

## Distorted Reflections of 1204: The Fourth Crusade through the Lens of Greek Historiography

After the destruction of Constantinople in 1204, eyewitness accounts, the only extant of which will be the topic of this paper, circulated the Greek speaking world, and informed Greek communities of the various atrocities committed by Latin Crusaders. Churches which hosted masses in the Latin language were reconsecrated so as to avoid the stain of the Latin liturgy, and debates between papal legates and Greek church leaders became increasingly vitriolic (Darouzzes 1963). Despite these anti-Latin sentiments, the Greek-speaking world maintained a religious connection with the Latin West through the forced concession of the Council of Florence in the fifteenth century (Chadwick 2005).

Niketas Choniates' *Chronike Diegesis* will provide the eye-witness account of the Sack of Constantinople. Niketas Choniates, a member of the Byzantine bureaucracy, was also a famed historian within his own time and provided the Greek speaking world with a terrifying scene of Crusaders entering into Constantinople. Nicetas Choniates was highly educated and was well versed in Greek literature, therefore while removed from his home he wrote to highly literate Greek speakers in a manner befitting their erudition (Spingou 2022, Simpson 2006). Niketas Choniates' account of the Sack of Constantinople thus contains a number of features common to Greek historiography as a genre including deliberate tendentious modification (Lilie 2014). In further analyzing Niketas Choniates and his the Greek historiographical nature of his works and their intellectual ecology, I turn to Reader-Response Criticism (Gibson 1950).

Constantine Stilbes was one of many Greek Church Fathers who accepted a Papal legate in the fourth decade of the thirteenth century. To this legate, and among an ongoing debate concerning the reconciliation of the Greek and Latin churches, Constantine Stilbes presented *Ta*

*Aitiamata tes Latinikes Ekklesias* (The Errors of the Latin Church). The *Aitiamata* of Constantine Stilbes was written merely two decades after the *Chronike Diegesis*, and provides an indication as to how Greek speakers interpreted the work, and later used it as a point of reference in debates with legates from Rome. The purpose that Constantine Stilbes had in writing this is not historical, but rather, he writes this account as a legal or religious attack against the Latin-speaking Church for not only their theology, but also the destruction of Constantinople. This resource provides a record of the Greek conceptions of the Sack of Constantinople and how Greek-speakers reckoned with such violence while maintaining the shared Christian faith of those that imposed such violence upon them. The *Aitiamata* includes many of the details from the account of Niketas Choniates which account for the deliberate tendentious modifications and thus also acts as a case study for the political and religious implications of Greek historiography in the thirteenth century (Darouzzes 1963).

The purpose of this paper is to draw a throughline between the Byzantine practice of emulating Classical genre in historical writing to the political and religious conflicts which make up broader Schism-studies. In order to do so, I rely on the scholarship of Classicists and Byzantinists alike in order to interpret the primary source work, and hope to produce a cogent argument on the practice of history and the ramifications of doing so.