

V. Macedonia from 1025 to 1430

by Alkmini Stavridou-Zafraka

1. Macedonia from 1025 to 1204

1.1. The 11th-century crisis

The death in December 1025 of Basil II, the emperor who had spent AHforty-two of the fifty years of his reign waging wars against Samuel's Bulgarians – hence his epithet *Bulgarlayer* – was a turning point in the history of Byzantium. The Empire had reached its greatest expanse and prosperity, holding sway over the Balkans from the Adriatic to the Danube.

Basil's firm leadership was followed, however, by a series of inept Emperors who, closed up within the walls of Constantinople, the Queen of Cities, were unable to confront external enemies successfully. They instead willingly blinded themselves to reality and indulged in the pursuit of pleasure and the satisfaction of their own personal ambitions, in purposeless building projects and in the unrelenting taxation of rural populations already worn out by the constant wars. Basil II's policy against the great landowners was overturned, thus destroying the smallholders, whilst the soldiers of the *themata* were replaced by foreign mercenary armies, thanks to the new war tactics. The moral crisis of the cultural world was palpable.

Internal and external factors led the Empire to a crisis in the 11th century, and the changes in social and military organisation were a forewarning of the decline that Byzantium was to experience in the following centuries.

It did not take long for the results of the policies of the government and of bureaucratic circles in the capital to surface either in the form of rebel movements led by ambitious and outraged military officers, or as revolutions on the part of rural populations, Greek and foreign, against the state's economic policy, with negative consequences in Macedonia as well.

One of the most dangerous was the Bulgarian revolution of 1040. Basil II had here implemented a far-sighted policy, preserving the system practiced under Samuel whereby the rural population paid their taxes in kind. By contrast, John the Orphanotrophus, the brother of Emperor Michael IV (1034-1041) and a selfish and greedy man who was always thinking up new taxes, demanded that the peasants pay their taxes in cash. Moreover, after the death of the ethnic Bulgarian Archbishop of Bulgaria (Ochrid), Orphanotrophus appointed Leo, the Greek *chartophylax* of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, to succeed him.¹ In 1040, Peter Deljan, who appeared on the scene as the grandson of Samuel, proclaimed a revolution against Byzantium in Belgrade and descended towards the south, to Naissus and Skopje, spreading death and desertion in his wake. Michael IV, who suffered from epilepsy and so had gone to Thessaloniki to pray at the tomb of Saint Demetrius, rushed back to Constantinople. Deljan did not move against Thessaloniki, most probably because it was well fortified. A general of his did however take Dyrrachium, whilst another section of his army descended further south, temporarily taking Demetrias, and being met by the fervent resistance of the Thebans. Totally by surprise, however, the inhabitants of the *thema* of Nikopolis in Epirus (except for Naupaktos) joined Deljan's movement, not so much out of sympathy

with the Bulgarian rebel, but because they were angered by the heavy taxes and the oppressive behaviour of the tax collector who had been sent over from Constantinople.²

Deljan's rebellion took another turn when Alusjan, a nephew of Samuel's who had been a *patrikios* and general of Theodosiupolis in Asia Minor, turned up on the scene. Alusjan had been unjustly accused of treason and was imprisoned, whilst Orphanotrophus requested an extortionate sum to free him. Alusjan managed to escape from Constantinople and reach Macedonia. He met with Deljan at Ostrovos in West Macedonia, who, worried that the Bulgarians might accede to Alusjan, named him co-regent and even assigned him to conquer Thessaloniki. Alusjan, with 40,000 troops, besieged the city, which put up a strong resistance. After six days of siege and an all-night vigil in the church of the Saint Demetrius, the city's patron saint, the Thessalonians attempted an exodus, "*with the martyr leading the way*,"³ and crushed the enemies. Many of the Bulgarian prisoners even said that they had seen "*a young horse rider... leading the Roman [Greek] phalanx*."⁴ After this defeat, Alusjan, frightened that Deljan might accuse him of treason, trapped Deljan, blinded him and fled to the Emperor at Mosynopolis in Thrace. In exchange, he was given the honorary title of *magistros*. Michael reached Thessaloniki and campaigned from here against the Bulgarians as far as Prilep. He arrested their general Ivatzis and, having restored order in Macedonia, returned with Deljan and Ivatzis to the Queen City of Constantinople, where he led a Triumph at the Hippodrome.

Things, however, became worse for Byzantium when Constantine IX Monomachos (1042-1055) ascended to the throne. As the historian John Skylitzes wrote '*from the reign of that Emperor and his extravagances, the affairs of the Romans started to worsen*.'⁵ In October 1042 George Maniakes, a most able general who had scored brilliant victories against the Arabs in Asia Minor and against the Franks in Italy and Sicily, was recalled by the Emperor. Fearing for his life, he proclaimed himself Emperor and crossed over with his army to Dyrrachium. On his way to Constantinople, at a battle that took place near Amphipolis against the imperial troops, he was fatally wounded and his army collapsed.

With George Maniakes's rebellion and his departure from Italy, the Normans found the perfect opportunity to attempt raids on Southern Italy and thus to establish themselves there. Joint action between Byzantium and the Pope against this common enemy of theirs in Italy was not possible due to the schism of 1054 between the Church of Constantinople and the Pope.

Yet whilst the threats from external enemies were increasing, with the Hungarians and Pechenegs in the North, the Seljuk Turks in the East, and the Normans in the West, the Emperors were unable to comprehend the seriousness of the dangers and take the right measures. They attempted to distance the danger by bribing the barbarian leaders and ignoring their armies, something that only increased the enemies' power and intensified the lack of protection of the provincial populations and their alienation from the capital.

In 1064 the Hungarians took Belgrade, whilst the Pechenegs and the Ouzes crossed the Danube. The Ouzes raiders, around 600,000 of them (a surely exaggerated figure) defeated the Bulgarians and Byzantines in North Thrace and reached as far as Thessaloniki and Central Greece. They were however forced to withdraw to their bases due to the oncoming winter, whilst an epidemic that had broken out decimated them. Those who survived went over to the Byzantines and were given land to cultivate in North Thrace.⁶

A few years later, in 1071, Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes's tragic defeat at Mantzikert by Alp Arslan's Seljuks left the field open for the spread of the Seljuks throughout Asia Minor. In the West, the Normans, led by Robert Guiscard had taken Bari, the last Byzantine city in Southern Italy. In the Balkans, the revolutions of the Croats, Serbs and Bulgarians were put down violently, whilst the Pechenegs and Hungarians continued their destructive raids. The economic crisis during the reign of Michael VII Doukas, as a result of the economic measures of the eunuch Nikephoritzes and the introduction of the state wheat monopoly, led local populations to despair because of the high price. Rebel movements arose, such as that of the general of Dyrrachium Nikephoros Bryennios who, via the Egnatia Way, reached his hometown of Adrianople and pronounced himself Emperor in November 1077. Another rebellion was that of the general Nikephoros Botaneiatas in the East; with supporters also inside Constantinople, he was able to take the throne.

At Dyrrachium, however, Nikephoros Basilakios, the *doux* of Dyrrachium who succeeded Nikephoros Bryennios, also rebelled. He gathered an army of Greeks, Franks, Varangians, Bulgarians and Albanians, and reached as far as Ochrid. Here, he wanted to be pronounced Emperor, but was prevented from doing so by the Archbishop of Ochrid. When he reached Thessaloniki and was informed that Nikephoros III Botaneiatas (1078-1081) had ascended to the throne, he sent a letter to Nikephoros declaring his allegiance to the new Emperor; at the same time, however, he came to an understanding with the Pechenegs.⁷ The Emperor, although he was aware of Basilakios's movements, sent him a chrysobull and awarded him the title of *novelissimos* in order to appease him. Basilakios did not change his plans, however, and general Alexios Komnenos was sent against him. Alexios took Basilakios's fortress at Peritheorion (today's Porto Lagos) and set up a military camp outside of Thessaloniki, near the Axios river. Basilakios attacked at night, but his plan had been betrayed and he was thus forced to flee to the acropolis of Thessaloniki. Alexios, with the support of the Thessalonians, arrested him and sent him bound to Constantinople.⁸

The situation inside the Empire, however, was becoming worse and worse. The loss of the largest part of Asia Minor deprived the Empire of taxes, and things had become tight in the western provinces, resulting in a large drop in funds in the public purse. It was then that the Emperor began to counterfeit the currency: '*since the money was scarce, the gold coins were counterfeited,*' wrote a Byzantine historian.⁹ Thus, the *solidus*, the gold coin that had been introduced by Constantine the Great and which had maintained its value for so many centuries, was adulterated in the years of Nikephoros III Botaneiatas, a symptom of the state's declining economy.

In April 1081 Nikephoros III Botaneiatas was overthrown by Alexios Komnenos, scion of a military family who had made his mark in the quelling of the rebellions of Nikephoros Bryennios and Nikephoros Basilakios, ushering in a new era in the history of Byzantium.

1.2. The era of the Komnenoi and the Angeloi, 1081-1204

Alexios I (1081-1118), a brave general with diplomatic skills, able to set major goals and perform great works (*ambitious and magnificent*),¹⁰ had to confront the threat of the Normans in Italy immediately on ascending to the throne. He straightaway set to reorganising the army and strengthening the cities and fortresses of the western provinces. He signed a peace treaty with the Seljuks and, in June 1081, a treaty with the Venetians, whose interests were also at stake with the Norman presence in Southern Italy and for whom freedom of shipping through the straits of Otranto was of vital importance.

In the following years, both Macedonia and Epirus became the theatre for military conflicts between the Normans and the Byzantines. The aim of the Normans was not simply to pillage and take the coastal areas of the Ionian islands, but to destroy the Byzantine state. '*He longed for the imperial authority of the Romans,*' says Anna Komnene of Robert Guiscard, King of the Normans.¹¹ His aim was to occupy Illyria and Macedonia and to proceed through the Byzantine realm to Constantinople.

The advance party was led by Robert's eldest son, Bohemund, who took Canina and Aulona, whilst Robert himself sailed from Brindisi to Dyrrachium and took Corfu. On 17 June 1081 he reached Dyrrachium with a fleet and an army and besieged the city. The Emperor was thus forced in December 1081 to campaign against the Normans, going first to Thessaloniki and from there proceeding to Dyrrachium. His army, however, was crushed and Alexios fled to Ochrid and then to Thessaloniki. In February 1082 the inhabitants of Dyrrachium gave up their city. Alexios was forced even to sell the holy vessels of the Church to raise money.¹² He conscripted new soldiers, who were trained in the vicinity of Thessaloniki, and also issued a bull granting trade privileges to Venice for its help against the Normans. These privileges marked the beginning of Venice's rise as a great trading power, and also contributed to the commercial and economic decline of the Byzantine Empire.

Seeking to create a diversion, Alexios came to an agreement with Henry of Germany, who invaded Italy, forcing the Norman king to return to Apulia. Bohemund continued his campaign in Greece. With Kastoria as his base of operations, he conquered Ioannina, where the Byzantine army was again routed and Alexios was forced to return to Constantinople. The Normans then proceeded further north, occupying Skopje, Moglena, the Asprai Ecclesiai near the River Axios and Pelagonia (today's Monastir). They were not, however, able to take Ochrid, Ostrobos, Servia and Berroia. Bohemund crossed over to Thessaly, took Trikala and on 3 April 1083 began to lay siege to Larissa. The general Leon Kephala put up a heroic resistance and the siege eventually lasted for six months. Alexios rushed to Thessaloniki and, taking a detour around Tempe, he managed with this ruse to beat the Normans, who terminated their siege and returned to Kastoria and from there to Aulona.¹³ In the summer of 1083 Alexios returned to Constantinople. In the autumn of the same year, he returned to Macedonia and continued his mopping up operations, taking Kastoria, the Normans' main foothold in Macedonia, in October. The Normans surrendered, and the terms of the ensuing treaty were agreed upon in Thessaloniki. Despite all this, the military campaign was continued by Guiscard and his sons, who were however defeated by the joint Byzantine-Venetian fleet near Corfu. Moreover, the epidemic that broke out in the winter of 1083-84 decimated a large section of their army. Guiscard himself set sail for Cephallonia, where he died on 17 July 1085.¹⁴ His death marked the end of the bloody four-year war against the Normans. A rebellion that broke out against the Normans in Dyrrachium, at the instigation of the Byzantine Emperor, allowed the Byzantines to regain the city, and thus ended the first great Norman campaign against Byzantium.

The plans of the Normans to destroy Byzantium were revived twenty years later by Bohemund. As one of the leaders of the First Crusade, he took Antioch in Syria in early June 1098. He subsequently refused, however, to return the cities that the Byzantines would recapture, despite the vow that the Crusaders had made to the Emperor. On 15 July 1099 the Crusaders took Jerusalem. Bohemund founded his own personal Crusader state and took other cities from the Turks, Laodikeia and Germanikeia. He was captured by the Turks in August 1100, but purchased his freedom in 1103, fleeing to Corfu and from there to Apulia. Here he put his father's plan into action, at the same time spreading rumours about the Emperor Alexios, accusing him of being an ally of the atheists and an enemy of the Christians. As Anna Komnene wrote, Bohemund '*was*

going round to all the towns and villages decrying the Emperor and loudly proclaiming him a pagan who was assisting the pagans with all his might'.¹⁵ It was perhaps as a result of Bohemund's actions that 'the myth of the perfidious Greeks (*perfidia Graecorum*) was to a great degree created and spread, which became the rallying cry of the Westerners during their attacks against Byzantium'.¹⁶

In October 1107 Bohemund disembarked at Aulona and began to lay siege to Dyrrachium. Alexios I reached Thessaloniki in the spring of 1108. He avoided clashing with Bohemund, however, instead reinforcing the garrisons at the passes and using the Byzantine navy to cut off supplies coming from Southern Italy to his rivals. Bohemund was forced to surrender. The two leaders met at Deabolis, where the so-called Treaty of Deabolis, which Anna Komnene includes in her work,¹⁷ was signed in September 1108. Bohemund swore that he would remain faithful to the Emperor, and Alexios granted him the fiefdom of Antioch and its surrounding areas. Bohemund however died a little later in 1111 and his nephew Tancred, whom Bohemund had appointed as his successor at Antioch, did not recognise the Treaty. The long wars had, however, driven into poverty and worn down the populations of West Macedonia, from whence the Archbishop of Ochrid Theophylaktos would send letters of despair to the Emperor.¹⁸

The Normans were to march against Byzantium again, under Roger II in 1147. They pillaged Corinth and Thebes, from where they transported male and female silk workers to Sicily.

The political developments in Byzantium following the death of Manuel I Komnenos in 1180, along with the slaughters and expulsions of the Venetians and other Latins from Constantinople, gave the external enemies the opportunity to invade Byzantine territory. Hungarians and Serbs pillaged and destroyed cities in Dalmatia and in regions to the south of the Danube. The Norman king William II (1166-1189) also took action against Byzantium. In May 1185 a fleet of two hundred ships led by Admiral Margaritone, the notorious corsair, and 80,000 troops laid siege to Dyrrachium, forcing the city to surrender. The infantry then marched along the Via Egnatia towards Thessaloniki, whilst the fleet sailed around the Peloponnese, reaching the city's port on 15 August. The besiegers focused their attention on the south section of the east wall, which was the most fragile section. The ships could not approach as, it being summer, the tides had been pulled back and the waters were shallow. Unfortunately, the governor of the city, David Komnenos, was not able to rise to the occasion and acted treacherously. Not only did he deliberately provide the Emperor with misinformation on the situation in his letters, he also let rich citizens leave the city in good time. Moreover, he gave an order to let the water flow from Hortiatis to the great cistern at the Acropolis when the requisite number of days had not passed since it had been cleaned, resulting in the plasters dissolving and the water being made unusable. As a result, the inhabitants were not able to escape to the Acropolis.¹⁹ A military force from the Peloponnese and Alani mercenaries rushed to help, many of the latter however defecting to the enemy. Military units from Constantinople were also sent, although they had been given the order to remain outside the walls. The residents put up a stiff resistance, with even the women helping to transport water, stones, and food to the fighters, and sometimes even fighting themselves.²⁰ At dawn on the ninth day of the siege, the enemy entered through the crack made by the catapult near the tower of Hamaidrakon in the east wall. On 24 August the enemy flooded into the city. A frenzied slaughter, with rape and pillaging, followed. The description of the siege and fall of the city included in the writings of the metropolitan Eustathius gives the full sense of the destruction. The city that had been blessed land, he writes, was filled with the unburied corpses of men, women and the old. Of this beautiful, great city he wrote '*that nothing remained of its old beauty*'.²¹

The Normans even broke into the church of Saint Demetrius and hacked the coffin of the Saint to pieces with axes, removing the silver and gold. They took over the mansions and houses, and the Thessalonians wandered around homeless in the streets of the city whilst the hostages were gathered in the dockyards. Alongside them was the Metropolitan Eustathius who, although he could leave, stood by his flock, giving it courage and attempting to take stock of the ordeal of the fall.

The fall of the Empire's second city filled the Byzantines with outrage and anger. The Emperor Andronikos I Komnenos persecuted David Komnenos's relatives in Constantinople. A climate of fear spread, as Andronikos attributed the defeat to a secret deal between his rivals and the Normans.

The Normans left a garrison in Thessaloniki and proceeded to march against Constantinople. A section went on to take Serres, whilst the main section reached Mosynopolis in Thrace. The Norman fleet was already stationed outside Constantinople.

A chance event that took place on 15 December 1185 led to the overthrow of Andronikos I and his terrible death. The new emperor, Isaac I Angelos, ushering in the Angelos dynasty, was able to put together a battle-worthy army that, led by general Alexios Branas, attacked the Normans and took Mosynopolis. The Normans were completely routed on 7 November 1185 to the east of the river Strymon and were forced to abandon Thessaloniki and, later in the spring of 1186, Dyrrachium and Corfu. The Norman fleet also suffered losses during its retreat from the attacks of the Byzantine navy, and from storms and disease.

Once the Normans had withdrawn, Isaac attempted to forge alliances throughout the Balkans. He took the young Margaret, daughter of Bela, the king of Hungary, as his second wife. The imposition of extraordinary taxes to pay for the wedding celebrations provoked protests, primarily from the Bulgarians and the Vlachs around the Haemus. Led by the Asen brothers, they revolted against Byzantium. Repeated campaigns against the Bulgarians could not quell the uprising, and the Bulgarians founded a second Bulgarian state with its capital at Tirnovo (1187). They even built a church in honour of Saint Demetrius, pronouncing that the martyr of Christ Demetrius had abandoned Thessaloniki and his church there, and had come to Tirnovo in order to help them overthrow the yoke of the Romans (the Greeks).²²

After the overthrow of Isaac II Angelos in 1195 by his brother Alexios III (1195-1203), the Vlachs and Bulgarians attempted raids in Macedonia near Serres. The Vlach Dobromir of Chrysos, governor of Stroumitsa, attempted to gain autonomy, taking Prosek, an impenetrable fortress on the river Axios, and, briefly, Pelagonia and Prilep. The situation became even more dangerous for Byzantium in 1197 when Peter Asen was killed and was succeeded by his brother Johanitza (Kalojan or Skyloioannis), who set as his goal the expansion of his state at the expense of Byzantium.

Bad government and the dynastic crisis in the Byzantine Empire under Alexios III gave the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade the opportunity to take Constantinople, which fell to the Franks and Venetians on 13 April 1204. Alexios III barely put up a resistance, and had already abandoned the City on the night of 17 July 1203, fleeing to Philippopolis and later to Mosynopolis in Thrace, taking with him the royal treasury.²³

2. Macedonia during the period of Latin rule (1204 – 1261)

2.1. The Lombard Kingdom of Thessaloniki (1204-1224)

The fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders in 1204 is a watershed in the history of Byzantium. The Empire collapsed and its place was taken by the Latin Empire of Constantinople, with a Frank Emperor and Venetian Patriarch. Its remaining lands were adjudicated with the agreement of March 1204, by which the Byzantine state was divided up among the other leaders and Barons as well as Venice. Nonetheless, three Greek states were established: that of Trebizond under Alexios and David Komnenos; the Empire of Nicaea in Bythinia by Alexios III's son-in-law Theodore Laskaris; and the Despotate of Epirus by the cousin of the Emperor, Michael Doukas. Their aim was to retake Constantinople and establish the Byzantine Empire once more.

Candidates for the position of Emperor were Baldwin of Flanders and Boniface of Montferrat in Lombardy. With the support of Dandolo, the Doge of Venice, Baldwin was pronounced Emperor and was crowned in Hagia Sophia on 16 May 1204. Boniface was given Asia Minor and the Peloponnese. He also, however, contested the Empire's second city, Thessaloniki, and its environs, and even claimed inheritance rights, since the revenues from the region had been promised to his brother Renier, when he married the daughter of Emperor Manuel I Komnenos in 1179. Baldwin accepted, but the protests of the Barons created a rupture between these two protagonists.

Baldwin pursued the Emperor Alexios III, who had headed for Thessaloniki from Mosynopolis. Setting off from Adrianople, he reached the environs of Thessaloniki and requested that the city submit to him. Just as the cities of Thrace had proclaimed allegiance to the Frank Emperor to avoid pillaging and destruction, the residents of Thessaloniki agreed with the term that his army would not enter the city and that its privileges, which had existed from very early on, be recognised. Baldwin ratified the agreement with a bull: *'he agreed with the Thessalonians and handed them a bull signed in red ink, confirming for the city all the old customs.'*²⁴

Baldwin's entrance into Thessaloniki provoked Boniface's rage, who rushed to take Didymoteichon and besiege Adrianople. He even secured the acceptance of the Greeks, having married the widow of Isaac II, Margaret-Mary and pronouncing that he would have her first-born son Manuel crowned Emperor, whom they acclaimed as the King of the Romans. Civil conflict was avoided thanks to the intervention of Enrico Dandolo, who called for a Council at Constantinople in October 1204, which vindicated Boniface and recognised him as the king of Thessaloniki.

In October of 1204 the Byzantine Empire was divided up on the basis of the pact made in March of that year. However, in the final document, known as the *Partitio Romaniae*, although all the other provinces of the Empire were included, Thessaloniki and the regions of East Macedonia (Serres, Christoupolis, Amphipolis, Philippi, Melnik) and an area of Thrace as far as Mosynopolis, which had been given to Boniface, were not mentioned.²⁵ Boniface entered Thessaloniki and was crowned King in early 1205. He divided the most luxurious houses amongst the knights of his court and appropriated the money and properties of the Thessalonians, displeasing and disappointing the residents.²⁶ He proceeded immediately with the appointment of a Latin Archbishop and handed over the churches and revenues of Saint Demetrius and Hagia Sophia to the Latin clergy. The church of Hagia Sophia remained the metropolitan church.²⁷ It appears that the revenues of the monasteries of Philokalos and Akapnios were also given to the Latins.

Having secured his power base in Thessaloniki, Boniface set off with an army to conquer south Greece and the Peloponnese, and divide the lands that he would capture as fiefdoms for the Crusaders. He left a regency behind in Thessaloniki, comprised of Lombard nobles and headed by his wife Maria. Descending southwards, he took cities and castles such as Kitros, which he gave over to Wirich von Daun, and Platamon, which went to Rolando Piscia. Reaching Thermopylai, he came up against the resistance of the nobleman of Argos and Nauplion, Leon Sgouros, who had reached as far as Larissa, and who was ultimately obliged to withdraw to Acrocorinth.²⁸

Things, however, evolved dangerously for the Latins in Thrace. The inhabitants of the cities of Thrace, disappointed by the oppressive policies of the Franks, revolted. When Baldwin besieged Adrianople, its inhabitants sought help from the Bulgarian Tsar Johanitza, whose authority had increased after his coronation at Tirnovo by a representative of the Pope in November 1204. The Bulgarian Tsar jumped at the opportunity to invade Thrace. On 13 April 1205 Baldwin, laying siege to Adrianople, was ambushed by the Bulgarians, taken captive and beheaded. The Tsar then demanded that the Adrianopolites hand over their city, but they refused. He was not, however, able to capture it because, as the historian George Akropolites wrote that 'the Bulgarians were not capable in siege warfare', as they did not use siege machinery.²⁹ Frenzied, the Bulgarians then spilled out into Thrace, destroyed many cities and taking many captives into the Danube regions.

Johanitza's next target was Thessaloniki. A Vlach general of his, Etruismenos (Sisman), governor of Prosek, came to an understanding with the Thessalonians, who had rebelled, entering the city himself and laying siege to Queen Maria in the Acropolis. Boniface rushed back to Thessaloniki and punished the ringleaders. The Emperor Alexios III, who was in Thessaloniki with his family, may also have been in on the conspiracy, and was thus expelled. Alexios descended further south and met with Leon Sgouros, who then married his daughter Eudokia.³⁰

Johanitza, who styled himself *Romaioktonos* (Romanslayer), as a counterpart to Basil II the *Bulgaroktonos*, or Bulgarslayer,³¹ marched westwards, took Serres, slaughtered the Latin garrison and much of the population, and reached as far as Berroia, taking other cities of Macedonia. The Bulgarian raids brought slaughters, captivity and movements of populations to safer castle-cities.³²

Boniface was not able to retake Serres. He did, however, come to an understanding with the new Latin Emperor, Baldwin's brother Henry of Flanders (1206-1216), for a joint campaign against the Bulgarians. Henry even married Boniface's daughter Agnes. In September of 1207 Boniface fell victim to a Bulgarian ambush at Rhodope and died from haemorrhaging. His death was a blow for the Latins, and gave Johanitza the opportunity to rush to Thessaloniki and take the city. He was, however, killed in his tent during the siege, on 26 October 1207, the feast day of Saint Demetrius. The Thessalonians attributed the salvation of the city to their patron saint, and this is why many icons portray the Saint on horseback, lancing the Bulgarian Skyloioannis.³³ The death of Johanitza brought much relief to both the Greeks and the Latins, given all the destruction that he had spread.

After Boniface's death, there was much confusion and civil conflict in Thessaloniki. His then underage son Demetrius had been appointed successor to the throne, with his mother Maria as regent. However, the Lombard barons, led by Umberto of Biantrate, wanted to invite Demetrius's half-brother William of Montferrat, over from Italy as his father's heir. Emperor Henry arrived in Thessaloniki in December 1208 and came to an agreement with Biantrate at Chortaites Monastery (today's Chortiates). The Lombards, however, asked for all of Greece from Dyrrachium as far as Thrace, and

from Corinth as far as Philippopolis. Henry, taking into account the feelings of the people of Thessaloniki and the opinion of Queen Maria, annulled the agreement and crowned Demetrius king on the feast day of the Epiphany, 1209. With the help of the Greek inhabitants, he captured Serres and Christoupolis and expelled their Lombard garrisons, went down to Thessaloniki and obliged the Lombards to hand over Larissa and then Thebes. Henry led his army as far as Athens, where he accepted the surrender of Godfrey Villehardouin, prince of Achaia, and acknowledged him as a vassal. And, although he was to turn against Epirus, its leader Michael Doukas declared his vassal status and proposed the marriage of his daughter with Henry's brother Eustache, with one-third of his territory as dowry. Henry accepted this proposal and left for Constantinople, leaving Eustache behind in Thessaloniki as a second regent for Demetrius.³⁴

In 1212 the Flemish Guérin was elected Archbishop of Thessaloniki, assuming the privileges that the Archbishop of Thessaloniki enjoyed as a legate of the Pope before the submission of Illyricum to the Patriarchate of Constantinople (mid-8th century). Eleven dioceses were included in the Archbishopric: Kitros, Berroia, Kampania, Vardar, Servia, Petra, Platamon, Langada, Ardamereis, Ierissos and Kassandreia. A synodic decision of the Archbishop of Ochrid, Demetrius Chomatenos (1236), indicates that the Greek Bishops were kept, and they even judged various cases in the presence of Dux George Frangopoulos in the church of the Acheiropoietos, thanks to the lenient ecclesiastical policy of Queen Maria.³⁵

Yet, with an underage king and without strong military forces, the Lombard Kingdom of Thessaloniki began to shrink. And its very existence was threatened by the military activities and ambitions of the Despots of Epirus, who had set as their goal the recapture of Byzantine territory and the reformation of the Byzantine Empire.

2.2. The collapse of the Lombard Kingdom and the foundation of the Empire of Thessaloniki (1224-1246)

The struggle against the Bulgarians and Latins in Greece was assumed by the founder of the Despotate of Epirus, Michael I Doukas. Doukas was the cousin of the emperors Isaac II and Alexios III, and served in the army of Boniface of Montferrat after the fall. He sped however to Epirus when the governor of the theme, Nikolaos Senachereim, invited him to help him confront a rebellion. His second marriage was to the daughter or widow of Senachereim, and, with his base at Arta, he followed an ambitious and autonomous policy. He took part in the struggle of the Peloponnesians against the Franks, and, in a diplomatic move, declared himself a vassal to Emperor Henry in 1209. In 1210 he signed an agreement with Venice, but quickly broke these agreements, taking Dyrrachium from the Venetians in 1212 and Corfu in 1214. He liberated Larissa in 1212. After his murder in 1214/15, his policy was continued by his brother Theodore Doukas, an experienced and ambitious general who occupied territories in Macedonia and tightened the noose around Thessaloniki. Emperor Henry, worried about the situation in Thessaloniki, returned to the city, where he died suddenly in May 1216. The next year, Theodore Doukas scored an impressive victory in capturing the new Latin Emperor Peter of Courtenay in the mountains of Albania, thus increasing his status. Courtenay was the husband of Henry's sister Yolanda and had been crowned in Rome by Pope Honorius III in April 1217. With 160 cavalrymen and 5,500 infantry, Peter had crossed in Venetian ships from Brindisi to Dyrrachium, aiming to capture this important port for the Venetians, whilst his wife and her escort travelled by sea to Constantinople. Dyrrachium, however, put up a fierce defence, and Courtenay was ambushed whilst traversing the mountains to take the Via Egnatia, and imprisoned along with the Pope's

representative Cardinal John Colonna. The Latin Emperor disappeared, whereas, after pressure from the Pope, the Cardinal was freed in 1218.

From 1216-1219 Theodore liberated Ochrid, Pelagonia, Prilep, Prosek, Skopje and Stroumitsa from the Bulgarians, and from 1217-18 he liberated Neopatras (Ypati), Lamia, Grevena, Kastoria, Platamon, Berroia, Serres, Servia and Christoupolis from the Latins. He was thus able to isolate Thessaloniki and cut the city off from any assistance that it might receive from the Franks from Constantinople or south Greece.³⁶

In 1222 the young King of Thessaloniki, Demetrius, travelled to the West to request from the Pope that a new Crusade be mounted to save Thessaloniki. In early 1223, Margaret-Maria returned to her homeland of Hungary, whilst the defence of Thessaloniki was assumed by the Marquis of Boudonitsa, Guy Pelavicino. Pope Honorius III attempted to mobilise the western powers and gather money and armies for the Crusade, at the head of which was appointed William of Montferrat. Theodore Doukas laid siege to Thessaloniki in 1223 and made a triumphant entrance into the city in December 1224.³⁷ The Crusade that the Pope had organised was being delayed, and the Crusader armies reached Pteleos in Thessaly in the summer of 1225, only to be decimated by dysentery in the Thessalian plains. William died. The attempted Crusade collapsed.

When the danger from the West was extinguished, Theodore Doukas, having moved his troops into Thrace, was acclaimed Emperor in 1226. He was most likely crowned ‘*King and Emperor of the Romans*’ on the day of the Pentecost 1227.³⁸ The Metropolitan of Thessaloniki, Constantine Mesopotamites, refused to crown him, wanting to remain true to the Patriarchate and Emperor of Nicaea, and he abandoned the city. The coronation was performed by the Archbishop of Ochrid Demetrius Chomatenos, provoking the protests of the Patriarch of Nicaea, who sent letters accusing Demetrius Chomatenos of damaging the unity of the Patriarchate. There was great suspicion that, along with the *Kingdom* (= empire), a new Patriarchate would also be created. The acclamation and crowning of Theodore Doukas was considered by Nicaea as a usurpation of imperial power and contrary to the political ideology of the Byzantines for the exclusivity of the Empire.³⁹

With its recovery, Thessaloniki was made into a capital city (*vasilevousa*) and the Despotate of Epirus became the Empire of Thessaloniki. Theodore organised his court according to Byzantine models and granted the title of Despot to his two brothers and other honorary titles to leading officials. At the Thessaloniki mint he had coins cut portraying himself along with the city’s patron saint, Hagios Demetrius.

Light is shed upon the inner workings of the state through the archives of Demetrius Chomatenos and the Metropolitan of Naupaktos John Apokaukos. We can identify the administrative divisions of Theodore Doukas’s state on the basis of an imperial bull issued by Alexios III in 1198 and addressed to Venice, in which all the provinces of the state in which the Venetian merchants were to be granted commercial facilities and privileges are given. We also have the Pact for the division of the Empire, the *Partitio Romaniae* of 1204. The state was divided into *themata*, small judicial and tax districts under the governorship of a Dux. The *themes* of Vagenitia, Berroia, Deabolis, Ioannina, Koloneia, Nikopolis, Skopje, Stroumitsa, Thessaloniki, Acheloos, Dyrrachium, Ochrid, Prespa, Kastoria, Pelagonia and Servia are listed.⁴⁰

Immediately on conquering a city, both Michael Doukas and Theodore would replace the old Metropolitans and Bishops. If they had died they would give an order for the election of new ones, requesting the approval of the Patriarch only afterwards, incurring the fierce protestations of Nicaea.⁴¹ Another major ecclesiastical issue, which arose primarily in West Macedonia was that of the presbyters and the deacons who had

been ordained by the Bulgarian Bishops during the Bulgarian occupation. A compromise solution was given by the Synod of the Archbishopric of Ochrid in 1219: it deposed the Bulgarian Bishops without the possibility of recall, restored the legal Bishops who had been expelled, and proclaimed empty the Dioceses of those who had died. It kept those prelates who had been ordained, imposing certain penances.⁴² The question of the Bishops was exceptionally important because, in addition to their work with their flock, the local synods would judge different cases of family law, property differences, etc. The synodical court of the Archbishopric of Ochrid under Demetrius Chomatenos (1217-1236) was particularly influential.

Demetrius Chomatenos, '*Archbishop of Justiniana Prima and All Bulgaria*', the official title of the Archbishop of Ochrid, was distinguished for his education and legal training. Through his legal work he emerged as 'one of the greatest jurists of his era'.⁴³ Leaders, such as Stephen Nemanja of Serbia and Theodore Doukas, officials and even ordinary people from various places, even outside of the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric, would resort to the synodical court, requesting the judgment of Chomatenos, before embarking upon a judicial case.

After the capture of Thessaloniki, Theodore Doukas continued his campaigns to the East, reaching the walls of Constantinople in 1228. Some skirmishes took place, but ultimately a yearly truce was signed with the representatives of the Regency of Constantinople, as well as a commercial agreement, which was also ratified by the Senate of Venice. In the spring of 1230, the Emperor of Thessaloniki again moved against Constantinople. He wanted, however, to secure his tracks, and when he reached the river Evros turned northwards against the Bulgarian tsar John II Asen, but suffered a crushing defeat near the village of Kolokotinitza on the Evros. Theodore and many of his generals and officers were taken captive to Tirnovo, where a little later Theodore was accused of conspiracy and blinded. Asen then captured a number of cities in Thrace and Macedonia, placing Bulgarian generals in them and dispatching tax collectors to collect the taxes.⁴⁴

Rule of this reduced empire of Thessaloniki was assumed by Theodore Doukas's brother, the Despot Manuel, who had married an illegitimate daughter of John Asen. Manuel attempted to form alliances and pursued an autonomous foreign policy. He restored relations with the Patriarchate and the Emperor of Nicaea, which had been damaged by the coronation of Theodore Doukas, and he sent the Metropolitan of Corfu George Bardanes to Italy for talks with the Pope and the German Emperor of Sicily, Frederick II Hohenstaufen.

In 1237 the widower John II Asen married Irene, daughter of Theodore Doukas, who had accompanied her father into captivity. Asen freed Theodore, who returned secretly to Thessaloniki and assumed power there, whilst Manuel fled to the court of Nicaea. Theodore had his son John crowned king, although in reality it was he who wielded the reins of power. Manuel swore an oath of allegiance to John II Vatatzes, the Emperor of Nicaea, who supplied him with six ships in his effort to regain power. In 1239, he set anchor at Demetrias and took Pharsala, Larissa and Platamon. He eventually came to an agreement with his brother, and a civil war was avoided. Manuel became ruler of Thessaly, whilst Theodore was installed at Edessa and had the control of two castles in West Macedonia, Ostrovo and Staridola.⁴⁵

Manuel and John II Asen both died in 1241, and an important chapter in the history of Bulgaria came to a close with the death of the latter, who was succeeded by his son Kaliman. The whole political situation favoured the plans of the Emperor of Nicaea, who marched against Thessaloniki in 1242. With the intervention of Theodore Doukas, his son John stood down as Emperor and continued to rule with the title of Despot. Af-

ter his death in 1244 he was succeeded by his brother Demetrius, who was given the title of Despot by the Emperor of Nicaea. During this period, Thessaloniki was essentially a vassal of Nicaea. In the summer of 1246, John III Vatatzes campaigned against Bulgaria, which was governed by Michael, underage half-brother of Kaliman and son of Irene. He took Serres, the region of Meleniko as far as Velbuzd (Kujstendil), Stypion (Istip), Skopje, Velesa, Prilep, Pelagonia and Prosek. During his return, and whilst he was at Meleniko, a conspiracy against Demetrius was uncovered in Thessaloniki by a pro-Nicaea faction. In late November, Vatatzes set up military camp outside Thessaloniki and took the city. Demetrius was exiled and died in Asia Minor. The ephemeral Empire of Thessaloniki fell and the whole of Macedonia was incorporated into the Empire of Nicaea.⁴⁶

2.3. Efforts for the establishment of Nicaean rule in Macedonia (1246-1261)

Rule of Thessaloniki and the newly-conquered cities was assumed by the *mezas domestikos* Andronikos Palaiologos, whilst his son Michael took control of Serres and Meleniko.

The interests of Nicaea in Macedonia were however to come into conflict with those of the ruler of Epirus Michael II Doukas, who had returned to Arta from the Peloponnese, where he had fled after the murder of his father Michael. Michael II exploited the anarchy that reigned in Bulgaria after the death of John II Asen to regain territory in the regions of Dyrrachium, Albania and West Macedonia. In 1246 Epirus and Nicaea for the first time gained a common border in the region of Ochrid and Prilep, whilst Michael controlled the greater part of Thessaly and Epirus, considering himself the only living contestant to the imperial throne.

In the next years, Macedonia was to be the field of military conflict between Michael II and the Emperor of Nicaea. In 1251, along with his uncle Theodore Doukas, Michael unsuccessfully attempted to take Thessaloniki. In spring 1252 John Vatatzes reached Thessaloniki with sizeable military forces, taking Edessa, Kastoria and the greater part of Albania. Michael was forced to come to an agreement, handing over his uncle Theodore and his son Nikephoros as hostages. Theodore was led to Nicaea, where he died, whilst Nikephoros had also been engaged to Maria, the granddaughter of the Emperor since 1249, returned to Epirus with the title of Despot.

After the death of John III Vatatzes in 1254, the Bulgarian Tsar Michael I Asen (1246-1257) took the region from the river Axios as far as Albania, which had previously been captured by the Emperor of Nicaea. The new Emperor Theodore II Laskaris (1254-1258) campaigned in Thrace and Macedonia, restoring Byzantine rule, whilst in May 1256 Michael Asen signed a treaty abandoning the territory that he had occupied.⁴⁷

The crushing victory of the Emperor of Nicaea cut short the plans of Michael II of Epirus. On the initiative of his wife Theodora, who had travelled along with her son to the military camp of Laskaris on the river Evros, the marriage of Nikephoros with the daughter of Laskaris was decided upon. The wedding was held in Thessaloniki in October 1256 by Patriarch Arsenios, in the presence of the Emperor and Theodora. Michael was forced to offer Dyrrachium and Servia as a wedding gift to the bridegroom. Laskaris returned to Nicaea, leaving the historian George Akropolites as general governor. In December 1256 Akropolites started off from Thessaloniki and toured all the regions of Macedonia, reaching Dyrrachium and Kria. Michael II could not, however, forgive the way in which he was coerced to give up Dyrrachium and Servia, and, in collaboration with the Serbs, inspired a rebellion in Elbasan, taking Berroia and Kastoria and laying siege to George Akropolites who, with a few troops, had fled to Prileps. With the

fall of Prilep, Akropolites was led captive to Arta, whilst the governors of many cities were handed over, with the result that all of West Macedonia came under the control of the Despotate of Epirus. Thessaloniki was garrisoned by Michael Palaiologos, who was, however, recalled having been accused of treason.⁴⁸

Dramatic events unfolded in Nicaea. Theodore II Laskaris died in August 1258, leaving his underage son John IV Laskaris on the throne. During the novena, the regent George Mouzalon was assassinated by members of the aristocracy, with Michael Palaiologos assuming the role of regent.

Michael Doukas, in order to promote his plans, formed alliances with Manfred of Sicily (who married Michael's daughter and took Aulona and other cities that he had captured along the Epirus coast as dowry) and with William II Villehardouin (who married Michael's second daughter). These alliances worried Nicaea. On 25 December 1258 Michael VIII Palaiologos was crowned Emperor and the minor John IV Laskaris was crowned co-Emperor.

The decisive battle between the two rival sides took place in the summer of 1259 on the plain between Pelagonia and Kastoria, where the armies of Michael Doukas, Manfred and Villehardouin were routed by the army of Nicaea led by the brother of Michael Palaiologos, the *sebastokrator* John. After the battle of Pelagonia, the castles of Macedonia, Edessa, Ostrovo, Prespa, Kastoria, Prilep and Ochrid fell one after the other and the area as far as Dyrrachium and Berat came under the control of Nicaea.⁴⁹

The political situation was completely overturned on 25 July 1261 when the general of Nicaea Alexios Stratigopoulos, who had been sent to guard Thrace, recaptured Constantinople, which he found almost completely unguarded. On 15 August Michael VIII Palaiologos entered the City triumphantly and was crowned in Hagia Sophia as a new Constantine, inaugurating the dynasty of the Palaiologoi on the throne of Byzantium.⁵⁰

3. Macedonia in the years of the Palaiologoi (1261-1430)

With the recapture of the capital in 1261, the Byzantine Empire was refounded in a fractured capital city and with a plethora of internal and external problems. In addition to the coasts, the Empire had lost almost all of Asia Minor to the Turks, and the threat from the West was constant, as the Franks did not cease to push for Constantinople. Rule of the seas by the Italian republics of Venice, Genoa and Pisa, and the privileges that had been granted by the Byzantine Emperors damaged Byzantine trade, which was no longer competitive. The loss of the fertile areas of Asia Minor led to reduced revenues whilst the costs of the army had increased, as defence depended on units of foreign mercenaries. The appearance of new enemies in the Balkans and the steady advance of the Ottoman Turks were to constitute a fatal threat to the Empire over the coming years.

The hostilities in Macedonia did not stop. From 1262 until 1264 Michael II Doukas, in collusion with Manfred, violated the treaties and attacked the imperial fortresses, until 1265 when he was forced to sign a treaty with Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos and to give Ioannina up to him. The treaty was sealed with the marriage of his son, the Despot Nikephoros, to Anna, the Emperor's niece.

After the death of Michael II (between 1267 and 1271), his realm was divided between his two sons, Nikephoros with his capital at Arta, and John who controlled Thessaly and had his capital at Neopatras (Ypati). John participated in campaigns against Macedonia alongside the Emperor's dynamic new enemy, the Serb leader Stephen Urus II Milutin (1282-1321). In 1282 Milutin took Skopje and made the city the

capital of his kingdom, subsequently taking the areas north of Ochrid, Prilep and Stypion (Istip), and continuing his raids into Macedonia. In 1299 Emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328) was forced to come to an agreement with Milutin. Despite the protests of the Church, he agreed to the marriage of his five-year-old daughter Simonis with the forty-year-old Milutin. The wedding was held in Thessaloniki with the Archbishop of Ochrid conducting the service, and Milutin was given the territories he had occupied as dowry.⁵¹

Scions of the imperial family were to settle in Thessaloniki in the fourteenth century and to rule with the title of Despot. Yet, schismatic tendencies were also to appear, with disastrous consequences for Macedonia. In 1303, Yolanda-Irene, Andronikos II's second wife, was to separate from her husband and settle in Thessaloniki. Yolanda, daughter of the Marquis of Montferrat, had received from her father the noble title of Queen of Thessaloniki when she married Andronikos in 1284. She later requested of the Emperor that they divide the part of the realm outside of Constantinople between their three sons, according to western models. The Emperor rejected this request, as it was contrary to the dogma of a unified empire. Yolanda became angry and went to Thessaloniki, where she remained until her death (at Drama in 1317). In 1305 their son the Despot John, who had assumed governorship of Thessaloniki, died in the city.⁵²

In the next few years Macedonia was to suffer great damage from the Catalan Grand Company. Professional mercenaries, the Catalans had been hired by the Emperor to fight against the Turks in Asia Minor. Yet, when the Emperor was unable to continue paying their fees, they pillaged the provinces of Asia Minor and Thrace. In 1307 they settled in Chalkidike and began raids against the monasteries of Mount Athos and the surrounding area. Of the 180 monasteries that existed in the 11th century, only 25 survived the raids of the 14th century. In 1308 the Catalans attacked Thessaloniki but were unable to capture it, thanks to its fortifications. They thus turned to South Greece and took Athens.⁵³

The civil conflicts that broke out between 1320 and 1341 were also to have catastrophic consequences for Macedonia and the Empire more generally. Serbs, Bulgarians and Turks took part in these, and they contributed to the establishment of the Turks in Europe.

3.1. The war of the two Andronikoi (1321-1328) and the reign of Andronikos III (1328-1341)

In October 1320, Michael IX, son and co-emperor of Andronikos II, died suddenly in Thessaloniki on being informed of the death of his daughter Queen Anna in Epirus and the murder of his youngest son Manuel in Constantinople. Manuel's elder brother Andronikos, who had been proclaimed co-emperor already in 1316, was thought to be responsible for his death. Andronikos II, concerned for his grandson's flamboyant lifestyle, stripped him of his title and was planning to declare the illegitimate son of his son, the Despot Constantine, as his successor. The young Andronikos, surrounded by rich friends and powerful officials, reacted to his grandfather's plans, resulting in the outbreak of a civil war that lasted for seven years and is known as the war of the two Andronikoi. Military conflict was initially avoided with the Reggio agreement of 6 June 1321, which secured the succession of his grandson, who assumed rule of the areas from Selymbria as far as Christoupolis, with Adrianople as his capital. Andronikos II kept the areas from Constantinople to Selymbria and from Christoupolis to Dyrrachium. A little later, however, violent episodes broke out in Thessaloniki, when Andronikos III's mother, Maria-Rita, who had become a nun, most probably at the Monastery of Hagia Theodora, was forcefully taken to Constantinople. A rebellion broke out, and the

Thessalonians requested the young Andronikos to take the city. A new agreement between grandfather and grandson kept the government and economy of the state in the hands of Andronikos II, whilst the grandson was permitted to keep a mercenary army and was granted tax exemption and a yearly allowance. There followed a phase of partnership and peace. Yet, in December 1327, on the invitation of the Thessalonians, Andronikos III entered Thessaloniki and proceeded to take Edessa, Kastoria and Berroia. On 24 May 1328 he became master of Constantinople. The elderly Andronikos II stood down and withdrew to the Monastery of Libus two years later, where, as the monk Antonios, he died in 1334.

Immediately after his ascension to the throne, Andronikos III attempted to reinforce the defence of Macedonia by founding new castles: the Gynaikokastro (women's castle) in the Axios valley (near Kilkis); the Siderokastro (iron castle) in the valley of Strymon; and another near the river of Amphipolis. After the removal of Stephen Urus II Milutin by Serbian nobles and the rise to the throne of his son Stephen Dushan (1331-1355), the Serbs emerged as Byzantium's most dangerous enemies in the Balkans, whereas their goal was pillage and the conquest of Byzantine territory. Collaborating with the experienced general Syrgiannes Palaiologos, who had served as governor of Thessaloniki and vacillated during the civil war between the two Andronikoi, Serb forces took Ochrid, Stroumnitsa and Kastoria, and threatened Thessaloniki in 1334. Andronikos III reached Rentina from Didymoteichon, whilst his friend John Kantakouzenos forced the Turkish pirate ships that were ravaging Chalkidike to withdraw. After the murder of Syrgiannes by Andronikos's people, and given that the Serb state was being threatened by an invasion of the Hungarians, Dushan met with the Emperor at the Gallikos river and they made a peace pact, with the condition that Dushan return the cities and the castles that he had taken.⁵⁴ From 1334 until 1341 there was relative peace. After Andronikos III's sudden death on 15 June 1341, a new and far more devastating civil war broke out. This was accompanied by religious and social conflict, with the entanglement of the Serbs, Bulgarians and Ottoman Turks, sapping the Empire of its last breath.

3.2. The civil wars, 1341-1354 and the Ottoman occupation

Andronikos III was succeeded by his underage son John V Palaiologos, with his mother Anna as regent. The running of affairs was immediately assumed by the deceased's intimate friend, John Kantakouzenos, who had supported Andronikos during all his struggles to claim the kingdom. Andronikos had not appointed the members of the Regency, a fact which led to civil conflict, as claims to the Regency were made by the Patriarch John Kalekas and Alexios Apokaukos, who insinuated to the Queen Mother that John Kantakouzenos coveted the imperial throne. Kantakouzenos was thus pronounced an enemy of the state, his property seized, and his supporters in Constantinople persecuted and imprisoned. With the turn that things had taken, and on the exhortation of supporters of his who had fled Constantinople, Kantakouzenos was pronounced Emperor in Didymoteichon on 26 October 1341. Many cities went over to Kantakouzenos. In Adrianople, however, members of the lower classes attacked and pillaged the houses of the nobles, thus giving a social edge to the opposition to Kantakouzenos, who was one of the richest men of Byzantium with much landed property, especially around Serres.

The war erupted into uncontrolled events in Thessaloniki when, in the spring of 1342, the governor Theodore Synadinos invited Kantakouzenos to take the city. The inhabitants revolted, led by the Zealots, who came mainly from the lower classes and the guild of sailors. They turned against the rich with particular ferociousness, slaugh-

tering and pillaging. Thessaloniki resembled a city that had been destroyed by enemies. The Zealots took power, whilst Kantakouzenos came to an agreement with Stephen Dushan, who attempted to capitalise on events and extend his control in Macedonia. Starting out from Serbia, Kantakouzenos attempted to take Serres and proceed to Thrace. He was, however, forced to return to Serres as government forces and fleet were heading in the direction of Thessaloniki. In 1343 he took Berroia, Servia and Platamon, whilst the ships of his ally, Umur, the Seljuk emir of Aydin, had reached Thessaloniki. A section of the Turkish fleet anchored at Pydna in Pieria, and the Turks indulged in pillaging as far as the vicinity of Berroia. It was not, however, possible to take Thessaloniki whilst the Zealots were in power. Kantakouzenos returned to Thrace, but Dushan took Edessa, Kastoria and Florina, and also Serres in September 1345, where he was declared 'Emperor of Serbia and Romania'. He was crowned at Skopje in the spring of 1346.⁵⁵

The turn of events in Thessaloniki was quick and dramatic. The governor John Apokaukos ordered the assassination of the leader of the Zealots and exiled many of their leaders. When the news arrived that his father, Alexios Apokaukos, had been murdered in Constantinople, he was ready to hand over Thessaloniki to Kantakouzenos. It was at this point that a counter-movement arose, led by the until then moderate leader of the Zealots Andreas Palaiologos. Apokaukos and all the nobles who had fled to the Acropolis were thrown over the walls and the city succumbed to the pillaging and destruction of the rabid masses. The Zealots became masters of the city and ruled autonomously from 1345 until 1347, even after Kantakouzenos's entrance into Constantinople and his reconciliation with John V Palaiologos, who had married his daughter Eleni. They even twice refused entrance to the city to the new Metropolitan Gregory Palamas, the leading representative of the Hesychast movement, and requested help from the Serbs. This action was considered treacherous by the Thessalonians, and in 1349 they turned against the Zealots and applauded Kantakouzenos when he came to the city with John V in 1350.⁵⁶

In this way an end was put to the rule of the Zealots, but not to civil conflict. John V, who had remained in Thessaloniki, considering himself displaced in the provinces, came to an understanding with Dushan. This agreement was, however, blocked by his mother Anna Palaiologina, who sped to the new capital of Thessaloniki. In the autumn of 1352 John V clashed in Thrace with Matthew, the son of Kantakouzenos, and was defeated near Didymoteichon. After his failure to take Constantinople, he returned to Thessaloniki, where the government was being run by his mother Anna Palaiologina. In February 1354, Kantakouzenos crowned his son Matthew as co-emperor and prohibited the mention of John V in plaudits. In March of this same year, his allies the Turks took the city of Gallipoli, the most important city in strategic terms on the Hellespont, which had been abandoned by its inhabitants because of the earthquakes. This city now became the base from which the Ottomans spread to Europe.

In November 1354 John V, with the help of the Genoan Francesco Gattiluzi, secretly entered Constantinople and became master of the city. A few days later, John VI Kantakouzenos stepped down and withdrew to a monastery, where he lived another thirty years as the monk Ioasaaf.⁵⁷

After the death of Stephen Dushan in December 1355 and the break-up of the Serbian state, the Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs were unable to join forces against the common enemy, the Turks. After the defeat of the Serbs at Cirmen on the river Evros in September 1371, the Serbs and Bulgarians became vassals to the Sultan.

The only centre of resistance was Thessaloniki. Its governor, the youngest son of John V, Despot Manuel Palaiologos, retook Serres in November 1371, and planned the

defence against the Turks. He seized lands from Mount Athos and divided them up among the soldiers. The Turks were however advancing. In 1383 they took Serres and laid siege to Thessaloniki. The blockade of the city lasted for four years. The defeatism of the Thessalonians, who had been worn out by the hardships and the hunger, forced Manuel to abandon the city and flee to Bursa where, humiliated, he was accepted in the court of the Sultan. Thessaloniki was given to the Turks in 1387 after an agreement, and became a vassal city. With bitterness, Manuel later wrote to Kabasilas: 'in your homeland I constantly fought the enemies of the faith. And those for whom I preferred day and night to give my life... were in talks with the enemies.'⁵⁸ When John V died in 1391, Manuel escaped from Bursa and was crowned Emperor at Constantinople (1391-1425). In the same year Bayezid I took Thessaloniki. After his defeat at the hands of Tamerlane at the battle of Ankara in 1402, the city passed once again to the Byzantines. From 1403 until 1423, Thessaloniki was governed successively by scions of the imperial family, until Andronikos Palaiologos, son of the emperor Manuel II, faced with the Turkish danger, handed Thessaloniki over to the Venetians, on the condition that they respect the privileges of the community and the Church. Yet, neither were the Venetians able to hold on to the city. On 29 March of 1430, illustrious Thessaloniki fell to the hands of the Turks.⁵⁹

Notes

1. John Skylitzes 412.67-76.
2. John Skylitzes 411.51-412.3.
3. John Skylitzes 413.21.
4. John Skylitzes 413.22
5. John Skylitzes 476.55
6. Michael Attaleiates 83.10-85.22
7. John Skylitzes Continuatus 182.15-183.28
8. See G. Theocharides, *Istoria Makedonias (History of Macedonia)*, 281 ff. I. Karayiannopoulos, *Istoria (History) II* 588 ff.
9. Nikephoros Bryennios 129.10. Cf. I. Karayiannopoulos, *Istoria (History) II* 590.
10. Theodore Skoutariotes, publ. C. Sathas, *Medieval Library* 7 (1894) 185.
11. *Alexiad* 121.29-34, 146.59 ff. (= Leib I.144, II.10.8 ff.).
12. *Alexiad* 143.7 ff. (= Leib II.10.8 ff.).
13. *Alexiad* 153.69, 161.28 (= Leib II.22.6-24.1, 24.1-32.23).
14. *Alexiad* 176.51-180.73 (= Leib II.51.18-56.23).
15. *Alexiad* 361.70-72 (= Leib III.56.1-4).
16. Karayiannopoulos, *History III* 80-81.
17. *Alexiad* 413.90-422.30 (=Leib III.125.10-138.13).
18. See V. Nerantzi-Varmazi, *Plirofories tou Theophylaktou Achridas kai tou Dimitriou Chomatianou gia ton dytikomakedoniko horo (Details given by Theophylaktos of Ochrid and Demetrius Chomatenos on West Macedonia)*, *Diethnes Symposio Vyzantini Makedonia* pp. 231-238.
19. Eustathius of Thessaloniki 74.10, 68.24, 76.19-78.15.
20. Eustathius of Thessaloniki 88.23 ff., 90.1 ff.
21. Eustathius of Thessaloniki 100.12 ff., 146.2-10.
22. Niketas Choniates 368.47 ff., 371.23 ff. Karayiannopoulos, *History II* 288 ff.
23. Niketas Choniates 546.72 ff. Karayiannopoulos, *History C* 348 ff.
24. Niketas Choniates 599.39-40. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 310 ff.
25. See B. Hendrickx, *Oi politikoi kai stratiotikoi thesmoi tis Latinikis Aftokratorias tis Konstantinoupoleos kata tous protous chronous tis yparxeos tis (The political and military institutions of the Latin Empire of Constantinople during the first years of its existence)*, *Thessaloniki* 1970, 54-57.

26. Niketas Choniates 600.50-57.
27. Hagia Sophia had been the Metropolitan church since its foundation, and not the Rotunda, as has been argued by G. Theocharides. See Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka, *I Ayia Sophia os mitropolitikos naos kai to episkopeio. (Hagia Sophia as Cathedral and the Bishop's Residence)*, *Afieroma sti mnimi tou Sotiri Kissa (In honour of the memory of Sotiris Kissas)*, Thessaloniki 2001, 549-560.
28. G. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 314-315.
29. Niketas Choniates 615-617, George Akropolites 22.26-28.
30. Niketas Choniates 619.44-620.70.
31. George Akropolites 23.16-19.
32. Niketas Choniates 620.71-83, George Akropolites 23.1-16.
33. George Akropolites 23.19-24.4.
34. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 320-322.
35. Demetrios Chomatenos no.106.144-152.
36. George Akropolites 24.12-26.9. D. Nicol, *Despotate I* 48-59.
37. J. Longnon, *La reprise de Salonique...* Paris 1950.
38. George Akropolites 33.15-34.16. For the dating of his acclamation and coronation, see Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka, 'Symvoli sto zitima tis anagorevsis tou Theodorou Douka' ('Contribution to the question of the acclamation of Theodore Doukas'). Eleni Bey-Seferli, 'O Chronos stepseos tou Theodorou Douka' ('The date of the coronation of Theodore Doukas').
39. See Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nikaia kai Ipiros (Nicaea and Epirus)*. F. Breckenamp, *Empire of Thessalonik*.
40. G. Prinzing, *Studien I, II*.
41. A. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy*.
42. Demetrios Chomatenos, no. 8 and 146. Alkmene Stavridou-Zafraka, *I archiepiskopi Achridos kai i aftokratoria tis Thessalonikis, Christianiki Makedonia (The Archbishopric of Ochrid and the Empire of Thessaloniki, Christian Macedonia, 407-421)*.
43. Sp. Troianos, *Oi piges tou Vyzantinou Dikaiou (The roots of Byzantine Law)*, Athens-Komotini 1986, 172.
44. George Akropolites 38.21-43.19. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 328 ff., Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nicaea and Epirus*, 67-84.
45. George Akropolites 43.19 ff., 60.10-62.16.
46. George Akropolites 65.4-67.25, 70.13 ff., 79.16-84.22. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 332-344. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nicaea and Epirus*, 84-87.
47. George Akropolites 88.15-92.14, 107 ff.
48. George Akropolites 132 ff., 139 ff., 150 ff.
49. George Akropolites 167-170. George Pachymeres (ed. J. Failler), I.117-121.
50. George Akropolites 181-185. George Pachymeres I. 233.24 ff.
51. See Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 370.
52. Nikephoros Gregoras I 233-235. H. Constantinidi-Bibicou, *Yolande de Montferrat, impératrice de Byzance. L' Hellénisme contemporain* 4,6 (1950) 425-442.
53. K. Setton, *Catalan Domination of Athens* 286. A. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins* 220-226.
54. F. Ostrogorsky, *History III* 191 ff. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 374 ff. 383 ff.
55. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 386-389, 393-399.
56. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 403-405.
57. Theocharides, *History of Macedonia* 405-413.
58. Manuel II, letter 67 (ed. G. T. Dennis) p. 187. G. T. Dennis, *The Reign of Manuel II Palaeologus in Thessaloniki 1282-1387*, Rome 1960, 77 ff.
59. The fall is described by John Anagnostis, *Diegisis peri tis teleftaias aloseos tis Thessalonikis (Narrative of the final fall of Thessaloniki)*, G. Tsaras publications, Thessaloniki 1958.