is hard to speak of any of the broader Balkan entities as states, for the population seems to have been loyal chiefly to its own locality, and localities under given warlords tended to break away whenever a profitable opportunity arose. If the risks from secession seemed too great or if the profits from staying loyal seemed worth their while, they stayed. Counties dominated by local notables existed in all Balkan states; a federation of these units, willing or otherwise, composed the state. Great war chiefs like Kalajan, having subdued or won the loyalty of a sufficient number of these local warlords, were then able to force the rest into the fold. But after gaining their submission, Kalajan, like other great medieval war chiefs, created no apparatus or bureaucracy to retain control of them. Thus, little state control existed over the boyars, be it from state officials or from an independent state army; for the army continued to be made up chiefly of regional units, each composed of a major boyar leading his own local retinue. Even when Kalajan placed one of his own appointees over a province as governor, as he did when he acquired Prosek, this figure did not have sufficient troops or staff to truly control the region; the local boyars continued to dominate in their counties. Thus a state like Kalajan’s was bound to be ephemeral; under a weak tsar or during a period when a new tsar was establishing himself, these counties could, if they chose, cease to render obligations, which further weakened the center, or even secede completely. Boril was immediately faced with this situation; and overnight Bulgaria ceased to be a major power.

Boril’s difficulties were compounded by considerable domestic opposition to his rule. First, there were the supporters of the legitimate heir, John
Asen. Acropolites claims that they besieged Trnovo, the capital, for seven years before taking it in 1218. This is difficult to believe; Jireček may be right when he suggests Acropolites meant seven months. But possibly Acropolites meant that the capital was threatened with attack throughout this period, or that actual attacks occurred sporadically during it. In any case opposition from Asen’s supporters existed from the start, becoming more serious later (possibly from 1211) until finally they were to bring Asen to power in 1218. Second, Boril was opposed by two cousins (possibly one of whom was actually Boril’s brother)—Strez and Alexius Slav—who felt they had an equal or even better right to rule than Boril. The circumstances behind their opposition are unknown. For it is not known whether they initiated revolts to satisfy their own ambitions or whether, innocent of such ambitions, they were driven to rebellion by Boril’s distrust of them and his attempts to seize them. In any case, each led a rebellion that resulted in the secession of large chunks of territory from Bulgaria.

In his last year and a half Kalojan, hoping to conquer Thessaloniki, had shifted the emphasis of Bulgaria’s military activities from eastern Thrace to eastern Macedonia. This policy change, as we have seen, allowed various Greek aristocrats of eastern Thrace, hostile to Kalojan, to secede and seek alliance with the Latin Empire; recognition by these Greeks allowed the Latin Empire to penetrate deeply into eastern Thrace without much difficulty. Thus the Latin Empire came to hold eastern Thrace, chiefly by indirect rule with Greeks holding various towns as fiefs from the emperor. Unhappy with this situation, Boril’s first goal seems to have been to reassert Bulgarian authority in eastern Thrace.

Boril attacked Thrace in 1208. The Latin emperor, Henry, marched out to meet him. Reaching Adrianople, Henry sent envoys to seek the aid of a Bulgarian nobleman, Alexius Slav, who, though a first cousin of Boril, was “at war” with Boril, who “had taken his lands through deceit.” Since these negotiations were to have no immediate effect, though they were to have implications shortly, we shall return to Alexius Slav later. However, it is worth mentioning his resistance to Boril here, for it reveals that Boril, while trying to carry out his Thracian campaign, was simultaneously experiencing internal difficulties. If Alexius’ being “at war” with Boril indicates active fighting, then Boril clearly had to divide his manpower between two fronts, for Alexius had by then established himself in the Rhodope Mountains.

The Bulgarian and Latin armies then met at Berthoia in Stara Zagora. Though the fighting was indecisive, Boril was able to prevent further Latin advance toward the Balkan Mountains. The Latins then withdrew in a southwesterly direction toward Philippopolis. Although Philippopolis was taken by Bulgaria in 1205, it is not clear who held the town at this moment. Quite possibly the local Greek aristocrats had reasserted their control over it after Kalojan’s death. Boril’s armies, pursuing the Latins, caught up with them at Philippopolis. A major battle followed, resulting in a complete Latin triumph.
Presumably after this battle, the Latins took Philippopolis. They were to hold it until 1230. Soon after its acquisition it was given as a fief to Gerard de Stroem.

Thus the result of this 1208 campaign was that Bulgaria lost manpower and more (this time western) Thracian territory. Soon, as a result of Latin activity and secession (particularly that of Strez, whom we shall meet shortly), Bulgaria had lost all its territory south of the Balkan Mountains. The separatists bear particular responsibility for these losses. Taking advantage of the freedom of action afforded by Boril’s campaign in 1208 against the Latins, the separatists Alexius Slav and Strez asserted their independence and then began expanding their territories at the expense of the Bulgarian state. These territorial losses also, of course, lost for Boril the manpower that could be raised from these regions. Thus Bulgaria’s military strength suffered further reductions; it was to be diminished even further in the clashes between Boril and the separatists.

Let us turn first to Alexius Slav. Weaker than Boril and needing support, Alexius Slav made an alliance with Emperor Henry shortly after Henry’s victory at Philippopolis in 1208. Alexius accepted imperial suzerainty and married an illegitimate daughter of Henry. Alexius is referred to as despot, the second title in the imperial hierarchy. Acropolites states that Alexius received this title from Henry, presumably obtaining it at the time of his treaty with Henry, when he became an imperial in-law. However, as scholars have pointed out, it is always possible that he had already acquired this title from Kalojan, who, as a tsar and one who asserted all imperial prerogatives, could also have granted it. If he had obtained this title from Kalojan, then it would indicate that under Kalojan Alexius had been the second figure in Bulgaria, and one can well see why Alexius regarded Boril as a usurper and why it was said that Boril had taken “his lands.” Either because he was angry at his deprivation or because Boril threatened his person, Alexius had seceded, establishing his own state in the Rhodope Mountains, now re-enforced by his alliance with Henry. This state, with certain border changes, was to exist until 1230.

The second separatist figure was Strez. He too was a nephew of Kalojan, but whether this makes him a first cousin or brother to Boril is not known. Possibly he also had more right to the throne than Boril, for the Serbian monk Theodosius states that Strez as the tsar’s relative had been at the Bulgarian court at the time Kalojan died. Boril had then ordered Strez hunted down and killed. As a result Strez had fled at the very end of 1207 or the very beginning of 1208 to the Serbian court, where Grand Župan Stefan received him warmly, refusing Boril’s requests for extradition despite Boril’s proffered bribes and gifts. However, the honor given Strez by Stefan soon excited the jealousy of various Serbian nobles. Realizing this and fearing Stefan would side with his nobles and possibly send him back to Bulgaria, Strez planned to flee. Learning of Strez’s plans, Stefan reassured Strez of his continued favor and proved it by becoming a blood brother with Strez.
Kalojan had gained for Bulgaria Beograd, Braničevo, Niš, Skopje, and Prizren, all towns and regions claimed by the Serbs. The death of Kalojan and the difficulties ensuing under his successor resulted in the weakening of Bulgaria and presented the Serbs with an opportunity to acquire some of these towns. Strez’s arrival at the Serbian court provided Stefan with a marvellous means to carry out his plans, a means important enough to make it worth risking the jealousy of Serbian nobles. For even though Bulgaria was weaker, Serbia was still not a great power; moreover, a Serbian attack upon Bulgarian territory might be expected to rally many Bulgarians around Boril in the defense of that territory. However, to march against Bulgarian territories with a Bulgarian claimant to the throne might be expected to divide the Bulgarians and allow Serbia to obtain the submission of various cities and regions for the Serbian-supported claimant. As a result Boril would be weakened still further and Serbian influence in these border regions would be strengthened.

The first attack was to be aimed at the Vardar valley in Macedonia, a region recently acquired by Kalojan, probably in 1205, whose population probably did not feel closely bound to Trnovo and which might be expected to support Strez. It is not known whether Stefan would have remained satisfied in having this territory in the hands of an ally or puppet, thus limiting himself to increasing Serbian influence in the area, or whether he saw this as a first step toward Serbian annexation.

Whatever Stefan’s long-range motives, Strez with Serbian troops invaded Bulgarian territory. The attack occurred in 1208, presumably when Boril was campaigning in Thrace. Strez established himself, at first as a Serb vassal, in the fortress of Prosek on a high cliff overlooking the Vardar River and on the main Niš-Skopje-Thessaloniki route. This was the fortress previously held by Dobromir Chrysos. Some scholars, seeing the similarity of Chrysos’ name (in Slavic, Hrs) to Strez, have argued that the two names in fact refer to one individual. However, this does not seem to have been the case. First, Strez was clearly a close relative of Kalojan. Had Chrysos had such a connection presumably Choniates would have mentioned it. Second, as noted above, when Kalojan took Prosek he established a second individual as governor there; thus there is no question of any direct continuity between Chrysos and Strez. Thus most scholars now believe that the two were entirely different individuals.

Once Strez had acquired an initial territory, presumably at first the region between the Vardar and Struma rivers on the Bulgarian border, many Bulgarians came to join him, increasing his strength and proportionally weakening Boril’s. Then, with continued Serbian support, Strez expanded westward across Macedonia, eventually reaching at least Bitola. One Serbian source, presumably with considerable exaggeration, says Stefan and Strez took half of Bulgaria. Theodosius, the Serbian monk, asserts they conquered the territory from Thessaloniki (clearly not including the city) to Ohrid (some scholars feel Ohrid was taken, others do not).16 This territory was not necessarily all taken in one campaign. They could have conquered most of it in 1208 and then added further territory early the following year. In any case, Church docu-
ments indicate that within a year or so Strez held territory extending from and including Veria (Veroia, Berroia, Ber) in the south to and including Skopje on the Vardar in the north, and from the Struma River in the east to Bitola (if not Ohrid) in the west. As a result of this Boril’s rule in Macedonia was brought to an end. Either his officials were ousted or, as probably was frequently the case, they entered Strez’s service. Presumably since Strez’s conquest was rapid, many towns at once opened their gates to Strez, be it owing to his own dynastic connections and popularity, or to Boril’s unpopularity, or to opportunism based on their evaluation of the balance of forces and the difficulty of resisting the combined forces of Strez and Stefan.

Stefan then ordered many Serbian troops to remain in Strez’s realm. Whether Stefan was satisfied with the situation and simply wanted the troops there to guarantee Strez’s continued loyalty to Serbia and prevent his breaking away or whether they were intended to overthrow Strez and annex his lands is not known. Strez presumably was unhappy with their presence, particularly if he suspected they might sooner or later be used to overthrow him. Strez, by then holding strong fortresses like Prosek (documented as his in 1208), was in a position to assert considerable independence, provided he could remove the Serbs from his fortresses and surround himself with loyal supporters. And regardless of any earlier agreements, Strez surely was out for himself and would not have remained satisfied with being a Serbian puppet for long.

Serb sources report that next, as a result of the devil’s actions, Strez turned against Stefan and soon made peace with the “Greeks” (i.e., Michael of Epirus) and then later even with Boril. The biased Serbian sources depict Strez as a bloodthirsty, ungrateful sadist who turned against a patron and bloodbrother who harbored no evil intentions against him. Clearly the ambitions of the two princes overlapped. And even if Stefan’s intentions were honorable, Strez could never have been certain of them; moreover, the presence of Serbian troops and nobles in his fortresses could well have seemed to him a threat, an effort to control rather than aid him. Thus rightly or wrongly Strez may well have come to feel that he was being used by Serbia as a tool for it to sooner or later gain Macedonia. Tensions grew, and Serb sources report that Strez tortured some Serbian nobles and then hurled them from his fort (presumably Prosek) into the Vardar. Strez thus seems to have been making an effort to gain security and also independence by eliminating troops he could not trust.

Meanwhile, having secured his empire’s control of Thrace and secured Alexius Slav as a vassal in the Rhodopes able to defend against renewed Bulgarian penetration into western Thrace, Henry at the end of 1208 marched on Thessaloniki to secure the position of little Demetrius and the pro-imperial party against the Lombard count’s attempt to seize power there. (This action was described above.) Meanwhile the Greeks of Serres were hostile to the Latins, who, as noted, had regained that fortress in 1207. The city had been assigned in 1207 to a vassal of Boniface, and in 1208 was held by a garrison
loyal to Count Hubert in Thessaloniki. These Greeks sent a deputation to Boril’s deputy in Melnik (proof that Boril then held this city) offering Serres to Boril because they preferred the Bulgarians to the Franks. Henry, having gained control of Thessaloniki for his allies there, as we recall, then turned north in early 1209 to oust the Lombard’s supporters and assert his control over Serres and the other cities of Macedonia belonging to Thessaloniki. His presence in this area may also have been intended to deter Boril from trying to assume power in Serres or intervene in this area. Henry presumably turned south into Thessaly and Attica only in March or April 1209, when he felt certain that Boril was not going to attack Thessaloniki’s territory.

In 1209 Boril concluded agreements with Theodore Lascaris of Nicea and Michael of Epirus. If he tried to take any action in 1209 against Thessaloniki (and it is not certain whether or not he did), he certainly achieved nothing. However, he does seem to have moved against Strez’s territory during that year, probably in the spring. If a spring date for Boril’s move is correct, knowledge of this action would then have reached Henry in time to free him for his march south into Greece. At the time Boril moved against Strez (if we can believe the chronology implied in the Serb sources), Strez was trying to shed his vassalage to Stefan. Strez was too weak to achieve this entirely on his own, however. Thus if he saw the Serbs as a danger to himself and wanted to break with them, he needed a new ally. If he could negotiate a workable arrangement with Boril, he could at the same time solve his difficulties with the Serbs and secure himself from the ever-present danger of Bulgarian attack.

Boril, heading a weak and declining state and realizing his weakness after the previous year’s failure against the Latins, also needed help. Strez’s Macedonian territory could provide considerable manpower. Boril clearly would have liked to regain Macedonia, but he could not have been certain that he could do so militarily. However, if through negotiations he could persuade Strez to submit to his suzerainty, he could at least acquire loose control over Macedonia, possibly utilize, through Strez, some of its manpower, and keep the region in the hands of a Bulgarian rather than allow its annexation by the Serbs.

Thus it seems Boril advanced upon Macedonia. Most probably he and Strez, instead of fighting, negotiated their differences; Boril recognized Strez’s rights to his lands and the two then formed an alliance. It is also possible that Boril attacked Strez and, though not powerful enough to defeat him completely, was sufficiently successful to force Strez to drop the Serbian connection and accept a Bulgarian alliance. In the latter case, Strez’s actions against Serbian nobles within his lands may have followed a military clash between Strez and Boril in which Boril emerged the victor. Making the first alternative seem the more likely, however, are the absence of any evidence of Serbian military aid to Strez, which might have been expected had Strez still been Stefan’s vassal, and also the statements in Serbian sources that Strez,
through the devil’s actions, turned against Stefan (making it appear Strez acted on his own) and then, after that, entered into negotiations with Michael and Boril.

In any case, Strez became a Bulgarian ally and an opponent of Serbia from 1209 until his death in 1214. A document from a Church synod held in 1211 refers to Strez as sevastocrator, a title just below despot. Possibly he received this title in 1209, at the time of his agreement with Boril, in which case it reflected Strez’s submission and his admission to the Bulgarian court hierarchy. If the title dated back to Kalojan’s time, as is also possible, its use in the Church document of 1211 would show that Boril at least recognized Strez’s right to the title.

That Strez was able to obtain such favorable terms, rather than be conquered by Boril, as one might expect him to have been without Serbian support, shows that Strez had become a fairly powerful figure in his own right. He clearly had military ability and was able to acquire the loyalty of the regions he came to rule, whether because he was a member of the Bulgarian dynasty able to attract popular acceptance for that reason or because he appointed able and loyal deputies to rule his towns. In fact, no source mentions any disloyalty toward him until his demise during a campaign against Serbia in 1214. Strez appointed officials entitled “sevastics” in his major towns; each also ruled over the surrounding province. References exist, for example, to a “sevast” in Veria. Presumably his whole realm was divided into territorial units, each of which was governed by a sevast.

Michael of Epirus had allied himself with both Boril and Strez in 1209. That same year, in the summer, Michael had submitted to Henry, only to attack, probably at the end of the summer, Thessaloniki, which had also recognized Henry’s suzerainty. Michael was clearly out for himself and took none of these alliances seriously. Shortly thereafter, late in 1209 or more probably early in 1210, Henry took action against Michael, which not only drove him away from Thessaloniki but also, according to a letter of Henry’s, won some of their best land from Michael and Strez. Thus it seems likely that Strez had participated as an ally in Michael’s attack upon Thessaloniki late in 1209 and had suffered along with Michael Henry’s retaliation shortly thereafter. By 1211 Michael had come to reconsider his policy. He probably came to the conclusion that the allied forces of Boril and Strez based in the vicinity of Thessaloniki constituted a greater threat to Epirus’ long-range interests (i.e., the eventual acquisition of Thessaloniki) than the town’s remaining under the administration of the Latin barons. Thus in 1211 Michael disassociated himself from his Bulgarian alliances and concluded an agreement with the Latins. Soon he was to attack Strez.

At that time, in the spring of 1211, Nicean troops had crossed into Europe to lay siege to Constantinople. Henry, who had been at Thessaloniki, hurried back to defend his capital. Boril, then allied to the Nicæans, thought this a golden opportunity and prepared an ambush to waylay Henry. However, Henry was able to avoid it and reach Constantinople safely. He then
dispatched an army against Boril, who seems again to have been operating in some part of Thrace. As far as we can tell, Boril’s activities in Thrace early in 1211 were without any significant result. After Henry’s departure from Thessaloniki in the spring of 1211, Strez directed an attack against the Latins there; Michael of Epirus came to the aid of the barons, and together they expelled Strez from the city’s environs. Michael then acquired further troops from his new allies, the barons of Thessaloniki, and pursued Strez’s retreating forces, penetrating into Strez’s western Macedonian territory. Boril immediately sent troops to support his new ally Strez. The combined Bulgarian armies met those of Michael and his Latin allies in early summer 1211 at Pelagonia (modern Bitola) and suffered a major defeat. However, as far as we know, Michael did not acquire any Macedonian territory to speak of at this time. Thus we may presume his losses were heavy enough to prevent him from pursuing the campaign.

Meanwhile Henry had persuaded the Seljuk Sultan of Iconium to attack Nicea. This attack forced the Niceans to raise their siege of Constantinople and return to Anatolia to defend their state from the Seljuks. The Niceans rapidly drove out the Turks. Henry, in the meantime, had launched troops into Anatolia hoping to catch the Niceans in a two-front war. When he learned the Turkish invaders had been repelled, he realized that he had no chance now of acquiring territory in Anatolia, so he withdrew his forces. However, during Henry’s brief foray into Anatolia against Nicea, Boril had tried to take advantage of his absence to attack Thessaloniki in October 1211. The Latin barons, this time with help from Alexius Slav, defeated Boril’s forces and drove them away.

The Bulgarian cause was sputtering. Strez was surely weaker after his defeat at Pelagonia; and having the barons and Michael lined up against him probably forced him to give up his goal of southward expansion, though his men probably still carried out sporadic raids in that region. For his part, Boril had also met with failure; he had proved unable to regain the territory lost in Thrace and had had no success against Thessaloniki. Thus these two territorial goals, which he had fought against the Latins to achieve from 1207 to 1211, had not been realized, and there seemed little chance that he would realize them in the future. In fact, Boril’s attempts to realize them had brought about further territorial losses for Bulgaria. In 1208 his attempt to regain eastern Thrace had ended in Bulgaria’s losing all Thrace. And in 1211 when he had attacked the Latins he had suffered further losses in Bulgaria, as Henry’s ally Alexius Slav had not only helped expel Boril from Thessaloniki but had also taken advantage of the absence from Bulgaria of Boril’s troops on that campaign to take Boril’s town of Melnik, which then became Alexius’ main residence.

Perhaps Boril’s failures stirred up dissatisfaction at home. A revolt in Vidin, whose date is unknown, has often been dated by scholars to 1211 and associated with such discontent. However, a recent redating of this Vidin uprising to 1213 (to be discussed below) seems more plausible. But even if
the revolt occurred as late as 1213, popular dissatisfaction with his reign may still have existed as early as 1211 and caused Boril to make efforts to rally Church support for his regime. For in 1211 Boril convoked a Church synod whose main stated purpose was to condemn the Bogomil heretics and demand their persecution.

Many scholars have argued that the existence of the synod at this time suggests the Bogomils were increasing in number and becoming a threat to Orthodoxy in Bulgaria; hence the synod was summoned to meet an actual threat. Some scholars have claimed that dissatisfaction over the military failures and internal chaos of the time had encouraged Bulgarians to turn against the establishment and join the heresy. However, we actually know almost nothing about Bogomils at this time. No other sources refer to Bogomils in Bulgaria during this period. And one might expect Greek or Crusader sources, written at a time when both Greeks and Latins were warring against Kalojan and then Boril, to have used the presence of heretics to smear the Bulgarians, if heretics had actually been numerous. Moreover, after the synod of 1211 nothing more is said about Bogomils for the duration of Boril’s reign. We also have no evidence that any actual persecutions followed the synod. Thus I do not believe we can conclude that Bogomils were numerous in Bulgaria at the time. It seems more likely that the Orthodox Church wanted state action taken against what was still a small sect, and Boril, to acquire Church support, obliged by holding the synod.

Certain recent Bulgarian scholars have tried to differentiate between the religious policies of Kalojan and Boril. They have depicted Kalojan as a leader having broad religious tolerance—or possibly it is more accurate to say indifference—who was willing to negotiate and ally with the pope and other Catholics and who even seemed tolerant to the Paulicians of Philippopolis who wanted to surrender their town to him. They describe Boril as a more narrow and zealous Orthodox Churchman, who condemned heresy and made alliances primarily with Orthodox states. However, this is reading a great deal into a few specific items; and, as we shall soon see, a little more than a year after Boril’s anti-Bogomil synod Boril was to enter into alliances and close relations with both the Catholic Latin emperor and the Catholic King of Hungary.

Boril’s 1213 Alliance with the Latins and the Conclusion of his Reign

It was clearly in Henry’s interests to make peace with Bulgaria and end the Bulgarian threat to Thrace and Thessaloniki, so as to allow a greater concentration of his limited resources against the Nicean danger. The papacy approved this plan, for it would provide greater security for the lands of the Latin East. So in 1213 a papal legate traveled to Bulgaria to offer Boril peace and an alliance.
Since he could not gain Thessaloniki or the Thracian territory he sought, but only suffered losses in men and territory by trying, it made sense for Boril to re-orient his policy. Peace with the Latins made sense; for if he could not wrest territory away from them, peace and their support would enable him to retain what he still had. So, Boril accepted the offer. To seal the alliance Henry, a widower, married Boril’s "daughter" (in fact she was Kalojan’s daughter whom Boril had adopted when he married Kalojan’s widow). The wedding probably occurred also in 1213. Soon thereafter Boril married Henry’s niece, the daughter of Henry’s sister. To facilitate the arrangement, Kalojan’s widow—Boril’s wife up to this time—was probably packed off to a convent. In 1213 Henry also married off two other nieces, daughters of the same sister, one to King Andrew II of Hungary and the other to Theodore Lascaris of Nicea. Henry’s alliance with Bulgaria remained firm until Henry’s death in 1216.

Meanwhile a revolt broke out in Vidin that is generally attributed by scholars to popular dissatisfaction with Boril’s failures. The uprising, undated in our sources, is usually dated to 1211. Recently Dančeva-Vasileva has argued that the uprising probably broke out in 1213 after the Bulgarian and Hungarian rulers married the two sisters, for the King of Hungary came to Boril’s aid.18 Dančeva-Vasileva believes this marriage created the ties that led to Hungarian support of Boril. For before Boril’s Latin alliance, during which time Boril had been carrying out a staunch anti-Latin policy, such co-operation from the zealous Catholic King of Hungary would have been unlikely. The argument is sound, but not conclusive. In any case, between 1211 and 1213 an uprising led by three Cuman officers and supported by other Cumans broke out in Vidin. It soon spread throughout northwestern Bulgaria. Boril could not put it down. Since the province of Vidin lay on the Danube, the border with Hungary, Boril sought aid from the King of Hungary. The king willingly sent it. Hungarian troops defeated the main rebel army on the River Ogosta, where many rebels were killed and many others taken prisoner. Then the Hungarians marched on Vidin and after a siege took the town and finally the rebellion was ended.

The causes of the rebellion, as noted, are not known. Possibly it was simply another manifestation of local separatism; supporting this theory is the fact that Vidin frequently followed a separatist course later on. Possibly it reflected disillusionment with Boril’s military failures, or, if it did take place in 1213, opposition to his alliance with the Latins and to his relinquishing claims to Thrace. Since Cumans led it, it might even have reflected anger at Boril for divorcing his Cuman wife. Possibly these Cumans in Vidin were her relatives. Finally, the rebellion could well have been initiated on behalf of young John Asen. Cumans were to support him when he regained the throne in 1218. That support might have begun earlier, since Acropolites reports that seven years of action preceded his restoration. Possibly the Vidin revolt was part of that action. Nonetheless, to link Cuman support for the Vidin revolt to
later Cuman support for John Asen is a weak argument. There were Cumans throughout Bulgaria. They were involved in most major events and were often to be found divided in any given conflict, some supporting one side and some the other. Thus one should neither expect there to have been a single “Cuman policy” nor treat the Cumans as if they were a monolithic group.

It has been suggested that at this time Hungary, as the price for its aid to Boril, regained Beograd and Braničevo, taken from Hungary by Kalojan. It seems to me, however, that since the Hungarians felt so strongly about regaining these cities, they probably had retaken them immediately when conditions became unsettled after Kalojan’s death. Not only was Boril struggling then to secure his position against domestic rivals, but he was occupied on the opposite frontier fighting the Latins in Thrace during 1208. Thus one should probably date Bulgaria’s loss of these two cities to 1207 or 1208. Quite possibly, however, Boril in 1213 (or in 1211 if the revolt occurred then) to obtain Hungarian aid did relinquish his claim to them and recognize Hungarian possession. Relations between Bulgaria and Hungary remained cordial. In 1214 Hungarian envoys came to Bulgaria to arrange the engagement of King Andrew’s oldest son (the future Bela IV) to Boril’s daughter.

Boril’s alliance with Henry made things difficult for the separatists. For until then Alexius Slav had been allied with Henry against Boril. Moreover by this time, 1213, Alexius’ position had become much weaker, since his main bond with Henry, his marriage to Henry’s daughter, had been broken by the lady’s death. Needing new allies, Alexius Slav soon entered into a close association with Epirus sealed by his marriage in 1216 to the niece of the wife of Theodore, Michael of Epirus’ successor.

Strez’s options were also reduced, for he too could no longer campaign against Henry or Thessaloniki since this would bring him into conflict with Henry’s new ally and Strez’s own suzerain, Boril. Not surprisingly, Strez was soon drawn into the Bulgarian-Latin alliance. This was to be appealing to Strez, for almost immediately that alliance was directed against the Serbs, and Strez presumably had been expecting Serbian retaliation for his defection.

That the Bulgarian-Latin alliance was to be directed against Serbia also suggests that Boril was not the weak incompetent he often is said to have been. This verdict, though often seen, could well be doubted on the basis of the evidence already presented; for Henry was not likely to have pressed for an alliance with Boril and concluded two marriages with his family had Boril not been a worrisome adversary. Boril’s influence is further shown by the fact that the alliance was almost immediately directed against the Serbs. The Serbs were neighbors of, and problems for, Boril but should have been a matter of indifference for Henry. In no way did the Serbs threaten any imperial possessions, nor had they as yetwarred against or even supported a war against the Latin Empire. That the alliance was directed against them, clearly in Boril’s interests, shows that he was influential enough to guide the alliance’s policies toward the fulfillment of his own aims.
The 1214 War, the End of Strez, and the Division of his Lands

In 1214 the new allies planned a two-pronged attack. The Latins’ and Boril’s troops were to advance upon Serbia from the east while Strez invaded from the south. It has been argued that Michael of Epirus also participated in this alliance. However, this does not appear to have been the case. Michael intervened only later and seems simply to have been taking advantage of the opportunity created by the others. It has also been suggested by scholars that Henry’s and Boril’s ally, the King of Hungary, participated in the campaign. Whereas the Serbs may have feared this would occur, and though there may even have been some discussion along these lines between the Hungarians and the allies, there is no mention in the sources of any actual Hungarian action.

The Latin and Bulgarian armies reached Niš, while Strez moved up the Vardar valley and probably made camp at or near Polog (modern Tetovo) on the Vardar. Serbia was faced with what seemed a desperate situation, with a two-front war against a coalition which, if it had brought the large armies it was capable of mobilizing, should have had far stronger forces than anything Serbia, alone and without allies, could have raised. Grand župan Stefan sent envoys to try to negotiate peace with Strez while he mobilized an army to oppose Strez’s attack. When Stefan’s negotiators failed, Stefan’s brother the monk Sava, abbot of Studenica (the monastery where Nemanja’s body was interred) went as an envoy to Strez’s camp, which was pitched on Serbia’s border and from which Strez’s men had been plundering the Serbian border region. Sava’s words, we are told by the Serbian sources, made a great impression on some of Strez’s leading followers but not on Strez himself. So, Sava’s efforts also failed. Sava departed, but that very night Strez died. Immediately thereafter many of Strez’s leading associates deserted to the Serbs, and his army disintegrated, and so ended the danger to the Serbs. The mysterious death of Strez is depicted as a miracle by the Serbian sources. According to Theodosius’ Life of Saint Sava, a member of Strez’s entourage reported that Strez had suffered an attack in his sleep that had made it difficult for him to breathe. Then, waking up, Strez had gasped out that a terrible youth, at the command of Sava, had attacked him while he slept, using Strez’s own sword to stab his innards.

Whereas the Serbs depict Strez’s death as a miracle and claim that Sava’s prayers to Nemanja caused an angel to kill Strez, it seems more likely that Strez was the victim of a murder plot, which the miraculous tales were trying to cover up. Clearly Sava, who had already departed, did not actually stab Strez. But Sava’s presence immediately beforehand and the fact he had proposed terms that had impressed many of Strez’s courtiers suggest that Sava had not only made contacts but might also have found allies at the camp. Thus when Sava realized he could not get Strez to call off the campaign, he could have hired or persuaded some of Strez’s followers to kill him. Strez’s claim that the terrible youth had stabbed him at Sava’s command suggests Sava’s
involvement, and the desertion to the Serbian camp of many of Strez’s leading associates suggests at least the existence of a pro-Serb party at Strez’s camp, if not the participation of some of its members in the actual murder. Their guilt would have explained their flight, for they may well not have been sure which faction would get the upper hand upon Strez’s death. In any case, with or without Sava’s involvement, it seems probable that a pro-Serbian party in Strez’s entourage killed him.

The Latin and Bulgarian allies at Niš, however, took no action. Perhaps their inactivity was owing to Serbian defensive actions on this front, actions not mentioned in any surviving source. Or perhaps news of Strez’s death, which made it possible for Stefan to meet any attack they might make with his entire force, discouraged them. In any case, the Serbian sources simply state that disorders occurred in the allies’ camp, after which they withdrew and Serbia was spared. However, Serbia did not capitalize on Strez’s death to acquire any of his lands. This suggests that at least some of the allied troops had remained at Niš or that Stefan feared their return to Niš, and thus he kept his armies in Serbia to defend Serbia rather than sending them south to pick off Strez’s lands.

The fate of Strez’s territory is also obscure. Some scholars believe that Boril occupied the bulk of this Macedonian territory, either by a campaign—which may explain why he took no action against Serbia, preferring to use his men to recover Macedonia—or by the submission to him of Strez’s deputies who might well have preferred rule by Boril to rule by Serbia or Epirus. If Boril did in fact acquire some or all of Strez’s Macedonia, he retained it only briefly, for by 1217 all the Macedonian towns for which documentation exists were under the rule of Theodore, Michael of Epirus’ successor. Thus one must postulate either a short-lived annexation of territory by Boril that was soon taken by Theodore or else visualize the immediate conquest of some or all of these towns by Michael himself late in 1214, which gave them to Theodore when he inherited the Epirote state. It also is possible that in 1214 both Bulgaria and Epirus were active in Macedonia, with each obtaining territory, but with Bulgaria keeping what it acquired only briefly. Moreover, it has been argued that some of Strez’s southeastern holdings bordering on the Kingdom of Thessaloniki may have been grabbed by the Latin barons of Thessaloniki. If the barons did annex part of Strez’s lands, their possession was to be short-lasting also.

In any case, after the failure of the invading forces to attack Serbia and while Stefan, for whatever reason, took no action beyond his own borders, Michael of Epirus went on the offensive. Though Theodosius’ Life of Sava implies Michael was an ally of Strez, Boril, and Henry, most scholars think Michael had not joined the alliance but, simply seeing a good chance to add territory to his state, had gone into action for himself upon Strez’s death. He seems to have acquired at least some of western Macedonia (and, as noted, it is possible he annexed even more of Macedonia than that) and then marched into the region of Albania. Soon he turned northward, taking Skadar, and then
made plans to march on Zeta. Threatened by this new enemy, Stefan dispatched his forces for Zeta. Whether Zeta was at the time more-or-less under his authority or still under George, whom the sources do not mention in connection with these events, is not clear. Whether the two armies actually clashed in Zeta or not is also not known. However, once again Stefan was saved by what seemed a miracle. In late 1214 or early 1215, while stationed at Berat in Albania, Michael was murdered by a servant. Nemanja’s intercession is said to have played a role here too. This ended the Epirote threat to Serbia, because Michael’s heir Theodore was much more interested in the lands to Serbia’s south, Macedonia and Thessaly, including Thessaloniki, and even Constantinople itself.

Thus Stefan was able to recover southern Zeta, including Skadar and any other fortresses Michael might have taken in that region. It is not clear exactly when Stefan recovered Skadar from Epirus. However, since Stefan had troops in Zeta and Theodore does not seem to have been interested in contesting Zeta, Stefan probably recovered whatever losses the Serbs had sustained in Zeta promptly. Furthermore, one may assume that, if he had not done so already, Stefan must now have used the armies he had in Zeta to assert his own control over that region. Thus if George had been able to maintain his independent appanage—or part of it—up to this time, he would have lost it to Stefan now.

Since Theodore’s interests lay to his east, as noted, he did not want to quarrel with Serbia over Zeta. In fact, to avoid a two-front war when he moved against the Latin territories in the east, it was important to him to be assured of good relations with Serbia. So, he concluded a treaty with Stefan. In this he renounced his claims to the northern Albanian-Zetan area, thereby taking pressure off Serbia from the south. If he still possessed any Zetan fortresses, presumably he relinquished them after the treaty was signed. Theodore thereupon married Stefan’s sister, and shortly thereafter Stefan’s eldest son Radoslav, who was officially declared to be Stefan’s heir by 1220, married Theodore’s daughter Anna. Their marriage probably occurred in 1219 or 1220.

In 1215 Serbia found itself threatened again. This time, Serb sources claim, the Latins and Hungarians were preparing an attack on Serbia. Other than these preparations, whatever they were, there seems to have been no Hungarian action. Nor is there this time any sign of action by Boril against the Serbs, though this might have been expected in order to prevent the Serbs from moving into Strez’s former lands. We would also expect Henry to have pressured his ally Boril into action, for why would Henry have been preparing to attack the Serbs at all unless it was to aid Boril? One certainly would not expect Henry to have been planning to put his armies in the field in such a situation if Boril was remaining on the sidelines. If any action did occur, which is not certain, there is no evidence that it had any results of importance. In 1216, a later Serb source claims, the Hungarians again prepared for war against Serbia. It seems this attack was forestalled by negotiations. In any
case we learn where the Serbian-Hungarian border then lay, because the negotiations that took place on the common border between the two rulers occurred at Ravno (modern Ćuprije) on the Morava, mid-way between Beograd and Niš. Thus the Hungarians evidently still held, as would be expected, Beograd and Braničevo. Since Vidin stood as the Bulgarian province bordering on Hungary, Hungary’s eastern border with Bulgaria must have lain somewhere between the Morava and Timok rivers.

**John Asen Overthrews Boril**

Boril seems to have found himself in an increasingly weak position in his last years, though he maintained the Latin alliance until the end. In June 1216 his ally Emperor Henry died. The following year his second ally, the King of Hungary, went east to crusade. Possibly because Boril now lacked outside support, his enemies decided the time had come to strike. In any case, in 1218 John Asen’s supporters summoned him back from Russia. The young prince was now an adult of about twenty. They marched on Trnovo, whose citizens opened the gates to him. Boril was blinded and John Asen II (1218–41) became tsar. During the decade of Boril’s rule, even though he may have been less incompetent than earlier historians have tended to think, Bulgaria clearly suffered considerable decline. It lost all its territory south of the Balkan Mountains, and two large chunks of southwestern territory seceded under Alexius Slav and Strez respectively. After Strez’s death Epirus, and possibly also Thessaloniki (though only briefly)—not Bulgaria—acquired Strez’s lands. And even if Boril had at first occupied some of Strez’s territory, as certain scholars believe, he still was not able to retain it. During the decade that Boril ruled, 1207–18, the initiative in the Balkans had passed from Bulgaria to Epirus, ruled from 1215 by the vigorous Theodore. It was to take John Asen twelve years to restore Bulgaria to sufficient strength to reverse the balance.

**Serbia in the Second Decade of the Thirteenth Century**

Grand župan Stefan’s main concern in the second decade of the thirteenth century, after he had overcome the threats from Strez and Michael of Epirus, seems to have been directed toward the west, and in particular to securing his control over Zeta. By 1216 he seems to have temporarily eliminated Vukan’s son George and to have annexed Zeta. Scholars have long claimed that having annexed Zeta, Stefan assigned it—along with Trebinje—to his eldest son Radoslav to administer. This action, by establishing in Zeta as governor the heir to the throne, might have facilitated the binding of this newly gained area more tightly to Serbia and have hindered a reassertion of separatism. Recently, however, some scholars have argued that Stefan, fearing to do anything that might encourage Zeta’s tradition of separateness and independence,
did not want to give Zeta the special status of an appanage and thus continued to rule Zeta directly.

As noted in the last chapter, at some point Stefan intervened on behalf of Miroslav’s son Andrew of Hum against Andrew’s brother Peter, who had expelled Andrew and taken over most of Hum. Some scholars would date this intervention to 1216, believing that as soon as Stefan had annexed Zeta and was free to turn to other problems, he intervened in Hum, which bordered on Zeta. Whether he then assigned much of Hum to his son Radoslav, as Orbini claims, is uncertain. In any case, he probably would have tried to assert direct Raškan control, be it his own or his son’s, over as much of Hum as possible. And Orbini insists that Andrew, in whose name Stefan acted, received only a small part of Hum, just Popovo Polje and the coast. Peter seems to have withdrawn across the Neretva, retaining only the territory between that river and the Cetina.

With so much of his attention directed to the western Serbian lands where the Catholic Church enjoyed considerable support, particularly in the coastal regions (western Zeta as far inland as Podgorica and western Hum with Trebinje), Stefan naturally came to have considerable contact with Catholic leaders, both noblemen and churchmen. He also entered into closer relations with Venice. According to a later Venetian chronicle, in 1216 or 1217 (some scholars believe it actually was earlier) Stefan married Anna, the granddaughter of the Venetian doge Henry Dandolo. Venetian influence seems to have increased in Serbia from this time. Thus Catholic influence within the state presumably increased. Stefan, as we have seen, had long wanted to assume the title king. In 1217 a papal legate at last appeared in Serbia and carried out the royal coronation. Stefan has gone down in history as Stefan the “First-Crowned” (Prvovenčani) to distinguish him from the many other Stefans who ruled Serbia. The frequency of this name resulted from the fact that Serbia’s patron saint was Stephen the First Martyr.

It has been argued that since the only crown and kingship then recognized in the Serbian lands was that of Duklja (Zeta), Stefan must have been crowned with the crown of Duklja. Since George had been eliminated, no one was then wearing that crown; thus Stefan, as the conqueror of Zeta, had acquired the right to it. While this is a perfectly plausible hypothesis, it should be noted that there was nothing to prevent the pope from using his own authority to create new kingships. What promises Stefan made to the pope and what role, if any, the Catholic Church consequently obtained in Raška itself are not known.

However, either owing to actual promises made by Stefan to the pope or to their fears that concessions to Rome and Church Union were likely to be the next logical step, many of the Serbian Church hierarchs seem to have opposed the coronation and closer relations with Rome. Stefan’s brother Sava, abbot of Studenica and the most influential churchman in Serbia, expressed his protest by leaving Serbia. He returned in 1217 to Mount Athos. Since he
seems to have left Athos previously owing to the influence of Catholicism on the Holy Mountain, his return is often seen as evidence that conditions for the Orthodox there had by this time improved and that the privileges Emperor Henry had granted to the Orthodox monasteries had actually been implemented.

In any case, the Catholic Church seems to have been making progress inside Serbia. However, as we shall see in the next chapter, these gains were not to be lasting. It should also be stressed that, whereas some Serbian clerics saw the Church schism as a burning issue, most secular leaders seem to have been indifferent to it and quite prepared to deal with either Church to secure their own advantage.

These relations with Rome were also to particularly bother later Serbian churchmen. Whereas Dometian in his Life of Sava mentions the papal coronation of Stefan, the more elaborate Life of Sava written by Theodosius at the turn of the thirteenth-fourteenth century, which utilized Dometian’s work, ignored the papal role and claimed that Stefan had been crowned by Saint Sava. This contradiction has caused considerable controversy among scholars, including some Serbian scholars who also were troubled by the papal coronation, resulting in the theory that after he established an autocephalous Serbian Church in 1219 Sava gave Stefan a second coronation. This view has by now largely been discarded. It is generally accepted by modern scholars that Stefan had just one coronation, that from the papal legate.

The Serbian clerics were not alone in protesting Stefan’s coronation. The King of Hungary did so as well, for he saw the crowning as a contravention of his own rights held ever since 1202 when, after he had helped install Vukan in Raška, he had added “Serbia” to his own title. Claiming that he alone possessed the right to the Serbian kingship, he argued that a second ruler could not be entitled King of Serbia. Serbian sources claim that the Hungarians planned military action, and some scholars believe an attack was actually launched. Stanojević, however, argues that no Hungarian attack occurred at this time.19

The Serbian sources, Dometian and Theodosius, state that immediately after Stefan’s coronation the Hungarian king in protest began to mobilize for war, but then Sava traveled to Hungary and talked the king out of it, astonishing the monarch by miraculously procuring ice in the midst of a hot summer. As Stanojević points out, neither source states that the Hungarian king did more than prepare for war; and neither source mentions any actual fighting. Stanojević also notes that the story as given cannot be accurate; for if Theodosius is correct in stating that the Hungarian king immediately prepared for action, the king was not even present to take action. For in August 1217 the Hungarian king, Andrew II, had set sail from Split for Palestine as a crusader, not to return until the end of 1218. Furthermore, Sava could not have participated in negotiations at that time, as the sources claim, for immediately after the coronation he had left Serbia for Athos only to return in 1219/20. Stanojević suggests the story of Sava’s negotiations with the Hungarians is actually
a distorted version of the negotiations between the two states that took place in 1216, discussed above, when Stefan met Andrew at Ravno on their common border. Stanojević proceeds to describe the economic and political difficulties that then burdened Hungary and argues that for the ensuing decade Hungary was in no position to carry out a war against Serbia.

The only existing evidence from the time that suggests some fighting occurred between Hungarians and Serbs is a Hungarian charter from 1229 granted to a Hungarian nobleman which thanks him for service in a war against Serbia. If this reference to a Serbian war does not refer to some skirmish taking place between 1214 and 1216, when Hungary was allied to the members of the anti-Serbian coalition, this statement presumably refers to some small encounter against some Serbs that occurred after 1217. However, it seems safe to assume that though Hungary did protest the coronation, it took no major action. Whether action was prevented by diplomacy or by Hungary’s inability to launch a campaign at the time is not known.

NOTES

1. For a list of major fiefs established by Boniface on his march through Thessaly to Boeotia, see W. Miller, Essays on the Latin Orient (Cambridge, 1921), pp. 62–63.

2. Longnon ("Problèmes de l’histoire de la principauté de Morée," Journal des savants, 1946, pp. 88–93) argues that Othon de la Roche acquired Thebes for the first time in 1211. Longnon believes Thebes was held from late 1204 or early 1205 until about 1211 by a certain Albertino of Canossa, another vassal of Boniface; Albertino seems to have supported Hubert of Biandrate’s faction after Boniface’s death. Setton remains on the fence on this question: “Although there is some reason to believe that Thebes was first granted to Albertino . . . , the city . . . was certainly being ruled after 1211 by Othon” (Cambridge Medieval History, vol. 4, pt. 1 [Cambridge, 1966], p. 389). A second controversy concerning the de la Roche holding centers around the date the de la Roche lords acquired the title duke, enabling the holding to be called a duchy. It is commonly stated that the ducal title was granted to Guy de la Roche in about 1259. However, many scholars have come to believe that the story in the Chronicle of the Morea, the source for this date, is pure legend. And scholars have noted that the title duke was used off and on before 1259. For example, Pope Innocent III, who usually called Othon “lord,” in one letter of July 1208 called him “duke.” The ducal title came into regular use, however, only in the last quarter of the thirteenth century. In any case, when, by whom, and under what circumstances the title was granted remain a mystery.


4. Ducellier argues that Venice was not in a position to pose a major threat to Michael’s state and would not have launched a serious war over what to it would have been relatively low priority territory. He argues the greatest threat to Epirus came initially from Thessaloniki and then after 1209 from the Latin Empire itself (Ducellier, La façade maritime de l’Albanie au moyen âge [Thessaloniki (Institute for Balkan...
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Studies), 1981], pp. 136–38). In any case, regardless of which enemy seemed most dangerous to Michael, the arguments presented above on Michael’s policies and the motives for them still remain relevant.


16. E. Savčevá (“Sevastokrator Strez,” Godišnik na Sofijska universitet (Istočn Fest)et 68 [1974]:67–97) argues that at some point Strez did acquire Ohrid itself. He then fought to make Ohrid a bishopric for the territory of his state and presumably succeeded in subjecting all the towns of his realm to that archbishop. At this time Skopje, which Strez held, was transferred from the jurisdiction of Tmowo to Ohrid. This transfer would make no sense if Strez did not hold Ohrid. Though many Bulgarians received episcopal and clerical appointments at this time in towns under Strez, the major figures at Ohrid’s archbishop’s court remained Greek. But cf. F. Barišić and B. Ferjančič, “Vesti Dimitrija Horatijana o’vlasti Druguvita’,” ZRVI 20 (1981): 41–55.

17. The reader should be aware that two different towns bore the name Berthoa/Verboia (with beta’s b sound changing to that of v in the course of the Middle Ages). One lay in southern Bulgaria/northern Thrace. The other, Strez’s town, lay in Macedonia just north of Thessaly. The Slavs often called the latter Ber, which should not be confused with a third town Bera/Veria which lay in southern Thrace on the via Egnatia near the mouth of the Marica River. To avoid confusion I shall refer to the three places by different forms, calling the first, the southern Bulgarian town, Berthoa; the second, the Macedonian town, Veria; and the third, the southern Thracian town, Bera.