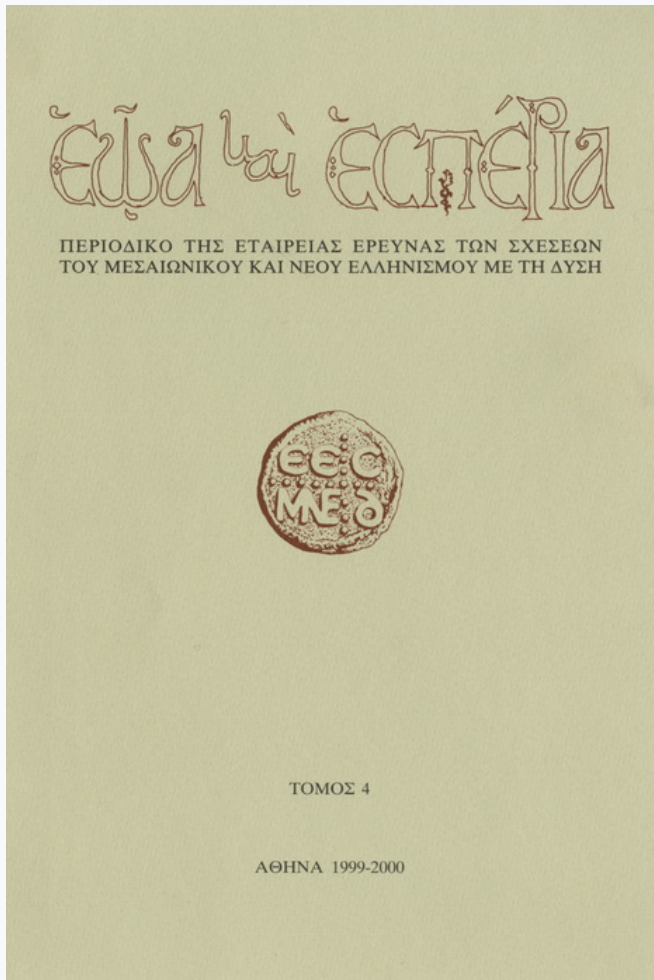


Eoa kai Esperia

Vol 4 (2000)



THE CATALAN DUCHY OF ATHENS AND THE OTHER LATIN POWERS IN GREECE ESPECIALLY THE PRINCIPALITY OF ACHAEA (1311-1388)

MARIA DOUROU-ELIOPOULOU

doi: [10.12681/eaesperia.52](https://doi.org/10.12681/eaesperia.52)

To cite this article:

DOUROU-ELIOPOULOU, M. (2000). THE CATALAN DUCHY OF ATHENS AND THE OTHER LATIN POWERS IN GREECE ESPECIALLY THE PRINCIPALITY OF ACHAEA (1311-1388). *Eoa Kai Esperia*, 4, 87-93.
<https://doi.org/10.12681/eaesperia.52>

**THE CATALAN DUCHY OF ATHENS
AND THE OTHER LATIN POWERS IN GREECE
ESPECIALLY THE PRINCIPALITY OF ACHAEA (1311-1388)***

After the “Reconquista” of the 13th century (Muslims’ expulsion from Iberic peninsula with the exception of Granada), the Kingdom of Aragon –consisting of Catalonia, Valencia, Majorca and Sicily, due to the Vespers in 1282–, came out of isolation and formed a new economic power in Western Europe with political and commercial interests in the Mediterranean¹. Catalans circulated independently in “Romania” as merchants or pirates, since the second half of the 13th century without order from the King of Aragon². The merchants were accepted in byzantine territories after paying the legal tax (commerkium, κομμέριον) of 2% according to Andronicus II privilege of 1320³. Some of them chose to stay permanently in “Romania” of their own free will and lived peacefully together with the inhabitants under the protection of the local administration⁴.

Catalan presence in Romania as a political power dates from the beginning of the 14th century. At this time a group of Catalan mercenaries (Almugavares)⁵ found themselves unemployed, after the peace of Caltabelotta in Sicily between the Ara-

* Το άρθρο έχει ήδη δημοσιευθεί στα καταλανικά στο περιοδικό *L’Avenç* 213 (1997) 52-55.

1. F. GIUNTA, *Aragonesi e Catalani nel Mediterraneo*, II, Palermo 1959, p. 7-10; A. MCKAY, *Spain in the middle ages (from frontier to empire 1000-1500)*, London 1977, p. 77-78; D. ABULAFIA, *The western mediterranean kingdoms (1200-1500). The struggle for dominion*, London 1997; P. LOCK, *The Franks in the Aegean*, London 1995.
2. A. RUBIO I LLUCH, *Diplomatari del Orient català (1301-1409)*, Barcelona 1947 (hereafter DOC), p. 23 (19) 1305: *Aragonenses et Catalani qui sunt in partibus Romanie, non iverunt illuc de voluntate mandato aut consilio ipsius regis... cum eundi habeant libertatem*; DOC, p. 35 (31) 1306: *Cathalani existentes in imperio Romanie totum currunt imperium et devastant*. For “Romania” see F. THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne au Moyen Âge*, Paris 1959 [=1975], p. 1-7; A. CARILE, *Imperio Romano e Romania, Estratto del II seminario internazionale de studi storici “Da Roma alla terza Roma”*, Apr. 1982, p. 247-261.
3. F. MIKLOSICH - J. MULLER, *Acta et diplomata graeca medii aevi*, Vienna 1968, III, p. 98-99, DOC, p. 140 (115), F. PEGOLOTTI, *La pratica della mercatura*, ed. EVANS, Cambridge 1936, p. 41.
4. THIRIET, *Romanie*, as above, p. 269, J. LONGNON- P. TOPPING, *Documents sur le regime des terres dans la principauté de Morée au XIVe siècle*, Paris 1969, p. 39 (19): *Bartholomeus Catalanus pro vinea quam habet in casali Catzicove, redit annuatim sterl. 15 (1337)*.
5. NIKEPHOROS GREGORAS, *Rhömäische Geschichte I*, ed. J. VAN DIETEN, Stuttgart 1973, p. 117-184, 190-195, 284-288, 292-294, DOC, p. 43 (35), G. SCHLUMBERGER, *Expedition des “Almugavares” ou routiers Catalans en Orient de 1302-1311*, Paris 1902, p. 3.

gonese and the Angevins (1302), and entered the service of Andronicus II Palaeologus (1282-1328). After the battle of Halmyros (in Orchomenos of Copais) on March 15, 1311, the Catalans conquered the burgundian duchy of Athens. The last burgundian duc Walter (Gautier) V de Brienne (1308-1311) was killed in that battle and his heir, titular duc of Athens Walter VI (+ 1356) was established in the Peloponnesus. On the other hand, the Catalans, the “*compagnia dei Franchi in Romania*” as it appears in venetian documents⁶, or «*η κουμπανία των Κατελώνων*» as is related in the greek chronicle of Morea⁷, soon after the conquest recognized as their leader Manfred, son of king Frederick II of Sicily (1296-1337), in an effort to legalize their new territories⁸. Due to the decline of the frankish states we can understand why a handful of leaderless mercenaries succeeded in keeping a well organized frankish duchy for almost a century.

The 14th century was not a turning point only for western Europe because of the socio-economic crises, but also for “Romania”, where the situation of the frankish domination seemed precarious. We witness an evolution in frankish society, where many of the old families have vanished and new ones, some of Italian origin, took their place in a last effort to regain their power. Especially the Angevins of Naples, who took over the principality of Achaea after the death of William II Villehardouin in 1278, have lost most of their prestige during the 14th century and their dominion was distant and left in the hands of the bailiffs. Venetians and Genoese have already formed an hegemony in the eastern mediterranean and there was a major antagonism between them. Meanwhile, the Greeks tried to recover their old territories and the Turks erupted into a menacing power. The Papacy, with the help of religious military orders (one in particular, the order of the Hospitallers of Rhodes), tried to organize a crusade against the “*Greci scismatici et Turchi infideles*”. These years are extremely tumultuous for Romania, as we shall see below.

By studying published documents we try to consider Catalans’ relationship with the Angevins of the principality of Athens and the burgundian ex-ducs of Athens, now limited in their Peloponnesean territories of Argos and Nauplion.

The Catalans were already known in the kingdom of Naples since the Hohenstaufen period. Charles I of Anjou (1266-1285) recognized the ancient privileges they benefited from Frederick II and granted them “*logia*” in Naples⁹, while Charles

6. R. PREDELLI, *I Libri Commemorativi della Repubblica di Venezia*, Venezia 1876, (here after *Commemorativi*), I, 2, p. 201 (149): *societate Francorum exercitui universitatis Francorum existentium in partibus Romaniae*”, G. THOMAS - R. PREDELLI, *Diplomatarium veneto-levantinum*, Venezia 1880-1899, I, p. 111, 114.

7. *The Chronicle of Morea*, ed. J. SCHMITT, London 1904 [=1967], p. 472 (7273).

8. D. JACOBY, *La “compagnie catalane” et l’ état catalan de Grèce. Quelques aspects de leur histoire*, in IDEM, *Société et démographie à Byzance et en Romanie latine*, *Collected Studies*, London 1975, V, p. 91.

9. G. YVER, *Le commerce et les marchands dans l’ Italie méridionale au XIIIe siècle*, Paris 1903, p. 175.

II (1285-1309) authorized them to form colonies and have consuls, whom they could replace by men of confidence during their absence¹⁰. But, when the Catalans of Athens started damaging the ports of the kingdom, king Robert (1309-1343) negotiated with the venetian duke how to stop the brigandage¹¹.

The Angevins of Achaëa suffering also from catalan incursions, had already planned in 1311 on giving the principality and what was left of angevin "Albania" to the Catalans, in exchange for Sicily¹². The answer of the king of France to this plan was to reinforce frankish rule in Romania by two arranged marriages in 1313. Philip of Taranto, brother of king Robert of Naples and suzerain of angevin possessions in Romania, married the heiress of the latin empire of Constantinople Catherine of Valois, and, on the other hand, Louis of Burgundy, who already had rights in the kingdom of Thessalonica from his brother, married Matilda (Mahaut) of Hainault, daughter of Isabelle and the last legal descendant of the Villehardouins. In the next few years the plan of exchanging Achaëa to Sicily was abandoned, but the principality was dispersed by an internal war. The infant Ferrandus of Majorca laid claims in the principality by his marriage to Isabelle of Sabran in 1314 whose mother Margarita of Acova was Matilda's aunt¹³. Ferrandus of Majorca with the help of Frederick II of Sicily, won the battle of Picotin in 1316, but was killed the following year in the battle of Manolada by Matilda's husband Louis of Burgundy, who also died shortly afterwards. Once again, the Angevin king reconsidered the plan of exchanging Morea to Sicily.

At the same time, the vicar of the duchy of Athens Alfonso Fadrique, natural son of king Frederick, had married Marulla, daughter of Bonifacio da Verona, and had received as dowry Karystos¹⁴, which was to be sold in 1359 to the bailiff of Euboea by Alfonso's son¹⁵.

Matilda, suzerain of Euboea, in several documents, requested venetian help to confront the Catalans, who, due to their matrimonial rights, risked to take over and, what more, the princess considered giving the island to Venice¹⁶. Also she asked for

218; J. DUNBABIN, Charles I of Anjou. Power, kingship and state-making in 13th century Europe, London 1998.

10. YVER, Commerce, as above, p. 198, 200.

11. Commemoriali, II, p. 149.

12. DOC, p. 58-61 (47); A. BON, La Morée franque. Études historiques, topographiques et archéologiques sur la principauté d' Achaïe (1205-1430), Paris 1969, p. 188-194; D. ABULAFIA, The Aragonese kingdom of Albania. An Angevin Project of 1311-1316, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 10 (1995) 1-13.

13. DOC, p. 85 (69).

14. D. JACOBY, Catalans, Turcs et Vénitiens en Romanie (1305-1332). Un nouveau témoignage de Marino Sanudo Torsello, in IDEM, *Recherches sur la Méditerranée orientale du XIIIe au XVe siècle*, Collected Studies, London 1979, V, p. 241; K. SETTON, The Catalans in Greece, 1311-1380, in IDEM, Athens in the middle ages, Collected Studies, London 1975, IV, p. 185.

15. Commemoriali, II, 4, p. 304 (151); DOC, p. 314 (239), 316 (240).

16. Commemoriali, I, 1, p. 162 (718), I, 2, p. 176 (36); DOC, p. 105 (86), 108 (89), 109 (90).

a loan of 60.000 fiorini to transport troops in Euboea¹⁷. In 1317 a new marriage was arranged for Matilda and John, count of Gravina, younger brother of the king of Naples. Even though the unhappy princess refused to give her consent to the wedding, John, with the king's order, became prince of Achaea in 1322.

Papal documents, from 1312 onwards, relate to the exclusion of Catalans from the duchy of Athens, which is considered legal inheritance of the Briennes and threatened the "invasores, detentores et usurpatores ducati" with excommunication, if they didn't stop incursions and ravages in Achaea and Euboea¹⁸.

Meanwhile, the catalan dominion was reinforced by the acquisition of Neopatras and Siderocastron in 1318, as well as with Alfonso's possessions of Egina, Lidoriki, Salona, Vitrinitsa, Zitouni and Carystos¹⁹. Since the beginning of the century the Catalans collaborated with the Turks²⁰ and from 1318 to 1329 they were allied and became a great threat because of their continuous incursions²¹. Marino Sanudo Torsello describes very vividly their ravages in Euboea in 1326: "compagnia Catellanorum pro damnificando civitatem Nigripontis et totam insulam mulieribus et infantibus qui ducti essent in servitium captivi in terras Saracenorum"²².

The Catalans' greater advantage was their alliance to Venice in 1319²³, which lasted till the end of their dominion in Athens and prevented any alliance with Catalans' enemies. Since, every papal request to Venice for help was rejected, because of that peace treaty they had signed²⁴. Their relations with Genoa were unstable and there were many complaints of piracy and brigandage²⁵.

When returning to Achaea in 1321, we encounter a complicated situation, with the barons of the principality planning on giving it to Aragon, or by second opinion to Venice²⁶. In 1324 an agreement is signed between Philip of Taranto, John of Gravina and king Robert to ask financial help from the florentine banking families of Bardi, Peruzzi and Acciaiuoli, in order to confront the Catalans²⁷, but their request to Venice to form an alliance against Greeks and Catalans (contra Grecos

17. Commemoriali, I, 2, p. 191 (97).

18. R. J. LOENERTZ, Athènes et Neopatras, in IDEM, *Byzantina et franco-graeca*, Roma 1978 (here after Athènes), II, p. 32; DOC, p. 72 (57), 82 (66), 84 (68), 128 (105), 78 (63), 113 (94).

19. LOENERTZ, Athènes, I, p. 188; SETTON, Catalans, as above, p. 175.

20. DOC, p. 23 (19).

21. DOC, p. 115 (96). JACOBY, Catalans, as above, V, p. 246; E. ZACHARIADOU, The Catalans of Athens and the beginning of the turkish expansion in the Aegean area, in IDEM, *Romania and the Turks*, Collected Studies, London 1985, V.

22. DOC, p. 167 (136), 164 (133).

23. DOC, p. 132 (109); Diplomatarium, as above, I, p. 120 (70).

24. Commemoriali, II, p. 262 (419).

25. M. BALARD, *La Romanie génoise (12e-15e s.)*, Genova 1978, p. 155, 198, 266; DOC, p. 23 (19).

26. Commemoriali, II, p. 231 (277), (278).

27. BON, Morée, as above, p. 205.

scismaticos quam contra societatem nefandam)²⁸, faced a firm refusal²⁹. The following years, up to 1330, John of Gravina lost interest in Achaea, which continued suffering from catalan and turkish incursions. In 1331, Philip of Taranto died and John of Gravina proposed to exchange Achaea to Durazzo. From 1332 a new prince, the minor Robert and his mother Catherine of Valois settled in Achaea, introducing a new period in the principality's history. Until the year 1346, when prince Robert took over, Catherine ruled with the help of her florentine councillor Nicholas Acciaiuoli. In 1330 we see for the first time the titular duc of Athens preparing an expedition against the Catalans, which was never realized³⁰. Walter Brienne had been married since 1325 to Beatrice, daughter of Philip of Taranto, titular emperor of Constantinople, and Thamar. King Robert requested the help of the feudatories of Achaea³¹, while Pope John XXII offered indulgences to anyone who could help Walter expulse the "scismatici" Catalans (adherents of the antipope Nicholas V (1328-1330) and regain the duchy³². Venice could not cooperate because of the truce with the Catalans³³.

All these years, the Catalans were under excommunication and only in 1343 we see a turning point in papal policy with the preparation of the Archipel crusade. The Papacy's principal goal was to confront the Turks, who have become extremely dangerous, and tried to unite all christian forces against them³⁴. Then the papal efforts turned to negotiation with Catalans by stopping the excommunication for some years. Documents of absolution in 1345, 1346, 1358, 1360, 1363 are indicative of the change in pope's policy³⁵.

In 1356 the rights of the duchy of Athens, Argos and Nauplion passed to the family of Enghiens, and in 1388 Maria of Enghien sold her peloponnesean possessions to Venice under the promise of getting married to a Venetian noble³⁶. The Enghiens, like the Briennes, were also honored with venetian citizenship³⁷. In the 1370's the last efforts of the Enghiens to chase the Catalans from the duchy were unsuccessful³⁸ and Venice still refused in 1370 and 1371 to help because of the truce

28. *Commemoriali*, II, p. 259 (410); *DOC*, p. 150 (122).

29. *DOC*, p. 151 (123); *Commemoriali*, II, p. 262 (419).

30. *DOC*, p. 192 (152).

31. *DOC*, p. 191 (151).

32. *DOC*, p. 189 (150).

33. F. THIRIET, *Régéistes des délibérations du sénat du Venise concernant la Romanie*, Paris 1958, I, p. 27, (21).

34. LOENERTZ, *Athènes*, II, p. 349; *DOC*, p. 232-4 (181); SETTON, *Catalans*, as above, IV, p. 193.

35. LOENERTZ, *Athènes*, II, p. 351, 363, 366; *DOC*, 246 (189), 309 (235), 338 (255).

36. *Commemoriali*, III, 8, p. 195 (301), (303); BON, *Morée*, as above, p. 263; A. LUTTRELL, *The Latins of Argos and Nauplia: 1311-1394*, in IDEM, *Latin Greece, the Hospitallers and the crusades*, *Collected Studies*, London 1982, VIII, p. 48.

37. *Commemoriali*, II, 4, p. 137 (116), 337 (335).

38. LOENERTZ, *Athènes*, I, p. 227; LUTTRELL, *Latins*, as above, p. 41.

with them³⁹. Finally, a treaty was signed in 1371 between Guy d' Enghien and the Catalans⁴⁰.

The years 1364-1383 form the last period of angevin domination in Achaea. After Robert's death without a direct heir, two pretenders lay claim on the remainder of the principality, his brother Philip II of Taranto and Maria of Bourbons with her son Hugo of Lusignan. In 1370 Hugo abandoned all claims and Philip II ruled alone until his death in 1373. At that time his nephew Jacques des Baux and the queen of Naples Jeanne accorded the principality to the Hospitallers of Rhodes for five years and in 1381 Jacques des Baux was recognised by the barons and the Navarrese company as prince of Achaea. After his death in 1383 and until the absorption of the principality by the Byzantines of the despotate of Morea in 1430, the Navarrese maintained a powerful position on the territory. The catalan duchy of Athens declined during the second half of the 14th century, even though its commercial activities increased and finally it was given to the florentine Nerio Acciaiuoli⁴¹. Meanwhile, Greeks obtained titles and rights in the duchy⁴². Catalan cruelty was noted in greek documents and was described by the most horrible ways⁴³.

In conclusion we assume that Catalans formed an important mediterranean political and economic power, which however didn't change the existing equilibrium of venetian and genoese economic preponderance, nor did it prevent turkish expansion. Catalan imperialism cannot be explained as an organized plan, but as individual attempts for fortune-seeking and profit. Even though the Catalans didn't achieve an effective acculturation⁴⁴, they formed a social and economic reality, which cannot be ignored.

39. THIRIET, *Régéstes*, as above, p. 123 (485), 125 (492); LOENERTZ, *Athènes*, II, p. 370.

40. DOC, p. 418 (331).

41. LOENERTZ, *Athènes*, I, p. 247.

42. DOC, p. 353 (269), 540 (479).

43. The correspondence of Athanasius I, patriarch of Constantinople, ed. ALICE-MARY MAFFRY-TALBOT, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* (1975) 72 (35), 162 (68).

44. A.R. LEWIS, The catalan failure in acculturation in Frankish Greece and the Islamic world during the 14th century, in IDEM, *Medieval society in Southern France and Catalonia*, Collected Studies 1984, XIV.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

ΤΟ ΚΑΤΑΛΑΝΙΚΟ ΔΟΥΚΑΤΟ ΤΩΝ ΑΘΗΝΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΠΡΙΓΚΗΠΑΤΟ ΤΗΣ ΑΧΑΪΑΣ (1311-1388)

Το άρθρο αναφέρεται στις σχέσεις των Καταλανών του Δουκάτου των Αθηνών με τους Φράγκους της Πελοποννήσου κατά τη διάρκεια του 14ου αιώνα. Οι Brienne, κάτοχοι του Άργους και Ναυπλίου και νόμιμοι διεκδικητές του δουκάτου των Αθηνών μετά την απώλειά του το 1311, επιχειρούσαν από το 1330 – με τη βοήθεια του Πάπα – να εκδιώξουν τους Καταλανούς. Οι Ανδεγαυοί επίσης αναγνώριζαν την καταλανική απειλή και προσπαθούσαν να ανασυγκροτήσουν τις δυνάμεις τους, αλλά η κυριαρχία τους στην Πελοπόννησο συνεχώς μειωνόταν. Οι Καταλανοί, λόγω της συμμαχίας τους με τους Βενετούς από το 1319, του εντεινόμενου τουρκικού κινδύνου και της βαθμιαίας εξασθένησης των λατινικών ηγεμονιών στη Ρωμανία, κατόρθωσαν να διατηρηθούν στο δουκάτο ως το 1388.

ΜΑΡΙΑ ΝΤΟΥΡΟΥ-ΗΛΙΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ