

Deviations of the Fourth Crusade

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Abstract:

The Deviations of the Fourth Crusade was a series of events that took place in the 13th century and witnessed a significant departure from its original objectives. It began in 1202, led by Catholic crusaders, with the main aim of reaching Jerusalem and reclaiming it from the Muslims. However, the campaign deviated greatly from its planned course. Instead, the Crusaders launched an attack on the city of Zara in Spain and then redirected their efforts towards Constantinople, turning against the Byzantines and contributing to the fall of the city in 1204. This provoked strong criticism from the Catholic Church and caused considerable outrage.

Keywords: Fourth Crusade, Crusaders, Byzantines, Constantinople, City of Zara.

Introduction:

The Crusades are considered to be significant movements that shaped the history of Western Europe. Between the years 1095 and 1400, the Crusades had a profound influence on Western European thought¹.

It is difficult to find a contemporary writer who did not refer to one of the Crusades or to the fate of the empires that emerged in Arab lands during this period. The appeal of the Crusades in Western Europe remained strong until the 18th century. For fifteen generations of Western Europeans, the Crusades were an important part of their lives. Hundreds of thousands of them participated personally in one or more crusades, while many others contributed financially to the cause. On the other hand, the events of the Crusades also occupied the minds of many who did not participate either personally or financially².

The Fourth Crusade is a direct result of the death of Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi in the month of Safar, 589 AH. Since his death, Pope Innocent III had been planning a crusade to wipe out the effects of Salah ad-Din's wars in the East and to retake

¹- Qasim Abdo Qasim, "The Nature of the Crusades", Year of Knowledge, 1978, Kuwait, p. 8.

²- Ibn Taghri Birdi, "The Shining Stars in the Kings of Egypt and Cairo", published by Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya, pp. 10-11, vol. 5.

Jerusalem from the Muslims.

In the middle of the year 594 AD, he called for the Fourth Crusade, and a number of princes responded. It was led by several French barons who, after discussions among the leaders of the campaign, decided to attack Egypt first and then Jerusalem. Preparations began in cooperation with Venice to provide them with ships, and the crusaders gathered in Venice in the summer of 598 AH. However, the Venetians demanded that the Crusaders attack the city of Zara and retake it from the King of Hungary as a condition of their cooperation. The Crusaders agreed to this without the Pope's consent, angering him greatly. He issued a decree of excommunication against the entire campaign, but later limited it to the Venetians.

As the Crusaders prepared to leave for Egypt, a revolution broke out in Constantinople, overthrowing the Emperor Isaac II. His son Alexios fled to the West, seeking help from the Pope and the Crusaders. In return, he proposed that the Eastern Church should submit to the Papacy and support the Crusaders in their campaign against Egypt. This proposal appealed to the Pope and the Venetians and served their interests in the Byzantine state. As a result, the Crusaders redirected their forces to Constantinople and captured it in 600 AH. They proceeded to destroy the city, committing acts of aggression against its inhabitants, and even some Byzantines wished that the city had fallen into the hands of the Muslims. The Crusaders burned some churches and the old mosque, built during the Umayyad period, and looted the city.

The Catholic Church took control of the Orthodox Church and, for the first time, a Catholic leader was appointed as its head.

One of the consequences of this campaign was that it weakened the position of the Crusaders in the Islamic East and undermined their status. As a result, one historian of the Crusades concluded that the Fourth Crusade was a harbinger of failure for the entire Crusading movement.

The deviation of the campaign's course was merely the practical and realistic application of the deviation of its goals from the beginning and the clear collapse of the concept of holy war. All that remained was to carry out the matter as it was and to call a spade a spade.

Therefore, the following problematic question will be addressed:

What were the reasons for the deviation of the Fourth Crusade and what were the consequences of this deviation?

Given the importance of the subject, it sheds light on the deviation of one of the most important crusades, the Fourth Crusade.

This study aims to:

- * Identify the reasons for the deviation of the Fourth Crusade.
- * Understand the course of the Fourth Crusade before and after the deviation.
- * To explore the consequences of the deviation of the Fourth Crusade.

In order to gain a full understanding of the various aspects of the subject, a descriptive historical method was used. This method involved documenting and arranging events in chronological order, along with providing descriptions and examining each development that occurred during the Fourth Crusade.

1. Reasons for the Deviation of the Fourth Crusade:

The desire to regain control of Jerusalem: The idea of the Fourth Crusade was born in the castle of "Thibault of Champagne" in 1199 AD (596 AH)³. One of the main reasons that motivated Western Europeans to prepare for a Fourth Crusade was the attempt to reclaim the Holy Land from the Muslims after Saladin of the Ayyubid dynasty had conquered it in 1187 AD (582 AH)⁴.

Financial difficulties: The leaders of the Crusade faced difficulties in financing the expedition, particularly in paying for the ships. As a result, they diverted their course towards the city of Zara (now Zadar) to meet the demands of the Venetians and to serve their own interests, despite the fact that Zara was a Christian city⁵. They managed to enter and conquer Zara and decided to stay there. At the end of the winter, however, the leaders decided to change the direction of the campaign again, this time towards Constantinople.

Greed and personal ambition: The leaders of the Crusade were driven by greed and personal ambition, which led them to exploit the campaign for their own gain. They took advantage of the strained relations between the Byzantine and Latin Western Empires, which had been marked by animosity between the two sides⁶.

The motivations of King Philip of Swabia:

King Philip of Swabia⁷ was the King of Germany from 1197 to 1208 AD (94-604 AH). He married the daughter of Emperor Isaac Angelus, called Irene. Philip of Swabia is regarded as the main reason why the campaign was diverted from its original course towards Constantinople⁸. He seized the throne of the Byzantine

³- Geoffroi de Villehardouin, "De la Conquête de Constantinople", published by Boulevard Saint-Germain, Paris, 1870, p. 02.

⁴- Abu Shama, "Al-Rudatayn fi Akhbar al-Dawlatayn al-Nuriyya wa al-Salahiyya", vol. 4, 4th edition, Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2002, p. 212.

⁵- Mikhail Zaborov, "Al-Salibiyyun fi al-Sharq", trans. Elias Shahin, Moscow, 1983 (n.d.), p. 166.

⁶- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 66.

⁷- He was the Duke of Swabia, contended for the German throne for a long time after the death of Emperor Henry VI, and is considered the first German king to be assassinated. See: Ashraf Saleh, "Al-Haqbah al-Humenshatufina fi al-Imbratoria al-Rumaniyya al-Muqaddasa", Egypt, p. 87.

⁸- Ghunaim, "Al-Hamla al-Salibiyya al-Rabi'a", (n.d.), Dar al-Maaref, Cairo, 1982, p. 65.

Empire from Emperor Angelus, who had been imprisoned⁹ by his brother Alexios III. However, Isaac's son, Prince Alexios, managed to escape from prison in 1201 AD (599 AH) and sought the help of his uncle, Philip of Swabia, to regain his unjustly taken throne. According to historical accounts, "The king of the Franks, Philip, married a French queen who gave birth to a male child. Then his brother usurped the throne, imprisoned him and ruled the country. His son escaped and sought refuge with his uncle¹⁰, Philip of Swabia, asking for help in regaining his father's throne. Philip welcomed Prince Alexios¹¹ Angelus as he travelled through northern Italy. He met Pope Innocent III, but the Pope showed little interest. It is noteworthy that Philip of Swabia saw an opportunity to support Alexios and restore him to the throne, as this would serve his own interests, including the containment of the Byzantine Empire under Western European influence¹² and challenging the leadership of the papacy, particularly Pope Innocent III, who was positioning himself as the leader of Western Europe.

The circumstances and conditions encouraged King Philip of Swabia to pursue his aims and use the campaign to his advantage. The leader of the campaign, Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, was his nephew, which made it easier for Philip to influence him. Philip met Prince Alexios Angelus in 1202 AD and discussed the privileges the Byzantine prince would grant the crusaders if they helped him regain his father's throne¹³.

Another figure responsible for changing the direction of the campaign towards Constantinople was Pope Innocent III. In his speech to the Emperor Alexios III on 16 November 1202 AD (598 AH), the Pope stated: "We showed no interest in Alexios, the son of the former Emperor Isaac Angelus, when he went to Philip, Duke of Swabia, seeking his help in taking the Empire from you. When we completely refused him, he withdrew from us and quickly approached Philip. When they consulted each other, Philip immediately sent his messengers to the Christian leaders, urging them to invade the kingdom of Constantinople with Alexios and to cross the Bosphorus"¹⁴.

In the year 598 AH (1202 CE), messengers arrived from Philip of Swabia and delivered his message to the leaders of the campaign, setting out the conditions and privileges that would be granted to them. The text of the message, as reported by the

⁹- Mahmoud Said Omran, "Tarikh al-Hurub al-Salibiyya", (n.d.), Dar al-Maaref al-Jami'iyya, Suez, 2000, p. 292.

¹⁰- Ibn al-Athir, "Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh", ed. Yusuf al-Daqqaq, vol. 10, 4th edition, Beirut, 2003, p. 288.

¹¹- Ibn Mahmoud Said Omran, the previous reference, p. 265.

¹²- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 71.

¹³- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 55.

¹⁴- Fatimah Rif and Maryam Waznawi, "Al-Hamla al-Salibiyya al-Rabi'a wa Inhirafuha Nahwa al-Qustantiniyya", thesis submitted for the Master's degree in Medieval History, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Aklou Mohand Oulhadj University, Bouira, 2015/2016, p. 42.

historian of the campaign, is as follows "Prince Alexios will offer you the best terms ever offered to a people, and he will give you the strongest support in conquering the lands beyond the sea. First... he will place his entire empire under the authority of Rome, from which it has long been excluded. Secondly, knowing that you have spent all your money and have nothing left, he will give you 20,000 silver marks and food for every man in your army, both leaders and soldiers¹⁵.

Furthermore, he himself will go with you to Babylon (Egypt), and ten thousand men will accompany you. In addition, he will maintain, at his own expense, five hundred knights throughout his life to guard the lands beyond the sea"¹⁶.

The envoys explained that they had been given all the powers that would allow them to make agreements with the crusaders. They stressed the importance of the privileges that the Byzantine prince would offer them. They declared that if they refused these privileges, they would not be worthy of glory and victory¹⁷. These privileges were seen as an enticement to the Crusaders to gain their consent to change the direction of the campaign, which would restore the rightful Emperor Isaac Angelus to the throne of the Byzantine Empire¹⁸.

The barons and Duke Dandolo discussed the matter. But the Cistercian group, who had left their homes and lands to fight the Muslims in the Levant and not the Christians, made it clear that they would not agree to go to Constantinople. One of the crusaders replied that they would achieve nothing in the Levant and that only through Egypt or the Byzantine Empire could they reach the Holy Land¹⁹. He warned them that if they did not agree to these conditions, they would regret it later.

The leader of the campaign, Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, agreed to the terms offered. He had been informed of these conditions during his meeting with King Philip and Prince Alexios in early 1202 CE²⁰. News had reached Rome of the Crusade's decision to change direction towards Constantinople. Philip of Swabia, Alexios Angelus and the Venetians had managed to influence the Crusaders and persuade them to change the direction of the campaign. Philip of Swabia had no power to do anything or to object to this decision. The fate and direction of the campaign were no longer in his hands²¹.

¹⁵- Fatihah Rif and Maryam Waznawi, the previous reference, p. 43.

¹⁶- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁷- Muhail Zakar, "Comprehensive Encyclopedia of the Crusades," Dar al-Fikr for Printing, Publishing, and Distribution, Vol. 10, Damascus, 1993, p. 215.

¹⁸- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 73.

¹⁹- Mutiqan Ransiman, "History of the Crusades," trans. Nour al-Din Khalil, Vol. 3, (n.d.), Shorouk Library, Cairo, 2000, p. 265.

²⁰- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 73.

²¹- Same source.

Pope Innocent III gave the Crusaders explanations and warnings. He sent them threatening messages saying that if they attacked Byzantium they would face the penalty of excommunication²². The Pope also informed them that they had no right to interfere in the affairs of the Byzantine Empire or its internal affairs, and he ordered them to swear an oath to that effect. If they did not comply, the indulgence granted to them for the attack on Zara would necessarily be revoked²³. However, the leader of the campaign, Boniface of Montferrat, used his influence as leader of the campaign to conceal the matter from the majority of the crusaders. Only a few leaders, including Duke Dandolo, were aware of the promise not to attack the Byzantines.

Despite Pope Innocent III's actions, he hoped that the Crusaders would conquer Byzantine lands without shedding blood, in order to achieve the unity of the Christian world and unite the Eastern Church under the leadership of the papacy in Rome²⁴.

The motives of the Venetians:

The Venetians agreed to transport the Crusaders to Egypt in exchange for substantial financial payments. They wanted to prevent the campaign from heading towards Christian lands. They initially directed the campaign towards the city of Zara, as mentioned above. Then Duke Dandolo²⁵ incited the crusaders to divert their attention from Constantinople. This was due to the commercial relations between the Venetians, Egypt and the Levant, as they transported pilgrims to the Islamic East and provided them with necessary supplies such as weapons and wood²⁶.

The Venetians paid taxes to engage in trade, as they carried out their activities in exchange for financial payments for their traded goods. In return, they were given freedom of trade in the regions of Egypt and Bilad al-Sham.

In Alexandria, the Venetians had a trading inn where they moved freely, protected by their troops. From there they transported spices, metals and other goods available at the time. Most of the supplies passed through Venice, where they were distributed to central Europe through river ports on the Rhine and ports rich in troops, goods and exchanges, benefiting the Italian provinces, especially Venice, Pisa and Genoa. Due to the active trade relations between the Italian provinces and the Islamic East, the latter was considered one of the strongest trading regions, with Venice being the most prominent province in this regard.

²²- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 74.

²³- Mikhail Ziarov, the previous reference, p. 26.

²⁴- Mahmoud Said Omran, previous reference, p. 293.

²⁵- He was the forty-first Doge of Venice and reigned from 1195 until his death in 1207 at the age of 98. See: Jamal al-Din Faleh al-Kilani, "Fi al-Tarikh al-Urubi al-Wasit", reviewed by Yaqzan Saadoun al-Amir, Mustafa Library, Cairo, 2011, p. 196. See also: Dan Brown, "Inferno," reviewed and edited by the Center for Arabisation and Translation, 1st edition, Dar al-Arabia for Science Publishers, 2013, p. 368.

²⁶- Henry Piren, "History of Europe in the Middle Ages", trans. Ati al-Qousi, Dar al-Hay'a al-Masriyya, Cairo, 1996, p. 32.

A treaty was signed with the Just King in 599 AH / 1202 CE, in which the Republic of Venice promised to facilitate the entry of its ships into the Egyptian ports of Alexandria and Damietta.

The Venetian merchants took advantage of this campaign to maintain their relations with the states of the Islamic East and Egypt²⁷. They worked to change the course of the campaign towards Constantinople, which had been linked to trade since the 5th century AH / 11th century CE and was further strengthened during the reign of Emperor Manuel Komnenos (539-577 AH / 1144-1180 CE)²⁸.

Venice benefited from its fleet in its war against the Normans, and in return Venice received trade privileges in Byzantine lands. Over time, however, the Venetians grew in power and commercial influence, which alarmed the Byzantines. Emperor Manuel was forced to form an alliance with their commercial rivals from the island of Pisa and also with the island of Genoa in 555 AH / 1169 CE. Their properties and ships were confiscated²⁹ and hostilities increased, especially when the Venetian quarter was burned in 578 AH / 1182 CE at the instigation of Emperor Andronikos, who allowed the murder of unwanted foreigners without distinction³⁰. Acts of violence followed, resulting in the massacre of Latin women and children living in Byzantium, the burning of their homes³¹, the looting of their property and the burning of churches where the Latin inhabitants had sought refuge. The Italian merchants' quarters in Constantinople were destroyed. However, things returned to their previous state during the reign of the new emperor, Isaac II Angelos (591-581 AH / 1185-1195 CE), who revived the beginnings of relations between Byzantium and Venice in order to benefit from the Venetian fleet in confronting the Norman threat. Relations were consolidated and the Italian republics, especially Venice, regained what they had lost in terms of money. They received substantial financial compensation from Emperor Alexios III. In 591 AH / 1195 CE, Isaac II Angelos was deposed by his brother Alexios III (591-599 AH / 1195-1203 CE). The latter imposed restrictions on Venetian trade and drew closer to the southerners and the Byzantines, causing the Venetians to lose many privileges³².

These relations between the Byzantine Empire and the Venetians reveal the role of the Venetians and their influence on the leaders of the Crusade campaign, with the aim of changing its direction. This was evident when the Doge of Venice, Enrico

²⁷- Ramadan Abdel Azim, "The Struggle Between the Arabs and Europe", (n.d.), Dar al-Maaref, Egypt, 1983, p. 504.

²⁸- Saeed Omran, "The Byzantine Empire and its Civilisation", Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Lebanon, 2002, p. 136.

²⁹- Henry Piren, the previous reference, p. 33.

³⁰- Heid Victor, "History of Trade in the Middle East in the Middle Ages", reviewed by Azz al-Din Foda, vol. 1, Dar al-Hay'a al-Masriyya, Cairo, 1985, p. 180.

³¹- Same source.

³²- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 53.

Dandolo, addressed them during their stay in the city of Zara in 1202, explaining to them the original direction towards Constantinople and the vast and fertile lands it possessed. In return, he sought a pretext and an argument to divert them there first and then on to overseas territories.

2- The course of the campaign to Constantinople (599 AH - 600 AH / 1203 CE - 1204 CE):

The Crusader army left the city of Zara on 7 April 599 AH / 1203 CE, while Marquis Boniface and Doge Dandolo stayed behind to await the arrival of the Byzantine Prince Alexios Angelos, who arrived in the city from Germany on 25 April of the same year. This was to go to Constantinople³³ with the leaders of the Crusader army. Ibn al-Athir mentioned these events and said: "Many Franks gathered to go to the lands of Syria to save the Holy Land. They took the king's son with them and set off for Constantinople³⁴. The Crusader army left the city of Zara and headed for the island of Corfu, where they settled. Prince Alexios then arrived, and Villehardouin describes the great joy with which the Byzantine prince was received on his arrival at the army. He says: 'When he arrived at the army, they cheered and welcomed him, and they set up his tent in the centre of the camp, next to that of the leader of the campaign, the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat, who was entrusted with the task of protecting Alexios and looking after his affairs³⁵."

The Crusader army stayed on the island of Corfu for three weeks and then left on 4 May 1203. The crusaders then went to the island of Abydos, where they were greeted by the people, who declared their submission to Prince Alexios. The crusaders left the island and made their way to the port of Abydos, a city located one hundred farsakhs from Constantinople. Its inhabitants surrendered to the crusaders, who set up a garrison there. The troops stayed there for a week to replenish their supplies, especially wheat³⁶, as it was harvest time. On 23 July 1203, they arrived at St Stephen's, three farsakhs from Constantinople, to resupply with wheat, as it was the time of the barley harvest. The barons met to discuss what to do, and the Doge of Venice suggested that they go to the island of Chalcedon, which is opposite Constantinople on the Asian side of the Bosphorus. They did so, but to no avail, and when they reached the island, the crusaders were astonished to see Constantinople before them.

Those who were on board the ships had a full view of the city through the entrance of

³³- Stefan Ransiman, "Al-Hadara al-Byzantia", trans. Abdul Aziz Tawfiq Jaweed, (n.d.), Dar al-Hay'a al-Masriyya, Cairo, 2002, p. 169.

³⁴- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 287.

³⁵- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 59.

³⁶- The same source.

St Stephen's, a monastery about four or five miles from Constantinople. From this point the whole city could be seen, and those who had never seen it before could scarcely imagine so beautiful a place in the world³⁷. Foucher de Chartres, who visited it in the 11th century, describes the high walls, surrounding towers, magnificent palaces and towering churches. It was hard to believe it was real³⁸. The triangular base on which the city was built covered an area of about five miles. Byzantium held an important position because of its geographical location. It was at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, surrounded by water on both sides, with the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles acting as natural waterways for trade. This made Constantinople a unique commercial centre and enabled it to control the trade routes to Western Europe, the countries bordering the Black Sea and the shores of the Sea of Marmara³⁹. Ibn Battuta, who visited the city, described it as an immense city divided into two parts by a large ebb and flow river. The city extended about seven miles into the sea, and its width was the same or greater. He also described its most prominent church, Hagia Sophia, as one of the greatest churches of the Romans. It was surrounded by a wall that made it resemble a city, with thirteen gates⁴⁰. The fleet anchored off Constantinople, close to its walls and towers, and docked in front of a palace on the Bosphorus just opposite Constantinople. After the army disembarked, the barons took their positions in the palace and everyone prepared. The horses were unloaded from the boats in the Kotari area of the Bosphorus. A naval blockade was then imposed on the city of Constantinople in order to restore the throne to their ally, Alexios IV Angelos, and his father, Emperor Isaac II Angelos⁴¹.

. When the Byzantine army arrived at the gates of Constantinople, Emperor Alexios III's efforts to prepare for the advance were unsuccessful. This was due to the wars he had fought, especially during the reign of Emperor Manuel, and the fact that the Byzantine army was largely made up of mercenaries who relied on money to wage war⁴².

"When Emperor Alexios III of Constantinople witnessed the siege of the city by the Crusaders, he sent them a messenger named Nicholas Onx, also known as Nicholas Rox. The messenger addressed the Crusaders and said, "Gentlemen, Emperor Alexios wishes to make it clear that he is well aware of your superior qualities and that you come from the best regions of the world. He is greatly intrigued and wonders why

³⁷- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁸- Same source.

³⁹- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 78.

⁴⁰- Ibn Battuta, "Tuhfat al-Nazr fi Ghara'ib al-Amsar wa 'Ajayib al-Asfar," trans. Abdul Hadi al-Tazi, Vol. 2, (n.d.), Publications of the Moroccan Library, Rabat, 1997, p. 253.

⁴¹- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 71.

⁴²- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 79.

and for what purpose you have invaded his land and kingdom. He is a Christian and you are Christians. He knows very well that you are on your way to reclaim the Holy Land, the Holy Cross and Jerusalem. If you are poor and in need, he really wants to give you money and food on the condition that you leave his lands immediately⁴³.

The barons and the Duke of Venice then chose a knight named Conon Bethine, because of his perceived wisdom and prudence of mind, to respond to this messenger. Conon Bethine, speaking on behalf of Vilhardouin, said: 'My lord, you have told us that your master is very intrigued. Why then, my lord, have you and the barons left his land and kingdom? They have not entered his land because he has seized it through greed and aggression and against God and justice. It rightfully belongs to his nephew, who sits on the throne among us. If your lord wishes to restore his nephew's crown and kingdom and willingly submits to his mercy, we will intercede with his nephew to seek forgiveness for him and grant him a comfortable existence. But if you do not respond to our message, do not dare to return here again.

When the emperor's envoy saw the crusaders' reaction, he told the leaders of the campaign that the Byzantines would welcome them when they saw him aboard the ship. However, they discovered the opposite of what he had told them, as the gates of Constantinople were closed in their faces and the soldiers were ready on the walls, leading to the failure of the first attempt to enter the city⁴⁴.

But then the Doge of Venice and his bombardiers managed to break through the walls. This happened on 17 June 1203, in the year 599 AH. When the people of Constantinople saw this fleet of crusaders and bombardiers advancing, they lost their courage and resistance. They saw the crusaders and bombardiers climb over the walls and ramparts. The Crusader fleet continued on its way to the city after successfully breaking the massive iron chains that closed the port of Constantinople. Battle ensued between the two sides, with the Crusaders seizing 25 of the capital's towers and engaging in fierce fighting with the defenders. Emperor Alexios III himself led the battle⁴⁵.

Ibn al-Athir narrates the events of this battle: "When they arrived, his uncle, Alexios III, came out as a warrior against them in the Roman army, and the battle took place between them in the month of Dhu al-Qa'dah, 599 AH (1203 CE). The Romans were defeated and the Franks entered the city. The king of the Romans fled to the outskirts of the city"⁴⁶.

3- The siege of Constantinople and the restoration of Isaac II Angelos to the

⁴³- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 72.

⁴⁴- Stefan Ransiman, the previous reference, p. 113.

⁴⁵- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 74.

⁴⁶- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 278.

throne:

The crusaders entered Constantinople in the summer of 1203 (599 AH). It was agreed that Prince Alexios, the co-ruler with his father Isaac II Angelos, should be removed from power. Alexios was named Alexios IV and took over the responsibilities of ruling as his father was blind. After regaining his throne, Alexios began to fulfil the promises he had made to the Crusaders. He attempted to force the clergy to accept the authority of the Pope of Rome, but his efforts failed due to the resistance of the clergy. He also gave the Crusaders many lavish gifts, depleting the treasury and leaving him unable to repay his debts to Doge Enrico Dandolo, the ruler of Venice. As a result, he was forced to impose new taxes on the Byzantines.

The situation became desperate and even led to the confiscation of church property, including gold, silver and sacred vessels, which were melted down and minted into coins to pay the agreed rent for the ships⁴⁷. Ibn al-Athir considered the Franks (Crusaders) to be the rulers of Constantinople, as their demands for money exceeded what they could pay. They therefore resorted to seizing the treasures of the Church, including icons of Christ and the Apostles, as well as the Gospels. These actions increased the hatred of the Byzantine Romans towards the Latins (Westerners) and their emperor⁴⁸.

The animosity of the Byzantines was further fuelled by the looting and pillaging that they themselves carried out throughout the city of Constantinople. They destroyed entire neighbourhoods, causing further resentment.

The hostility of the Byzantines was further fuelled by their own looting and pillaging of the city of Constantinople. They destroyed entire neighbourhoods and caused immense damage.

In particular, the French soldiers burned a mosque owned by Muslim merchants in the city, and the fire spread, destroying the entire neighbourhood⁴⁹. These actions led to a revolution in the imperial palace in Rajab 600 AH (February 1204 CE). Emperor Alexios IV was arrested and killed⁵⁰ and his father, Isaac II Angelos, who was imprisoned, died of grief for his son. Duke Alexios Ducas took over the throne in 600/1204 AD and became known as Alexios V. He belonged to the Angelos family and his wife was the daughter of Alexios III. After the murder of Alexios IV, the Crusaders lost their main supporter in the Byzantine capital, as the new emperor declared his hatred for the Crusaders and decided to fight them. This prompted the

⁴⁷- Saeed al-Hariri, "Al-Akhbar al-Sunniyya al-Hurub al-Salibiyya", vol. 3, Dar al-Athar, Cairo, 1985, p. 290.

⁴⁸- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 288.

⁴⁹- Stefan Ransiman, the previous reference, p. 162.

⁵⁰- Hasanin Muhammad Rabi', "Dirasat fi Tarikh al-Dawla al-Byzantia", (n.d.), Dar al-Nahda al-Arabiyya, Cairo, 1983, p. 255.

Crusaders to decide to take control of Constantinople⁵¹.

In 600 AH (March 1204 CE), the Crusaders and the Venetians held a meeting outside Constantinople where they decided to cease hostilities against the Muslims and reached a treaty on the division of the Byzantine Empire after taking it over. This treaty determined the future of the Latin Empire. They agreed that if a Frenchman was elected emperor, the patriarch would be Venetian. They also agreed that a quarter of the city would be given to the emperor alone, with no one else sharing it. The remaining three-quarters⁵² would be divided equally, with half going to the Venetians and the other half to the Crusaders. Everything acquired was to be considered the property of the Emperor. Afterwards, all the Crusader soldiers swore not to bring any of their booty back to camp, not to harm women, children or monks, and not to enter churches or monasteries⁵³.

4-Results of the Fourth Crusade (Fall of Constantinople)

The results of the Fourth Crusade, specifically the fall of Constantinople, were as follows: The leaders of the crusade agreed on the need to occupy Constantinople and launched their attack on 6 April 1204 (6th of Rajab, 600 AH). However, their attempt met with resistance from the Byzantines and they suffered several losses, which led to their withdrawal. They regrouped and resumed their attack on the city. There were around 30,000 Franks in Constantinople⁵⁴ but the vastness and expansion of the city obscured their true numbers. They collaborated with the Franks outside the city and set fire to it, burning about a quarter of the city. As a result, the gates were opened, allowing the Franks to enter Constantinople. Fighting continued for three days, during which the Franks killed and looted the Byzantines, leaving them either dead or destitute⁵⁵. The city fell into the hands of the Latins and Venetians on Monday 12 April 1204 (12th of Rajab, 600 AH), after they had set fire to the city, burning many houses. According to Villehardouin, the number of houses burned was equivalent to three major cities in France at the time, indicating the extensive devastation inflicted on Constantinople by the Crusaders⁵⁶.

The Crusaders engaged in widespread looting and pillaging, killing all the Byzantines they encountered. It became difficult to estimate the number of casualties, as described by Nicetas Choniates, who witnessed the fall of Constantinople and its sacking. He noted that when the Muslims recaptured Jerusalem, they showed more

⁵¹- Clari Rebert, "La Conquête de Constantinople", published by Lauer, Paris, 1924, p. 59.

⁵²- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 74.

⁵³- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 74.

⁵⁴- Hasan Muhammad Rabi', the previous reference, p. 254.

⁵⁵- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 289.

⁵⁶- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 75.

mercy to the Christians than to those who called themselves soldiers of Christ. This description underlines the catastrophe that befell Constantinople at the hands of the Christians, even though both sides shared the symbol of the cross⁵⁷.

The plundering and theft extended to all treasures and valuables, including those kept in churches and monasteries. Some Franks entered the Hagia Sophia, where a group of monks and priests had taken refuge, carrying the cross and the Gospel and pleading for their lives. However, they were killed and the church sacked⁵⁸.

And they proceeded to smash their rare silver icons and trample the holy books with their feet. The order was then given to collect all the spoils from the churches, and they chose ten knights from among the prominent Crusaders and ten from among the Venetians whom they considered trustworthy, and they were given the task of guarding the treasures collected from the churches⁵⁹.

The Crusaders were rewarded with an abundance of booty and wealth, described by Villehardouin as an endless supply of gold, silver and precious stones. He emphasised that never before had such booty been taken as that of Constantinople. The Crusaders were satisfied, the hungry were fed, and the poor became rich. The Crusaders acquired so much booty and wealth that it equalled the sum of all the riches of Europe put together. Most of the treasures they captured were precious stones and were brought back to Europe, such as the four bronze horses that adorned the Hippodrome in Constantinople, which were then taken to Venice⁶⁰.

As for the Venetian merchants, they benefited more than others from the wealth of Constantinople. They took the treasures and precious objects that they had acquired through their love for the city and transported them to Egypt and the Levant, where they sold them. In particular, the marble looted from the churches reached the city of Damascus, as Abu Shama⁶¹ reports. This confirms the commercial links between the Venetians and the Islamic East.

Egypt remained a stronghold for maintaining this close relationship between the two sides, despite the hostility between the Christian West and the Islamic East during the Crusades. The change in the direction of the campaign towards Constantinople was intended to preserve and maintain their relationship.

Once the sacking and pillaging of Constantinople was complete, the leaders of the campaign had to choose a Latin emperor to rule the Byzantine Empire.

They reverted to the previous agreement, which provided for the election of a

⁵⁷- Hasanin Muhammad Rabi', the previous reference, p. 255.

⁵⁸- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 289.

⁵⁹- Calari Rebert, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁰- Villehardouin, op. cit., p. 65.

⁶¹- Abu Shama, the previous reference, p. 78.

committee of twelve, six from the Crusaders and six from the Venetians. There was fierce competition between the Marquis Boniface of Montferrat and Count Baldwin⁶², Duke of Flanders and Hainaut. The Venetian Doge Dandolo feared the power and zeal of the crusader leader Boniface, who was a threat to the Venetians and their interests because of his strength and leadership of the crusader army, as well as his good relations with the Byzantines, especially after his marriage to Margaret of Hungary, widow of Isaac II Angelos, the former Byzantine emperor. This led the Byzantines to support him and consider him their Holy Emperor⁶³. However, Boniface realised that he would not be able to control the election committee as only three of the six crusaders were in his favour.

They supported his rival Baldwin, as the Venetian Doge Dandolo preferred the new emperor to be a weaker and less important figure for easier control. Boniface was also an ally of Genoa. These reasons led the Venetians to work to keep him out of the position⁶⁴.

In the middle of 1204, Nicholas, Bishop of Soissons, who was a member of the electoral committee, announced the election of Baldwin, Count of Flanders, as Emperor of Constantinople. On 16 May of the same year, he was crowned in a great ceremony in the Hagia Sophia⁶⁵. As for the Patriarch of the Church of Constantinople, this was one of the important conditions agreed upon before the fall of the Byzantine capital. After the Emperor was elected by the Crusaders, the position of Patriarch fell to the Venetians. Men gathered in the Hagia Sophia and chose Thomas Mauroceni⁶⁶ for this position⁶⁷.

According to the agreement between the Crusaders and the Venetians, the spoils were divided between them. The leaders and commanders of the campaign received the largest share, as mentioned by Ibn al-Athir. He mentions the Marquis Boniface de Montferrat, leader of the French, and Baldwin IX, Count of Flanders. Doge Dandolo of Venice was also mentioned. The main leaders who ruled over Constantinople and

⁶²- He is considered one of the greatest French feudal lords, born about the year 1172. He was the son of Baldwin V and his mother, Margaret, was the sister of Philip of Alsace, Count of Flanders. After the death of Philip of Alsace in the city of Acre in 590 AH / 1194 CE, his son Baldwin inherited the region of Flanders. After the death of his father, Baldwin V, in 591 AH / 1195 CE, Baldwin became ruler of the region of Flanders and Hainaut. He is known as Baldwin IX. See: Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 102. See also: Ghunaim, "Studies in the History of the Empire of the Retainers", (n.d.), Dar al-Maarefa Alexandria, 2000, p. 116.

⁶³- Ghunaim, "Studies in the History of the Empire of Nicaea", (n.d.), Dar al-Maarefa, Alexandria, 2000, p. 116.

⁶⁴- Stefan Ransiman, the previous reference, p. 166.

⁶⁵- He belonged to a noble and prestigious family whose origins were in Mantua, which was not present in Constantinople at the time of his election. In 1205 A.D. he was raised to the rank of deacon by Pope Honorius III, and on 30 March 1205 he was made Archbishop of Constantinople. His tenure in Constantinople was short-lived, however, as he died in 1211. See: Ghunaim, the previous reference, pp. 105-106.

⁶⁶- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, p. 289.

⁶⁷- Hasanin Muhammad Rabi', previous reference, p. 256.

its surroundings were divided among them. The southern part, including Thrace and five-eighths of the Byzantine capital, went to Emperor Baldwin⁶⁸.

Boniface received the Kingdom of Thessalonica, which included the provinces of Thessaly and Macedonia, as a means of appeasement and to allow his followers to gradually settle in the Greek lands and the Peloponnese peninsula⁶⁹.

The Venetians took most of the rest. They seized a large quarter in Constantinople for their commercial activities, acquired most of the Ionian islands and several islands in the Aegean, such as Taxis and Andros⁷⁰. They also gained control of a group of cities along the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmara, including Galata, Rodosto and Heraclea, and some cities in Thrace, the largest of which was Adrianople, as well as the island of Crete⁷¹.

From the beginning, the Venetians sought to acquire fertile lands suitable for commercial exploitation. These lands were mostly along the main sea route between Venice and Constantinople⁷². The rest of the participating crusaders received limited spoils, which led to their dissatisfaction, especially after the major leaders had claimed most of the territories and spoils. This led to tensions and hostilities between the different nationalities that made up the campaign, such as conflicts between the Germans and the Burgundians, the Lombards and the French, and with the Venetians⁷³.

These divisions led to the emergence of a western feudal system in the Latin Empire, where a large number of small and large fiefs were granted to princes and knights, similar to the system prevalent in western Europe. The Latin knights were required to swear allegiance to the Latin emperor in Constantinople, but the Venetians saw no need for such an oath, which exposed the weaknesses in the feudal structure of the Latin kingdom⁷⁴. The control of the Latins over the Greeks was evident in many ways. The Orthodox Church was united under the leadership of the Catholic Church in Rome, with a Latin Patriarch chosen by the Venetians. Nevertheless, Pope Innocent III expressed his displeasure at the sacking of Constantinople and repeatedly urged the Latin clergy and princes to treat the Byzantine Christians with kindness⁷⁵.

The letter sent by the Bayezid to Cardinal Peter Capuano reflects the Bayezid's

⁶⁸- Muhammad Munis Ahmad Awad, "Bibliographical Chapters in the History of the Crusades", vol. 1, Dar Rutabrint, 1996, p. 189.

⁶⁹- Heid, the previous reference, p. 288.

⁷⁰- The same source, p. 187.

⁷¹- Ghunaim, "The Fourth Crusade", the previous reference, p. 98.

⁷²- Heid, the previous reference, p. 287.

⁷³- Ghunaim, "Studies in the Empire of Nicaea", the previous reference, p. 119.

⁷⁴- Hasanin Muhammad Rabi', the previous reference, p. 258.

⁷⁵- "The Fourth Crusade", the previous reference, p. 102.

dissatisfaction.

In the letter, he asks how the Greek Church can be expected to return to loyalty to the Apostolic See when the Latins have acted wickedly and committed acts of the devil. For clear reasons and their obvious hatred of the Greeks, even more than their hatred of dogs, this letter reveals the crusaders' mistreatment and murder of the Latins, as well as the animosity and hatred between the two sides. The Latin control of Constantinople and the division of its possessions assured the Frankish crusaders in the Levant that no further campaigns would take place in 1204 A.D., and the summer passed with the crusaders settled in Constantinople⁷⁶.

During the year 600 AH/1204 CE, conflicts broke out between the Muslims and the Crusaders. With the fall of Constantinople to the Crusaders, many of them came to Acre with the intention of seizing the city of Jerusalem from the Muslims. They plundered and sacked the area around the Jordan River⁷⁷. At that time, Al-'Adil, who was in Damascus, left the city and went to Mount Tabor⁷⁸, south-east of Acre, to prevent the Crusaders from advancing towards the Islamic territories. At the same time, he sent out appeals for help from all Islamic lands, and support poured in from all directions. Meanwhile, the Crusaders were raiding Kafr Kanna⁷⁹, capturing and plundering it⁸⁰, and the princes who were with Al-'Adil could not tolerate these actions. They urged him to launch an attack on the Frankish territories, but Al-'Adil did not agree with them and remained steadfast. The Frankish envoys also hesitated on the question of reconciliation. In the end, a truce was reached between the two parties. As a result of this agreement, Jaffa came under Crusader control and Al-'Adil relinquished his claims to Ludd and Ramla⁸¹. Ibn al-Athir mentions that Al-'Adil also gave up the city of Nazareth⁸².

Egypt was also attacked by the Crusaders in Shawwal 600 AH/1204 CE.

Twenty Crusader ships entered the Rosetta branch of the Nile and advanced to the

⁷⁶- Ghunaim, the previous reference, p. 260.

⁷⁷- Ibn Khaldun, "The Book of the Beginning and the Events in the History of the Arabs and the Berbers and their Contemporaries", vol. 5. (n.d.), Edited by Suhail Zakar, Dar al-Fikr, Beirut, 2000, p. 394.

⁷⁸- Ibn al-Mu'addal, a fortified castle, was demolished in 1218 AD. It was located on Mount Tabor overlooking the Sea of Galilee in Jordan, separated by four valleys, during the Crusader siege of Damietta. See: Yaqut al-Hamawi, "Mu'jam al-Buldan", translated by a group of editors, volume 3, (no date of publication), Dar Sader, Beirut, 1997, volume 4, page 47.

⁷⁹- It is a city between Tiberias and Nazareth in Palestine. See: The same source, page 470.

⁸⁰- Al-Maqrizi, Taqi al-Din (d. 845 AH), "The Course for Understanding the Pearls of the Kings", translated by Muhammad Abdul Qadir Ata, volume 1, 1st edition, Beirut, 1997, page 275.

⁸¹- Ibn Waseel Jamal al-Din (d. 874 AH), "Mufarrij al-Kurub fi Akhbar Bani Ayyub", translated by Hasanin Muhammad al-Rabi', volume 5, (no date of publication), Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyya, Beirut, 2000, page 290.

⁸²- Ibn al-Athir, the previous reference, page 255.

city of Fowa⁸³. They settled there, plundering and pillaging, and those who managed to escape⁸⁴ managed to survive. The Egyptian troops hastened to gather on the opposite bank of the Nile, but were unable to engage the Crusaders due to the absence of the Al'Adili fleet⁸⁵. After five days, the fleet returned peacefully⁸⁶, having achieved victory. Al-'Adil had previously signed a truce for a period of six years, with the aim of recognising the superiority of the Crusader navy in preventing trade between Egypt and Syria. On the Crusader side, King Amalric sought this truce because some of the Crusader knights had gone to Constantinople with the desire to possess its lands⁸⁷. Al-'Adil then returned to Egypt and resided in the Palace of the Ministry, where he began to organise the affairs of Egypt⁸⁸.

Conclusion:

From the above we can conclude that the Fourth Crusade, in its initial preparations, was sponsored by the Pope and European princes without the participation of their kings. Its aim was to recover Jerusalem from the Muslims and to avenge the defeat of the Third Crusade. However, the circumstances surrounding the campaign, particularly when it was diverted to Venice to use its fleet for a voyage to Egypt, led to a turning point in the course of the Crusade. Venice, with its privileges in the Islamic East, capitalised on the campaign for its own benefit. This was evident when the Crusaders failed to pay the agreed amount and personal interests took precedence over the main objective of the campaign, which was initially directed towards the Christian city of Zara. This period was a critical one in the history of European relations, as they fought among themselves rather than against the Muslims as planned. It is worth noting that the papacy did not take a decisive stance on the situation, merely threatening them with excommunication, which was quickly withdrawn. The Venetian merchants, who had always pursued their own interests regardless of the papal excommunication, were the beneficiaries of this deviation, which marked the first deviation of the campaign. The situation in Constantinople after the deposition of Emperor Isaac II Angelos by his brother Alexios III was chaotic due to the power struggle, leading to the flight of Prince Alexios to Germany to meet King Philip of Swabia. The Fourth Crusade used this as a pretext to attack Constantinople.

In particular, Prince Alexios enticed the leaders of the crusade with numerous

⁸³- It is a city on the banks of the Nile, five miles from the sea. It has markets and many date palms. See: Yaqut al-Hamawi, the previous reference, page 281.

⁸⁴- Al-Maqrizi, the previous reference, page 292.

⁸⁵- Ibn al-Athir, the previous book, page 292.

⁸⁶- Al-Maqrizi, the previous book, page 276.

⁸⁷- Mahmoud Saeed Omran, "The Fifth Crusade" (no date of publication), Dar al-Maaref, Alexandria, 1985, page 99.

⁸⁸- The same source, page 277.

privileges if they helped him regain his throne. We can therefore conclude that the deviation towards Constantinople was the result of several factors and circumstances. Among these was the motivation of the Venetian merchants to secure their trade in the Mediterranean. In addition, King Philip of Swabia was driven by his ambition to create a global empire under German leadership, which meant gaining control over and incorporating Byzantine territories. The actions of the papacy also played a role in changing the direction of the campaign, as it sought to unite the Eastern and Western Churches under one leadership.

The internal conditions of Byzantium also contributed to this diversion, with power struggles and the use of the campaign by Prince Alexios as a pretext for overthrowing Constantinople. It is clear that the Fourth Crusade forgot its original objective and its ambitions and dreams led it to attack the city of Constantinople. Despite being a Christian city and bearing the symbol of the cross, it was not spared by the Latin soldiers who brought corruption, destroyed its churches and burned its museums as if it were their enemy. They did not respect the religious bond that bound them together and committed atrocious acts that are recorded in their own writings.

The Venetian merchants were the ones who benefited most from this campaign, especially as they traded with its treasures and gained control of most of the coastal areas that facilitated their commercial activities. This view is shared by many historians, who see the Venetian merchants as the ones who brought about the fall of Constantinople.

Moreover, the Fourth Crusade allowed the Crusaders already present in the Islamic East to be drawn into the Byzantine territories after they had come under Latin control.

This was done to exploit the lands and wealth, leading many Western historians to describe it as a misguided campaign, as it continued its course towards the Christians without reaching the Muslims, who were not affected by this campaign.

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