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## EARLY CATALAN CONTACTS WITH BYZANTIUM

*Stephen P. Bensch*

For historians of the medieval Crown of Aragon, the Greek East has long stood for intrigue, high adventure, and resolute pride in Catalan expansion. Whether dealing with the remarkable exploits of the Catalan Company as it moved with the destructive power of a tornado through Asia Minor and Greece from 1303 to 1311, with the intricate diplomatic maneuverings among the papacy, Palaeologi, Aragonese, Angevins, Genoese, and Venetians for claims to the tottering Byzantine world, or with the Catalan Duchies of Athens and Neopatria, early investigators into the Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon regarded involvement in the complex affairs of the Byzantine Empire as the fulfillment of Catalonia's "manifest destiny" in the Mediterranean. The Catalan presence in Byzantium, what contemporaries referred to as Romania, represented not only the spread of military and commercial influence from one end of the sea to the other but, through contact with the imperial purple, confirmed that the interests of the Crown of Aragon had to be taken into account in the shifting balances among the major maritime powers. For the hopeful nationalist generation of the early twentieth century, the satisfying image of Catalan spoken on the Acropolis signalled that the medieval Crown had come of age.<sup>1</sup> The diplomatic and military repercussions from the expedition of the Catalan Company in the early fourteenth century and the subsequent fate of the Catalan Duchies in Latin Greece have attracted most of the scholarly attention. As a result, the presence of the Catalans in the Greek world is usually treated as a curious appendage to crusader history.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For patriotic assessments of Catalan involvement in the Greek East, see Antonio Rubió y Lluch, *Diplomatari de l'Orient català, 1302-1409* (Barcelona, 1947), xliii-xliv; Lluís Nicolau d'Oliver, *L'expansió de Catalunya en la Mediterrànea oriental*, 3rd ed. (Barcelona, 1974), 45-77; Ferran Soldevila, *Història de Catalunya*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona, 1962), 417-19.

<sup>2</sup> Among the most valuable contributions to the field are Rubió y Lluch, *Diplomatari* (this splendid source collection, the product of a lifetime of scholarly labor, appeared a decade after his death); Kenneth M. Setton, *The Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311-1388* (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), with an excellent annotated bibliography of the older literature; Robert I. Burns, "The Catalan Company and the European

The purpose of the present paper is to reconsider incipient Byzantine-Aragonese relations in light of new sources which have appeared in the past few years, primarily from the archives of Barcelona. They provide a new perspective on the economic and social dimensions of early Catalan expansion in the East, aspects that early studies treated only in passing. Although information about Byzantine relations is far from abundant, the details provided by individual business contracts, notarial materials, and royal accounts help illuminate the better known diplomatic notices, commercial privileges, and narrative sources. While early work on the Catalan Company placed its exploits against a nebulous background of commercial development, the nature and intensity of early Catalan trade with Byzantium and its place within the economy of Barcelona and neighboring cities have received little attention. An older literature consistently and unreflectively attributed the motor of Catalan commerce to the opening of trade routes with the Levant and Byzantium, the much discussed *ruta de especias*; the editors of the earliest surviving commercial contracts of Barcelona still labelled this route the "primordial artery" of exchange despite the evidence from their own collection.<sup>3</sup> In a typically bold but unsubstantiated thesis, Jaume Vicens Vives suggested that trade with the Greek Empire helped energize the early commercial potential of the towns of Catalonia.<sup>4</sup> In recent studies on Catalan commercial expansion, however, the Eastern Mediterranean has been reduced to an ancillary position in relation to the intense exchange with Tunis, Bougie, and Sicily in the thirteenth and early fourteenth century. Because we now know that early Catalan trade was firmly anchored in the Western Mediterranean, a reevaluation of the contacts with Romania is needed.<sup>5</sup>

Powers, 1305-1311," *Speculum*, 19 (1954), 751-77 [repr. in *Moors and Crusaders in Mediterranean Spain* (London, 1978)]; Angeliki E. Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins: The Foreign Policy of Andronicus II, 1282-1328* (Cambridge, Mass., 1972), 127-243.

<sup>3</sup> J. M. Madurell i Marimon and A. Garcia i Sanz, *Comandas comerciales barcelonesas de la baja edad media* (Barcelona, 1973), 20. On the importance of Eastern Mediterranean trade for Barcelona, see p. 143.

<sup>4</sup> Jaume Vicens Vives, *Manual de historia económica de España*, 5th ed. (Barcelona, 1967), 191.

<sup>5</sup> The predominance of North Africa in early Catalan trade has had difficulty gaining acceptance in the literature. See above all Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane et le Maghrib aux XIII<sup>e</sup> et XIV<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Paris, 1966), 110-13, 128-31. Cf. later evaluations, which have had the advantage of drawing on work based upon sources from the cathedral archives of Barcelona that became accessible after Dufourcq's investigations, by Jocelyn Hillgarth, *The Problem of a Catalan Mediterranean Empire, 1229-1327*, supplement to *English Historical Review*, 8 (London, 1975), 39-40

Before the 1260s no clear evidence points to a Catalan presence in the Greek East. Although the cosmopolitan rabbi Benjamin of Tudela testified to the presence of merchants (although not ships) from *Arangon* in Alexandria along with men from Provence and Languedoc as early as the 1160s, there is nothing to indicate that they formed a cohesive trading community in Egypt and the Levant nor that they used this as a base to penetrate into the Greek world.<sup>6</sup> By 1215 a group of Provençals resided in a special quarter in Constantinople, recently brought under Latin rule, but no clear evidence exists to substantiate Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer's optimistic assertion that Catalans were included.<sup>7</sup> The Fourth Crusade had established Venetian commercial hegemony over the Greek world which even its Wercest rival, Genoa, had to acknowledge. A door to this closed world began to open, however, when Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus (1258–1282) with Genoese support was on the verge of retaking Constantinople from its Latin masters, whom the Venetians backed with a fleet of warships; as the naval exchanges between Venice and Genoa escalated into their first great conflict, the Genoese fleet was destroyed at Acre in 1258 and its citizens expelled from this crucial hub of Levant trade. This humiliation was soon avenged, however, through the alliance concluded between Genoa and the Greek emperor in the Treaty of Nymphaeus in 1258, which granted the Genoese a monopoly of Black Sea trade and helped ensure the end of Latin rule in Constantinople in 1261.<sup>8</sup> The critical and sudden swing of alliances and naval power in the East allowed Catalans to penetrate the highly protected markets of Byzantium; less than a year before the recovery of Constantinople by Michael VIII, the first extant commercial contract was concluded in Barcelona for a voyage to Romania, and others would follow during the 1260s.<sup>9</sup> Initial contact with Byzantine markets therefore occurred only after Catalans had established a well developed commercial network in North

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and David Abulafia, "Catalan Merchants and the Western Mediterranean, 1236–1300," *Viator*, 16 (1985), 214–26.

<sup>6</sup> *The Itinerary of Benjamin of Tudela*, ed. and trans. M. N. Adler (London, 1907), 2, 76.

<sup>7</sup> Olwer, *L'expansió*, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Balard, *La Romanie génoise (XII<sup>e</sup>–début du XV<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Rome, 1978), 1:38–45; Deno J. Geanakoplos, *Emperor Michael Palaeologus and the West, 1258–1282: A Study in Byzantine-Latin Relations* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959), 81–91.

<sup>9</sup> Madurell and García, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 11, 12; Arxiu Capítular de la Catedral de Barcelona [ACB hereafter] 1–6–485.



Africa, Sicily, and, though to a lesser extent, with Alexandria. *Alfòndecs*, merchant-compounds with warehouses and sometimes churches, already existed in Tunis by 1253 and in Bougie by 1258. According to Dufourcq, these outposts were experiencing an economic boom around 1260. A flourishing trade with Sicily had also been building up from the 1240s, and in 1262 King Jaume I sent the first ambassador to Alexandria to negotiate with the Mamluk sultan Baybars in order to establish an *alfòndec* in the king's name and organize an Egyptian trade that was sporadic but nonetheless of considerable antiquity.<sup>10</sup> Our earliest notices of commercial contacts between subjects of the Crown of Aragon and Byzantium therefore occurred during the first flush of a maturing Catalan trading system centered in the Western Mediterranean and a rapid rearrangement of power in the Greek world. Rather than providing an original impetus for long-distance trade, as Vicens Vives argued, Byzantine contacts formed one of the last pieces to fall into place during the Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon.

The 1260s marked not only a maturation of Catalan commerce but also its restructuring. As Dufourcq has clearly demonstrated, the king referred to the *alfòndecs* of Tunis and Bougie in proprietary terms (*alfundicum et consulatum nostrum*), farmed the right to manage them to entrepreneurs, and attempted through the foundation of a royal *alfòndec* in Alexandria to create a profitable colonial outpost far to the east.<sup>11</sup> Because the king himself personally traded in North Africa and the consuls of the Catalan *alfòndecs* served the Crown as administrators and financiers, the mixture of commercial, military, and dynastic interests found a natural expression in the royalist trading posts overseas. Yet in 1266 the king granted the municipal council of Barcelona, known as the Consell de Cent, the right to elect consuls with broad jurisdictional powers to supervise Catalan merchants who set sail to Ultramar, that is to Egypt and Syria; two years later he amplified this concession by including the right of the municipal council to

<sup>10</sup> Charles-Emmanuel Dufourcq, "Les consulats catalans de Tunis et de Bougie au temps de Jacques le Conquérant," *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 3 (1966), 469–79. A Catalan *alfòndec* already existed in Bougie in 1258, a reference slightly earlier than that found by Dufourcq, ACB 4–10–15. A. Huici Miranda and M. Desamparados Cabanes Pecourt, *Documentos de Jaime I de Aragón* (Zaragoza, 1976–), 5: no. 1386; Carme Batlle i Gallart, "Les relacions entre Barcelona i Sicília a la segona meitat del segle XIII," *XI Congresso di storia della Corona d'Aragona* (Palermo, 1983), 2: 149–52.

<sup>11</sup> Dufourcq, "Les consulats," 471–72.

appoint consuls in Romania.<sup>12</sup> Thus, in contrast to the lucrative royal monopoly the Crown exercised over the emporia of Tunis and Bougie, Barcelona's municipal council was in the future supposed to exert control over the Catalan communities in the Levant and Romania.

While the significance of this institutional reorganization has long been recognized, for it in effect turned the Consell de Cent into the Crown's department of commerce for the Eastern Mediterranean, its background has not been fully elucidated. Two factors led to this experiment: the Byzantine emperor's need to counter the Angevin threat to resurrect a Latin state in Constantinople, and King Jaume's desire to finance his long-promised crusade to the Holy Land. After the Genoese had helped Michael Palaeologus reclaim his capital in 1261, the emperor quickly realized that he had to strike a delicate balance among the competing Italian interests lest he become completely constrained by the force of his Ligurian ally. Through an intricate set of diplomatic maneuvers, Emperor Michael did for a time manage to pit Genoa against Venice successfully. Byzantine plans, however, were dashed in February 1266, when Charles of Anjou defeated Manfred, king of Sicily, at Benevento and began to build a formidable coalition to restore the Latin Empire in the East. Michael VIII therefore began to look for new allies among the Latins. While restoring Genoa's privileges at Constantinople and in the Black Sea, negotiations may well have already begun to enlist the support of the Crown of Aragon, the successor of Hohenstaufen claims to Sicily.<sup>13</sup> The Byzantine emperor and Abaqa, the Mongol ruler of Persia, sent ambassadors to King Jaume at Valencia in 1269 in order to offer aid for his crusade to the Holy Land.<sup>14</sup> The culmination of his life's work of conquest, the crusade required substantial resources and Byzantine aid, both of which caused the aging king to reassess his involvement with Catalan outposts in the East. In the summer of 1266 Barcelona offered the king an extraordinary aid of 60,000 sous, and a further 80,000 sous in 1269, both accompanied by royal

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<sup>12</sup> Antonio de Capmany y de Monpalau, *Memorias históricas sobre la marina, comercio y artes de la antigua ciudad de Barcelona*, 2nd ed. (Barcelona, 1961–1963), 2:nos. 19, 23.

<sup>13</sup> Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 1:48–51; Geanakoplos, *Michael Palaeologus*, 189–200.

<sup>14</sup> Jaume I, *Llibre dels feits*, chap. 481 in *Les quatre grans cròniques*, ed. F. Soldevila (Barcelona, 1971), 168. On the role of the crusade at the end of Jaume's reign, see Francesc Carreras Candi, "La croada a Terra Santa," *Congrès d'història de la Corona d'Aragó* (Barcelona, 1911), 1:106–8 and Ferran Soldevila, *Jaume I i Pere el Gran* (Barcelona, 1955), 42–44.

promises of future tax exemptions and favors.<sup>15</sup> The willingness of the city council to loosen its purse strings lay behind the Crown's transfer of jurisdiction over the potentially lucrative trading posts in the Levant and Byzantium as Jaume mounted his crusade.

Although the charter of 1268 grants the municipality the right to elect consuls over Catalan commercial outposts east of Sicily, Capmany, Heyd, and others following them have doubted that a Catalan consul existed in Byzantium before 1293, when an official with that title appears in a document sent to Emperor Andronicus II (1282–1328). Yet an overlooked charter in Barcelona's cathedral archives clearly demonstrates that a resident consul had been established a generation earlier.<sup>16</sup> In August 1281, Bartomeu Romeu and Bonat Barraler, representatives elected by the merchants of Barcelona, appointed Pere Ris of Barcelona to the post of consul in Constantinople and charged him with the obligation of supervising the activities of "all the men from the land of the king sailing to and residing in (*navigantes et existentes*) in that region," which implies the presence of a Catalan community at Constantinople. Below the notarized letter of appointment appears the copy of a royal diploma, issued at Valencia in 1279, authorizing the merchant community of Barcelona to elect two of its members to "supervise, administer, and do everything required for the common good of each and every member of the community in promoting commerce truly and faithfully without any diminution of our rights." While the royal privilege has long been known, little information has come to light about the precise powers granted the representatives of the merchant community. As the selection of Pere Ris in 1281 demonstrates, however, merchant representatives quickly sought to take advantage of the new privilege the king had granted them by appointing a consul in Constantinople; with royal assent the body of merchants had therefore usurped this right from the municipality.

This institutional innovation and the need to include a copy of the royal diploma issued two years earlier suggest that the consulate was of recent origin, for the charter, the first extant "letter of appointment" for a Catalan consul in Constantinople, must have served as

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<sup>15</sup> Barcelona, Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó [ACA hereafter] Canc., reg. 14, fol. 82v.; reg. 16, fol. 159v.

<sup>16</sup> Appendix, no. 1. Two *comanda* contracts relating to the voyage, made within a week after the appointment of Pere Ris as consul, also survive, Madurell and García, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 47, 48.

a letter of credentials for the subjects of the Crown of Aragon trading in Romania. In Egypt as well as Byzantium, the establishment of permanent trading communities and their control proved difficult. While consuls served as leaders of individual trading expeditions, in 1262 and 1264 King Jaume I empowered his ambassadors in Alexandria to establish a consul over the *alfóndec* there and treat it as a source of profit for the dynasty. Even though Barcelona's municipal council received the right to appoint consuls in Alexandria and Syria, the municipality's prerogatives were at times overridden by the intervention of the king.<sup>17</sup> Because trading contacts with Romania may not have been intense enough for the municipality to have established a resident consul, the king took the initiative to regularize relations and intervene forcefully by allowing the merchants to organize the trading community in Constantinople for as long as it pleased him. The inclusion of an intriguing third section in the charter also supports the exceptional nature of the charge. Written in Catalan, unlike the rest of the document, the final section contains regulations (*ordenaments*) concerning the exercise of authority aboard ship and the proper chain of command in the event that several ships arrive in a foreign port at the same time. Reminiscent of the final clause in the Regulations of the Ribera of Barcelona in 1258, an early source for the famous compilation of maritime law, the *Llibre del Consolat de Mar*, this additional *ordenament* carried by the Catalan consul to Constantinople reveals a system of maritime custom in rapid evolution.<sup>18</sup> A provision in this section of the charter commands consuls to write down any crimes committed by a member of the community overseas and collect testimony in order that the case might be tried in Barcelona. The *ordenament*, in fact the earliest fragment of maritime law in Catalan, thus provides indirect evidence that a merchants' court, the Consolat de Mar, was already in operation at Barcelona.

The establishment of a permanent Catalan consul at Constantinople in 1281 must be seen as part of the intensified diplomatic efforts on the eve of the Sicilian Vespers. Although a lively scholarly dispute has long existed as to whether a formal Byzantine-Aragonese alliance

<sup>17</sup> On the question of control over the consulates, see A. B. Hibbert, "Thirteenth-century Catalan Consulates," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, 9 (1949), 352-58.

<sup>18</sup> The *Ordenacions de la Ribera* are most easily consulted in Capmany, *Memorias históricas*, 2: no. 14.

was concluded before the Sicilian campaign, the appointment of Pere Ris as Catalan consul in Romania in 1281 not only argues for an accord between Pere III of Aragon and Michael Palaeologus but suggests that it may have contained advantageous terms for Catalan trade in the Byzantine world.<sup>19</sup> A Byzantine-Aragonese alignment provided a natural counterweight to the papal-Angevin ambitions to recover Byzantium and maintain control of Sicily. This may have encouraged King Pere to seek a new institutional means of establishing a Catalan consul in Constantinople, who, according to his commission, should "look after the honor of the king of Aragon and his men." In addition to the royalist tenor of the document, Catalan commerce with Constantinople seems particularly intense at the time, at least to judge from a number of commercial contracts clustered around 1280, including one mentioning the export of twenty-five iron-tipped lances from Barcelona.<sup>20</sup> Under the mounting pressure of Mediterranean-wide coalitions that would lead to the Sicilian Vespers, Aragonese diplomacy and Catalan commercial interests fused in the early 1280s to open up the Greek East as never before. The long period of Aragonese-Angevin rivalry that would stretch from the Sicilian adventure in 1282 to the Treaty of Caltabellotta in 1302 not only relieved Latin pressure on Byzantium but allowed Catalans greater access to Greek markets.

But the Catalan presence in Byzantium was far from secure. Part of the advantage enjoyed by merchants and ships arriving from the Crown of Aragon derived from their small numbers; for Emperor Andronicus II, the Catalans at first presented few problems in comparison to the Venetians and Genoese. By playing off the two great maritime powers of Italy, the Byzantine emperors had traditionally hoped to retain control over their rump empire. After the menace posed by Charles of Anjou, supported by Venice, had been checked by the Sicilian Vespers, Andronicus II threw his weight squarely behind the Genoese. Although the Byzantines needed the support of the Crown of Aragon to neutralize the Angevins, the Genoese found the

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<sup>19</sup> For the outlines of the debate, see Geanakoplos, *Michael Palaeologus*, 344–51, who argues strongly for the existence of a formal pact, including monetary support sent to Sicilian conspirators by the Greek emperor; and Robert Lopez, *Genova marinara nel duecento*, Benedetto Zaccaria (Messina and Milan, 1933), 69–93, 256–57, and Hillgarth, *The Problem*, 23–24, who doubt its existence.

<sup>20</sup> Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 44, 45, 47, 48; ACB 1–6–182, 842, 2537, 3014, 3543; Appendix, no. 3.



Catalan presence irritating, if not always threatening, but wished to avoid unrelieved hostility since this could threaten their access to Sicilian grain. A tense peace followed between Catalans and Genoese in Romania, broken by intermittent acts of piracy. Toward the end of Michael VIII's reign the Byzantine historian Pachymeres tells of a Catalan vessel literally taking the wind out of the sails of a Genoese pirate ship through a daring maneuver, which then allowed the smaller Greek ships following the marauder to attack. Yet later the Genoese had the advantage, for five of their galleys seized a Catalan vessel in 1289 off the coast of Asia Minor near Ania, a redoubt of Ligurian privateers.<sup>21</sup> In the closing decade of the thirteenth century, competition among the Latin powers for access to Byzantine markets increased and Emperor Andronicus II, who had dismantled his fleet, watched helplessly as a colonial war broke out for control of Greek trade and access to the Black Sea markets.

While the second contest between the Genoese and Venetians, known as the War of Curzola, dominated the affairs of the Eastern Mediterranean from 1293 to 1299, the Catalans too had their role. One of the first incidents revealing the explosive volatility in the region occurred in 1292. Claiming that the emperor had failed to pay a promised subsidy, Roger de Loria, admiral for King Frederick II of Sicily, attacked Lesbos, Morea, and Chios, the latter of vital interest to Genoa for its access to alum, a mordant essential for finishing cloth, produced in the mines of Phocaea. In retaliation, Andronicus II seized the assets of several Barcelona merchants resident in Constantinople, valued at over 2,891 ounces of gold.<sup>22</sup> The incident reveals a tension between the military and commercial motivations for expansion. To compensate for the losses, King Jaume II insisted that Roger de Loria reimburse the Barcelona merchants from the proceeds of his raids, particularly from the mastic seized at Chios. The affair highlighted just how unstable the balance was between the unreliable Aragonese naval power that the Byzantines had enlisted and the calm needed for Catalan merchants to do business in Constantinople. Jaume II claimed that he in fact did not control Roger de

<sup>21</sup> Appendix, no. 2. On the unsavory reputation of the Genoese at Ania in the late thirteenth century, see Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 2:591.

<sup>22</sup> Heinrich Finke, *Acta aragonensia* (Berlin and Leipzig, 1908), 2:no. 458; Ramon Muntaner, *Crònica*, chap. 117 in *Les quatre grans cròniques*, ed. F. Soldevila (Barcelona, 1971), 774–75; Rubió y Lluch, *Diplomatari*, no. 11, n. 2. For the date of the raid and its background, see Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 46–47.

Loria, just as the king would later deny that he had control over the activities of the Catalan Company. Just before the Venetian fleet burned down Pera, the Genoese colony below the walls of Constantinople, in July 1296, the emperor offered the Catalans trading in Romania a tariff reduction from four to three percent as an incentive and promised that they "shall suffer no harm, injury, or rapine . . . while in our empire."<sup>23</sup> In contrast to a later privilege of 1315, which reduced tariffs to two percent, the same rate enjoyed by the main Italian traders, the chrysobull of 1296 was addressed not to the king of Aragon and his subjects but to the merchants of the Crown in the Greek East; the emperor dealt with the Catalan community as an independent enclave rather than as a group under the command of the Aragonese monarchy. Resident merchants must have found this distancing reassuring when in the following year King Jaume, hard pressed for money, sought a loan from the emperor, possibly the price of his anti-Angevin support. The merchant community in Romania thus felt best served in the contentious waters of the Aegean by seeking to promote their interests in a manner that had little to do with the interests of the Crown.

The wisdom of such a policy, and its ultimate failure, made itself apparent in 1302. While Andronicus II was in the process of negotiating with Roger de Flor for the services of the Catalan Company in Asia Minor, with its disastrous consequences for the Byzantines, the magistrates of Barcelona sent letters of introduction on behalf of local merchants addressed to the Genoese *podestà* in Constantinople.<sup>24</sup> This direct intervention with a foreign power in Romania caused Capmany to propose that the Catalans did not maintain a permanent consulate in the Greek Empire. Yet the magistrates were in fact reasserting their rights to represent Catalan interests according to the terms of the grant in 1268, a prerogative usurped by consuls chosen according to the terms of the royal privilege of 1279. The members of the merchant community found it best to allow the Consell de Cent, not the king, to press for advantages in Romania and to deal directly with the leader of the most powerful trading community, the Genoese, rather than with the emperor. The leaders of the

<sup>23</sup> Capmany, *Memorias históricas*, 2:no. 45. For the proper dating, however, see Constantin Marinesco, "Notes sur les Catalans dans l'empire byzantin pendant le règne de Jacques II (1291-1327)," *Mélanges d'histoire du moyen âge offerts à M. Ferdinand Lot* (Paris, 1925), 505-6.

<sup>24</sup> Capmany, *Memorias históricas*, 2:no. 257.



Catalan commercial community hoped to carry on their business without being drawn into the whirlpool of dynastic ambitions and mercenary raiding in the East. Although this strategy helps explain the implied reorganization of the Catalan merchant community in Constantinople in 1302, the appearance of Roger de Flor with his *almogàvers* and the resentment they produced among the Greeks undermined any attempt to promote the independence of Catalan traders in Byzantium.

The late development of Byzantine contacts and the inherent dangers of doing business in the highly contested waters of the Aegean gave trade with the Greek East its peculiar features within the Catalan commercial community. By the time that ships from the Crown of Aragon were sailing to Romania with some frequency in the 1260s, merchants and entrepreneurs from Barcelona, Tortosa, Tarragona, Lleida, and Majorca had already developed regular, highly complex networks of exchange with Sicily and North Africa; the latter in particular served as a commercial clearing house for the distribution of spices and luxury goods from the Levant, the gold and slaves arriving on caravans from sub-Saharan Africa, and the cloth and grain available in the Western Mediterranean. These markets early on provided the principal overseas trading outlets for Catalonia. From 1250 to 1290 surviving commercial contracts from Barcelona record sixty-seven overseas voyages, of which eleven involved ships sailing to Romania and only nine to Egypt and the Levant; North Africa and Sicily, on the other hand, involved twenty-nine ships. The preponderance of Western Mediterranean trade in the first surge of commercial expansion receives further confirmation from the tolls collected at Barcelona. In 1248 and 1249 the tolls for trade with the "Saracen shore" (i.e. North Africa and al-Andalus) were farmed to a local entrepreneur for 6,130 sous; since the total commercial tolls were valued at 9,400 sous in 1253, Muslim trade in the Western Mediterranean made up roughly two-thirds of Barcelona's maritime commerce in the mid-thirteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Far from providing the main axis of exchange, the *ruta de especias* to Egypt, the Levant, and Romania in fact represented an exotic appendage to the evolving commercial and military involvement of Catalans with the Ḥafsid

<sup>25</sup> ACA Canc., pergamins Jaume I, nos. 1120, 1332, 1336. The figure of 9,400 sous for the "leuda et quintalis" in 1253 is consistent with the amounts received for the farm of the commercial tolls between 1258 and 1262, ACA Canc., pergamins extrainventaris Jaume I, no. 28 and pergamins Jaume I, nos. 1615, 1682.

emirs in Ifriqiya and the Hohenstaufen and Angevin kings of Sicily.

During the 1260s, however, new tensions threatened the prosperity of these established routes. A brief maritime conflict flared up with Tunis in 1264, leading to raids and privateering on the North African coast and a significant decrease in revenues from the Catalan consulates in Tunis and Bougie. As late as 1268 King Jaume I was still prohibiting trade with Tunis.<sup>26</sup> Sicilian trade also suffered after Charles of Anjou ascended the throne of the island kingdom in 1266. Merchants subject to the House of Barcelona, which had inherited Hohenstaufen claims, could not expect favorable treatment from the Angevins in the island's closely supervised grain markets. Although there is evidence of some Catalan-Sicilian trade for several years after Charles began his reign, it disappears from the sources in 1272, "époque du durcissement angevin" according to Cuvillier, until the Sicilian Vespers in 1282.<sup>27</sup> Thus, after establishing themselves on the main circuits of Western Mediterranean trade, Catalan merchants encountered a series of disruptions to their accustomed activities for a generation after 1260. Buffeted by the increased political and commercial competition in the Western Mediterranean, they began to look to the Eastern Mediterranean for new opportunities in the last third of the thirteenth century.

Whether sailing to Romania or Ultramar, Catalans sought direct access to the spices and luxury goods available from China, Persia,

<sup>26</sup> Some light is cast on this obscure conflict, known through privateering licenses granted by the king, by Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane*, 114–17 and Robert I. Burns, "Piracy: Islamic-Christian Interface in Conquered Valencia," *Muslims, Christians and Jews in the Crusader Kingdom of Valencia* (Cambridge, 1984), 113–14. The value of the *alfóndec* in Tunis fell from 2,750 besants in 1261–1262 to 600 besants in 1266 and 800 besants for the next five years; Louis de Mas-Latrie, *Traité de paix et de commerce concernant les relations des chrétiens avec l'Afrique septentrionale au moyen âge* (Paris, 1866), 36–38; ACA Canc., reg. 13, fol. 291r.; reg. 15, fols. 43v–44r. On the continuing trade prohibition with Tunis, Huici and Cabanes, *Documentos*, 5: no. 1554.

<sup>27</sup> Jean-Pierre Cuvillier, "Barcelona, Gênes, et le commerce du blé de Sicile vers le milieu du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Atti del Io congresso storico Liguria-Catalogna* (Bordighera, 1974), 165, n. 1. The last Barcelona commercial contract involving Sicily before 1282 is now printed in Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, no. 37. Batlle i Gallart, "Les relacions entre Barcelona i Sicília," 166–69, app. 3, transcribes a will made by a Catalan at Messina in 1280. Several Catalans also attest to the document; two had become citizens of Messina and the others appear to be immigrants. News of the testator's death, however, did not reach Barcelona, where he still held property, until 1282. This delay suggests anything but close communication between Sicily and Catalonia at the time. The Catalan immigrants appear to have been rapidly absorbed in Sicilian society rather than to have formed a coherent trading community.

and the Near East. The great trading emporia at Constantinople, Alexandria, Acre, and (after Acre's fall in 1291) Famagusta offered a comparable array of merchandise; the desirability of visiting one port rather than another therefore depended on a complex evaluation of price differentials, tariff costs, and political conditions. Catalan commercial penetration into the Eastern Mediterranean therefore appears tentative and dispersed; merchants from the Crown were testing the waters in different markets in the thirteenth century rather than concentrating on Alexandria and Rhodes as they would in the fifteenth.<sup>28</sup>

Spices at first provided the most attractive merchandise drawing Catalans to Romania, which had recently become a terminus for the trade routes with China and Central Asia as a result of the connections created by the Mongol imperium. In one of the earliest documents referring to Byzantine trade, Bernat Cantull and Guillem Bos in 1262 returned to investors in Barcelona a cargo of pepper worth 676 lbs. in the coinage of Barcelona, ginger worth 104 lbs., cinnamon worth 22 lbs., and 14 lbs. in cash.<sup>29</sup> Several commercial contracts specify that their investments should be used to purchase wax in Romania, a product which had acquired a particularly high reputation for its quality from Black Sea sources; in an unusually large investment the widow Maria deposited 75 lbs. with her son Felipe de Bosc, who was instructed to invest two-thirds of his profits in wax and one-third in mastic, an aromatic resin which was a speciality of Chios.<sup>30</sup> The frequency with which investors specified the acquisition of specific goods in Romania, a relatively rare clause in commercial *comanda* contracts, indicates that the markets of the Greek East were slowly acquiring a specialized place in Catalan trade. Expensive luxury goods and Byzantine fineries rather than bulk products first drew the attention of merchants toward Constantinople. On one of the early voyages a merchant with a taste for the exotic probably brought back to Barcelona one of the few Byzantine artifacts in the city today, an intricately carved sixth-century capital from the church of St. Polyuktos at Saraçhane (already in ruins by 1200) now on display

<sup>28</sup> Seventy-three percent of Catalan ships bound for the Eastern Mediterranean from 1390 to 1493 made Rhodes and Alexandria their destination, Mario del Treppo, *Els mercaders catalans i l'expansió de la Corona catalano-aragonesa al segle XV*, trans. J. Riera i Sans (Barcelona, 1976), 59.

<sup>29</sup> ACB 1-6-485.

<sup>30</sup> Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 44, 48; ACB 1-6-3014. On the principal products available in Romania from the thirteenth century and later, see Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 2:717-85.

at Barcelona's archaeological museum, where it is handsomely crowned with a potted plant.<sup>31</sup>

To obtain spices, wax, and mastic in Greek markets, merchants from the Crown of Aragon brought with them northern woolens, skins, olive oil, and paper. By far the largest recorded investments involved eighteen pieces of cloth of Châlons-sur-Marne and three Iberian woolens (*barragans*) shipped to the East; this followed a typical thirteenth-century pattern of exporting valuable northern cloth to fuel long-distance trade in the absence of a substantial textile industry in Barcelona.<sup>32</sup> Yet in addition to the large sums invested in foreign woolens, a staple of Latin trade with the East, relatively small consignments of wolf, fox, rabbit skins, and armaments point to more specialized Catalan exports that helped merchants from the Crown of Aragon enter the competitive markets of Romania. The processing and exportation of furs and pelts formed an integral part of Barcelona's expanding economy during the late twelfth and early thirteenth century, providing valuable export materials to compensate for the lack of a local textile industry. From 1140 to 1220, tanners and furriers (*pelliparii*) proved the fastest growing segment of craftsmen; many of this art's most successful practitioners came to invest their products and capital in overseas trade.<sup>33</sup> In 1280 and again in 1281 Maria, widow of the *pelliparius* Pere de Malla, consigned merchandise, including skins, to her sons on their voyages to Romania; from other investors, who included two tanners, they also carried ten wolf-skin coats (*garnatxes*), thirteen rabbit-skin tunics (*cots*), and wolf and fox furs.<sup>34</sup> In addition to responding to a demand for furs, Catalan merchants found arms a popular item in the Byzantine world, which had evidently come to respect the military prowess of the Catalans long before the arrival of the Catalan Company. In 1278 Arnau de Sala, a shoemaker, invested 100 sous in a shipment of twenty-five iron-tipped lances to the Greeks and in 1299 Bonanat de Bosquerons, a bit-maker (*frenarius*), brought cuirasses with him to

<sup>31</sup> R. Martin Harrison, "A Constantinopolitan Capital in Barcelona," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 27 (1973), 297–300. The capital was housed in the old medieval parish church of Sant Miquel until it was moved to its current location in 1936.

<sup>32</sup> Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 47, 48; cf. nos. 11, 12.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen P. Bensch, *Barcelona and its Rulers, 1096–1291* (Cambridge, 1994), 188–91.

<sup>34</sup> Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 44, 47, ACB 1–6–842, 3014, 4014.

sell.<sup>35</sup> Neither furs nor arms (which popes technically forbade exporting to the infidel, but often to no effect) figured prominently in the early trade with the Levant. Through these specialities, Catalan merchants found a niche for themselves in the Greek world, yet, like the Italians, they also exported large quantities of northern woollens to their trading outposts in Byzantium.

Because of the difficulties in establishing commercial relations in an area so heavily dominated by the Genoese, Byzantine trade did not attain sufficient volume to create a Catalan merchant elite in the late thirteenth century. The individuals most heavily involved in Romania, as far as they can be identified, did not come from the most affluent entrepreneurial families. The wills of Pere de Bosc (d. 1282), Pere Cantull (d. 1280), and Pere de Malla (d. 1277), all pioneers in early Byzantine trade (or in the case of Pere de Malla his widow and sons), reveal men with substantial but not exceptional resources.<sup>36</sup> Profits from the risky but lucrative trade with the Greek world could, however, add to other commercial ventures to allow for social mobility. Bernat Cantull, for instance, possessed a share of the ship owned by Ramon Marquet, who would later serve as admiral of the royal fleet defending Catalonia from the French invasion of 1285; Pere de Malla had sufficient resources to grant each of his three daughter 550 to 600 gold morabetins in dowry, a substantial sum able to ensure a prestigious match. Especially after the difficulties experienced by Catalan merchants in the traditional markets of the Western Mediterranean in the 1260s, Romania offered a new and, potentially at least, unusually lucrative field of commercial activity to supplement other opportunities. Significantly, those families directing their ships and resources to Romania had commercial interests throughout the Mediterranean and were daring enough to enter the door left ajar by the new political forces reshaping Byzantium and the Levant in the late thirteenth century. Pere Ris, the first known Catalan consul in Constantinople, typifies the potential advantages of looking eastward. From an obscure family, Pere Ris moved in the

<sup>35</sup> Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, no. 69; Appendix, no. 3.

<sup>36</sup> ACB 4-3-209, 4-15-13, 180. For more details on the de Malla family, see Carme Batlle i Gallart, "La vida y las actividades de los mercaderes de Barcelona dedicados al comercio marítimo (siglo XIII)," *Le genti del mare mediterraneo*, ed. R. Ragosta (Naples, 1981), 334-35. Abulafia, "Catalan Merchants," 221 also characterizes these families as wishing to acquire a "place in the ranks of the Barcelona 'upper-middle' class."



circle of the de Malla and de Bosc, with whom he invested in trade with Genoa.<sup>37</sup> Although clearly not from one of Barcelona's great trading families, he nevertheless recognized opportunity in new areas when it beckoned: together with Pere de Bosc, he appears among the purveyors of grain to King Jaume's abandoned crusading army in the Holy Land in 1269.<sup>38</sup> Thus, rather than reinforcing the position of Barcelona's patrician and entrepreneurial houses, early trade with Romania and with the Eastern Mediterranean generally offered a means of ascent for individuals daring or desperate enough to risk their lives and resources in an area that was just opening up to the subjects of the Crown of Aragon.

Yet trade with the core of the Byzantine Empire did not fulfill its potential. Forced to submit to Genoese hegemony in the Black Sea, threatened by piracy and instability produced by the War of Curzola, and compromised by reprisals provoked by the privateering raids of Roger de Loria, ships from Catalonia by the late thirteenth century turned further south, toward Alexandria and the rim of the Greek world at Cyprus and Crete, which Catalans frequented as early as 1280.<sup>39</sup> A remarkable series of private contracts and royal accounts provides a wealth of information about this trade in 1299 and 1300. The fragmentary remains of one of Barcelona's earliest extant notarial registers contains details about a convoy of five ships departing for Candia in Crete and Cyprus in late September 1299.<sup>40</sup> Members from some of Barcelona's leading commercial families operated the ships: Eimeric Dusay, a prominent merchant-banker; Pere d'Olivera, whom the king designated royal ambassador to Ghazan Khan, the ruler of Persia, in May 1300; and Bernat d'Olm, from an established Barcelona family.<sup>41</sup> The large amounts involved in the expedition

<sup>37</sup> ACB 1-6-2955, 4014.

<sup>38</sup> ACA Canc., reg. 17, fols. 142r.-143r., transcribed in Carreras Candi, "La croada," 136.

<sup>39</sup> ACB 4-39-475, which records the appointment of a procurator in Candia by Bernat de Pelaya and his wife Guillemma to attend to a pious bequest from their property in Barcelona.

<sup>40</sup> The register contains twenty-seven contracts dealing with the voyage; Arxiu Històric de Protocols de Barcelona [AHPB hereafter], Not. 3, Pere Portell, fols. 5v., 7v., 9v.-13v. Nine are transcribed in Madurell and Garcia, *Comandas comerciales*, nos. 62-70.

<sup>41</sup> On the growing importance of merchant-bankers in Barcelona's trade, see Stephen P. Bensch, "La primera crisis bancaria de Barcelona," *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 19 (1989), 317-18. For Pere d'Olivera, Capmany, *Memorias históricas*, 2: no. 60. Less is known about the other two shipowners, Guerau de Trilea and Pere Llorenç.

and its eventual destination appear more clearly in early records from Catalonia's central fiscal officer, the *Mestre Racional*, who took care to levy fines on the prohibited trade with Egypt. The ships captained by Pere d'Olivera, Eimeric Dusay, and Pere Llorenç surface in the royal accounts of the *Mestre Racional*, which show that they piloted their vessels from Alexandria to Candia and then back to Alexandria before returning home.<sup>42</sup> Candia and Cyprus formed important relay stations on the trade routes with Egypt, compensating in part for the difficulty Catalans encountered in establishing a firm footing in Romania. Candia had long served Venice as a colonial commercial hub, linking communications with Constantinople, Alexandria, and the Levant, and Cyprus provided a similar link for the Genoese and other Latins after the fall of Acre in 1291, the same year in which subjects of the Crown of Aragon received trading privileges on the island. Candia in particular provided a backdoor to Byzantium, while Famagusta also provided a link to trade with the kingdom of Lesser Armenia, where Barcelona merchants were active as early as 1274.<sup>43</sup> In 1301 Jaume de Sena, a Barcelona resident, received a consignment of Armenian cotton at Famagusta from Pere Seu of Barcelona to sell after the return voyage on the ship of Bernat Marquet, and Borràs of Barcelona in the same year made payment to a Constantinopolitan merchant for goods he received there.<sup>44</sup> The volume of trade circulating in the waters separating Candia, Famagusta, and

<sup>42</sup> ACA Reial Patrimoni, reg. 264, fols. 1r.-7r.; the phrase "per altre viatge que feren dalexandria en Candia et tornan en Alexandria" appears throughout the accounts. One of the *comanda* contracts made in Barcelona in September 1299 refers to the cost of trading with Alexandria in a matter-of-fact manner; Madurell and García, *Comandas comerciales*, no. 67: "mundis et quitis de duana et aliis juribus Alexandrie."

<sup>43</sup> Salvano Borsari, *Il dominio veneziano a Creta nel XIII secolo* (Naples, 1963); Angeliki E. Laiou, "Quelques observations sur l'économie et la société de Crète vénitienne (ca. 1270-ca. 1305)," *Bisanzio e l'Italia: raccolta di studi in memoria di Agostino Pertusi* (Milan, 1982), 177-98 [repr. in *Gender, Society, and Economic Life in Byzantium* (London, 1992)]. On the growing importance of Cyprus as a relay station for prohibited Egyptian trade, see Jean Richard, "Le royaume de Chypre et l'embargo sur le commerce avec l'Égypte (fin XIII-début XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle)," *Compte-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1984), 120-34. On the presence of Barcelona merchants, including Pere Mallol and Pere Ramon de Palau, at Lajazzo in Lesser Armenia, see *Notai genovesi in Oltremare: atti rogati a Laiazzo da Federico di Piazzalinga (1274) e Pietro di Bargone (1277, 1279)*, ed. L. Balletto (Genoa, 1989), nos. 35, 41. For the diplomatic relations of the Crown of Aragon with Cyprus and Armenia, see Francesco Giunta, *Aragonesi e catalani nel Mediterraneo* (Palermo, 1956-1959), 2:78-79, 81-85.

<sup>44</sup> *Notai genovesi in Oltremare: atti rogati a Cipro da Lamberto di Sambuceto (3 luglio 1300-3 agosto 1301)*, ed. V. Polonio (Genoa, 1981), no. 257; *Notai genovesi in Oltremare: atti*



Alexandria had reached considerable proportions by 1300. In that year alone the prohibited trade with Egypt brought in 40,785 sous, roughly a tenth of the revenues for the entire Crown of Aragon at the time. With fines levied at the rate of 2 sous per lb., the volume of prohibited trade with Alexandria must have been in excess of 400,000 sous that year; the ship of Pere d'Olivera alone carried merchandise worth 137,910 sous.<sup>45</sup> When taken together with the licit trade with Crete and Cyprus, Catalan commerce between the southern edge of the Greek world and Egypt assumed a new importance around 1300. As a result, direct trade with Byzantium, which seemed to hold out such promise in the second half of the thirteenth century, evolved into a minor offshoot of a thriving exchange network with Egypt and the islands on the periphery of Romania.<sup>46</sup>

With several points of contact along the edge of the Byzantine commercial sphere, however, merchants from the Crown of Aragon managed to retain an oblique access to Greek markets. This served them particularly well once the Catalan Company provoked the rage of the Greeks against all the subjects of the Crown of Aragon. Summoned in 1302 from Sicily by the Emperor Andronicus II to fight as mercenaries against the Turks in Asia Minor, the rugged troops under the command of Roger de Flor and Berenguer d'Entença had turned against their Byzantine master by 1305. The assassination of Roger de Flor at a state banquet in April of that year unleashed the punitive expedition known as the Catalan Vengeance against the emperor; while Catalan merchants in Constantinople had no direct involvement with the mercenary army, mounting anti-Catalan sentiment in the capital caused them in 1305 to join their countrymen at their base in Gallipoli in order to attack the empire. Although by 1311 the Catalan Company had moved away from the center of the empire to establish themselves in Athens and Thebes, disrupted Byzantine-Aragonese trading contacts proved difficult to mend. Only in 1315 did new negotiations lead to the grant of a chrysobull in which

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*rogati a Cipro de Lamberto di Sambuceto (6 luglio-27 ottobre 1301)*, ed. R. Pavoni (Genoa, 1982), no. 74.

<sup>45</sup> The total of 40,785 sous is higher than the amount collected in most years for which we have records between 1305 and 1327; Giunta, *Aragonesi e catalani*, 2:119. On the prohibited trade with Egypt, see also José Trenchs i Odina, "'De Alexandrinis' (El comercio prohibido con los musulmanes y el Papado de Aviñón durante la primera mitad del siglo XIV)," *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 10 (1980), 237-321.

<sup>46</sup> For its dimensions in the fifteenth century, del Treppo, *Els mercaders*, 56-59; Claude Carrère, *Barcelone, centre économique, 1380-1462* (Paris, 1967), 2:643-44.

Andronicus II reduced the tariff levied on Catalan and Aragonese merchandise to 2 percent on both imports and exports. Because the chrysobull does not reiterate the terms of the privilege granted in 1296, a typical diplomatic characteristic in the renewal of trading privileges, the earlier privilege appears to have lapsed.<sup>47</sup> With the new privilege and the reestablishment of friendly relations between Jaume II and Andronicus II, however, Catalan ships quickly attempted to stage a comeback.

The resumption of direct trading contacts with Constantinople was anxiously awaited by Barcelona investors, who rapidly provided substantial sums for trade and procured their largest ships to penetrate the Byzantine market. Records survive of two voyages from Barcelona in 1316, the first departing in June and the second in September. Owing to the survival of twenty commercial contracts (*comandas*) for the first of the two ships in an early notarial register, it is possible to look into the nature of revived Byzantine trade and have some sense of the enthusiasm with which the city's entrepreneurs greeted this new opportunity. The directors of the voyage made plans far in advance. On February 26, 1316, during the winter lull in long-distance shipping, Arnau de Cornellà and Guillem de Costabella of Barcelona entered into a commercial society with two co-citizens, Bernat Maçana and Bernat de Malví, to prepare their two-masted *cocha*, named the Bona Ventura which was at the time in use at Majorca, for a voyage to Romania with 1,200 lbs.<sup>48</sup> The employment of a *cocha*, a stout roundship, indicates the importance of the voyage, for Catalans began using these large, square-sailed transport ships only a few years earlier.<sup>49</sup> The bulk of the ship perfectly suited the nature of trade. The individual investments recorded in the twenty *comanda* contracts, all but three accepted by the shipowners themselves, total 15,978 sous 11 diners and averaged 798.9 sous; these

<sup>47</sup> The chrysobull is printed in Greek in Rubió y Lluch, *Diplomatari*, no. 115, and with a Latin translation in Capmany, *Memorias*, 2:468-71. These editions give 1320 as the date, but Franz Dölger, "Die Urkunden des byzantinischen Kaisers Andonikos II für Aragon-Katalonien unter die Regierung Königs Jakobs II," *Estudis universitaris catalans*, 18 (1933), 300-7 [repr. in *Byzanz und die europäische Staatenwelt* (Speyer, 1953), 134-37] has clearly proven that the correct date is 1315. Both Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 278, and Dölger, *Byzanz*, 134 accept that the privilege of 1296 had lapsed; Marinesco, "Notes sur les Catalans," 502 does not.

<sup>48</sup> AHPB, Not. 5-2, Pere de Torre, fols. 27r.-28v.

<sup>49</sup> Dufourcq, *L'Espagne catalane*, 40, n. 8 indicates the presence of a Catalan *cocha* in 1309.

are substantial sums, considerably larger than those recorded for Byzantine trade in the late thirteenth century, which had emphasized luxury goods. Investors included some of the most dynamic figures among Barcelona's entrepreneurs and merchants: Jaume d'Oliver, whose family figured prominently in the Levant trade; Simó Dusay and Guillem Fiveller, wealthy merchant-bankers; A. de Vilano, a successful apothecary; and Sança de Banyeres, member of an established patrician house.<sup>50</sup> The voyage therefore drew the attention of established families which could afford to sink large sums in a risky venture but with the potential of high profits. While the *comanda* contracts make some mention of the export of small quantities of paper, light cloth, and saffron, most investors placed their money in olive oil and stipulated that they should receive alum and wax from the return voyage. In one of the largest *comanda* contracts, Jaume d'Oliver shipped 60 jars of olive oil containing 724 *quarterii*, worth 85 lbs. 8 sous 6 diners, to Romania in order to obtain alum and wax.<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on trade in bulk products, facilitated by the employment of the *cocha*, demonstrates that Catalans hoped to make a quick advance into the Greek market with their large ships and heavy capital outlays; nine of the commercial contracts specify that olive oil was to be shipped in large quantities, totalling 302 jars in the surviving contracts. Like the Genoese, the Catalans rapidly deployed their resources to create a commerce based on the exchange of bulk merchandise with Romania; this reveals just how anxious they were to reestablish a presence in Constantinople.<sup>52</sup> With the dispatch of an "oil tanker" to the Greek East in 1316, Barcelona entrepreneurs hoped to make up the ground they had lost as a result of the recklessness of the Catalan Company.

Yet the second ship known to have set out from Barcelona for Constantinople in 1316 also had an objective besides trade. A commercial *comanda* contract records that Bonanat Reig, Guillem Bartomeu, Tomàs Despuig, Arnau de Mora, and Guillem de Riera had received 25 lbs. in merchandise from Jaume Abril, a Barcelona banker, for the voyage, which bears the same characteristics as that organized in June. Yet Bonanat Reig had also received a commis-

<sup>50</sup> The contracts are found in AHPB, Not. 5-2, Pere de Torre, fols. 103v., 106r.-v., 108v., 109v., 110v., 114v., 115v., 117v.

<sup>51</sup> Appendix, no. 4.

<sup>52</sup> During the early fourteenth century the Genoese began to use *cochas* extensively to import alum from Phocaea, Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 2:556-57, 769-78.

sion from King Jaume II a month before his September departure in order to press the emperor for a monetary settlement for rights to parts of Asia Minor that Constance of Hohenstaufen had transferred to the king in 1306.<sup>53</sup> The suit proved irritating to the emperor, who dismissed it. Although this was surely a minor sticking point, not serious enough for either side to risk their newly restored friendship, it nevertheless indicates the uneasy relationship between Catalan commercial and dynastic interests in the Byzantine world. Because of distance and the strong position of the Genoese, the Aragonese monarchs could never effectively bring their political and naval weight to bear in order to force open the Byzantine Empire for their traders. The arrival of the Catalan Company drove a wedge between the interests of the House of Aragon, which through opportunistic negotiations with the Company's leaders gained neither their clear allegiance nor control, and those of the Catalan merchant community developing in the East, which could scarcely afford to antagonize the Greeks and their Genoese protectors.<sup>54</sup> This rapacious, independent mercenary band brought in to defend the Byzantine Empire in Asia Minor in fact forced the issue of the Aragonese dynasty's ability to control Catalan expansion in the Greek world and thereby provoked a rupture in both trading and diplomatic relations. The Genoese exacted a high price from the emperor for their help in dislodging the Catalan Company, for they became the main defenders of Greek interests, gained increased jurisdictional independence within the empire, extended their trading privileges, and received further concessions at Chios and Phocaea. According to Laiou, the years from 1304 to 1308 marked "the real Genoese colonization of the empire."<sup>55</sup> This made the recovery of the Catalan commercial position even more difficult after diplomatic and trading relations were restored in 1315. Even though Catalan investors and sailors appeared anxious to revive their direct contacts with

<sup>53</sup> The commercial contract is ACB 1-7-382; Bernat Reig's commission from the king is transcribed in Rubió y Lluch, *Diplomatari*, no. 81. On the claims of Constance of Hohenstaufen, the widow of Emperor John III Vatatzes (1222-1254), see Constantin Marinesco, "De nouveau sur Constance de Hohenstaufen," *Byzantion*, 1 (1924), 451-68; and Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 279-81.

<sup>54</sup> On the complex question of the allegiances of the Catalan Company to both James II of Aragon and Frederick II of Sicily, see Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 137-40, 177-83; Olwer, *L'expansió*, 57-60; Burns, "The Catalan Company," 765-70.

<sup>55</sup> Laiou, *Constantinople and the Latins*, 147.

Constantinople, merchants had to remain content with the trade the Genoese would allow them; during the fourteenth century Catalan commercial relations with Byzantium were irregular and frequently degenerated into raids on Genoese ships or commercial outposts.<sup>56</sup>

Early Catalan contacts with Byzantium failed to solidify into a stable route of exchange; the Aegean was not to form part of the "Catalan Main." In the late Middle Ages, Romania remained a marginal zone of Catalan commercial interest, accessible only with the consent of the Genoese in Pera, Caffa, and Chios. Yet the failure of the Catalans to establish strong, viable commercial outposts in the Byzantine Empire presents the Mediterranean expansion of the Crown of Aragon from a revealing, if disappointing, angle. The early phase of Byzantine-Aragonese contacts from 1260 to 1302 followed the establishment of durable relations with North Africa, anchored on the mercantile-military outposts in Tunis and Bougie and placed under firm royal command. In these centers, a combination of trading emporia and military barracks, a convergence of dynastic, mercenary, and commercial interests fused into a durable pattern of exchange and communication. As the Catalans began to move more aggressively into the eastern basin of the Mediterranean, however, dynastic and commercial interests often seemed to move in different directions, determined in both Egypt and the Byzantine world by crusading ambitions, diplomatic intrigue, and competition among well entrenched Italian powers. The fluctuating control over the consulates of Egypt and Constantinople between the Crown and Barcelona's municipal council reveal the difficulty in finding a proper balance among these interests. If the consulates were tentatively moving toward increasing independence in the late thirteenth century, much in the manner of Genoese Pera, which came to act as an independent city-state, the Byzantine markets did not prove lucrative enough to create a dynamic and stable Catalan merchant community in Constantinople. The inability of dynastic, naval, and commercial forces to fuse into durable institutions and policies, not a failure of acculturation, accounts for the half-hearted Catalan commercial presence in Romania during the fourteenth century.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 2:593.

<sup>57</sup> For a different view of the problem, see Archibald R. Lewis "The Catalan Failure in Acculturation in Frankish Greece and the Islamic World during the Fourteenth Century," *Viator*, 11 (1980), 361-70.



Barcelona's patricians and leading entrepreneurs exhibited a marginal interest in Byzantine trade. Only a small band of adventurous merchants from the Crown of Aragon managed to establish themselves in Constantinople, and even fewer succeeded in breaking into the closed Black Sea markets.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to Venetian and Genoese investments in Byzantium and the Levant, those made by Catalan investors did not greatly exceed the sums placed in Sicilian and North African trade.<sup>59</sup> Socially, the profits from Byzantine and even Levant trade did not in themselves prove sufficient to form an elite group of families in Barcelona or other Catalan towns that dominated investments in the Eastern Mediterranean and treated overseas outposts as clannish resources. The commercial, dynastic, and military projection of the Crown of Aragon thus appears scattered, moving opportunistically into the spaces allowed within the solid structures of Italian trade and naval interests and the old dynastic alliances of the Latin states in Greece. The late arrival of the Catalans in the Byzantine world can thus be understood only through the complex matrix of forces shaping the thirteenth-century Mediterranean as a whole, not as a simple line of Catalan imperialism drawn from one end of the sea to the other.

<sup>58</sup> Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 1:243, 266; G. I. Bratianu, *Actes des notaires génois de Péra et de Caffa de la fin du XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle (1281-90)* (Bucharest, 1926), no. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Investments of Barcelona merchants for the Levant and Romania averaged 663 sous and 606 sous respectively before 1290, in comparison to 431 sous for North Africa and al-Andalus and 270 sous for Sicily; see Bensch, *Barcelona*, 288. Although investments for Eastern Mediterranean trade are somewhat higher than for routes closer to home, the differential is much larger in Genoa and Venice. See Erik Bach, *La cité de Gênes au XII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Copenhagen, 1955), 50-52; Balard, *Romanie génoise*, 2:522-32; Gerhard Rösch, *Der venezianische Adel bis zur Schließung des Großen Rats* (Sigmaringen, 1989), 111.

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## APPENDIX

No. 1: August 26, 1281

Bartomeu Romeu and Bonanat Barraler, citizens of Barcelona, receive a commission from the merchants of Barcelona to appoint Pere Ris consul for the subjects of the king of Aragon in Constantinople. Regulations for the administration of the community are established in a royal diploma dated June 19, 1279.

A. Original parchment. ACB 1-6-4037. 357 x 256 mm.

Noverint universi quod nos Bartholomeus Romei et Bonanatus Barralerii mercatores et cives Barchinone electi auctoritate illustris domini Petri dei gratia regis Aragonum a mercatoribus civitatis Barchinone super mercaturis fideliter et legaliter tractandis et aministrandis prout in tenore instrumenti dicti domini regis sigillo eiusdem maiori pendenti sigillato cuius tenor infra scribitur continetur. De consilio et assensu mercatorum Barchinone ad honorem predicti domini regis Aragonum et ad communem utilitatem hominum eiusdem elegimus in consulem apud Constantinopolim et in aliis partibus Romanie Petrum Ris mercatorem Barchinone euntem ad dictas partes in navi Bonayn Lauri et sociorum. Itaque ipse habeat potestatem procurandi et aministrandi in dictis partibus omnia ea que viderit expedire hominibus terre dicti domini regis navigantibus et existentibus apud Constantinopolim et in aliis partibus Romanie predictis quamdiu ipse consul ibi fuerit iuxta ordinaciones nostras que infra continentur et omnes homines de terra dicti domini regis navigantes et existentes in dictis partibus teneantur dicto consuli obedire. In testimonium autem huius rei presens instrumentum iussimus fieri auctoritate Berengarii Lupeti notarii publici Barchinone infrascripti.

Datum Barchinona .vii.º kalendas septembri anno domini .m.º .cc.º octuagesimo primo.

Tenor autem instrumenti dicti domini regis talis est. Noverint universi quod nos Petrus dei gratia rex Aragonum volumus et concedimus universis mercatoribus Barchinone qui officium mercationis seu negociationis ibi exercent aut exercuerint quod possint eligere inter se et sibi proponere duos mercatores ex ipsis bonos et legales qui electi de comuni assensu dictorum mercatorum vel maioris partis



eorum procurent aministrent et faciant omnia que necessaria fuerint ad comunem utilitatem ipsorum omnium et singulorum super mercationibus suis bene et fideliter et absque diminutione nostrorum iurium procurandis. Hanc autem concessionem facere intendimus quamdiu nobis placuerit salvo iure nostro in omnibus et ita quod iurisdictioni nostre propter ipsam nullatenus derogetur. Mandantes vicario baiulo et aliis officialibus nostris Barchinone presentibus et futuris quod hanc concessionem nostram predictis mercatoribus firmam habeant et observent et faciant observari prout superius continetur.

Datum Valencie .xiii.<sup>o</sup> kalendas iulii anno domini .m.<sup>o</sup> .cc.<sup>o</sup> .lxx.<sup>o</sup> nono. Sig. Petri dei gratia regis Aragonum. Testes sunt Guillelmus de Castro Novo, Amor Dionisii, Blascho Masza, Icardus de Muro, et Bernardus de Petra Tallada. Sig. Petri de Sancto Clemente scriptoris predicti domini regis qui mandato eius hoc scribi fecit et clausit loco die et anno prefixis.

La tenor empero dels dits ordenamens es aquesta. Ordenen en Bertholomeu Romeu e en Bonanat Barraler a honor del senyor rey darago e a profit de la mercaderia que en cascuna nau vaien .ii. consols e quels consols que iuren que be e leyalment a honor del senyor rey e a cuminal profit de les sues gents e de lur mercaderia procuren tots aquels qui sien de la senyoria del senyor rey darago a be e a profit dels e que pusquen destrenyer aquels en persones e en coses si avien fet so que no deguessen o no volien obeir als consols. E si peraventura alguns daquels nos volien destrenyer per els ordenen quels consols ab testimonis scriven los noms daquels e les males fetes que fetes aien e que conferan en Barcelona que ho deien denunciar a els. Item ordenen que quantes que naus vaien en Oltramar o en Erminia o en Romania o en Barberia o en altres parts que los dits consols qui iran en la primera nau qui primerament la fara port sien apelats e tenguts per consols per totes les altres naus qui aqui vendran mentre aquella primera nau hi sera. Els altres consols qui in les altres naus iran sien conseladors e ajudors dels primers .ii. consols e ab aquels ensemps tracten lo cuminal profit de les lurs gens. E si peraventura los .ii. primers consols seu venien o avien anar en altres parts aquels .ii. consols de l'altra nau qui aqui fees port apres de la primera fossen tenguts per consols per totes les altres naus axi con les primeres. E si tant era que la un dels .ii. consols falis que altre hi fos stablit en loc daquel daquels so es asaber de l'altra nau qui apres fos venguda. E axi ordenen ques seguescha de la primera nau tro ala derrera. Item ordenen que si negu mercader de Barcelona o

daltre loc de la senyoria del senyor rey comensava segons lur conexensa de guastar les coses que el agues portades en lo dit viatge que els per si meteís e ab lur consel e encara ab la senyoria de la terra si als fer no podien emparassen e presessen e salvassen totes aqueles coses que poguessen trobar al dit mercader.

Sig. Berengarii Lupeti notarii publici Barchinone qui rogatus a dictis Bartholomeu Romei et Bonanato Barralerio hoc scripsit et clausit die et anno quo supra.

No. 2: November 26, 1289

Pere de Conangle admits owing Ramon de Tarascó 8 hyperpers and merchandise seized by Genoese pirates near Ania.

A. Original parchment. ACB 1-6-1813. 175 x 157 mm.

Sit omnibus notum quod ego Petrus de Conangulo confiteor et recognosco vobis Raimundo de Tarascono et vestris quod ex illa comanda triginta unius librarum et quinque solidorum et septem denariorum monete Barchinone de terno quam de vobis recepi et portavi in viatico Romanie in navi Bernardi de Ulmo et sociorum prout in carta inde confacta auctore Bernardi Paschalis notarii Barchinone .v.º kalendas octobris anno domini .m.º cc.º lxxx.º .vii.º continentur. Ceperunt a me in dicta navi violenter homines quinque galearum ianuensium de quibus erat admiraldus Paulinus de Oria in Gulfo de Ania octo perperes auri quos ego habeam intus caxiam meam et quos habueram de aliquibus mercibus dicte nostre comande. Item ceperunt a me homines dictarum galearum unum camisollum de ferro et duas gorgerias vestras qui et que fuerunt apreciati in dicta comanda ad sexaginta quatuor solidos monete Barchinone de terno. Unde promitto vobis et bona fide convenio quod tradam vobis voluntati vestre indilate quamcumque restitutionem seu emendam recepero aliquo tempore de predictis octo perperis et de dicto camisol et gorgeriis. Concedo etiam vobis quod si in absentia mei fiet aliqua restitutio seu emenda de predictis quod vos possitis eandem restitutionem et emendam petere et recipere.

Actus est hoc .vi.º kalendas decembris anno domini millesimo ducentesimo octuagesimo nono. Sig. Petri de Conangulo predicti qui hoc laudo et firmo. Testes huius rei sunt Guilelmus de Claromonte, Petrus Catalani, et Arnaldus Maestre. Sig. Petri Lupeti notarii publici Barchinone qui hoc scribi fecit et clausit.

No. 3: September 25, 1278

Pelegrí de Canells receives in comanda from Arnau de Sola, a shoemaker of Barcelona, 100 sous in twenty-five iron-tipped lances for a voyage to Romania.

A. Original parchment. ACA pergamins varis, Sentmenat, Indice 8, III, 81. 216 x 136 mm.

Sit omnibus notum quod ego Pelegrinus de Canellis concedo et recognosco tibi Arnaldo de Solerio sabaterio commoranti in carraria maris in Barchinona et tuis quod porto in tua comanda in presenti viatico quod facio ad partes Romanie in navi Francisci de Rovira et sociorum vel ubicumque ipsa navis fecerit portum causa mercandi centum solidos monete Barchinone de terno implicatis in viginti quinque lanceis cum earum ferris. Super quibus renuncio exceptioni rerum non numeratarum et non habitarum et non comandatarum et doli. Promitens hanc comandam illic vendere sicut melius potero bona fide et precium quod inde habuero implicare ibidem in eriminis vel gala quecumque horum tibi plus videro expedire atque implicamenta ipsa capitale scilicet et lucrum promito reducere in tui posse vel tuorum dicto viatico facto sicut deus ea salvaverit. Ita vero quod ego habeam de lucro quod deus in hac comanda dederit quartam partem et tu habeas residuas tres partes ipsius lucri cum tuo dicto capitali. Set comanda hec eat maneat et redeat ad tui redegum et fortunam. Et pro hiis omnibus firmiter et legaliter sub dicta forma complendis attendendis et observandis obligeo tibi et tuis me et omnia bona mea mobilia et immobilia.

Actum est hoc .vii. kalendas octobris anno domini .m.<sup>o</sup>.cc.<sup>o</sup> septuagento octavo. Sig. Pelegrini de Canellis predicti qui hec omnia concedo et firmo. Testes huius rei sunt Arnaldus Cama, et Iohanes Vicarius. Sig. Guilelmi de Boscho publici Barchinone notarii qui hoc scripsit et clausit die et anno prefixo.

No. 4: June 8, 1316

Arnau de Cornellà, Guillem de Costabella, Bernat Maçana, and Bernat de Malví, citizens of Barcelona, receive from Ferrera, wife of Jaume d'Oliver, citizen of Barcelona, 85 lbs. 18 sous and 6 denars in the ternal coinage of Barcelona invested in 60 jars of olive oil, holding 724 *quarterii*, on the voyage to Romania which they will make in their roundship.

A. Original parchment. ACB 1-7-1395. 148 x 137 mm. Cancelled with slits.

B. Notarial register. AHPB, Not. 5-2, Pere de Torre, fol. 106v. Includes body of text only.

Sit omnibus notum quod nos Arnaldus de Corniliano Guilelmus de Costabella Gerardus Maciani et Bernardus de Malvino cives Barchinone quilibet nostrum insolidum confitemur et recognoscimus vobis domine Ferrarie uxoris Iacobi Oliverii civis Barchinone quod recepimus et portamus in nostra comanda<sup>a</sup> in presenti viatico quod facimus ad partes Romanie in cocha nostra vel ubicumque dicta cocha portum faciet causa mercandi octuaginta quinque libras et decem et octo solidos et sex denarios monete Barchinone de terno implicatas in sexaginta iarris olei in quibus sunt septuaginti viginti quartarii olei. Quam comandam renunciantes exceptioni olei non recepti et doli et nove constitutioni et beneficio dividende actionis promittimus vendere sicut melius poterimus bona fide et precium quod inde habuerimus fideliter implicare in duabus carguis de cera et residuum in alumine de rocha vel possimus dictam comandam implicare in cera si nobis videbitur faciendum. Et ipsum implicamentum capitale et lucrum prout deus inde salvaverit in vestrum vel vestrorum posse fideliter reducere facto dicto viatico. Ita tamen quod de omni lucro quod deus in hac comanda dederit habeamus nos quartam partem et vos residuas tres partes cum vestro capitali predicto. Et predictam comandam possimus nos omnes vel tres a[ut]<sup>b</sup> duo vel etiam unus aportare vobis in dicta cocha vel in alio quolibet vassello nobis videbitur qui venia[t in]<sup>c</sup> partes occidentales. Set hec comanda sit ubique ad vestri redegum et fortunam. Et pro his complendis obligamus vobis et vestris quilibet nostrum insolidum nos et omnia bona nostra habita et habenda.

Actum est hoc sexto idus iunii anno domini millesimo .ccc.<sup>o</sup> sextodecimo. Sig. Arnaldi de Corniliano Sig. Guilelmi de Costabella Sig. Bernardi Maciani Sig. Bernardi de Malvino predictorum qui hoc firmamus. Testes huius rei sunt Bartholomeus Martini, et Franciscus Guarnerii. Sig. Petri de Turri notarii publici Barchinone qui hoc scribi fecit et clausit cum litteris rasis et emendatis in linea .viii.<sup>a</sup> ubi dicitur duabus.

<sup>a</sup> *comanda* repeated in A.

<sup>b</sup> *ut* damaged in A.

<sup>c</sup> *t in* damaged in A.