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ART, POWER, AND PATRONAGE IN THE PRINCIPALITY OF EPIRUS, 1204–1318

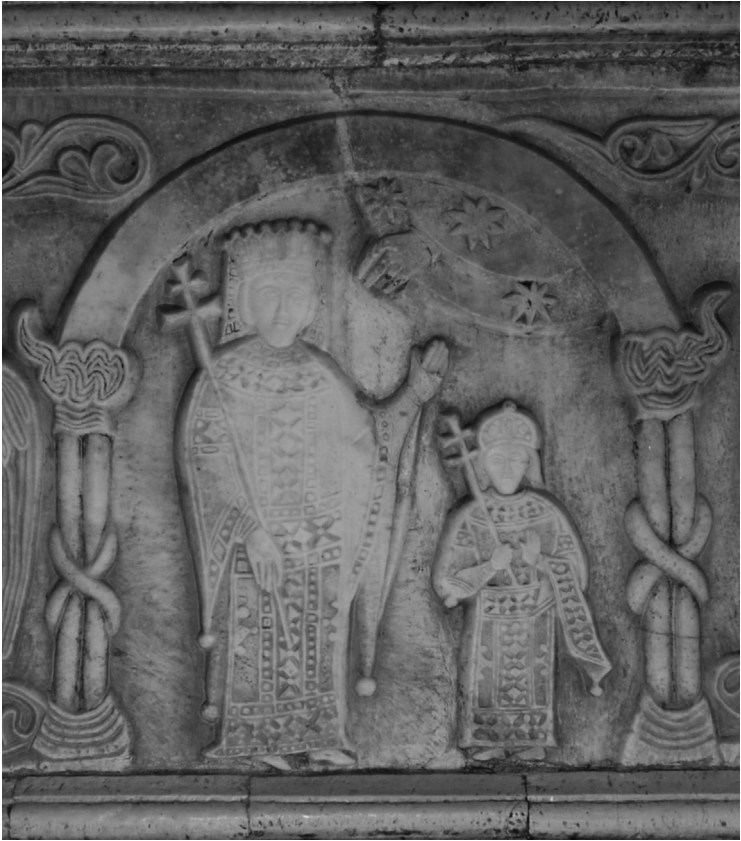
Leonela Fundić



Art, Power, and Patronage in the Principality of Epirus, 1204–1318

The Principality of Epirus was a medieval Greek state established in the western part of the Balkans after the fall of Constantinople to the forces of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. The Epirote rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family claimed to be legitimate successors to the Byzantine imperial throne and, with the support of the high clergy and the aristocracy within their domain, carefully maintained their Byzantine identity under the conditions of exile. This book explores a corpus of Epirote architecture, frescoes, sculpture, and inscriptions from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework, focusing on the nexus of art, patronage, and political ideology. Through an examination of a vast array of visual and textual sources, many of them understudied or hitherto unpublished, the book uncovers how the Epirote elite mobilised art and material culture to address the issues of succession and legitimacy, construct memory, reclaim Constantinople, and mediate encounters and exchanges with the Latin West. In doing so, this study offers a new perspective on Byzantine political and cultural history in the aftermath of the Fourth Crusade.

Leonela Fundić's research focuses on Late Antique and Byzantine archaeology, art, history, and theology. She holds a doctorate in Byzantine art and history from the University of Thessaloniki, Greece. Since 2013, she has been working as a researcher and lecturer at the School of Theology and Philosophy of the Australian Catholic University. During the academic year 2017–2018, Fundić was a postdoctoral fellow at the Department of Ancient History of Macquarie University, working on the Australian Research Council Discovery Project *Memories of Utopia: Destroying the Past to Create the Future*.



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Leonela Fundić
2021 Brisbane

Note to the Reader

Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are my own. The names of Greek scholars, when encountered in bibliographical references in Greek, are Latinised, but without the application of macrons. All bibliographical references in Serbian and other Slavic languages are rendered in the Latin alphabet.

‘Cat. No.’ refers to items in the catalogue of churches with internal decoration included in this book. The drawings of iconographic programmes of these churches are also incorporated in the catalogue.

Chapter 2 of the present book incorporates and expands upon parts of my article, “Art and Political Ideology in the State of Epiros during the Reign of Theodore Doukas (r.1215–1230)”, *Byzantina Symmeikta* 23 (2013), pp. 217–250.

Abbreviations

<i>AA</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικά Ανάλεκτα εζ Αθηνών</i>
<i>ABME</i>	<i>Αρχεῖον Βυζαντινών Μνημείων της Ελλάδος</i>
<i>AD</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον</i>
<i>ABSA</i>	<i>Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>AE</i>	<i>Αρχαιολογική Εφημερίς</i>
<i>ΑΠ</i>	<i>Αρχεῖον Πόντου</i>
<i>ArtB</i>	<i>The Art Bulletin</i>
<i>BCH</i>	<i>Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique</i>
<i>BF</i>	<i>Byzantinische Forschungen</i>
<i>BIHBR</i>	<i>Bulletin de l'Institut historique Belge de Rome</i>
<i>BMGS</i>	<i>Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies</i>
<i>BNJ</i>	<i>Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher</i>
<i>BSA</i>	<i>The Annual of the British School at Athens</i>
<i>BS</i>	<i>Βυζαντινά Σύμμεικτα</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Byzantinische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>CA</i>	<i>Cahiers Archeologiques</i>
<i>CahBalk</i>	<i>Cahiers Balkaniques</i>
<i>CFHB</i>	<i>Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae</i>
<i>CorsiRav</i>	<i>Corsi Cultura sull'Arte di Ravenate e Byzantina</i>
<i>DOC</i>	<i>A. R. Bellinger, P. Grierson, Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, 3 vols, Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Center for Byzantine Studies, 1966–1973</i>
<i>DOP</i>	<i>Dumbarton Oaks Papers</i>
<i>DACL</i>	<i>Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et le Liturgie</i>
<i>ΔΙΕΕ</i>	<i>Δελτίον της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος</i>
<i>ΔΧΑΕ</i>	<i>Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
<i>EchR</i>	<i>Eastern Churches Review</i>
<i>ΕΕΒΣ</i>	<i>Επετηρίς Εταιρείας Βυζαντινών Σπουδών</i>
<i>ΕΕΠΣΑΠΘ</i>	<i>Επιστημονική Επετηρίς Πολυτεχνικής Σχολής του Αριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης</i>
<i>ΕΕΘΣΠΑ</i>	<i>Επιστημονική Επετηρίς της Θεολογικής Σχολής του Πανεπιστημίου Αθηνών</i>
<i>ΕΚΠΑ</i>	<i>Εθνικό και Καποδιστριακό Πανεπιστήμιο Αθηνών</i>

xvi *Abbreviations*

ÉO	<i>Échos d'Orient</i>
Ηπειρ.Εστ.	<i>Ηπειρωτική Εστία</i>
HX	<i>Ηπειρωτικά Χρονικά</i>
ΘΗΕ	<i>Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία</i>
ΙΕΕ	<i>Ιστορία του Ελληνικού Έθνους</i>
IRAİK	<i>Izvestija Russkogo Archeologičeskogo Instituta v Konstantinopole</i>
JÖB	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik</i>
JÖBG	<i>Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinisten Gesellschaft</i>
JBArA	<i>Journal of the British Archeological Association</i>
ΚρητΧρον	<i>Κρητικά Χρονικά</i>
LChrl	<i>Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie</i>
ΛΣ	<i>Λακωνικά Σπουδαί</i>
Mansi	Mansi, J. D. <i>Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima olection</i> , 53 vols, Paris: H. Welter, 1901–1927 (Reprint: Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1960–1961)
OCP	<i>Orientalia Christiana Periodica</i>
ODB	Kazhdan, A. (ed.) <i>The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium</i> , 3 vols, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991
ΠΑΕ	<i>Πρακτικά της εν Αθήναις Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας</i>
PG	J.-P. Migne (ed.), <i>Patrologiae cursus completes. Series graeca</i> , 161 vols. (Paris: Petit-Montrouge, 1857–1866)
PLP	E. Trapp (ed.), <i>Prosopographisches Lexikon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1976–1996
RACr	<i>Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana</i>
RBK	<i>Reallexikon zur byzantinischen Kunst</i>
REB	<i>Revue des Études Byzantines</i>
RN	<i>Revue Numismatique</i>
SBS	<i>Studies in Byzantine Sigillography</i> (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection 1987)
TIB	<i>Tabula Imperii Byzantini, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften</i>
VV	<i>Vizantijskij Vremennik</i>
ZLU	<i>Zbornik za Likovne Umetnosti Matice Srpske</i>
ZRVI	<i>Zbornik Radova Vizantološkog Instituta</i>

Introduction

In the wake of the Fourth Crusade and the capture of Constantinople in 1204, the artistic landscape of the Byzantine world radically changed, not much less than the political one. The prominence acquired by new centres of power, such as Nicaea and Trebizond; the unprecedented influx of Western objects, artists, and tastes; the ambitious patronage of the elites of the emerging Slavic nations, Serbia and Bulgaria, in the Balkans; and the formation of a diaspora of Constantinopolitan painters and master-builders all contributed to the creation of a fundamentally different artistic environment.

The richness and complexity of the Byzantine art of this period, including its patronage, have attracted considerable scholarly attention. However, the art and patronage of the Principality of Epirus, one of the Greek successor states that emerged from the wreckage of 1204 has not generated the academic interest it deserves. The architecture and fresco decoration of selected Epirote monuments are the subject of several important monographs in Greek. However, these books are rather traditional in their methodology. They are mostly preoccupied with questions of style, iconography, and workshop practices, paying little attention to the larger issues of patronage, political ideology, memory, and cross-cultural exchange. This book sets out to address this lacuna by offering the first comprehensive account of art and patronage in the Principality of Epirus examined in the context of political and ideological changes during the reign of the Komnenos Doukas family in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (1204–1318).

History of the Principality of Epirus

After the conquest of Constantinople on April 13, 1204, by the Latin troops of the Fourth Crusade, the Latin Empire of Constantinople was established. It included Constantinople, the northwest part of Asia Minor, Thrace, and several islands in the Aegean Sea.¹ The new emperor was Baldwin of Flanders (1204–1205). The rest of the Byzantine territories were apportioned by the Treaty of *Partitio Romaniae* to the leaders of the crusade and the Venetians.² However, two Byzantine ‘rump states’, Nicaea ruled by the Laskaris family³ and Trebizond by the Komnenos family,⁴ were a threat to the new Latin Empire. This empire was also challenged from the West, where another Byzantine statelet, Epirus, was formed.

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According to the Latin Treaty of *Partitio Romaniae*, western Greece, including Epirus and the Ionian Islands, should have been governed by the Venetians. Many different reasons contributed to making this an extremely difficult task for the Serenissima. Furthermore, the Venetians were certainly not as interested in the hinterland, and especially not in the Epirus' inaccessible mountains, as they were in the major ports, like Dyrrachion (Durrës), and the Ionian Islands and Corfu. As a result, the Byzantine state of Epirus was established in the territory between Durrës in Albania and Arta, including western Greece as far south as Nafpaktos (Fig. 1).

The information about the first three decades of the history of Epirus as an independent state of the temporarily dissolved Byzantine Empire is unfortunately scarce, as no historian whose work survives lived in the area. The most important



Fig. 1 Map of Epirus

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

historical information about Epirus comes from writers of the Empire of Nicaea, but they are often incomplete and biased.⁵ Also important, although sporadic, is the information provided by the official documents of the first two rulers, Michael I and Theodore; the court acts; and the surviving collections of letters from distinguished writers and church leaders of that time.⁶ For example, the correspondence of the metropolitan of Nafpaktos, John Apokaukos, sheds light on the historical events of the time of Michael I (1204–1215) and his successor, Theodore Angelos Doukas (1215–1230).⁷ Furthermore, various writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid, inform us about the internal situation in Epirus, as well as about the relations between this state and Nicaea.⁸ Finally, the correspondence of George Bardanes, archbishop of Corfu, is an important source for the history of that island. Scholars have also used *The Life of Saint Theodora*, written by the monk Job Melias Iasites, as a historical source, but it is quite unreliable, and much information concerning the political and social history is erroneous.⁹

Michael I Komnenos Doukas (r. 1204–1215) was the first Epirote ruler.¹⁰ Michael, and his two brothers, Theodore and Manuel Doukas, were the sons of sebastokrator John, the son of Constantine Angelos and Theodora Komnene, the daughter of Alexios I Komnenos and Irene Doukaine. Sebastokrator John was the uncle of the emperors Isaac II and Alexios III Angelos. As can be observed, although Michael was related to the Angelos dynasty in Constantinople, he used the family names of Komnenos and Doukas, which he had inherited from his maternal grandmother.¹¹

Michael I Komnenos was first mentioned when Emperor Isaac II (1185–1195), who was his cousin, handed him over as a hostage to Frederic Barbarossa. Towards the end of Isaac's reign, Michael performed the function of duke and anagrapheus¹² of the double theme of Mylasa/Milas and Melanoudion (April 1195).¹³ After Isaac's death, Michael held these positions during the time of Alexios III (1195–1203). However, Michael revolted against Alexios but was defeated, so he sought refuge in the Iconian Sultanate.¹⁴ According to Villehardouin's *Chronicle*, in 1204, Michael entered the service of Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat, in Constantinople, and went to Thessaloniki with him in the summer of the same year.¹⁵ Michael, however, soon revolted against Boniface and approached the governor of Arta, probably Senacherim, whom Emperor Alexios III appointed governor of Nicopolis and Aetolia in 1204 and who had already organised resistance against the Latins. After Senacherim was murdered, Michael married his daughter, inherited the territories ruled by her father, and became the independent ruler of the area between Arta and Durrës,¹⁶ the main port of the Epirus state.¹⁷

Michael I Doukas (r. 1204–1215) as the first Epirote ruler and a pious defender of the Byzantine Empire and Orthodoxy, did not immediately engage in warfare against the crusaders, but rather forged alliances with them, as the state of Epirus was surrounded by crusading states. Some Ionian islands were ruled by Mayo Orsini. Durrës and Corfu were occupied by the Venetians. Thessaly was divided between the crusading barons who recognised first Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat (1205), and later Henry of Flanders (1209),¹⁸ while William of Champlitte

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and Geoffrey I of Villehardouin, with the support of Boniface of Montferrat, established the principality of Achaia in the Peloponnese.¹⁹

When John X Kamateros, patriarch of Constantinople (1198–1206), refused to recognise Michael as a legitimate successor to the Byzantine throne, he turned to Pope Innocent III (1160/1161–1216) for recognition. In addition, he also became a subject of the Latin Empire by giving his daughter as wife to Henry of Flanders's brother Eustace in 1209 and offering one-third of his territory as a dowry. Therefore, the state of Epirus, which had already received a *de facto* recognition from the pope, gained *de jure* recognition from the Latin emperor of Constantinople. One of the reasons he did this was the death of Boniface I, Marquis of Montferrat king of Thessaloniki to whom Michael became a vassal as early as 1204. As the Kingdom of Thessaloniki became too weak to help anyone, Michael tried to gain an ally in Henry of Flanders.²⁰

Michael I Doukas was also a 'vassal' of the Venetians with an obligation to fight against their enemies and pay a certain amount of money as an annual fee. Every year, he also offered one gilded altar cloth for the church of San Marco and one to the doge. From this treaty of vassalage that Michael signed with Venice in 1210, we can see that he was the ruler of the following territories: the duchy of Nikopolis, Ioannina, Vagenitia, Dryinopolis, Glavinitza, and Grandis(?), the latter of which cannot be identified with any of the known toponyms.²¹

Michael's alliances with the Latins did not last long. From 1210, all agreements that he had forged with the pope, Emperor Henry of Flanders, and the Venetians were nothing more than diplomatic overtures preceding a declaration of war on all of them. In the encyclical of Henry of Flanders from 13 January 1212, Michael Doukas is called 'the most terrible traitor' (*traditor potentissimus*).²² Michael began to conquer new territories and expand the borders of Epirus. He achieved the most significant successes in the north, where in 1213 and 1214, he captured first Durrës and then Corfu. At the end of 1214, Michael managed to conquer the Serbian Shkodër, as well as most of Thessaly.²³

We draw data on the borders of the Epirote state and their expansion during the reign of Michael Doukas from several sources. According to Niketas Choniates, Michael Doukas conquered Aetolia, Nicopolis, and Durrës²⁴ and, according to the Akropolites, Arta, Nafpaktos, and Ioannina.²⁵ Overall, at the time of Michael I's death, the newly established state extended from Durrës to Nafpaktos, including the islands of Corfu and Lefkada, as well as Larissa and some other parts of Thessaly.²⁶

After Michael's death, Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–1230) continued the same policy, which resulted in a very successful expansion in Macedonia and Thessaly.²⁷ The state of Epirus reached its peak through the conquest of Thessaloniki in 1224, threatening the very existence of the Latin Empire (Fig. 2). Theodore took Thessaloniki from the Latins in 1224 and was crowned the emperor of Thessaloniki, thus briefly setting himself up as a rival to the emperor of Nicaea. The capture of Theodore by the Bulgarians quickly diminished the aspirations of Theodore to the imperial throne of Constantinople. In April 1230, the Bulgarian king, John Asen, defeated Theodore's army at Klokotnitsa and took Theodore



Fig. 2 Map of Epirus and surrounding states around the year 1225

(drawing: Georgios Fousteris)

and his officers as prisoners. Theodore was blinded and kept in a Bulgarian prison for seven years. In the next few months, John Asen conquered Xanthi, Serres, Pelagonia, Ohrid, Prilep, and Devol.²⁸

After the battle at Klokotnitsa, there were a few other attempts from other members of the Komnenos Doukas family, including Theodore Doukas after his return from Bulgarian slavery around 1237, to keep the Kingdom of Thessaloniki. The kingdom was, however, already very weakened, and it could not have survived independently or as part of Epirus. Theodore's son John was forced by John III Vatatzes (1222–1254) to substitute the title of emperor for that of a despot. In 1246, Thessaloniki was annexed by Nicaea. All these events did not end the existence of Epirus or reduce the ambitions of the Komnenos Doukas family. Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1230–1266/1268), after 1252, recovered many territories in western Macedonia with the major victory in Prilep, an important city and castle that controlled the entire Pelagonia. Keeping imperial pretensions alive as the last serious rival to Nicaea, he failed to capture more territories and was forced to sign a peace treaty with the Nicaean emperor John Vatatzes, sealed with the marriage between his granddaughter Maria to Michael's son Nikephoros. Despite the fact that both the father and the son were honoured with the title of

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despot, Michael forged alliances with western leaders, Manfred of Hohenstaufen and William II Villehardouin through his daughters marriages. He wanted to protect Epirus' independence against threats that could come from the West, and, at the same time, he did not like his subjugation to Nicaea.²⁹

After the Battle of Pelagonia (1259), many territories of Epirus were temporarily conquered by Nicaea. Michael II Komnenos Doukas and his wife Theodora were in exile in Cephalonia on the court of Michael's uncle, Mario Orsini.³⁰ This catastrophic defeat of the Epirotes lasted for a very short period. Already in 1260, Michael with help from his son, John Doukas, regained most of the lost territories in Epirus, returned to Arta, and continued his war against Nicaea. Even in 1261, when Michael Palaiologos marched into Constantinople and became a new Byzantine emperor, Epirotes did not abandon their ambition. After several unsuccessful attempts against Nicaea, Michael II Komnenos Doukas was forced to negotiate with Michael Palaiologos. Michael II agreed to marry his son, the despot Nikephoros,³¹ with Anna Kantakouzene, a niece of Michael VIII Palaiologos, and to cede the town of Ioannina to Nicaea. After Michael II's death, his territories were split between his sons: Nikephoros Komnenos Doukas succeeded his father in Epirus, and John I Doukas stayed in Thessaly.

Due to Nikephoros's marriage with Anna from the Palaiologan court and thanks to his title 'despot', which he received from her family, the rivalry between Epirus and Nicaea was temporarily paused. As Nikephoros did not like to serve the interests of his wife Anna's family, he forged an alliance with the western rulers. He gave his daughter Thamar to Charles II's son, Philip I of Taranto, with the right to inherit the state of Epirus after his death. During this time, Nikephoros did not consider this arrangement's future consequences for Epirus. When he died, his widow Anna rejected all agreements and became the regent of her juvenile son, Thomas I Komnenos Doukas, managing to resist all Latin attacks. Epirus continued to be ruled by Thomas I until 1318 when he was murdered by Count Nicholas Orsini who then overtook Epirus. With Thomas's death, the rule of the Komnenos Doukas family in Epirus ceased for good.

These historical events, summarised briefly here, will be independently analysed in the following book chapters, where detailed references will also be provided.

Question of Terminology: Despotate or Principality of Epirus?

The medieval independent region of Epirus has long been called the 'Despotate of Epirus', although it has been shown that, strictly speaking, the use of the word 'despotate' is not correct.³² In fact, the term is of western origin and was attributed to a small independent territory where there was no central authority. For this reason, the term is found in the sources closely related to the West, such as *Chronicle of Morea*. When referring to medieval Epirus, Byzantine sources use terminology related to its geographical location: τὰ κατὰ τὴν Δύσιν κάστρα καὶ χῶραι ('western castles and lands') or δυτικὰ θέματα ('western themes').³³ In the inscription

from the tomb in Vlacherna of Arta, Nikephoros is mentioned as *δυσμοκράτωρ*, which could be interpreted as ‘ruler of the west’. In another inscription, preserved in the church of Panagia Vellas in Voulgareli, Nikephoros and his wife Anna are mentioned as *σκηπτροκρατοῦντες τῶν δυτικῶν φρουρίων* (rulers of the western fortresses).³⁴ Pachymeres mentioned Michael II and Nikephoros as the despots in the west, and Nikephoros’s wife Anna as ‘the basilissa in the west’.³⁵

From the fourth century onwards, the emperor was called a despot in official documents. Later, this adjective also appears on coins, as well as on the inscriptions of various buildings. The title of the despot, which was formed during the twelfth century, in its new sense was used for the highest title after the imperial and was given to members of the royal family, including the grooms. In some cases, the word ‘despot’ also referred to rulers of certain neighbouring countries; moreover, this title is also used as a prefix for the supreme ecclesiastical hierarchy—that is, patriarchs and bishops.³⁶

The term ‘despotaton’ (*δεσποτᾶτον*) in the Greek language did not mean the territory ruled by the despot but only the dignity of the despot. It has been proven that Epirus’ founder, Michael I Angelos Komnenos Doukas, was simply a local ruler who did not have the title of despot. Michael’s signatures on official documents and letters also confirm that he never used the title of despot. He usually signed himself as *Κομνηνὸς κυρ Μιχαήλ*.³⁷ The only title that Michael probably possessed was the ‘dux’, which he had received from the doge of Venice when he signed the vassal treaty in 1210. According to this document, the ruling territories by Michael were named the ‘ducat’ (ducatu), so he probably was a ‘dux’ and at that time was also the Venetian governor of Durrës, Marino Valareso.³⁸

Michael’s brother and successor, Theodore, did not have any title until he occupied Thessaloniki and became an emperor. In his official signatures, he used his name Theodore Komnenos, adding also the family name Doukas, which he inherited from his maternal grandmother as mentioned previously. Later, his successors also imitated him and were often mentioned in the sources as Komnenoi and Doukas but never as Angels. Therefore, the first two rulers of Epirus did not hold the title of despot since the right to grant it belonged to the Byzantine or Latin emperor. As we have seen, Epirotes did not have good relations with either Theodore Laskaris or later with the Latins. Michael I Doukas and his successor Theodore stressed their blood ties to the Komnenian family and, accordingly, claimed that they were legal successors of the imperial throne. They were not expecting to receive any titles from the emperor, but they attempted to maintain the Byzantine identity with the ultimate goal of recapturing the imperial capital, Constantinople, and restoring the former Byzantine Empire.

The title of despot was bestowed upon Michael II and his son Nikephoros when the latter married the emperor’s daughter Maria in 1256. This act was calculated to define their state of subservience to the emperor’s authority. The term ‘despotate’, however, has been used for Epirus only starting with the sources from the late fourteenth century. For all the aforementioned reasons, in this book, the use of the term ‘despotate’ for the newly established Byzantine statelet will be avoided.

The Scholarship on Byzantine Epirus: Texts, History, and Art

Epirus has attracted scholarly attention since the middle of the nineteenth century. P. Aravantinos was the first to write a history of Epirus in 1856,³⁹ followed 30 years later, in 1895, by another history written by I. Romanos.⁴⁰ However, the more significant contribution for understanding the western part of the Byzantine world started with the publication of various collections of writings consisting of letters and documents of church prelates from Epirus. V.G. Vasiljevsky, A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, S. Pétridès, and N.A. Bees were responsible for publishing the correspondence of John Apokaukos with various eminent contemporary personalities, including Demetrios Chomatenos, George Bardanes, the metropolitan of Athens Michael Choniates, Theodore Doukas and his wife Maria, and other high-ranking officials from the court and the clergy. The writings of Demetrios Chomatenos, which include documents, synodal acts, judicial decisions, and letters, also have an enormous importance. Although the first of them were published by Cardinal Pitra in 1891,⁴¹ over the last decades, Prinzing has made the greatest contribution to the study of Demetrios Chomatenos. From the end of the nineteenth century, A. Moustoxidis was the first to recognise the importance of George Bardanes, metropolitan of Corfu, and he edited some of his letters.⁴²

However, all these first publications of the primary sources were not incorporated in any of the studies of the history of Epirus. Since the first monograph from the nineteenth century, there have been some sporadic studies on the history of Epirus by English historians, until Donald M. Nicol wrote his first monograph in 1957, providing the first analytic history of Epirus between 1204 and 1261. In addition to a number of shorter key studies on the same topic, in 1984, Nicol published his second monograph on the history of Epirus, covering the period between 1267 and 1479. Subsequently, much has been written on the topic by prominent scholars such as A.S. Zafraka, G. Prinzing, V. Katsaros, and D. Dželebdžić about the origin and development of the state of Epirus, including its ideological, political, and social history.

The art and material culture in Epirus and Aitolokarnania also began to be studied in the late nineteenth century by the Greek Archaeological Service. Spyros Lambros visited the Vlacherna monastery and the church of Panagia Vellas in 1886 and later published the first photos, architectural plans, and first observations.⁴³ G. Lambakis also conducted some research on Epirote monuments in 1889.⁴⁴ The first systematic study of the Byzantine monuments in medieval Epirus was started by A. Orlandos, who at the same time restored many of the monuments. His work was continued by P. Vokotopoulos, who, performing the duties of a curator in the area, had published almost all the churches in the Greek *Archaeological Bulletin*. Particularly valuable are his studies in which he deals in detail with the art of Epirus and the artistic production during the thirteenth century. Vokotopoulos's monograph *The Monastery of Saint Demetrios at Phanari*, published in 2012, has substantially contributed to the study of Epirote architecture.⁴⁵

Equally important are the studies of other scholars published in the last two decades. Among them, a special place occupies various studies by M.

Acheimastou-Potamianou and especially her monograph on the Vlacherna monastery published in 2009.⁴⁶ V. Papadopoulou has been very energetically working on the preservation of a large number of monuments and carried out extensive research on sites in Epirus, followed by numerous publications. The most important among them are her three books: *Byzantine Arta*, *Icons in Arta*, and *Blacherna Monastery*.⁴⁷ The relatively recent research by G. Velenis dedicated to epigraphy and architecture of the Blacherna monastery in Arta has enriched fundamentally our knowledge not only about this church but also the Epirote art in general.⁴⁸ The book *Byzantine Painting in Arta* written by D. Giannoulis is also a valuable source, as he was the first to publish some unknown parts of the frescoes from this city.⁴⁹

Art, Power, and Patronage in the Principality of Epirus, 1204–1318

This book explores a corpus of Epirote architecture, frescoes, sculpture, and inscriptions dated from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth centuries within a comparative and interdisciplinary framework, focusing on the nexus of art, patronage, and political ideology. The geographical area selected for investigation includes the territories stretching from Durrës in Albania to Arta in western Greece and to the south as far as Nafpaktos in Aitolokarnania (Fig. 1). One of the book's main themes is the visual articulation of ideological responses to the Latin occupation of Constantinople and the experience of exile in Epirus. The Epirote rulers from the Komnenos Doukas family portrayed themselves as the legitimate heirs of the Byzantine imperial throne and, with the support of the high clergy and the aristocracy within their domain, carefully maintained their Byzantine identity under the conditions of exile.

Through a diverse set of evidence, ranging from inscriptions, church dedications, and monumental pictorial programmes, to icons, coins, and seals, this book offers an in-depth analysis of the political *spiritus movens* behind the artistic patronage of the Komnenos Doukas family and the high clergy of Epirus and Epirote aristocracy. In addition to these, an array of textual sources that shed further light on the artistic culture are included here, as well. For example, the aforementioned letters of eminent Epirote clergymen John Apokaukos and George Bardanes; a series of legal acts issued by Demetrios Chomatenos, archbishop of Ohrid; the histories of George Akropolites and George Pachymeres; a Greek chronicle known as *Χρονικὸν τοῦ Γαλαξειδίου*, *The Chronicle of Morea*; and the hagiographic texts composed in honour of St Theodora, the wife of Michael II Komnenos Doukas (1230–1266/1268), Serbian ruler Stefan Nemanja, and others.

In Chapter 1, I argue that, along with the universal motives of piety, contrition, thankfulness, and salvation, which preoccupied royal patrons across the Byzantine world, the patronage of the Epirote rulers was to a large extent informed by a nostalgia for the lost 'Queen of Cities', i.e., Constantinople. Chapter 2 investigates how the Epirote rulers consciously sought to model their capital Arta after the image of Constantinople. In this way, they preserved the memory of the imperial

capital, while the carefully maintained link with Constantinople served as an ideological basis in their attempts to restore the former empire. Epirote church prelates praised the rulers in their writings and public oratory. For instance, they associated the second Epirote ruler Theodore with the prophet David, frequently invoking select biblical verses to draw parallels between Constantinople and Sion. Such eulogies encapsulated a political vision, according to which Theodore was expected to lead the chosen people to Jerusalem, i.e., Constantinople, which the new Babylonians—that is, the crusaders—had destroyed. Similar ideas were reflected and propagated in contemporary church programmes and epigraphy, all of which are analysed in this chapter. All the aforementioned examples particularly held currency during the time when the state of Epirus reached its peak after Theodore's conquest of Thessaloniki in 1224. By crowning himself as the emperor of Thessaloniki, Theodore briefly challenged the emperor of Nicaea.

Chapter 3 addresses the impact that new political changes and alliances after the demise of the Empire of Thessaloniki in 1230, including the ambitions of the new Epirote ruler Michael II Komnenos Doukas to rival the emperor of Nicaea, had on Epirote art.

Chapter 4 explores history and art during the period between 1267–1296/1298. The idea of recapturing Constantinople was not at the top of Nikephoros' agenda, the Epirote ruler who succeeded Michael II Komnenos Doukas. Nikephoros was mostly concerned with the maintenance of Epirus' territory and its independence, and hence his relations with the restored Byzantine court in Constantinople were amiable. On the other hand, Nikephoros reinforced an alliance with the Latins—namely, with Charles of Anjou. The Epirote interactions with Italy, which also encompassed a frequent movement of merchants, pilgrims, and goods, including art objects, especially icons and manuscripts, had some impact on Epirote art. This western influence is especially evident during the last decade of the thirteenth century, as witnessed by the key monuments sponsored by despot Nikephoros. It is quite probable that the despot attempted to visually express the union of the two cultures and his commitment to his Latin allies through the works of art he commissioned.

The last chapter is focused on the question of legitimacy of the last Komnenos Doukas rulers through the lens of artistic production. After the death of Nikephoros in 1296, his widow Anna sought to reinforce the legitimacy of her regime through artistic means, as witnessed by pictorial and sculptural decorations produced at her behest. The chapter further analyses the aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage which further attempted to consolidate Anna's regime and legitimise Thomas' succession to the Epirote throne.

A large part of this book is dedicated to the analyses and interpretations of the church buildings and the corpus of Byzantine monumental paintings in Epirus. I include iconographic and stylistic analyses only when absolutely necessary to better understand the Epirote art.

Accompanying the main text of the book is a detailed catalogue of Epirote monuments and their iconographic programmes mentioned in the text. The catalogue includes architectural plans and perspectival views showing the interior

arrangement of iconographic units within each church. The catalogue provides not only the first systematic presentation of a number of previously unpublished monuments but also revises the dating of several published ensembles.

Many of the preserved dedicatory inscriptions, either found in situ or housed in museum collections and relevant written sources: letters, acts, documents, and similar are here translated into English for the first time.

Notes

- 1 Akropolites, 13.6–11.
- 2 Carile, 1965, 125–305; Laiou, 2005.
- 3 Angold, 1975; Langdon, 1992; Angelov, 2007, 293–310; Stavridou-Zafraka, 2014, 254–256.
- 4 The Latin occupation did not cause the establishment of the Empire of Trebizond; rather, it was founded by the Komnenian family, which was overthrown by the Angeloi in 1185. See Miller, 1926; Savvidis, 1984; Eastmond, 2004, XIX–XX and references therein; Stavridou-Zafraka, 2014, 256–257.
- 5 *Akropolites* (Macrides), 94–97.
- 6 Katsaros, 1992; Konstantinidis, 2001.
- 7 Dželebdžić, 2008; Apokaukos (Bees).
- 8 *Ponemata Diaphora*.
- 9 *Life of St. Theodora* (Talbot), 1996.
- 10 Varzos, 1984; Polemis, 1968, 91–92; Nicol, 1957, 24–46.
- 11 Stiernon, 1959, 102–120; Loenertz, 1973, 362–364.
- 12 Ἀναγραφεύς was a fiscal official whose function was the revision of the cadastre. See *ODB*, s.v. ‘Anagrapheus’.
- 13 Miklosich and Müller, 1887, 320–328.
- 14 Choniates, *Historia*, 529.18–26; Polemis, 1968, 91–92.
- 15 Ferjančić, 1964, 111.
- 16 Durrës was not included before 1214. See p. 4.
- 17 *Life of St. Theodora* (Talbot), 1996.
- 18 Magdalino, 1989, 97.
- 19 Bon, 1969; Lock, 2013; Gerstel, 2013a, 2013b.
- 20 Nicol, 1957, 34.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 35.
- 22 Prinzing, 1973, 411, l. 15, 422–423.
- 23 Magdalino, 1989, 97.
- 24 Choniates, *Historia*, 638–644.
- 25 Akropolites, 14.4.
- 26 Nicol, 1957, 42.
- 27 For Theodore, see Nicol, 1957, 47–75, 103–112.
- 28 *Ibid.*, 111.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 169–180.
- 30 Akropolites, 171–172.
- 31 His first wife Maria died in 1258.
- 32 On the anachronistic name of the state of Epirus as Despotate, see Stavridou-Zafraka, 2001.
- 33 Nicol, 1984, 220–221.
- 34 Kalopissi-Verti, 1992, 55.
- 35 Nicol, 1984, 220.
- 36 On the title of despot, see *ODB*, s.v. ‘Despot’; Ferjančić, 1960, 3–26, 1973, 45–53; Failler, 1982, 171–186.

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- 37 Stiernon, 1959, 102 sq., esp. 103, nos. 12, 13, 14, 20, 107, nos. 55, 57; Ferjančić, 1960, 49–53.
- 38 Tafel and Thomas, 1856, Nos. 223 and 224, pp. 119–123.
- 39 Aravantinos, 1856.
- 40 Romanos, 1895.
- 41 Pitra, 1891.
- 42 Moustoxidis, 1848.
- 43 Lambros, 1905.
- 44 Lambakis, 1903, 92, Figs. 25 and 26.
- 45 Vokotopoulos, 2012.
- 46 See bibliography.
- 47 For works of V. Papadopoulou, see bibliography.
- 48 Velenis, 2015.
- 49 Giannoulis, 2010.