

ALEXIOS V DOUKAS MOURTZOUPHLOS:
HIS LIFE, REIGN AND DEATH (? -1204)*

The significant role of Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos, Byzantium's ephemeral emperor, who acceded to the throne on the eve of the Latin Empire, has received only a few lines worthy of mention in general works on Byzantine history or on the Crusades¹.

The accounts of greater scope in more specialised works, although sometimes excellent, never examine Mourtzouphlos' life and role as a whole².

In the present study we shall be examining from the sources on Mourtzouphlos, his life prior to his reign, his rule as such, his experiences after his flight, and finally his death, in order to give a complete survey

* The parts of this article referring to the sources and to Mourtzouphlos' life and activities have been written by Mrs Matzukis and myself. The particular conclusions, following part III and at the end of the article are mine, and resulted mainly from a paper on Mourtzouphlos, which I read at the University of Thessaloniki in November 1977. I wish to thank the Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa for their financial aid to my project on the Φραγκοκρατία. - B. Hendrickx.

1. G. Ostrogorsky, *History of the Byzantine State*, Oxford 1968², p. 416 - A. Vasiliev, *Histoire de l'empire byzantin*, Paris, vol. II, 1932, pp. 85, 86, 109, 110, 113. - C. Diehl, The Fourth Crusade and the Latin Empire, in *The Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. IV, Cambridge 1936, pp. 419 and 478. - S. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, vol. 3, London (Penguin) 1971, pp. 120-2. - D. M. Nicol, *Byzantium: its Ecclesiastical History and Relations with the Western World*, London, 1972 (chap. III, pp. 276-330 = also in *Cambr. Med. Hist.* IV, I, Cambridge 1966, pp. 284-6 and 291).

2. E. Gerland, *Geschichte des lateinischen Kaiserreiches von Konstantinopel*, I, Homburg v.d. Höhe 1905, pp. 21-22, 32, 35, 104. J. Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, pp. 43-47 and 69. - R. L. Wolff in R. L. Wolff - H. W. Hazard, *The Later Crusades, 1189-1311*, in *A History of the Crusades*, II, Philadelphia 1962, pp. 181-182 ff., 201 and 202. - D. I. Polemis, *The Doukai. A Contribution to Byzantine Prosopography*, London 1968, pp. 145-147. - C. M. Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West: 1180-1204*, Cambridge, Massachusetts 1968, pp. 111, 120, 122, 124, 248-257. - A. Carile, *Per una storia dell' Impero latino di Costantinopoli (1204-1261)*, Bologna 1972, pp. 143-147, 160-162, 191-192.

of what is known of Mourtzouphlos, and to try to place him in the context of the actual political situation.

I

THE SOURCES

The primary source on Mourtzouphlos is a biography of the emperor by Niketas Choniates¹, whose dissatisfaction with Mourtzouphlos is immediately obvious in the first few lines of his work; he had been ousted from his office as *λογοθέτης τῶν σεκρετῶν* by Mourtzouphlos who promoted his father-in-law in his stead.

Other Greek sources are—in degree of importance—the following: (a) George Akropolites, who wrote his work in continuation of Choniates' history and whose main interest was in producing an *éloge* on the Nicaean Empire and its rulers²; (b) the *Ἀλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, written at the end of the fourteenth century, using N. Choniates as its main source³; (c) the Greek version of the *Chronicle of Morea*, written in the fourteenth century, but giving a slanted account of the events concerning the fourth crusade and its immediate consequences⁴. None of these sources (with the exception of Choniates) is strictly contemporary and none is favourable towards Mourtzouphlos.

Mourtzouphlos is also referred to in other Greek chronicles, but no additional substantial information is provided⁵.

Among the Western sources⁶ Villehardouin⁷ ranks the highest,

1. *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ex recensione L. Bekkeri, C.S.E.B., Bonnae 1835 - *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, recensuit I. A. van Dieten, Berlin 1975. -We shall refer to Bekker, and—between parenthesis—to van Dieten.

2. *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, recensuit A. Heisenberg, Lipsiae 1903 - *Georgii Acropolitae Annales*, recognovit I. Bekkerus, C.S.E.B., Bonnae 1836.

3. *Ἡ Ἀλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως*, in J. A. C. Buchon, *Recherches historiques sur la principauté française de Morée*, Paris 1845, vol. II, pp. 335-367.

4. *The Chronicle of Morea*, ed. J. Schmitt, London 1904.

5. Especially: Theodoros Skoutariotis: K. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνική Βιβλιοθήκη* VII, Paris 1894, pp. 1-556 - Pseudo-Kodinos, *Chronographia*: ed. I. Bekker, C.S.H. B., Bonnae 1843. - *Βραχέα Χρονικά*, ed. S. Lampros - K. Amantos, Athens 1932, p. 5, n° 3 and p. 53, n° 29.

6. We exclude of course Du Cange, *Histoire de l'empire de Constantinople sous les empereurs français*, Paris 1657 (J. A. C. Buchon, Paris 1826); P. Rannusio, *Della guerra di Constantinopoli per la restituzione degl' imperatori Comneni fatta da signori veneziani et francesi l'anno 1204*, Venice 1604, and Raynaldi, *Annales Ecclesiasticae*, XIII, Rome 1646, as sources *sensu stricto*, being works written after the Middle Ages. However we have consulted them, although they proved of no real importance.

7. Geoffroy de Villehardouin, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. E. Faral, Paris (Budé) 1961².

followed by Robert de Clari¹. Both chroniclers have provided accounts in great length on Mourtzouphlos, but are — as are all other western sources — unfavourable towards the emperor, portraying him as a traitor.

The *Devastatio*, an eye-witness account, also provides interesting information².

Further and secondary sources are the following: the 13th century chronicle of Aubry de Trois-Fontaines³, the chronicle *Balduinus Constantinopolitanus* which provides a rather «legendary» account of the life of emperor Baldwin⁴, the *Croisade de Constantinople*⁵, a compilation of the 13th century; and the contemporary Gunther de Pairis⁶. Further, the Chronicle of Dandolo⁷, the Anonymus Caetanus⁸ and the Chronicle of Halberstadt⁹ are completely lacking in detail specifically on Mourtzouphlos.

The variant versions of the *Chronicle of Morea*¹⁰ do not differ from the Greek version to which we shall be referring in this study.

The Russian Chronicle of Novgorod, written by a Russian monk, is another eye-witness account of the events, and contains some valuable information¹¹.

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1. Robert de Clari, *La Conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Ph. Lauer, Paris 1924.
 2. *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, ed. C. Hopf, *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, Berlin 1873, pp. 86-92.
 3. *Chronica Albrici Monachi Trium Fontium a Monacho novi Monasterii Hoiensis interpolata*, ed. P. Scheffer-Boichorst, *MGH.SS.*, XXIII, pp. 631-950.
 4. *Balduinus Constantinopolitanus*, ed. J.J. De Smet, *Corpus Chronicorum Flandriae*, Brussels, I (1837) 130-141.
 5. *Croisade de Constantinople*, ed. Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, I, pp. 479-505.
 6. Gunther de Pairis, *Historia Constantinopolitana*, ed. Comte Riant, *Exuviae sacrae Constantinopolitanae*, Genève 1877, vol. I, pp. 57-126.
 7. *Andreae Danduli ducis Venetiarum Chronica per extensum descripta*, a cura di Ester Pastorello, in *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores*, XII, 1938.
 8. *Anonyme de Gaëte, Qualiter caput beati Theodori martyris de Constantinopolitana urbe ad Caietam translatum est*, ed. Riant., *Exuviae*, I, pp. 150-155.
 9. *Gesta Episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. L. Weiland, *MGH.SS.*, XXIII, pp. 73-123.
 10. *Chronaca di Morea (versione italiana)*, ed. C. Hopf, *Chroniques Gréco-Romanes*, Berlin 1873, pp. 414-468. - *Le Livre de la Conqueste*, ed. Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, I, pp. 1-477 = *Livre de la conquête de la princée de l'Amorée. Chronique de Morée (1204-1305)*, ed. J. Longnon, Paris 1911. - *Libro de los fechos et conquistas del Principado de la Morea*, ed. A. Morel. - *Fatio*, in *Série historique*, IV (Publ. Soc. de l'Orient latin), Geneva 1885.
 11. *Chronista Novgorodensis*, ed. Hopf. *Chroniques gréco-romanes*, pp. 93-98.

As diplomatic documents, we have only the letters of Baldwin, the first Latin emperor of Constantinople¹, and a letter written by the doge Henry Dandolo². These letters reveal the typical bias and hostility of the Western Chroniclers towards the Greek emperor.

II

MOURTZOUPHLOS' LIFE PRIOR TO HIS REIGN

Alexios Doukas Mourtzouphlos was, according to Du Cange³, the son of Isaakios Doukas Sevastokrator and second cousin of young Alexios IV, while Wolff presents him as the great-great grandson of Alexios I Komnenos⁴. Polemis, however, states correctly that it is not clear who his ancestors were and that «no allusion to a supposed noble ancestry appears to have been preserved», although «this silence may probably be due to the invariable hostility shown to him by both Greek and Western chronicles»⁵.

In fact, we don't even know when he was born. The *Ἔλωσης* describes him as «old» at the time of his short-lived reign⁶, but this—even if true—does not convey much.

The designation of «Doukas» is a cognomen applied to certain individuals or families in Byzantium from the middle of the ninth century and although the majority of the Doukai belonged to the Byzantine nobility, the name Doukas was borne by people belonging to different strata of Byzantine society⁷.

Re this Chronicle, see also the recent article of J. Gordon, The Novgorod Account of the Fourth Crusade, *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 297-311.

1. W. Prevenier, *De Oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (1911-1206)*, II. *Uitgave*, Brussels 1964 (*Re* Mourtzouphlos, numbers 271-274) - G. L. F. Tafel - G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, I (814-1205), Wien 1856 (*Re* Mourtzouphlos, number CXXII, pp. 501-511).

2. Tafel-Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, no. CXXVIII, pp. 521-3.

3. Du Cange, *Histoire*, I, p. 16 (Buchon) - Cf. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, VI, New York 1969 (1910), p. 167 n. 2.

4. Wolff, *The Later Crusades*, p. 182.

5. Polemis, *The Doukai*, pp. 145-146.

6. *Ἔλωσης*, v. 229.

7. Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 1 ff.

The epithet «Mourtzouphlos» was originally a nickname given to him by his contemporaries because «he used to contract his eyebrows in such a manner as to meet over his eyes»¹. Polemis indicates that the nickname later became an actual surname. The name, «Mourtzouphlos», may have been a corrupted form of the original term «δμουφρύσιλος», which in turn was abbreviated to «μουφρύσιλος» and finally reached its form of «μούρσυφλος»², hence «μούρτζουφλος».

Information on Mourtzouphlos' activities prior to January 1206 is scant. Aubry as well as Gunther of Pairis list Mourtzouphlos among the supporters of Alexios III against Isaakios II in 1195, but it is virtually impossible to evaluate the historical worth of their information³. Aubry further states that Mourtzouphlos was one of the leaders of the army of Alexios III in 1203 defending the town against the Crusaders⁴. However, according to Robert de Clari, Mourtzouphlos was in prison for seven years (i.e. 1196-1203)⁵.

Robert de Clari's statement concerning Mourtzouphlos' imprisonment, although not his chronology, seems to be confirmed by the *testimonium* of a scribal note, probably written after 1259, and referring to the abortive palace revolution of John Komnenos against Alexios III in 1201⁶.

If this scribal note is reliable, it is most probable that Mourtzouphlos was thrown into prison *in 1201*, and there he remained until Isaakios and

1. Chroniates, p. 742, lines 12-13 (= p. 564, lines 23-25).

2. Cf. de Muralt, *Essai de chronographie*, p. 275 n. 5 - Cf. Modern Greek: «σκούτσύφλος» and «συνοφρομένος».

—Gunther of Pairis, generally unhappy in his etymological explanations, claimed that «Mourtzouphlos» meant «flos cordis», but he didn't explain why: Riant, p. 76; see F. R. Swietek, Gunther of Pairis and the *Historia Constantinopolitana*, in *Speculum* 53 (1978) 49-79: p. 64.

3. Aubry, p. 870 - Gunther, pp. 76 and 110 - E. H. McNeal, Transl. of Robert de Clari, *The Conquest of Constantinople*, New York, 1936 and Swietek, *o.c.*, p. 77 dismiss Gunther's statement, but ignore Aubry's information (dated to 1194). Although improbable because of his later attitude, Mourtzouphlos' attitude may have been possible.

4. Aubry, p. 881

5. Robert de Clari, chap. 52, lines 27-33; chap. 58, line 12; chap. 61, line 14-15.

6. See Wolff, *The Later Crusades*, pp. 181-182 - Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West*, pp. 122 and 248-249 - Cf. A. Heisenberg, *Nikolaos Mesarites: Die Palastrevolution des Joannes Komnenos*, Programm des K. alten Gymn. zu Würzburg für das Studienjahr 1906-7 (Würzburg 1907); Choniates, pp. 697-699 (= pp. 526-8) - For other references see Brand, *o.c.*, p. 347 n. 14.

Alexios IV, who could only have had sympathy for the opponents of Alexios III, released him¹.

Still before his reign, and *a fortiori* before 1201, Mourtzouphlos, already married once before², became the son-in-law of a certain Philokalios³, whose daughter he later — during his reign — deserted for Eudokia, daughter of Alexios III and Euphrosyne⁴. Polemis suggests that Philokalios should perhaps be identified with Eumanthios, «an official frequently met with during the period of the Angeloi»⁵, but there is no evidence for such an identification.

III

MOURTZOUPHLOS' ROLE DURING THE REIGN OF ALEXIOS IV

About the 1st August 1203 (coronation of Alexios IV) Mourtzouphlos was not only released from prison, but became one of Alexios' most prominent ministers. Alexios made him *protovestiaros*⁶, and all sources

1. Choniates, p. 699 (= p. 528), states indeed that Alexios III threw the conspirators into prison. One cannot accept Brand's supposition that Mourtzouphlos might have been imprisoned *either* because of his participation in John Komnenos' abortive coup *or* because Eudokia, Alexios' III's daughter, was his mistress (*Byzantium*, pp. 120, 249, 346 note 9). Indeed, there is no evidence at all that Eudokia became Mourtzouphlos' mistress before his reign. On the contrary, our sources agree in noting or in insinuating that the liaison dates to the time before the capture of Constantinople on the 12th April 1204. Cf. *infra* VI. 1. Mourtzouphlos' marriage to Eudokia.

2. Choniates, p. 755, lines 18-20 (= p. 571, lines 52-53).

3. Choniates, p. 749, line 4 (= p. 565, line 12).

There is no substance in Brand's statement (*Byzantium confronts the West*, p. 120) that Eudokia, after returning in 1198 from Serbia, «became enamored of Alexios Doukas,..., who thus became another candidate for Alexios' throne», the other candidates being Alexios III's sons-in-law, Alexios Palaiologos and Theodoros Lascaris.

4. Wolff, *The Later Crusades*, p. 181, Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, II, p. 120, and Bury, *Cambridge Medieval History*, II, part I, p. 284 erroneously present Eudokia as married to Mourtzouphlos before his reign. — *Re* the chronology of their marriage *vide infra*.

5. Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 146 n. 9.

6. Choniates, p. 745, lines 8-9 (= p. 563, line 79) — Akropolites, chap. 3 (Bonn, p. 8, line 14 = Heisenberg, p. 7, line 4).

The French chronicles echo this event by stating that Mourtzouphlos was made «bailliu» (Robert de Clari, chap. LII, p. 53, lines 27-33: «maistre bailliu»; Croisade de Constantinople, Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, I, p. 488: «bailliu de le tere et de l'enfant»).

agree that his influence over the young emperor increased with time¹. In this context, even the often unreliable information of the *Croisade de Constantinople* seems to make sense: Mourtzouphlos is presented as the «bailliu de le tere et de l'enfant (= Alexios IV)»².

Mourtzouphlos' title of μέγας δούξ, as revealed in the "Αλωσις τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως³ is evidently an error and probably due to «a misunderstanding of the cognomen Doukas»⁴.

After it had been decided that the Crusaders should prolong their stay in Constantinople, Alexios IV, accompanied by several Crusaders, left the capital for an expedition into the provinces before the 19th August, 1203⁵. He only returned on the 11th November of the same year⁶. Meanwhile a fire, caused by an incident between the Latin and the Greek inhabitants of Constantinople, destroyed a section of the town and killed many citizens. The fire broke out on the 19th August and according to Villehardouin took eight days to be extinguished⁷. As a result of this incident the Latins moved out of Constantinople, and good relations between the two groups terminated⁸.

1. Notice how implicitly Alexios IV trusted him even up to the very moment of his capture by Mourtzouphlos (Choniates, p. 745 (= p. 563)) – Baldwin of Flanders in his letters (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, nos. 271, 272, 273, 274) calls Mourtzouphlos «iuratum sibi (= Alexios) quendam Marchuflum nomine, sanguine sibi propinquam», which of course is wrong, but emphasises the strong bond between the two men.

2. Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, I, p. 488. – The reasons given by this chronicle, however, are erroneous: the crusaders(!) would have made Mourtzouphlos «bailliu» not only because Alexios was too young to govern, but because they also wanted Mourtzouphlos to ensure Alexios' payment of debts to them.

3. Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, II, p. 345, line 226.

4. Polemis, *The Doukai*, p. 146. It is also unlikely that he would have been demoted from *protovestiarios* (the 5th rank in the order of dignitaries) to the 6th rank. (Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des offices*, éd. J. Verpeaux, C.N.R.S., Paris 1966, pp. 133 ff.).

5. Villehardouin, chap. 201-202.

6. Villehardouin, chap. 207.

7. Villehardouin, chap. 203-205. – Choniates, p. 730 (= p. 553), states that a group of Flemings, assisted by some Venetians and Pisans, had caused the fire to conceal their retreat after having attempted to plunder a synagogue and after having been chased by the Greeks and the infidels (Jews). – The *Devastatio* (Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes*, p. 89) confirms that the Latins were responsible for the fire.

8. It is, however, possible that still some Latin citizens remained in the town, if G. Akropolites' testimony of a later (and final) exodus may be accepted: see notes 2 and 3, p. 125.

The *Croisade de Constantinople*, referring to the episode of the fire, states indirectly that Mourtzouphlos did not accompany Alexios IV on his expedition: it was Mourtzouphlos who, at this time, invited the Crusaders to stay in Pera in the tower of Galatas where he could «deliver their meat»; he also asked the Venetians «qu'il seussent as escriis quom-bien li pelerin avoient donné as lors nés, et li fesist on savoir», to which demand the Venetians agreed¹. The testimony of the *Croisade* could suggest that Mourtzouphlos was—during the absence of Alexios IV—the highest Greek official in the city. However, this possibility is not supported by evidence from other sources², while the *Croisade's* historical authority remains most controversial. Anyway, this does not exclude the eventuality of Mourtzouphlos' remaining in Constantinople.

The situation deteriorated on the return of Alexios IV, who kept his distance from the Crusaders and did not make the slightest attempt to pay them the balance of his outstanding debt, contracted during the fourth Crusade.

Everything points to a complete seizure of power by the young emperor, to the detriment of Isaakios II, who seemed at this stage to have lost all influence. The Chronicle of Novgorod states that Alexios assumed all powers from his blind father (though the statement that his father became a monk seems false)³. Alexios' assumption of power is indirectly confirmed by Villehardouin and Robert de Clari, in whose accounts Isaakios practically disappears from the political scene, and more directly by Choniates, who notes that Alexios was beginning to pay more heed to the voice of the people who had formerly dethroned his father⁴. Mourtzouphlos, however, more than anyone else seemed to have exerted the strongest influence over the young ruler, and when—still during the month of November 1203⁵—the crusaders sent an ultimatum

1. Buchon, *Rech. Morée*, I, p. 488. In fact, the camp of the crusaders, before and during Alexios' absence, was situated in Pera (Cf. Faral, ed. of Villeh., I, p. 209, note 7), but Mourtzouphlos had no part in the choice of this place.

2. Villeh. (chap. 203-204), describing the fire, does not refer to Mourtzouphlos at all, but Villehardouin — and all the other sources — put Mourtzouphlos only later into their picture, when his role becomes dominant. Therefore their silence cannot be used as an argument against the *Croisade*, although this chronicle — as we know — does not offer much guarantee of its historical authority.

3. Hopf, *Chroniques gréco-romanes*, p. 94.

4. Choniates, p. 735, lines 20 ff. (= p. 556, lines 90 ff.).

5. Villehardouin, chap. 206-216. — Runciman, *History of the Crusades*, Vol.

to Alexios demanding from him payment of his debts, the emperor, on Mourtzouphlos' advice¹, refused to make any further payment. This, however, did not prevent Alexios from becoming even more unpopular with the people², while Mourtzouphlos cunning tactics seem to have proved a strong means to his end³.

The unsuccessful ultimatum of the Crusaders was instrumental in the renewal of hostilities between Crusaders and Greeks. It is probable that the attempts made in December 1203 and on the 1st January 1204 to set fire to the Venetian fleet were, on both occasions, instigated by Mourtzouphlos⁴. Moreover, he would have lost his life during a skirmish at Τρυπητός Λίθος⁵ shortly before the 25th January, had not a band of archers saved him⁶. The fact that Choniates mentions Mourtzouphlos' perseverance without the support of any other leader, reveals his determination and courage, but also the reserves of these leaders towards Mourtzouphlos' policy⁷.

Alexios IV' s vacillating attitude on the other hand drove both the people and the leaders to despair and on the 25th January 1204, the Senate and high clergy, pressurized by the populace, met to deliberate on the eventual replacement of Alexios and his blind powerless father⁸. Nobody however, was willing under such circumstances to accept the burden of the crown. However, the mob refused to disperse and their

III, p. 120 dates this embassy in February 1204 which of course, as will be proved by our chronology, is most unlikely.

1. Robert de Clari, chap. LVIII, p. 58 – Villehardouin, chap. 221.

2. Besides the fact that he was already hated by the populace as an emperor because he was put on the throne by the crusaders, the Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 94, gives as an extra reason for his unpopularity the fact that he despoiled and ransacked the monasteries of the city.

3. The «Chronicle of Morea» states that Mourtzouphlos «ἐλόγιασεν τὴν βασιλείαν μὲ πονηρίαν καὶ ἐπάργη» (v. 736).

4. Cf. Villehardouin, ed. Faral, II, p. 15, n. 2 – Devastatio, Robert de Clari, chap. LX. – Villeh., chap. 217-220.

5. Choniates, p. 742, line 17 (= p. 561, lines 27-28) – Τρυπητός Λίθος is an unknown spot.

6. Choniates, pp. 742-743 (= p. 561, lines 30-32).

7. Mourtzouphlos' act gained him even more popularity among the populace. Alexios IV on the other hand was losing confidence and influence, and—according to Choniates—refused to offer any direct assistance to Mourtzouphlos.

8. Date stipulated by Choniates, p. 743, line 9 (= p. 561, lines 37-38) – Same events reported, without date, by Villehardouin, chap. 221 and the Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 94.

first choice fell on a shadowy figure named Radinos¹, who had hidden himself in order to escape the honour! Finally on the 28th January, Nikolaos Kanabos was elected emperor by the people².

Nikolaos Kanabos was a young man of gentle nature, who was prudent and hated the thought of war³. Appointed emperor against his will⁴, he was crowned immediately (possibly together with his wife) in the Hagia Sophia, although probably not by the patriarch⁵.

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We can already conclude that there is no indication of Mourtzouphlos being the leader of a people's party or of the people as a whole, who anyway first elected Radinos and finally Kanabos.

Also nothing permits us to attribute an anti-latin policy or conviction to Mourtzouphlos before the reign of Alexios IV, and less still to see in him the chief of an anti-latin party or faction or the coordinator of

1. Chronicle of Novgorod, pp. 94-95. – Probably Constantinos Radinos, mentioned—in another context—by Choniates, p. 672 (= p. 507).

2. Choniates, p. 744, lines 11-13 (= p. 562, line 60) gives the date – Cf. Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 and the letters of Baldwin (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, nos. 271, 272, 273, 274).

3. Choniates, p. 746 (= p. 564).

4. Choniates, pp. 743-4 (= p. 562) states that the Byzantine senate was pressurised by the mob to elect a new emperor. But — according to Choniates—«we were fully aware that whoever might be nominated, he would be rejected by the Latins». Then he states that after three days *they* (and not *we*) elected *a certain* (τινὰ) Kanabos. It thus seems that neither he nor the Senate as a whole was involved.

5. Choniates, p. 744 (= p. 562) – Letters of Baldwin (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274)—Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95. – This last chronicle says that Kanabos was crowned *absente patriarcha*. This has also been suggested by Choniates' text: the subject of *χρῆσθαι*, is not mentioned. (See preceding note). – Only the Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 refers to Kanabos' wife, not giving her name.

As for the implications of the term *χρῆσθαι*, see: G. Ostrogorsky, Zur Kaisersalbung und Schilderhebung im Spät-byzantinischen Krönungszeremoniell, *Historia* 4 (1955) 246-256. – Aikaterini Christophilopoulou, Ἐκλογή, ἀναγόρευσις καὶ στέφανος τοῦ Βυζαντινοῦ Αυτοκράτορος, Athens 1956, pp. 210-211. – B. Hendrickx, Die laat-Bisantynse Kaisersalwing en Skildverheffing: Problematiek en politiek-theoretiese Aspecte, in *Middeleeuse Studies / Medieval Studies* 1974, Johannesburg 1975, pp. 68-81. – D. M. Nicol, Kaisersalbung. The Unction of Emperors in Late Byzantine Coronation Ritual, in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 2 (1976) 37-52. Nicol, however, does not refer to Kanabos' crowning, although there are some important problems: if the patriarch was not present, who *anointed* Kanabos? Or is *χρῆσθαι* here metaphorically used? But in that case, Nicoll's theory collapses.

such tendencies. Seeing such inclinations in Mourtzouphlos' collaboration to the revolution of John Komnenos in 1201—as do Wolff and Brand¹—is a violation of the sources.

In fact, Mourtzouphlos' anti-latin attitude can be confirmed only after Alexios IV's return from the provinces. This attitude of Mourtzouphlos—at that stage—is not in accordance with the political line of the aristocracy, which acted with prudence and moderation towards the Latins. On the other hand, the mass showed strong anti-latin feelings since the time of the fire (August 1203) and this enmity reached its height on the 25th January 1204.

Thus it seems that Mourtzouphlos—during the reign of Alexios IV—followed the feelings of the people, though he was not their leader, and did not conform to the policy of the aristocracy and high clergy.

Finally, it is also difficult to speak of the existence of an anti-latin party. Only a strong anti-latin feeling can be stated.

IV

THE EPHEMERAL RULE OF EMPEROR NIKOLAOS KANABOS AND THE COUP OF MOURTZOUPHLOS

Alexios IV in his palace of Blachernae was informed of Kanabos' election, and promptly sought the protection of Boniface of Montferrat². Alexios' plan, however, was revealed to Mourtzouphlos, who during the night of the 28/29th January³ usurped power and threw Alexios IV into a dungeon⁴.

The Letters of Baldwin state that Alexios sent none other than Mourtzouphlos to request Boniface's intervention. From Choniates' account, however, we are able to deduce that Alexios IV announced his plan to his close collaborators amongst whom was his protovestiarios Alexios Doukas. This seems to be the more valid information for the

1. Brand, *Byzantium confronts the West*, pp. 124, 248-249. Wolff, *Later Crusades*, pp. 181-2.

2. Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 - Choniates, p. 744 (= p. 562) - Letters of Baldwin (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, nos. 271-274).

3. This date can be established from the information given by Choniates, pp. 743-744 (= pp. 561-562).

4. Choniates, pp. 745-746 (= pp. 563-4). It is well known how Mourtzouphlos deceitfully led the naive and unsuspecting young Alexios to his own dungeons.

simple reason that Mourtzouphlos would not have had time enough for the preparation of his coup had he in fact been the messenger. Choniates further informs us that Mourtzouphlos, with the help of a eunuch, the official of the Treasury, bought off Alexios' guard¹.

The major role played by this guard in the capture of young Alexios is also stressed by Villehardouin². Mourtzouphlos also seems to have received direct assistance from his relations and associates³. The question of Kanabos' elimination, Mourtzouphlos' eventual crowning, and the chronology and circumstances of the death of Isaakios II and Alexios IV are the main problems of this chaotic period.

On the very night of the 28/29th January, Mourtzouphlos was greeted by some as emperor, and «τοῖς βασιλικοῖς κοσμεῖται συμβόλοις»⁴, while others informed Kanabos of Mourtzouphlos' coup. Mourtzouphlos either seized Kanabos by force or detained him with promises of high promotions as compensation for his resignation⁵. In spite of what might have taken place, Kanabos (whom the people refused to help) and eventually his wife were thrown into prison and presumably executed shortly afterwards⁶.

It is virtually impossible to establish the exact date of the capture of emperor Nikolaos Kanabos (probably some days after *his* coup) and the date of Mourtzouphlos' crowning. The only date available for Mourtzouphlos' crowning is that of the 5th February⁷ found in the Chronicle

1. Choniates, pp. 744-745 (= p. 563).

2. Villehardouin, chap. 222 states that Alexios was put in prison by Mourtzouphlos, his associates and Alexios' guards, who of course—according to the Byzantine custom—were Varangians.

3. Choniates, pp. 744-745 (= p. 563). Cf. Chronicle of Morea, v. 731-750, in which amongst others Mourtzouphlos' relations, friends and neighbours are referred to.

4. Choniates, p. 746 (= p. 564).

5. Choniates, p. 746 (= p. 564) states that Kanabos was captured οὐκ εἰς μακρόν. —The letters of Baldwin state that Kanabos was thrown into prison. —The Croisade de Constantinople, p. 488 writes that Mourtzouphlos killed Kanabos in or near the Hagia Sophia —The Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 tells us the story of Mourtzouphlos bribing Kanabos with a high ranking title, and putting him and his wife in prison after Kanabos and his supporters had stayed in the Hagia Sophia for 6 days and 6 nights. —The Devastatio, p. 91 states that Mourtzouphlos surrounded Kanabos in the Hagia Sophia, captured then decapitated him.

6. Devastatio, p. 91.

7. Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95. Polemis (*The Doukai*, p. 146, n. 7) seems to have deduced from the Chronicle of Morea (v. 741) and from Villeh. (ch. 222) that the cro-

of Novgorod. This date, however, cannot be confirmed.

No contemporary Greek source mentions Mourtzouphlos' crowning in the Hagia Sophia. Akropolites states that Mourtzouphlos—after Alexios' death (!)—«ἀνηγόρευθη παρὰ τῶν πολιτῶν»¹. According to Choniates, he took the *insignia imperialia* during the night of the 28/29th January, but the same source mentions Mourtzouphlos' ἀνάρρησις when Kanabos was captured². Choniates' information, however, that Mourtzouphlos reigned for two months and sixteen days³, brings us back to the night of the 28/29th January⁴. The most important occidental sources do refer to a crowning, but with information and chronology either confused or contradictory⁵.

We may thus conclude that Mourtzouphlos was wearing the *insignia* since his coup, and was crowned later, probably on the 5th February.

It seems to be an accepted fact among many scholars, e.g. Runciman, Wolff, Ostrogorsky, Nicol a.o.⁶, that Isaakios II died or was killed *after* the death of Alexios IV. This may be an inference from Robert de Clari's account⁷. Nevertheless, we must erase this error, since sources

wning of Mourtzouphlos had taken place a week after his coup. This, however, cannot be accepted as neither source substantiates this evidence.

1. Akropolites, chap. 3.

2. Choniates, p. 746 (= p. 564) – Comp. Theod. Skout., pp. 444-445 and Pseudo-Kodinos, Chronographia, p. 162.

3. Choniates, p. 755 (= p. 571).

4. Mourtzouphlos' reign ended the *night* of the 12th April, when he fled from Constantinople. Deducting two months and sixteen days we obtain the night of the 28/29th January 1204.

Christofilopoulou, Ἐκλογή, pp. 169 and 236 accepts as crowning-date for Mourtzouphlos the 28/29th January 1204. However she too refers to texts (Choniates, Theod. Skout., Pseudo-Kodinos) which only state his coup and the fact that some people honoured him then as emperor.

5. Robert de Clari (chap. LXII: mentions the crowning as having taken place after Alexios' death), Villehardouin (chap. 222: in Hagia Sophia, before Alexios' death), Devastatio (p. 91: in the palace of Blachernae, before Alexios' death), and the Croisade de Constantinople (p. 488: in Hagia Sophia, after Alexios' death). The Balduinus Constantinopolitanus, p. 134 pretends that Mourtzouphlos «in capite suo imposuit diadema imperiale» - The Letters of Baldwin do not mention any crowning.—As for later Greek sources, the *Chronicle of Morea* (v. 731-750) mentions a crowning, but the *Ἀλωσις* makes no mention at all.

6. Runciman, *A History of the Crusades*, II, p. 121 – Wolff, *The Later Crusades*, p. 182 – Bury, *Cambridge Medieval Hist.*, vol. 4, p. 284. – Ostrogorsky, *History*, p. 416 – Nicol, *Byzantium*, p. 284 (= *Cambr. Med. Hist.*, IV, I, 1966, p. 284).

7. Robert de Clari, chap. LXII states that Mourtzouphlos killed both Alexios

such as Choniates, the Chronicle of Novgorod, Villehardouin, Baldwin's Letters, Aubry and the «Balduinus Constantinopolitanus» clearly state that Isaakios died in the period between the coup of Mourtzouphlos and the death of Alexios IV¹.

Choniates' text suggest that Isaakios might have died about the time of Mourtzouphlos' coup, and it is obvious from the text that Isaakios died of old age and fear and was not murdered by the hand of Mourtzouphlos.

Choniates actually records the death of Alexios to have taken place on the 8th February², which in turn is confirmed by the chronology of events as presented in the Letters of Baldwin. It is quite impossible to establish the exact date from the texts of Villehardouin and Clari³, while our other sources provide either confused or quite incredible accounts of Alexios' death⁴.

V

MOURTZOUPHLOS' REIGN

1. *Emperor Mourtzouphlos and the Crusaders*

Mourtzouphlos was well aware of the difficulty of not only his own position but also that of the city. He therefore appears to have tried to gain time for himself by keeping the crusaders uninformed of the events taking place in Constantinople.

His first reaction seems to have been the closing of the city-gates

IV and Isaakios together.

1. Choniates, p. 744 (= p. 562) – Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 94 – Villeh., chap. 223 – Baldwin's letters (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274) – Aubry, p. 883. – Baldwinus Constantinopolitanus, p. 134.

2. Choniates, p. 747 (= p. 564): Alexios ruled for six months and 8 days.

3. Villeh. chap. 223 – Clari, chap. LXII.

4. Dandolo, p. 279 (Alexios died during Mourtzouphlos' coup). Croisade de Constantinople, p. 488 (during coup — mention of Alexios' dream in which he was threatened by a pork) – *Chronicle of Morea*, v. 731-750 (during coup) — Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 (after 5 February) – *Ἀλωσις*, lines 224-227 (during coup.). Also some modern scholars give erroneously the date of the 1st Feb. 1204; e.g. de Muralt, *Chronographie*, p. 277 and Wolff, *The Later Crusades*, p. 793. This date is confirmed by no source at all!

and the cutting off of any supplies available to the crusaders¹.

The expedition of Henry of Flanders to Filea, about the 2nd February 1204², took place due to a shortage of food and constituted the beginning of renewed hostilities: Henry, returning from Filea, had his rear-guard attacked by Mourtzouphlos whose spies had kept him informed on Henry's action. In the battle the Greeks, however, were defeated by the Latins who not only won an icon of the Virgin, which the Greek emperors regarded as a safeguard in war, but also the «vexillum imperiale» belonging to Mourtzouphlos, and perhaps the latter's crown³. Mourtzouphlos lost some of his bravest soldiers and nearly perished himself in the battle⁴.

During this period it seems that Mourtzouphlos made a further attempt to destroy the Latin fleet by sending burning ships⁵, but with no more success than on the previous occasions.

1. This is stated by the *Croisade de Constantinople*, p. 489 and the *Balduinus Constantinopolitanus*, p. 134. Although these sources are not always reliable, Mourtzouphlos' reaction could obviously not have been otherwise.

2. Villehardouin, chapter 227-228 states that the episode took place around *Chandeleur* (2nd February). This date fits in with the general chronology of two other sources (*Letters of Baldwin*, *Devastatio*), placing the date of the events at Filea between Mourtzouphlos' coup and the death of Alexios IV (8th February). No date, is given by Choniates or Robert de Clari. The fact that they (and Villehardouin) mention the story of Filea after Mourtzouphlos' coup and Alexios' death, does not necessarily signify that the events had taken place in that order. Following Carile, *Storia (o.c.)*, p. 145, this episode must be dated after the 5th of February (Mourtzouphlos' probable coronation), because he was wearing the *insignia imperialia*. However, we know that he took the *insignia* on the 28/29th of January.

3. Choniates, pp. 750-751 (= p. 567) states the loss of the imperial icon-Villehardouin, chap. 227-228 refers to the loss of the icon and Mourtzouphlos' *gonfanon* – Baldwin's letters (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274) mention the *vexillum imperiale* and the icon – The *Devastatio*, p. 91 says that Mourtzouphlos lost the icon and *omnia imperialia* – Robert de Clari, chap. LXVI, mentions the loss of the icon, the *ensenge* (= *vexillum*) and *capel emperial* (imperial head) – Aubry, p. 883 gives an fanciful story of Pierre de Bracheux taking the icon from patriarch Sampson (sic!) who dropped it during the battle. The icon was given by the crusaders to the Order of the Cistercians (Cf. Baldwin's letters).

4. For references see preceding note. Villehardouin states the death of 20 Greek «knights», the *Devastatio* speaks of 15. The latter source indicates that Mourtzouphlos was wounded and had to hide until night. It is difficult to accept this.

5. The *Letters of Baldwin* (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274), the *Croisade de Constantinople*, p. 489 and the *Balduinus Constantinopolitanus*, p. 134, state that Mourtzouphlos sent burning ships after his crowning. Baldwin's letters place the event between the episode of Filea (about the 2nd February) and Mourtzouphlos'

It seems however that during the first few days of his reign Mourtzouphlos tried to avoid an open war. This is inferred from Robert de Clari's statement that Mourtzouphlos had demanded that the crusaders' departure from the city take place within eight days¹. Moreover, the Greek emperor had peace-talks with the doge Dandolo, probably on the 8th February 1204².

There are reasons enough to believe that these peace-talks were held on the initiative of Mourtzouphlos, as expressed in the letters of Baldwin³. Mourtzouphlos' position and popularity may indeed have suffered severely due to his unsuccessful venture at Filea, as is stated by Robert de Clari, who mentions that the Greek emperor's endeavours to present his defeat as a victory were betrayed when the crusaders displayed—from a vessel—in front of the Greeks of Constantinople, the icon and the vexillum⁴. Furthermore, the fact that, during the talks, the Latin forces suddenly appeared from a vantage point and attacked Mourtzouphlos, to whom the doge was dictating unacceptable conditions⁵, illustrates the fact that the Latins had not taken the talks too seriously.

The conditions laid down by the doge at the meeting which—as recorded by Choniates—took place near Comidium, are repeated in Baldwin's letters and merely mentioned by Choniates, who refers to the harsh conditions laid down as «difficult and hardly acceptable to a nation which has had the taste of freedom»⁶. The Chronicle of Novgorod on the

meeting with the doge (8th February). —Faral, in Villehardouin, II, p. 17, note 1, assumes that there were only two attempts made by the Greeks to burn the fleet, and, referring to Robert de Clari (chap. LX) and the *Devastatio*, he presumes that Baldwin's letters, which also refer to two attempts, present an erroneous chronology. Faral, however, does not refer to the other sources. It seems therefore that we must accept that there were *at least* three attempts on the part of the Greeks to burn the fleet, one of which was early in February 1204.

1. Robert de Clari, chap. LXII.

2. Choniates, p. 751 (= p. 567) — Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95 — Letters of Baldwin (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274). Baldwin says that «insequente nocte» Alexius IV was killed, which gives us the 8th February. The Chronicle of Novgorod places the talks after the 5th of February and immediately before Alexios' death.

3. Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, nos. 271-274.

4. Robert de Clari, ch. LXVI, pp. 67-68, lines 77-93 and chap. LXVII.

5. Choniates, p. 751 (= p. 567).

6. «... ἀποκναίουςαι μὲν καὶ δυσπαράδεκτα τοῖς γενομένοις ἐλευθερίας καὶ εἰωθόσιν ἐπιτάσσειν» (Choniates, p. 751 (= p. 567)).

other hand, gives a fanciful and erroneous account of these conditions¹.

The following were the conditions:

- (i) Alexios IV had to be restored;
- (ii) Mourtzouphlos had to seek pardon from Alexios;
- (iii) The Latins would have discussions only with Alexios whose previous actions would be pardoned because of his youth and immaturity;
- (iv) Obedience to the Roman Church was necessary;
- (v) The agreements previously signed by young Alexios had to be kept. This meant that his debts had to be paid².

The condition referred to by Choniates, of an immediate payment of fifty golden centenarii, must obviously refer to this debt.

It is most probable—if not definite—that the harsh conditions laid down by the crusaders, had led to Mourtzouphlos' liquidation of Alexios IV. It is certain also that the news of Alexios' death which Mourtzouphlos seems to have tried to conceal from the crusaders³, further antagonised their attitude⁴.

Akropolites is the only source which provides information on the *escalade* in the psychological war of this period. He records that the leaders of Constantinople decided to expel all the remaining Latin inhabitants of the city in order to avoid having «inside-enemies»⁵. It seems that this happened about the 3rd March 1204⁶.

1. Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 95. According to this source, the crusaders asked Mourtzouphlos to hand over Alexios IV (for repatriation) to the emperor of Germany. If this condition were fulfilled, the crusaders apologising for their presence, would hand over the empire to Mourtzouphlos! Mourtzouphlos, however, refused and according to the source, did away with Alexios. It is evident that this account is entirely unacceptable.

2. It is interesting to note that the letters of Baldwin also refer to an agreement, which Mourtzouphlos would have signed with the infidels («ac federis inter quantumlibet infideles firmiter obtinentis»). It was quite impossible for Mourtzouphlos, under such circumstances and also taking into account the chronology of events, to have achieved this.

3. Villehardouin, chap. 224 – Gunther of Pairis, chap. 14.

4. Cf. Villehardouin, chap. 224-225 – Robert de Clari, chap. LXII – Chronicle of Novgorod, pp. 95-96.

5. Akropolites, chap. 3 (= Heisenberg, pp. 8-9).

6. Akropolites, chap. 4 continues his report: «Τεσσαράκοντα γοῦν παρῆλθον ἡμέραι καὶ ἐξέλω...» This suggests that the expulsion took place about the 3rd March.

No other source whatsoever confirms Akropolites' statement. Nevertheless his assertion is not necessarily erroneous as it seems to comply with the general course of events, since it was in March 1204 that the crusaders and the Venetians signed their famous convention on the constitutional laws of their own potential new state of Latin Constantinople¹. The expulsion of these Latin inhabitants may have proved an additional reason to spur on the Latins to their ultimate decision of destroying the Greek Empire.

All further information deals with the final attack and capture of Constantinople by the crusaders.

Since all sources in general agree on the events and chronology of this final offensive², we are able to accept the following dates and course of events as correct.

On the 8th April 1204, the Crusaders prepared their offensive, and their ships were placed in battle-order. On Friday, 9th April, the first Latin attack was launched but repulsed by the Greeks. The final assault took place on the 12th April. Constantinople fell to the Latins and Mourtzouphlos fled.

Mourtzouphlos appears, during this offensive, to have been a courageous, intelligent and cautious leader. Choniates informs us that the Greek emperor—during the Latin attack against Blachernae—pitched his tent on the hill at the monastery of Pantepoptos from which he could clearly observe the enemy's ships and their operations³.

Robert de Clari mentions Mourtzouphlos' exultation after he had repulsed the attack of 9th April⁴, and goes on to say that on the 12th April, the Greek emperor in person led the operations with competence⁵.

Mourtzouphlos' resistance is once more clearly revealed in the heroic episode of Pierre de Bracheux⁶. Villehardouin too admits that the empe-

1. Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 267 = Tafel-Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, nos. CXIX, pp. 444-449 and CXX, pp. 449-452.

2. Villehardouin, chap. 236-246 – Robert de Clari, chap. LXX-LXXXIX – Letters of Baldwin (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274) – Choniates, pp. 752-755 (= pp. 568-571) – Chronicle of Novgorod, p. 96 — Devastatio, pp. 90-91.

3. Choniates, p. 752 (= p. 568). This is confirmed by Robert de Clari, chap. LXX, who affirms that Mourtzouphlos took up position at «un monchiel dedens le chité».

4. Robert de Clari, chap. LXXI.

5. Robert de Clari, chap. LXXIV. – The mention of the «fu grijois» is also an interesting fact.

6. Robert de Clari, chap. LXXVI.

ror «ne repose mie»¹. It seems that he had to abandon his tents and escape to his palace of Boucoleon only because of *his soldiers'* flight² and that during the night of the 12th April, his original plan was to assemble his troops in order to attack the Franks. However, realising the hopelessness of the situation, he fled through the Golden Gate at the South of the city³.

2. Mourtzouphlos' policy in Constantinople itself

The Chroniclers focussing all attention on military events of this period, have provided us with limited information on Mourtzouphlos' internal policy and action.

Choniates relates—and we probably owe this piece of information to his personal frustration—that Mourtzouphlos was a shrewd individual meditating over the changes he was to effect, with the intention of disrupting everything⁴. Choniates affirms that he himself had lost his position as «logothetes tōn sekretōn» to Philokalios, the emperor's father-in-law, whom he presents as a man with no experience whatsoever⁵.

Finding the treasury empty, the emperor was obliged to tax heavily. He brought to trial the ex-Caesars, ex-Sevastokratores and other ancient dignitaries of the period of the Angeloi, and also confiscated their private belongings. Mourtzouphlos reduced the rich to the indignities of austere-living, causing hatred amongst his own relations who were used to luxury⁶.

On the other hand, these very actions made him champion of the people on whom he relied for support.

Fearing the loss of prestige as a result of the defeat at Filea, Mourt-

1. Villehardouin, chap. 246.

2. Villehardouin, chap. 243.

3. Villehardouin, chap. 246. – Robert de Clari, chap. LXXVIII states that—if the Greeks were to have resisted—the crusaders would have decided to set fire to the city. We find similar, although confused, evidence in Gunther de Pairis, chap. 17. There is evidence of a similar account in the *Devastatio*.

4. Choniates, p. 748 (= p. 565). – The Balduinus Constantinopolitanus, pp. 134 and 136 also cites Mourtzouphlos' changes.

5. Choniates, p. 749 (= p. 565) – Gardner, *The Lascarids*, p. 49 suggests that «Mourtzouphlos had alienated some loyal Greeks by his choice of ministers» and also refers to Choniates' replacement.

6. Choniates, p. 749 (= pp. 565-6).

zouphlos, after raising the sea-wall of the city by means of beams¹ and strengthening the gates, had decided personally to supervise the distribution of food to the people thereby encouraging his men and setting an example².

The fact that the Greek senate, probably on the night of the 12/13th April, had elected Theodore Lascaris as the new emperor, may also suggest Mourtzouphlos' unpopularity among the ἄρχοντες³.

An important contributory factor to Mourtzouphlos' power seems to have been the loyalty shown to him by the Varangian Guard, which—as we have already noticed—played a major role in his coup. These same Varangians are mentioned as listed amongst his finest soldiers during the final assault of the 12th April⁴, and, according to the Chronicle of Robert de Clari, surrendered to the crusaders only after the flight of Mourtzouphlos⁵.

VI

MOURTZOUPHLOS' ADVENTURES AFTER HIS FLIGHT

1. *Mourtzouphlos' marriage to Eudokia*

It is virtually impossible to establish whether Alexios V Doukas in fact married Eudokia, daughter of Alexios III and Euphrosyne⁶, either immediately before or just after the capture of Constantinople.

1. The detail of fortifying the walls is also given by Baldwin's letters (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274).

2. Choniates, p. 750 (= p. 566).

3. Choniates, p. 756 (= pp. 571-2) – Baldwin's letters (Prevenier, *Oorkonden*, II, no. 271-274). See also B. Sinogowitz, Ueber das Byzantinische Kaisertum nach dem vierten Kreuzzuge, *BZ* 45 (1952) 345-356, who—following Baldwin's information—pretends that Constantine and not Theodore Lascaris was elected.

Of course, the confused story of the Balduinus Constantinopolitanus, p. 135, which brings Alexios III on the scene in Constantinople during the night of Mourtzouphlos' flight, has no foundation at all.

4. Robert de Clari, chap. LXXIV mentions these men as English and Danish. Cf. Chronicle of Novgorod, pp. 96-97.

5. Robert de Clari, chap. LXXX.

6. Eudokia's first husband was Stephen of Serbia, who sent her back to Constantinople (Choniates, p. 804 (= p. 608). Mourtzouphlos was her second, and Leon Sgouros her third husband.

Our most reliable source, Choniates, clearly states that Mourtzouphlos had fled from the city accompanied by Eudokia «with whom he was in love» and Euphrosyne, her mother. He indicates that they married only after the fall of the city¹.

Villehardouin's text seems to agree with that of Choniates².

Akropolites and the «*Ἀλωσις*», however, mention that Mourtzouphlos married Eudokia before the fall of Byzantium³.

2. *The Adventures of Mourtzouphlos up to the time of his capture*

The destination of Mourtzouphlos in his flight after the fall of Constantinople is not known. Villehardouin records that he remained not far from Constantinople⁴ and we find him back at Tchourlou, which he had plundered, after the 16th May 1204⁵.

Persecuted by Baldwin of Flanders, the Latin emperor, Mourtzouphlos fled to the neighbourhood of Mosynopolis where Alexios III was staying at the time⁶. Mourtzouphlos, who sought an alliance with Alexios III, was invited by the latter for dinner and a bath. Mourtzouphlos

1. Choniates, pp. 755 and 804 (= pp. 571 and 608). - It is on this occasion that Choniates describes Mourtzouphlos as a lustful and lecherous man.

2. Villehardouin suggests that Mourtzouphlos fled with Euphrosyne and Eudokia (chap. 266), and that—on hearing that Alexios III was at Mosynopolis—he sent him messengers to ask for the hand of Eudokia. Alexios III agreed to his request (chap. 270). Villehardouin does not mention anywhere that Mourtzouphlos married her, and suggests that he was unmarried when he arrived before Mosynopolis.

3. Akropolites, chap. 5 (= Heisenberg, p. 10): Mourtzouphlos divorced his wife, married Eudokia, and on the 12th April left the city «ἐπιφερόμενος καὶ τὴν σύζυγον Εὐδοκίαν». - According to the «*Ἀλωσις*» Mourtzouphlos married Eudokia on 28 or 29 March: «εὐρών τὴν θυγατέρα δὲ τοῦ πρώτου βασιλέως, εἰς γαμετὴν ἠγάγετο, μῆνας κατάρξας δύο» (v. 230-231) and «Λαβὼν τὴν σύνευνον αὐτοῦ καὶ τὴν μητέρα ταύτης» (v. 236).

4. Villehardouin, chap. 266: «Li empereres Morchuflex n'ere mie exlongniez encor de Constantinoble. IIII. jornees».

5. Tchourlou = Τζουρουλὸν = the ancient Bergulae in Thrakia. - Villeh., chap. 267. This took place after the crowning of Baldwin (16 May 1204), who was informed of Doukas' expedition, and began a «hot pursuit» (chap. 268-270). Following Carile, *Storia*, p. 191, Mourtzouphlos was in Tchourlou by the middle of June, but this cannot be confirmed.

6. *Re* the adventures of Alexios III after his flight from Constantinople, see the recent article by R. J. Loenertz, *Aux origines du despotat d'Épire et de la principauté d'Achaïe*, *Byzantion* 43 (1973) 370-376.

was in all probability sincere and loved Alexios' daughter, but failing to apply his usual «*πονηρία*», was seized by Alexios who, in the presence of Eudokia, ordered him to be blinded in the bathroom¹.

This episode—as we know—took place after the 16th May 1204, but quite a while before the 12th August 1204².

Baldwin, informed of this incident, promptly set out for Mosynopolis but failed to find either Alexios III or Alexios V Doukas³. This disproves Akropolites' statement that Mourtzouphlos wandered around Mosynopolis—where he was eventually captured—as an «*ἀλήτης*»⁴. Mourtzouphlos was deserted by Alexios III who departed with his wife and daughter in the direction of Thessaloniki, and was cared for and guarded by those of his soldiers who remained loyal to him to the last⁵. Mourtzouphlos' flight must have been immediate in order to escape Baldwin.

Several reasons have been given for the behaviour of Alexios III, and it has also been used—by Villehardouin⁶—as an argument to illustrate the unworthiness of the Greek emperors. Akropolites suggests that Alexios III had many reasons for hating Mourtzouphlos, especially Mourtzouphlos' involvement with Eudokia⁷. However, it seems—as the same Akropolites states—that the girl really loved her husband, stood by him and was heavily shocked by her father's action. Moreover Alexios III did not hesitate a little later to give Eudokia to Leon Sgouros. Alice Gardner suggests that Alexios III bore a grudge against Mourtzouphlos «also because of the imperial title which Mourtzouphlos had accepted»⁸.

1. Villehardouin, chap. 271 – Choniates, p. 804 (= p. 608) – Akropolites, chap. 5. – The blinding, without further details, is mentioned by Halberstadt, p. 118 and Aubry, p. 884, who erroneously gives the name Andronicus instead of Alexios III.

2. Indeed, the news of Mourtzouphlos' blinding reached Baldwin when he was at Adrianoupolis (Villeh., chap. 272). From there he went to Mosynopolis, where he remained a while and waited for Boniface of Montferrat. At their meeting started their disagreement concerning Thessaloniki. Boniface left the emperor and then, on the 12th August 1204, sold Crete to the Venetians (Villeh., chap. 273-275; Tafel-Thomas, *Urkunden*, I, pp. 512-515, no CXXIII).

3. Villehardouin chap. 273-274.

4. Akropolites, chap. 5 (= Heisenberg, p. 11).

5. This is suggested by Villehardouin, chap. 271.

6. Villeh., chap. 271 – comp. Choniates, p. 804 (= pp. 608-9).

7. Akropolites, chap. 5. (= Heisenberg, p. 11).

8. Alice Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea*, London 1912, p. 68.

After his blinding, Mourtzouphlos must have made his headquarters elsewhere, probably near to the detroits, since here he was captured by Thierry de Loos shortly after the 1st November 1204, when trying to escape to Asia Minor¹.

3. *Mourtzouphlos' execution*

Practically all the sources, Villehardouin, Robert de Clari, Niketas Choniates, Akropolites, Gunther de Pairis, the *Chronicle of Morea*, the *Βραχέα Χρονικά*, the *Ἀλωσις* (i.e. with the exception of the *Balduinus Constantinopolitanus*) are in agreement with the manner of the execution of Mourtzouphlos in Constantinople. The Greek emperor was tried and executed before the 11th November 1204².

The decision to have Mourtzouphlos thrown down from a column at the Place of Taurus seems to have been made by the *conseil privé* (*conseil féodal*) of emperor Baldwin³.

It is interesting to note that Baldwin and the Frankish leaders who were themselves usurpers, tried to use Mourtzouphlos as a «scapegoat» to

1. Cf. B. Hendrickx, *Οἱ πολιτικοὶ καὶ στρατιωτικοὶ θεσμοὶ τῆς Λατινικῆς Ἀυτοκρατορίας τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κατὰ τοὺς πρώτους χρόνους τῆς ὑπάρξεώς της*. Thessaloniki 1970, p. 53 note 5, in which the chronology has been proved according to Villehardouin's text: Thiery de Loos captured Mourtzouphlos during an expedition to his fief of Nikomedia and brought him to Constantinople between the 1st November 1204 (departure of the army of Louis de Blois) and the 11th November (departure of Henry of Flanders to Abydos) (= Villeh., chap. 304-310). We thus differ from Faral's interpretation (Villeh., II, p. 115 note 3), which we refuted *in loco citato*.

2. Villeh., chap. 306-307 – Robert de Clari, chap. CIX – Choniates, p. 804 (= p. 609) – Akropolites, chap. 5 – Gunther de Pairis, chap. 20 – *Chronicle of Morea*, p. 60 – *Ἀλωσις*, p. 350. — The Anonymus Gaietanus, p. 153 erroneously states that Mourtzouphlos «fugit in columnis, & se inde precipitavit». — The Balduinus Constantinopolitanus, p. 137 erroneously records that Mourtzouphlos and 22 of his companions had been decapitated and that Mourtzouphlos' body had been tied to a torture-wheel and his head transfixed on a lance. — See also Hendrickx, *Οἱ θεσμοί*, pp. 139 note 3, and 140.

3. This results from Villehardouin's account (chap. 306); for a detailed discussion see Hendrickx, *Οἱ θεσμοί*, pp. 140-142. — According to Clari (chap. CIX), the idea of throwing Mourtzouphlos down from a column came from Dandolo, while the *Chronicle of Morea* (p. 60) gives an incredible account of a wise man informing the Frankish leaders about a prophecy of Leon VI, written on one of the city's columns: «Ἀπεδῶ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ κιονίου ὀφείλουσιν κρεμνίσει τὸν βασιλέα τὸν ἄπιστον τῆς Κωνσταντίνου Πόλεως» (v. 890-891).

cover their own guilt, and in so doing, hoped to convince the people that Baldwin was in fact the true successor to Alexios IV, while Mourtzouphlos was the traitor and murderer of his emperor. Indeed from their purely feudal point of view, Alexios Doukas was the unforgiveable traitor, but from the Byzantine point of view Mourtzouphlos was not entirely wrong in declaring (during his trial) that Alexios IV, and not he was in fact the real traitor¹.

*

After this survey, I think that we can put forward the following conclusions:

(i) The events around Kanabos' enthronement and Mourtzouphlos' coup confirm that the latter was not the leader of the people, but was acceptable to them;

(ii) However, once emperor, Mourtzouphlos relied heavily on the people's sympathy and collaboration, as is shown by his personal participation in the preparation for the defence of the city, and his reactions after the defeat at Philea. On the other hand, the changes he introduced into the Senate, the trials of aristocrats and the taxes he imposed on them clearly show an anti-aristocrat attitude.

(iii) It is probably this mutual distrust and hatred between Mourtzouphlos and the Byzantine aristocracy which explains the hostile attitude of all the Greek sources towards Mourtzouphlos. Here, one may think of Aliki Laiou's words: «the sources, written as they are by an upper class and largely for an upper class, give relatively abundant information about a small segment of the population, leaving us in darkness about the rest of the society»².

A similar consideration can explain the fact that the Greek historical tradition did not praise the «patriotic» attitude of Mourtzouphlos against the crusaders, but underlined his weak points and held him responsible for the final disaster.

(iv) In view of the silence of the sources—it is also probable that Mourtzouphlos was a «Doukas» of humble origin, which fits in with his attitude, the reaction of the aristocracy and even of Alexios III towards the «lover» of his daughter.

(v) It is however clear that Mourtzouphlos' anti-latin attitude was

1. Choniates, p. 804 (= p. 609).

2. Angeliki E. Laiou, Peasant Names in Fourteenth-Century Macedonia, in *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1 (1975) 71-95.

accidental and not essential, resulting from the feelings of the people and the political circumstances; Mourtzouphlos indeed tried to avoid war with the Latins because—as a good psychologist of the masses—he felt that the people of Constantinople were not morally prepared to undertake a decisive fight.

(vi) Thus we must consider Mourtzouphlos as a man of rather humble origin, without scruples, knowing how to adapt perfectly his own ambition to the nationalistic feelings of the mass; a strong personality, whose decisions and actions in 1203-4 show a correct estimation of the circumstances, but who himself became a victim of the absence of moral conviction of the Byzantine people. This attitude of the people alone is responsible for the double capture of Constantinople by the Latins, which—in the past—had resisted much stronger attacks¹.

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