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The Fourth Crusade: How Internal Dynamics and Leadership Transitions Could Have Led to its Diversion and Ultimate Failure

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at Syracuse University

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Abstract

The Fourth Crusade, a war called to recapture Jerusalem, ended in disaster for the Christian city of Constantinople and the city of Jerusalem remained untouched by the crusading host. The fact that a war called to protect Christians in the Middle East and to recapture the city of Jerusalem for God resulted in the sacking of one of the largest Christian cities has led to much scholarly investigation into what exactly caused this to transpire. For the better part of a millennium scholars have sought answers to significant questions and have produced a variety of explanations for why the crusade ultimately failed. These theories range from conspiracy to random chance but debate still rages on between scholars about possible answers to these long deliberated questions.

This study will rely mainly upon the primary sources of some of the crusaders who were a part of the crusade and some of their contemporaries for evidence to support this claim. Geoffrey de Villehardouin along with some of his contemporaries, such as Robert of Clari, recorded their knowledge and experience of the Fourth Crusade and are the main primary sources used for this study. This study also makes extensive use of secondary literature, such as the work of Thomas Madden and Donald Queller, regarding both the Fourth Crusade itself and the theories that have been conceived to explain both its diversion and ultimate failure.

The purpose of this study is to try to provide conceivable answers to these long discussed questions by looking at the crusade using a different technique that combines certain aspects of noted scholars' analyses with a style of looking at the crusade by dividing it into separate periods of time. By analyzing the Fourth crusade with this method the study aims to provide possible explanations for certain major events by analyzing specific internal dynamics and leadership transitions that this study claims to be responsible, to some degree, for both the diversion and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade. The goal of this study is to prove that internal dynamics that include: the changing goals of the leadership, desertions, polarization of the crusading party, and justifying actions as a means to an end, along with leadership transitions are at least partially responsible for both the diversion and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade.

Executive Summary

This project is a research based thesis on the Fourth Crusade that focuses on potential causes of its well-documented diversions and ultimate failure. The Fourth Crusade began as a military pilgrimage to Jerusalem to re-capture it from Muslim Ayyubid forces and protect the Christians who lived in the Holy Land; however, the crusade never reached the Holy Land and never accomplished its original goals. Instead of attacking the Muslim occupiers of the Holy Land, the crusade resulted in the killing of thousands of Christians and the sacking of one of the largest and most important Christian cities, Constantinople. The fact that a crusade that was launched to retake Jerusalem and protect Christians actually resulted in the destruction of a major Christian city and didn't set foot in the Holy Land has sparked much debate among scholars for well over eight centuries. As a result of this lengthy scholarly debate, there is no shortage of theories as to why the crusade ultimately diverted and failed. Possible explanations for the failure of the Fourth Crusade include random chance, sabotage, and even treason. However, this thesis proposes that there is another possible explanation for both the diversions and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade; that the diversions and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade were not the outcome of any one group controlling things all along, but instead reveal the shifting influence exerted by various parties and their shifting motives throughout the crusade and that leadership transitions and internal dynamic shifts provide evidence for this.

This thesis puts forward the idea that leadership transitions and the related internal dynamics shifts of the crusading host, resulted in its diversion from its original goals and its ultimate failure in those very same goals. The crusading host, in this study, refers to both the

crusaders and the accompanying Venetian forces. Leadership transitions refers to shifting influence among groups within or associated with the crusading host. These shifts in leadership, this thesis argues, were a major factor in both the direction and result of the crusade because whatever group had more power seemed to be able to divert the crusade. The leadership transitions occurred both between and within groups involved with the crusade and often resulted in the changing of direction, objectives, and even desertion.

Internal dynamic shifts also played an important role in the diversion and failure of the crusade. In this study, internal dynamics refers primarily to the struggles among the crusading host, especially among the crusaders. There are four major internal dynamics that this paper examines: the changing goals of the leadership; desertions; polarization of the crusading party; and justifying actions as a means to an end. The changing goals of the leadership is an internal dynamics closely related to leadership transition and simply means that when a group ascended into a position of influence over the crusade, the goals of the crusade seem to shift without ever losing sight of the ultimate goal of Jerusalem. Desertions refers to the exclusively crusader phenomenon during this crusade in which thousands of crusaders left the crusade due to various reasons, such as morals or lack of urgency, and resulted in the failure of the Fourth Crusade. The polarization of the crusading party is also a uniquely crusader phenomenon in which there were two major groups of crusaders, one pushing for the immediate assault on Jerusalem and another group which was more pragmatic about the situation. The group that wanted to go directly to Jerusalem made their judgement based upon religion and morality while the other group made their judgment based upon necessity and strategy. Justifying actions as a means to the end is closely related to the polarization of the crusading party and

was used by the group of crusaders who weren't pushing to immediately go to the Holy Land and this dynamic allowed the crusade to be diverted twice and thus contributed to the failure of the crusade as well.

The findings of the study are that different groups had power at different times and this, along with specific internal dynamics, contributed, on some level, to the diversions and failure of the Fourth Crusade. This isn't to say that other theories are incorrect, but that this may help explain long debated questions about the Fourth Crusade. Perhaps this theory, when combined with other theories such as the belief the crusade failed due to random chance, may provide a more complete or different view of the Fourth Crusade, its diversions, and its ultimate failure.

The methodology used for this project was research based with a focus on primary sources. Two main primary sources were used in this study, Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Robert of Clari. Both of these men were a part of the Fourth Crusade and offer a perspective from that of the leadership and the common soldier, respectively. Secondary scholarly works were also used in this study to analyze other approaches to the study of the Fourth Crusade and were also used to provide additional evidence to support the thesis of the project.

While using mainly primary sources, this study takes a unique approach by dividing the Fourth Crusade into three parts and examining each period individually before analyzing the crusade as a whole. Breaking the crusade into periods not only helps to focus study but viewing the crusade in smaller portions allows for further insight that previously would be hard if not impossible to gain if viewed as a single event. The focusing of the crusade also will allow for a more extensive study of leadership transitions and internal dynamic shifts and, in turn, possibly provide an explanation for why the Fourth Crusade was diverted and ultimately failed. This

study chose to divide the crusade into three periods based upon the “natural partition points” that occur during the crusade. These points occur during times of great tension, diversion, and even desertion. Therefore, by focusing on the partition points and the transitions between different parts of the crusade, an overarching theme, in regards to the leadership transitions and internal dynamics, becomes visible.

This project’s main goal, in regards to scholarship of the Fourth Crusade, is to add to the discussion. With the available sources, and the biased nature of them, it is very hard to know what happened conclusively during the crusade. However, this doesn’t mean that this crusade shouldn’t be studied. Just because there may not be an answer now, or ever, it is important to have discussion of the Fourth Crusade because of its drastic impact on Europe, the Middle East, and the world. The crusade that started out as a mission to protect Christians in the Holy Land and to retake Jerusalem crippled a major Christian power, Byzantium. This led to the destabilization of the region and the ascendancy of Venice as a major Imperial trading power since their biggest competitors of the time, the Byzantines, were crippled. Thus, the crusade called to attack Muslim forces actually led to the destruction of a longstanding Christian empire and led to the ascendancy of a new Christian force in Europe.

Even though this project cannot conclusively say what caused the diversions or the failure of the Fourth Crusade, having a continuing dialogue about not only different possibilities, but also different ways to look at the crusade are very beneficial. Being able to look at something in a new way may prompt another scholar to do the same and perhaps lead to another new theory or breakthrough that previously was not explored. Proposing ideas and having a constructive discussion about the validity and ramifications of such a finding are an

integral part of the historical field and the overall goal of this study is to be a part of the greater discussion about the Fourth Crusade and propose a new way to look at the Fourth Crusade and those involved in it.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Fourth Crusade — a war called by the papacy that began as a military pilgrimage to Jerusalem to recapture the city for Christians and God — ended in disaster for the Christian city of Constantinople while the city of Jerusalem remained untouched by the crusading host. The fact that a war that was called in the apparent defense of Christianity in the Middle East resulted in the sacking of one of the largest Christian cities has led to much scholarly investigation on exactly what caused this to occur. For the better part of a millennium scholars have sought answers to key questions and have produced a variety of explanations for why the crusade ultimately failed. These range from conspiracy theories to random chance, but debate still occurs among scholars about what exactly the answers could be. By closely examining leadership transitions and internal dynamics this study hopes to prove is that several groups with different and even shifting motives had more or less influence at different stages in the Crusade. The study also hopes to show that the diversions and the ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade are a result of these leadership transitions and internal dynamics and their related effects.

This study will rely mainly upon the primary sources of some of the crusaders who were a part of this crusade and a selection of their contemporaries for evidence to support this claim. Geoffrey de Villehardouin along with some of his contemporaries, including Robert of Clari, recorded their knowledge and experience of the Fourth Crusade and provide the main primary sources used in this study. These sources are invaluable to understanding a crusade that is still

being debated today. However, these sources leave many questions unresolved. The accounts of the Fourth Crusade are few and far between and often have conflicting details that cannot be reconciled. Many sources also have excessive bias, portraying events in a deceitful light that makes the reality of the situation hard to discern. Since the sources are heavily biased and written from different perspectives, they offer polarized views about the crusade that have led to the differentiation of scholarly views that will be discussed below. Therefore, the challenge of analyzing these sources to determine the truth behind the bias of the Fourth Crusade has been going on for more than 800 years without a single explanation or answer being endorsed as the only possible answer by experts.

In order to better understand the plan and direction of this study, it is important to have a basic understanding of the Fourth Crusade. The Fourth Crusade was called by Innocent III in 1198 as a response to the loss of Jerusalem to the forces of Saladin.¹ The crusaders gathered forces and the port of Venice was selected as the point of embarkation for the main crusading force; a treaty was signed with the Venetians to ensure supplies and transportation.² However, not enough crusaders arrived at the port when they were supposed to, and this led to the crusaders becoming indebted to the Venetians.³ This resulted in the crusaders helping the Venetians to attack or capture several Christian cities, including Zara, in the vicinity of Venetian territory as a way to delay payment of what the crusaders owed.⁴ This diverted the crusade

¹ Innocent III, "Post miserabile," in *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291*, ed. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 50.

² Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade and The Conquest of Constantinople*, trans Frank T. Marzials, (London: J.M. Dent, 1908), 5, 9.

³ *Ibid*, 16.

⁴ *Ibid*, 17, 31-32.

from its intended purpose to retake Jerusalem. This diversion led to much dissension among the crusaders, which would periodically flare up, especially in times of great moral crises, such as the attack on Zara or when the crusaders discussed whether they should divert the crusade a second time to Constantinople to help reinstall the dethroned emperor, Alexius IV, in exchange for support for the crusade.⁵ The decision to aid Alexius led to conflict between the crusading host and the Byzantines who controlled Constantinople, which in turn led to the capture of Constantinople by crusader and Venetian forces in 1204 and the end of the Fourth Crusade soon thereafter without the crusade even setting foot in the Holy Land.⁶

Possibly due to the bias and discrepancy of primary sources, there are many details that are not agreed upon and even polarize studies of the Fourth Crusade.⁷ Many questions are still debated and haven't been reconciled: Who exactly was directing the crusade? Why did the crusade divert twice? Who is ultimately responsible for the outcome of the Fourth Crusade? These questions are still debated as evidenced by the introduction to a work by Thomas Madden, a medievalist.⁸

As previously stated, historians have sought to explain the diversion of the crusade ever since it occurred, and due to the hundreds of years of study, there is no shortage of theories concerning the precise cause of the Crusade's diversion. Dr. Jonathan Harris has discussed the many theories that have been proposed for the diversion and discusses the evolution of

⁵ Ibid, 17, 24-26.

⁶ Ibid, 64-65.

⁷ These discrepancies and biases will be discussed further in the paper.

⁸ Thomas Madden, "Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade," *International History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Nov., 1995): 726; in this Madden discusses an argument among a large group of scholars regarding who is responsible and what caused the diversion of the Fourth Crusade.

theories over time.⁹ From the conclusion of the crusade through the 1870s theories of a Venetian conspiracy were popular and seemed all but certain according to Harris.¹⁰ These theories were generally considered unsubstantiated after an 1877 article by Gabriel Hanotaux who discredited some of the evidence used to support the Venetian diversion theory.¹¹ However, even though the theory was largely discredited, Harris does cite some continued support for it in the scholarly community.¹² The article then discusses a theory that is still used to explain the crusade, the modified theory of accidents, which was “something of a synthesis of the theory of accidents and the treason theories” and was proposed by Walter Norden in twentieth century.¹³ As evidenced by Harris’ article, the account of Thomas Madden, and the continued debate among historians, there seems to be no shortage of explanations for the Fourth Crusade and no shortage of ways in which to approach it study.

According to Thomas Madden, in order to better understand the diversion of the Fourth Crusade we must “move inside” the crusade and understand the people who were involved.¹⁴ A greater understanding of the Crusade could be gained through the study of the people involved

⁹ Jonathan Harris, “The Debate on the Fourth Crusade,” *History Compass*, Volume 2, Issue 1 (2004).

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 2-4.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 4-5; Hanotaux re-dated a piece of evidence, a Venetian treaty with the Sultan of Babylon, long used by scholars to support the Venetian diversion theory. This theory states that the Venetians purposefully diverted the crusade for their own means. In this case, it was claimed that they diverted the crusade from the Holy Land because of a secret treaty with the sultan of Babylon. This was disproven by the revision of the date of the treaty to several years after the conclusion of the Fourth Crusade, thus discrediting a major piece of evidence for the theory.

¹² *Ibid*, 5.

¹³ *Ibid*, 6; The theory proposed by Norden stated that an attack on Constantinople was not surprising and many western leaders had reasons for desiring it. This isn’t to say that an attack was planned during the Fourth Crusade, but that once the army was at Constantinople, with provocation, the western leaders seized the opportunity before them. According to Harris, this theory proved very influential and is still used as an explanation as to why the Fourth Crusade diverted and ultimately failed; Harris, “Debate,” 6.

¹⁴ Thomas Madden, “Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade,” *International History Review*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Nov., 1995): 743.

in the crusade with a focus on their goals and actions. The approach of focusing on individuals and analyzing them in depth by trying to ascertain some sense of their goals, beliefs, fears, and thought processes is one way to analyze the Fourth Crusade. Scholars can accomplish this by gathering primary sources and using them to try to discern information and possibly the thoughts of those involved in the Fourth Crusade. By looking at the inner workings and the internal struggles of the crusade, this study can provide possible explanations for two questions regarding the Fourth Crusade: What caused the diversion of the Fourth Crusade and what ultimately resulted in its failure?

While studying every individual's goals, reactions, and thoughts would be ideal, it is not possible with the sources available. Therefore, the approach of this study is to focus on individuals about whom we know the most. A group we seem to have the most information about is the leadership of the crusade. Studying the leadership is a logical choice since these were the people who ultimately decided the direction of the crusade. Leaders such as Doge Dandolo, Pope Innocent III, Boniface of Montferrat, and Alexius IV among others give us some insight into the various groups involved in the crusade: the Venetian crusaders, the Christian church, the crusaders, and even the Byzantines. While these leaders may not be representative of their respective associated groups they do provide some information that can be used in this study. The works of Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Robert of Clari are the main contemporary sources for the crusading leadership, the Venetians, and the pope.¹⁵ The contemporary source

¹⁵ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*; Robert de Clari: "La Prise de Constantinople," Complete texts and notes from Dana C. Munro, "The Fourth Crusade," in *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History*, Vol 3:1, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, [n.d.] 189?), 1-18.

that relays the Byzantine perspective of the crusade comes from Nicetas Choniates.¹⁶ While these sources are not absolute truth and do contain discrepancies, they are the foundation of the modern understanding of the Fourth Crusade and underpin many studies of the Fourth Crusade, including this one.

However, if only the leadership was studied, we would most likely miss out on an important view of the crusade, that of the ordinary rank and file soldiers. Therefore, in order to try and gain a more complete view of the crusade, the ordinary soldiers must also be analyzed on some level, although this will be more difficult because the primary sources related to the Fourth Crusade were largely written by leaders or focus on the leadership. Nevertheless, one source in particular, Robert of Clari, contains some information about what ordinary soldiers believed or heard and thus could be a highly valuable source in trying to gain a more complete view of the Fourth Crusade.¹⁷

Focusing on individuals also allows for the study of the internal dynamics of the crusade and leadership transitions, which ultimately seem to have had great influence over the crusade as a whole. Internal dynamics, in this study, refers primarily to the struggles among the crusaders themselves. This study focuses on four internal dynamics: the changing goals of the leadership; desertions; polarization of the crusading party; and justifying actions as a means to an end.¹⁸ While these internal dynamics play a very important role in both the direction and the

¹⁶ Nicetas Choniates, *O City of Byzantium: Annals of Niketas Choniates*, Trans Harry J. Magoulias, (Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 1984).

¹⁷ Robert of Clari was a knight in the crusading army and perhaps is writing from the perspective of an ordinary soldier in the crusade.

¹⁸ "Crusading party" and "crusaders," in the context of this study, strictly refers to the non-Venetian members of the crusade while the term "crusading host" refers to both the Venetians and the non-Venetian crusaders.

ultimate result of the crusade, another very closely related dynamic, leadership transitions, plays an even more important role. As such, it can be considered an internal dynamic and will be analyzed independently in this study.¹⁹

A leadership transition in this study simply means when one group who has power and influence over the crusade and its direction loses this power or influence to another group. Thus, whenever there is a leadership transition between groups, not within a group, the direction of the crusade tends to shift or become diverted. This does not mean that at all times only one group had control of the crusade. There was a constant power struggle between factions within the crusade who were all seeking to gain the upper hand, in order to further their goals and their vision of the crusade. A great example of a leadership transition is when the crusaders decide to help the Venetians capture Zara.²⁰

While this idea of studying the individuals involved in the crusade is certainly not new, perhaps by taking a slightly different approach to studying the crusade a new way of thinking about the crusade may arise. Breaking down the crusade into periods allows for a thorough study of individuals, internal undercurrents that affected the crusade, and leadership changes and a more focused view on a smaller portion of the crusade that may not be looked at as closely if the crusade was studied as whole. This approach, accompanied with dividing the

¹⁹ It is important to note that leadership transitions are very closely related to the changing internal dynamics of the Fourth Crusade. Often times when there is a major leadership change, there are also changes to the internal dynamics. When a new group ascends to power or gains influence, the primary objectives of the crusade seem to shift. That said, the ultimate goal of the Fourth Crusade never seems to be forgotten but, depending on what leadership was ascendant, it may have been considered secondary to the other objectives held by the group.

²⁰ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 16; This will be further explained during the analysis of the second period of the crusade later in this paper.

crusade into periods, should provide a more complete view of the Fourth Crusade and help to explain both the diversion and failure of the crusade.

Dividing the Fourth Crusade into time periods accomplishes more than just focusing study. There seem to be two natural points of partition that occur during the crusade as a result of certain inner dynamics and leadership shifts coming to a head. Analyzing two points — after the failure of the crusaders to fulfil their treaty with the Venetians and after the conquest of Zara, — can provide insight and give evidence of both the shifting internal forces at work and the leadership changes that occurred during the course of the crusade. These two natural partition points occur during periods in which important events in the crusade are occurring, and these event ultimately shape and direct the course of the crusade. By dividing the crusade into smaller parts and viewing these periods separately, insight is gained that previously would be hard if not impossible to gain if viewed as a single event. This division of the crusade, because it allows for a focused study of the leadership of the crusade, may provide evidence of who or what was driving the crusade at a particular time.

Using this strategy means there are three distinct time periods to study in the Fourth Crusade. These three periods are separated by two major events that naturally create breaking points chronologically and have widespread effects on the course of the Fourth Crusade and the people involved. Breaking the crusade into parts denies the assumption that a group or person who had influence in one period has the same influence or power in another period. If this strategy is to be successful then each period must first be analyzed independently. Once each period has been analyzed and conclusions drawn independently then the periods can be

analyzed as a whole. By first analyzing periods independently then analyzing them together further conclusions can be drawn by analyzing patterns that occur throughout the crusade.

The three time periods used in this study for the Fourth Crusade are August 1198 through mid-October 1202, mid-October 1202 through early 1203, and early 1203 through the end of the crusade. The first period covers the calling of the crusade by Pope Innocent III with *Post miserabile* on 15 August 1198 through the gathering of the crusader army at Venice and failure to meet the payment they promised the Venetians in October 1202.²¹ This study views this segment as one period because it begins with the conception of the crusade and ends at the first naturally occurring partition point. This period ends when a major event — the failure of the crusaders to pay the Venetians — occurs and is considered singular period because it is a continuous and ends with a major leadership transition, a shift of internal dynamics, and diversion.²²

The second period, which is the shortest period but the most dynamic, starts with the aftermath of the crusaders failing to pay off the Venetians.²³ This results in a defining decision in the Fourth Crusade and leads to another major event, the attack on Zara. The new agreement with the Venetians and the attack on Zara are so closely related and occur so close

²¹ Geoffrey de Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 9, 15-17; Innocent III, "Post miserabile," 50.

²² The natural partition points which separate the three periods have major shifts in internal dynamics, have significant leadership transitions and lead to a diversion. What this means is that during two specific natural partition points there is a massive amount of tension that surfaces in the form of desertions, threats of desertions, possibility of diversion which lead to some form of leadership transition which ultimately leads to a diversion. This, in turn, has a great effect on the Fourth Crusade and these partition points occur during two periods of time in which major decisions are made that ultimately divert the crusade and result in its failure. Therefore, since a goal of this study is to better understand the diversion of the Fourth Crusade, these natural partition points can help by focusing attention on these time periods that seem to have the most surfacing of internal dynamics and leadership transitions which, in turn, could help in the understanding of how or why the Fourth Crusade was diverted.

²³ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 15.

to one another that it makes a logical single time period, one that is and ends with a shift in internal dynamics and right before another significant leadership transition. This period features the most extensive leadership transition and the internal dynamics of the Crusade become much more visible due to the short amount of time in this period and the major events that occur at the beginning, the attack on Zara, and at the end, the meeting and eventual agreement with Alexius IV.²⁴ This period is also punctuated on both sides with a major diversion of the crusade.

The third period begins after the siege of Zara and the major event that occurs in the start of this period is when the crusaders hear from Alexius IV. This message from Alexius IV and the resulting decision to aid him in retaking Constantinople is another defining point of the Fourth Crusade that ultimately decides its remaining direction.²⁵ This period extends to the conclusion of the crusade and started with a defining event that led to a shift in the internal dynamics and a leadership transition and diversion. Therefore, while all three periods of the crusade share similar characteristics, they can be typified as their own independent time partitions. They all have continuity and either end or begin with major leadership transitions or shifts in internal dynamics of the crusading host.

There are four areas in which these time partitions help in studying the Fourth Crusade. First, this method can show how the reins of leadership passed among parties during the crusade. Second, it can provide a perspective by which we can view the crusade in a way that can allow us to better see whether or not a single group could be responsible for diverting the

²⁴ Ibid, 15, 30.

²⁵ Ibid, 15.

crusade or if the situation was more complex. Third, it can help to discern possible reasons why the crusade was diverted and give some rationale for the diversions. Finally, dividing the crusade chronologically allows for a more focused study of the crusade along with its internal dynamics and leadership transitions that may ultimately result in a better understanding of the diversion of the Fourth Crusade and its ultimate failure.

By using this approach, evidence should emerge that several groups, with different and even shifting motives, had more or less influence at different stages in the Crusade and this shifting influence and to a lesser extent, control, is at least partially responsible for the diversion of the Fourth Crusade and its ultimate failure. If this evidence is found then this could prove that the diversion and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade were not the outcome of any one group controlling things all along, but instead reveal the shifting influence exerted by various parties and their shifting motives throughout the crusade. The approach of this study is to analytically progress through the crusade in the above manner while offering a synopsis of events and then analyzing the events in terms and the internal dynamics that are present in that period. The inner undercurrents will also be compared between time periods in order to understand the changes better.

The study will proceed in a similar fashion with regard to analyzing leadership transitions that primarily occur around the partition points and will discuss what it means both in terms of that specific time period and how it relates to the transitions that occur in the other periods. The Fourth Crusade will be examined, in this study, by using primary sources and the analysis of modern scholars. The evidence provided by this analysis could show a new way of

looking at the Fourth Crusade and in turn shed light on the diversion and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade.

Villehardouin seems to provide information from the perspective of one of the crusade leaders.²⁶ He also writes about other members of the crusading leadership, which may provide an accurate perspective in relation to the other leaders as well from Villehardouin.²⁷

Villehardouin was one of the six envoys sent to Venice to negotiate the contract that the crusaders ultimately failed to fulfill.²⁸ Villehardouin continues to represent the crusaders as both a leader and envoy throughout the crusade and is selected as one of the envoys who negotiated terms with the Byzantines when Alexius IV was re-installed.²⁹ While Villehardouin certainly has his biases and inaccuracies in his writing, he is still an invaluable source for the Fourth Crusade due to his leadership role within the crusade and involvement with the crusade.

Robert of Clari, a knight, is also a valuable source for this portion of the Fourth Crusade. His perspective is very valuable because the other main primary source of the Fourth Crusade,

²⁶ Thomas Madden, "The Venetian Version of the Fourth Crusade: Memory and the Conquest of Constantinople in Medieval Venice." *Speculum*, vol. 87, 316; According to Thomas Madden, Villehardouin started writing after the crusade was over, sometime between 1205 and his death around 1213 A.D. His purpose for writing is not entirely known but it can be argued that he is writing in defense of his actions during the Fourth Crusade in an attempt to shift blame from himself. This is a possibility since the crusade ultimately failed and resulted in the capture of Christian cities, which was not a widely popular outcome as evidenced by the crusaders' and the pope's reactions. Therefore, while Villehardouin is an excellent primary source for this period, his account must be scrutinized and should not be taken as absolute truth. While the general information appears to be accurate, certain details perhaps become twisted when he defends himself or the crusade as whole. It would be unfair to assume that all inaccuracies are a result of blatant fabrication; he did write after events and thus inaccuracies may be due to forgetfulness.

²⁷ As with when Villehardouin was writing about himself, careful consideration must be made when believing everything that Villehardouin writes about other leaders. Villehardouin is trying to defend the actions of the crusade and his own actions so it is possible that he misrepresents some leaders, especially within the crusading party. That said, there doesn't seem to be any reason to completely discount Villehardouin and for the most part his work seems accurate. Due to his primacy and first-hand witness to the events, his account will be used as the foundation of this study.

²⁸ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 5.

²⁹ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 47.

that of Villehardouin, is from the perspective of the leadership while Clari's is of that of an ordinary soldier. Clari also gives historians a larger source and knowledge base to work with instead of just having to draw from Villehardouin. Having two main sources from the crusader perspective is also useful because they can be used to corroborate information and thus provide a potentially more accurate account of events.

Because Clari's account provides challenges to Villehardouin's information this calls into question the validity of both accounts, which encourages the questioning of the sources and not just the acceptance of their accounts. This questioning of sources has led to a continuation of a scholarly discussion about the Fourth Crusade that this study adds to by re-examining questions in regards to both the diversion and failure of the Fourth Crusade. Both Clari and Villehardouin are great sources for the Fourth Crusade because of their wealth of information with regard to the internal struggles and changes in leadership that this study focuses on.

Chapter Two: The First Period

The first period of the Fourth Crusade is a time of relative stability in terms of internal dynamics and leadership transitions. Yet this period has inner struggles and changes, but they are much less frequent and have less impact on the course of the crusade than the ones that occur during later periods. The first period is important because it sets in motion the crusade and the decisions made during this period — using Venice as a port of embarkation — which have serious repercussions throughout the crusade.

In his letter *Post miserabile*,³⁰ Pope Innocent III called for the clergy and nobles to gather soldiers in order to retake the Holy Land from the Muslim Ayyubids.³¹ Despite crusading indulgences that could grant remission of sins, the Fourth Crusade was slow to start and didn't really begin to grow and mobilize until Fulk of Neuilly preached in support of the crusade during a tournament at Ecry in 1199.³² According to Villehardouin, after the tournament, many more counts joined as crusaders, including two high barons of France, Simon de Montfort and Renaud de Montmirail.³³ Pope Innocent III realized that funds needed to be raised to support the crusade and sent out letters to the great churches of Europe asking the clergy for a monetary contribution of a fortieth part of their income.³⁴ Innocent also was willing to contribute substantially out of his own poorly endowed treasury and promoted the raising of funds in churches for the crusade by gathering donations from the laity.³⁵

One of the first important endeavors of the Fourth Crusade, besides raising soldiers and money, was undertaken by the envoys selected by the barons, including Villehardouin, who had taken the cross in order to find transportation for the crusade.³⁶ Villehardouin and the other representatives were tasked with finding secure passage to the Holy Land for the Crusade.³⁷ The envoys decided upon Venice and entered into negotiations with the doge of Venice, Enrico

³⁰ Innocent III, "Post miserabile," 50.

³¹ Ibid, 58

³² Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 1-2.

³³ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 3.

³⁴ Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell, "The Pope, Crusades, and Communities," in *Crusade and Christendom: Annotated Documents in Translation from Innocent III to the Fall of Acre, 1187–1291*, ed. Jessalynn Bird, Edward Peters, and James M. Powell, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 47.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 5.

³⁷ Ibid, 6.

Dandolo, and the council of Venice.³⁸ After a week of discussion the Venetians agreed to make a compact with the crusaders.³⁹ The Venetians agreed to provide ships for 4,500 horses, 9,000 esquires, 4,500 knights, and 20,000 foot soldiers and nine months' worth of food, for both the horses and men.⁴⁰ Along with ships and food the Venetians also agreed to send fifty armed galleys to join in the crusade if the crusaders would split all captured land or money evenly with the Venetians.⁴¹ The envoys agreed to the terms established by the Venetians, the treaty was ratified by both parties in March 1201, and messengers were sent to Pope Innocent III who also ratified the treaty.⁴²

In the summer of 1202, between the signing of the treaty and when the crusaders were supposed to arrive in Venice, there were some changes within the crusading leadership. The original leader, Count Thibaut of Champagne, died shortly after the treaty was ratified with Venice.⁴³ This led to the first shift of power in the crusading leadership; however, this was not due to politics or leverage like future shifts would be. In 1201, a group of crusaders met after the death Count Thibaut and elected Boniface de Montferrat as the new leader of the crusade.⁴⁴

Even though the crusade was experiencing problems crusaders pushed forward and in the summer of 1202 departed their lands to rendezvous in Venice.⁴⁵ According to the treaty,

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 7.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid, 9.

⁴³ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 12-13.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 14.

the plan was for the entire crusading army to gather in Venice and depart from its port. However, not all of the crusaders followed this plan for various reasons and this led to significantly fewer crusaders arriving in Venice than was planned in the treaty.⁴⁶ The crusaders were stationed on the island of St. Nicholas in Venice.⁴⁷ After the time had passed in which the crusading army was to arrive, the doge of Venice and the Venetians went to the crusaders and demanded payment for the navy and the supplies that had been prepared as per the treaty.⁴⁸

At this point, perhaps one of the most important happenings in all of the Fourth Crusade occurred when, according to both Villehardouin and Robert of Clari, less than half of the expected crusaders arrived.⁴⁹ Of the 33,500 soldiers for which the Venetians had built ships, only about one-third showed up, according to Villehardouin.⁵⁰ Robert of Clari noted that of the planned 4,000 knights and 100,000 foot soldiers only 1,000 knights and around 50,000 foot soldiers reported.⁵¹ While these numbers vary greatly between accounts, both verify that a larger crusader army was expected in Venice and that this lack of soldiers made it impossible for the crusaders who were in Venice to pay off the debt to which they had agreed in the contract.⁵² According to Villehardouin and Robert of Clari, the Venetians postponed their entire maritime commerce for a year and a half in order to complete their part of the treaty and expected nothing less than the complete fulfillment of the treaty.⁵³

⁴⁶ Ibid, 15.

⁴⁷ Clari, "Constantinople," 7.

⁴⁸ Clari, "Constantinople," 7; Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Clari, "Constantinople," 7.

⁵² Clari, "Constantinople," 7; Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 16.

⁵³ Clari, "Constantinople," 8-9; Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 16.

The large discrepancy between actual arrivals and the expected number created a difficult position for the crusaders and the Venetians. According to Villehardouin, many crusaders opted to use other ports instead of Venice as planned by the delegates or just never set out, thus not allowing the crusaders to pay the sum they owed the Venetians.⁵⁴ While this may just be an excuse formulated by Villehardouin to save face, there is evidence that supports his claim that some crusaders did use other ports. Villain of Nully and Henry of Longchamp among others decided to go to Apulia instead of Venice and seek passage to the Holy Land from there.⁵⁵ Some historians such as Donald Queller, Thomas Compton, and Donald Campbell make a claim very closely related to the claims of this study: that different groups most likely used the crusade for their own means.⁵⁶ They also claim that one reason why there were insufficient crusaders at Venice was due to the lack of cohesion of the crusading army and the fact that many of the leaders had their own goals and only “felt bound to the army only so long as it served them.”⁵⁷ The idea that different groups had different goals and could have used the crusade to their advantage coincides with the premise of this study. Due to this possible lack of

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Donald Queller, Thomas Compton, and Donald Campbell, “The Fourth Crusade: The Neglected Majority,” *Speculum*, Vol 49, No. 3 (Jul., 1974), 443.

⁵⁶ Ibid; Queller, Compton, and Campbell don’t go into much detail with regard to their belief in different groups using the crusade for their own means since their study was more focused on those who had not joined the crusade at Venice and were therefore not a part of the main crusading movement. However, Thomas Madden in his work entitled “Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade” does discuss theories that claim groups, especially the Venetians, used the crusade for their own means. Some of these claims made by medievalists state that the Venetians used the crusade to get revenge on the Byzantines and to protect their trading interests in the Middle East. It is important to note that the idea that groups used the crusade for their own means has existed since the Fourth Crusade, and there are several times when these theories along with conspiracy theories do seem to make sense and provide an exciting tale, according to Madden, but are not to be understood as true. This study would agree with Madden’s statement, and a premise of this study is that no one group had power during the entire crusade and that different groups who had power at different times led to the diversion and failure not just a single group like the Venetians.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 445.

cohesion and the resulting shortage, the crusaders were detained in Venice on the island of St. Nicholas until they could repay their debt.⁵⁸ However, when the Venetians realized the crusaders would still be unable to pay, they devised a new strategy.

From Villehardouin's and Clari's accounts a picture begins to emerge of the many different groups involved with the crusade. What is not readily apparent — but becomes more visible in the next two periods — are the differences in goals and ethics among the various groups involved in the crusade. In this period, the four main internal dynamics this study focuses on are not present and there are only minor leadership transitions within the crusading party. Although this first period does not seem to be very important in the overall outcome of the Fourth Crusade, one would be mistaken to believe this. This period sets in motion the Fourth Crusade through the ratification of the treaty with Venice, which would grant the Venetians great power and control over the crusade during certain periods and ultimately lead to the diversion of the Fourth Crusade in the second and third periods.

Chapter 3: Analysis of the First Period

The first period of the Fourth Crusade was relatively calm with respect to leadership transitions and internal dynamics. This period does have a few leadership transitions that occur within the crusading party itself but does not have any leadership transitions between groups that characterize the later periods. This period also lacks significant internal dynamics changes, very unlike the other two periods. However, the events that occur during this period seem to

⁵⁸ Clari, "Constantinople," 8.

have created an environment in which future internal dynamics change and greatly affect the course and result of the Fourth Crusade.

The initial period of the crusade marks the first time the reins of the crusade begin to shift hands. Pope Innocent III, when he initiated the crusade in 1198, was, for all intents and purposes, its leader.⁵⁹ In his *Post miserabile*, he laid out his plan for the crusade and the objectives he sought to accomplish. In this declaration Innocent III stated that he was ashamed and upset at the fall of the Christian kingdom of Jerusalem and the slaughter of Christians there.⁶⁰ By means of a crusade he sought to retake Jerusalem from the Muslim Ayyubids and rescue the remaining Christians there were while defending the land of Christ from infidels⁶¹ Innocent made a plea to his fellow Christians after the “lamentable slaughter of Christendom, after the deplorable invasion of that land on which the feet of Christ had stood” to “...arouse the nations of Christendom to fight the battles of Christ and to avenge the injuries done to him crucified.”⁶² He also called those hearing his plea to action by saying that “...our inheritance has gone to strangers, our houses to alien people.”⁶³ Ignoring the fiery rhetoric of Innocent, a call by the church to right a spiritual injustice was nonetheless made. Innocent claims that the Muslim Ayyubids stole what was rightfully the Christians’ and, more importantly, Christ’s and they must seek justice and “rush to the aid of him by whom you exist and live and have your being.”⁶⁴ The retaking of the Holy Land from the infidels for God while trying to protect the

⁵⁹ Bird, Peters, and Powell, *Crusade*, 47.

⁶⁰ Innocent III, “Post miserabile,” 56-57.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid, 54-55.

⁶³ Ibid, 55.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 56.

Christians who lived there seemed to be the ultimate objectives of the church and appeared as shared objectives throughout the crusade among the different groups. Even through the three periods of the crusade these ultimate objectives were never forgotten, the means to the end and the prevailing goals that were sought fluctuated in accordance with whom was controlling the crusade.

The leadership transitions in this period are not only between groups, such as the pope and the crusading host, but also within groups as well, in particular within the crusading host itself. When the first powerful lords took up the cross at the tournament at Ecry in 1199 a leader for the crusade host emerged: Count Thibaut of Champagne.⁶⁵ Since there is no evidence of the beliefs or goal of Thibaut, all that can be said with accuracy is that he joined the crusade early on and was chosen as its leader by his fellow nobles.⁶⁶ However, Thibault died shortly after becoming the leader and was replaced by Boniface of Montferrat in 1201.⁶⁷ The goals of Boniface at this point are also uncertain due to the lack of evidence; however, he was proposed by Villehardouin.⁶⁸ As evidenced by elections the leadership of the crusade within the first two years was already shifting hands but these leadership transitions do not appear to alter the course of the crusade as much as future ones tended to do.

⁶⁵ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 3.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Bird, Peters, and Powell, *Crusade*, 48.

⁶⁸ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 12; Boniface was one of the most accomplished men of the time, and a renowned soldier. His family was a family of Crusaders. Boniface himself had even fought Saladin, was made prisoner, and afterwards liberated because of a prisoner exchange. According to Frank Marzials an editor of *Chronicle of The Fourth Crusade and The Conquest of Constantinople* and M. Emile Bouchet "(i)t was no mean and nameless knight that Villehardouin was proposing as chief to the assembled Crusaders, but a princely noble, the patron of poets, versed in state affairs, and possessing personal experience of Eastern warfare;" Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 12.

The ever present dynamic of the pope's influence from Rome and the belief of some leaders and common soldiers alike that the pope had to sanction the actions of the crusaders becomes apparent in this period and also foreshadows the upcoming conflict between some of the leaders of the crusade and Innocent III. Evidence of this dynamic in this period was illustrated by the crusaders presenting Innocent with the contract with the Venetians in order to get his approval.⁶⁹ This shows that approval of Innocent III was at least sought at the beginning of the crusade and he had the power to make the agreement with the Venetians official by ratifying it. This dynamic of seeking the approval of the pope continued throughout the rest of the crusade and became very apparent in future periods, such as before the attack on Zara and during the discussion whether or not to aid Alexius IV. However, as the crusade progressed, it can be argued that the military and religious leaders in the field were the ones who seemed to be making the decisions without directly consulting the pope. This became clearer later on in the crusade but it is important to note that once the pope called the crusade and sent out representatives to preach and recruit for it his influence was not felt as much as that of the actual people who were physically leading the crusade.

In this first period there is one overwhelmingly evident event that would end up dictating the future of the crusade: the treaty with Venice. While it is impossible to say what would have happened if this treaty never been ratified or was different, it can be said that the conditions imposed on the crusaders in this treaty resulted in a major leadership struggle as well as a moral and ethical struggle among the crusaders in future periods of the crusade. Some

⁶⁹ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 9.

modern scholars, such as Donald Queller, Thomas Compton, and Donald Campbell who attempt to explain the crusade pinpoint the treaty as a decisive event that had major repercussions throughout the remainder of the crusade.⁷⁰

Chapter 4: The Second Period

This period is when the Fourth Crusade was first diverted and many internal struggles and leadership transitions occurred. The second period also contains one of the most important events in the Fourth Crusade: the attack on Zara. This period, along with the final period, truly demonstrate the effects and repercussions of the multitude of leadership transitions and internal dynamic shifts that this study claims are partially responsible for both the diversion and failure of the Fourth Crusade. Therefore, understanding the events of the second period is crucial if a greater understanding of the overall course of the crusade and the implications of leadership transitions and internal dynamics are to be more fully realized.

The second period begins with a major moral crisis for the crusaders in the form of an ultimatum given to them because of their inability to fully repay the Venetians.⁷¹ According to Robert of Clari, there was both a secret and public agreement between the Venetians and the crusading army.⁷² Publicly the Venetians promised to postpone the debt of the crusaders as long as they promised to pay the remaining 36,000 marks from the first conquests of the

⁷⁰ Queller, Compton, Campbell, "The Neglected Majority," 442. Modern scholars such as Donald Queller, Thomas Compton, and Donald Campbell in their various works argue that the treaty with Venice was the genesis of many issues that would persist throughout the Fourth Crusade. In their work entitled "The Fourth Crusade: The Neglected Majority," they claim that the terms established by the treaty were poor for the crusaders who were not able to muster the forces they had predicted and would ultimately indebt the crusaders to the Venetians, which in turn would lead to the diversion of the crusade.

⁷¹ Clari, "Constantinople," 9.

⁷² *ibid*

crusade.⁷³ The Venetians also joined the crusade with a large army and demanded to be given half of all that was conquered on the crusade.⁷⁴ According Clari, the crusaders were very grateful and eagerly accepted this compromise; however, the secret agreement to attack Zara caused much division within the crusading leadership.⁷⁵

The Venetians spun the attack on Zara as the crusaders helping the Venetians to regain territory that was rightfully theirs. According to Villehardouin, the Venetians told the crusaders that the King of Hungary took from them Zara in Slavonia and that they could not retake it without their help.⁷⁶ According to Villehardouin, the decision to help the Venetians retake Zara was not unanimous within the crusading leadership.⁷⁷ Nevertheless, the Venetians and crusaders prepared to sail to Zara, and many Venetians, including the doge, took the cross and officially joined the crusade.⁷⁸

The crusade was now diverted to Zara and at this point major moral and ethical struggles began to afflict the crusading host. The crusaders finally set out from Venice in early

⁷³ *ibid*

⁷⁴ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 7.

⁷⁵ Clari, "Constantinople," 9; Even though Clari was just a knight in the crusading host and not a leader he does offers a useful perspective of the leadership for study. He gives his account regarding the leadership from the outside looking in. This way of seeing the leadership is important because it could possibly be how the common soldiers, such as Clari, saw the leadership and their decision-making. This perspective from the common soldiers' standpoint would then, in turn, provide a counter perspective to Villehardouin in some regard, providing more evidence to be used in this study. Perhaps one of Clari's best attributes as a documenter of the Fourth Crusade was the fact that he was part of the crusade and wrote much sooner after its end than did Villehardouin. This is important because it may have allowed him to remember things more easily and provide us with more accurate details. However, perhaps the most important distinction between Villehardouin and Clari is their purpose for writing. Villehardouin seems to be writing to defend his and the crusader's actions while vilifying those who either deserted or never showed up. Clari seems to be writing his perspective of the Fourth Crusade for posterity and his account is filled with much less bias or at the very least his bias is much more concealed than that of Villehardouin.

⁷⁶ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 17.

⁷⁷ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 18.

November and arrived at Zara November 10, 1202 A.D.⁷⁹ On November 12, 1202, a delegation from Zara approached the doge and offered to surrender as long as the lives of the people in Zara were spared.⁸⁰ The doge convened with other crusader leaders because he seemingly wanted their approval or wanted to appease the crusaders by asking their opinion.⁸¹ The crusaders agreed to the terms of the surrender; however, a force within the crusade incited the people of Zara to fight and not surrender, according to Villehardouin.⁸² When the doge discovered this subversion by a force within the crusading party, he demanded that the crusaders still help him take the city as they had promised.⁸³ This was a difficult proposition because Zara was a Christian city and was under the protection of Innocent III, but the doge did not believe that this protection was legitimate.⁸⁴

While the Venetian leadership seemed to be confident that they were justified in attacking Zara, the crusaders were not, and a schism began to appear between two major beliefs in the crusading army. One group seemed to believe that the ends justified the means and the other group seemed to believe the opposite and that the crusaders should go straight to the Holy Land. The Abbot of Vaux, a papal delegate and an advocate of the beliefs of the

⁷⁹ Ibid, 20.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 21.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 22.

⁸⁴ Madden, "The Venetian Version," 316; The doge, in a letter to Innocent III, claims to have attacked Zara because they were rebellious toward Venice and he was within his rights to seek vengeance. The doge also claims that he believed that the papal protection of Zara was just a rumor and that there was no way that the pope would have been protecting the property of the King of Hungary who had "who had taken the cross only as a pretext for stealing and keeping others' property." Therefore, it would seem that either the doge truly believed this or retroactively declared this as his justified reasoning. However, it is important to note that the pope didn't receive this letter until after the sacking of Constantinople and had already excommunicated the Venetians after the attacking of Zara.

second group, forbade the attack on Zara on the grounds that they were pilgrims and the city was full of Christians.⁸⁵ Despite this warning, the crusaders capitulated to the demands of the doge because they were in his debt, and the people who believed the ends justify the means would have been shamed if they failed to complete what they promised and were unable to reach the Holy Land.⁸⁶ Villehardouin, being a leader and the source that reports this sense of shame, may have felt shame and responsibility for the situation the crusaders were put in by the treaty he negotiated. While it is not possible to know for certain how Villehardouin felt, it is clear that there was some sense of obligation to the Venetians either because of this shame or perhaps stemming from a belief that if the crusaders helped the Venetians they would be able to continue on to the Holy Land and fulfill their crusading vows. Nevertheless, the crusading army attacked the Christian city of Zara, which surrendered after five days of fighting, and the crusaders remained there until spring of the following year.⁸⁷ This marks the end of the second partition of the crusade.

During the second period the first major change of influence and power occurred when the crusaders deferred control to the Venetians, failed to fulfill the treaty, and agreed to help the Venetians attack Zara. In this period the Venetians also take the cross and become crusaders.⁸⁸ In this period Innocent III also begins to lose what control he has over the crusade as evidenced by the crusaders and Venetians going through with the attack on Zara despite him

⁸⁵ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 21.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 22; Ibid, 25.

⁸⁸ From this point forward, the Venetian crusaders will be referred to as the Venetians and the Non-Venetian crusaders will be referred to as the crusaders. This is semantic in nature only as both groups are crusaders during the Fourth Crusade.

warning them not to and, according to Madden, threatening them with excommunication.⁸⁹ The crusade would continue to experience these leadership transitions and internal dynamic shifts throughout the third and final period.

Chapter 5: Analysis of the Second Period

In the second period it becomes apparent that different leaders were willing to accept different means to a desired end. This is a recurring internal dynamic that is present throughout much of the second and third period of this crusade and often comes to the surface during periods of moral crisis such as the deliberation whether or not to attack the Christian city of Zara. This period also makes evident more dissent within the crusading host based upon the beliefs and goals of groups involved. Analyzing both the actions and reactions of groups in this period provides more insight into the crusade and shows that events in this period were the result of the failure of the crusaders to fulfill the treaty and the ensuing leadership change that occurred when the crusaders attempted to rectify the situation by making a new deal with Venetians.

This second phase of the crusade is when outside forces begin to steer the crusade in the direction they want.⁹⁰ The Venetians sacrificed much in order to complete their part of the treaty so it is understandable why they wanted to hold the crusaders completely accountable for what they agreed to. The Venetians postponed their entire maritime economy for a year and a half in order to complete their part of the treaty and they only received a small payment

⁸⁹ Madden, "Venetian," 326.

⁹⁰ Outside forces in this context means other people or groups besides the crusaders themselves. This would include the Venetians and in the next period, Alexius IV.

in advance.⁹¹ This postponing of the maritime economy was all the more important because the Venetians relied upon trade and maritime commerce to supply their city and since much of their wealth came from trade the Venetians were lacking a large amount of money that they would have otherwise gained from such commerce.⁹²

The Venetians needed to make a decision about how to rectify the situation but also needed to be careful not to make a decision that would not hurt their interests. The Venetians could have made the crusaders sign a new contract agreeing to pay the remainder of the debt within a certain period of time but that was risky and the crusaders had already failed to pay once. The Venetians seemed to have considered keeping the money that was collected from the crusaders and since it was not enough to fulfill the contract just tell the crusaders to leave.⁹³ However, according to Elizabeth Horodowich, the Venetians were used to failed contracts and used this experience to devise a plan to both benefit themselves further and allow the crusaders to continue on their crusade.⁹⁴ Horodowich believes that the Venetians agreed to transport the crusaders in return for capturing several cities in Adriatic Sea, including Zara, to help shore up Venice's strength and hold on their trading routes.⁹⁵ With the evidence presented by Horodowich and Villehardouin it seems that the Venetians decided upon this solution in order to appease their own people who still were owed money from the crusaders

⁹¹ Clari, "Constantinople," 9.

⁹² Elizabeth Horodowich, *A Brief History of Venice: A New History of the City and its People* (London: Constable and Robinson LTD, 2009), 52.

⁹³ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 17.

⁹⁴ Horodowich, *Venice*, 40. Elizabeth Horodowich is a modern-day scholar who focuses on the history of Venice. Her work discusses the Venetian involvement in the crusades and the Fourth Crusade. Horodowich offers a modern perspective of both Venice and the Venetians involvement in the Fourth Crusade, which is very useful as a contrast to the accounts of Clari and Villehardouin.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

and to perhaps protect their reputation from being tarnished, which could have a devastating impact on their trade empire.⁹⁶

This new arrangement between the Venetian crusaders and the non-Venetian crusaders drastically shifted the control and power of the crusade into the hands of the Venetians. The crusaders agreed to help the Venetians retake Zara and also to give fifty percent of all conquests to the Venetians. The crusaders were in effect following orders of the Venetians not only to repay a debt but in order to reach the Holy Land and fulfill their crusading oaths. This represents the first major leadership transition of the crusade, which occurred between rather than within groups.

The Venetians claimed that it was justified to attack the city of Zara because they were rebellious and according to just war theory of the time they were right in doing so, according to an analysis of Gunther of Pairis' work explored by Raymond Schmandt.⁹⁷ According to the translated work of Gunther, some crusaders decided that committing small acts of evil in order to accomplish the greater holy work of the crusade was justified.⁹⁸ However, there was still great debate among the crusaders as to whether or not this was justified. Many crusaders left

⁹⁶ If the Venetians were perceived as deceptive or bad people, this could have had a negative impact on their reputation and result in loss of trading contracts that would adversely affect their economy. The Venetians could have just taken the money they were paid and told the crusaders to find another way to the Holy Land, but since it wasn't the full value they decided to come up with a different solution. Therefore, in order to protect their reputation the Venetians seemed to have made the correct decision for their own city as the crusade resulted in Venice gaining vast amounts of territory and becoming a massive imperial power with great commercial power; Horodowich, *Venice*, 43.

⁹⁷ Schmandt, "Just-War," 204. Raymond Schmandt translated Gunther of Pairis' work *Historia Constantinopolitana* from Latin to English and used his translation as evidence for his claim that some crusaders decided that the means justified the end. The just war theory of the time that pertains to the crusaders seems to one based upon religion, morality, and justice. An action ideally must be morally justified based upon Christian ideals; *ibid*, 197, 218.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*.

the crusade because they felt that it was not going in a direction they could morally support.⁹⁹ The Abbot of Vaux along with another opposition leader, Simon de Montfort, read a papal letter stating that the crusaders would be excommunicated if they attacked the city. Thus, Simon de Montfort left the crusade with as many as would follow him to find another way to the Holy Land.¹⁰⁰ The crusade was far from over since many men remained and carried out the attack on Zara, thus gaining military victory but also facing excommunication.

It is very important to try to determine why, at this point in time, so many crusaders decided that even though their actions could result in excommunication, they still pursued the current plan as it was their best chance of reaching the Holy Land. From what can be gathered, the crusaders who stayed most likely believed the ends justified the means. If this belief is accurate, perhaps the crusaders believed that by attacking Zara they would be able to eventually achieve their ultimate objective of liberating the Holy Land. The crusading leaders who carried out the attack and stayed with the crusade may have, on some level, believed the ends justified the means; otherwise, they most likely would have deserted along with the others who didn't believe in attacking Christian cities and wanted to go directly to the Holy Land.¹⁰¹ The Venetians were very careful in defending why they attacked Zara and if the letter of Doge Dandolo to Innocent III previously discussed is any indication, the Venetians seemed compelled to defend the attack on Zara as justified — not on the basis of religion but rather as seeking vengeance for rebellion in which Venice would be justified to retaliate.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 28.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 26; Crusaders who stayed seemed to be under the pretense that they must hold the crusade together in order to complete their mission, according to Villehardouin, or that they were justified in their actions, according to Raymond Schamandt.

It seems very likely that not all soldiers were made aware of the consequences of their actions and, according to Madden, many soldiers, especially the Venetians, still believed they were receiving direct orders from Innocent III.¹⁰² This belief along with the feeling that they must obey the commands of the pope may have contributed to support for the attack on Zara as well.¹⁰³ An excellent example of the soldiers not knowing the true consequences of their actions or even the origin of their orders is when the crusaders and Venetians were excommunicated, only a few of the leaders knew about it and this was kept hidden from the vast majority of the army.¹⁰⁴ While this does seem to be a way for the crusading leaders to maintain control over and even manipulate their soldiers to do what they want, it also seems that they believed the ends justified the means and that the ordinary soldier had no need to know what was truly going on as long as they fulfilled their crusading oaths. According to Madden, the leadership must have been fearful for the continuity of the crusade if this information was leaked to the army, and they feared this for good reason. Many soldiers had already left due to moral disagreements and if they had learned they were excommunicated, they might have given up.¹⁰⁵ This fear of excommunication leading to the disintegration of the army was mentioned by Doge Dandolo to Boniface of Montferrat who, in turn, relayed this information to Innocent III in a letter.¹⁰⁶ This fear of excommunication and of incurring the wrath of the church for diverting the crusade seems to have been shared by both the Venetians, as evidenced by the above letter, and by the crusaders, as evidenced by the various debates

¹⁰² Madden, "Venetian," 327.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Madden, "Venetian," 327.

and discussions among the crusading leadership about the diversions to Zara and, in the next period, to Constantinople.

The reins of the crusade had passed from the crusaders into the hands of the Venetians and the doge. This had disastrous moral and religious consequences for those crusaders who stayed. However, it is important to note that after the conquest of Zara there were no plans to attack any other Christian cities, according to the account of Villehardouin, and the agreement struck with the crusaders after they failed to meet the conditions of the treaty. The crusaders and Venetians were to remain in Zara for the winter and then in spring head to the Holy Land, according to Villehardouin.¹⁰⁷ It is important to note that the ultimate objective still appears to be the retaking of the Holy Land, but what we see from the Venetian leadership is the crusading host is being asked to achieve this goal through means that are not entirely religious and are definitely not entirely approved by the originator of the crusade, Innocent III.

The shift of the leadership gives us some insight into what was most important to certain groups during this second period. The first group, the newly ascendant Venetian leadership, under the doge, had several objectives that don't necessarily reconcile with one another unless we see the crusade from their perspective. The Venetians seem to have had a blend of monetary and religious motivations, which have raised many questions from scholars

¹⁰⁷ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 25; As with other details in the crusade relayed by Villehardouin, care needs to be taken when deciding whether or not they are accurate. However, Clari does seem to corroborate the story that the crusaders were planning on wintering in Zara and heading to the Holy Land in the spring, but they realized that they had neither the provisions nor the money to support them in their endeavor. This is where the crusading host decides to reach out to Alexius IV, if you believe the account of Clari is more accurate, or Alexius IV decided to reach out to the crusading host, if you believe Villehardouin; Clari, "Constantinople," 11.

as evidenced by the debate that Madden recorded in this work, “Outside and Inside the Fourth Crusade” about their real intentions in joining the crusade.¹⁰⁸

This uncertainty of what the Venetians’ true motivations were has, perhaps unjustifiably, led to conspiracy theories about the Venetians purposefully diverting the crusade for revenge.¹⁰⁹ This Venetian diversion theory has existed since the time of the Fourth Crusade and has seemingly evolved as time has gone on. Nicetas Choniates, a Byzantine historian who documented the Fourth Crusade in his *Historia*, claimed that the doge of Venice used the crusade for his secret plan to trick others into destroying Byzantium.¹¹⁰ A modern version of this theory is that the Venetians took advantage of the crusaders being unable to fulfill their debts and in turn used this debt to drive the crusade to secure their control of the sea for trade and to eliminate a major competitor, Byzantium.¹¹¹ While there is still some support for the Venetian diversion theory as evidenced by the work of Madden and, to a lesser extent, Horodowich, this theory is not supported by the evidence gathered from this study.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Madden, “Outside,” 726; In the introduction to this work Madden tells of a debate that occurred during “recent meeting” of the International Congress on Medieval Studies. During a discussion on a paper related to the Fourth Crusade a panelist accused the Venetians of subverting the crusade for their own ends. The chairman of the panel went as far as to say that the doge of Venice secretly planned to divert the crusade to get revenge on the Byzantines and to get rich from it, according to the account of Madden. What transpired after was a back and forth debate between one side who vehemently believed the Venetians were crooked and tried to purposefully sabotage the Fourth Crusade while the other half of the room fought this notion. Whether or not the information presented by the chairmen was true is not the important part of this exchange. What is important is that it shows there is still a very polarized debate about the Venetian involvement in the Fourth Crusade and there is particular skepticism as to their motivations during the crusade and potential involvement in the failure of the crusade.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Choniates, *O City of Byzantium*; This claim of a conspiracy from Nicetas should not be taken as absolute truth as he was writing from the defeated Byzantine perspective and most likely harbored many ill feelings toward the crusaders and especially the rivals of the Byzantines who has just conquered their city, the Venetians.

¹¹¹ Horodowich, *Venice*, 39-41;

¹¹² The evidence gathered during this study seems to point to the fact that the Venetians did use the crusaders’ inability to fulfill their contract with the Venetians to their advantage but were not directly responsible for the crusaders failing to meet the terms. Therefore, it seems incorrect in stating that the Venetians diverted the crusade when in fact the initial diversion was the responsibility of the crusaders failing to fulfill the treaty. It is true that the Venetians wanted the crusade diverted to Zara as a deal to postpone payment from the crusaders, and

However, even though there were cases in which the leadership of the crusade switched hands, the ultimate objective always appeared to be the retaking of the Holy Land. The means and the secondary objectives are the ones that tended to shift.

One of the main goals of the Venetians at this point was to secure repayment for their treaty with the crusaders. This is evident in both the accounts of Villehardouin and Clari when they only allow the crusaders to leave port when they agree to repay them through conquest and they had previously also agreed to split what they conquer with the Venetians.¹¹³ This doesn't mean the Venetians were solely in the crusade for the profit. Making sure they were repaid and protecting their reputation as a maritime power dependent upon trade possibly had an impact upon their decisions as well. However, it would be incorrect to say that the Venetians had solely secular motivations for the crusade.

The second main goal of the Venetians, and still the ultimate objective, was to help retake the Holy Land for God. The Venetians had a past of serving and supporting the crusades and the pope, and this could be seen as a continuation of that service and support.¹¹⁴ The Venetians were a religious people as evidenced by their devotion to Christianity and Christian

some crusaders, according to both Clari and Villehardouin, agreed to assist. The second diversion to Constantinople is a little harder to decipher who exactly initiated the contact between Alexius and the crusading host, but Clari states that the host agreed to help Alexius out of necessity while Villehardouin states they helped out of moral responsibility and promised aid in their mission. Villehardouin —whom we must be cautious in accepting what he states as fact due to him wanting to protect himself and perhaps make the crusade seem more justified than perhaps it was — never blames the Venetians for the diversions or failures. This is important as the Venetians could very easily have become scapegoats for Villehardouin yet he doesn't present them as hijackers but as fellow crusaders who have the same goal as the crusaders. One key piece of evidence that does seem to deny a conspiracy is the fact that the Venetians designed boats specifically for assaulting beaches in the Holy Land, not for assaulting the Greek islands and especially not the fortress of Constantinople; Madden, "Outside and Inside," 740; Therefore, it seems unlikely that the Venetians truly hijacked or purposefully ruined the crusade for their own means even if they did benefit from the failure of the crusade.

¹¹³ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 7, 17; Clari, "Constantinople," 9.

¹¹⁴Madden, "Venetian," 314.

saints, such as Saint Mark, and previous involvement in crusades.¹¹⁵ This support of Christianity and seemingly well intentioned prior involvement in the crusades does provide some evidence as to why the Venetians only directed the crusade to Zara after the crusaders failed to pay their debt and the Venetians had to make a new arrangement and the fact that there is no evidence of this being a plan prior to the crusader's failure to pay. This would also help to explain why the Venetians did not state any plans to attack other Christian cities in this period, thus invalidating the claim of a Venetian hijacking of the crusade for their own purposes. It could even be argued, based upon the evidence provided by Thomas Madden, that the majority of Venetians in the crusade never believed that they were acting in a way that would be against their faith, the direction of the crusade, or Innocent III.¹¹⁶ In addition, many of the ordinary soldiers and men not in high leadership positions believed that they were following the direct orders of Innocent III, according to Boniface of Montferrat.¹¹⁷

In this period there is a dichotomy of beliefs among the crusading leadership, especially in their ideas of what is an acceptable means to the end of reaching and liberating the Holy Land. There seem to be two major groups within the crusading party. One group was more apt to accept extreme means, such as attacking Christians, in order to achieve the desired goal. The other group was much less likely to accept extreme means and its ideals seem more similar to

¹¹⁵ Horodowich, *History*, 35-37.

¹¹⁶ Madden, "Venetian," 324-326; In this section Madden discusses the widespread narrative of a Venetian historian Da Canal. He discusses how widely accepted it was by Venetians as fact even though we now know it was almost completely false. This is important because in Da Canal's version the Venetians were following the orders of the pope and he never mentions the excommunication that occurred. Thus, it would seem that the suppression of the inner working of the crusade by the doge and the suppression of the excommunication led to a "Venetian Version" of the Fourth Crusade in which the majority of Venetians believed, both during and after the crusade, that they were following the orders of the pope, according to Madden.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 326.

those of Innocent III than of the first group. It is important to examine these two groups closely in order to better understand how and why the crusade was ultimately diverted.

The first group, which did not believe the means of attacking Christians justified the ends, appears to have similar ideals to that of the crusade's spiritual leader, Innocent III. Some evidence to support this lies in the fact that this group openly supported and preached the desires of Innocent III to the rest of the crusaders in order to try and convince them that they should follow the orders of their pope.¹¹⁸ This group had many high ranking members of the crusade and the main conservative leaders were the Abbot of Vaux and Simon de Montfort. This group is regularly referred by Villehardouin to as "those who wished that the host should be broken up" or some version of that.¹¹⁹ This perhaps alludes to the obstructive stance they took with regard to the diversion of the crusade and attacking Christians and their opposition to the Venetians and the party that favored drastic means to get to the desired end. Therefore, it would seem that Villehardouin is distorting the truth just enough to make it misleading. It seems likely that the group he is describing wanted to go directly to the Holy Land and to stop diverting the crusade. Perhaps in his mind the dissenters were trying to break up the crusade when in reality they were trying to save it from its own diversions and missteps.

This group seemed to have a consistent policy during the crusade. They seem to believe that attacking Christians was taboo as we saw in their opposition to attacking Zara and as we will continue to see throughout the remainder of the crusade.¹²⁰ A great example of some

¹¹⁸ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 21.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, 17.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*.

members of this group stating this belief is when the Abbot of Vaux preached that attacking Christians during a crusade was wrong and Robert of Boves even told the Zarans that the crusaders would not attack them because they were Christian.¹²¹ Another strong belief of this group of crusaders was that they should not waste time and should immediately go to the Holy Land to fight for God and fulfill their crusading vows. This belief is evidenced by this group of crusaders not supporting the change of plans to divert to Zara.¹²² Further evidence of this occurs in the next part of the crusade when the crusaders are presented with a proposal by Alexius IV of Byzantium.¹²³ As has been alluded to above, there is a continuation of these beliefs in the next period of the crusade and some of this group tries to separate themselves from what they deemed as a crusade that was no longer in accordance with the wishes of the pope.

The second group of crusaders had a much more complex view of what was right and wrong for the crusade and perhaps showed a more practical approach to the conundrum that faced them. The main leaders of the crusade who seemed to share this ideology were Villehardouin, Marquis of Montferrat, Baldwin Count of Flanders, and the Abbot of Loos. Even though this group shared the same ultimate goal as the other group, that does not become readily evident until the next period. This is evidenced by the crusaders helping to settle their debt with the Venetians so that they could continue on to the Holy Land and by some of the leaders claiming that this was their best chance of accomplishing their mission. This group also recognized that in order to achieve this goal they would need to use extreme measures such as

¹²¹ Ibid, 21.

¹²² Ibid, 17.

¹²³ Ibid, 24.

attacking a Christian city. The members of this group supported the attack on the city and justified it as keeping the host together and fulfilling the treaty that they had originally failed to uphold.¹²⁴ These extreme measures, however, were often not in line with the views of the church and Innocent III and led to conflict that resulted in the crusade being excommunicated multiple times, the first being after the attack on the city of Zara.¹²⁵

This group supported the attack on Zara as a way to repay the Venetians and seemed to believe that helping the Venetians and resolving their debt was a way to avoid the shame and dishonor of failing to complete their treaty. Clari wrote that he believed the Venetians felt that the crusaders were shameful for not doing what they promised.¹²⁶ Perhaps the crusaders agreed to the new proposal out of shame for failing to live up the original proposal. According to Villehardouin, the crusaders attacked Zara because it was all they could to try to hold the crusade together.¹²⁷

The belief that diverting the crusade was the best option to ultimately complete their goals occurs in the third partition of the crusade when the crusaders once again reach a point of contention over a perceived diversion of the crusade. It is important to note that this group did not include a majority of the rank and file soldiers who tended to have a view more similar to the first group of crusaders and seemed less likely to support extreme measures.¹²⁸ The idea of the normal rank and file having this mindset comes from the letters of Boniface of Montferrat discussed above. Therefore, the crusade leadership understood that the rank and

¹²⁴ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 16-17.

¹²⁵ Madden, "Venetian," 324.

¹²⁶ Clari, "Constantinople," 9.

¹²⁷ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 27.

¹²⁸ Madden, "Venetian," 326.

file were of this mindset and as the crusade proceeded they seemed to become increasingly more secretive about specific crusading details and even hid from the soldiers that they were excommunicated by the pope after attacking Zara.¹²⁹

During this period we begin to see a very distinct difference between two divergent groups within the crusade but we also see the steady and consistent policy and belief of Innocent III. During this period, he had no change of policy regarding the crusade and what he considered acceptable means to accomplish his plan. Innocent III excommunicated the entire crusading host for going against his wishes, a policy that shows how upset he was by the crusaders' actions.¹³⁰ According to Villehardouin, Innocent III pardoned the crusaders for their attack on Zara because he believed that they were compelled by others to attack Zara and acknowledged that the crusading host must be held together in order to retake the Holy Land.¹³¹ It is important to note that even though Innocent III pardoned the crusaders within a few months of excommunicating them in 1202, he purposefully didn't pardon the Venetians whom he may have believed to have been behind the diversion that resulted in the attack on Zara and the ones who impelled the crusaders to attack.¹³² While this may not be entirely accurate, it would explain why the crusaders and not the Venetians were pardoned. With the information provided by Madden, such as the doge informing Innocent III that if the Venetians knew of their excommunication they would turn home, it would seem likely that Innocent knew

¹²⁹ Ibid, 327.

¹³⁰ Boniface of Montferrat, "Reg. 6:100," Trans. Alfred Andrea, *Contemporary Sources* (Leiden, 2000). 57-59.

¹³¹ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 27; Madden, "Venetian Version," 315; In a letter, Innocent stated his suspicion that the Venetians had diverted the crusade and this could be one reason why he refused to lift the excommunication of the Venetians at that point in time.

¹³² Ibid.

that the host must remain together in order to achieve his ultimate goal of recovering the Holy Land.¹³³ Therefore, it seems that he told the crusaders to do what they could to hold the host together in the hopes of being able to retake Jerusalem; this seems to be the main motivation for Innocent pardoning the crusaders.¹³⁴

The second period, even though it did not span a great deal of time, contained many important internal dynamics shifts and a major leadership transition. The third period continued the trend of internal dynamic changes and leadership shifts and the ascendancy of the Venetians as a major contributor and influencer of the crusade. While the second period does seem to have one of the most important events during the Fourth Crusade with regard to its diversion and ultimate failure, the attack on Zara, the final period is also extremely important in understanding the issues this thesis tries to address.

Chapter 6: The Third Period

The third part of the crusade begins with the crusading party wintering in Zara. However, there are two different versions of what exactly happened while wintering in Zara — one from Clari and the other from Villehardouin — which alter perceptions of the events that follow significantly. Both accounts provide valuable insight into the crusade and offer contrasting views that are hard to reconcile with one another. Therefore, one version is ultimately given more credence and used in this study as the source for this period.

¹³³ Madden, "Venetian," 327.

¹³⁴ Madden, "Venetian," 327.

If the version of Villehardouin is to be believed, the third period began when the crusaders received messengers with a proposal from Alexius IV and King Phillip of Germany while they were wintering in Zara. According to Alexius and Phillip, if the crusaders were to help bring Alexius justice by helping him retake Constantinople — which to Alexius believed was rightfully his — then the crusaders would receive a great reward that would be ultimately beneficial to their quest for retaking the Holy Land.¹³⁵ According to the proposal, Alexius would reunite the Byzantine church with that of the West and would be obedient to Rome. Alexius would also offer 200,000 silver marks along with provisions for the crusading army.¹³⁶ He also offered to send 10,000 soldiers with the crusade to fight in the Holy Land for a year and maintain 500 knights in the defense of the Holy Land for his lifetime.¹³⁷

The crusading party was deeply divided and had a great debate over the proposal.¹³⁸ This dichotomy of the crusading party continued into the third period and remained throughout a majority of that time. One group of crusaders wanted nothing to do with the proposal while the other major group felt it gave them a better chance to retake the Holy Land.¹³⁹ Once again, after much debate, some of the group agreed to the proposal and the Marquis of Montferrat, Baldwin Count of Flanders and Hainault, Count Louis, Count Hugh of St. Paul and eight other

¹³⁵ Ibid 24

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 25; This polarization of the crusading party is very similar to the polarization that occurred in the second period. The existence of two major factions within the crusading party has continuity from the second period and their stances on whether the means justify the ends and whether the crusade should or should not immediately go to the Holy Land were unchanged. There is still one group that supports extreme means to get to the desired end and was willing to take detours in order to reach the Holy Land, presumably more ready and able to conquer it. There was still the other major group that still believed that the means did not justify the ends and wanted to go the Holy Land sooner rather than later.

men of importance entered into the covenant with Alexius.¹⁴⁰ This agreement, according to Villehardouin, was not supported by the other group of crusaders who did not favor attacking Christians or diverting the crusade.¹⁴¹ This group advocated to reject the new compact with Alexius and supported sailing straight to the Holy Land.¹⁴²

The struggle between the two groups within the crusading host had reached critical levels. Villehardouin writes that many crusaders abandoned the crusade and tried to go home or to the Holy Land without the rest of the army.¹⁴³ Despite this, the crusaders still had enough men to go forward with their new plans of helping to retake Constantinople for Alexius, and once Alexius arrived in Zara in April 1203, the host departed for Corfu but not before leveling the city of Zara.¹⁴⁴

If we are to believe Clari a very different scenario unfolded. According to him, after the crusaders had conquered Zara they were out of money and provisions and were unable to complete their journey to the Holy Land.¹⁴⁵ Clari even goes as far as to say that even if they did go to the Holy Land, they would not have the means to accomplish anything.¹⁴⁶ Clari also writes

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 26.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 28; The account of Villehardouin is a very problematic source. He is writing from a position of leadership within the Fourth Crusade, which not only completely failed its primary objective but also destroyed a major Christian empire, Byzantium. Innocent III was not pleased with the direction the crusade took as evidenced by both his excommunication of the crusaders and in his reprimand of a papal legate, which will be explained later. Therefore, his account may present information in a way that is not absolute truth in order to defend himself of the actions of the crusaders. Attacking Christians and not fulfilling one's crusading vows must not have been looked on too favorably, and perhaps this account along with the periodic casting of blame on other parties was a way for Villehardouin to justify his actions and to present the case of the crusaders to those who would read it. That said, this study does accept the general premise of Villehardouin's work; however, caution must be taken when reading his work and some information may be attributed to hindsight or deception in order to protect himself.

¹⁴⁵ Clari, "Constantinople," 11.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

that the doge realized this and thus proposed to the host: "Sirs, Greece is a very rich land, and bountifully supplied with everything. If we can find a sufficient excuse for going there and taking food and other things, so as to recuperate ourselves, it would seem to me advisable, and then we could easily go across the sea."¹⁴⁷ Boniface of Montferrat, the leader of the crusaders, then stated that he knew of Alexius IV who was a victim of treason and had lost Constantinople to traitors.¹⁴⁸ He goes on to suggest that they get him to join them and take him to Constantinople not only because he is the rightful heir, but also because they would be able to resupply there and continue on the crusade.¹⁴⁹

The theme of dissention is consistent between the accounts of Clari and Villehardouin. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that once Alexius arrived at Zara the crusaders convened to discuss what to do since there was discontent brewing. One group claimed that they now had an excuse to go to Constantinople since they had the lawful heir with them.¹⁵⁰ However, the other group dissented, saying that they should make for the Holy Land since they only had about six months left on their contract with the Venetians who were providing their transportation.¹⁵¹ The one group in support of Alexius responded by saying that they didn't have enough money or provisions to go and would die of hunger if they attempted a journey to the Holy Land right away.¹⁵² This same group claimed it would be acceptable for them to attack Constantinople because they would be helping a wronged leader and would be gaining support

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 12.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 24.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid.

and provisions from Alexius once he regained power.¹⁵³ According to Clari, the Marquis of Montferrat did everything he could to get the crusaders to go to Constantinople because he wanted revenge for an unnamed wrong that the usurper had done to him.¹⁵⁴

While Clari's version is certainly interesting, the account of Villehardouin seems to be more reliable because he was in a position of leadership and thus more likely to be privy to the reality of the situation. Whether or not Villehardouin presents the situation accurately or truthfully is not fully known.¹⁵⁵ This isn't to say that Clari's version is a lie. It may or may not be true, but it provides a different perspective and perhaps relays different information than the account of Villehardouin alone would, including which party initiated dialogue with respect to helping Alexius IV retake Byzantium. This dichotomy of accounts creates many issues with studying the Fourth Crusade because it relies upon the reader to try to decipher the truth from the bias and deception. This is further complicated by the extreme bias that is seemingly in all the major primary sources for this crusade.

Despite the differences between the two accounts, we do know that Alexius joined the crusaders at Zara and after debate some of the crusaders left the host while those who remained journeyed to Corfu.¹⁵⁶ Among the crusaders who left were many notable leaders,

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ While neither source can be trusted completely, each source can be trusted on some level. When reading the sources we must be wary of their biases and perspective and use that to make a judgement call on whether or not the information provided can be trusted. It seems to be the trend to generally accept the account of Villehardouin along with the caveat that it is heavily biased at some points but that much of the general information, especially that which is corroborated with Clari and other sources, can be accepted as most likely true. The idea that Villehardouin is the most widely read and important contemporary source of the Fourth Crusade is shared by Madden; Madden, "Venetian Version," 315.

¹⁵⁶ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 30.

such as Simon of Montfort and the Abbot of Vaux, who were very much opposed to the current diversion and attacking of Christians.¹⁵⁷ This group decided to leave the host and join with the King of Hungary, the previous ruler of Zara.¹⁵⁸

The threat of desertions would follow the crusader host to Corfu where they managed to capture the city of Duras, but another group of crusaders gathered together and sought to abandon the crusade.¹⁵⁹ This time, according to Villehardouin, over half the remaining host sought to abandon the crusade.¹⁶⁰ The Marquis of Montferrat and his followers were distraught at this realization and knew that if they did not reconcile the other group that the crusade would fall apart and fail.¹⁶¹ Therefore, this group of crusaders decided to approach those who were discontent and make a promise to them: If the discontents would remain with the host for six months, they would provide transport for anyone discontent with the direction of the crusade to the Holy Land after that time.¹⁶² Both parties accepted this compromise and another disaster was avoided by the crusading host.

With the host newly reunited they soon set sail for Constantinople in order to reinstall Alexius. Along the way the crusaders captured the cities of Abydos and Andros. According to Horodowich, the Venetians wanted these cities dealt with in order to shore up control of their Adriatic trade routes.¹⁶³ After these conquests the host continued to the city of Constantinople, stopping at the Abbey of St. Stephen, three leagues from Constantinople, in order to formulate

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 28.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 29.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 31-32; Horodowich, *Venice*, 40.

a plan.¹⁶⁴ The crusaders decided to raid the nearby islands before approaching the city of Constantinople with Alexius.¹⁶⁵ When the crusaders reached the city, they paraded Alexius in front of the walls and announced to the people of Constantinople that he was their true lord and if they accepted him as such they wouldn't be harmed.¹⁶⁶ However, the people of Constantinople didn't recognize Alexius as their ruler so the crusaders prepared for battle.¹⁶⁷ Battle ensued for the next few days until one night, the usurper that ruled Constantinople, Alexius III, fled from Constantinople.¹⁶⁸ The late night retreat resulted in some leaders within the city of Constantinople releasing the father of Alexius IV, Isaac, and reinstalling him as ruler of Constantinople.¹⁶⁹

With Alexius III driven from the city and Isaac II, father of Alexius IV, reinstalled the crusade finally seemed like it would soon be in the Holy Land. The crusaders sent envoys — Villehardouin among them — to Isaac II in order to discuss the terms established by Alexius IV with the crusaders and the treaty was ratified by Isaac.¹⁷⁰ According to Villehardouin, the terms that were presented to Isaac were as follows:

In the first place to put the whole empire of Roumania in obedience to Rome, from which it has been separated this long while; further to give 200,000 marks of silver to those of the host, with food for one year for small and great; to send 10,000 men, horse and foot - many on foot as we shall devise and as many mounted - in his own ships, and at his own charges, to the land of Babylon, and keep them there for a year; and during his lifetime to keep, at his own charges, five hundred knights in the land overseas so that they may guard that land.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 32.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 35-36.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 37.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 46.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 47-48.

It is important to note that even though Isaac said that these conditions would be difficult to fulfill he still confirmed the agreement and thus the crusaders allowed Alexius to return to his father, if we are to believe the account of Villehardouin.¹⁷² At this point, according to Robert of Clari, Alexius demanded that he be crowned emperor before he began making payments to the crusaders.¹⁷³ On August 1, a few weeks after the crusaders had returned Alexius to Constantinople, he was coroneted as emperor of Constantinople.¹⁷⁴

With Constantinople subjugated and Alexius in power the crusaders appeared to be a short time away from liberating the Holy Land; however, issues quickly arose that would lead to the eventual failure of the crusade. According to Villehardouin, shortly after Alexius gained power he began fulfilling his part of the deal with the crusaders by beginning the payments to crusaders.¹⁷⁵ Clari states that Alexius paid 100,000 marks, which is half of what he promised, and this was split evenly between the crusaders and the Venetians.¹⁷⁶ This was the point in the crusade when the crusaders finally paid off their remaining original debt of 36,000 marks to the Venetians.¹⁷⁷

Although Alexius had begun payment to the crusaders, he realized that he would be unable to fully pay them unless they remained at Constantinople for an extended period of time, according to Villehardouin.¹⁷⁸ Alexius also realized that he was hated for allying himself with the

¹⁷² Ibid, 48.

¹⁷³ Clari, "Constantinople," 46.

¹⁷⁴ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 49.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Clari, "Constantinople," 47.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 49.

crusaders, and if the crusaders left, he would be unable to pay them because he might be killed.¹⁷⁹ In return for this further delay from the mission of the crusade, Alexius promised to pay for the retention of the Venetian forces for another year as long as they supplied the crusaders.¹⁸⁰ The reasoning provided by Alexius, according to Villehardouin, was that this extension would allow him to strengthen his hold on the government and would give him enough time to prepare troops to send with the crusade and pay the crusaders what was owed to them as per their agreement.¹⁸¹

Although this plan seemed reasonable according to Villehardouin, the leaders decided to present this proposition before the entire crusading host and make a decision based upon what the group wanted.¹⁸² Once again there was great debate among the crusaders who proposed to delay the crusade. Another group of crusaders was deeply upset with the proposal to delay the crusade.¹⁸³ They wanted to abandon the crusade but were eventually dissuaded by the efforts of the group of crusaders who had been trying to hold the crusade together with the offer of Alexius to retain the services of the Venetians for several more months.¹⁸⁴

While this does seem plausible, Clari presents Alexius in a much different light. He writes that Alexius, when approached by messengers of the crusaders seeking the rest of the payment, refused to pay any more than the 100,000 marks and wanted the crusaders gone from his land.¹⁸⁵ This is in stark contrast to the pleading of Alexius for the crusaders to stay,

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 50.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Clari, "Constantinople," 47

which Villehardouin reports. Clari even goes as far as to say that Alexius threatened the crusaders with war if they did not leave and that he would not keep his deal with them.¹⁸⁶

Villehardouin eventually seems to realize, along with the remaining crusaders, that Alexius is using delay tactics to complete his promise. Villehardouin was chosen as one of the envoys sent to Alexius to give him an ultimatum: either pay what is due or the crusaders will seize what they believed to be rightfully theirs.¹⁸⁷ Alexius responded angrily and both sides prepared for war.¹⁸⁸

At this point the Byzantines seemed to no longer require Alexius since their ties with the crusaders were now meaningless. Therefore, a coup occurred in which Alexius and his father were both murdered and Mourzuphles was made the new emperor.¹⁸⁹ This act may have doomed the Byzantine Empire. This act of treachery toward Alexius seemed to give some crusaders, who had doubts about attacking Christians, a justified reason to attack: avenging

¹⁸⁶ Ibid; when the two accounts differed greatly last time, Villehardouin was given credence due to his position of power and the information he provided. . However, this time, perhaps being in a position of power is a reason to distort facts. Villehardouin was most likely writing this account to both inform others and to defend his actions and that of the crusade. Saying that the crusaders were all but begged to stay by Alexius and then betrayed by him was perhaps his way of justifying the actions of the crusaders who first delayed at Constantinople then attacked it. Clari present Alexius as fed up and angry with the crusaders and wanting them out of his land. One could imagine the severe economic drain having a foreign army occupying the territory outside of Constantinople. Having a foreign force also could have created many domestic issues that would have made Alexius renege his previous agreement with the crusaders and want them gone. Given what was about to transpire, this study favors the account of Clari and considers most of what Villehardouin had to say on this specific event as hindsight and trying to use deception to protect himself and justify the actions of the crusaders. It is not a matter of choosing one source as correct and one as wrong; it is a matter of seeing what source depicted the events in the most accurate and least biased way possible. This once again is extremely difficult, especially with a major source having so much responsibility with regard to the failure of the Fourth Crusade, and this personal investment often seemed to make Villehardouin's portrayal of events skewed as he framed events with the aid of hindsight.

¹⁸⁷ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 54-55.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 55.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, 57.

regicide.¹⁹⁰ Villehardouin described the crusaders' and clergies' reactions to this news as follows:

And all the clergy, including those who had powers from the Pope, showed to the barons and to the pilgrims that any one guilty of such a murder had no right to hold lands, and that those who consented thereto were abettors of the murder; and beyond all this, that the Greeks had withdrawn themselves from obedience to Rome. "Wherefore we tell you," said the clergy, "that this war is lawful and just, and that if you have a right intention in conquering this land, to bring it into the Roman obedience, all those who die after confession shall have part in the indulgence granted by the Pope." And you must know that by this the barons and pilgrims were greatly comforted.¹⁹¹

Thus, according to Villehardouin, it appears the Byzantines inadvertently doomed themselves by committing regicide and refusing to hold up their end of the agreement. The Byzantines gave the crusaders a just reason — according to the crusaders — to attack Constantinople. Therefore, this attack on a Christian city seemed to have met less opposition from the crusaders than the previous attack on Zara and was not a major moral conflict like the attack on Zara or the aiding of Alexius IV.

Raymond Schmandt believes that the account of Villehardouin is accurate in its stating that the crusaders felt their actions to be justified. Schmandt uses the accounts of Villehardouin, Clari, and Gunther along with his knowledge of medieval just-war theory to break down the crusaders' justification to attack into three key moral and religious components.¹⁹² First, Schmandt primarily uses the work of Gunther to support the claim that the crusaders saw attacking Constantinople as self-defense.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid, 57.

¹⁹² Schmandt, *Just-War*, 216.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

According to Schmandt's translation of Gunther, because the crusaders felt isolated and threatened by Alexius IV and Isaac II and they had no place of refuge, they were at the mercy of the Byzantines.¹⁹⁴ Second, citing both Clari and Villehardouin, Schmandt claims that since the crusaders had fulfilled their end of the bargain and were being betrayed by Alexius IV, they justifiably sought revenge for a wrong.¹⁹⁵ Schmandt also claims that the crusaders were particularly horrified by the regicide committed by the Byzantines and used that as justification for attacking Constantinople.¹⁹⁶ Finally, Schmandt claims that repairing the schism between the eastern and western churches may have played a role by helping to justify attacking those who were not obedient to the law of Rome and the pope.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, it seems the ends justifying the means was still present and that the crusaders, according to the accounts of Villehardouin, Clari, and Gunther along with the analysis of Schmandt, believed they had justified reasons to attack Constantinople.

With justifications for their impending assault, the crusaders devised both a military strategy for attacking the city and planned what they would do when they captured the city. The crusaders and Venetians agreed to divide the city and spoils in half and that a panel of six crusaders and six Venetians would elect the next emperor. With justification and plans in order, the army attacked Constantinople and after being repulsed once captured the city and forced Mourzuphes to flee.¹⁹⁸ The plan of dividing the spoils and city between the crusaders and

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 217.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid; Evidence used by Schmandt in this claim is as follows (taken from the work of Villehardouin): "Anyone guilty of such a murder had no right to hold lands, while those who consented to such a thing were accomplices in the crime."

¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 217.

¹⁹⁸ Villehardouin, Chronicle, 61, 64.

Venetians was followed for the most part, with Villehardouin stating that some covetous people took more than they should.¹⁹⁹

The last part of the crusade that this study examine is the election of the new emperor of Constantinople. Six Venetians and six crusaders deliberated and elected a new emperor. According to Villehardouin, the decision was between the leader of the crusade, Boniface of Montferrat, and Count Baldwin of Flanders and Hainault.²⁰⁰ After deliberation, the latter was chosen and was coroneted within three weeks.²⁰¹

With this election and capture of Constantinople, the main driving force of the crusade seemed to halt. This study is considers this to be the end of the crusade because at this point the host becomes severely splintered by the conquest and the ensuing occupation and protection of the land. However, some crusaders did continue to the Holy Land. Some, such as Henry, the brother of the new emperor, even managed to capture some territory but had very limited military power, which led to very little overall success.²⁰² This lack of military power can be attributed to both the occupation of Byzantium and the resulting infighting between the crusaders struggling to capture their own pieces of territory in what was previously Greek Byzantium. Evidence of this infighting can be seen even between the new emperor and the leader of the crusading host, Boniface of Montferrat, who came into conflict over the cities of Demotica and Salonika.²⁰³ Even though the ultimate objective of the crusade was never

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 67.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, 68.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 69.

²⁰² Ibid, 82.

²⁰³ Ibid, 74.

accomplished, many groups gained a lot from their participation. These gains and what they meant for the respective groups will be examined in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Analysis of the Third Period

The two different accounts by Villehardouin and Clari of the negotiation with Alexius at the beginning of the third period set the tone for a period full of conflict, confusion, and uncertainty. These accounts vary quite significantly if both sources are considered credible. Therefore, it is important to analyze the differences of these accounts to determine what could have happened and the reason for these differences.

Villehardouin claimed that Alexius IV approached the crusading force and offered a great reward for assisting him in retaking what was rightfully his. This idea of justification persisted throughout the chronicle written by Villehardouin. It seems that the crusaders preferred having a just reason to have a reason for action, especially if that reason, such as attacking a Christian city, was considered controversial. Therefore, this account can be considered a continuation of a theme of trying to justify an action in order to lessen the blame on Villehardouin. His account was written well after the conclusion of the crusade and has the benefit of hindsight, which perhaps led him to write in a way that presented the crusade in a more justified manner in order to deflect blame from himself for its failure or its wrongdoings. However, it is still important to note that some crusaders, even with the justification, preferred to abandon the host and go home or directly to the Holy Land instead of helping Alexius.

Clari generally agreed with Villehardouin regarding the discussion of whether or not to accept the deal of Alexius, but their main difference centers on who initiated the dialogue

between Alexius and the crusaders. While this may seem trivial, it is an important difference that helps to illuminate an internal dynamic present throughout the crusade.

The differences between accounts begin when the leader of the crusade, Boniface of Montferrat, says he saw a man in the court of Philip of Swabia who was the usurped emperor of Byzantium and if they helped Philip to retake his land they would have a sufficient excuse to go.²⁰⁴ This account portrayed the crusaders as actively seeking a justified excuse to attack Constantinople and represented the crusaders as less than honest and not as virtuous as the Villehardouin's account portrayed them. Clari reported that the crusaders appear to be using the dethroned emperor as an excuse for attacking a rich and powerful city.

On the other hand, Villehardouin presents the crusaders as passive recipients of a plea for help rather than active seekers of it. Villehardouin says that Alexius sent a message to the crusaders asking for their help to retake what was rightfully his. Therefore, if the crusaders decided to help they would justifiably be attacking a Christian city without actively seeking to do so.

This is a small part of the crusade, but it has enormous weight in how the crusade is viewed. Were the crusaders actively seeking ways to justify their desired actions? Clari would have you believe so. Or was the crusade sought after in order to attain justice as Villehardouin believed? Perhaps Clari was unaware of the reality of the situation and what he heard or observed was not contextually accurate. Or, perhaps Villehardouin was once again trying to deflect blame and criticism by portraying the crusaders as passive in this instance. While there

²⁰⁴ Clari, "Crusades," 12.

is no sure answer, it is nonetheless important to understand that these differences highlight the possible motives of both writers but, more importantly, they shed light on certain internal dynamics within the crusade, such as need for justification of actions. The authors either personally felt the need to justify the actions of the crusade or recorded that others sought justification or believed they were justified in their actions.

During this period desertions by the group of crusaders who wanted to go directly to the Holy Land became a very real threat to the host. This reinforces the idea of a dichotomy in the crusade. One group wished to go directly to the Holy Land while another supported diverting the crusade along the way to either resolve issues, such as attacking Zara to postpone payment of debt, or to enhance their chances of success in the Holy Land, such as helping Alexius regain his power and receive his support. Threats of desertion became actual acts of desertion several times during this period, both at Zara and at Constantinople. This lack of resolve and cohesion created many issues for the crusading leaders, and even though they made concessions to the unhappy party, it appeared that the crusading leaders were losing some of their power over their own army.

This third period is the part of the crusade which contained the most leadership transitions. More importantly, this is the period in which the power and direction of the crusade was temporarily altered by someone not even affiliated with the crusade, Alexius IV. The previous groups — the crusaders, the Venetian crusaders, and the pope — also experience a change in their power and influence throughout this period.

In order to better analyze the different leadership changes, this study examines the transitions by group rather than by chronological order and then analyzes the pattern of these subsequent changes. This method of analysis gives a better perspective on how each individual group's influence shifts so that patterns emerge that can then be analyzed further. The Venetians seemed to have the most influence on the crusade in the second period and their influence continues throughout the third period but to a lesser extent. The doge of Venice was always part of the decision-making process and whichever side he supported eventually won out. The best example of this is when the doge supported the aiding of Alexius, which led to some crusaders agreeing to help Alexius.²⁰⁵

The Venetians were an integral part of the crusading force. However, during this period, the influence of Alexius created a change in power within the crusade. After the agreement with Alexius was made, the crusade was working for his goals. The fact that the crusaders helped retake Constantinople affirmed the Alexius' influence on the crusade. Because the goals of Alexius IV had become a priority, the Venetians lost some of their influence but were still very involved with the crusade through its end. Once the crusade turned to taking Constantinople, the Venetians' influence became more equal to that of the crusading force. When they captured Constantinople, the groups divided both the territory and spoils evenly between the two groups.²⁰⁶ This equitable division showed that neither group was more deserving than the other nor had more right to the land or spoils. This equality extended until the end of the crusade when six crusaders and six Venetians chose the next emperor of

²⁰⁵ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 25.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 60.

Constantinople. Even though the emperor came from the crusading party, he was chosen by both crusaders and Venetians, which supports the theory of equality of influence in the decision. If the Venetians were adamantly opposed to a crusader as emperor, they could have forced a stalemate with each side having six votes. However, this did not happen and the new emperor was chosen unanimously by the delegates.

During this period the crusaders slowly gained some influence over the crusade and regained some power at the expense of the Venetians. In the second period the crusaders were at the whim of the Venetians; however the Venetians had less of a grip on the direction of the crusade when the agreement with Alexius was struck. The crusaders had also fulfilled the first part of their new agreement with the Venetians, the capture of Zara. This along with the deal with Alexius gave the crusaders some power. It is likely that the Venetians did not have the military power to capture Constantinople on their own and so needed the crusaders to accomplish the reinstatement of Alexius IV. Since the crusaders still owed money to the Venetians and represented a potent fighting force that was now required to storm a heavily fortified city, it can be argued that this returned some power to the crusaders although they still were not in a position of dominance over the Venetians. If anything, the crusaders had risen to level terms with the Venetians during the final period, as evidenced by the equal division of the captured Constantinople and equal representation in electing a new emperor.²⁰⁷

The crusaders gained some power in this period in a very unusual way. Ironically, the thing that plagued the crusaders during this period as well as the second — the threat of

²⁰⁷ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 60, 67, 69.

desertion — also gave them some influence over the course of the crusade. At several points during this period desertion threatened to end or further derail the crusade. There are two major instances of this either affecting change or a new policy from the leaders of the crusade, one at Corfu and one at Constantinople.²⁰⁸

At Corfu the dissenting party threatened to desert because they believed that attacking Constantinople would take too long and was too dangerous and they wanted to go directly to the Holy Land.²⁰⁹ The threat of desertion was so real that this discontented group forced the remaining crusaders and the Venetians to agree to their terms. These terms guaranteed transportation for all discontents directly to the Holy Land within fifteen days of their request and in return the discontents would stay with the crusade for another six months. This shows the amount of power that the faction of discontented crusaders had gained. The reason for this is rather simple: The discontents were a large number of crusaders and if they left, the crusade would be doomed, according to crusade leader the Marquis of Montferrat.²¹⁰ While it would be misleading to say all crusaders gained power during this period it would be accurate to say that, at the very least, the discontented crusaders' voices became heard due to their large number and importance to the mission so that they were able to force a policy change from the other crusaders and the Venetians. While the discontented crusaders who remained with the crusade didn't directly alter its course, those who left and weakened the crusade had a direct impact on the crusade's manpower. Along with the weakening of the military force the discontent crusaders were listened to but seemed to have been dissuaded at several points — the

²⁰⁸ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 30, 51.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 29-30.

²¹⁰ *Ibid*, 29.

incident at Corfu and when Alexius IV asked the crusading host to winter in Byzantium — when they were threatening to leave the crusade.²¹¹

This party of discontents showed their influence for a second time when the crusading forces were camped outside of Constantinople after re-installing Alexius. Alexius asked the crusaders to stay and protect him and in return he would ensure that they got what he had promised them. However, the six month's had passed and the discontents demanded to be given ships to go to the Holy Land. After their threats to leave and much debate, they decided to remain because the Venetians agreed to stay with the crusade another year as long as Alexius compensated them. Thus, this group of discontents once again shaped change in the crusade and even forced the hand of the group that had previously forced theirs, the Venetians.

During this third period, the power of the crusaders seemed to steadily grow, especially that of the discontents, but one event can be interpreted as a true ascendance of power — although not necessarily within the crusade — the selection of a crusader as new Emperor of Constantinople. However, the election of a crusader as emperor did not have a major impact since it occurred at what this study considers the end of the Fourth Crusade. Even though it did not have a major impact on the events of the Fourth Crusade it does perhaps provide evidence for a power shift within the crusading host.

The third “group” to be analyzed in this period is only a single but important man, Alexius IV, the leader of Byzantium. When Alexius was approached or approached the crusaders, depending upon whose account you believe, the leadership dynamic drastically

²¹¹ Ibid, 30, 50-51.

changed as previously discussed.²¹² Alexius became the prime beneficiary of the crusade and his the reinstatement of him as emperor became a primary objective of the crusade. Even though reaching the Holy Land was still the ultimate objective of the crusade, another group's desires became its goal as well. Attacking of Constantinople in order to help Alexius and get supplies in return was comparable to the crusaders helping the Venetians in the second period to take Zara. The reaction of the discontent crusaders is also similar in this instance.

The power balance stabilized between the crusaders and the Venetians upon Alexius' reinstatement as emperor of Byzantium, even as Alexius exerted influence on the crusade by convincing the crusaders to postpone their journey to the Holy Land. But when he started to fail to live up to his promises, he lost much of his influence. The crusaders were angry by this betrayal and gave him an ultimatum: complete what you promised or face war. Alexius chose the latter.

At this point the only effect Alexius had on the crusaders was instigating a conflict with Byzantium. However, in an ironic twist, when Alexius was murdered, he suddenly had a great impact on the crusade, perhaps greater than he had had as emperor. The crusaders used his murder as a justifiable reason to attack and sack Constantinople to get the supplies and money

²¹² The two differing accounts of Villehardouin and Clari create a dilemma for the analysis of this part of the crusade. The analysis of Villehardouin's account of Alexius IV's petition to the crusaders paints Alexius as a fairly influential member outside of the crusade that temporarily joins it for assistance. The crusaders and Venetians want to help Alexius regain power because it means more money, supplies, and soldiers for their cause. This satisfies the primary objectives of both the crusaders and Venetians and would help aid in the ultimate objective of retaking the Holy Land as well. It can be argued that since Alexius offered all of this that he had influence over the direction of the crusade (since they diverted to aid him) as well as influence over the ability of the crusade to accomplish its mission. If the account of Clari is to be believed, then the power of Alexius was all but nonexistent in terms of power and influence within the crusade. Clari paints Alexius as a pawn in the plan of the Venetians' and crusading leadership's plan to find an excuse to attack Constantinople in order to resupply and gain wealth, which may or may have been not be used to aid the crusade.

they were promised, but also doing it in a way that Villehardouin presented as a collective reaction to an injustice.²¹³ Villehardouin always tried to justify the actions of the crusaders, and the regicide of Alexius whom they had help to install seemed like the perfect excuse to take what the crusaders wanted and have a justified reason for doing it.²¹⁴ Whether or not this is the reason they attacked Constantinople after the death of Alexius cannot be known, but Villehardouin believed it to be so.

So during this period Alexius actually had considerable influence over the crusade. He offered resources and men in exchange for retaking his land and ultimately diverted the crusade a second time. Through his deceitful acts and failure to pay the host, he brought the crusading host and Byzantium into conflict. However, perhaps one of the most important ways he affected the crusade was his death. However, capturing Byzantium also crippled the crusade and effectively ended it with the coronation of the new crusader emperor of Constantinople.

The last “group” to examine in this period is once again a single man, Innocent III. At this point, Innocent had seemingly lost control of the crusade; the crusaders had defied his wishes in the second part of the crusade by attacking Zara and he eventually capitulated and pardoned the crusaders. In the third period, there is very little mention of Innocent III and his legates.

²¹³ Ibid, 57.

²¹⁴ Villehardouin, Chronicle, 57. “And all the clergy, including those who had powers from the Pope, showed to the barons and to the pilgrims that any one guilty of such a murder had no right to hold lands, and that those who consented thereto were abettors of the murder; and beyond all this, that the Greeks had withdrawn themselves from obedience to Rome. “Wherefore we tell you,” said the clergy, “that this war is lawful and just, and that if you have a right intention in conquering this land, to bring it into the Roman obedience, all those who die after confession shall have part in the indulgence granted by the Pope.” And you must know that by this the barons and pilgrims were greatly comforted.” Villehardouin used the above evidence as a justification of why the crusaders attacked Constantinople. It is important that the church representatives, according to Villehardouin, consented to the attack and used the murder and the disobedience to Rome as justifiable reasons to attack.

Their main contribution was to claim that attacking Constantinople after the murder of Alexius was justified by God and the pope and that they had every right to rectify the evil committed since they were on a pilgrimage.²¹⁵ Villehardouin doesn't mention much else with respect to the pope.

However, further evidence of the pope losing influence during this period comes from his letter that reprimanded Peter, one of his legates stationed with the crusade. In this letter Innocent angrily stated that the legate had no authority to absolve from their "pilgrimage vows and their crusading obligations all the Crusaders who have remained to defend Constantinople."²¹⁶ The pope also claimed that since the crusaders did not fulfill their vows and against his wishes by plundering without consequence that calling another crusade might be much more difficult.²¹⁷ The pope had begun to lose control in the second period and by the end of the third period even some of his legates, such as Peter, were acting without his approval. Innocent had consistently been opposed to the diversions and the extreme measures taken by the host, especially the attacks on Zara and Constantinople. His influence drastically decreased throughout the crusade and particularly so in the third period.

This period saw a host of leadership transitions and related internal dynamic shifts, including influence transfer between groups, which greatly impacted the course of the crusade and led to another diversion. The dichotomy within the crusading party also became more visible in this period and culminated in a near desertion of a large number of crusaders at Corfu.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Pope Innocent III, Ep 136, *Patrologia Latina* 215, 669-702, trans. James Brundage, *The Crusades: A Documentary History*, (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 1962), 208.

²¹⁷ Ibid, 209.

The ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade is directly linked to the events of this period, especially the diversion that takes place in this period and the conquest of Constantinople. Thus the internal dynamics and the leadership transitions of the third period are very influential in the end result of the Fourth Crusade.

Chapter 8: Analysis of the Internal Dynamics and Leadership Transitions and Their Overall Effect upon the Fourth Crusade

Since the individual periods have been analyzed along with their leadership transitions and internal dynamics, the next step is to look at the themes and overall effects of several key elements on the Fourth Crusade. As has been discussed above this study proposes that there are the effects and patterns of these internal dynamics and leadership transitions principally responsible for the diversion and failure of the Fourth Crusade. Examining the internal changes and leadership shifts, an understanding of what possibly could have caused the diversions and failure of the crusade is developed.

The first internal dynamics to examine are the different and shifting goals of the various groups in the crusade. Often when a group shifts into a position of more power, — the crusaders failed to complete their part of the treaty with the Venetians or the crusading host agreeing to aid Alexius in retaking his throne — the objectives of that group or individual seem to have more precedence. There are two instances of diversion that can be attributed to the

shifting goals of the ascendant leadership and not just a series of accidents or treason as scholars of the Fourth Crusade and Villehardouin propose.²¹⁸

The two major power shifts that occurred before the attack on Zara and the decision to aid Alexius show this internal dynamic of shifting goals due to the leadership transitions. During these leadership transitions it also becomes apparent that different groups may have had different objectives. Innocent III stated that he wanted to retake Jerusalem and protect the Christians who lived there. In general, the crusaders shared the same goals as Innocent but due to their treaty debacle, some decided to use extreme means, which Innocent opposed, in order to accomplish the goals. The Venetians also wanted to fulfill the goals of the crusade but had more secular objectives such as protecting and strengthening their trading empire. Examples of this are the new terms they proposed to the crusaders after they had failed to complete the treaty and the fact that the Venetians took many spoils of war to fill their coffers.²¹⁹ Alexius IV also promised to support the crusade in the accomplishment of its goal, but in order for that to happen Alexius' other goal of being reinstated as emperor of Byzantium had to happen first. Therefore, as evidenced throughout this study, the groups involved with the crusade often rose and fell with respect to their power and influence, and when a group gained ascendancy, their unique set of goals took priority and ascendancy as well. This helps to disprove the claim that one group held ultimate power and could hijack the crusade as the Venetian diversion theory

²¹⁸ Jonathan Harris, "The Debate on the Fourth Crusade," 6; Harris discusses various theories as to what caused the crusade to divert and ultimately fail. These include treason and purposeful diversion and the claim that the crusade was just a result of accidents. Harris does not fully endorse an explanation for the Fourth Crusade and states that since the debate is so polarized and the fact that many arguments focus on intangibles such as feelings and internal motivations that it is very difficult to arrive at an answer that most scholars would agree upon.

²¹⁹ Villehardouin, *Chronicle*, 67.

purports. This also helps to explain why the crusade diverted when there were major leadership transitions and why the priority of objectives shifted along with the leadership.

Another key internal dynamic is the threat of, and act of, desertion. This internal dynamic exclusively pertained to the crusading party during the Fourth Crusade. The majority of the desertions or threats of desertion occurred during times of moral crises. The first major desertion occurred after the attack on Zara and after the decision was made to go to Constantinople.²²⁰ The second major threat of desertion occurred while the crusaders were at Corfu. The final threat of desertion occurred when Alexius IV asked the crusaders to winter in Byzantium.

This internal dynamic played a key role in the policy of the crusading host after the first wave of desertions at Zara. The crusading host had to make a new policy in order to appease the crusaders wanting to desert because their numbers were so large that the crusade might fail if they all deserted.²²¹ This policy change to appease the discontented crusaders occurred at Corfu and essentially gave the discontented crusaders a guaranteed way to leave the crusading host after a few months if they still felt the need to go directly to the Holy Land — and they would even be provided transportation.²²² With this policy change the crusading host seems to have been held together, and there are no more recorded instances of desertion in the account of Villehardouin until the threat of desertion at Constantinople. At Constantinople the discontented crusaders wanted to invoke a policy that would allow them to leave the crusade

²²⁰ Ibid, 24-26.

²²¹ Ibid, 29; The estimate of Villehardouin is that over half of the crusading party wanted to desert at Corfu.

²²² Ibid, 30.

but were convinced by the promises of Alexius IV and the Venetian and crusading leadership to stay the winter and have the previous policy become active gain once the winter was over.²²³

The desertions also played a role in the diversion of the crusade and its ultimate failure. Those who deserted at Zara seemed to have done so because of their belief that they must go to the Holy Land and that waiting to do so was wrong. The crusaders who were trying to desert at Corfu seemed to have the same reasons for wanting to desert. Since the leadership of the crusading host seemed so worried about losing so many soldiers because it would most likely result in the failure of retaking Jerusalem, the leadership made a deal with the group as previously discussed. Therefore, the leadership acknowledged the need for these crusaders to stay in order for their effort to be successful, which points to the fact that the leadership was well aware that if they didn't accomplish their crusading vows, they would be shamed. Perhaps if the discontents had opposed any solution but going to the Holy Land, then the crusade would have been forced to do this with the means they had at that time. Therefore, it would seem that since the discontents were able to be appeased on some level, the threats of desertion didn't prevent a diversion and the appeasement of these crusaders allowed for the diversion of the crusade. These diversions, in turn, would result in the crusade getting bogged down in Constantinople and ultimately failing to retake the Holy Land.

The third internal dynamic, the polarization of the crusading party, is closely related to the fourth internal dynamic, the means justifying the ends. The polarization of the crusading party occurred over the fact that two main groups in crusading party had very different views

²²³ Ibid, 51.

about whether or not certain means were justifiable and whether or not they could justify delaying their arrival in the Holy Land. One group, as discussed above, believed their actions were justified and that committing lesser evils to ensure the greater good was justifiable. This would also include their decision to postpone their arrival in the Holy Land in order to get more support that could help them achieve their goals more easily. The second major group was the opposite. They were often labeled discontents because of their frequent outcries against the delay of the journey to the Holy Land and the use of means they deemed unjustifiable.

The group that believed their actions were justified used various arguments both with respect to the means employed and the delay in journeying to the Holy Land. From the analysis reveals an attempt to justify actions by both the crusaders and the Venetians.²²⁴ There are four times that crusaders seem to justify their actions: the attack on Zara, the delay to traveling to the Holy Land, the aiding of Alexius, and the final attack on Byzantium. The crusaders justified attacking Zara by saying that they owed a debt to the Venetians and they needed to attack Zara to hold the host together.

They justified the delay to the Holy Land at various times throughout the staying the winter at Byzantium. Delaying the trip to the Holy Land was justified different ways at different times during the crusade. At Zara when Alexius asks for aid, the crusaders justify the delay because they were low on supplies and thought it was better to wait until they were better supplied in order not to risk the failure of the crusade. Alexius promised them money, supplies, and soldiers to help them retake Jerusalem so the crusaders delayed going to the Holy Land to

²²⁴ It is important to note that the polarization only occurred within the crusading party and for some reason there is no dissent recorded within the Venetian party.

try and gain these advantages. The crusaders justified the decision to delay at Constantinople because it was winter and traveling then would make the journey to the Holy Land much more difficult. They thought if they delayed their departure Alexius would be able to fulfill his debt to the crusading host, and he would be able to gather an army to aid the crusading host.²²⁵ Once again, this group of crusaders justified their actions by claiming that they would be in a better position to accomplish their ultimate goal, according to Villehardouin.

The crusading host had very different reasons for justifying their final attack on Constantinople. Alexius IV has just been murdered by Mourzouphes, and this had sent shockwaves throughout the crusading host's camp. The clergy who were embedded with the crusaders claimed that "one guilty of such a murder had no right to hold lands, and that those who consented thereto were abettors of the murder; and beyond all this, that the Greeks had withdrawn themselves from obedience to Rome."²²⁶ The clergy then goes on to say that the crusaders were justified in attacking Constantinople in order to avenge the regicide and to bring the Byzantines under control of the pope.²²⁷ Thus, the justification for attacking Constantinople was moral rather than strategic. The group of crusaders who were in opposition to the will of the first group had consistent reasons to think the crusade was wayward. This group wanted to go to the Holy Land sooner rather than later and found the delays to be unjustified as evidenced by many soldiers deserting after the first delay and planned diversion to Constantinople.²²⁸ This group was also averse to attacking Christians and was not supportive of

²²⁵ Ibid, 50.

²²⁶ Ibid, 57.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid, 26.

the diversions to Zara and Constantinople for this reason among others. It is important to note that this group did not object to attacking Constantinople after Alexius was murdered. This could be due to the fact that they had a moral reason to attack rather than a strategic one. If this were the case, it would coincide with their previous opposition to the direction of the crusade based upon what they judged as morally wrong. Therefore, it could be argued that this group's priority was moral obligation while the other group seemed have a more flexible in morality as long as the means could be justified on some level.

The polarization of the crusader party created tensions within the crusading party that resulted in many soldiers deserting and weakening the crusade. Perhaps if the crusading party had been all of the same mind, it may have been harder for the diversions to occur since it would be the Venetians would have been advocating for them and the whole of the crusaders opposing. A unified crusading party, even if they supported the diversions, most likely would have experienced more success than two constantly conflicting, struggling parties. Ultimately, the disunity in the crusading party allowed for the diversions to Zara and Constantinople, which in turn prevented the crusade from reaching the Holy Land.

The justification of means also played a part in both the diversion and failure of the Fourth Crusade. By using justification, the crusaders managed to convince themselves that their actions were proper. This includes the various delays and diversions that plagued the Fourth Crusade. Without these justifications it can be argued that the crusaders as a whole may have wanted to desert, like the group of crusaders who didn't believe there was a justification for said actions. If this had happened, then what would have followed is pure speculation; however, since this did not happen there remained two opposing groups and whatever side the

Venetians favored eventually won out. Therefore, since one group of crusaders could find justification for their actions and one could not, a polarization of the crusading party occurred, which resulted in the splitting of the power of the crusaders. In turn, this resulted in the ability of the Venetians and the group of crusaders who believed the means were justified to delay and divert the crusade, which led to its ultimate failure.

These leadership transitions have been discussed at length throughout this study for good reason; they are intricately linked to the outcome of the Fourth Crusade. The transfer of leadership periodically throughout the crusade created a situation in which its objectives shifted with whomever was in ascendancy of the crusading host's leadership. Therefore, when the crusade experienced the first major leadership transition, after the failure of the crusaders to fulfill their treaty with the Venetians, the objectives of the ascendant Venetians diverted the crusade to Zara. This set off a chain of events that would lead to the crusade needing supplies at Zara and finding an answer to that need in the form of Alexius IV. Once again, the crusade was diverted when the leadership was split and the Venetians were in favor of diverting to Constantinople in order to obtain support and supplies. This final diversion led to a conflict between the crusading host and Byzantium that resulted in the sacking of Constantinople and a member of the crusading leadership being elected the new emperor of Constantinople, effectively ending the Fourth Crusade.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The Fourth Crusade, which initially set out to retake Jerusalem from Muslim Ayyubid forces, ultimately failed. Its diversion ultimately led to the sack of one of the most powerful

Christian cities, Constantinople. These diversions and the reasons behind them — treachery, vengeance, and even chance — have been long debated. However, close examination and analysis of leadership transitions and internal dynamics using two main primary sources, Geoffrey de Villehardouin and Robert of Clari, proposes another possible answer. Several groups with different and even shifting motives had varying influence at different stages in the crusade, and these leadership transitions, along with accompanying internal dynamics and their related effects, are responsible, on some level, for both the diversion and ultimate failure of the Fourth Crusade.

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