

# **The Old French** ***Chronicle of Morea***

An Account of Frankish Greece  
after the Fourth Crusade

Translated by

**Anne Van Arsdall** and  
**Helen Moody**



Crusade Texts in Translation

# CRUSADE TEXTS IN TRANSLATION

Volume 28

## *About the volume*

Preserved in a unique fourteenth-century manuscript, the Old French version of the *Chronicle of Morea* is a contemporary account of Frankish feudal life transposed onto foreign soil. It describes clashes, conquests, and ransoms between the Franks and Byzantines, as well as their alliances and arranged marriages. The *Chronicle of Morea* brims with anecdotes giving insight into the operation of feudal justice, the role of noble women in feudal society, the practice of chivalry, and the conduct of warfare. This is the first translation into English.

## *About the series*

The crusading movement, which originated in the 11th century and lasted beyond the 16th, bequeathed to its future historians a legacy of sources which are unrivalled in their range and variety. These sources document in fascinating detail the motivations and viewpoints, military efforts and spiritual lives of the participants in the crusades. They also narrate the internal histories of the states and societies which crusaders established or supported in the many regions where they fought, as well as those of their opponents. Some of these sources have been translated in the past but the vast majority have been available only in their original language. The goal of this series is to provide a wide ranging corpus of texts, most of them translated for the first time, which will illuminate the history of the crusades and the crusader-states from every angle, including that of their principal adversaries, the Muslim powers of the Middle East.

## *About the translators*

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THE OLD FRENCH *CHRONICLE OF MOREA*

# Crusade Texts in Translation

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The Old French  
*Chronicle of Morea*  
An Account of Frankish Greece after  
the Fourth Crusade

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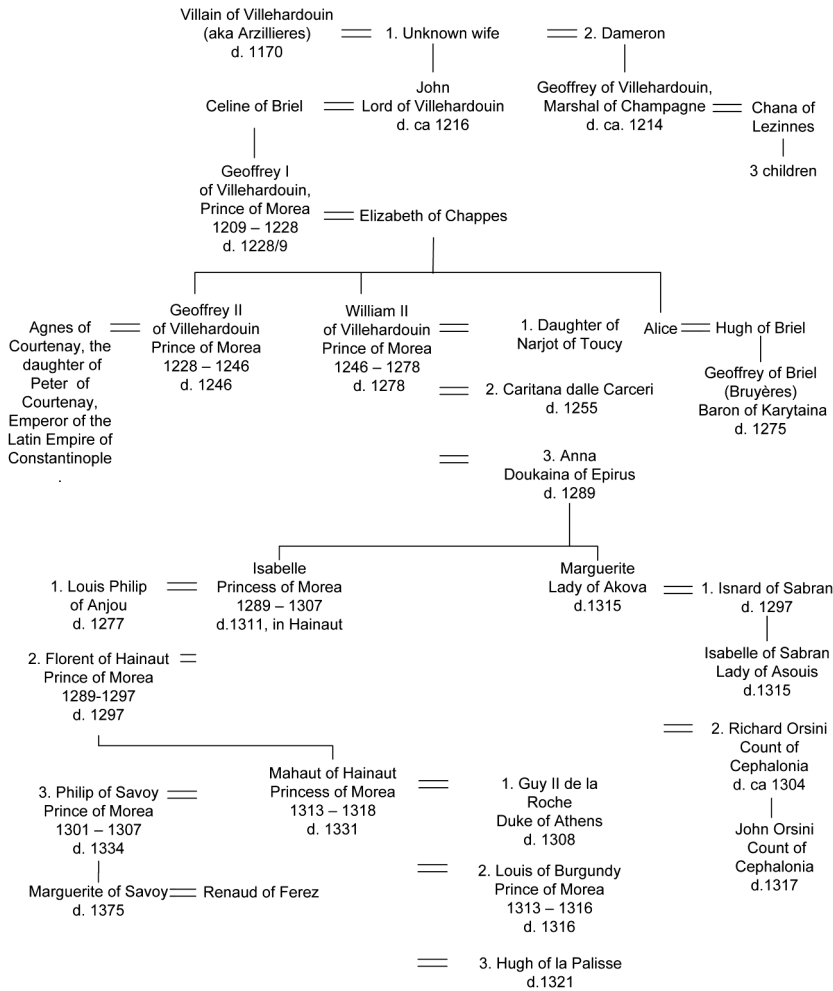
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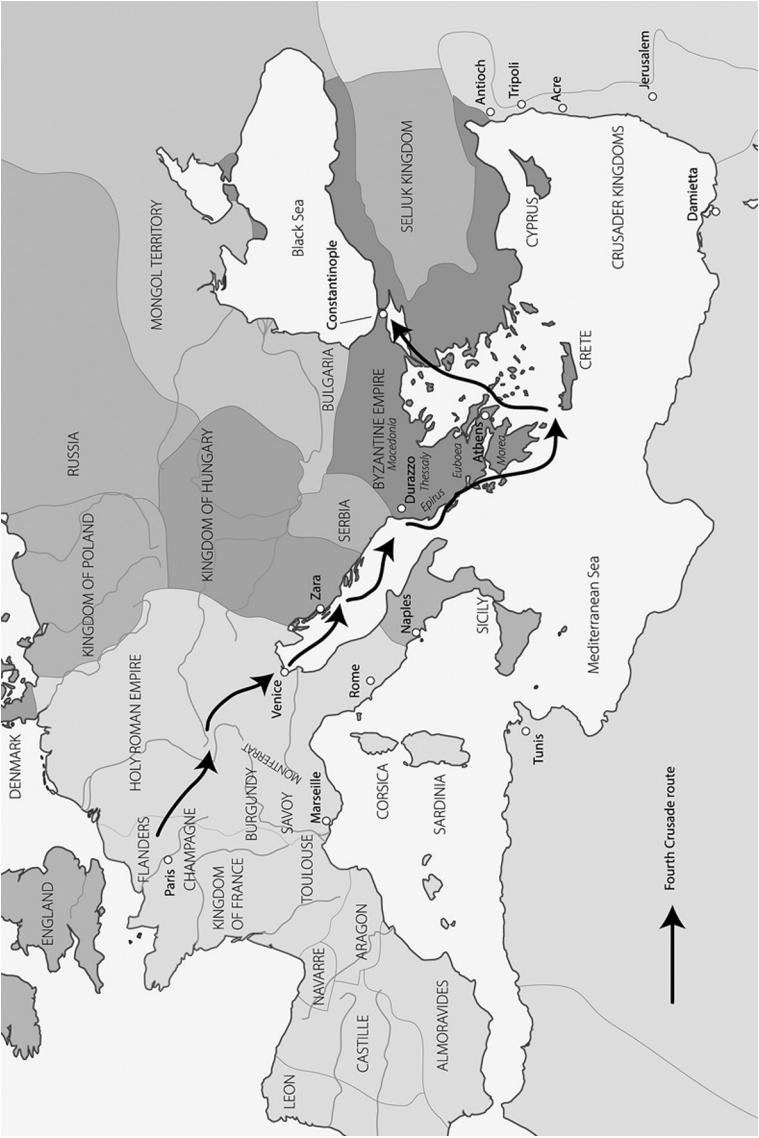
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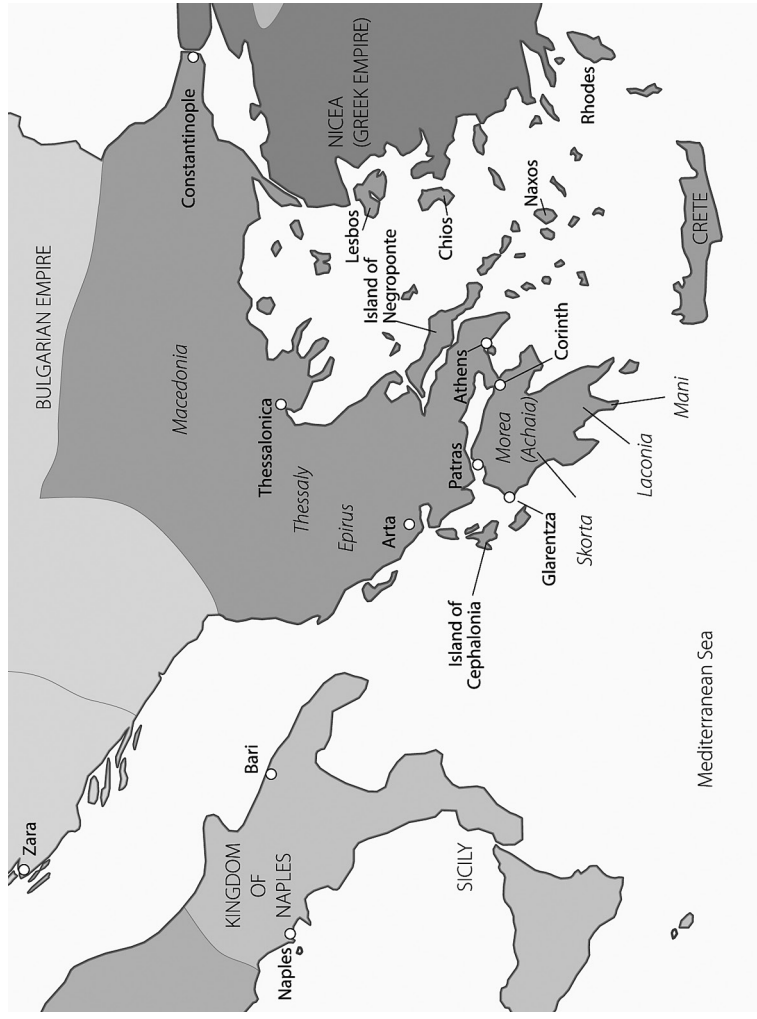
Villehardouin Family  
1170 – 1375





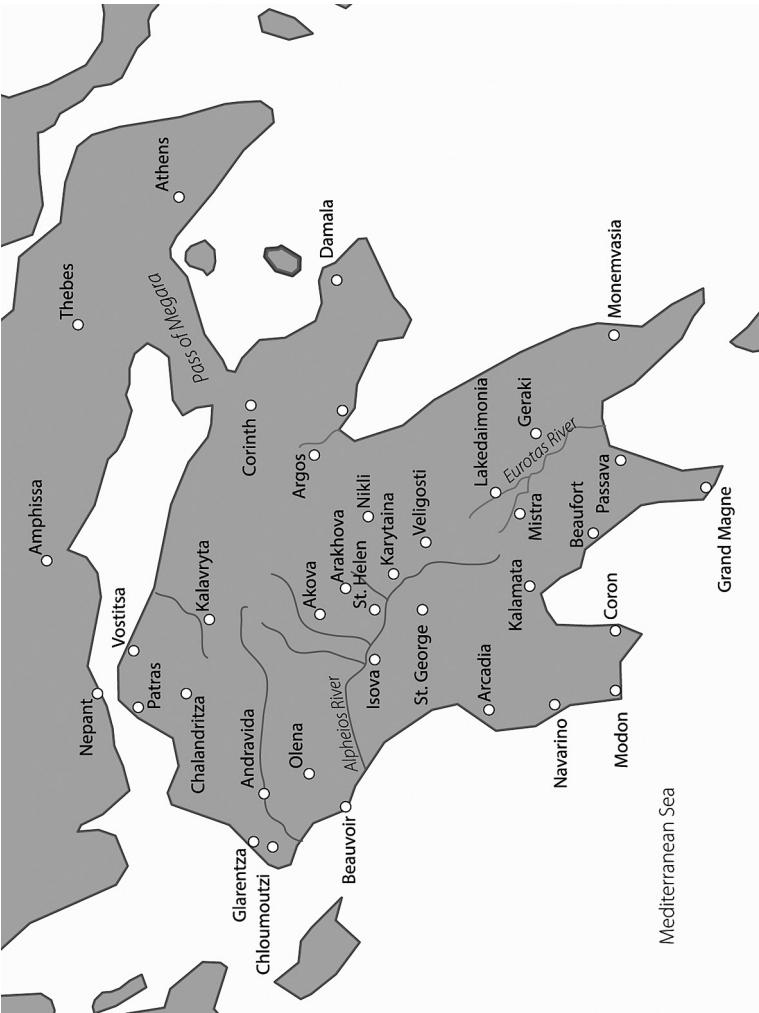
Map 1

An overview of Europe and Byzantium at the time of the Fourth Crusade, ca 1200–1204, indicating the route taken by the main crusader host in its diversion to Constantinople. Regions and cities shown are keyed to places mentioned in the French version of the *Chronicle of Morea*. Map by Robby Poore; used with permission of the artist.



Map 2

Principal cities and regions in Italy, Greece, and the Byzantine Empire at the time covered in the *Chronicle of Morea*. Borders and regions changed hands constantly from 1204 onward, as endless and complex power struggles unfolded over decades. Map by Robby Poore; used with permission of the artist.



Map 3

Detailed view of the principality of Morea, sometimes called Achaia, during the time covered by the *Chronicle of Morea*, showing the major towns, castles, regions, and rivers mentioned in the work. Map by Robby Poore; used with permission of the artist.



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Anne Van Arsdall and Helen Moody





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# Introduction

## Summary

The principality of Morea was established after the Fourth Crusade by Frankish conquest in the Greek Peloponnesus. It flourished in the thirteenth century and continued in diminished form until the fifteenth century. The *Chronicle of Morea* documents the principality's establishment and rise, as well as the beginning of its slow decline.

The *Chronicle* describes conquests and captures, trials and punishments, alliances and betrayals among Franks, Byzantine Greeks, Turks, and others. Rich in source material for medieval culture, it illuminates myriad topics connected with feudal life, including chivalry, the role of noble women, and the conduct of warfare.

This is the first translation of the Old French *Chronicle of Morea* into English. It may be read in the original in Jean Longnon's edition.<sup>1</sup>

## The *Chronicles of Morea*

The *Chronicle of Morea* is not a single text, although perhaps it was once: historians believe a lost prototype, whose language is a matter of controversy, was composed between 1310 and 1320.<sup>2</sup> Rather, the *Chronicle of Morea* is a collective term for a story that is dispersed among eight extant manuscripts, in four languages, which

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<sup>1</sup> Jean Longnon, ed. *Livre de la conquête de la princée de l'Amorée. Chronique de Morée (1204–1305)* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1911).

<sup>2</sup> David Jacoby in 'Quelques considérations sur les versions de la Chronique de Morée', *Journal des Savants* (1968), 133–189, presents extensive evidence and reasoning for a French prototype, a finding supported by Peter Lock, Harold Lurier, and Kenneth Setton, among many others. However, Longnon (lxxiii–lxxxiv) argues for an Italian prototype, one created for Bartholomew Ghisi, a theory supported by Antoine Bon: *La Morée Franque: Recherches historiques, topographiques, et archéologiques sur la principauté d'Achaïe 1205–1430* (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, 1969), 15–17. Michael J. Jeffreys, 'The Chronicle of the Morea: Priority of the Greek Version', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 68 (1975), 304–350, presents arguments for a Greek prototype, which are supported by Teresa Shawcross: *The Chronicle of Morea: Historiography in Crusader Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009). In a critique of Jeffreys's argument, Gill Page demonstrates the improbability of a Greek prototype; see *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 303–304.

are believed to derive ultimately from that prototype.<sup>3</sup> These manuscripts include translations and paraphrases into Greek, Aragonese, and Italian, as well as the French abridgment translated here. Correspondences exist across all the versions, but each differs regarding which events are included and how events are treated.<sup>4</sup>

### *The Greek 'Chronicle of Morea'*

There are five manuscripts of the Greek *Chronicle of Morea* (*To Chronikon tou Moreos*), four of them dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.<sup>5</sup> Three of the four are paraphrases. The definitive texts of the Greek *Chronicle* consist of the earliest Greek manuscript, dating from the late fourteenth century (MS Fabricus 57, Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen), and the related sixteenth-century Turin manuscript. Written in verse, the Greek *Chronicle* features more dialog and description than the French, and despite being written in Greek, shows a hostile attitude toward Greeks. It breaks off with events in 1292. Apart from critical editions in Greek, an English translation is also available.<sup>6</sup>

### *The Aragonese 'Chronicle of Morea'*

The *Libro de los fechos et conquistas del principado de la Morea* (MS 10131, Biblioteca Nacional de España, Madrid) was presented on 24 October 1393 to Juan Fernández de Heredia, the Grand Master of the Knights Hospitaller, then headquartered in Rhodes.<sup>7</sup> The Hospitallers had earlier held a lease in Morea from Joanna I of Naples (d. 1382).<sup>8</sup> The Aragonese version of the *Chronicle of Morea* depicts events from 1200 to 1377, about the time the Hospitallers' lease began, in 1376. However, this version has been judged sufficiently different from the

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<sup>3</sup> One point on which seemingly all agree.

<sup>4</sup> See Shawcross, 274–349, for a comparison of the versions.

<sup>5</sup> Shawcross, 35–36.

<sup>6</sup> Harold E. Lurier, *Crusaders as Conquerors: The Chronicle of Morea*, in *Records of Civilization, Sources and Studies* No. 69., ed. American Council of Learned Societies (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964); John Schmitt, ed. *The Chronicle of Morea (To Chronikon tou Moreos): A History in Political Verse, Relating the Establishment of Feudalism in Greece by the Franks in the Thirteenth Century, Edited in Two Parallel Texts from the MSS of Copenhagen and Paris, with Introduction, Critical Notes and Indices* (London: Methuen & Co., 1904).

<sup>7</sup> The presentation date is recorded in the manuscript. See Alfred Paul V. Morel-Fatio, *Libro de los fechos et conquistas del principado de la Morea* (Geneva: Société de l'Orient Latin, 1885).

<sup>8</sup> For an account of this lease, see Kenneth M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204–1571)*, vol. 1, *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries*, *Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society*, no. 114 (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1976), 161ff.

contemporaneous Greek and French manuscripts to be considered ‘a distinct and even new work’.<sup>9</sup>

*The Italian ‘Chronicle of Morea’*

The *Istoria della Morea* (mss. Italiani classes VII Cod 712 Coll 8754 in Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana, Venice) is part of an eighteenth-century codex. The Italian *Chronicle* is a summary of the Greek.<sup>10</sup>

*The French ‘Chronicle of Morea’*

The *Chronique de Morée*, ‘the book of the conquest of the principality of Morea’, whose translation follows, survives in a unique manuscript, which is held in the Royal Library in Brussels.<sup>11</sup> Like the other versions, the French *Chronicle* is believed to be based on an early fourteenth-century prototype. An abridgment was made early mid-century of a (presumably French) document that was perhaps the prototype. This document was found, we are told, ‘in a book that once belonged to the noble baron Bartholomew Ghisi, the great constable, which book he had in his castle at Thebes’. A copy of the abridged manuscript was made around 1400, possibly in the Veneto, and perhaps thence carried to the duke of Burgundy’s library, where it stayed until the nineteenth century, when it was transported to Brussels.<sup>12</sup>

This copy is incomplete in terms of the text and apparently unfinished as a book. The lacunae and copyist’s remarks tell us that the abridgment had been damaged. The gaps in the text are noted and faithfully preserved by the copyist, for himself or a future scribe to fill in. This suggests that the copyist believed

<sup>9</sup> Shawcross, 41.

<sup>10</sup> See Shawcross, 36–37, for a description.

<sup>11</sup> *Chronique de Morée*, MS 15702, Bibliothèque royale de Belgique, Cabinet des manuscrits, la Librairie des ducs de Bourgogne, Brussels.

<sup>12</sup> For the transmission of the manuscript, see Jacoby, ‘Quelques considérations’, where he describes how John of Nevers might have acquired the abridged manuscript while returning from imprisonment under Sultan Bajazet I in the late 1390s, taking it to Burgundy for copying. Features of the manuscript, however, suggest that the copy was perhaps made in the Veneto, maybe in Treviso: there are two slightly differing bull’s head watermarks of a type belonging to Treviso; on one of the blank pages, a moralized alphabet (e.g., ‘E is for Eve’) is written in a northern Italian dialect. According to Froissart, John of Nevers and his company spent time in Venice, where ‘they employed clerks and messengers to write and carry letters to France’. When an epidemic struck Venice, they decamped to Treviso for four months. See Jean Froissart, *Chronicles of England, France, Spain, and the Adjoining Countries, from the Latter Part of the Reign of Edward II to the Coronation of Henry IV*, trans. Thomas Johnes, 2nd edn, 12 vols. (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806), vol. 12, 9–13. Shawcross describes alternative scenarios, 86–98, among them an initial transmission of the *Chronicle* to Hainaut.

that an undamaged abridgment existed somewhere or that another version of the *Chronicle*, perhaps the Greek or Aragonese, might be brought into service to complete the manuscript.<sup>13</sup> Besides the lacunae, the manuscript shows another sign of being unfinished: the initial capitals were never completed or gilded. The most recent edition of this manuscript is by Jean Longnon, cited above.<sup>14</sup>

Unlike the Greek version, which breaks off with events in 1292, the French *Chronicle* continues the story through a lavish parliament called by Philip of Savoy, then prince of Achaia, and held at Corinth in the spring of 1304 (the year is disputed).

Unique to the French *Chronicle* is a chronological table that begins the manuscript and takes events to 1332/3. No one knows why the table was added to the abridgment, as it provides neither a table of contents nor a thorough update to the main narrative. In a detailed analysis of the table, Jacoby observes that apart from the commonalities between the table and the text regarding events before 1303, they also both report the same dating error: Godfrey of Bouillon's conquering the Holy Sepulcher in 1104 (really in 1099).<sup>15</sup> There are several other correspondences, especially repetition of wording, but the table also reports facts and rumors from different sources.<sup>16</sup> For one example among many, the *Chronicle* says that the marriage of Isabelle of Villehardouin to Philip of Savoy was prompted by the advice of French noblemen (her close friends and kinsmen), while the table merely notes the pope's consent.

### Accuracy in the *Chronicle of Morea*

The *Chronicle* is a major source for many events and persons in thirteenth-century Morea. Yet its accuracy cannot be completely trusted, as it sometimes confuses similarly named persons, misnames others, conflates events, and invents stories.

For instance, paragraphs 80–81 report that Theodore I Laskaris is supposed to have left behind a minor son in the care of regent Michael Palaiologos, who then killed the son and seized control himself. Historically, it was instead Theodore I's grandson, Theodore II Laskaris, who left behind a minor son. This son was

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<sup>13</sup> Not all the pages remained pristine; the moralized alphabet was written on a lacuna page after f. 61.

<sup>14</sup> For an earlier edition, see J. A. C. Buchon, ed. *Recherches historiques sur la principauté française de Morée et ses hautes baronnies. Le livre de la conquête de la principauté de la Morée publié pour la première fois d'après un manuscrit de la Bibliothèque des ducs de Bourgogne à Bruxelles avec notes et éclaircissements. Première époque: Conquête et établissement féodale de l'an 1205 à l'an 1333*, vol. 1 (Paris: Imprimerie de Plon Frères, 1845).

<sup>15</sup> As neither the narrative nor the table is accurate by modern standards, we have provided a historical timeline to help orient readers.

<sup>16</sup> Jacoby, 'Quelques considérations sur les versions de la Chronique de Morée', 144.

not killed; rather, he was blinded and imprisoned by the regent turned usurper, Michael VIII Palaiologos.

The *Chronicle* sometimes confuses the three Geoffreys of Villehardouin, and conflates the deeds of the first two: Geoffrey (d. ca 1214), marshal of Champagne, crusader, and the chronicler of the Fourth Crusade; the chronicler's nephew Geoffrey I (d. ca 1228), co-founder and second prince of Morea; and the prince's son Geoffrey II (d. 1246), third prince of Morea. In another confusion, the early rulers of Athens are called by the names of their descendants, so both Otto and Guy I de la Roche are called 'William', and John I de la Roche is called 'Guy'.

### *Literary Elements in the 'Chronicle'*

The *Chronicle* was intended, according to its narrator, to be an entertaining read. The narrator does not offer a *longue estoire* that bores people, since not everyone has the patience to read a long document. Instead, he says, 'I will tell my story, not as I found it written down, but as briefly as I can. Let everyone hear it gladly and willingly' (§1). The word for story ('Here the story stops' or 'here the story says') used throughout the *Chronicle* is *conte* (and variants), rather than *estoire*, history, the word used for the '*grant estoire*' of the kingdom of Jerusalem that the narrator has read (§2).

The *Chronicle of Morea* features many set narrative pieces. There is, for example, a long yarn about 'Robert of Champagne' (a figure who may not have existed by that or any other name), who came to claim the principality on behalf of his cousin William of Champlitte. His luckless tale occupies several paragraphs (§140ff), but no one knows if any of William of Champlitte's relations voyaged to Morea to claim his title and lands, as the *Chronicle* reports. Perhaps someone whose record is lost did indeed attempt such a claim. Nonetheless, the narrative's portrayal of the cat-and-mouse game played by Geoffrey I against a hapless, untitled Robert has certainly been embroidered, if not indeed invented whole cloth.

Passages of monolog and dialog, often dramatic, sometimes touching, abound. A small sample includes:

- Geoffrey of Bruyères, the captivating lord of Karytaina, talking with his tent pole (§287ff), so that he could alert his men to the desertion their leaders planned, without breaking the oath of silence those same leaders had forced him to take.
- Prince William II and the emperor's arguing about ransom (§313ff).
- Nicholas III of Saint-Omer's issuing a dramatic, 'make-my-day' challenge to Prince Philip of Savoy (§861ff).
- Roger of Lauria and Lord John of Tournay's becoming best friends after nearly killing each other (§764ff).

As it is unlikely that a clerk was present to write down such passages as they were spoken, we must assume that the author(s) of the *Chronicle* knew how to enliven the narrative, whether by their own invention or by their recording of oral tales.

### *History and the 'Chronicle'*

The history of thirteenth-century Greece is complex. A major power, the Byzantine Empire, was gravely weakened by internal events as well as by the Fourth Crusade. Victors and neighboring powers rushed in to take advantage of its poorly defended territories, even as the empire rebuilt itself. The *Chronicle* relates these interwoven stories with varying degrees of clarity, a situation not helped by the French version's being a digest. Furthermore, as described above, the *Chronicle* misstates some matters of fact, elaborates certain of its stories, and invents some of its scenes.

We therefore direct our readers to the full, modern histories of this period presented in the notes and bibliography. More immediately, notes and the annotated index (among other reader aids) correct the larger errors and provide historical context. Finally, we have tried to untangle some of the more confusing narrative threads with the following simple overview of the major historical developments relating to thirteenth-century Morea.

### **Historical Background**

The events described in all versions of the *Chronicle of Morea* include the Fourth Crusade and its aftermath in Greece, as well as the conflicts of the newly created Latin Empire of Constantinople with the splintered Byzantine Empire. The following sketch of this complex history is provided to help the *Chronicle's* readers understand something of the conflicts, significant personages, and territories mentioned in the text. This overview omits much detail; furthermore, historians are not unanimous regarding many dates, not to mention interpretations of events. For further details, interested readers may refer to a number of in-depth histories, as well as to other chronicles.<sup>17</sup> In addition, our historical timeline

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<sup>17</sup> Bon; Nicolas Cheetham, *Medieval Greece* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981); Bernard Hamilton, *The Crusades* (Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton Publishing, 1998); David Jacoby, 'The Latin Empire of Constantinople and the Frankish States', in *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492*, ed. Jonathan Shepard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Peter Lock, *The Franks in the Aegean, 1204–1500* (London; New York: Longman, 1995); Jean Longnon, *L'empire Latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris: Payot, 1949); Jean Longnon, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin: Recherches sur les croisés de la Quatrième Croisade* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1978); William Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece (1204–1566)* (New York: E. P. Dutton and Company, 1908); Steven Runciman, *A History of*

summarizes the significant historical events recounted (often out of sequence) in the *Chronicle* itself, and the annotated index of persons and places provides additional information.

### *The Fourth Crusade (ca 1202–1204)*

Many complex factors contributed to the Fourth Crusade's diversion to Greece, the chief of which were the disorganization of the Byzantine Empire and the ambitions of the Latin forces.

### *Byzantium on the eve of the Fourth Crusade*

At the turn of the thirteenth century, the Byzantine Empire was fragile, having been weakened by decades of poor rulers, rebellious (conquered) peoples, and incessant attacks from neighbors and regional invaders, including Serbs, Bulgarians, Seljuk Turks, and Normans. In 1195, the ruling Byzantine emperor, Isaac II Angelos, was blinded and imprisoned by his usurping brother, Alexios III Angelos, who also captured Isaac's son Alexios IV. However, in 1201, the son escaped prison and fled to the court of his brother-in-law Philip of Swabia, from where he was soon to change the course of the Fourth Crusade.

### *Franks and Venetians*

In the late twelfth century, counts and minor aristocracy in northern France, chiefly in the counties of Champagne, Burgundy, and Flanders, were inspired, the *Chronicle* tells us, by the preaching of Fulk of Neuilly to undertake a crusade to

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*the Crusades*, vol. 3: *The Kingdom of Acre and the Later Crusades* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954); Kenneth M. Setton, R. L. Wolff, and H. W. Hazard, eds. *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2: *The Later Crusades, 1189–1311* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); Kenneth M. Setton and H. W. Hazard, eds. *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3: *The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1975); Jonathan Shepard, ed. *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire c. 500–1492* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). The principal chronicles touching on Morea include Geoffroy of Villehardouin, *Conquête de Constantinople (Édition Bilingue Français-Français Médiéval)*, trans. Jean Dufournet, Garnier Flammarion/Littérature Bilingue (Paris: Flammarion, 2004); Francisco de Moncada, *The Catalan Chronicle of Francisco de Moncada*, trans. Frances Hernandez (El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1975); Ramón Muntaner, 'The Chronicle of Muntaner', ed. Anna Goodenough, 2 vols. (Hakluyt Society 2nd ser., nos. 47, 50) (repr. Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010); Marino Sanudo, *The Book of the Secrets of the Faithful of the Cross (Liber Secretorum Fidelium Crucis)*, trans. Peter Lock, *Crusade Texts in Translation*, vol. 21 (Farnham, Surrey, England; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2011). See also Jean de Joinville and Geoffroi de Villehardouin, *Chronicles of the Crusades*, trans. Caroline Smith (London: Penguin, 2008).



the Holy Land.<sup>18</sup> They sought permission from the pope (Innocent III) and went to Venice to secure ships for the overseas passage.<sup>19</sup>

After ordering ships from the Venetians, the Franks soon found themselves in a financial bind, for the greater part of their expected troops never arrived, and others took different routes to the Holy Land. The Franks were thus left owing for excess ships, a debt they could not pay. In response, the Venetians cut them a deal: invade Zara (modern Zadar, Croatia), a former client city on the Adriatic, and return it to Venetian rule. The Franks agreed to this method of repaying part of their debt and postponing payment of the remainder. Accordingly, in 1202 the Venetians and Franks attacked and conquered Zara – to their own disgrace, for Zara was not only a Christian city but a Catholic one.

The initial plan to journey to the Holy Land changed, principally thanks to Alexios IV, who after his father's blinding, as mentioned above, had fled to the court of Philip of Swabia, his brother-in-law. While there, Alexios met Boniface of Montferrat, who was his brother-in-law's cousin and a leader of the Fourth Crusade. Alexios persuaded Boniface and most of the leaders of the Fourth Crusade to take their armies to Constantinople and restore his father and him to the throne. For so doing, he promised them vast rewards of troops, ships, and money, which would enable them to continue the crusade to the Holy Land.

Although some of the crusaders continued on to Syria and the Holy Land, in 1203 the principal armies journeyed to Constantinople. During one of several assaults on the city, the usurper Alexios III fled in disgrace. The Byzantine nobility restored Isaac II to the throne, but the crusaders, who wanted to claim their promised rewards, then forced them to name Alexios IV co-emperor.

As a ruler Alexios IV was neither popular nor competent, and in early 1204 he was overthrown by Alexios V Doukas (called 'Mourtzouphlos' in the *Chronicle*). Alexios IV was killed, and his father, Isaac II, died soon after. The crusaders immediately demanded that Alexios V honor the agreements they had made with

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<sup>18</sup> The words 'crusade' and 'crusader' were never used in these chronicles. Instead the voyagers are called 'pilgrims' ('pelerin'), and the journey is described as 'the [overseas] passage to the Holy Land of Jerusalem' ('le passage d'aler en la sainte terre de Jherusalem'), or simply 'the passage'. For a recent discussion of the evolution of this terminology, see M. Cecelia Gaposchkin, 'From Pilgrimage to Crusade: The Liturgy of Departure, 1095–1300', *Speculum* 88, no. 1 (2013), 44–91.

<sup>19</sup> Venice, a merchant republic, had a very long history of engagement with the Byzantine Empire (and indeed, would continue its involvement in the region long after the Franks left). Nominally part of the Byzantine Empire for some centuries, an eleventh-century treaty gave the Venetians privileged trading status and exempted them from certain taxes. Venetian success aroused local resentment, and in 1182 the populace of Constantinople massacred Latin merchants, focusing particularly on Venetians. The legendary blinding of doge Henry Dandolo, mentioned in the *Chronicle*, perhaps metaphorically refers to this deadly riot, if not to his other less-than-pleasant encounters with Byzantium. Although Dandolo undoubtedly had very poor eyesight, it was probably not due to deliberate blinding by a Constantinopolitan torturer, as reported in the *Chronicle* and elsewhere.

Alexios IV, but he refused. Consequently, in April 1204, the French and Venetian armies sacked Constantinople. Alexios V fled but was captured and executed later that year – by being thrown from the top of an ancient pillar, according to the *Chronicle* (§59).

*After the Fourth Crusade: Kingdoms, Empires, and the Rise of Morea*

*The division of lands after the conquest of Constantinople*

Immediately after the sack of Constantinople in 1204, the victors divided the conquered areas of the Byzantine Empire. The conquest's leaders agreed that they would establish a Latin Empire of Constantinople and elect one of their own as its head. Their emperor would take over one-quarter of the Byzantine territories, those nearest Constantinople; Venice and the Frankish nobles who chose to stay in Greece would then equally divide the remaining three-quarters of the Byzantine Empire. This plan meant that after taking the city, the victors had to begin at once the conquest of the remaining Byzantine territories (see Map 2).<sup>20</sup>

The *Chronicle* depicts a time of multiple, concurrent developments: the founding of empires, kingdoms, and principalities; of despotates, duchies, and baronies; and the ceaseless wars among them. The Latin-controlled territories included the Latin Empire around Constantinople itself, the kingdom of Thessalonica, and the principality of Morea. Venice, a maritime empire, claimed the major Greek ports and strategic islands, rather than the inland territories. Most of these nascent feudal states were technically subject to the Latin Empire. But allegiances often shifted, depending on marriage and family ties, as well as on opportunity. The Greek-controlled territories included the despotate of Epirus (Arta) and the Byzantine empire of Nicaea. Bordering kingdoms and tribes also participated in disputes, notably Bulgaria and the Cuman people. We present an overview of these developments, which for Morea culminate in the disastrous battle of Pelagonia in 1259.

*The Latin Empire and Its Rulers, 1204–1261*

Within its first few decades (1204–1228), the Latin Empire of Constantinople had four emperors, whom the *Chronicle* sometimes confuses (§§65–87).

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<sup>20</sup> Peter Lock identifies six Latin-controlled territories that had some form of settled political organization in 1210: The Latin Empire of Constantinople; the kingdom of Thessalonica; the principality of Achaia (Morea); the lordship (later duchy) of Athens and Thebes; the duchy of the Archipelago; and the triarchy of the island of Negroponte (Euboea). In addition, there were numerous small family holdings, such as Boudonitza, as well as Venetian colonial territories, such as the castellanies of Modon and Coron and the duchy of Crete. See Lock, 5.

*Baldwin I, count of Flanders (1204–1207)*

In May 1204, Baldwin of Flanders was elected the first Latin emperor, with Constantinople his capital, just beating Boniface of Montferrat for the title. The empire, however, was not simply given to him; rather, he had to conquer those Byzantine territories allotted to his share. In addition, a much diminished but very hostile Byzantine Empire lay to the east, and to the north Bulgaria coveted his lands. Baldwin was initially successful fighting the Byzantines to the east, but in 1205, his army fell to the Bulgarian army at Adrianople, on the northern frontier. The new Latin emperor was taken prisoner and, in 1207, was put to death in a Bulgarian prison. Baldwin's brother, Henry of Flanders, initially became regent of the empire. When Baldwin's fate in Bulgaria became known, Henry was named emperor.

*Henry of Flanders (1206–1216)*

Henry (called 'Robert' in the *Chronicle*), an able ruler, spent most of his reign in battles with Bulgaria and the empire of Nicaea. He had to confront turmoil within his empire as well. In 1207, feudal lords in mainland Greece and on the Peloponnesus rebelled against him, planning to establish a powerful territory of their own in central Greece and another in the Peloponnesus. In 1209, however, Emperor Henry overcame the rebellion and demanded obedience from the Frankish nobles, calling a parliament for that purpose at Ravenika, near Lamia. Henry appeared to have united the Latin Empire of Constantinople.

In reality, Henry's land holdings were not much more than Constantinople and a stretch of land between the new Byzantine Empire to the east and Bulgaria (with its holdings in Thrace) to the north. Henry ruled the Latin Empire until his death, perhaps by poison, in June 1216.

*Peter of Courtenay, Yolanda of Flanders, and their sons (1217–1228)*

Henry's brother-in-law Peter of Courtenay started out from France to take his place. Peter was crowned in Rome in 1217, but before reaching Constantinople he was captured by the despot of Epirus that same year and died in prison two years later. In the meantime, Yolanda of Flanders (sister of Baldwin and Henry, as well as Peter's wife) traveled separately from her husband and successfully reached Constantinople. From 1217 until her death in 1219 she ruled the Latin Empire as regent on behalf of her eldest son, Philip of Namur. During her regency, Yolanda arranged strategic marriages for her daughters Agnes (to Geoffrey II of Villehardouin) and Mary (to Greek emperor Theodore Laskaris).<sup>21</sup>

The two following years were, technically, without a Latin emperor. Even the regent named after Yolanda's death, Conon of Béthune, died soon after his appointment, in 1219/20. Philip of Namur refused the imperial throne, giving it to his younger brother Robert, who set out for Constantinople. Thus, in 1221,

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<sup>21</sup> For detailed accounts of these events, see Lock, 60ff, and Setton et al., eds., *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 2, 212ff.

Robert of Courtenay, Peter and Yolanda's second son, became emperor. Until his death in 1228, Robert ruled ineptly over a territory that was encroached upon from all sides.

*Baldwin II of Courtenay (1228–1261)*

Another of Peter and Yolanda's sons, Baldwin, then took the throne. Baldwin II succeeded his brother Robert in 1228, ruling under a regent (John of Brienne) until he came of age, in 1237. Baldwin II of Courtenay was destined to be the last Latin emperor of Constantinople to hold Constantinople and rule in anything but name. Yet even he spent most of his life as Latin emperor traveling throughout Europe and trying, with limited success, to raise funds and armies to regain his empire.<sup>22</sup>

Support from rulers in the West and from the pope dwindled, as other crusades and other issues took precedence over the problems of a weak Latin Empire. Although individual Latin feudal states throughout Greece, notably Morea, were flourishing at the time, the Latin Empire itself was never robust, lacking adequate funding and support. The nobles of Baldwin II's empire wanted only to establish their own power bases and paid him scant allegiance.

In 1261 the Byzantine emperor of Nicaea recaptured Constantinople, effectively ending the Latin Empire. Baldwin II fled, living his final years at the court of Charles I, king of Naples, on whose charity he depended and to whom, in May 1267, he conveyed his empire. Baldwin died in 1273. For more than a century afterward, his heirs continued to claim the imperial title. His granddaughter, Catherine of Courtenay, is mentioned several times in the *Chronicle* as one of his successors.

*Boniface of Montferrat and the kingdom of Thessalonica (1205–1224)*

The conquerors also claimed lands on the Peloponnesus and those in mainland Greece that the emperor did not hold. As compensation for losing the imperial election, Boniface of Montferrat, leader of the crusade army, claimed Thessalonica, a city in northern Greece on the Aegean coast. He immediately set out with many of the crusaders to take over as much of central and southern mainland Greece as he could.

Boniface was well-placed to rule in Greece. He had been chosen as the crusade's leader after the death of the original leader, Theobald III of Champagne, and had married Maria of Hungary, the widow of Emperor Isaac II, thus allying himself with key Greek nobles, some of whom accompanied him on his march to the south. Beginning in the fall of 1204, Boniface overran Thessaly and then proceeded south into Boeotia. He took Thebes, then Athens, and marched on to the Gulf of Corinth: victorious everywhere. As he won land, Boniface gave holdings

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<sup>22</sup> Baldwin II was indirectly responsible for Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. In 1238, he persuaded Louis IX of France to purchase the Crown of Thorns and redeem the pledge made to the Venetian merchant to whom Baldwin had pawned it. Work on Sainte-Chapelle as a fitting shrine for this relic began in 1241. See Lock, 316.