Intercultural Contacts in the Medieval Mediterranean

edited by

Benjamin Arbel

INTERCULTURAL CONTACTS IN THE MEDIEVAL MEDITERRANEAN

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF DAVID JACOBY

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BENJAMIN ARBEL

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Foreword

David Jacoby needs no introduction to anyone acquainted with the history of the the medieval Mediterranean. For several decades he has been at the centre of scholarly activity in this field, publishing many original studies and participating in numerous scientific meetings, always contributing sharp insights of his own to discussions on many subjects. Originally trained as a Byzantinist, Jacoby has always insisted on being considered as a historian of the medieval Mediterranean, and his many writings, though largely centred on the eastern Mediterranean and on the contacts between Latins and Greeks, reflect this ambition. In fact, his historical work covers a very wide field, and he has never limited himself to a single aspect of historical research. His book on the feudal code of Frankish Greece, The *Assises de Romanie,* which shows how legal history can be treated in all its complexity, taking into consideration social, political, and cultural aspects, has been acclaimed by the scholarly community as a masterpiece of historical analysis.[1] His studies on Byzantine demography, on Byzantine institutions, on the transformation of Greek society following the stormy events of the Fourth Crusade, on Venetian overseas colonies, on Venetian shipping and trade, on Frankish Cyprus, on the Jewries of the eastern Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages, on the Byzantine economy, on urban development in the Latin East, and on intercultural contacts in the eastern Mediterranean have been landmarks in the study of these issues. A number of these have been assembled in the three volumes of collected studies by Jacoby published so far in the series of Variorum Reprints.[2]

1. *La féodalité en Grèce médiévale. Les 'Assises de Romanie', sources, application et diffusion* (Paris, 1971).
2. *Société et démographie à Byzance et en Romanie latine* (London, 1975); *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XII^e au XV^e siècle: Peuples, sociétés, économies* (London, 1979); *Studies in the Crusader States and on Venetian Expansion* (London, 1989).

David Jacoby is retiring from his teaching activity at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem at the height of varied and intensive scientific activity. Most colleagues were unaware of his age and were greatly surprised to hear that he has reached the age of retirement. There is no doubt however, that his vigorous and untiring historical curiosity and his indefatigable interest in many fields will now continue on an even greater scale. For David Jacoby, this is undoubtedly only another station on a route which continues to look promising and full of exciting discoveries.

It was impossible to impose a pre-established and rigid plan on the 23 scholars who have collaborated in the present volume. The term 'intercultural contacts' has therefore been conceived in a wide perspective, comprising not only cultural connections in the narrower sense (including religious and scientific links), but also political, military, technological, ethnic, social, and institutional relationships. The themes of the different articles were suggested by their authors, and only in a few cases did I consider it necessary to intervene to bring them more in line with the general framework. With the exception of one paper, all the studies included in this volume cover the period to which David Jacoby dedicated his extensive research. They present various aspects of a world which, during the medieval centuries, was an arena of continuous contacts between cultures, ethnicities, polities, and individuals of various countries, all of whom, while preserving their basic identities and in spite of endless conflicts between them, were largely interdependent and mutually related by a complex system of visible and invisible bonds.

The limitations resulting from various editorial and technical constraints rendered the choice of contributors to this collection rather difficult. As happens in every selection of this kind, there are certainly several among David Jacoby's friends and colleagues who would have liked to take part in this endeavour, but could not be included for one reason or another. I have done my best to include those historians of the medieval Mediterranean who, I know, have been close to Jacoby for many years, collaborated with him in their scholarly activities, have been involved, together with Jacoby, in the publication of the journal *Mediterranean Historical Review*, and were at the same time available and willing to comply with our editorial demands. The initiative generally met with great enthusiasm. A few among those who had been asked to participate expressed their deep regret for being unable to meet with the rather short time-limit imposed for this publication. Since Jacoby, to the best of my knowledge, was unaware of all this until the

last moment, I myself take full responsibility for any blunders, expressing my sincere regret for not being able to include everybody who would have wished to take part in this initiative.

Finally, special thanks go to Ann Ussishkin for her careful treatment of the difficult texts included in this volume.

The Editor

The Aragonese Kingdom of Albania: An Angevin Project of 1311-1316

David Abulafia

The theme of this study is the project launched by the Angevin king of Naples in 1311 to exchange the Kingdom of 'Trinacria', ruled by Frederick of Aragon, for a new set of Aragonese possessions consisting of a kingdom in Albania and lands in Achaia further south. The hope was to resolve by diplomacy the constant tension between Neapolitan aspirations to restore the rule of the house of Anjou in Sicily on the one hand and the wish of James II of Aragon to create a permanent peace in the western Mediterranean on the other hand. This is not simply, however, an episode in the history of Sicily and of the Balkans. Sardinia and Corsica were also eventually placed in the scales as it became evident that Frederick of Sicily was unconvinced by the offer of Albania; both islands had already been conferred on James of Aragon as part of the series of deals that brought the War of the Sicilian Vespers to an end between 1297 and 1302, but, remaining unconquered, they seemed to the court of Naples a suitable alternative to Sicily, Albania, and Achaia.

The project for the acquisition of Albania arose at an unpropitious moment for Aragonese involvement in the affairs of Greece and neighbouring lands. Paradoxically, the presence in Greece of the Catalan Company made the situation less, not more, stable as far as Aragonese interests were concerned. The Catalans had acquired the Duchy of Athens by battle without the direction of the king of Aragon (1311), though a year later the conquerors came to recognize the loose authority of Frederick of Sicily over them.[1] The Catalan duchy intruded itself into a political arena already characterized by bitter infighting

1. K.M. Setton, *The Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-88* (Cambridge, MA, 1948); L.N. d'Olwer, *L'expansió de Catalunya en la Mediterrània oriental*, 2nd edn. (Barcelona, 1974); F. Giunta, *Aragoneses y catalanes en el Mediterráneo*, trans. J. Bignozzi (Barcelona, 1989).

between factions loyal to the house of Anjou, the king of France and indeed other masters in the Greek world. It was therefore a tall order to suggest that the king of Trinacria should abandon a relatively peaceful island kingdom, which had begun to recover from 20 years of bitter warfare with the Angevins, for lands in turmoil in Greece and for a shadowy Kingdom of Albania, which lacked any administrative structure and which was torn apart by a startling variety of local interests.

In Albania, this was a period of particularly acute uncertainty. The Albanian historian Pëllumb Xhufi sees in the period 1306-7 an intensification of the conflict in the zone around Durazzo (Dyrrachium) between the supporters of the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos and Angevin troops under the command of Philip of Taranto, who was the son of King Charles II of Naples, and lord of Achaia and of the Kingdom of Albania. One result was that Durazzo itself capitulated to the Angevins, but the root of the problem lay in the assumption among the Albanian nobles themselves that only the Angevins were capable of helping resist their enemies in the region, in particular the Greeks loyal to Emperor Andronikos.[2] In order to consolidate their position in the Balkans, the Angevins also sought closer ties with other Balkan neighbours, in particular with the rulers of Serbia. A quick look at the antecedents of this policy will help explain Angevin priorities in the region.

Towards the end of the reign of Charles II (1285-1309) the issue of Neapolitan control of the western Balkans had a particular significance, bringing with it the hope of establishing Angevin dominion over the eastern shores of the Adriatic and over the Ionian Sea, areas in which there was a very long tradition of involvement by the rulers of southern Italy. There were two fundamental aspirations at work here, which neatly coincided: the consolidation of Angevin naval power in the waters around the Neapolitan kingdom, creating a *cordon sanitaire* impervious to Aragonese or other intruders; and also the assumption of a prime role in the struggle against schismatic Greeks and Muslims in the aftermath of the fall of Acre in 1291, a period when the lack of a secure Latin base in the east (other than Cyprus) generated a variety of approaches to the problem of how to restore Latin authority in the eastern Mediterranean. Since the reign of Charles I of Anjou the kings

2. P. Xhufi, 'Albania and the Kingdom of Sicily in the time of Manfred Hohenstaufen and Charles I and Charles II of Anjou', *Journal of Medieval History*, forthcoming.

of Naples had taken a firm line opposing compromises with the Greeks, and supporting attempts to revive the short-lived Latin Empire of Constantinople; the creation of an Angevin dominion in Albania by Charles was part both of that policy and of a more restricted, Adriatic-based, policy of affirming Angevin hegemony in the central Mediterranean (a dimension of Angevin policy that tends to be forgotten under the overpowering glare of the attraction of Constantinople).

The recovery of Latin power within Greece after 1300 offered the opportunity to relaunch the eastern policy of the house of Anjou on the basis of existing power relationships in the Balkans; Charles II's plans did not, therefore, solely consist of dreams of a massive crusade in which the flower of European knighthood would participate. The practical manifestation of this policy was visible in attempts to subjugate the Despotate of Epiros, the territory just south of Albania proper, in a delicate position between the lands controlled by the Byzantine emperor, by the Serbs, and by the supporters of the house of Anjou in the western Morea.[3] It is evident that Philip of Taranto aspired to the realization of his presumptive rights in Albania, Epiros, and western Greece, rights acquired in a controversial enough setting following his marriage to Thamar (Catherine), daughter of Nikēphoros, despot of Epiros, in 1294.[4] Indeed, part of the anticipated arrangement was that Philip would in due course succeed his father-in-law as ruler of Epiros.

Donald Nicol has argued that the result of this alliance was nothing less than the virtually total subjection of Epiros to Charles II of Anjou, around 1300; the presence in the region of Angevin administrative

3. The fundamental study of Epiros is that of D.M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479: A Contribution to the History of Greece in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 60-61. For the earlier history of Epiros up to 1267 see D.M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford, 1957), and the same author's valuable 'The Relations of Charles of Anjou with Nikephoros of Epiros', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, 4 (1972), 170-94. There is a powerful tradition among British historians of expounding the narrative history of late medieval Greece: W. Miller, *The Latins in the Levant: A History of Frankish Greece 1204-1566* (London, 1908); id., *Essays on the Latin Orient* (Cambridge, 1921); Sir Rennell Rodd, *The Princes of Achaia and the Chronicles of the Morea*, 2 vols. (London, 1907). Among recent studies see also A.E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), particularly for the Catalans in Greece and for the legacy of Charles of Valois.
4. Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479*, pp. 44-9; for a brief biography of this princess, see D.M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Lady: Ten Portraits, 1250-1500* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 24-32.

officials confirmed that Neapolitan domination was a stark reality; meanwhile, the existence of Angevin power bases in Corfu and on Cephalonia (which was ruled by a line of Orsini counts formally dependent on Naples) meant that the house of Anjou had a stranglehold on the western coasts of Greece.[5] Yet succession rights in Epiros did not prove so easy to obtain. When Nikēphoros of Epiros died his widow Anna refused to place the despotate in the hands of the Angevins, with the result that the Neapolitans sent in an invasion force in 1304-6 under the command of Philip of Taranto, and acquired (at greater expense than the limited results justified) bases at Butrint, Lepanto (Naupaktos), and Vonitsa.[6] Still, these were gains that were valuable in the confirmation of Angevin naval hegemony, even if control did not extend any great distance inland. Further north, Philip's eyes alighted on the half-forgotten Albanian kingdom created by his grandfather Charles I, possession of which would put considerable pressure on any number of enemies: the rebel Epirotes to the south, the schismatic Greeks to the east.[7] Whereas Charles I clearly saw the possession of Albania as the opening of a back door leading towards Constantinople, Philip's aims seem at this point to have been more localized, with the assertion of Neapolitan control of the southern Adriatic and the Ionian Sea a particular objective. Yet this policy was subject to change; in 1309 Philip abandoned the unhappy Thamar who was accused, probably unjustly, of flagrant adultery, and found a new wife with an even more extensive, and even more contested, legacy in the East: Catherine of Valois brought with her the title to the Latin Empire of Constantinople, which had ceased actually to exist nearly half a century earlier. As a result, Philip's energies began to turn more towards the Aegean, and the difficult task he had been set of establishing a secure Angevin dominion in the western Balkans became much less attractive. As a result, a vacuum began to open up in the area of Albania and Achaia.

It was as a result of these changes in his fortune that Philip could contemplate the exchange of his own Albanian dominion for Sicily; this exchange after all brought him no obvious direct benefit in territory, since he was to give up his own lands and his brother Robert, the new king of Naples, was to be the beneficiary of the abandonment of Sicily

5. Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479*, p. 50.
6. Ibid., pp. 56-61.
7. Ibid., p. 68. The aid of the papacy was expressed in the wish to aid the Latin Church, in particular Latin priests said to have been oppressed by the Greeks.

by Frederick of Trinacria. It is thus essential to look more closely at the exact terms of the arrangement as recorded in the documents of the *Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó*.[8] In the spring of 1311 King Robert of Naples wrote to James II of Aragon to present to him the text of an agreement dated 28 April 1311, between himself and Philip, prince of Achaia, *dominum regni Albanie et despotum Romanie*.[9] The king of Naples promised to try to *procurare seu obtinere* a modification to the treaty of Caltabellotta of 1302, according to which Frederick of Aragon had been permitted to hold the island of Sicily with the title 'king of Trinacria' for the duration of his life, without the possibility of passing Sicily to his heirs; Philip of Taranto indicated his own preparedness to sell to the king of Naples his rights in Albania:

> Regnum Albanie cum civitate et castro Durachii aliisque civitatibus terris et locis, castris, fortelliciis, hominibus, iuribus et pertinentiis eiusdem regni omnibus que nunc tenet seu que tempore dicte assignationis faciende tenebit, cum plenaria cessione et translatione omnium iurium et accionum eidem domino principi quocumque iure seu titulo pertinentium in ipso regno Albanie, tam in domaniis, quam in feudis et ceteris quibuscumque, tam eorum, que tenet et tempore dicte assignationis tenebit, quam eorum que per Grecos seu quoscumque alios scismaticos detinetur et detineretur.

From this it is abundantly clear that the acquisition of Albania did not offer the chance to gain control of a territory already securely under Angevin rule, for Angevin power was on the retreat in the region, and it is really rather doubtful whether the Angevins controlled anything beyond the environs of Durazzo.[10] Robert of Naples was unable to deny

8. *Acta et diplomata res Albaniae mediae aetatis illustrantia, collegerunt et digesserunt*, Ludovicus de Thalloczy, Constantinus Jireçek et Emilianus de Sufflay, Vol. I, annos 344-1343 continens (Vienna, 1913); H. Finke (ed.), *Acta Aragonensia. Quellen zur deutschen, italienischen, französischen, spanischen, zur Kirchen- und Kulturgeschichte aus der diplomatischen Korrespondenz Jaymes II. (1291-1327)*, Vol. II (Berlin – Leipzig, 1908).
9. Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 443, pp. 704-5 (summary); Thalloczy *et al.*, No. 597, pp. 177-9 (text).
10. For the origins of the Angevin dominion in Albania, see P. Xhufi, 'Shqiptarët përballë anzhuinëve (1267-1285)', *Studime Historike* (1987), 199-222, with a French summary; Nicol, 'Relations of Charles of Anjou'; also special mention must be made of the outstanding work of A. Ducellier, in particular *La façade maritime de l'Albanie au Moyen Age. Durazzo et Valona du XI^e^ au XV^e^ siècle* (Salonica, 1981).

that there existed on the ground a strong Greek opposition, led by the princes of Epiros, and that there were also Slav factions hostile to Angevin interests. A further complication was the crisis generated by the Catalan victory at Almyros in March 1311, when the duke of Athens, Walter of Brienne, lost his life fighting against the freebooting Catalan mercenaries whom he had once hoped (like so many others) to control; first of all he aspired to an opportunistic alliance with the Catalans, and then he found himself facing a ruthless and irresistible force which managed to take his entire duchy from under his feet. The foundation of a Catalan duchy of Athens further decisively altered the political map of Greece, resulting in the long term in a series of proxy wars between supporters of the Angevin and of the Catalan interest in southern Greece.

Interesting in the letter of King Robert is not just the concession to Frederick of the title 'King of Albania', but also of rights in the principality of Achaia. Philip was for his part to receive a handsome financial settlement: 70 thousand ounces of gold, a sum which would represent a large hole in the Angevin treasury but also a hole that could eventually be filled with the substantial revenues to be expected from a reoccupied island of Sicily. For the moment, the sum was to be drawn from the general taxes of the Kingdom of Naples, payable in four instalments, the first at the time of the assignment of the title to Albania and Achaia, and then a further quarter for each of three years. Yet there was a pessimistic awareness that such an arrangement might not turn out so well after all; Mediterranean politics were not so stable that the possibility of further war between the Aragonese and the Angevins could be excluded even within the next three years. Were such a conflict to break out between the kings of Sicily *ultra* and *citra* the Faro, Prince Philip was to be compensated for his co-operation in the project with a grant from the gabelles of the Kingdom of Naples. In any event, the king of Naples had only three years in which to convince Frederick of Trinacria to make the suggested exchange of territories, and if he failed, the prince of Taranto for his part would be absolved from all obligations arising from the treaty between him and the king of Naples, who was his *dominum* not merely in the principality but also in the Albanian kingdom, which up to now Philip had held from him as his subordinate. Behind this willingness to trade Albania and Achaia for a large pile of gold can be seen Philip's new and more ambitious plans in the East, consequent upon his marriage to Catherine of Valois and the re-activation of the Latin claim to Constantinople.

James II of Aragon had himself begun the process of exchanging Sicily for other territories towards the end of his own brief reign as ruler

of Sicily between 1285 and 1296; on his accession to the throne of Aragon itself in 1291 he began to consider the return of Sicily to the house of Anjou, notwithstanding the growing evidence that the Sicilian baronage would rather retain him, or failing that his younger brother Frederick, as their ruler, both being seen as the heirs through their Sicilian mother to the house of Hohenstaufen. Boniface VIII agreed to the cession of the *regnum Sardinie et Corsice* after other possibilities had been considered, among them Cyprus which was occasionally targeted by the Aragonese as a possible acquisition, particularly since the local Lusignan dynasty was not held in high esteem by the papacy and by other Latin rulers. It is unlikely that James II saw his offer to return Sicily to the Angevins as anything more than a manoeuvre to obtain papal goodwill and a chance of peace in the western Mediterranean, since his relations with his brother Frederick were still cordial after Frederick had been elected king of Sicily by his supporters and after James had joined the Angevin war against Frederick; James's participation in this conflict was maintained in a generally low key, and his interest in Italian politics lay increasingly not in the submission of Sicily but in the accretion of influence in the central Italian cities. While the peace of Caltabellotta confirmed the title of Frederick to Sicily (if only as 'king of Trinacria'), the house of Anjou suffered a serious loss of income from what had been a major revenue-earning part of their old kingdom. Thus the peaceful cession of the island was bound to be an issue on the agenda even in 1311. A further important factor was the presence in Italy at this juncture of the Holy Roman Emperor Henry VII of Luxemburg, who began to develop warm ties with Frederick of Trinacria, and whose policies in the north of Italy clashed directly with the interests of the Guelf allies of the house of Anjou.[11] Thus the needs of the king of Naples were clear; the danger of being squeezed between an aggressive Aragonese king of Sicily and an aggressive Holy Roman Emperor were more than he could bear to face. What is perhaps more surprising is the relatively favourable attitude of the king of Aragon to the proposal to grant Frederick lands in the Balkans in lieu of Sicily. Already in 1309 James II had been hoping to

11. W.M. Bowsky, *Henry VII in Italy: The Conflict of Empire and City-State, 1310-1313* (Lincoln, NB, 1960), pp. 4-5, 14, 53, 124, 137, 157, 161-2, 169-70. The intensification of the relationship between the king of Trinacria and Emperor Henry in 1312 gave rise to great difficulties at the court of Naples; see the discussion of the theoretical as well as practical implications by K. Pennington, *The Prince and the Law: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 165-201.

arrange the cession to Frederick of the title to the lost Kingdom of Jerusalem (a title already contested, of course, between the kings of Naples and those of Cyprus).[12] What we see at work, therefore, is a tentative eastern policy designed to insert the Aragonese royal house into the confused political world of Greece, Cyprus, and the eastern Mediterranean.

In this light a letter written in Valencia by James of Aragon on 5 March 1312 makes sense; it was sent to Frederick of Trinacria ten months after the initial approach by Robert of Naples to James of Aragon.[13] This second letter makes it plain that the delay in negotiations had resulted from the death of Arnau de Vilanova, the famous mystic and medical practitioner who was active for some time at the court of Frederick of Trinacria. James's letter mentions the great if implausible advantages of the Albanian kingdom as related to him by Robert of Naples: the kingdom *es molt noble e rich*, and the cession of Albania would also involve the grant of Durazzo (just as well, considering that there was not really much more to grant). But James knew full well that the king of Trinacria had no intention of following this road: *e que vos, germa, non avets vulgut fer*. The king of Naples, according to James, was prepared to offer substantial subsidies for the conquest of Albania and Achaia, a point which must have seemed to confirm the genuine difficulty involved in gaining control of the kingdom: 'Encara nos ha fet saber en les dites letres lo dit G. que otra les coses damuntdites vos assignava de vostra vida lo rey Robert alguna part de les rendes de la isla de Sicilia en aiuda de conquerre lo regne Dalbania'. James's letter also makes it plain that the negotiations between the various parties were set on a different track when the problem of the future of the Kingdom of Trinacria was brought under discussion. Frederick was clear in his aspiration to found a new dynasty which would hold the island permanently, despite past agreements, and it was this, rather than the issue of Albania and Achaia, that came to dominate negotiations between Naples and Sicily. Frederick even seems to have advanced the position that the king of Naples was not genuinely hostile to the maintenance of an independent Aragonese

12. P.W. Edbury, *The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374* (Cambridge, 1991); N.J. Housley, *The Italian Crusades: The Papal-Angevin Alliance and the Crusades against Christian Lay Powers, 1254-1343* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 84-5; J.N. Hillgarth, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth-Century France* (Oxford – London, 1971), p. 66, n. 61.
13. Thalloczy *et al.*, No. 602, p. 180 (summary); Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 445, pp. 706-8 (text).

dynasty in Sicily; such delicate issues, and such vain hopes, soon created a fog around the Albanian project. Indeed, what mattered for Frederick was not the Albanian question, which obviously never seriously took his fancy, but the opportunity to create an open channel of communication with his Angevin rivals, through which he could make plain his extreme reluctance to allow his family's title to Sicily to lapse after his death, whatever might have been agreed in 1302.

Robert was not prepared to let go of Sicily so easily. By offering Frederick Albania and Achaia, Robert stood to regain the *part principal de nostre regne*, Sicily, as he stated in a letter written to James II on 3 February 1314.[14] At this point the crisis between Robert of Anjou and Henry of Luxemburg had been unexpectedly resolved, with the death of the emperor in 1313. Thus Robert renewed his hope for the recovery of Sicily, this time without having to defeat a great imperial-Ghibelline-Trinacrian alliance against him, as had seemed necessary in 1312-13. Looking the other way, Philip of Taranto's increasing wish to involve himself in the central Byzantine lands meant that Albania and Achaia were readily disposable to another ruler. If that ruler were to be Frederick of Trinacria, all well and good, since he would be so tied up in the internal politics of the western Balkans that he would surely never pose a threat to Angevin interests in either Italy or Byzantium. The aim, in other words, was to ensure that Frederick would become lost in the thickets of Balkan politics, out of which there was no known escape.

In reality, Frederick had not the slightest illusion about the difficulty in making royal authority real in Albania and in Achaia amid the conflicting interests of Greeks, Slavs, Albanians, and Franks; in any case, he was now working hard to extend his authority within Sicily after the 20 years of disorder generated by the War of the Vespers, which had resulted in severe dislocation of the economic, ecclesiastical, and political life of the island.[15] This is not to say that Frederick lacked an eastern policy; he gave his support to his cousin Ferrando of Majorca, who dreamed of re-establishing the principality of Achaia with the help of his wife Isabella, of Frankish ancestry, and of Frederick himself. Ferrando arrived in the region in 1308, hoping to bring the

14. Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 447, p. 712. The date of the letter is not absolutely certain.
15. On this see C. Backman, *The Decline and Fall of Medieval Sicily* (Cambridge, 1995), a study of the reign of Frederick III that places some emphasis on the reconstruction of royal authority in the island, and the serious problems involved in the reaffirmation of Aragonese power in Sicily.

Catalan Company under his control; and he came again in 1313, but his presence only increased the instability in a world characterized by sharp confrontations between the Catalan mercenaries, the Frankish lords, and the Greek irredentists.[16] King Frederick sent aid in 1315, hoping to confirm his own lordship in Achaia without the approval, support, or wish of the king of Naples. Thus just now the Aragonese of Sicily, the Angevins of Naples, and also allies of the king of France were all contesting the lordship of Achaia: when Ferrando lost his life at Manolada, in 1316, this Majorcan prince was fighting against the armies of Louis of Burgundy, supported by King Philip the Fair of France.[17] With the victory of the Burgundian faction the court of Naples was prompted to reconsider its policy, with the result that Robert reaffirmed his own direct control over the Achaian lands from 1317 onwards; Louis died soon after his victory, and his widow, Mahaut, was seized by the Neapolitans, who took her from Achaia to the Castel dell'Ovo in Naples, where she was kept securely under guard. Thus western Greece returned for a few years to the sphere of influence of the house of Anjou.[18]

At the same time, the king of Naples resumed his interest in a diplomatic solution to the problem of Sicily. Alain Ducellier has argued that the original project of 1311 was dead after 1314, since the three years stipulated in the original document for the settlement of financial and territorial claims were now past.[19] But in reality the king of Naples could not let go of the Albanian project, and rather than forgetting it he began to vary his approach, substituting other offers, such as the revenues from Tunis or Aragonese rights in Sardinia and Corsica, for the grant of Achaia and Albania. The Franciscan emissary Ponç Carbonell, sent to Palermo and Naples by James II of Aragon, was struck by the fact that both kings of Sicily, that of Naples and that of Trinacria, insisted on their peaceful intentions:

> Noscat igitur vestra sublimis maiestas, ambos reges fore super facto pacis diversarum voluntatum, licet uterque dicat se velle

16. For a recent study of Ferrando, see B. Berg, 'The Moreote Expedition of Ferrando of Majorca in the Aragonese Chronicle of Morea', *Byzantion*, 55 (1985); see also the *Libro de los fechos et conquistas del principado de la Morea*, ed. A. Morel-Fatio (Geneva, 1885).
17. For a brief narrative of the events, see N. Cheetham, *Medieval Greece* (New Haven, 1981), pp. 143-6.
18. Ibid., pp. 146-7.
19. Ducellier, *La façade maritime*, pp. 331-2.

> pacem et concordiam. Et maxime in hoc est controversia, quod dominus rex Fredericus nullo modo vult facere pacem, nisi insula libere sibi et suis filiis remaneret, et dominus rex Robertus nullo modo vult consentire, quod filii eius habeant, nec etiam ipsemet dominus rex Fredericus in vita sua, set, si forte haberet concedere, dicit, quod non concederet hoc etiam pro vita domini regis Frederici, nisi traderetur sibi aliqua castra Sicilie pro cautione et pactis firmius observandis.[20]

The solution was therefore to find another kingdom for Frederick and his sons, such as Sardinia and Corsica:[21]

> Concedit etiam inter alia, quod, si videretur et placeret vobis ei concedere ius Sardinie et Corsice, que quidem adquirere ac adquisita retinere dificile videtur: tum propter communitatum potentiam, tum etiam propter condicionem terre non sanam, ipse libenter adquireret pro vobis vel uno filiorum vestrorum aliquod regnum in Romania, vel etiam illud, pro que me misistis, vel recompensaret in pecunia, secundum quod conveniens videretur, ita tamen, quod tradito regno Sardinie et Corsice domino regi Frederico vel eius filiis, quod propter propinquitatem, quam habet cum Catalonia, esset sibi forsitan magis gratum, insula Sicilie sibi libere redderetur.[22]

Sardinia, then, was a mixed blessing, an unhealthy land full of contending parties; but if James felt the loss was too great, Robert would gladly provide a piece of the former Byzantine Empire as compensation. But Robert's prime energies were naturally directed to Sicily; indeed, the king of Naples implored the aid of the king of Aragon (appropriately enough) in such a project: 'Et insuper, quod vos teneretis aliqua loca sive castra Sicilie pro huiusmodi adimplendis'.[23]

20. Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 448, p. 715.
21. For Aragonese and Angevin policies at this time in relation to the question of Sardinia, see F.C. Casula, *La Sardegna aragonese. 1. La Corona d'Aragona* (Sassari, 1990), pp. 106-10, where the author justly indicates that the years from 1314 to 1323 have been ignored by historians such as V. Salavert y Roca, *Cerdeña y la expansión mediterránea de la Corona de Aragón, 1297-1314*, 2 vols. (Madrid, 1956), and A. Arribas Palau, *La conquista de Cerdeña por Jaime II de Aragón* (Barcelona, 1952), who have concentrated on the prior or subsequent years.
22. Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 448, p. 716.
23. Ibid.

An interesting point in the discussions was the refusal of the king of Trinacria to accept the overall dominion of the king of Naples on the model of the relationship between the king of Majorca and his overlord the king of Aragon; this was hardly the most propitious model anyway:

> Dominus quoque rex non vult consentire, quod filii sui tenerent insulam pro domino rege Roberto vel suis, sicut regnum Maioricarum tenetur pro rege Aragonum, nec ullo alio modo senioritatis, set bene consentiret habere mutuam societatem adinvicem, quod excepta ecclesia et rege Aragonum ambo essent contra quocumque alium et mutuo se iuvarent.[24]

Naturally, for the king of Naples such a response was quite unacceptable. However, the king of Aragon did not abandon the project of acquiring Sicily by diplomatic means, presumably with little real hope of success.

Thus, between September 1316 and May 1317 Robert of Naples wrote to James of Aragon to propose formally the granting of Sardinia to Frederick of Sicily, together with the property of the Templars in southern Italy, which was valued at 50,000 ounces, with an additional 100,000 ounces of gold. Another possibility offered to Frederick was the island of Sardinia together with all the revenues received by the rulers of Sicily from the king of Tunis, but in that case he could not have the 100,000 ounces. In conquering Sardinia, he would be able to count on the aid of Robert, who would supply 30 galleys for five years, or otherwise would offer money to cover the cost of operating a similar fleet. This time Robert was asking for only half of Sicily, and was actually prepared to leave Frederick in charge of the other half of the island; for instance, one could have the Val Demone from Messina to Castrogiovanni (Enna), the other the rest. Robert apparently assumed that once he had a permanent foothold on the island it would be hard ever to displace him, all the more so while Frederick was absent campaigning in Sardinia. Another possible offer, still very much in Robert's mind, was the exchange of Sicily for Albania and Achaia, as before, but with the additional concession that half of Sicily would be left in Frederick's charge during his lifetime.[25] Thus the project of 1311

24. Ibid; on this relationship, see D. Abulafia, 'The Problem of the Kingdom of Majorca. 1. Political Identity', *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 5 (1990), 150-68; id., *A Mediterranean Emporium: The Catalan Kingdom of Majorca* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 34-55.
25. Thalloczy *et al.*, No. 629, p. 186; Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 449, p. 718.

was far from forgotten, even if the principle was extended to other, perhaps more palatable, offers such as Sardinia. Not that Sardinia was so much more attractive than Albania, for it too was a land of competing factions, Pisan, Genoese, and home-grown, while past projects for its incorporation into either the realms of Aragon or those of Anjou had come to nothing beyond the grant of the title to Sardinia to James II in 1297.[26]

In reality the king of Trinacria well saw that the time was ripe for a return to more conventional ways of sorting out the rivalry of Anjou and Aragon within the Italian South. In 1316 the armies of the two kings clashed in Calabria, while Frederick laid plans for new naval projects in Greek waters.[27] The intention of Frederick was to force Robert's hand, to make it plain that the house of Aragon had no intention of abandoning its rights on the island to anyone else, and that he was perfectly capable of maintaining an active role in the politics of the east Mediterranean on his own, without having to rely on the patronage and authority of the king of Naples in Albania, Achaia, or any other corner of the now fragmented Byzantine Empire.

26. Abulafia, *Mediterranean Emporium*, pp. 235-48.
27. Finke, *Acta Aragonensia*, No. 450, pp. 718-26.

Roger of Lauria's Expedition to the Peloponnese

Gabriella Airaldi

The Genoese chronicler Jacopo Doria describes how, in June 1292, Admiral Roger of Lauria prepared 20 galleys with 40 horses on board and set sail from Sicily towards 'Romania'. He laid everything to waste on the island of Corfu, sparing only the castle; on reaching Monemvasia, he attacked the town and destroyed it, demanding and obtaining a ransom for the men and women whom he held captive on the galleys. He then sacked and devastated the island of Chios and again obtained a ransom for the prisoners. The chronicler observed: 'There is no need to dwell upon the great displeasure that this caused the emperor of Constantinople.'[1]

Narrated with the characteristic simplicity and dryness of this celebrated chronicler, this episode was considered by him to be one of the most significant events of that particular year. As a matter of fact, it annoyed not only the Byzantine emperor but undoubtedly the Genoese as well. As is well known, their trading routes led to Chios and Monemvasia, before reaching the Black Sea, which they controlled, and they therefore once again suffered considerable damage. But there was perhaps another reason for their displeasure at that time. In any case, the chronicler only mentioned certain locations, while neglecting others which, as shown below, were also affected by the admiral's actions.

It is no coincidence that Jacopo Doria placed the story of this event among others of a similar nature, which clearly demonstrate the state of war and acts of piracy which occurred at that time. This particular episode is narrated immediately after another in which the same admiral was indirectly involved. The Genoese had attacked a ship carrying a cargo of wheat, sent by the admiral from Sicily to the Pisans.

1. Iacopo Doria, *Annali Genovesi*, in *Annali Genovesi di Caffaro e dei suoi continuatori*, ed. L.T. Belgrano and C. Imperiale di Sant'Angelo (Rome, 1890-92), pp. 145-6.

As the chronicle reports, rapid diplomatic amends were made, because 'the Genoese feared the admiral, who was not a man to forget injury or offence'.

Both these episodes formed part of a series of turbulent events marking increased friction in relations between Genoa and the Crown of Aragon between 1291 and 1292. The rift began in 1291 (as the chronicler recalls) after James II of Sicily came to the throne of Aragon and declared himself King of Aragon, Sicily, Majorca, and Valencia, leaving his brother Frederick as prince regent in Sicily. This was the first step towards the complications that would lead to the political isolation of Sicily and its detachment from the Kingdom of Aragon.

In May 1291 a decisive political change had also occurred in Genoa. The Ghibelline captains had fallen from power and Genoese policy, though ostensibly neutral, began to turn to new directions.

Lauria's raid, which has frequently been analysed by historians (more as an isolated episode than a fact of greater importance), is not merely a typical episode in the general deterioration of that time.[2] This is demonstrated by the fact that others besides the Genoese related it in great detail or gave it special emphasis. The differing versions which have survived are all significant and all deserve to be taken into consideration.

To begin with, there is the much-debated account contained in Marino Sanudo's *Istoria del regno di Romania*:

> And I have been told by messer Ruzero del Oria in person, that his going to Romania was with the intention of sacking and causing damage to the land of the emperor, because the said emperor had promised to pay the King of Aragon 60,000 *lipperi* a year for as long as the war lasted, and also because the said King of Aragon claimed 6,000 ounces of gold from the emperor for a certain lady ('una certa madonna') from the Kingdom of Sicily, who had been married to the emperor who was then reigning and who was related to King Manfred. . .'.[3]

2. M. Amari, *La Guerra del Vespro Siciliano* (Palermo, 1969, [1843]), Vol. I, pp. 461-2; G. Caro, *Genova e la sua supremazia nel Mediterraneo* (Genoa, 1974, [1899]), Vol. I, pp. 153-84; C. Manfroni, *Storia della marina italiana*, Vol. II (Livorno, 1902), pp. 173-4; A.E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins* (Cambridge, MA, 1972), pp. 46-7; M. Balard, *La Romanie génoise*, Vol. II (Genoa, 1978), p. 58.
3. Marino Sanudo Torsello, *Istoria del Regno di Romania*, in *Chroniques gréco-romaines inédites ou peu connues*, ed. C. Hopf (Berlin, 1983), p. 133. 'E ho

Historians have given credit to this explanation, believing that the 'madonna di Sicilia' is a reference to Costanza, illegitimate daughter of Frederick II of Hohenstaufen and Manfred's sister, who had married the Byzantine emperor of Nicaea, John III Vatatzēs (1222-54).

The Venetians observed the situation carefully: relations with the Kingdom of Aragon had been especially good since they had weakened their alliance with the Angevins. Relations were also good with Byzantium and a truce had been reached with Genoa. There therefore seems to have been a carefully planned and to some extent realistic motive, if the appropriate connection is considered. Once Costanza became a widow, she became part of the Court of Aragon, to which she left her worldly goods.

The reference to this motive, however, evidently implies a royal order and consent on the part of the King of Aragon. This is confirmed in a letter written by the king himself to the admiral. Not long after the episode, he in fact demanded a share of the spoils. The Byzantine emperor had partly compensated for the damage suffered by seizing the belongings of Catalan nationals living in his kingdom, while James of Sicily was required to reimburse the harmed parties. The king was, in fact, in very great need of money. The state of war required expenditure as well as aid. Roger of Lauria was one of the powerful men in the Kingdom of Aragon, and willingly put his ships at the king's disposal and headed the royal fleet. He lent money to the monarch and in return received enormous benefits -- not least the attractive booty from such operations. This was normal practice for admirals of the era and it is therefore not surprising that this Calabrian was to be found serving as admiral of the Aragonese royal fleet in 1285. From this time, he worked not only in the service of Sicily but also for that kingdom. However, Sanudo's work only cites the damage the admiral caused to the Byzantine Empire.

Muntaner, the Catalan chronicler, also describes the same event, although with a different slant. He brought the action forward by a few years in order to insert it into the wider context of a series of operations

udito da messere Ruzero del Oria stesso, ch'egli quando andò in Romania, andò per correre e danneggiare il paese dell'imperatore, perché il detto Imperator aveva promesso dar al re d'Aragona ogn'anno 60 mila lipperi insino a guerra finita, e perché anco il detto re d'Aragona pretendeva aver dal detto Imperatore 60 mila onze d'oro per una certa madonna del regno di Sicilia, ch'era stata maritata all'Imperatore, che allora regnava, ch'era parente del re Manfredi. . .' .

carried out in the Mediterranean by the admiral, acting on the orders, so he claims, of the king himself.[4]

His account goes more deeply into the economic and military policy of James II, who basically continued and reinforced that of his predecessors. When he reigned over Sicily the island already thronged with Catalans. This greatly displeased the Genoese, even though a treaty signed in 1290 (and ratified in 1292 by James's brother, Frederick) confirmed the traditional friendship and trading privileges accorded to them. In 1290 the Byzantine emperor Andronikos II himself had also welcomed the Catalan merchants to his empire, not fearing the Aragonese, who were at war with the Angevins, and certainly not foreseeing the success of Aragonese diplomacy.

Other documentary sources also exist. There are four surviving versions of the *Chronique de Morée*. The lively French and Aragonese versions tell a slightly imaginative story of chivalry which also includes details worthy of an eye-witness account.[5] However, the account is once again related by parties involved directly in the events. There are also additional details which throw interesting light on the Franks, the enemy of the Aragonese.

With his 20 galleys and 10 'taride', the admiral passed Clarence (Glarenca, Kyllēnē) without suffering damage and attacked the islands of the archipelago: Lesbos, Lemnos, Santorini, Thassos, Andros, Mykonos, and Chios were sacked. The entire mastic crop of Chios was plundered and the bishop of Monemvasia was taken prisoner. The admiral then attacked Maina, where he hoisted the flag of San Marco to mislead and capture those who had come to offer merchandise, together with other citizens whom he later sold as slaves in Sicily.

On the return journey, once he had left Modon and arrived at Port de Jonc (Zonklon), he wished to take on water supplies and unload the horses, but the castle governor of Kalamata, Giorgio Ghisi, lord of Chalandritsa, feared a coup and gathered his knights and men-at-arms. Conflict was inevitable. Roger of Lauria set out against Jean de Durnay, the powerful and well-armed knight who was leading the charge. Roger was unhorsed and his men fell upon de Durnay's horse and killed it.

4. R. Muntaner, *Cronica catalana*, ed. A. de Bofarull (Barcelona, 1869), Chs. CXVII, CXXXIX.
5. *Libros de los fechos et conquistas del Principado de la Morea*, ed. A. Morel Fatio (Geneva, 1885), paras. 487-505; *La chronique de Morée: Livre de la conqueste de la princée de l'Amorée* (Paris, 1911), paras. 756-89; E. Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris, 1949), pp. 264-71.

The valiant knight defended himself ferociously with his sword but would also have lost his life had it not been for the admiral, who picked himself up and invited de Durnay to surrender. According to the narrator, this was because the admiral did not wish such a man to be killed. Roger then called for one of his horses and led de Durnay to his own red galley, where he surrendered his arms and was covered with a scarlet mantle. The admiral asked the knight to sit with him at the stern and offered him sweetmeats and drink, telling him that he was the most valiant knight he had ever encountered. On learning that he was the son of the renowned Geoffroy de Durnay, who had fought bravely in the Sicilian wars, the admiral expressed his regret that the knight was married, for otherwise he would have offered him his own daughter's hand. He then asked his captive how he wished to be liberated. Jean de Durnay asked to be taken to the port of Clarence, where he would be able to pay his own ransom and that of his companions. Roger of Lauria replied:

> Your people tell me that you are poor. But his lordship Giorgio Ghisi is much richer than you, since his father has so much money. I order him to give me 10,000 *perperi*, not a penny less. Out of these 10,000 *perperi* I shall give you 2,000 so that you can have a suit of armour made bearing my coat-of-arms in my remembrance. And you shall give me 2,000 *perperi*, so that I can buy a suit of armour bearing your coat-of-arms in remembrance of you. Furthermore, I shall ask no ransom for Othon de Durnay, your brother, and others of your kin who have been captured. All of these shall be released as a token of the love I bear for you.

Meanwhile, the news had spread to the Morea, and the princess of Achaia, Isabelle of Villehardouin, whose husband was at that time in Italy, ordered preparation for the defence of Clarence, where she was staying. She then sent the admiral of the Morea to ask Roger of Lauria for a meeting. When Roger entered the port in great pomp and made contact with the knights sent to meet him, the princess was accompanied on horseback by all of her barons to a tower near the sea. Some 'biaux tapiz courçois' were laid in the shade of the tower and the two sat down to talk. After the ransom had been paid, the admiral sent for Jean de Durnay and presented him to the princess as one of the most valiant knights in the world. He then gave him his best bay horse and a suit of armour. The princess ordered the admiral's ships to be supplied with water and gave him a gift of jewels.

Possibly, in the light of subsequent policy, the chronicle indicates that Roger of Lauria's real object were the Byzantines, although there

had been an attack on Catalan ships in the Morea in 1291 and a state of war did actually exist.

Gerolamo Zurita's *Anales aragonenses* also mention the event.[6] They only explicitly tell of the conquest and sacking of Monemvasia and Chios where, interestingly, the admiral is said to have plundered the merchant ships. There is also mention of the damage caused on the coasts of the Morea and the ransom paid in Clarence.

The most complete information was without doubt supplied by the Sicilian chroniclers, who lived on the island which was at the heart of contemporary problems and which was the centre of the interests and political and economic issues of the leading figures in the western region.

Both Bartolomeo da Neocastro and Niccolò Speciale give a detailed account of the event, particularly the former, who concentrated on two specific episodes: 'De captione Malvasiae' and 'De praeda insule Chii'.[7] The first episode gives a variety of details in a style reminiscent of the great Latin writers. The attack on Monemvasia ('sed proprie dici debet Manovadia idest "solum vadum"') and the location itself are described. The chronicler tells of Franks who were waiting there for reinforcements to come from Puglia ('In civitate illa se receptaverunt Gallici hostes insidias in Siciliam machinantes'). The whole account is very precise: 'On 15 June the admiral deployed his ships and sailed along the coast before the eyes of the inhabitants. He then made a proud speech: "Be of good spirit, companions, and take courage, because we shall take Monemvasia tonight. All citizens shall be spared, except any Franks we find."' Then two messengers from the city came bearing words of friendship, provisions, and the offer of all that they required or wished for ('oves, boves et universa pecora'). Entertainment would also be provided if the sailors wished to leave their ships and seek amusement. But the admiral was wary of the blandishments of 'Greeks bearing gifts' and replied: 'Cives vostri male agunt quod recipientes Gallicos hostes in perdendos Siculos regis potentis Aragonum atque Siciliae scienter se faciunt inimicos'. When night fell the assault and pillage began. The account concerning

6. G. Zurita, *Anales Aragonenses* (Barcelona, 1852), Vol. I, p. 252.
7. Bartolomeo Neocastro, *Historia Sicula*, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, ed. L.A. Muratori (Milan, 1727), Vol. XIII, cols. 121-4; Nicolò Speciale, *Historia Sicula*, in ibid., Vol. X, cols. 959-60.

Chios is shorter and less intense. However, here too 'maxima quantitas masticis ad opus Imperatoris Paleologi recollecta' was taken as the Greeks fled to the woods. When returning to Messina in October, Roger of Lauria took with him the archbishop of Monemvasia, for whom he obtained a large ransom.

The Sicilian chroniclers seem to have been the best observers, and not only as far as this episode is concerned. As soon as the beloved King James of Sicily came to the throne of Aragon, he began to perpetrate what the Sicilians were to define as 'betrayal'. In order to avoid excommunication and isolation and to definitively prevent Angevin ascendancy in the Mediterranean, he continued the war while at the same time following the course of diplomacy.

This policy proved to be fruitful, in that it marked the ascendancy of his own influence in the Mediterranean instead of that of the Franco-Angevin dynasty. It also created a substantial obstacle for the Genoese. And this, as indicated above, would lead to the isolation of Sicily.

The negotiations with the Angevins, which had already begun under Alfonso III and continued with intensity in the period 1291-92, need not be described in detail here. They began with the treaty of Brignoles Tarascon in February 1291 (which first mooted the eventual renunciation of Sicily), and although this was unexpected it was an unequivocal sign of the continuation of James II's plan, which would lead to his marriage to Blanche d'Anjou.

The short period of time between 1292 and 1293 saw a series of frenetic diplomatic visits to Genoa by Angevin and Aragonese ambassadors, aimed at persuading the city to abandon neutrality with promises concerning Sicily, among other aspects. It is interesting to note how Genoese ideas gradually changed not only in relation to internal policy, but due also to the diplomatic manoeuvres and the increasing tension between the city and the Crown of Aragon resulting from its movements in the Mediterranean area.

Although the Sicilians associated the incursions with the 'Franks', they also recognized the Byzantine target underlying the Aragonese action. From all of this, it becomes clear that the two real protagonists of events were the Kingdom of Aragon and the Byzantine Empire — namely James II and Andronikos II.

At this point, something must be said of the policy of Andronikos II. He favoured the Genoese, who were present in the entire area and whose ships were also active militarily, but he also gave generous concessions to the Venetians and Catalans. However, what should really be underlined here is his matrimonial policy, especially regarding his son Michael (the future Emperor Michael IX), whose marriage to

Catherine of Courtenay, heiress to the throne of Constantinople, he was trying to arrange.[8]

Like James, Andronikos was a great arranger of marriages. When his first wife died, he had hoped to marry an Aragonese, but James was wise enough to realize that the marriage of an excommunicate to an Orthodox Church member would not bring him any benefit and rejected such an aspiration. Andronicus acquired his second wife, Irene di Monferrato (who brought him Thessalonica as a dowry), through the king of Castile. However, the failure of the desired marriage with an Aragonese was a clear sign of the deterioration of relations. The importance of the planned marriage between Michael and Catherine de Courtenay should not be underestimated in this context. Marriage to Catherine was an enticing prospect and there were many attempts to win her hand.

In the light of such facts, it would be as well to reconsider a situation with many key figures, two of whom (James and Andronikos) were interested in improving and possibly definitively restoring full relations with the Church of Rome, which does not seem to have turned a deaf ear to either party. The House of Anjou was also interested in negotiations, given the long and extenuating war with the Aragonese dynasty. They kept their allies happy with promises, tried to wear down Genoese neutrality, and openly negotiated with the Crown of Aragon.

The area of interest to the Genoese (who had so far been the real support of the Byzantine emperor) was the Black Sea and the area around Greece. Their ships travelled extensively in that area, including the Frankish and Byzantine ports of call. Nor must Sicily be forgotten, for it was here that the Genoese obtained grain supplies and this was an important stage on their trading route. However, they frequently complained of the problems caused by Byzantine bureaucrats and of the acts of piracy committed against them by Monemvasian ships, among others.

The truce with Venice was also becoming unstable. After the fall of Acre and the Venetian establishment of relations with the Tartar Khan Nogai on the Black Sea, both the Genoese and the Venetians became more sensitive to change — as did the Sicilians, though for other reasons. Despite the accounts of the Catalan and Frankish chronicles, all three powers detected deteriorating relations between the Crown of Aragon and Byzantium.

Thus, the episode involving Roger of Lauria can be understood as constituting both an action and a reaction if it is seen as part of the

8. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, pp. 48-54.

operative framework of James II's policy. His Catalans were present extensively throughout Sicily and the Byzantine Empire. In order to thwart Angevin ambitions or favour his own Mediterranean policy, he even made plans for a possible crusade (which came to nothing) with the Church. Neither did he hesitate (immediately before the Lauria affair) to stipulate treaties with Egypt and Tunis or to renew the treaty with Genoa. This was also the period during which negotiations with the House of Anjou, leading to the marriage in 1293, were in a critical phase. In the same year, furthermore, the prince regent of Sicily, Frederick, announced his aspirations to the throne of Byzantium.

However, the acts of war continued and Roger of Lauria was an outstanding figure in this field, acting mainly on royal orders. The Angevins themselves did not set aside their eastern policy. Between 1291 and 1292, Epiros was attacked by the Byzantines with the support of Genoese ships and defended by Florent d'Hainaut, prince of the Morea. The peace of Clarence in 1291 brought to an end the state of Franco-Byzantine tension in the Peloponnese and its importance should not be undervalued.

Further attention should also be given to another element, often considered on its own account but never in relation to this specific episode. From 1288 (and with particular intensity during the period under examination here), the question of the marriage of Catherine of Courtenay, regarded in the West as the titular empress of Constantinople, to Michael IX, the emperor's son and successor, was being debated. The House of Aragon also had aspirations, but on the other hand there were careful sponsors, such as Mary of Hungary. The Church itself took an active though prudent interest in the matter, since there might be a return of orthodoxy and a crusade. The French monarchy was also involved in ambassadorial visits and the exchange of letters. This may be one of the reasons, if not the specific reason, for the visible decline in Aragonese-Byzantine relations after the episode of the Sicilian Vespers — the Byzantines would subsequently carry the burden.

It does not therefore seem possible to interpret Roger of Lauria's action as a mere act of plunder. He was certainly no stranger to actions of this kind: they formed part of a seafarer's life in those days and were rewarded with the bestowal of titles, lands, and money, although these were actually not sufficient to pay for his ships, men, and acts of war. Other famous admirals of the time took part in similar adventures (for example, the celebrated Benedetto Zaccaria).[9] Less obvious is the fact

9. R.S. Lopez, *Genova marinara nel Duecento: Benedetto Zaccaria, ammiraglio e mercante* (Messina – Milan, 1933).

that Roger of Lauria was the official representative of the Crown of Aragon, which was facing a combination of internal problems and those relating to Mediterranean policy at the time.[10]

Roger of Lauria was a renowned figure, and seems to have frightened even the tough Genoese. It must also be remembered that he married the daughter of Berengari d'Entença, who would later prove to be a thorn in the side of the Byzantines. The power he acquired and the rewards he accrued in Aragon and in Sicily, together with the manorial property of Gerba and Kerkene, meant that he influenced the Crown with which he had such close relations, although he later changed sides in a manner worthy of his proudly decisive character and espoused the Angevin cause.

That, however, is another story. What has been shown here is that he dealt a severe blow to relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Crown of Aragon. It is for that reason that this particular episode is prominent among the many violent episodes which mark Mediterranean history.

10. See F. Giunta, *Aragonesi e catalani nel Mediterraneo*, Vol. II: *La presenza catalana nel Levante dalle origini a Giacomo II* (Palermo, 1972), pp. 57-90.

The Urban Landscape of Rhodes as Perceived by Fourteenth- and Fifteenth-Century Travellers

Michel Balard

'We roamed freely in the city, so as to comfort our battered bodies and souls with good things.'[1] It is in these terms that canon Pietro Casola, on 20 September 1494, expresses his pleasure at the restorative stop in Rhodes, on the way back from his pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The island of the Hospitallers was, in effect, a favourite stopping place on the pilgrimage route: between Crete and Cyprus it allowed the exhausted voyagers, suffering from the difficult conditions on board ship, to regain their strength, to take advantage of the air which they all deemed excellent, to make fruitful contacts with the Knights, and to make their devotions at some of the island's churches which were rich in relics.

Actually, it is this last preoccupation that seems to be of vital importance to many of the voyagers, at least for the oldest among them. Their perception of the island had, in fact, greatly evolved since the first reports of the fourteenth century, which had been dry and devoid of any descriptive character, becoming fully detailed descriptions at the end of the fifteenth century, when the travellers' curiosity reaches out to every sphere: the churches and their wealth, and also the urban framework of Rhodes, the life of the Knights, the Ottoman threats, and the accounts of the 1480 siege, the election of the Grand Master, and the work of fortification. The impersonal approach of the first accounts gradually gives way to a concern for the picturesque and for the things to be seen during the stopover. The pilgrim's guide thus becomes a

This article was translated by Annette Dulzin.

1. M. Newett (ed.), *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage in Jerusalem in the Year 1494* (Manchester, 1907), p. 306.

tourist's guide.[2] The value of these accounts, which complement archaeological reports,[3] becomes clear in a study of the urban landscape of Rhodes towards the end of the Middle Ages. The voyagers become aware of the strength of this citadel of Christianity, its forward position facing the Ottoman world, the quality of its harbour site, and the division of the city into three concentric blocs, beyond the ramparts of which lay irrigated gardens and suburban sanctuaries.

Global views, however, are rare. Descriptions of urban landscape are often limited to conventional phrases which could apply to any port city discovered by the pilgrim on his itinerary to the East. 'A very beautiful town on the seacoast', says the German guide in the middle of the fourteenth century.[4] Pero Tafur does not say much more about it in 1437, pointing out that 'the city of Rhodes is flat, but fortified by a moat and a wall',[5] while 40 years later Paul Walther de Guglingen merely writes that Rhodes is not very big, but has a great castle.[6] Only Pietro Casola, in 1494, has the idea of taking an over-all view of the city, by climbing up a hill. His disappointment is great: 'There is no order', he writes, 'neither in the palaces, nor in the layout of the walls. The city cannot be described as long, square, or triangular.'[7] In short, rare are those who evince any interest for the general picture of the Rhodian urban landscape.

On the other hand, the fortifications impress all the travellers. 'Whoever has not seen Rhodes . . . has never seen a fortress', writes

2. J. Richard, *Les récits de voyage et de pèlegrinage*, Typologie des sources du Moyen Age occidental, fasc. No. 38 (Turnhout, 1981); *Les récits de voyage*, Publications du Centre d'Etude et de Recherche d'Histoire des Idées et de la Sensibilité (Paris, 1986). The main texts concerning Rhodes have been collected and commented on by F.-C. Plaisant, *L'Image de Rhodes dans les récits de voyage, XIV^{e}-XV^{e} siècles*, mémoire de maîtrise, Université Paris 1, 1994.
3. A. Gabriel, *La cité de Rhodes (1310-1522)*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1921-23); J.-C. Poutiers, *Rhodes et ses chevaliers, 1306-1523. Approche historique et archéologique* (Beirut, 1989). See also the studies by A. Luttrell, published in three volumes by Variorum Reprints: *The Hospitallers in Cyprus, Rhodes, Greece and the West, 1291-1440* (London, 1978); *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the Crusades, 1291-1440* (London, 1982); *The Hospitallers of Rhodes and their Mediterranean World* (London, 1992).
4. L. Conrady, *Vier Rheinischen Palaestina Pilgerschriften des XIVten, XVten und XVIten Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden, 1882), p. 46.
5. M. Letts (ed.), *Pero Tafur, Travels and Adventures* (London, 1926), p. 51.
6. M. Sollweck (ed.), *Fratris Pauli Waltherii Gugligensis itinerarium in Terra Sancta et ad Sanctan Catharinam*, Bibliothek des Literatischen Vereins, Vol. 192 (Stuttgart, 1892), p. 86.
7. Newett (ed.), *Canon Pietro Casola's Pilgrimage*, p. 206.