O, lost City of New Rome
The Byzantine outlook on Constantinople from exile

A Master Thesis by Berend Titulaer
S4218345
Radboud University
Master Eternal Rome
Supervisor: prof. dr. M.L.M. van Berkel
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'It seems, O Italians, that you no longer remember our ancient harmony... But no other nations were ever as harmonious as the Graikoi and the Italians. And this was only to be expected, for science and learning came to the Italians from the Graikoi. And after that point, so that they need not use their ethnic names, a New Rome was built to complement the Elder one, so that all could be called Romans after the common name of such great cities, and have the same faith and the same name for it. And just as they received that most noble name from Christ, so too did they take upon themselves the national name. And everything else was common to them: magistracies, laws, literature, city councils, law courts, piety itself; So that there was nothing that was not common to those of Elder and New Rome. But O how things have changed!'
- Georgios Akropolites, Against the Latins 2.27, in Georgii Acropolitae opera, ed A. Heisenberg, rev. P. Wirth (Stuttgart,1978), 2: 64.

Preface:

The field of Byzantine studies has often been described as a labyrinth; and most certainly it is not an easy terrain to tread upon. During these last two years of study at the Radboud University, I have put on my climbing gear and started to scale this Mount Athos. I have fallen off the path more than once, but each time the road picked up right where I had fallen. These years I have been capable to study this magnificently interesting field thanks to the commitment and certainly also thanks to the academic freedom, which was provided by the teachers of the Ancient and Medieval History departments. They allowed me to delve into the 'Roman Empire that never stopped existing (except in 1453, of course)'. I studied the realm of Late Antiquity through the eyes of the orator Themistios, who held on to his precarious senatorial position throughout the tempestuous waters of the early existence of the city of Constantine.

Nea Roma outgrew its elder sibling like I outgrew Late Antiquity and landed next upon the distant shores of the Chrysea Pyle, or the Golden Gate. This enormous monument to the Emperors of Old was entered in triumph for the last time when the Roman Emperor re-entered the Queen of Cities after 57 years of exile (which perhaps not completely coincidentally is also partly the subject of this thesis). 200 years later however the site of this monumental building had changed so much that a French adventurer, equipped with the same books that I read, could not identify it, even though he walked right past it. This apparently is what the sand of time does to us and the monuments we build.

This period of study of the early and late life of Byzantium has culminated in the piece of writing that is in front of you right now. Swept up by what is often called historical sensation I stood on the shoulders of the giants, that have tread on the unexpecting fields of Byzantium, and peaked over the triple walls. This modest contribution to these hallowed grounds allowed me to add my name to all those scholars that got to complain that 'Byzantine Studies is an under-appreciated field' and that so much elementary work is still laying there, waiting to be done. Apart from that this work has severely contributed to my expertise in the historian's craft and to my understanding of the mystical (but not in an orientalist way) realm of Byzantium. I hope that it may be to your pleasure as much as it has been to mine.

Berend Titulaer

Nijmegen, 15th of June, 2017

Content:

Introduction

In the year 1204 The Byzantine Empire suffered a catastrophe of cataclysmic proportions: The city of Constantinople, capital of the Roman Empire for at least 800 years, was sacked by Latin Crusaders of the fourth Crusade. This city had not been overwhelmed by a foreign invader in all of its history. In many ways the shock that was felt, must have been similar to 410, when (Elder) Rome was sacked by the Visigoths. Many of the country's elite became refugees and fled from the new Latin Empire that emerged after the sacking.[1] They regrouped themselves at two places: the Byzantine courts of Nicaea and Epiros.

With the loss of their capital many certainties in the Byzantine worldview were shaken and torn. Generations of generals, bureaucrats, clergymen and ordinary citizens had been raised and had spent their lives in the huge city that constituted the heart of the Byzantine realm. The City had been embellished by emperor after emperor, had been treasured by its people and had therefore become the Byzantine History incarnate.[2] At the many landmarks that adorned the City its inhabitants could view their history, which stretched back many centuries. Many of these adornments and sites of beauty were lost or damaged in the sacking of 1204.[3]

For the next sixty years the Byzantines strove with all their might to regain their beloved capital and Mother-city from the two centers of refuge at Nicaea and Epeiros. At the Nicene court Theodore Laskaris was successful at gaining the imperial title on Easter Day 1208.[4] He stabilized the Nicene realm against foreign invaders and laid the foundation of the Byzantine Empire in exile. It fell to his successor and son-in-law John III Vatatzes however to bring the Empire in exile to bloom again.[5] It was his sound fiscal administration and insight in strategy that allowed the Nicene Empire to compete with the many other powers at work: the Latins of Constantinople and the surrounding duchies, the Epirot and Trebizond Byzantines and the Seljuq Turks. Vatatzes was succeeded by his son Theodore II Doukas Laskaris in 1254. During his short reign he alienated the Nicene aristocracy from him, which

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[1] Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile: Government and Society Under the Laskarids of Nicaea 1204-1261* (London, 1975), 11.

[2] Peter Arnott, *The Byzantines and their World* (London, 1973), 68.

[3] John Hearsey, *City of Constantine 324-1453* (London, 1963), 197.; T.F. Madden, 'The fires of the Fourth Crusade 1203-1204: a damage assessment', *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 84-85 (1992), 72-93, esp. 72.

[4] David Abulafia, 'Byzantium in Exile', *The New Cambridge Medieval History* 5 (Cambridge, 2005), 543-568, esp. 545.

[5] Ibidem, 549.

led to a coup against his infantile son after his death in 1258.[6] Out of this coup rose emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos. In 1261 this Emperor Michael VIII from Nicaea succeeded in retaking Constantinople and entered the regained capital in a triumphal procession. The City of Constantine was Byzantine once again. Delivered unto Michael by God himself.

During the time of exile the Byzantines were forced to adjust to life without their capital. In this master thesis I will examine in what ways they looked at the city they lost. What role does Constantinople play in the worldview of the Byzantines in exile?

WHO WERE THE BYZANTINES?

The city of Constantinople was the center of the world of the Byzantines. But who were these people? That question has not been answered conclusively. It is startling to see how nearly every Byzantinist has to add a paragraph in the beginning of his/her book stating that the Byzantines did not call themselves 'Byzantines' but Ρωμαιοι (*Romaioi*) and their country Ρωμανια (*Romania*).[7] It shows the conflicting position many Byzantinists find themselves in when it comes to the issue of the Byzantine identity. The term Byzantine actually only came in general use in Western scholarship after the Empire it described, had long ceased to exist.[8] This term Byzantium reaches back to the pre-Roman settlement at the Bosporus, which would be replaced by Constantinople, and is often in popular discourse associated with all kinds of Orientalist associations, like eunuchs, backwardness and a mystical spirituality.[9]

It has recently been argued by Anthony Kaldellis that this term is in fact a modern reincarnation of many older attempts to deny the Romanness of the Byzantines.[10] Starting with the word *Graikoi* in the eight century, there has been a constant negation of a Byzantine claim to a Roman heritage from western sources.[11] He raises the question why we still use this term, as it does not help the understanding of our research subject in any way. These people did not refer to themselves in this way and the term is intrinsically linked with a tradition that stood in defiance to the research subject.

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[6] Ibidem, 559.

[7] Anthony Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome, from Empire to Nation-State,' in: Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (ed.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (New York, 2012), 387- 404, esp. 387.

[8] Averil Cameron, *The Byzantines* (Chichester, 2010), ix.

[9] Ibidem, 3.

[10] Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome,' 387.

[11] Ibidem, 387.

In this thesis the term Byzantine will be used however, as it will discuss contemporary identity denominations a lot. The word Byzantine will therefore function as a neutral *termus technicus* which describes a group of people bound together by a certain 'Byzantine' identity and/or adherence to the Byzantine state and community (*politeia* and *oikoumène*).[12]

This issue of identity is extremely important for this thesis. After all, the place of Constantinople within the collective mindset of the Byzantines in exile is closely linked to their identity. It is generally asserted there are three pillars on which the identity of the Byzantines rests: Romanness, Greekness and Orthodox Christianity.[13] In what proportion these pillars are present in Byzantium at any given time is unclear and has been subject of debate.

Through history there have been several major stances on the 'Byzantine' Identity. The oldest one originates from Western historians of the 17th to 19th centuries, like Edward Gibbon, and basically states that the Byzantines actually were Greeks, but hid behind the label of *Romaioi* to lay claim to the Roman reputation of old.[14] This stance is characterized to a large degree by a Eurocentrist way of Enlightenment-thinking, which put them at a position of hostility towards the Byzantines. Nothing shows the disdain these writers had for the Byzantines better than this quote by Gibbon: *'But the subjects of the Byzantine empire, who assume and dishonor the names both of Greeks and Romans, present a dead uniformity of abject vices, which are neither softened by the weakness of humanity, nor animated by the vigor of memorable crimes.'* [15] As described above, this stance is thought to actually be an effort to deny the Byzantines their Roman heritage and reserve this for the West. Another consequence of this tradition is that it also allowed modern historians of the recently formed Greek nation to absorb the Byzantine history into their national history.[16]

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[12] Ioannos Stouraitis, 'Roman Identity in Byzantium: a critical approach,' *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 107:1 (2014), 175-220, esp. 175.

[13] Evangelos Chrysos, 'The Roman Political Identity in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium,' in: Karsten Fledelius and Peter Schreiner (ed.), *Byzantium: Idenity, Image, Influence, XIX International Congress of Byzantine Studies University of Copenhagen, 18-24 august 1996* (Copenhagen, 1996), 7-16, esp. 7.

[14] Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,* ed. J.B. Bury (New York, 1906).

[15] Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall vol. 8*, 217.

[16] A. Vakalopoulos, 'Byzantinism and Hellenism: remarks on the racial origin and the intellectual continuity of the Greek nation', *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968), 101-126.; P. Charanis, 'The formation of the Greek people', in: S. Vryonis(red.), *The "past" in medieval and modern Greek culture* (Malibu, 1978), 87-102.; S. Vryonis, 'Recent scholarscip on continuity and discontinuity of culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, modern Greeks', in: S.Vryonis (red.), *The "past" in medieval and modern Greek culture* (Malibu, 1978), 237-256.; S. Vryonis, 'The Greek identity in the Middle Ages', in: *Byzance et l'hellénisme: L'identité grecque au Moyen-Âge. Actes du Congrès International tenu à Treste du 1er au 30 Octobre 1997. Études Balkaniques* 6 (1999), 21-36.; B.

The disdain and orientalist views have however given way to more serious study during the last hundred years. This newer research has led to a tradition which is most broadly accepted and argues that the Byzantine Empire was a multi-ethnic empire which was held together by loyalty to the emperor and the state administration.[17] A second important factor was the Orthodox patriarchy which allowed the Byzantines to extend their influence over the Slavic peoples and create some sort of 'Byzantine Commonwealth.'[18] This stance, championed by Dimitri Obolensky in 1971, believes the Byzantine Empire to consist of all sorts of peoples bound together by an imperial ideology of universality that emanated from Constantinople.[19] This idea has long been accepted as the general idea about the identity of the Byzantine Empire and combines the idea of Roman universality with ideas of Christian universality into the forming of a great *oikoumène* to which in theory anyone could belong. It did however get criticism on areas or certain timeframes where it did not fit as nicely as Obolensky's focus on the Empire's core and the Slavic hinterland.

This large area of modern historiography is characterized by several large and phenomenal works which cover enormous scopes of Byzantine history. Several writers have contributed hugely to our understanding of the Byzantine Empire.[20] This however reflects several of the problems Byzantine Studies as a whole faces. Because Byzantium does not really support the history of a modern nation-state, it has received relatively little scholarly attention, which means that most of the scientific progress in this field has been brought about by small, specialist centers of research spread across the world. This has brought about the peculiar situation where some of the most important sources of this time period still don't or only recently have gotten a critically edited edition or a translation. This in turn is a reason why Byzantine history has gotten little scholarly attention, since any serious student of the

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Papoulia, 'Das Ende der Antike und der Beginn des Mittelalters in Südosteuropa', in: Ελληνικές Ανακοινώσεις στο Ε΄Διεθνές Συνέδριο Σπουδών Νοτιοανατολικής Ευρώπης (Athene, 1985), 61-75.

[17] Johannus Koder, 'Byzanz, die Griechen und die Romaiosyne – eine Ethnogenese der Römer?,' in: H. Wolfram (ed.), *Typen der Ethnogenese unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Bayern*, vol 1 (Vienna, 1990), 103-11.; Johannus Koder, 'Griechische Identitäten im Mittelalter: Aspekte einer Entwicklung,' in: A. Abramea, A. Laiou and E. Chrysos (eds.), *Βυζάντιο – Κράτος και Κοινωνία. Μνήμη Νίκου Οικονομίδη* (Athens, 2003), 297-319.; Johannus Koder, 'Byzantium as seen by itself –images and mechanisms at work', in: *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies Sofia, 22-27 August 2011* (Sofia, 2011), 69-81.; Paul Magdalino, *Tradition and transformation in medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1991).; Chrysos, 'Roman political identity,' 7-16.; C. Rapp, 'Hellenic identity, romanitas, and Christianity in Byzantium,' in: K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms. Culture, identity and ethnicity from antiquity to modernity* (Aldershot, 2008), 127 – 147.

[18] Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500-1453* (New York, 1971).

[19] Paul Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), xxi-xxii.

[20] One should think here about people like J.B. Bury, Alexander Kazhdan, Hélène Ahrweiler, David Nicol, Michael Angold, Averil Cameron, Cyril Mango and Paul Magdalino.

subject must be gifted with a relatively strong knowledge of Greek and Latin in order to understand his or her sources.

In recent times a push has been underway to remedy that: The last twenty to thirty years witnessed a return to the sources in critical editions and translations. This return to the sources has come with a reevaluation of the assumptions, which were based on those sources, and led to a new stance about the Byzantine identity. Questioning some basic assumptions about Byzantine identity, this stance stresses the inherent Romanness of the Byzantine realm. It has become a broadly carried theory that the Byzantine Empire may have been 'something like a Roman nation-state.'[21] These authors believe there was an ethnic or national group of Romans that constituted the core of the Byzantine realm.[22] This means that they believe there was a Roman people, who shared a cultural cohesion in areas like clothes, language, religion and way of life.[23] They believe that the Roman people believed they were a people.[24] This stance therefore focuses much more on the labels Byzantines used to refer to themselves than the earlier stance. When studying these labels these authors found that there were different kinds of being 'Roman' and that for example loyalty to the emperor or to the Orthodox faith alone could not suffice to qualify as a full Roman.

Kaldellis' and others' work has raised several challenges to which the field of Byzantine Studies is still responding. Kaldellis' main argument against the multi-ethnic empire is that this conception would be based more on modern doctrine than medieval evidence.[25] This naturally got a lot of criticism: a recent lengthy article by Ioannos Stouraitis defends the multi-ethnic empire thesis quite rigorously.[26] Especially Kaldellis' use of the word nation-state comes under a lot of scrutiny, because it would deny the hierarchical character of the Byzantine Empire (and any pre-modern state for that matter). According to this counterthesis, a nation-state could not exist before the cultural homogenization, which

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[21] Anthony Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium: The Transformations of Greek Identity and the Reception of the Classical Tradition* (Cambridge, 2007).; Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome,' 387- 404.; Paul Magdalino, 'Hellenism and Nationalism in Byzantium', in: *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Byzantium* (Aldershot, 1991),1-29, esp. 4-6.

[22] R. Beaton, 'Antique nation? "Hellenes" on the eve of Greek independence and in twelfth-century Byzantium', *Byzantine and modern Greek Studies* 31 (2007), 76-95.; Christos Malatras, 'The making of an ethnic group: the Romaioi in the 12th-13th centuries', http://www.eens.org/EENS_congresses/2010/Malatras_Christos.pdf [accessed at 2-6-2015].; Gill Page, *Being Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans* (Cambridge, 2008).

[23] Christos Malatras, 'The making of an ethnic group: the Romaioi in the 12th-13th centuries', http://www.eens.org/EENS_congresses/2010/Malatras_Christos.pdf [accessed at 2-6-2015].

[24] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 14.

[25] Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome,' 389-391.

[26] Stouraitis, 'Roman Identity', 185-206.

was started by public schooling and nationalist ideas in the nineteenth century. According to Stouraitis, Kaldellis is deceived by the homogenous elite of the empire.[27] Kaldellis answer can be seen when he refers to Chris Wickham's idea that '*some national identities did exist [in the Early Middle Ages] and adds that Byzantine national identity has not been much considered by historians, for that empire was the ancestor of no modern nation state, but is arguable that it was the most developed in Europe at the end of our period.*'[28]

The different stances also provide Constantinople with different roles. The multi-ethnic stance usually ascribes Constantinople to be the Roman Imperial city-state around which the other peoples revolve, while the nation-state stance believes Constantinople to be the center of a larger Roman people.[29] So to Stouraitis Constantinople is the only really 'Roman' thing in the Empire, while in Kaldellis' view it takes a similar place as, say, Paris in modern France.

Another position in between the two above has been taken in the recent work by Gill Page, who focuses mostly on the time after the Fourth Crusade and concludes there were two Byzantine Roman identities: a political and an ethnic one.[30] The ethnic identity is however confined mostly to Constantinople itself according to Page.

THE CENTER OF THE WORLD

This brings us to the Grand City itself and the actual subject of this thesis. The stances in the paragraph above were about the identity of the Byzantines in general, but how are these things regarded during the Byzantine exile? In terms of identity this time was quite interesting because many old certainties were shaken. In all their existence the Byzantines could label themselves 'Romans' without any serious doubt or challenge. Their emperor of the Romans had his seat after all in 'New Rome.' In 1204 however, one of the major pillars around which they were grouped was torn underneath them: Constantinople. The 'Queen of Cities' had been the political and cultural center of the realm for ages. The major part of the elite lived there. The loss of this center meant a devastating blow to most Byzantines, forcing them into a renegotiation about the importance of this capital.[31]

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[27] Stouraitis, 'Roman Identity', 198.
[28] Kaldellis, 'From Rome to New Rome', 395.
[29] Ibidem, 388-389.; Stouraitis, 'Roman Identity,' 185 - 186.
[30] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 46.
[31] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 338-339.

In fact, according to several historians this is exactly the time of a peak in 'Byzantine Nationalism.'[32] The tensions grew and dividing lines became sharper. Shortly before the fall of Constantinople, for example, the Constantinopolitans forced the Latin inhabitants of the city to leave, even though they had sworn oaths of allegiance to the Byzantine Emperor.[33]

Apart from that, there was now also a Latin 'Roman' Empire, backed by the church of Rome. The claim the Latins made to the Roman heritage, given force by their appropriation of Constantinople and large parts of the realm, meant that the Byzantines were also forced to renegotiate the labels they used to describe themselves. It is striking that the Papal See and the Venetians were willing to call the Latin Empire in the East *Romania*, where before 1204 they were not willing to do so for the Byzantine Empire.[34] It led to a strong hatred of the Latins and a strengthening of the ethnic cohesion among Byzantines. Clear however is that this is a time which transformed and (re)shaped the Byzantine identity. Kaldellis states that it is exactly during the Byzantine exile that we see the Byzantine people getting forcibly detached from the City as a common ground and still held on to their Roman identity.[35] This makes the question what role Constantinople played in the collective mindset even more interesting.

WHAT IS TO COME

The main part of this master thesis will consist of analyses of several sources of the time. These are writers who lived through (parts) of the exile and experienced firsthand the events that drive this history. They will be dealt with in a chronological order to find out whether there was any development over time and to prevent confusion. Throughout the thesis the question what role Constantinople played in the worldview of the authors will be continually asked and more explicitly we will look in what ways the city was praised. What did these writers exactly miss or reminisce about from the old capital?

This thesis will however start with an introductory chapter in which I will discuss the actual urban outlook of Constantinople in 1204 and the usual forms and subjects of urban praise of that time. In this chapter we will try to come to an understanding on how cities were usually praised and what in Constantinople people could and did praise. We will undertake

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[32] Michael Angold, 'Byzantine Nationalism and the Nicaean Empire,' *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 1:1 (1975), 49-70, esp. 51.; Magdalino, 'Hellenism and Nationalism', 1-29.

[33] George Akropolites, *The History*, transl. and ed. Ruth Macrides (Oxford, 2007), §3 110-11.

[34] Ibidem, 337.

[35] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 346.

this in order to find out whether the writers we will analyze later on stuck to conventional models or whether they changed in this aspect.

The second chapter will then deal with our first source of the time: Niketas Choniates (1140-1213). His historical work is one of the main histories of the twelfth and early thirteenth century and has been studied extensively.[36] It therefore provides an excellent starting point for the analysis of this thesis. He was a major official within the imperial administration and after 1204 was forced to flee Constantinople. He joined the refugee court at Nicaea and finished his history there. He seems to have edited his history after his flight to include the major changes of his time better. The focus will therefore be on these edited parts and the chapters dealing with the sacking of Constantinople.

In the third chapter we will combine two smaller sources that cover the time during the Byzantine exile. The first source is Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197-1272). He left Constantinople as a child and fled to Nicaea. He was the most skilled philosopher and theologian of his age and played a major part in the intellectual milieu of Nicaea. His autobiography is quite extraordinary for his time and provides an interesting insight from the viewpoint of a man who was detached from most politics. The other source is Theodore II Doukas Laskaris (1222-1258). This man was the Nicaean emperor from 1254 to 1258 and was trained in philosophy. We still have several writings from his own hand and they provide a very extraordinary view on our subject. He has written a laudatory praise to the city of Nicaea which will be the basis of our analysis.

The fourth and final chapter will deal with the *History* by Georgios Akropolites (1217-1282). He was a leading intellectual, who played important roles at the Nicaean court. His history provides an important reflection on the Byzantine exile from hindsight. He has however been much less extensively studied than Niketas Choniates.

This leaves us with a thesis that is flanked at the beginning and the end with major historical works; the kind for which Byzantine historiography is famous.[37] The selection of these sources is based on both the fact that they are Byzantine in outlook and that they originated from the new Nicaean center of power. This selection means that we deal with a clearly colored outlook as it doesn't include any Epirotian or Latin sources. Therefore a

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[36] Jan-Louis van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates: Erläuterungen zu den Reden und Briefen nebst einer Biographie* (Berlin, 1971).; Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009).; Alicia Simpson, 'Before and After 1204: The Versions of Niketas Choniates Historia,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006), 189-221.

[37] Anthony Kaldellis, 'The corpus of Byzantine historiography: an interpretive essay,' in: Paul Stephenson (ed.), *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), 211-223.

source like the Chronicle of Morea has explicitly been ignored because of reasons of cultural subjectivity and sheer length. Instead the choice has been made to delve deeper into the Anatolian perspective.

Furthermore these sources have been selected because of their relative availability. The field of Byzantine Studies regrettably remains largely closed off to outsiders because of a shortage of translations or edited versions of much but the most standard works. Luckily the recent translations of Macrides and Magoulias into English opens some of these standard works to an English audience, even though German versions have existed for several decades now. These works were therefore also selected on the fact that they have had at least been edited at a basic level as well.

Constantinople: Its urban Landscape and its Praises before 1204

'Oh, what an excellent and beautiful city! How many monasteries, and how many palaces there are in it, of wonderful work skillfully fashioned! How many marvelous works are to be seen in the streets and the districts of the town!'

- Fulcher of Chartres, *Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres*, transl. Martha E. McGinty, Edward Peters (ed.), The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chartres and Other Source Materials (Philadelphia, 1971),62.

URBAN CHANGE IN BYZANTIUM

Constantinople grew rapidly in the early years after its foundation in 326 A.D. Constantine had planned his city with a certain degree of megalomania when he built the new walls of the city, which increased the size of the city several times. Not even a hundred years later however the new coat for the city proved too small when Theodosius II had to enlarge the city even more with whole new and magnificent walls.[38] While the growth of many cities during the fourth and fifth century stagnated and even declined, Constantinople continued to grow in both size and importance into what could be called a late antique megalopolis.[39] It also started to gain a central position in the distribution networks in the Eastern Mediterranean, as is known from ceramic evidence.[40] As both an Imperial and Christian capital Constantinople was adorned with all kinds of monuments and buildings to signify those aspects. It got imperial fora, large church basilicas, a senate house, a hippodrome, porticoed streets, an abundance of statues, baths and aqueducts; in short, all the things that define the ancient city.[41]

The sixth and seventh centuries meant a challenge to the megalopolis of old: plagues, invasions and subsequent loss of land and resources severely downsized the population of the

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[38] Bryan Ward-Perkins, 'Old and New Rome Compared: The Rise of Constantinople,' in: Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2012), 53-80, esp. 63

[39] Paul Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople,' in: Paul Magdalino, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), 1-111, esp. 19.

[40] John Haldon, 'The Idea of the Town in the Byzantine Empire,' in: G.P. Brogiolo and Bryan Ward-Perkins (eds.), *The Idea and Ideal of the Town between Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (Leiden, 1999), 1-24, esp. 7.

[41] Alexander Kazhdan, 'The Italian and Late Byzantine City,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 49 (1995), 1-22, esp. 1.

city into perhaps as less as 70.000.[42] This is quite a difference from the 500.000 persons which the city was said to house in the fifth century.[43] It seems however that a lot of the urban topography of the late antique megalopolis remained standing.[44] The survival of much of these ancient sites added to a sense of history and urban identity to later beholders.[45] A lot of the landmarks of the city did change their function and a shift to a more Christian City was made, where instead of large squares and open spaces as social nuclei, churches and monasteries and their dependent institutions fulfilled that role.[46] All in all Constantinople was in a state of crisis during these centuries but managed to remain standing.[47]

From the eight century onwards the city went through a process of restoration and rebuilding.[48] The walls were restored and the population numbers flourished again in the following centuries. So much so that the city even got overcrowded at the end of the eleventh century.[49] The City also got adorned with aristocratic palaces which rivalled the newer one the Emperors had built at the Blachernae.[50] This is clearly connected to the rise of powerful, aristocratic families within the Byzantine state, which happened from the tenth century onwards.[51] Through the building of palaces and the founding of monasteries, which dotted the Constantinopolitan landscape ever more, they vied with each other for power and prestige.[52] The flourishing of Constantinople from the tenth century onwards also attracted a lot of trade. The picture sketched by Michael Attaleiates is one of boats unloading all along the Constantinopolitan coasts.[53] This trade mainly came from Italy and the Middle-East and meant that the City was also inhabited by a lot of foreigners.[54] It even contained several catholic churches and mosques. The growing power of Latins in the City itself and

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[42] Robert Oosterhout, 'Constantinople and the Construction of a Medieval Urban Identity,' in: Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), 334-351, esp. 336.

[43] Ibidem, 336.

[44] Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople,' 54.

[45] Sarah Basset, *The Urban Image of Late Antique Constantinople* (Cambridge, 2004), 14

[46] Oosterhout, 'Constantinople and the Construction of a Medieval Urban Identity,' 337.

[47] Haldon, 'The Idea of the Town,' 9.; Paul Magdalino, 'Constantine V and the Middle Age of Constantinople,' in: Paul Magdalino, *Studies on the History and Topography of Byzantine Constantinople* (Aldershot, 2007), 1-24, 1.

[48] Magdalino, 'Medieval Constantinople,' 54.

[49] Ibidem, 64.

[50] Ibidem, 77.

[51] Paul Stephenson, 'The Rise of the Middle Byzantine Aristocracy and the Decline of the Imperial State,' in: Paul Stephenson, *The Byzantine World* (London, 2010), 22-33, esp. 22.

[52] Oosterhout, 'Constantinople and the Construction of a Medieval Urban Identity,' 337.

[53] Paul Magdalino, 'The maritime neighbourhoods of Constantinople: commercial and residential functions, sixth to twelfth centuries,' *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 54 (2001), 209-226, esp. 215.

[54] Ibidem, 222.

encroaching attacks from Western princes did however lead to a slaughter of Latins in 1182.[55]

So the Constantinople we find at the onset of 1204 is a bustling one. Trade came in from all over the Mediterranean, the City was adorned with splendid monasteries and palaces, several important sites of late antiquity had survived and provided a significant sense of history to the people.

MANY NAMES FOR ONE CITY

The city of Constantinople was known under many names which were used interchangeably. Constantinople was founded on the older city of Byzantion in the year 324 A.D. and quickly grew into one of the most significant cities of the Empire.[56] This classicizing name of βυζάντιον could be used during the Byzantine Empire to mean the city or its inhabitants. Until the Ottoman conquest in 1453 the foremost name the city bore however, was the name of its founder, Constantine the Great: Κωνσταντινούπολις, literally the City of Constantine.[57] This established the importance of both Constantine and the Imperial state for the City. It was created by Roman Emperors and remained to house them for nearly a millennium. To the Byzantines the Empire was the natural order of the world.[58]

Already soon after its (re)foundation another name came into common use and was probably propagated by the emperors as well: Νέα Ρώμη or δευτέρα Ρώμη, meaning 'New Rome' or 'other Rome.'[59] This name signified the importance of the city to the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. Constantinople soon grew to be the center of the Byzantine world; a world in which Old Rome was situated at the outskirts of the Realm. The fact that this name persisted through the ages shows the importance of the Roman heritage to the Byzantines. When the Byzantines thought of their history they looked at the Roman history as their own, starting with Aeneas.[60]

It must be remarked that the city also could play the part and carry the name of a New Jerusalem.[61] There is the tendency however, that the city gets called like this a lot more in the

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[55] Magdalino, 'The maritime neighborhoods', 226.

[56] Grig and Kelly (eds.), *Two Romes*, 14.

[57] John Georgacas Demetrius, 'The Names of Constantinople', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 78 (1947), 347-367, esp. 354-355.

[58] E. M. Jeffreys, 'Byzantine Chroniclers and Ancient History', *Byzantion* 49 (1979), 199-238, esp. 206.

[59] Georgacas, 'The Names of Constantinople', 354.; Grig and Kelly, *Two Romes*, 11.

[60] Kaldellis, 'From Empire to Nation-State', 396.; Jeffreys, 'Byzantine Chroniclers', 228.

[61] Oosterhout, 'Constantinople and the Construction of a Medieval Urban Identity', 336.

secondary literature than the primary sources. The reality of this concept is therefore a bit elusive, but it is clear that the City of Constantinople played an important part within the religious sphere as a Holy City. This is both clear from the huge amount of relics amassed in the City and the large amount of prophecies in which it figured.[62] This was reinforced by the fact that the City was also the seat of the Patriarch: one of the most important religious figures within Orthodox Christianity.

A fourth and shorter name was commonly used to designate Constantinople: Πόλις, simply The City.[63] It is attested from an early age and this denomination can be compared to the way *Urbs* signified Rome in the western empire. If anything, the usage of this term again secures a link to the Older Rome and symbolizes the central significance Constantinople held in the Byzantine mindset as the city par excellence.

HONOR TO THE CITY

It was common from ancient times onward to write descriptions of cities. We already find them in Thucydides' well known history.[64] During the Roman Empire the description of cities got formalized and highly stylized with a set of strict guidelines in the form of the *enkomion*.[65] Firmly established by the third century orator Menander, this highly standardized form of praise remained customary until the end of the Byzantine Empire. A writer or orator was expected to amplify and embellish positive aspects of a city, while suppressing possible negative ones.[66] According to Menander a good *enkomion* consists of two parts: a praise of the city's physical environment and the qualities and accomplishments of its citizens. In the late Roman period the focus of the *enkomion* came to lie on the first part and less on the latter.[67] This meant a departure from the ancient focus on the accomplishments of a people.

Despite the anti-urban message of early Christianity, once the religion became incorporated into the Roman official system it also adopted the *enkomion* of the city into hagiography. It became usual to provide the place of origin of the praised person in question,

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[62] On amount of relics: Oosterhout, 'Constantinople and the Construction of a Medieval Urban Identity', 336.; On the religious prophecies: Paul Magdalino. 'Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople', in: Angeliki Laiou (ed.), *Urbs Capta: The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences* (Paris, 2005), 41-54.

[63] Georgacas, 'The Names of Constantinople', 358.

[64] J. E. Stambaugh, 'The Idea of the City: Three Views of Athens', *Classical Journal*, LXIX, 14 (1974), 302-321.

[65] Helen Saradi, 'The Kallos of the Byzantine City: The Development of a Rhetorical Topos and Historical Reality', *Gesta* 34:1 (1995), 37-56, esp. 37.

[66] Ibidem, 38.

[67] Ibidem, 40.

usually in the form of an *enkomion* of their city.[68] The Christian literature provided an extension to the original rhetorical *topos* of the accomplishments of a citizen. It also added a new component to the praise of a city's physical environment in the guise of the praise of churches. Great and splendid churches could also be seen to embellish the city's prestige.

As described above, the urban landscape of Constantinople went through a period of crisis in the sixth and seventh centuries, but remained standing. This however cannot be said of a lot of the urban landscape of other cities of the Empire, they went through profound changes. With some simplification the new sorts of cities can be summarized as follows: small, fortified, Christian and imperial.[69] Of course not all urban life was completely supplanted by the *kastron*, as this type of city is called, but it did gain a much more prominent place.[70] This went together with the above named trend in which ecclesiastical institutions formed major social nuclei. This change in urban landscape also found resonance in the way cities were praised. A shift can be discerned from the praise of aspects of ancient cities like great monuments towards the praise of the beauty and strength of the walls and the splendor of the churches.[71] This shift took several centuries and even then was in no way absolute, because the Byzantine *paideia* (higher education) was very classicizing in nature.

Apart from the rigid *enkomion*, descriptions of cities can be found in nearly all literary genres in looser styles. One rhetorical tool that was however often used in these texts to highlight aspects of a city was the *ekphraseis*. The *ekphraseis* is a lengthy digression which diverts from the main narrative to focus attention on a small part. Often this small part is meant to transfer a larger statement or picture about either the whole or an abstract concept. Although the *ekphraseis*, like the *enkomion*, is used for all kinds of descriptions apart from cities it is also invaluable for the description of cities as it confers great detail on a certain part of the city. One does however have to be careful when analyzing an *ekphraseis* as it is often meant to convey a larger and more symbolical message than a mere description.

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[68] Saradi, 'The Kallos of the Byzantine City', 43.
[69] Enrico Zanini, 'The Urban Ideal and Urban Planning in Byzantine New Cities of the Sixth Century AD', *Late Antique Archaeology* 1:1 (2003), 196-223, esp. 214.
[70] Haldon, 'The Idea of the Town,' 16.
[71] Saradi, 'The Kallos of the Byzantine City', 45-46.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the City of Constantinople had had a long urban history before the cataclysmic changes of 1204. Like most Byzantine cities, the young megalopolis of Constantinople went through rigid transformations during the sixth and seventh century, but unlike most cities, Constantinople was capable of sustaining and repairing a remarkable amount of the ancient infrastructure. Through an imperial building programme which started from the eight century onwards the city flourished again and was a bustling megalopolis at the time of the Fourth Crusade.

The Constantinopolitan city held a central position in the collective mindset and the governmental infrastructure of the Byzantine Empire. This is signified by the many names the City wears, each connecting to different aspects of the City's and the Empire's (perceived) history.

The City's important role was expressed in *enkomia* and *ekphraseis* time and time again in a whole range of literary works. Unsurprising these literary expressions followed their age and beautified what was there to embellish, which in the later Byzantine Empire shifted to fortifications and churches.

Niketas Choniates

'O imperial City, I cried out, City fortified, City of the great king, tabernacle of the most High, praise and song of his servants and beloved refuge for strangers, queen of the queen of cities, song of songs and splendor of splendors, and the rarest vision of the rare wonders of the world, who is it that has torn us away from thee like darling children from their adorning mother?'

- Niketas Choniates, *O city of Byzantium, Annals by Niketas Choniates*, transl. and intro. by Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1984), 325.

HIS LIFE

Niketas Choniates is our most important Byzantine source for the events of the Fourth Crusade. In order to better understand his writings, we must first take a look at his life. He was born around 1155 in Chonai, a small city in the Maeander valley in Anatolia.[72] This city was at that time a border-city, which often saw imperial troops passing through on campaign against the Turks.[73] Niketas most likely hailed from an important family in the city, as Niketas godfather was the bishop of the city.[74] At the age of nine, he was sent to his brother Michael in the Queen of Cities by his father.[75] Here he got a full education under the supervision of his older brother. Michael was pursuing a career in the church in the capital. His little brother Niketas instead chose to go into the imperial civil service. As both probably came from a family of (lesser) nobility, they were well educated on orders of their father.[76] Niketas was introduced to political circles by his older brother.[77] His first post in these circles was probably as a revenue officer in Pontos and Paphlagonia some time before 1182.[78] During (part of) the reign of Alexios II Komnenos (1180-1183) he served as an undersecretary at the court of Constantinople.

This steady career was broken up abruptly when Andronikos I Komnenos took the throne in 1183. Niketas withdrew from the court either because he could not stand

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[72] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 72-73.
[73] Van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates*, 17.
[74] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 72.
[75] van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates*, 8.
[76] Ibidem, 8-10.
[77] Ibidem, 23.
[78] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 73.

'Andronikos' tyrannical ways' or because he was forced by a demotion.[79] When Andronikos was ousted again by Isaac II Angelos in 1185 Niketas returned to court and was probably in favor with the new emperor, as he gave an oration to celebrate Isaac´s marriage to Margaret-Maria of Hungary around the end of 1185 or the beginning of 1186. During that time he also got married to a girl from the family of the Belissariotes. This noble family was closely allied to the family of Choniates and Niketas himself was good friends with the brothers of the girl he wed, as is clear from the funeral oration he delivered to them.[80] As both brothers were officials within the imperial administration, this friendship probably meant a boost to Niketas' career as well.[81]

His career consequently continued to flourish. In fact, the *Historia* may very well originally have begun as a project to gain favor in higher court circles.[82] In 1187 he accompanied Isaac on a campaign against the Bulgarians and the Cumans and in 1189 he was promoted to governor of the district of Philippopolis.[83] During his time at this post he came into direct contact with the crusading armies of the German emperor Frederick Barbarossa as they passed through his territories. In the early 1190's he was 'judge of the velum' and an ephor. Although the precise content of these posts is unknown, they probably involved financial administration of imperial estates.[84] By 1195 he was appointed to be logothete of the sekreta, which was one of the highest posts in the civil service, answering directly to the emperor. With this post also came the honor of membership to the senate. He had held this influential post for nearly a decade, when he lost it in 1204 when Alexios V Mourtzouphlos briefly seized power.

He witnessed the sacking of the City in 1204 personally. In his *History* he paints a gripping picture of how he, his heavily pregnant wife and several friends escaped the city only by pretending to be captives of a Venetian friend. All this while leaving their whole life burning behind them. After this he stayed a while in Selymbria in Thrace, but soon returned to Constantinople when the Bulgarians invaded Philippopolis in the summer of 1205.[85] He stayed in the former capital for six months before he left for the court of Nicaea. He probably

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[79] van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates*, 24.
[80] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale: Im Spiegel der schönen Rede*, transl. and intro. by Franz Grabler, Byzantinische Geschichtsschreiber 11 (Graz, 1966), 250-285.
[81] Simpson, 'Before and After 1204', 200.
[82] Ibidem, 203.
[83] Alicia Simpson, 'Niketas Choniates: the Historian,' in: Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009), 13-34, esp. 32.
[84] Page, *Being Byzantine*, 74.
[85] Ibidem, 74.

had high hopes to continue his career in Nicaea, but these hopes never materialized. A reason for that may have been the fact that Niketas' powerbase was within the context of the Imperial system of Constantinople. Theodore I Laskaris and his capital in Nicaea however were forced to rely much more on Anatolian aristocracy and his own family as a power base. It is well possible that in the midst of the chaos of the aftermath of the Latin invasion, there was no place in the court offices for a Constantinopolitan senator with no material advantages that he could bring to the court.[86] The power structure in which Niketas acted was after all torn down in 1204 and he did not seem to own any lands or troops in the Anatolian provinces. Although he was in the service of emperor Theodore I Laskaris in some other (unknown) occupation, he never held any office in his government. Niketas was therefore quite a bitter man when he died around 1217.[87]

HIS WRITINGS

What makes Niketas' *Historia* such a remarkable document is the fact that several versions of it circulate.[88] During a large part of his life Niketas wrote and rewrote his *Historia* based on his surroundings and his uses for the text. He for example omitted or added certain passages based on the people for whom the manuscript at a certain time was meant.[89] The bulk of the *Historia* was written before 1204 and the break that the tragedy of 1204 formed had a large influence on the writing process. Choniates' narration had reached the year 1202 when he had to interrupt the writing.[90] This can be concluded from a very sudden allusion to 1204 which interrupts the narrative:

'*At this time [spring 1202], he took Strummitsa, using guile to surround Chrysos, and concluded a peace treaty with Ioannitsa.'*

Up to now, the course of our history has been smooth and easily traversed, but from this point on I do not know how to continue. What judgment is reasonable for him who must relate in detail the common calamities which this queen of cities endured during the reign of the terrestrial angels?'[91]

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[86] Michael Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 60-63.
[87] Simpson, 'Before and After 1204', 218-220.
[88] Ibidem, 189-190.
[89] Ibidem, 209-210.
[90] Ibidem, 205.
[91] Niketas Choniates, *O city of Byzantium, Annals by Niketas Choniates*, transl. and intro. by Harry J. Magoulias (Detroit, 1984), 294.

Another part seems to have been written during his time as a refugee in Selymbria and Constantinople. Finally a lot of rewriting has been done during his last years in Nicaea. That the *Historia* is not a monolithic writing but a process with several sidesteps must be remembered when studying the text.

The *Historia* stands out because of its high style and sophisticated use of language. In fact, one historian even describes it as 'a work of literary art awaiting its due place in world literature.'[92] It is full of apparent paradoxes and ironies and constantly toys with conceptions of tragedy and comedy.[93] It plays with symbolism and metaphors throughout its pages.[94] It is also critical of the Byzantine state and emperors. After all it had to explain how it was possible that the atrocities of 1204 happened. According to Niketas this could happen because of the internal strife of the Byzantine Empire.[95] In many ways the *Historia* can be seen as an explanation of the happenings of 1204. In the narrative he mostly blames the Byzantines themselves and the Latins or Turks mostly figure as literary *topoi* of the authentic barbarian.[96] His stance about the Byzantine fate in the *Historia* is perfectly summarized in a small poem in the beginning of chapter 9:

'*If you* [the Byzantines] *now suffer, do not blame the Powers* [God and Fate]*,*

For they are good, and all the fault was ours.

All the strongholds you put into his [Latin] *hands,*

And now his slaves must do what he commands.'[97]

It is clear from this that Niketas blames the Byzantines themselves for the tragedy that befell them. If the emperors had not been concerned with luxury and trivialities and the people had cared for war instead of commerce they could have together stopped the Latins.

Apart from the *Historia* also several letters and orations from Niketas have survived the ages. The orations are mostly from before the flight of 1204, although some are from Niketas' time in Nicaea.[98] The letters number eleven and seem to have all been written after Niketas fled Constantinople. They tell the story of a man who lost everything and is looking

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[92] Stephanos Efthymiades, 'Niketas Choniates: The Writer', in: Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009), 35-58, esp 58..

[93] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Paradox, Reversal and the Meaning of History', in: Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009), esp.75-100, 77-78.

[94] Simon Franklin and Alexander Kazhdan, *Studies on Byzantine Literature of the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1984), 263.

[95] Simpson, 'Niketas Choniates,' 23.; Efthymiades, 'Niketas Choniates: The Writer', 39.

[96] Simpson, 'Niketas Choniates,' 22-23.

[97] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 321.

[98] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale*, 13-16.

to old friends for help. In fact there even is one letter, asking for help, which seems to have been standardized and without designation, so it could be send to anyone.[99]

VIEW OF THE CITY

In the *Historia* the city of Constantinople plays an important role. He does however not write an *enkomion* of the city. Instead it figures frequently as the stage of action or is described in detail in long *ekphraseis*. In fact, the *Historia* has often been mined by historians for its many topographical remarks about the city.[100] In general Niketas focuses mostly on the secular infrastructure of Constantinople, generally giving less attention to churches and monasteries in the city.[101] In fact, when describing the raiding of the city he only speaks of two churches, one holding the grave of Justinian and the other the Hagia Sophia. Interestingly enough in the case of the Hagia Sophia, Niketas describes only the destruction of the altar in the church: '*The table of sacrifice, fashioned from every kind of precious material and fused by fire into one whole - blended together into a perfection of one multicolored thing of beauty, truly extraordinary and admired by all nations - was broken into pieces and divided among the despoilers,...*'[102] Niketas instead focuses mostly on sites like the Hippodrome, the aristocratic palaces (several of which he owned and describes vividly), the fora, the porticoed streets and the monumental ornaments that adorned them. This is more in line with the classical guidelines then with the way Niketas' contemporaries usually described cities.[103] Niketas was after all a very classicizing author and knew his classics well, as is apparent from the many allusions to them.[104] He however also was well-read in other areas, like the old Christian writers or later Byzantine writers.[105] The reason why Niketas focused mostly on the ancient areas remains a guess, but the answer can probably be found in both personal interest and the classicizing education he received.

When Niketas left Constantinople not much of it was standing anymore. During clashes at the end of 1203 a fire started which destroyed large parts of the historical center of

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[99] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale*, 353-356.
[100] Alicia Simpson, 'Narrative Images of Medieval Constantinople', in: Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009), 185-209, esp. 185.
[101] Ibidem, 186-188.
[102] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 315.
[103] Saradi, 'The Kallos of the Byzantine City', 45-49.
[104] Efthymiades, *Niketas Choniates*, 35.; Titos Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis of Niketas Choniates,' in: Stephanos Efthymiadis and Alicia Simpson (eds.), *Niketas Choniates: A Historian and a Writer* (Geneva, 2009), 208-223, esp. 222-223.
[105] Van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates*, 52.

the City.[106] Add the raiding and pillaging that happened when the Latins actually took the city and not much can have been left standing. The words Niketas utters when leaving the city walls behind him may therefore not be too exaggerated: *'If those things for whose protection you were erected no longer exist, being utterly destroyed by fire and war, for what purpose do you still stand?'*[107] The city of Constantinople would never look as magnificent as before 1203 again until its capture by the Ottomans in 1453.[108]

      Niketas therefore had a lot to bewail, and he did. A chapter in the *Historia* called the *De Statuis* calls for special consideration in this respect. The chapter is dedicated to all the bronze statues the Latins melted for coin.[109] It however also carries several strong metaphorical and allegorical meanings, both to the whole conflict and to the topography of the City.[110] At the end of the chapter before the *De Statuis,* Niketas tells how the Constantinopolitan rabble destroys a statue of Athena because of some superstition.[111] This must be read as a metaphor for the Byzantine lack of wisdom and courage, things of which Athena is the symbol.[112] The narrative in the *De Statuis* then moves to a Constantinople occupied by the Latins, who melt the statues *'displaying the love of gold which characterizes them as a people.'*[113] He starts with telling how the Crusaders plunder the graves of the Emperors, finding that the body of Justinian had not yet decomposed in his grave. Then the narrative passes to the antique statuary on the Fora of Constantine and Theodosius and finally the Hippodrome. Using the statues as a guideline Niketas takes the reader through many of the ancient landmarks of the City, establishing a clear topography of layers of history that composed the City. It is then no coincidence that most of the statues he describes refer back to the ancient past. Among the statues are Hercules, Nikon and Eutyches created on order of Augustus, Bellerophon, the Hyena Constantine the Great brought from Antioch, the She-wolf which nursed Remus and Romulus and Helen of Troy. Using these statues Niketas continues to establish clear lines with the ancient past: the Hercules, Nikon and Eutyches, the Hyena and the She-wolf all represent (Roman) power and courageousness.[114] The Crusaders however destroyed these relics to a culture they too claimed to have a heritage to. Niketas

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[106] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 303-304.
[107] Ibidem, 325.
[108] Alice-Mary Talbot, 'The Restoration of Constantinople under Michael VIII', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 47 (1993), 243-261.
[109] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 357-362.
[110] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 210.
[111] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 306.
[112] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 212.
[113] Niketas Chonaites, *O City of Byzantium*, 357.
[114] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 215.

makes that quite clear in the line: '*but because these too were bronze, and they were short of coins, they threw them into the furnace, selling out even those venerable monuments of their own people's culture.*'[115]

Also striking in this aspect is the statue of Helen of Troy, beauty incarnate, which is destroyed because the Latins are '*wholly ignorant of their ABCs, the ability to read, and knowledge of those epic verses sung of you.*'[116] Using these Roman statues Niketas disqualifies the Roman claim of the Crusaders and weaves the theme of the destruction of Troy into his narrative. It is important to note that no records remain of a statue of Helen of Troy in Constantinople and it most likely that he actually described a statue of Aphrodite.[117] This illustrates how Niketas actively formed and chose these statues for his narrative. He does however end the chapter on a more positive note. The last statues he describes are a hippopotamus and a crocodile engaged in a bloody struggle to the death, situated in the Hippodrome.[118] These statues represent the enemies of the Byzantines at that time, who in search for supremacy struggled against one another and could therefore both be beaten by the Byzantines.[119] '*Common to both was the contest, common the defense, co-equal the victory, and death the fellow contestant. This mutual destruction and killing has persuaded me to say that these death-dealing evils, ruinous to men, not only are portrayed in images and not only happen to the bravest of beasts but frequently occur among the nations, such as those which have marched against us Romans, killing and being killed, perishing by the power of Christ who scatters those nations which wish for wars, and who does not rejoice in bloodshed, and who causes the just man to tread on the asp and the basilisk and to trample under foot the lion and the dragon.*'[120]

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[115] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 215.
[116] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 360.
[117] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 222.
[118] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 361-362.
[119] Papamastorakis, 'Interpreting the De Signis', 217.
[120] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 362.

At two points in the *Historia* Niketas gives lengthy lamentations on the fate of the City.[121] The first lamentation starts religious themed: '*O City, City, eye of all cities, universal boast, supramundane wonder, wet nurse of churches, leader of the faith, guide of Orthodoxy, beloved topic of orations, the abode of every good thing! O City, that hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of his fury! O City, consumed by a fire far more drastic than the fire which of old fell upon the Pentapolis!" "What shall I testify to thee? What shall I compare to thee? The cup of thy destruction is magnified," says Jeremias, who was given to tears as he lamented over ancient Sion.*' This fits with the narrative just before this lamentation in which the Crusaders are unmasked as enemies to Christianity. Instead of going to the Holy Land and freeing it from the Muslims they turned on their fellow Christians and the leading city of the Faith. This piece of text however also shows signs of a narrative of exile. During the years of exile this narrative became extremely important in the Byzantine minds to explain what happened in 1204. This narrative compared the actual events of the thirteenth century to the Babylonian exile of the Old Testament.[122] Niketas Choniates also displays this narrative when he bids the Emperor Theodoros I Laskaris to retake the City of Constantine as Zorobabel once did for the Jews.[123] Or when he sarcastically tells of how the Patriarch fled the Crusader invasion departing '*our New Sion.*'[124] This shows this narrative was established soon after the sack of the City and probably shaped the way Niketas formed his *Historia* in his later years. After all, the main focus of the *Historia* is the large amount of internal strife and committed sins by the rulers of the Byzantine Empire.[125]

As he hints at in the *De Statuis* Choniates considered Constantinople the true heir of Rome and the Roman emperors. This aspect returns in the lengthy lamentations as well: '*O prolific City, once garbed in royal silk and purple and now filthy and squalid and heir to many evils, having need of true children! O City, formerly enthroned on high, striding far and wide, magnificent in comeliness and more becoming in stature; now thy luxurious garments and elegant royal veils are rent and torn;*'[126] Or: '*O imperial City, I cried out, City fortified, City of the great king,*'[127] The Empire and its state remained the main method of viewing the world for Choniates even as this foundation was being changed all around him.

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[121] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 317-318; Idem, 325-326.
[122] Angold, 'Byzantine Nationalism and the Nicaean Empire', 53.
[123] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale*, 217-219; Idem, 248; Idem, 298.
[124] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 326.
[125] Kaldellis, *Hellenism in Byzantium*, 341.
[126] Niketas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*, 317.
[127] Ibidem, 325.

Apart from history, wealth and beauty however there is another thing that had been lost during the fall of Constantinople; Niketas delivered an oration at the funeral of his long-time friends and brothers in law Michael and John Belissariotes at Nicaea in 1207.[128] In this oration he speaks of the heaviest loss the fall of the City produced: the loss of great men and leaders like Michael and John.[129] He tells how these men were produced and taught in the City of Emperors and indirectly creates the assumption that this education and therefore these wise men can now no longer be produced as the City has been lost. In the same oration he also calls the city '*nurse of wisdom*,' clearly highlighting the important institutions of education which were vested in the city.[130] This passage is part of a rhetoric which is primarily meant to honor Michael and John, but may very well betray a real fear of Niketas.

As nearly all Byzantine writers Niketas also has many names for the city of Constantinople, signifying the importance of the city in their mindset. Apart from usual names like the Queen of Cities, the City of Emperors or simply The City, Niketas also uses other adjective forms to describe Constantinople. Niketas often calls Constantinople the '*home*'-city or '*fathercity*.'[131] Telling how he lost '*his hearth*' it becomes clear he really thinks of the city as a lost home. A home he clearly misses a lot and which he expects others to miss as well. The sense of belonging that is apparent in a lot of the pleas in his letters and orations makes clear he really thinks of Constantinople as a homeland.

Most striking in this aspect is the already mentioned standardized letter in which Niketas searches for a '*selbstgeschaffenen Vaterland.*'[132] In this letter he tells the tale of king Abgar V of Edessa who succeeded in convincing emperor Augustus in letting him go home by showing him that even animals feel the longing for home. Niketas compares himself in the letter to this king Abgar and to Odysseus in the sense that he too longs for home. But since it is impossible to reach his real home (Constantinople), he asks the 'friend' for a replacement home. All this shows that Niketas thought of Constantinople as his fatherland and expects others to think of it in the same way.

[128] Van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates*, 155-160.
[129] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale*, 254-255.
[130] Ibidem, 269.
[131] Ibidem, 218; 357.
[132] Ibidem, 355.

CONCLUSION

Niketas Choniates is multi-faceted writer who also serves as our most important source of the sacking. As a high-ranking official he knew the workings of the Byzantine state very well and in 1204 he lost nearly everything important to him. Among other things he lost his home and fathercity. In his *Historia*, after the rewriting, he seeks to explain these cataclysmic events by showing how Latin brutality went hand in hand with Byzantine incompetence and internal strife. That he believed in this narrative of exile through sin becomes quite clear in the consistency with which he utters it in all kinds of media.

To him Constantinople is simply the center of the world. Its loss is earthshattering to him. His lament in for example the passage of the *Historia* where he leaves the burning city behind, or when he recounts earlier years at the funeral speech of his brothers-in-law seems to be genuine.[133] This premise is strengthened by the fact that Niketas wrote these passages not for political gain, but in his final bitter years in exile.

He does not write an *enkomion* of the city, but Constantinople does feature as the stage for many events in his *Historia*. When describing the city he follows the classical guidelines and focuses more on the secular attributes of the city. In passages describing the city after the sack he mostly mourns for the beautiful aspects of the City which were destroyed in the flames of war. He however also clearly identifies Constantinople as his home and expects other refugees to do so as well. This sheds a small light on the important place Constantinople took in the collective mindset of the Byzantine elite.

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[133] Niketas Choniates, *Kaisertaten und Menschenschicksale*, 250-251.

Of Philosophers and Emperors

'Then you, who held out through the invasions of the enemy, and protected the empire, and watched over the government, and armed its forces, and drove away its opponents - should you not obtain the prize of victory, and joining the name of victory you bear with reality, should you not rule all cities?'

- Theodore II Doukas Laskaris, *In Praise of the Great City of Nicaea*, transl. Clive Foss, Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and Its Praises (Brookline, 1996), 14: 151.

When the city of Constantinople fell to the Latins a portion of the Byzantine elite regrouped at the court of Nicaea. Under the emperors Theodore Laskaris and John III Vatatzes the realm in exile rose to prominence again.[134] Education was also reestablished at the new capital, which led to a certain revival of a learned climate.[135] This educational climate drew on several teachers that transferred the education they had enjoyed in Constantinople to this new setting. The two writers we will discuss in this chapter both benefited and contributed heavily to this.

One is Nikephoros Blemmydes, a learned philosopher whose education took place in the beginning years of the empire of Nicaea and who became a teacher of the elite in Nicaea himself.[136] The other is his student and philosopher-emperor Theodore II Doukas Laskaris.[137]

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[134] Donald M. Nicol, *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (Cambridge, 1996), 21.

[135] Clive Foss, *Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital* (Brookline, 1996), 67-71.

[136] Nikephoros Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, transl. and ed. by Joseph A. Munitiz, spicilegium sacrum lovaniense études et documents 48 (Leuven, 1988), 14-21.

[137] Foss, *Nicaea*, 69.

NIKEPHOROS BLEMMYDES

  Blemmydes is revered by most sources as the wisest scholar of his time.[138] He also seemed to have a very complicated personality however and seemed stiff and distant to most around him.[139] We know so much about this man because he was the only Byzantine to ever write a full-fledged autobiography.[140] This work, *A Partial Account,* consists of two parts: the first one dealing with his tribulations and the second one with his accomplishments.[141] He composed it during his 66th life year, in 1264.[142] It is an extremely hard and inaccessible read for anyone. The first editor, August Heisenberg, apparently misunderstood numerous passages and made several punctuation mistakes.[143]

  Blemmydes studied throughout both the Western and Eastern halves of the former Byzantine Empire, but in the end chose to stay in the Eastern half where he grew up. Here he enjoyed quite a remarkable clerical career, even being nominated for the vocation of Patriarch but refusing this honor and instead opting for a monastic pursuit.[144] Apart from his studies and clerical positions, he also served as a teacher of philosophy, teaching such reputable men as Theodore II Doukas Laskaris and

George Akropolites. He was a stubborn man who dared at several points in his life to stand up to the authorities around him. He did in fact not seem to have very high regards for the world of both worldly and clerical politics as becomes clear in the following passage: '*...but after my return from the Skamander and from my professor, as I felt myself drawn once more to the dream world that I have already mentioned* [the imperial court] *although I cut myself off from it, I dedicated myself (deceived by the solemnity of its titles) to another world, where even more turbulence reigned, that of the Church and clergy.*'[145]

  Nikephoros Blemmydes was a very independent man who held views that at times stood directly opposite of the Nicaean authorities while at other times his eloquence of speech made him a representative of those same authorities. He played a leading part for example in

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[138] Ibidem, 68.

[139] Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, 32-33.

[140] Michael Angold, 'The Autobiographical Impulse in Byzantium', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 52 (1998), 225-257, esp. 249.

[141] Angold, 'The Autobiographical Impulse', 248.

[142] Blemmydes, *A Partial Account,* 43.

[143] Joseph A. Munitiz, 'Self-Canonisation: the "Partial Account" of Nikephoros Blemmydes', in: Sergei Hackel (ed.), *The Byzantine Saint* (New York, 2001), 164-170, esp. 164.

[144] Foss, *Nicaea*, 68.

[145] Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, I:11, 48.

several theological discussions that were held with both Latin and Armenian scholars, but also defended the Epirotan claim to independence from Nicaea. [146]

His accounts of Constantinople in the *Partial Account* are also characterized by this independent distance. He is very to the point and factual in his descriptions of his *'fatherland, Byzantium,'*[147] In those passages in which he gets more in depth about Constantinople it is often about matters of organization of the Church in exile. He for example relates that the Patriarch at Nicaea supervised two sets of clerics, one set for the Patriarchy and one set for the Nicene diocese. They apparently did this because *'the Queen of cities maintained the hope of regaining her former power, a hope which we have seen has not been "defrauded".'*[148]

That we however do deal here with a Byzantine who still organized his worldview in the Byzantine system of *oikoumène* becomes clear when we look at the passage in which Blemmydes argues against the imperial claims of Theodore Komnenos Doukas of Epiros *'as it was not to the good of men from the same race, nor was it right, that there should be two Emperors and two Patriarchs (as was also part of his plan).'*[149] So even in this distant and stubborn man so removed from politics can we find a glimmer of what has been labelled a 'Byzantine nation.'[150]

THEODORE II DOUKAS LASKARIS

Where we find in Blemmydes an emotionally distant and often strict man, we find in his student nearly the complete opposite. Theodore was emotional and at times extremely volatile, especially later in life when he also suffered from epileptic strokes.[151] He was however also an eager student who studied with the best teachers of his day. This made him an erudite man who through his studies held views that severely hindered him during his reign.

Most notably among those is his practice to elevate men of low birth to high positions, apparently putting friendship over kinship, and merit over blood, or in his own words: *'If I may say something novel: the love of true subjects prevails completely over many great blood*

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[146] Ibidem, 35-36.
[147] Ibidem, II:7, 97.
[148] Blemmydes, *A Partial Account*, I:12, 49.
[149] Ibidem, I:23, 56-57.
[150] Paul Magdalino, 'Hellenism and Nationalism', 5.
[151] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 78-79.

relations.[152] He provided these friends with titles, offices and noble marriages.[153] This naturally did not sit well with the aristocrats who led his armies and commanded his forces.[154] So when, after his early death in 1258, Theodore left one of these 'new men' as regent to his son, the aristocrats undertook a coup to regain power once more.

Theodore produced several scholarly works and high-style orations. It is quite extraordinary to have writings by an emperor instead of about him. Curiously enough however, not much of this work has been translated into a modern language. In fact, a translation of most of his works in Latin has only been brought about in 2000.[155] One piece of oratory that has gotten more attention however, and which we will also use extensively in this thesis, is his oration *'In Praise of the Great City of Nicaea'*. This oration stands out because of its long and explicit praise for the new capital of Nicaea. It is in fact one of the longest *enkomia* ever written for the city.

The speech hasn't been precisely dated, but it is certain Theodore delivered it at court to his father John III Vatatzes, which gives us a date before 1254.[156] It has been proposed to have been written as a scholarly exercise, which also casts doubts about its seriousness.[157] Other scholars however propose that this oration does reflect the view of its author and would have been appreciated by its audience.[158] The fact that it was read at court, does suggest that its content was appreciated.

In this oration, which borrows heavily from more standard *enkomia* of Constantinople, Theodore goes through all the things which make the city of Nicaea where he was born great.[159] He starts by praising the walls of the city for being strong and well-constructed.[160] He then goes on to praise it as a center of learning and philosophy, even rivalling the Athens of old.[161] Nicaea is superior however, because it shares in the Wisdom of God.[162] After that he praises the crops and orchards that are apparently situated within the

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[152] Akropolites, *The History*, 25.; Theodore Doukas Laskaris, *Theodore II Ducas Lascaris opuscula rhetorica*, ed. by A. Tartaglia (Munich, 2000), 121.23-37.
[153] Akropolites, *The History*, 27.
[154] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile*, 80.
[155] Theodore Laskaris, *Opuscula rhetorica*.
[156] Foss, *Nicaea*, 129.
[157] Erwin Fenster, *Laudes Constantinopolitanae* (München, 1968), 178-180.
[158] Foss, *Nicaea*, 129-130.
[159] Fenster, *Laudes*, 179.
[160] Theodore II Doukas Laskaris, *In Praise of the Great City of Nicaea*, transl. Clive Foss, Nicaea: A Byzantine Capital and Its Praises (Brookline, 1996), 1: 133.
[161] Laskaris, *In Praise*, 2-5: 135-139.
[162] Ibidem, 6-7: 139-141.

walls, giving the city the appearance of a grove or the Garden of Eden.[163] Then from paragraph 14 to 16 he praises Nicaea as the city that stood firm while Constantinople failed. Throughout the oration Theodore also makes wordplays on the name of Nicaea and Victory (*Nikè* in Greek), as Nicaea will bring the Byzantines the Victory in the future.[164]

This makes for a remarkable whole. First of all the fact that this is the first oration of its kind for Nicaea (that is still known to us) makes it extraordinary. That it was delivered by an imperial prince however adds a whole extra dimension to this. We must be careful not to see too much of imperial policy in this oration, especially as we don't know when it was delivered exactly, but the Laskarids were most certainly embellishing their new home with a palace, churches, stronger walls and an aqueduct.[165] It appears that in words and mind they embellished the city as well. What adds to that is the fact that Theodore was the first emperor who wasn't born in Constantinople and never even entered it; Nicaea was therefore at the center of his world and his empire.

In the oration Theodore borrows heavily from older models, *topoi* and modes of reference.[166] What is striking is how cheeky he can get at times. When he says about Nicaea: *'Thus this city of yours, which is a queen of cities...'*[167] or *'For it is then that a city is above other cities, and a queen above queens, and a ruler above rulers, a superior above superiors...'*,[168] it makes one wonder if using these words, which once were the prerogatives of Constantinople, isn't some sort of blasphemy.

Constantinople however doesn't just witness its names taken by Nicaea but is also reprimanded in harsh words for failing to protect the empire several times: *'For previously, when the city of Constantine was taken, and yielded to the enemy, and ran away from the Italian army and was enslaved, and did not guard the other cities in accordance with the Gospel, but like some initiate pagan, ignored them;'*[169] Theodore in fact suggest that Nicaea is now deserving of the first place instead of Constantinople.[170] This seems quite a shocking shift from the Constantinople as the center of the world we found in Choniates' writing.

Theodore thus seems to have written an *enkomion,* as existed for Constantinople by the thousands and which he most surely studied during his education, for his new home of

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[163] Laskaris, *In Praise*, 9-10: 143-145.
[164] Ibidem, 17: 153.
[165] Foss, *Nicaea*, 97-120.
[166] Ibidem, 125-127.
[167] Laskaris, *In Praise*, 4: 137.
[168] Ibidem, 1: 133.
[169] Ibidem, 14: 149.
[170] Ibidem, 14: 151.

Nicaea. If anything, this shows signs that some Byzantines were adjusting to their new reality. They after all didn't have the luxury, as we do now, to know they would regain their former capital one day. One can only wonder if this trend would have developed further if the Queen of Cities hadn't been reconquered.

CONCLUSION

In the writings of Blemmydes and Laskaris we find two very different approaches with which Byzantines could deal with the rapid changes in their world. In Blemmydes *A Partial Account* we find that even a man so removed from mundane things adhered to some of the worldview of the Byzantine *oikoumène*. He did of course have the privilege of writing in a time when Constantinople had recently been reclaimed, but to him not much has fundamentally changed.

Theodore II Doukas Laskaris provides us with a shifting worldview. Adapting to the reality of his day this educated prince was using the older model of the *enkomion* to reflect the fact that things weren't as they had been before. Admittedly he is quite alone in this, or at the very least in the severity of his stance, but it isn't unthinkable that others around him were adapting as well.

Georgios Akropolites

'So let our beginning be the capture of the city of Constantine which is so notorious and well known to everyone that there is not a single nation that did not learn about it.'

- George Akropolites, *The History*, ed. and transl. by Ruth Macrides (Oxford, 2007), §1: 105.

HIS LIFE

George Akropolites (1217-1282) was the first Byzantine historian that was born while the Latins ruled in Constantinople. He was however born in the Queen of Cities and spend the first 16 years of his life there.[171] His father was a local notable who apparently hated the Latin invaders he served.[172] In his son's 16th year of life he sent George to the Nicaean court to finish his studies. It seems he intended to follow his son towards the court in exile, but died two years later of a sickness before he could follow up on those plans.[173] In the meantime George continued his studies in Nicaea. In fact, it seems he was handpicked by emperor John III Vatatzes to be part of the new structure of higher learning the emperor was setting up in Nicaea.[174] Akropolites actually boasts about a much closer relationship between him and the emperor than the other students.[175]

In his studies he got taught by several of the greatest minds of the empire of that time. It was his study under the aforementioned Nikephoros Blemmydes however that he took the most pride in.[176] It seems Akropolites took after his mentor as several parts of the *History* seem to coincide with views Blemmydes had.[177] After his studies he became a teacher himself and actually taught to the future emperor Theodore II Doukas Laskaris. It becomes clear from Theodore's own writings that he considered his teacher to be his friend.[178]

Apart from teaching, the 'new man' at the court also fulfilled several administrative posts and accompanied John III and Theodore II on several campaigns. His career at the

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[171] Akropolites, *The History*, 6.
[172] Georgios Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, ed. and transl. by Wilhelm Blum, Bibliothek der Griechischen Literatur 28 (Stuttgart, 1989), 1.
[173] Ibidem, 1.
[174] Akropolites, *The History*, 8.
[175] Ibidem, §32: 192.
[176] Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, 2.
[177] Akropolites, *The History*, 47-48.
[178] Ibidem, 11.

Nicaean court culminated when he was appointed Praetor of Albanon and Western Macedonia in 1256.[179] This high title meant he held financial, administrative and military responsibilities and was something like a vice-emperor. He was however not able to enjoy this high honor for a long time because the forces of the Epirot despot Michael II surrounded him at Prilep at the end of 1257 and he spent the next two years as a prisoner in Arta.[180]

Peculiarly enough it seems that it was exactly this unfortunate happening that saved his life. Akropolites was a man who owed his whole career to the Laskarid dynasty and was among the inner circle of Theodore II.[181] Theodore however was dismissing the aristocratic men at court in favor to men of lower birth like Akropolites himself.[182] This did not sit well with the aristocrats who staged a coup after Theodore's death in 1258 and elected Michael Palaiologos to be regent of the young emperor John IV Laskaris.[183] In the next year he disposed of Theodore's 'new men' and was raised to the imperial office in 1259.[184] In fact, of the five men Akropolites reports were honored by Theodore II with great titles in 1255, only Akropolites was still alive when Michael Palaiologos was crowned.[185] And this may only be the case because he was locked up by a hostile government at the time of the chaos which ensued after Theodore's death.

After Michael VIII Palaiologus won a crushing victory over the Epirots at Pelagonia in 1259, Akropolites was released and returned to the Nicaean court.[186] He managed to secure the favor of Michael VIII and became part of his administration. So much so, that we know that at least after 1261 he held the function of *megas logothetes*: the chief minister and the minister of foreign affairs.[187] In fact, at the end of 1260 he was sent on an embassy to the Bulgarians, so he may have held the position earlier. After he returned from that embassy Michael VIII quite miraculously succeeded in retaking Constantinople. Akropolites wrote thirteen prayers to accompany the glorious occasion as he was at the travelling court of the emperor when the news reached them in Meteorion.[188] After the reconquest he also became a teacher of philosophy in the new capital and played an important part in the following

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[179] Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, 7.
[180] Ibidem, 8.
[181] Akropolites, *The History*, 25-26.
[182] Angold, *A Byzantine Government in exile*, 76-77.
[183] Ibidem, 82-83.
[184] Ibidem, 88-89.
[185] Akropolites, *The History*, 26.; Idem, §60: 298.
[186] Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, 9.
[187] Akropolites, *The History*, 23-24.
[188] Ibidem, 29.

discussions about Union of the Churches, even travelling to Rome and France to act as the emperor's voice in the negotiations.[189] This was a very unpopular attempt to bring a union to the orthodox and Roman churches, which would acknowledge the Pope as the highest Bishop, but through which Michael VIII hoped to prevent another crusade. The last that we hear of Akropolites is that he went on an embassy to Trebizond in early 1282 to negotiate a marriage between Michael's daughter and the emperor of Trebizond. He still held the title of *megas logothetes* at that time and died later that year, 65 years of age.[190]

HIS WRITINGS

Most of what we know of Akropolites, we know because he told us in his *Chronikè Syngraphé* (or *History).* This large historical work is also the main source we have for the period of exile. It is often considered to be an objective and reliable work, based on Akropolites' statement on the importance of impartiality in his introduction.[191] Recent scholarship has however shown that Akropolites' work requires a lot more scrutiny than thought before.[192]

Two modern works exist that deal with George Akropolites and his *History*. There is a German translation by Wilhelm Blum from 1989 and an English translation by Ruth Macrides from 2007. Before that the only redirected version was by August Heisenberg from as far back as 1903. Akropolites has therefore not been studied as extensively as one might hope. Those two translations however do provide a comprehensive inquiry into Akropolites' work and life.

The *History* was written sometime after 1261, but when exactly is hard to pinpoint.[193] Blum believes it is likely to have been written close after 1261, but Macrides states it cannot be discounted that Akropolites wrote it late in life.[194] Another question that has not been conclusively answered is whether Akropolites actually wrote a longer *History* than we still have today. The timeframe from the loss of Constantinople until its reconquest does create a nice whole, but that does not explain why the last chapter ends mid-sentence.[195] It could have continued further into Michael VIII's reign, which means it would have dealt with the Union

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[189] Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, 11.
[190] Ibidem, 13.
[191] Akropolites, *The History*, 29.
[192] Anthony Kaldellis, 'Review: George Akropolites: The History. Introduction, Translation and Commentary by Ruth Macrides', *Speculum* 83:2 (2008), 459-460, esp. 460.
[193] Akropolites, *The History*, 34.
[194] Akropolites, *Die Chronik*, 22.
[195] Akropolites, *The History*, §89: 387-388.

of the Churches: a policy Akropolites supported. This could have made it a target of anti-unionist destruction, like other pieces of Akropolites' writing.[196]   What is clear however, is that Akropolites took an extremely pro-Palaiologan position in the *History*.[197] This becomes especially evident when we compare it to the version of Akropolites *History* which was supposedly composed by Theodore Skoutariotes. Through variations, additions and omissions this metaphrasis of Akropolites' text subtly constructs a much more pro-Laskarid version of the *History*.[198]

   Akropolites for example introduces Michael VIII very early in the narrative, far before he is emperor, and the most energetic passages of the *History* are those in which Michael is the main protagonist.[199] That this is a conscious effort can quite clearly be seen in the following passage, when a regent must be chosen for the young emperor John IV: *'The eyes of all were on Michael Komnenos, whom the narrative has often mentioned.'*[200] It is even more interesting to see how the emperors John III and Theodore II are portrayed as incompetent leaders, even though Akropolites owed everything to them.[201] In several passages Akropolites distances himself from them, especially from Theodore II.[202] It is clear that Akropolites, who was still in function when writing the *History*, tried to appease his new employer and that the *History* must be read as a piece of propaganda for Michael VIII. In fact, it could very well have been written for that exact purpose.

AGAINST THE LATINS

   One of the most remarkable things about the *History* is the attention that is paid to the naming of titles. Akropolites names his subjects very meticulously.[203] There is for example an Epirot, self-proclaimed emperor named Theodore Komnenos. After his defeat at the battle of Klokotnitza however he is named Theodore Angelos; a surname with less prestige.[204] He also does this in regard to the enemies of the empire. Those who defy the authority of the emperor at Nicaea are consistently labelled rebels and renegades. Also every time he has to name a Latin emperor, he doesn't hesitate to immediately denote the limits of their power,

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[196] Akropolites, *The History*, 32.
[197] Ibidem, 60.
[198] Ibidem, 67-68.
[199] Ibidem, 64.
[200] Ibidem, §76, 344.
[201] Ibidem, 56.
[202] Ibidem, §60: 297-298.; Idem, §66: 319.; Idem, §75: 339-340.
[203] Ibidem, 41.
[204] Ibidem, §25: 178-179.

calling them *'the emperor of the city of Constantinople'* for example.[205] In this way he tries to deny the Latin emperors any claim to the Empire of the Romans. He also describes two characteristics of the Latins: their hatred of the Romans, and their lack of perseverance.

Akropolites shows that the Byzantine people weren't too fond of their new Latin lords. In the next passage, in which the citizens of Constantinople petition the Latin emperor Henry in their case against the papal legate, Akropolites clearly shows that the Byzantines believed themselves to be different to the Latins both in their way of life and in their religious beliefs: *'Although we are of another race and have another bishop we have subjected ourselves to your rule, so that you rule over our bodies, but certainly not our spirits and souls. It is of necessity that we fight for you in war but it is utterly impossible that we should give up our beliefs and practices. Either deliver us from the terrible things which have come upon us or release us as free men to go to our own kind.'*[206] It is interesting to note that the Latin emperor actually listened to the petition and stood up for the Byzantine clergy against the papal legate. Many Byzantine monks were freed from prison by him and fled to the Nicaean court afterwards.

CONSTANTINOPLE IN THE HISTORY

In contrast to Choniates' *Historia* Constantinople hardly functions as a theatre in Akropolites *History*. It is a place where people rule and armies march from and to, but we are not given much of an inside look into the City. Most of the action happens either at the court in Nicaea or during military campaigns in the field. In fact, the *History* is quite famous for the way in which it structures its narrative in 'eastern' and 'western' parts.[207] This probably reflects the way Akropolites (and other contemporaries) tried to order the world at that moment, or in Akropolites own words: *'Since at that time affairs were in a fragmented state because rule was shared by many everywhere, the narrative also must twist along in a complex manner.'*[208] It is clear that the Byzantine world during exile looked a lot different from the clearly structured Byzantine Empire of old.

Constantinople does however feature quite prominently as a marker of time during the beginning chapters of the *History*. Akropolites uses it as a starting point of his *History* and it is one of the few historical dates that is actually named. In fact, the whole of chapter 4 is used

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[205] Akropolites, *The History*, 89-90.
[206] Ibidem, §17: 155.
[207] Ibidem, 34.
[208] Ibidem, §37: 202-203.

to focus on and add gravity to the event.[209] After that there are plenty of instances where we are told what happened *before, during or after* the capture of Constantinople.[210] All this adds up to create a feeling that this was in fact an event that changed the Byzantine world in a profound way.

The other time Constantinople returns to the foreground is at the end of the *History* when Michael VIII's forces undertake military action against the City and quite miraculously retake it. Once (truly) Roman forces enter the City again we are also given a look inside the City again.[211] The narrative then makes it very clear that it was by divine providence that Constantinople came into the hands of the Byzantines. In a passage that seems to mirror chapter 4, in which Constantinople was lost, Akropolites calls attention to the date on which Constantinople was retaken: *'And these things happened in this way, and by the providence of God the city of Constantinople again became subject to the emperor of the Romans, in a just and fitting way, on the 25th of July, in the fourth indiction, in the 6769th since the creation of the world, after being held by the enemy for 58 years.'*[212]

What follows are several chapters in which God and the Divine, who are remarkably absent throughout most of the *History*, are connected to the reconquest of Constantinople. It is in these passages that we get a most in depth look into Constantinople and its geography. First there is a tale in which the emperor Michael VIII hears he has taken Constantinople:

'As quickly as she could, then, the emperor's sister went to the emperor; Finding him asleep, she shook him gently with her hand in order to awaken him, prompting with a small voice, 'You have taken Constantinople, O emperor.' She said this more than once but the emperor stayed still, saying nothing at all to her. But when she changed her statement and said, 'Rise, emperor, for Christ has conferred Constantinople upon you', he arose from bed and, stretching his hands to heaven, he said, 'This statement, O sister, I accept. The first words you said, that I had taken the city of Constantine, I can in no way accept. For how could I take possession of the city of Constantine from Meteorion [the place the emperor camped at that moment]*? I did not even send a worthy army against it. But I agree that these things are easy for God and He is able quickly to grant to whomever he wishes that which is almost impossible.'*[213]

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[209] Akropolites, *The History*, §4: 113.
[210] Ibidem, §5: 114.; Idem, §13: 139.
[211] Ibidem, §85: 376.
[212] Ibidem, §85: 376.
[213] Ibidem, §86: 379-380.

Then the narrative culminates in the triumphal entry into the city. This was the first triumphal entry into Constantinople since some 200 years and would be the last ever.[214] It was however quite different from traditional triumphs by reserving a lot larger role for clerical ceremonies and divine icons.[215] This also becomes clear from the account of the triumphal entry given by Akropolites:

'*The metropolitan of Kyzikos, George, who was also named Kleidas, performed the service. Climbing up to one of the towers of the Golden Gate, with the image of the Theotokos which is named after the monastery ton Odegon, he recited the prayers in the hearing of all. The monarch took of his kalyptra and, bending his knee, fell to the ground and all those with him who were behind him fell to their knees. When the first of the prayers had been recited and the deacon mat the motion to rise up, all stood up and called out the 'Kyrie Eleeison' 100 times. And when these were finished another prayer was pronounced by the bishop. What happened for the first prayer happened in turn for the second and so on until the completion of all the prayers. When this holy ritual had taken place in this way, the emperor entered the Golden Gate in a manner more reverential to God than imperial; for he proceeded on foot, while the icon of the Mother of God preceded him. He went as far as the Stoudios monastery, and when he had left the icon of the immaculate Mother of God there, he mounted a horse and went to the shrine of the Wisdom of God* [Hagia Sophia]. *There he paid reverence to the Lord Christ, and when he had given Him due thanks he arrived at the Great Palace. On that occasion the Roman population was of good cheer and felt great gladness of heart and immense joy. There was no one who was not jumping for joy and exulting and almost doubting the deed because of the unexpectedness of the event and the extreme pleasure.*'[216]

This is the passage in which Michael VIII is at the top of his glory and the climax of the *History*. He managed to reconquer Constantinople for the Byzantines and his fragile position of Emperor became untouchable. After this there followed a wave of propaganda to legitimize his rule: he started calling himself 'New Constantine' and undertook a large programme of rebuilding the capital ravaged by war and occupation.[217] He also erected a

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[214] Alexander van Millingen, *Byzantine Constantinople: The walls of the City and adjoining historical sites* (London, 1899) 68.; Albrecht Berger, 'Imperial and Ecclesiastical Processions', in: Nevra Necipoğlu, *Byzantine Constantinople: Monuments, Topography and Everyday Life* (Leiden, 2001),73-88, esp. 84.
[215] Hearsey, *City of Constantine*, 209-210.
[216] Akropolites, *The History*, §88: 383-384.
[217] Jonathan Harris, *Constantinople: Capital of Byzantium* (London, 2007), 173.; R.J. Macrides, 'From the Komnenoi to the Palaiologoi: imperial models in decline and exile', in: Paul Magdalino (ed.), *New Constantines: The rhythm of imperial renewal in Byzantium, 4th-13th centuries, Papers from the Twenty-sixth*

column in front of the church of the Holy Apostles on which stood a bronze statue of the Archangel Michael towering over the smaller figure of the Emperor holding the city in his hands. He also minted coins which bore a picture of the city protected by the Virgin.[218] The narrative told here seems to reinforce this idea of Michael VIII sent by God to restore the old order.

In relation to Constantinople it is also interesting to note the functions the new residences of the emperors had during the time of exile. Through Akropolites' writing we learn that the emperors of Nicaea set up residence at Nicaea during the summer and in Nymphaion during the winter, already from early on.[219] This meant that several public functions were split over the two cities. Nymphaion was the winter residence of the emperors and housed the mint, while Nicaea was the political and ecclesiastical center and housed the patriarchal see.[220] Such a split would have been impossible when the emperors still had their residence in Constantinople. Through a large number of ceremonies and important sites the emperors were bound to the city of Constantine.[221] Constantinople also housed every important public function. Even though the emperors had the Blachernae palace to escape the center of the city, moving out of the city would not have been conceivable to them. The fact that the public functions and residences could be divided over two cities shows that Nicaea never functioned as much as a site of ritual as Constantinople did.

CONCLUSION

In Akropolites' History we find a scattered and fragmented Byzantine reality. Power and order was divided over several centers throughout the former empire. Even within the Nicaean empire several cities share the public functions that were once housed in one. Although he writes with a strong pro-Palaiologan agenda, Akropolites shows us this world of exile. His narrative, like much of his reality, is split in western and eastern parts in which war dominates.

Constantinople only figures in a minor role on his stage. It is the cataclysmic start of his narrative and the culminating end of the period. The fall of the City serves as an important time marker at the beginning of the period, signaling the huge changes that befell the

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Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, St Andrews, March 1992 (Aldershot, 1994), 269-282, esp. 270.; Talbot, 'The Restoration of Constantinople', 243.

[218] Nicol, *The last centuries of Byzantium,* 43-44.

[219] Akropolites, *The History*, §84: 369.

[220] Ibidem, 87-88.

[221] Gilbert Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (New York, 2007), 84-124.

Byzantine world at that time. At the end God, working through the Emperor Michael VIII, has finally seen fit to restore the unity of the Empire and restore the old order. Michael VIII capitalized greatly on the fact that he retook the former capital. He used it to legitimize his illegitimately gained title of Emperor and to add to that claim he restored the buildings of the former capital and moved all of the public functions back to Constantinople; leaving Nicaea and any taint from the Laskarid-dynasty behind.

Conclusion

In this thesis we have looked at one of the most volatile and changing periods of Byzantine history. During the period of exile the Byzantines were forced to renegotiate many certainties of their worldview. Most of all they had to renegotiate their position in a world without their beloved *fathercity*. We have found several different approaches to the difficulties this challenge posed in the writings of Niketas Choniates, Nikephoros Blemmydes, Theodore II Doukas Laskaris and Georgios Akropolites, even though these men moved in comparable (or the same) social circles. As we have seen in the first chapter there was a lot to praise in the city of Constantinople and several very rigorous and stylized models that could be used for this goal.

In Choniates' writing we witnessed the despair that held the old elite of the City in its clutch after its loss. A key component of their world, the city where they functioned and had their palaces, had been torn from them. He uses the superfluous and classicizing style that his education in the capital provided him with to lament the many things that were lost with the City.

The old order of the Byzantine world is also still apparent in the writings of Nikephoros Blemmydes. Even though some relations of power have changed, it is natural even to this man, who is so shut out of worldly affairs, that the Byzantine *politeia* and world order must be maintained in some way or the other.

We find a full adaptation to the apparently changed ways of the world however, in Theodore II Doukas Laskaris' writing. As a prince who was born in Nicaea and didn't know the lost capital firsthand, he was adapting to a changed environment. Using the old model of the *enkomion* and many prerogatives once reserved for Constantinople, he praises the city that did stand for the Byzantines in their time of need, where Constantinople failed. This signals a shift in worldview to the reality of his day.

It is Akropolites then, who relates to us the glorious recapture of Constantinople. Utilizing this event for propagandist purposes for his lord Michael VIII, he reveals to us that the old order was restored. In a large part of his account of the time of exile however, we don't find much of this old order. His world is a chaotic one, in which Constantinople hardly figures and the Byzantine *politeia* is split. In spite of the bright light at the ending, we find slips of the darkness that reigned the Byzantine world during this time.

When we analyze these responses to the challenge the loss of Constantinople posed, we may, with a bit of conjecture, construct several hypotheses concerning our subject. We

can discern a chronological development for example. It seems that those writers who stood further away from the actually 'living, Byzantine Constantinople' also adapted better to the reality of the Byzantine realm in exile in their writing. Akropolites, who knew the City only as an occupied territory, for example does not award it a very large space in much of his *History*. We see this even clearer in Laskaris' oration for Nicaea, in which he shows he is ready for a world in which Constantinople isn't of importance anymore. This doesn't mean he didn't have the political goal of retaking it, but that he was probably capable of visualizing a world in which Constantinople wouldn't be retaken. One can only wonder how this trend of thought would have developed if Constantine's City hadn't been recaptured.

These authors used the classical rhetoric models to capture the changing world they perceived. They were capable of this through the classicizing, Byzantine *paideia*, which even survived the loss of the capital and its educational facilities. This seems to be a recurring theme in Byzantine history. Through these classic molds the Byzantines gave an interpretation to the events around them. Through a biblical theme of exile, for example, a hope of return to their Sion could be given shape.

During this exile we can see that Constantinople becomes less important to the Byzantine identity, quite frankly because it had to. The period however doesn't seem to have been long enough to sever the bonds between the Byzantine elite at Nicaea and their former capital completely. When the chance was there to retake the capital they longed for, the Byzantines took it and shifted back to their former home. It was however not the same world as before when they entered the City in triumph in 1261. The Byzantine Empire had been severely weakened by the events of 1204 and would never fully recover; and neither would their worldview.

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