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ANISINA**

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**IN MEMORY OF  
PROF. DR. İŞİN DEMİRKENT**

**AYRI BASIM**

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## NIKETAS CHONIATES AS A SOURCE FOR THE SECOND CRUSADE IN ANATOLIA

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Since the seminal work of Bernard Kugler in the latter-half of the nineteenth-century, historians of the Second Crusade have conferred significant authority on the chronicle of Niketas Choniates and that of his contemporary John Kinnamos.<sup>1</sup> The Greek sources have been employed in two important areas in particular. First, to demonstrate both the reason for, and location of King Conrad III of Germany's retreat in October 1147 from the Anatolian plain of Dorylaion (modern Eskişehir) back to Nikaia (mod. Iznik).<sup>2</sup> Secondly, to maintain that the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Komnenos' hostility and alleged perfidy towards the crusaders as evinced in Kinnamos and Choniates were integral components in a perceived imperial policy of impeding western support of the crusader states, thus inhibiting the power of the Latin East.

A modern analysis of these sources actually within the context of the Second Crusade has not been published, but such a consideration is essential to our understanding of the value of this source evidence. Both Kinnamos and Choniates are useful for some events in Europe. Kinnamos in particular is employed to demonstrate the apparent mutual hostility between Manuel Komnenos and Conrad III outside Constantinople in 1147, and consequently, Manuel's alleged duplicity. However, it is argued elsewhere that given Kinnamos' notions of the bellicose and unruly Latin 'barbarians', the lack of supporting evidence of the hostilities he reports and indeed, testimony to the contrary in our less accessible sources, Kinnamos' personal reasons

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<sup>1</sup> Kugler, B., *Studien zur Geschichte des Zweiten Kreuzzuges*, (Stuttgart, 1866) and the modifications and additions to this found in his *Analekten zur Geschichte des Zweiten Kreuzzuges*, (Tubingen, 1878) and *Neue Analekten*, (Tubingen, 1883); Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum ab Ioanne et Alexio Comnenis Gestarum*, ed., A Meineke, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, (Bonn, 1876); John Kinnamos, *Deeds of John and Manuel Comnenus*, trans., C. Brand, (New York, 1976); Niketas Choniates, *Historia Comnenica historia*, ed. J. L. van Dieten, 2 vols., *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 11, 1-2 (Berlin 1975); Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, ed., I. Bekker, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, (Bonn, 1835); Niketas Choniates, *Ο Γεν. ἡ Βυζαντινῆ Ἱστορίας τοῦ Νικηταῦ τοῦ Χωνιάτου*, trans., H. Magoulias, (Detroit, 1984). For ease of reference to the Greek sources, both the editions in English and the Bonn series are cited. All quotations are the present writer's translations of the Bonn editions unless stated otherwise.

<sup>2</sup> Greek names are transliterated from the twelfth-century equivalent minus intrusive diacritics, with the exception of Constantinople (rather than Konstantinopolis) and the familiar adjective Comnenian. If known, Greek eleventh-century names and their modern Turkish equivalents are given in the first instance, as such: Nikaia (mod. Iznik).

for extolling the emperor and the rhetorical conventions employed to do so, we must exercise extreme caution when employing his evidence.<sup>3</sup>

The aim of this paper is to reveal the shortcomings found in Niketas Choniates to similarly advocate the need for analytical prudence when utilising his testimony. This is facilitated by comparison with, and a thorough knowledge of our contemporary Latin texts, suppositions as to the geneses of Choniates' unsupported assertions, and deductions as to the type of sources Choniates employed to construct his history. This approach seriously questions the value of his testimony for our understanding of the Second Crusade. Through highlighting the weaknesses evident in Choniates' text born predominately from his obligatory dependence on distorted oral testimony, it is anticipated that the dangers inherent in selectively employing his evidence to support our traditional notions concerning Conrad's retreat to Nikaia, and our preconceptions of Byzantine foreign policy towards the Latin world, will be illuminated.

Niketas Choniates' history was largely dependent upon various forms of eyewitness accounts such as living testimony, verse encomia and first-hand narratives of specific events which may or may not have been officially issued for public consumption.<sup>4</sup> Choniates might have employed any one or a combination of such sources to construct his history of the crusade in Anatolia, although it is well known that his testimony regarding this episode is profoundly confused<sup>5</sup> in spite of, or as will be maintained, owing to his partial use of this first-hand material.

The textual problems and hence, scope for scholarly error begin with Choniates' discussion on the manner in which the crusaders<sup>6</sup> were provisioned in Anatolia. He suggests that as the 'Germans'<sup>7</sup> of Conrad's army<sup>8</sup> approached the Byzantine towns, the inhabitants only sold provisions and relinquished their wares via a rope suspended from the town walls. Others are said to have cheated the crusaders at the scales, whilst some mixed lime with barley to concoct a fatal mixture. Choniates writes, 'Whether this was commanded by the emperor, as was ru-

<sup>3</sup> Roche, J. T., 'Conrad III and the Second Crusade: Anatolia Reconsidered', unpublished PhD thesis.

<sup>4</sup> Magdalino, P., *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, (Cambridge, 1993), pp.4-26, 413-88.

<sup>5</sup> For example, R.D. Thomas notes that 'Niketas Choniates muddles the chronology and identity of the crusaders in a spectacularly confusing way.' Thomas, R. D., 'Anna Comnena's Account of the First Crusade: History and Politics in the Reigns of the Emperors Alexius I and Manuel I Komnenus' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, vol. 15, (1991), pp.269-312, esp. p.308. Also, see the introduction in Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p.xvii. However, the extent of the problems has not been fully expounded.

<sup>6</sup> This term is applied throughout this paper to denote those who advanced with king Conrad, and is in no way intended to imply that all those on crusade had taken the cross.

<sup>7</sup> Note that within the same context as his references to German crusaders, Choniates interchangeably refers to Italian troops. The Greek historian is unaware that a contingent under the leadership of Bishop Otto of Freising departed from Conrad's army at Nikaia to traverse an unknown route to the east, and thus, when 'German' and 'Italian' crusaders are referred to in his text, Choniates can only be referring to Conrad's troops. For Otto's separation from Conrad see *Annales Herbipolenses, Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, (M. G. H.), *Scriptores*, XVI, p.5; *Annales Palidenses*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XVI, pp.82-4; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione Antichristi Liber I*, ed., E. Sacker, M. G. H., *Libelli de Lite Imperatorum et Pontificum Saeculis XI et XII Conscripti, Tomus III*, p.376; *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XX, p.674; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici VII in Orientem*, ed. & trans., V. Berry, (New York, 1948), p.50 n.28, p.88 n.3.

<sup>8</sup> Although the masses of soldiers and non-combatants did not constitute an army in any modern sense of the word, for clarity and convenience those who advanced with king Conrad III are termed an 'army' throughout this paper. As the emperor-elect of the Holy Roman Empire, Conrad was the nominal leader of the crusade. In reality, the expedition consisted of the contingents of many German and non-German greater and lesser lords who would have considered themselves separate polities, and indeed, a council of princes was convened to agree on major strategical decisions. For clarity and expediency, however, Conrad is treated throughout this paper as sole supreme chief of the various contingents which advanced with the king, and the army is most conveniently referred to as 'German'.

moured, I have not ascertained'. Nonetheless, he suggests that Manuel minted debased coinage which were exchanged with the crusaders to presumably pay for their market needs.<sup>9</sup>

Historians have tended not to accept Choniates' recalled rumour that the crusaders were poisoned with lime,<sup>10</sup> although Michael the Syrian and Arnold of Lübeck levelled similar charges at the Byzantines, and thus they were widely circulated.<sup>11</sup> Ferdinand Chalandon reasonably suggested that the surviving embittered crusaders would have created such a story to reconcile the numbers which had succumbed to disease.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, historians have readily accepted most of Choniates' rumours, and from his statements that the army was cheated at the scales and provisioned via ropes from town walls in Anatolia, in addition to Manuel debasing his coinage, historians have concluded that the Byzantine towns failed to adequately supply Conrad's army, or else they only sold provisions at exorbitant prices.<sup>13</sup>

The only contemporary corroboratory evidence for Choniates' rumours regarding Conrad's provisioning in Anatolia comes from Odo of Deuil, who accompanied the French King Louis VII of France as he advanced through Europe and Anatolia in the wake of Conrad's army. Odo complains of a poor exchange rate in Byzantine territory,<sup>14</sup> and presumably the German army received similar rates of exchange. If monetary transactions were performed using weights and measures, it could be construed that the crusaders were exploited during their transactions, which would sustain Choniates' rumour that the crusaders were cheated at the scales. However, there is the possibility that Choniates is referring to scales that measured the weight of food which was exchanged for cash. Moreover, Choniates' accusation is conspicuously absent in Odo's *De Profectione*; given Odo's well known anti-Greek bias, we can be certain he would have informed his audience if he believed the Byzantines specifically cheated at the scales, rather than merely offering a poor rate of exchange.

Odo maintained that the French were provisioned via ropes suspended from walls in some of the imperial lands to the west of the capital.<sup>15</sup> There is no Latin evidence which suggests Conrad was provisioned in this manner in Anatolia. Indeed, during his advance to Ikonion (mod. Konya) he received no provisions what so ever beyond Nikaia.<sup>16</sup> Thus, we may only tentatively suggest that Conrad was supplied at Nikomedia (mod. Izmit) and Nikaia in a similar manner to Louis in Europe. Moreover, as will become apparent, Choniates' dependence on distorted oral information tends to confuse his testimony. Therefore, there is a possibility his source of rumour incorrectly recalled some 55 years after the events described, that it was Conrad's army in Anatolia, rather than Louis VII's army in Europe, which was provisioned in this manner.

<sup>9</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, p.89; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p.38-9.

<sup>10</sup> There are exceptions: Angold, for example, who does not question the Greek texts, believes the crusaders were poisoned. Angold, M., *The Byzantine Empire 1025-1204, a Political History*, 2nd ed., (Essex, 1997), p.199.

<sup>11</sup> Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, ed. & trans. J. Chabot, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, patriarche jacobite d'Antioche* (1166-1199), vol. III, (Paris, 1905; repr. Brussels, 1963), p.276; Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XXI, p.122.

<sup>12</sup> Chalandon, F., *Jean II Comnène (1118-1143) et Manuel I Comnène (1143-1143)*, vol. II, (Paris, 1912), p.286.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Phillips, J., *Defenders of the Holy Land Relations Between the Latin East and the West, 1119-1187*, (Oxford, 1996), p.83.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.40, 66.

<sup>15</sup> Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione Ludovici*, p.40.

<sup>16</sup> For Conrad's provisioning at Nikaia, see Conrad III, *Die Urkunden Konrads III., und seines Sohnes Heinrich*, ed., F. Hausmann, M. G. H., *Diplomata*, IX, p.354; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.90.

An erroneous recollection appears to be responsible for Choniates' rumour that the Germans received substandard coinage to pay for provisions in Anatolia. Whilst no other text mentions a debased currency, we know Odo of Deuil complained of a poor exchange rate which was presumably similar to that offered to the German army. It is feasible that contemporary fraudulent allegations of exchange fixing provided the basis for Choniates' testimony concerning substandard currency, which he recalled generations later. Alternatively, numismatics has shown that Manuel did indeed debase his coinage, and Choniates was evidently aware of this. However, it has been demonstrated that Manuel issued substandard currency much later in his reign. Therefore, Choniates is wrong in suggesting Conrad's forces received a debased coinage; whilst certainly plausible, Manuel did not issue a debased currency in 1147/8.<sup>17</sup>

Immediately after the above erroneous insinuation, Choniates writes that 'It was then left to the Turks to do similar things against the Germans, with the emperor stirring them up with letters and inciting them to war. And so, around [the River] Bathys, [in the plain of Dorylaion] led by a certain Pamplanes, they slew large numbers through battle and were victorious.'<sup>18</sup> John Kinnamos agrees in part here with Choniates.<sup>19</sup> He recounts that 'Nothing unpleasant happened to the Germans as far as Melangia and Dorylaion. Then a Turk by the name of Mamplanes, with a small army, attacked the vanguard to test the enemy's strength and fighting formation.'<sup>20</sup> Given this evidence it is conventionally held that after a ten-day march from Nikaia,<sup>21</sup> the army was defeated in battle at Dorylaion and compelled to turn around and retreat back to Nikaia.<sup>22</sup>

However, it has been demonstrated elsewhere that the barren 'desert' location Conrad ultimately reached, as depicted in a plethora of western sources, contrasts sharply with the fertile and habitable Dorylaion as described by contemporary Greek authors, including Kinnamos and Choniates. Rather, the depicted terrain Conrad advanced into is indicative of the arid landscape beyond the plain of Dorylaion. It is thus clear that a verdant Dorylaion was not the same forbidding location where the crusade began its retreat; Kugler clearly misconstrued the geographical information contained within the Greek histories.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the source evidence which suggests Conrad progressed beyond Dorylaion is corroborated by a calculated rate of march. The exercise of projecting Conrad's probable daily camp locations demonstrates he was likely to have progressed three days beyond Dorylaion during his ten-day march from Nikaia. This would have witnessed him advancing into exactly the type of landscape the sources prove he eventually reached.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, a number of texts intimate that the barren and desolate terrain Conrad ultimately found himself in was a major factor in the decision by council to retreat,<sup>25</sup> as opposed to the

<sup>17</sup> Hendy, M., *Studies in the Byzantine Monetary Economy, c.300-1450*, (Cambridge, 1985), pp.518-9.

<sup>18</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, p.89; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p.39.

<sup>19</sup> Note: William of Tyre calls the Turkish chieftain Paramunus. William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, ed., R. B. C. Huygens, 2 vols. (Turnhout, 1986), XVI.22, p.747.

<sup>20</sup> Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum*, p.81; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, p.68.

<sup>21</sup> Conrad III, *Die Urkunden*, pp.354-5; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.90.

<sup>22</sup> For example: Kugler, *Studien*, pp.152-3; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p.196.

<sup>23</sup> Roche, J. T., 'Conrad III and the Second Crusade: Retreat from Dorylaion?' *Crusades*, vol.5, (2006), pp.85-97.

<sup>24</sup> Roche, 'Anatolia Reconsidered'.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.92; William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.21, p.745; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione*, pp.375-6; *Annales Herbipolenses*, p.6.

army receiving an overwhelming blow in a single military encounter as Kugler maintained.<sup>26</sup> If Kinnamos and Choniates employed a first-hand account of Conrad's crusade in Anatolia, either their source or the historians themselves neglected to mention that the prospect of continuing to advance into such a landscape without guides did not prove attractive.<sup>27</sup> Whilst Kugler ignored the evidence, it is clear in a number of texts that the march occasioned fatigue, starvation and dehydration which were prevalent throughout the army before the retreat was called.<sup>28</sup> In fact, it is unclear whether there strictly was an initial single major Turkish assault which ultimately caused the crusaders to turn back. The source testimony is far from unanimous on the matter, and almost certainly reflects the various experiences, perceptions and recollections of the different crusade participants. Most of the sources do not mention an initial single military encounter, and give the impression that those who did not perish through hunger, thirst and exhaustion, were slaughtered by recurrent Turkish attacks on the already weakened marching column.<sup>29</sup> Choniates does not recall any of this, but many of our Latin sources give the impression that it was such Turkish forays on the crusader lines, combined with the army's preceding debilitation, which finally forced Conrad to retreat.<sup>30</sup>

The potential scope for misinterpretation through reliance on Choniates does not stop here. Immediately after his statement that Conrad was defeated beside the River Bathys, he recounts that an 'Italian' and 'German' contingent inflicted a heavy defeat on Turkish troops at a ford on the Maiandros River (mod. Büyük Menderes), as the historian himself observed by the remains of Turkish bones.<sup>31</sup> In fact, as mentioned above, Turkish warriors inflicted serious casualties among the German crusaders; no elements of Conrad's army gained such a victory. It is tempting to suggest that Choniates confuses the result of this set piece action, that is, the skeletal remains he witnessed were those of defeated crusaders rather than Turks. However, our western sources do not record any such engagement between the Turks and Conrad's forces. Conversely, Choniates' description of the engagement is very similar to Odo of Deuil's retelling of Louis VII's forceful crossing of the Maiandros en route to Laodikeia (near mod. Denizli), and of course, Choniates even mentions the Maiandros River;<sup>32</sup> clearly, he has confused reports of

<sup>26</sup> Kugler, *Studien*, pp.153-4.

<sup>27</sup> The Byzantine guides fled the crusader camp the night preceding the council. Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, pp.90-3; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, p.276. William of Tyre confirms that Conrad called the council because he was faced with advancing into an inhospitable terrain without guides. William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.21, p.745.

<sup>28</sup> For example, see William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.21, pp.744-6; *Annales Heribolenses*, pp.5-6; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XX, p.58; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione*, p.375; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.92; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XVI, p.188; Conrad III, *Die Urkunden*, pp.354-5; John of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury*, ed. & trans., M. Chibnall, (Oxford, 1986), p.54; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, p.275.

<sup>29</sup> Conrad III, *Die Urkunden*, pp.354-5; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p.188; John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, p.54; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione*, pp.375-6; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, p.58; *Annales Palidenses*, p.83; *Romoldi Annales*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XIX, p.424; *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis*, p.674; *Gotfredi Viterbiensis Pantheon*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XXII, pp.263-4; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, p.276; Tritton, 'The First and Second Crusades', pp.69-102, 273-306; William of Newburgh, *The History of English Affairs Book 1*, ed. & trans., P.G. Walsh & M.J. Kennedy, (Warminster, 1988), pp.93-5.

<sup>30</sup> The army's debility was caused primarily through a lack of provisions. William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.21-2, pp.744-7; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, pp.90-6; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, p.58; *Annales Rodenses*, M. G. H., XVI, p.719; *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis*, p.674; Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, pp.122-3; *Notae Pisanae*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, XIX, p.266; Tritton, 'The First and Second Crusades', pp.69-102, 273-306. On baggage supplies also see Conrad III, *Die Urkunden*, pp.354-5.

<sup>31</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, pp.89-96; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp.39-42.

<sup>32</sup> Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, pp.108-110.

king Louis' advance through Anatolia with a contingent from Conrad's army.<sup>33</sup>

Choniates' source for the clash at the Maiandros may have been any one of the forms of first-hand accounts he usually employed mentioned at the top of this paper. It is probable that Byzantine guides<sup>34</sup> accompanied King Louis VII of France and these may have been the source for such an account. However, Choniates was evidently informed that after the clash at the Maiandros, the 'Germans' (read French), who were not with Conrad continued in Anatolia without opposition.<sup>35</sup> Choniates is unaware of a number of further significant events in Anatolia following the clash at the Maiandros. The troops who forced the crossing of the river were significantly opposed a number of times before the remnants left Anatolia.<sup>36</sup>

Such errors and omissions suggest that rather than Choniates employing a first-hand narrative of Louis' crusade, echoes of the clash at the Maiandros eventually filtered back through to Constantinople, and the process of permeation would of course explain the confusion in his text. Indeed, Choniates' errors and omissions are a reflection of the type and purpose of the sources he utilised. The first-hand narratives the Greek historians employed usually concerned events from the front-line involving the emperor and the imperial army. Hence, there is relatively a great amount of detail in Choniates' and Kinnamos' narratives of the clashes between the imperial forces and crusaders in Europe.<sup>37</sup> In contrast, there are substantial lacunae in their testimonies once the crusaders were safely across the Bosphoros and did not encounter imperial troops.<sup>38</sup> A preoccupation of the verse encomia was to eulogise Manuel Komnenos, and by extension, his imperial subjects. The apparent technique employed, as exemplified in the poems of 'Manganeios Prodromos', was to inflate the emperor's virtues by contrasting them with stereotypical abhorrent traits of the Latin barbarians ultimately to present Manuel as saving Constantinople from the crusader threat.<sup>39</sup> Necessarily, the encomiast discovered his material in instances where the Byzantines clashed with the crusaders in Europe and outside the Byzantine capital. Living testimony is obviously restricted to the knowledge of the individual, and in this

<sup>33</sup> As previously noted (note 7), a contingent under the leadership of Bishop Otto of Friesing traversed an unknown alternative route to the east. Gerhoh of Reichersberg, Odo of Deuil and the Würzburg Annalist all confirm that King Louis VII of France traversed the same path as Otto near Laodikeia (near mod. Denizli). Therefore, Otto may have preceded Louis along the Maiandros Valley, and this could be the force referred to by Choniates. However, Choniates shows no awareness of Otto's contingent, and thus we cannot make this conclusion. Moreover, his depiction of the clash at the Maiandros is too close to Odo of Deuil's description to be mere coincidence. Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione*, p.376; Odo of Deuil, *De Projectione*, pp.112-4; *Annales Herbipolenses*, p.5. For the route to Laodikeia via the Maiandros Valley see Belke, K. & Mersich, N., *Phrygien und Pisidien, Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, Band 7, (Vienna, 1990), pp.140, 149-50.

<sup>34</sup> Odo of Deuil, *De Projectione*, p.82; William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.25-26 pp.750-3.

<sup>35</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, pp.89-86; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p.42.

<sup>36</sup> For example, see *Epistola Ludovici ad Sugerium*, *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, XV, pp.495-6; Odo of Deuil, *De Projectione*, pp.112-43; William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.25-26 pp.750-4; Ibn al-Qalanisi, *The Damascus Chronicle of the Crusades*, H. Gibb, trans., (London, 1932), pp.280-82.

<sup>37</sup> Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum* pp.67-83; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, pp.58-68; Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, pp.81-88; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp.36-8.

<sup>38</sup> Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum*, pp.84-6; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, pp.70-1; Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, pp.88-96; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, pp.38-42.

<sup>39</sup> Roche, 'Anatolia Reconsidered'. On contemporary Byzantine verse encomia, see Magdalino, *Empire*, pp.20-1, Ch.6. On 'Manganeios Prodromos', see Magdalino, *Empire*, pp.440-1; Jeffreys, E. & M., 'The "Wild Beast from the West": Immediate Literary Reactions in Byzantium to the Second Crusade', in E. Laiou & R. Mottahedeh, eds., *The Crusades from the Perspective of Byzantium and the Muslim World*, (Washington D.C., 2001), pp.101-16. Elizabeth and Michael Jeffreys are editing the corpus of 'Manganeios Prodromos'. The writer is greatly indebted to both for providing advance editions of his relative poems.



case, predominantly that of individuals in Constantinople. Thus, whilst an individual's memory and recollections may have potentially been distorted by such things as a body's physical deterioration, plus the influence of collective and retrospective versions of the past, such testimony would also have been restricted in its geographical scope. In other words, once the crusaders had crossed the Bosphoros, the perceived threat to Constantinople and contact between Manuel and Conrad and their respective forces receded along with the types and value of the sources the Greek historians could utilise. As Anatolia was on the periphery of their interests, Kinnamos and Choniates were very likely to have been largely dependent on potentially distorted oral testimony alone for their portrayal of events in Asia Minor.

Nonetheless, Choniates' suggestion that Manuel Komnenos acted treacherously against the German crusaders in Anatolia, and in particular, his allegation that the emperor incited the Turks to attack the army has largely been accepted by modern historians hypothesising that the adversities the crusaders encountered were due to the policies pursued by the Byzantine emperor, and specifically, his support of Seljuk Turk attacks on the crusaders to protect Byzantine interests.<sup>40</sup>

Regardless of their occasional protestations to the contrary, it is clear that the Byzantine historians of this period did not perceive of their genre as means of objectively recording their accumulated evidence. Rather, they belong to a tradition of writing that treated the historical genre as a vehicle for imparting their individual and partial perception of the past. As Paul Magdalino has pointed out, Choniates' narrative is conditioned by the historian's conception of Divine Providence.<sup>41</sup> When he wrote at the very beginning of the thirteenth century, Choniates perceived the growing strength of the western barbarian world and the comparable weakness of the Byzantine Empire as an exchange of God's favour owing to the 'sinful' deeds of Byzantines, and in particular, those of the Byzantine Emperor. Although the criticism of Byzantine moral and spiritual aberrance in his history begins with the reign of Manuel Komnenos, he becomes more critical of Byzantine behaviour the nearer in time the text and the ruling emperors are relative to the defining event of the middle Byzantine period, namely, the Latin conquest of Constantinople in 1204.

Choniates' conception is very apparent in the differences between the two drafts of his history. At the time of the composition of his *brevior*, or shorter first draft, which was completed before the Latin conquest, Choniates uncovered evidence of supposed sinful Byzantine deeds to help expound in the history the author's notion of why God withdrew His divine favour from His chosen people. The *auctior*, or enlarged second draft, the text that is most accessible to modern historians, was completed in the years following the seizure of Constantinople. In an attempt to explicate the reasons why the Queen of Cities fell to a barbarian people; Choniates inserts statements in the latter draft among the original discourse which illuminate, for example, perceived imperial impiety or tyranny. Choniates' testimony regarding the Second Crusade is a case in point. Concerning the rumours that Manuel sabotaged the crusade, Choniates added in the *auctior* draft that the emperor 'commanded others to inflict such harm'.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For example, see Harris, J., *Byzantium and the Crusades*, (London, 2003), pp.93-101; Angold, *Byzantine Empire*, p.199; Lilie, R., *Byzantium and the Crusader States 1096-1204*, (Oxford, 1993), pp.158-62.

<sup>41</sup> Magdalino, *Empire*, pp.14-5, 18-20.

<sup>42</sup> The present writer is indebted to Alicia Simpson for this information. On the two different drafts of Choniates' history, see van Dieten's introduction in Niketas Choniates, *Nicetae Choniatae historia*.

Clearly, Choniates' allegations of Manuel's duplicity should not be so willingly accepted when the writer perceived that the empire's decline and ultimate fall was divine retribution for such alleged irreverent acts of Byzantine treachery towards a barbarian people who had apparently gained God's favour.<sup>43</sup> Choniates was under no illusion that such 'sinful' deeds 'incensed the All-Seeing Eye'<sup>44</sup> and he was prepared to alter his text to suit his interpretation. He appears to search for Byzantine causes behind God's apparent exchange of favour, and traces deleterious evidence which is necessarily based on distorted oral testimony. As we have seen so far, his disclosed evidence is far from unequivocal.

It could be contended that Choniates' allegations of Manuel's treachery are merely echoes of similar accusations uttered by the crusaders during and after the crusade.<sup>45</sup> Given space however, one can demonstrate that the crusader privations were owing to their lack of topographical and logistical acumen, and that accusations of Byzantine perfidy are predominantly dependent on the crusaders' ignorance of the realities of the twelfth-century geopolitical situation.<sup>46</sup>

Of course, it is well known that enmity did exist between the Latins and Greeks and that the Byzantine emperors pursued a foreign policy to inhibit Latin power in the crusader states. The evidence provided in a number of our contemporary Latin texts suggests that Manuel's relations with Conrad were amiable; there is certainly no significant evidence of hostilities. Whilst the Latin sources are not unanimous, we do hear, for example, of Conrad being magnificently received by the emperor who lavished gifts and advice upon him.<sup>47</sup> Such imperial munificence was integral to Byzantine court ceremonial designed partly to enable the emperor to ingratiate with visiting dignitaries, whilst leaving all parties in no doubt as to their relationship in which, ultimately, the emperor was peerless.<sup>48</sup> The Greek sources do not even allow Conrad III Staufen this. Moreover, and perhaps more pertinently, at the time of the Second Crusade, the Komnenoi and the Staufen had already gained each other's favour; it is indicative of the limitations inherent in Choniates' text that he is ignorant of this. Manuel's father, John II Komnenos, had made an alliance with the German King, Lothar II, against Roger II of Sicily. John renewed it with Lothar's successor, Conrad III, with a proposed marriage alliance, which was sealed as late as 1146 with the new emperor Manuel's marriage to Conrad's adopted daughter.<sup>49</sup> The political and dynastic connections were strengthened further after the crusade by

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Magdalino, P., 'The Phenomenon of Manuel I Komnenos', *Byzantinische Forschungen*, vol. 13, (1988), pp. 171-99.

<sup>44</sup> Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, pp. 88-9; Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, p. 39.

<sup>45</sup> For example, see William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.21 pp. 745-6; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione*, p. 375; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p. 188; *Romoaldi Annales*, p. 424; *Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, p. 58; *Gotfredi Viterbiensis Pantheon*, pp. 263-4; John of Salisbury, *Historia Pontificalis*, p. 54; William of Newburgh, *History of English*, pp. 93-5; Michael the Syrian, *Chronicle*, pp. 275-6; Taylor, W., 'A New Syriac Fragment Dealing with Incidents in the Second Crusade', *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, vol. 11, (1929-30), pp. 120-30; Tritton, 'The First and Second Crusades', pp. 69-102, 273-306.

<sup>46</sup> Roche, 'Anatolia Reconsidered'.

<sup>47</sup> *Annales Herbipolenses*, pp. 4-5; *Annales Palidenses*, p. 82; *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis*, p. 674; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p. 188; William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.19 p. 741; *Romoaldi Annales*, p. 424. However, Odo of Deuil and Arnold of Lübeck imply that Conrad and Manuel's negotiations were tense. Arnold states they were eventually reconciled outside Constantinople, although Odo suggests the rulers never met. Arnold of Lübeck, *Chronica Slavorum*, pp. 122-3; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p. 48.

<sup>48</sup> On Byzantine ceremonial, see Magdalino, *Empire*, pp. 237-48.

<sup>49</sup> Magdalino, *Empire*, pp. 38-40, 42-3; Lilie, *Byzantium*, p. 148, 151-2. Otto of Freising provides details of the marriage negotiations. Bertha, who was known as Eirene to the Greeks, was Conrad's sister-in-law at the time of the marriage negotiations with John II's fourth son, Manuel. However, upon Manuel's unexpected ascendance to the imperial throne, Bertha was

the marriage of Conrad's relative, Henry of Badenburg, to Manuel's niece Theodora in 1148, whilst Conrad convalesced in Constantinople;<sup>50</sup> the apparent confirmation of the earlier alliance by the so-called 'Treaty of Thessalonica';<sup>51</sup> and the suggestion of bringing the dynasties even closer by a marriage between Conrad's son and heir Henry with one of Manuel's female relatives, and upon Henry's death in 1151, by Conrad offering himself as a suitor.<sup>52</sup>

Self-evidently, but unknown to Choniates, it was in the best interests of Byzantine foreign policy not to be hostile to Conrad. There is manifest danger in employing Choniates' evidence of Manuel's alleged perfidy towards the German king, which is better explained by the medieval historian's interpretation of divine providence and the crusaders' logistical, topographical and geopolitical ignorance. Indeed, even given concrete reasons for mutual hostility, such as imperial ideological and theological differences, the perceived threat of Conrad's crusade to Constantinople, his army's disturbances and subsequent western allegations of Greek perfidy – an accusation which can be explicated without succumbing to medieval myopia – the two rulers obviously considered themselves allies, before, during and after the crusade, even if perhaps this was rooted in *realpolitik*, rather than purely the Staufen's familial bonds to the Komnenoi.

This is the first occasion that all the shortcomings in Choniates' text concerning the crusade in Anatolia have been highlighted, and it is clear that no aspect of his relative testimony is irrefutable. His necessary dependence on oral evidence gathered some 55 years after the events recalled, and which he himself describes as rumour, has been shown to be distorted with regards to Manuel issuing a debased currency, the known clash at the River Maiandros, and quite probably, the manner by which Conrad was provisioned in Anatolia. There is plenty of evidence which proves the crusaders did not obtain satisfactory provisions, but it is unsound to conclude that the towns failed to provision Conrad adequately, or that they only offered provisions at exorbitant prices following a simple reading of Choniates. Such palpable weaknesses in the text must be taken into an analytical consideration of the sum value of the source within the appropriate context before selectively employing elements of his brief testimony to support our traditional notions and preconceptions. For the Second Crusade, these include the presupposition of where and why Conrad retreated to Nikaia, which a thorough examination of our more abstruse western sources has seriously challenged elsewhere. Similarly, the preconceived notion of a Byzantine policy employed to impede western support of the Latin East – in this case, Conrad's crusade – and accordingly, the power of the crusader states, whilst not refuted here, should not, given the above problems with the source and the

seemingly of a much less attractive status for elevation to the rank of Augusta or senior empress. Accordingly, it appears that Conrad may have adopted her as his daughter. Otto of Freising, continued by Rahewin, *Gesta Friderici seu rectius Cronica*, ed. F. Scmale, tr. A. Schmidt, (Darmstadt, 1965), pp.168-80.

<sup>50</sup> Conrad III, *Die Urkunden*, pp.354-5; Odo of Deuil, *De Profectione*, p.51; Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum*, pp.85-6; John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, pp.70-1; William of Tyre, *Willelmi Tyrensis archiepiscopi chronicon*, XVI.23 pp.748-9; Gerhoh of Reichersberg, *De investigatione Antichrist*, p.376; *Annales Heribolenses*, p.7; *Annales Palidenses*, p.83; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, p.188; *Romualdi Annales*, p.425; *Notae Pisanae*, p.266; *Casus Monasterii Petrishusensis*, p.674. Anonymous, *Historia Francorum*, R. H. G. F., XII, pp.116-7. For particular reference to the marriage see *Annales Palidenses*, p.83; *Annales Mellicenses*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, IX, p.504; *Continuatio Claustroneoburgensis Tertia*, M. G. H., *Scriptores*, pp.632-3. Also see Magdalino, *Empire*, p.52.

<sup>51</sup> John Kinnamos, *Deeds*, p.72; Ioannes Cinnamus, *Rerum*, p.87; Otto of Freising, *Gesta Friderici*, p.265; *Annales Palidenses*, p.83; John of Salisbury, *The Historia Pontificalis*, p.59; *Romualdi Annales*, p.424. On the 'Treaty of Thessalonica', see Vollrath, H., 'Konrad III und Byzanz', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte*, vol.59, (1979), pp.321-65.

<sup>52</sup> Vollrath, 'Konrad III und Byzanz', pp.358-63.

Comnenian/Staufen alliance, be unquestionably sought in Niketas Choniates. Indeed, we should begin to contest his evidence and not confer significant authority on his history by selecting one or two sentences from such a relatively brief and as we have seen, essentially unreliable crusade source to conform to our hypotheses or historical conventions.



