

The Fourth Crusade

in the Historical Memory of
the Eastern Orthodox Slavs

Snezhana Rakova

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The Fourth Crusade in the Historical Memory of
the Eastern Orthodox Slavs
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to the loving Memory of my Parents

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A Note to the Reader

By Prof. Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova

The capture of Constantinople by western crusaders in 1204 was one of the most noteworthy events in the mediaeval history of the Balkans. Yet, as Snezhana Rakova observes, it found rather less historical resonance than the second fall of Constantinople in the calamitous year of 1453.

This is not to say that contemporary Byzantine and western witnesses of events that brought new masters to the Balkans were indifferent to what they saw. Indeed, they penned diverse accounts which went on to attract a great deal of scholarly attention down the centuries, including a notable increase in interest amid the recent flurry of commemorative gatherings and conferences in 2004.

Almost all researchers who have conducted bibliographical studies of the Fourth Crusade have noted that Byzantine historians, chroniclers, hagiographers and poets, as well as western writers, have left much more thorough accounts than their Russian, Serbian or Bulgarian counterparts. This is despite the latter's much greater proximity to the pillage and destruction visited, albeit transiently, upon the Byzantine Empire, and to the interventions of local potentates in the consequent redrawing of the Balkan map.

Snezhana Rakova posed herself the question of why this was so, alongside that other most pertinent question of why Slavic men of letters displayed an apparently belated interest in the first fall of Constantinople in the sixteenth century or later, as revealed in original works and transcriptions of Greek and other accounts.

In seeking and providing answers to these questions, our author echoes certain ideas of that renowned Slavic researcher Riccardo Picchio, who—more than a decade ago—wrote that one must seek a common model of civilisation in the cultural exchange between Bulgars, Serbs and Russians.

I commend most highly this original study by a historian who is also a valued colleague.

28 March 2007

Introduction

The Fourth Crusade marked an important juncture in the histories of many European nations, eastern as well as western. Far from confining itself to Byzantium and its successor states of Nicaea and Epirus, or to the Latin Empire of Constantinople, it also involved the Balkan Slav states of Serbia and the Second Bulgarian Empire, and was felt as far away as distant Russia.

The issue of how the Orthodox Slavs interpreted the most momentous event of the period—the fall of Constantinople—and the extent and nature of its Balkan aftermath, form a tempting area of research. This is not only because matters of historical memory and the interpretation of historical events are especially topical today, but also because such enquiries can shed light on the Fourth Crusade from a yet-unexplored standpoint.

Research into the crusades has been particularly intensive of late, with the 800th anniversary of the conquest of Constantinople by the crusaders adding impetus to an already time-honoured historical interest in the period.¹ Relations between the Byzantine Empire and *les autres* have also attracted scholarly interest in recent years: Byzantium and the East, Byzantium and the Arabs, even Byzantium and the North.² Yet, the response of the Orthodox Slavs to the events of 1204 and to subsequent changes in the *status quo* have not formed the subject of particular analysis.

This study traces the emergence of a historical memory of the Fourth Crusade in the literary traditions of the Orthodox Slavs. Its main sources are literary works dating back to a broad period between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries: the later Middle Ages at their greatest extent. Naturally, dedicated historians from western Europe and Byzantium have told the story of the Fourth Crusade many times. Contemporaries sensed its general importance, and particularly the significance of the fall of the Byzantine metropolis. Modern research has primarily ad-

1 See the latest research and collections of papers on the Fourth Crusade: J. Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (London-New York, 2003); *Urbs capta: La IV^e croisade et ses conséquences*, ed. A. Laiou, (Paris–London, 2005). A general bibliography on the crusade is available at www.the-orb.net/bibliographies/crusades.html.

2 A. Maalouf, *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes* (New York, 1985); *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, eds. A. Laiou, R. P. Mottahedeh (Washington D.C., 2001); *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium: Papers from the Thirty-Third Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, the University of Warwick*, ed. A. Eastmond (Coventry, 2001); *Medieval History Writing and Crusading Ideology*, eds. T. Lehtonen, K. V. Jensen, *Studia Fennica* 9 (Tampere, 2005).

dressed political history, conflicts between states and divisions of territory, and the ideological changes resulting from the takeover of Constantinople by “the Latins”, yet it presents a seemingly unclear or muddled picture of how the crusaders were regarded among the Balkan Slavs.

Contemporary documents record the names of a great many rulers and statesmen—*eminenti*, monarchs and senior Bulgarian and Serbian clerics—who played prominent roles in the diplomacy of the period. Foremost among the crusaders were Baldwin of Flanders (the first emperor of the Latin Empire, 1204–1205), his brother Henry, and the Marquess Boniface of Montferrat. The Catholic clergy was also particularly active under Pope Innocent III and his legates. One way or another, they all found their way into Slavic annals.

A particularly rapid succession of ecclesiastical and political events, in Bulgaria and Serbia and the successor states of Byzantium (Nicaea, Epirus and the crusaders’ own Latin Empire) marked the decades after the capture of Constantinople by the Latins. Accordingly, accounts of the conquest of Constantinople and the rule of the first two Latin emperors, Baldwin and Henry of Flanders, are of prime importance to research. Another significant event soon after was the battle of Adrianople in 1205, in which the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan (1187–1207) routed the flower of the knights who had so recently conquered Constantinople. In clarifying the circumstances surrounding religious affairs, the development of ecclesiastical and political relations between Bulgaria and Nicaea and Serbia and Nicaea should also be borne in mind, since it was in this period that autocephalous Orthodox churches emerged in the two Slavic states. A thematic reading of the literary output of Orthodox Slavs points to a chronological delineation of the period under research ranging from 1200 to the 1230s. Beyond this time frame, historical information on the Latins in Slavic literature is rather scarce.

Another issue of relevance to this study is the date at which interest in the past first awoke and the diffusion of historical writings increased in the Slavic world: a Serbian—Bulgarian—Russian circle. Some scholars share the view that there must have existed a number of historical sources, such as chronicles or annals, which have since been destroyed and lost.³ In the course of research, when analysing texts, the present author necessarily assumed that the sources available today were also the only ones extant during the Middle Ages. These sources testify to the Slavs not showing any particular interest in the events of 1204, or at least not to the extent that one would expect to see evidenced in written sources.

Without doubt, a major research objective is to identify what written information on the Fourth Crusade was preserved by the Slavs. The answer to this question in turn leads to deliberations of a somewhat higher order, such as the possibility

³ П. Динев, “Старата българска литература и националната историческа съдба”, *Старобълг. лит.* 1 (1971): 5–32.

of throwing light on the issue of historicism in Slavic literatures. It was Riccardo Picchio, when discussing the role of Bulgarian literature in European culture, who implied that future research would have to address the contents of this literature on the basis of individual topics.⁴ Such, indeed, is the aim of this study. This in turn poses a number of difficulties, mostly arising from the broad chronological scope of the sources and literary, linguistic and textual complexities whose resolution calls for a varied arsenal of diverse skills.

Two literary-historical works define the time span of the sources under investigation. The first, probably dating to shortly after 1204, is the anonymous Russian *Account of the Capture of Constantinople by the Franks*; the second is the Russian *Chronograph*, a historical work, in the full sense of the term, which dates back to 1512. The existence of these two Russian works should not mislead us as to the extent to which historical knowledge had been disseminated. The former work is indeed an exception, being a historical treatise unique in Slavic literature; the latter encompasses within itself the entire tradition of translating Byzantine and southern Slavic works on the history of the Orthodox nations.

This study rests upon two basic theses which have long held sway in Slavic studies and historical science. The first, introduced by the great Italian Slavic scholar Picchio, concerns the cultural and literary community of Orthodox Slavs, which he terms *Slavia Orthodoxa*. The present study relies on Picchio's observations that there were common processes of cultural and literary exchange between Bulgarians, Serbs and Russians, and that a common model of civilisation was pursued by these nations throughout the Middle Ages.⁵ Here this thesis will be applied to the specific issue of the reflection of the Fourth Crusade in the historical records of the Orthodox Slavs.

The second basic thesis is that of a Slavo-Byzantine cultural community resting on the shared Orthodox confession and on the processes of close cultural and literary interaction. This has also long formed a basis of contemporary research.⁶ The question arises here of what was adopted from Byzantine historians and in what manner, for it is beyond doubt that Slavs followed Byzantine models in their historical writings. Scholars long ago ascertained that world chronicles or short chronicles were most popular among the Slavs. A multitude of works referenced by Slavic authors in other genres were also Byzantine. For this reason, attention must also be paid to the manner in which Byzantine exemplars were viewed and reworked.

The activity of high-ranking figures in the Balkan states such as Archbishop (*pri-mas*) Vasilij and Patriarch Yoakim I of Bulgaria, Archbishop Sava of Serbia, and

4 Р. Пикио, „Мястото на старата българска литература в културата на средновековието”, in idem, ed. *Православното славянство и старобългарската културна традиция* (София, 1993), 137–169.

5 Р. Пикио, „„Православно славянство” и „Римско славянство” (Литературно-историографски въпроси)”, in idem, ed. *Православното славянство*, 35–136; Р. Пикио, *История древнерусской литературы* (Москва, 2002), 9–17.

6 D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London, 1971).

the monarchs Kaloyan and Stefan Prvovenčani (1196–1228) deserves attention because they were closest in time to the events of 1204. Their involvement is known to us through surviving correspondence and is also reflected in literary sources. Some representatives of ruling circles in Bulgaria and Serbia had direct access to firsthand accounts of events through their correspondence with Rome.

How these accounts reached subsequent generations is a separate issue. The laws of historical memory do not always meet our expectations as distant heirs to that epoch. One might assume that there would be records of events, as more than an incidental number of Balkan nobles with papal and crusader contacts could have left accounts, as did Nicetas Choniates and Geoffrey of Villehardouin, two of the best-known mediaeval authors whose names will figure prominently below.

In fact, it was an anonymous Russian monk or pilgrim, recording what he had seen in 1203 and 1204, who left the sole Slavic historical testament of the fall of Constantinople. This account is the principal historical source examined in this study. Chapter One (The Fall of Constantinople in April 1204 in the Memory of Contemporaries) is devoted to an analysis of this text. Other thirteenth-century documents which reflect the spirit of the period are also reviewed, such as accounts by Russian pilgrims visiting Constantinople and specifically the description of Constantinople by future Archbishop Anthony of Novgorod in 1200. This work is interesting insofar as it reflects the particular view which Orthodox people had of the holy sites in the Byzantine capital.

When such descriptions by Orthodox pilgrims filled with devout fascination for the myriad saintly relics in Constantinople's churches and monasteries are set side-by-side with similar texts by western European pilgrims, the comparison accentuates the profound differences between western and eastern attitudes to the holy sites of Byzantium. That a desire to pillage the Eastern Empire drove the crusaders, and that they sacked not only secular but also devotional sites, is well known from western sources; here we address the issue of what was remembered and recorded for posterity by Orthodox writers.

In the process of research, sources were selected only from genres containing historical information. Chapter Two (Between Religion and History) analyses the two major types of composition which reflect the memory of the fall of Constantinople to the Latins. These are, first, the *Lives* of saints revered in the Second Bulgarian Empire and Serbia from the thirteenth century onwards, and second, historical-apocalyptic (or prophetic) texts, whose distribution in the thirteenth century was also relatively extensive and encompassed all three Slavic literatures. The main line of research in this part of the study focuses on how "historical episodes" from the *Lives* were passed on to posterity.

The process of learning about historical events has to address political, ecclesiastical and religious developments in the Slavic lands. The thirteenth century saw the emergence of Serbian statehood under the Nemanja dynasty, while the Second Bul-

garian Empire began under the Asen dynasty. Developments in Russia were more complex, with the Kievan Rus declining in the late twelve century, while new principalities emerged in Novgorod, Moscow and elsewhere against the background of a lengthy Mongol domination.

Chapter Three (Historical Memories) looks at “purely” historical works. It presents the literary sources which are most removed from the events of 1204. While the distinctions between short chronicles, world chronicles and annals became rather diluted, historiography came to be characterised by peculiar historical compilations that were the fruit of a centuries-old tradition of translated and original works. In this later era, Byzantium no longer existed and the Fourth Crusade was a remote historical memory. During this period, in the early sixteenth century, Russia emerged as a centre for the creation and distribution of new historical genres, such as chronographs.

One can hardly say that the Latin Empire remained entirely unnoticed by mediæval Slavic writers, but its impact is mainly observed in works of a purely religious character, such as the well-known *Synodicon* of Boril of 1211. In this text the Byzantine tradition of historical writing may be discerned in the form of an imitation of Byzantine lists of rulers. The *Synodicon* is not only testimony to ecclesiastical events and the struggle against heresy, but also a historical source. It is examined here as a vehicle of historical memory.⁷ There can be no doubt that the document is an effort to present the Asen dynasty as legitimate successors to the Bulgarian throne.

Another significant and fundamental monument of historical literature, this time from the fourteenth century, is the well-known Bulgarian translation of Manasses' *Chronicle*. This work enjoyed particular favour among writers not only in this period but also in future centuries. The Bulgarian translation commissioned by Tsar Ivan Aleksandar remains perhaps the most significant Balkan historical work of the late Middle Ages. The Bulgarian additions to the *Chronicle* go only as far as the reign of the Byzantine emperor Basil II. Only the final sentence hints that the era of Tsar Asen the Elder (the Second Bulgarian Empire) is to follow. Questions arise as to why a chronicle of this type did not continue with additions covering the subsequent centuries of Bulgarian statehood up to the fall of Bulgaria in 1396, and why men of letters in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries continued using Byzantine historiographic patterns set in the twelfth century.

One possible answer is that the Byzantine model, which had become established as early as the First Bulgarian Empire, enjoyed such great authority among fourteenth-century literary circles that it could not be supplanted. Particularly pertinent to this study is the manner in which accounts of early thirteenth-century Byzantium appear in lists of Byzantine rulers rendered into the Slavic languages, how Bulgar-

7 D. Angelov, «L'Etat médiéval bulgare, facteur de formation de 'mémoire historique'», *PBg.* 5 (1981): 3–20.

ian, Serbian and Russian writers resolved the issue of the transfer of the emperor's seat from Constantinople to Nicaea, and how much historical information was left unrecorded. Chronicles and their Russian and Balkan reflections come to the fore in this context. The analysis will also address Serbian annals, which emerged most probably in the late fourteenth century, before the ultimate fall of Serbia in 1439.

The reflection of history in folklore remains outside the scope of this study. This oral level of transmission of historical information is subject to different laws and disciplines, reflects purely popular conceptions of events and is characterised by other means of expression. Frequent references to the Latins in songs and stories would be hard to link specifically to the period of the Fourth Crusade.⁸ Nevertheless, since the main topic of this study is Slavic reminiscences of the Fourth Crusade, one cannot overlook the possibility of the transmission of historical information through oral traditions.

The earliest documentation of folklore dates back to the nineteenth century, limiting any research to guesswork and assumption, but the image of the Latins is a definite part of Balkan folklore. Some of the motifs found at this level of literature from the thirteenth century (apocryphal prophecies and apocalyptic works), such as images of blond men who would take Constantinople, spill over into folklore. Folklore contains mostly general concepts and imagery (Latin royalty, Latin maidens, the Latin city of Legen and other themes), which might relate to earlier times.

Aside from the textual sources listed so far, one may also speculate whether any other resources might tell us how the era was perceived, for instance works of art. The issue of how Balkan art reflected the crusades is indeed rather intriguing and has long attracted scholarly attention.⁹ Sadly, it has proved almost impossible to discover any works of specific relevance, be they frescoes, miniatures or other images. The sole exception may be the frescoes in the Boyana Church near Sofia, where certain elements possibly attest to western influences brought by the crusaders.

The chronological sequence of texts may be summarised as follows:

- A very few texts by contemporaries of the Fourth Crusade and the Latin Empire: the anonymous Russian *Account of the Capture of Constantinople by the Franks*; the revised edition of Anthony of Novgorod's *Kniga Palomnik* dated to after 1204; some Prologue Lives from Bulgaria and Serbia;

- A considerable proportion of the sources dates to the fourteenth century, owing to the flourishing of Bulgarian literature under the Patriarch Evtimiy and the

⁸ See С. Ракова, „Леген град латински в славянския фолклор“, in *Андрия Качич Миошич и българите. Сборник доклади от българо-хърватска конференция*, ed. Р. Божилова (София, 2000), 109–123; eadem, „Фолклор и средновековие на Балканите. Историческата памет за кръстоносните походи“, in *Изследвания в чест на чл.-кор. проф. Страшимир Димитров [Studia balcanica, 23]*, vol. 1 (София, 2001), 134–141.

⁹ A. Grabar, «Un reflet du monde latin dans une peinture balkanique du 13e siècle», *Byzantion* 1 (1924): 229–243; idem, «L'Asymétrie des relations de Byzance et de l'Occident dans le domaine des arts au Moyen Age», in *Byzanz und der Westen*, Österr. Akad. der Wiss. Phil-Hist. Klasse, 432 (Vienna, 1984), 9–24.

great influence exercised by Bulgarian texts in Serbia, Moldova and Russia, and also on account of the distribution of Byzantine texts;

– A subsequent group of sources appeared in the sixteenth century, when a large number of transcriptions of historical texts and compilations thereof were produced in Russia and disseminated to other Slavs. This was part of the process whereby Russia supplanted Byzantium and propagated the idea of Moscow as the Third Rome. The greater part of transcriptions of Serbian annals, chronicles and other historical texts also date to this period;

– Some of the texts treated here date to as recently as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the period in which printed books appeared and manuscript compilations of all manner of texts, including historical works, made their last appearance. These include Serbian and Moldovan chronicles.

The broad chronological and thematic scope of this research presents a challenge to any review of previous historiography. Slavic studies, the mediaeval literature of the Bulgarians, Serbs and Russians, and Byzantine-Slav relations between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries represent a range which is hard to encompass. The scholarly foundations were laid by classical Russian Slavists from the early twentieth century, such as H. Loparev, A. A. Shahmatov and M. N. Speransky. They were succeeded by eminent modern Slavists (some now deceased), such as D. Likhachev, D. Bogdanović and B. Angelov.

The current author has chosen a genre-driven approach, which identifies distinct categories of works from among the source materials of this study. This particular topic has been the subject of a few articles, most written some time ago. In the first instance, they include studies by the Russian Slavists M. N. Speransky and V. G. Vilinsky, which enquire into the textual transmission of the Russian *Account of the Capture of Constantinople* and how it may have arrived in the Balkans. N. Meshchersky's research into this work is particularly important. P. Bitsilli was the first to draw attention to the text in 1916. The achievements of nineteenth-century Russian Slavists in highlighting the history of Russian annals and the formation of the genre of chronicles must also be noted. An essential basis for this study are the classic publications of A. Popov on Russian chronicles, alongside studies by V. Istrin and V. Grigorovich on the Moldovan *Chronograph* of Mihail Moxa, and more recent studies on the same subject by O. V. Tvorogov.

A review of major studies in the field of Balkan mediaeval literature, and specifically thirteenth- and fourteenth-century historical traditions, reveals that scholarship has typically focused on specific national sources and genres, with very few comparative studies. An example of the latter is the recent book by B. Florya, which addresses Orthodox Slav attitudes to Rome. R. Trifonova compared some Serbian and Bulgarian *Lives* of saints and the processes of their composition, while P. Pavlov conducted similar research in the political sphere. In the present study recent publications and studies of individual documents and texts receive most attention.

Introduction

Although voluminous, the historiography devoted to Balkan and Russian mediaeval annals has given little or no consideration to the fall of Constantinople in 1204. It is precisely a comparative analysis of the three separate Slavic literatures (Bulgarian, Serbian and Russian) that would offer the opportunity to undertake more general assessments of the transmission of texts, their contents and themes, and the processes of their interaction in building models for the transfer of historical information.

The main texts examined are appended to this volume in both the Old Slavonic original and English translation: *The Anonymous Russian Account of the Capture of Constantinople by the Franks*, *Archbishop Antony of Novgorod's Pilgrim's Book*, *The Nikon Chronicle* (Excerpts), *A Serbian Sixteenth-Century Chronograph* (Excerpts), and *The Brancović Chronicle* (Excerpts). Some of these texts have never been translated in English and are largely unknown to researchers of the Fourth Crusade.

* * *

The invaluable help offered by many colleagues and friends in my research was most beneficial. I owe sincere thanks to my first readers for comments and advice which had a substantial effect on the finished work. They include Prof. Vasilka Tapkova-Zaimova, Assoc. Prof. Anislava Miltenova, Assoc. Prof. Penka Danova and many other colleagues from the Mediaeval Section of the Institute for Balkan Studies in Sofia. I also wish to thank my family for the understanding and patience they displayed during the lengthy gestation of this work.

Въ лѣто ꙗС.Ѹ.В.І. Царствующю Ольксе въ Цесариградѣ, въ царствѣ Исаковѣ, брата своего, егоже слѣпивъ, а самъ цесаремъ ста. А сзѣна его Олекса затвори въ стѣнахъ възокзѣхъ стражею, тако не възнидетъ. И временомъ минувшемъ, и дѣръзѣнъ Исакъ молитисѣ о сзѣнѣ своемъ, дабы его испетилъ ис твърди прѣдъ сѣа. И змоли брата Исакъ, и приаста извѣщение съ сзѣномъ, тако не помзислити на царство, испщенъ възѣтъ ис твърди и хожашеть въ своеѣ воли. Цесарь же Олькса не печашеста о немъ, вѣрѣа братъ Исакови и сзѣнови его, зане приаста извѣщение. И потомъ Исакъ помзисливъ, и възсхотѣ царства, и зчишеть сзѣна, посзѣлаѣа потаи, тако добро створихъ братъ моемъ Олѣксе, от поганзѣхъ възкзѣпихъ его, а онъ противъ зло ми въззда: слѣпивъ мѣа, царство мое възѣа. И възсхотѣ сзѣнъ его, такоже зчашеть его, и мзѣшлѣашьта, како емъ изити изъ града въ дальнѣа странзѣ и оттолѣ искати царства. И възвѣденъ възѣтъ въ корабль, и възсаженъ възѣтъ въ бочкѣ, имвщи .г. дна при единѣмъ конци, за нимъ же Исаковицъ сѣдѣаше, а въ дрѣгомъ конци вода, идеже гвоздъ: нѣблзѣ во бѣаше инако изити изъ града. И тако изиде изъ Грѣчьскѣи земли. И, звѣдавъ, цесарь посла искатъ его. И начаша искати его въ мнозѣхъ мѣстѣхъ, и внидоша въ тѣ корабль, идеже бѣашеть, и всѣа мѣста обискаша, а изъ бѣчькѣ гвоздѣ възнимаша, и видеше вода текзѣщю, идоша прочъ, и не обрѣтоша его.

И тако изиде Исаковичъ, и приде къ нѣмьчѣскѣмъ цесарю Филипови, къ зѣати и къ сѣстрѣ своей. Цесарь нѣмѣчѣскѣи посла къ папѣ въ Римъ, и тако звѣчаستا, тако нѣ воевати на Цесарьградъ, нѣ такоже рече Исаковицъ: Весь градъ Костѣантинъ хотѣтъ моего царства, такоже посадѣае его на прѣстолѣ, поидете же къ Иерусалимъ, въ помочъ; не възсхотѣтъ ли его, а ведете иѣ опѣатъ къ мнѣ, а пакости не дѣите Грѣчьскѣи земли.

Фрѣази же и вси воеводѣи ихъ въззлюбиша злато и сѣбѣро, иже мѣнѣшеть имъ Исаковицъ, а цесарева велѣнѣа забѣиша и папина. Първое, пришьдѣше въ Сѣдъ, замкѣи желѣзѣнѣа разѣиша, и пристѣпивъше къ граду, огонь възвергоша .д. мѣстѣ въ храмѣи.

In the year 6712 [1204]. The Tsar Alexius¹ did reign at Constantinople upon having blinded his brother Isaac² during [the latter's] reign to become tsar himself. He did keep Isaac's son Alexius³ gaoled behind high walls under guard, lest he flee. And it came to pass that some time later Isaac dared plead for his son to be released from his dungeon before he himself was freed. And Isaac did beseech this of his brother and did swear an oath together with his son that he would not contemplate reigning, and so was released from the dungeon and lived as a free man. The Tsar Alexius was not fearful, for he kept faith with his brother Isaac and with his son, who had sworn an oath. And thereafter Isaac, having given thought to the matter, again desired to reign and did begin to incite his son, sending [men] in secret to him: "I did good to my brother Alexius by ransoming him from the infidels, yet he repaid me with evil, blinded me and took my realm." And his son did desire what his father had incited him to desire and the two took to scheming how Alexius might flee from the city to distant lands and wage war for the realm from there. And so they took him to a ship and placed him within a barrel which had on one side three compartments: one in which Isaac's son sat, and the others, where it closed, with water in them; for there was no other manner in which he could flee the city.⁴ And thus he left the Greek realm. And upon learning of this, the tsar did send men to seek him. And they did seek him in diverse places, and did board the ship where he was, and looked everywhere, and plucked the tap from the barrel, and saw water flowing, and passed onward, and did fail to find him.

Thus did Isaac's son flee to the German tsar Philip, his brother-in-law, and also to his sister.⁵ And the German tsar sent [emissaries] to the pope in Rome and thereafter decreed to: "Do not wage war upon Constantinople,⁶ but rather [do] as Isaac's son says: 'all of the City of Constantine desires that I be tsar.' And after you set him upon the throne, go to the aid of Jerusalem; and if they fail to accept him, then bring him back to me, and cause no harm to the Greek land."

The Franks and all their voivods⁷ thought only of that gold and silver which Isaac's son had promised them, and forgot the order of the tsar and of the pope. When they entered the Golden Horn, they first broke the iron chains, and as they advanced upon the city, set fire to it from four sides.

1 Alexius III Angelus, Byzantine emperor (1195–18 July 1203).

2 Isaac II Angelus, Byzantine emperor (1185–1195, 1203–1204).

3 Alexius IV Angelus, Byzantine emperor (1203–1204, d. 8 February 1204).

4 This story is unique and may be legendary. No other Byzantine author reports it.

5 Philip of Swabia, Duke of Swabia (1196–1208) and King of the Germans (1198–1208), married to Irene Angelina, sister of Alexius IV.

6 S. Patri has different translation: "L'empereur allemand l'envoya au pape a Rome, et tous deux [le pape et Alexis] convinquirent [les chefs des Croises] de ne pas partir en guerre contre Constantinople ..."—S. Patri, «La relation russe de la quatrième croisade», 479, note 54.

7 *i.e.* the leaders of the Crusade.

Тъгда цесарь Олькса, съзревъз пламень, не створи брани противъ имъ. Призвавъ брата Исака, егоже слѣпи, посади его на прѣстолѣ, и рече: Даже еси, братъ, тако створилъ, прости мене, а се твое царство, избѣжа изъ града. И пожьженъ възистъ градъ и церкви несказънзи лѣпотою, имъже не можемъ числа съповѣдати. И Святѡе Софіе притворъз погорѣ, идеже патриарси вси написани, и подръмѣ и до моря, а семо по Цесаревъз затворъз и до Сѣда погорѣ. И тѣгда погна Исаковиць по цесари Олексъ съ фригъзи, и не постиже его и възвратисѣ въ градъ, и съгна отца съ прѣстола, а самъ цесаремъ ста: Ты еси слепъ, како можеши царство държати. Азъ есмь цесарь. Тѣгда Исакъ цесарь, много съжаливси о градѣ и о царствѣ своемъ и о граблении манастырьскыхъ, еже даѣста фригомъз злата и срѣвро, посленое имъ, разволѣвси, и възистъ мнихъ, и отъиде свѣта сего.

По Исаковѣ же смерти людие на сына его възсташа про зажъжение градъное и за пограбление манастырьское. И съвращесѣ чернь, и волочахъ добрыѣ мжи, дѣлающе с ними, кого цесарѣа поставѣать. И вси хотѣахъ Радиноса. Онъ же не хотѣаше царства, нъ крѣзашесѣ от нихъ, измѣнивси въ чърнзи риззи. Женъ же его, имъше, приведоша въ Святѡю Софію и много нѣдиша: Повѣжь намъ, кде есть мжъ твой. И не сказа о мжи своемъ. Потомъ же ѣаша человекѣа, именемъ Никола, воина, и на того възложиша вѣньць бес патриарха, и тѣ възистъ снемъ въ Святѣи Софii .s. днии и .s. ночии.

Цесарь же Исаковиць вѣашеть въ Влахернѣ, и хотѣаше възвести фригъзи отан боѣаръ въ градъ. Боѣаре же, свѣдавъше, столиша цесарѣа, не даша емъ напѣтити фригъзъ, рекъче: Мзи с тобою есмь. Тѣгда боѣаре, збоѣавшесѣ възвѣдениѣа фригъзъ, съдѣлавъше съ Мюрчюфломъ, ѣаша цесарѣа Исаковица, а на Мюрчюфла вѣньць възложиша.

А Мюрчюфла вѣаше възсадилъ ис тѣмнице Исаковиць, и приалъ извѣщение, ѣако не искати подъ Исаковицемъ царства, нъ влюсти подъ нимъ. Мюрчюфлъ же посла къ Николѣ и къ людѣмъ въ Святѡю Софію: Азъ ѣалъ ворога вашего Исаковица, ѣзъ вашъ цесарь, а Николѣ даю пѣрвзи въ боѣарехъ, сложи съ себе вѣньць.

And the Tsar Alexius, upon seeing the fire, did not wage war on them. He summoned his brother Isaac, whom he had blinded, raised him to the throne and said: "Even if it was thou who caused this, brother, do forgive me and take thy realm back", and thereupon fled the city.⁸ And so the city was burnt, and with it churches of immeasurable beauty beyond count. And so burnt the narthex of Hagia Sophia, where all the patriarchs are recorded, and from the Hippodrome to the sea itself, and from there to the tsar's dungeon and to the Golden Horn, everything did burn. And then Isaac's son rose with the Franks in pursuit of Tsar Alexius, but failed to capture him and returned to the city and removed his father from the throne and became tsar himself: "Thou art blind; how wouldst thou rule the realm? I shall be tsar!" Then the Tsar Isaac, afflicted with sorrow for the city and for his realm, and for the sacked monasteries which were yielding the promised gold and silver to the Franks, fell ill and took holy orders, and left this world.⁹ After the death of Isaac the people rose against his son for the burning of the city and the sacking of the monasteries. And so the crowd gathered and summoned prominent men to proffer advice as to who should be tsar. And all wanted Radinos.¹⁰ But the latter did not want to reign and took holy orders so as to hide from them. They caught his wife and took her to Hagia Sophia and asked her for a long time: "Tell us where thy husband is!" And she did not betray him. Then they brought forth a man by the name of Nicholas and betrothed him to the realm without a patriarch officiating and thereafter conferred at Hagia Sophia for six days and six nights.

And the Tsar Isaac's son was in the Blachernae [palace] and desired, in secret from the boyars,¹¹ to introduce the Franks into the city. Yet when the boyars discovered this, they calmed the tsar and did not let him admit the Franks, saying: "We are with thee." Then the boyars took fright that the Franks would enter the city, and they bargained with Murtzuphlus and captured the son of Isaac, and placed the wreath [of Tsardom] upon Murtzuphlus.¹²

Isaac's son had freed the said Murtzuphlus from the dungeon after the latter had sworn an oath that he would make no attempts upon the throne but would instead serve. Murtzuphlus sent [emissaries] to Nicholas and to the crowd at Hagia Sophia [to say]: "I did capture your enemy Isaac's son and so I am your tsar; and Nicholas shall be my first dignitary, but let him first remove the wreath of Tsardom."

8 The events mentioned here occurred in July 1203. See Th. Madden, "The Fires of the Fourth Crusade in Constantinople, 1203–1204: A Damage Assessment", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84/85 (1992): 72–93. 9 January 1204.

10 S. Patri, «La relation russe de la quatrième croisade», 485, note 70.

11 *i.e.* the nobles.

12 Alexius V Ducas Murtzuphlus, Byzantine emperor (5 February–12 April 1204). He was supported by the aristocracy and prevailed over the previously mentioned pretenders to the throne—Radinos and Nicholas Kanavos. S. Patri, «La relation russe de la quatrième croisade», 487, note 72.

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