CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information

# 1

# CONQUEST



FOR 380 years, from its conquest by King Richard I of England in May 1191 until the fall of Famagusta to the Turks in August 1571, Cyprus lay within the orbit of western European expansionism. A century before Richard's invasion, at the time of the First Crusade (1095–9), the Franks, or Latins as the occidentals were often known, had burst in spectacular fashion upon the lands around the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. Aflame with enthusiasm to wrest the Holy Places in Jerusalem from Muslim control, their determination reinforced by hope of salvation and lust for adventure, large numbers of knights and pilgrims had marched through Europe and Asia Minor and had conquered significant areas of Syria and the Holy Land. In their wake came settlers and merchants, and with their help the conquerors consolidated their hold on the territories they had occupied. But in 1187 the Muslims won back Jerusalem and most of the other western-held areas. Christian Europe responded with a new crusade, the Third. Among those who came to the East in this fresh expedition was King Richard the Lionheart, and in the course of his campaigns he added Cyprus to the lands under Latin rule.

In important respects Cyprus differed from the territories conquered during and after the First Crusade. The island had been a Byzantine province and so was won not from the Muslims but from Christian Greeks, and Cypriot society, although subject henceforth to western domination, remained largely Greek in culture, language and ritual. The crusaders' seizure of territory peopled by Christians under Christian rule and not under direct Muslim threat marked a new departure, and it was to be repeated on a far larger scale after the capture of Constantinople by the army of the Fourth Crusade in 1204. From 1192 a crusading family of Poitevin origin, the Lusignans, governed Cyprus. Their rule brought prosperity – at least until the economic collapse of the later fourteenth century – and saw the introduction of an array of European institutions and influences.

Although the Lusignan regime owed its origins to the crusaders, it far outlasted the crusading expeditions to the Holy Land. The Christian states in Syria and Palestine survived until 1291, though for most of the thirteenth century

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



the Muslims retained Jerusalem itself. During that time Cyprus became intimately linked to the mainland states by dynastic, military and commercial ties and so came to be involved in the crusades to the East and acquire a strategic role in the confrontation between western Christendom and Islam. Indeed, the early decades of Lusignan rule coincided with the apogee of crusading activity in the eastern Mediterranean. But as the thirteenth century progressed, the likelihood of recovering Jerusalem receded and obstacles to the launching of new crusades multiplied. The loss of Acre and the other Christian possessions in Syria in 1291 marked the end of an epoch. Cyprus was now the sole outpost of western Christendom in the eastern Mediterranean and had to find a way of living at peace with the Muslim rulers of the mainland coasts opposite and at the same time making the most of its commercial prosperity. True, talk of crusades and crusade projects continued well into the fourteenth century and beyond, but little was actually done. In the 1360s King Peter I of Cyprus took the initiative and embarked on a flurry of aggression against the Mamlūk sultanate, which for over a century had been ruling in Egypt, Syria and the Holy Land. His efforts, however, ended with his murder in 1369. Then in 1373–4 the Genoese invaded Cyprus. They seized Famagusta, the principal port, and placed the island under tribute. After that any further significant role for Cyprus in crusading history was out of the question. The island remained under Lusignan control until the 1470s and in 1489 was formally annexed by the Venetians. But by then the days of the crusades to the Holy Land were long past. It is with the years 1191–1374, when Cyprus was directly affected by the crusading movement, that this study is concerned.

To understand the background to Richard's conquest, we must consider both the earlier history of Cyprus and the changing fortunes of the crusader conquests in Syria. Comparatively little is known about the island between the seventh century and the end of the eleventh. Until 965, when the Byzantines took complete control, the Greeks and Arabs had ruled jointly in a condominium. At the time of the First Crusade Cyprus would seem to have been a backward province of little importance in which governors and prelates sent out from Constantinople lorded it over an indigenous population that was predominantly Greek-speaking but retained traces of its earlier contacts with the Arab world.[1] In the twelfth century, however, its fortunes revived, thanks partly to the economic stimulus provided by the creation of the Latin states in Syria and

[1] For the condominium, R. J. H. Jenkins, 'Cyprus between Byzantium and Islam, A. D. 688–965' in G. E. Mylonas (ed.), *Studies Presented to David Moore Robinson* (St Louis, 1951–3), II, 1006–14; P. Lemerle, 'Séance de clôture de la Section médiévale', *Πρακτικὰ τοῦ Πρώτου Διεθνοῦς Κυπρολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου*, II (Nicosia, 1972), 153–6. For Cyprus in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, C. Mango, 'Chypre carrefour du monde byzantin', *Rapports et co-rapports du XVe congrès international d'études byzantines*, V. *Chypre dans le monde byzantin*, part V (Athens, 1976).

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



Palestine. The successes of the First Crusade encouraged the Italian maritime republics to trade in the eastern Mediterranean, and Cyprus benefited from its position on the sea-routes from the West. In 1126 the Venetians obtained trading concessions in the island, and there was clearly a western European community resident in Limassol by the time Richard arrived in 1191.[2]

This revival of Cyprus was part of a wider pattern of Byzantine resurgence in the East which lasted until the 1170s. The First Crusade had helped make possible a partial recovery of Greek power in Anatolia, and in the middle years of the twelfth century the emperors John and Manuel Comnenus were able to consolidate their control of the south coast of Asia Minor and assert Byzantine suzerainty over the Latin principality of Antioch. Successive emperors shared the ambition of bringing the conquests of the crusaders within their sphere of influence, and they made use of Cyprus and Cypriot resources to obtain this end. But in the 1170s and 1180s the Byzantine position in the eastern Mediterranean declined radically. The Greek defeat at the hands of the Turks at Myriokephalon in 1176 was symptomatic of a more general malaise and signalled the effective end of Byzantine intervention in the Christian states in Syria and Palestine. The imperial fleet, which for much of the reign of Manuel Comnenus (1143–80) was frequently to be seen in the East, was allowed to decay to the extent that it could no longer even contain piracy in the Aegean. The consequent falling off of Greek influence was further aggravated by the political instability which reappeared in the empire after Manuel's death. Although Cyprus seems to have been prospering, the government in Constantinople now found it no longer had the ability to defend it.[3]

In 1184 Isaac Comnenus, a member of the imperial house, seized power in the island and had himself proclaimed emperor. A great-nephew of the emperor Manuel, Isaac had been governor in Cilicia in the mid-1170s and had then spent some time as a prisoner of the Cilician Armenians, who had taken control when Byzantine authority in the region collapsed. He was released in 1182. What happened next is obscure: according to the Greek historian Nicetas Choniates, he forged letters appointing himself governor of Cyprus, but Nicetas' self-evident hostility casts suspicion on his testimony, and it has been suggested that Isaac was legitimately appointed to the office by the regents for the young

[2] *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, ed. G. L. F. Tafel and G. M. Thomas (Vienna, 1856–7), I, 124. For twelfth-century Venetian interests in Cyprus, *Documenti del commercio veneziano nei secoli XI–XIII*, ed. R. Morozzo della Rocca and A. Lombardo (Rome/Turin, 1940), nos. 74, 82. For 1191, 'L'estoire de Eracles empereur', *RHC Oc.*, II, 164.

[3] J. L. La Monte, 'To What Extent was the Byzantine Empire the Suzerain of the Crusading States?', *Byzantion*, VII (1932); H. Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer: la marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VIIe–XVe siècles* (Paris, 1966), pp. 234–7, 268–9, 288–92; C. M. Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West, 1180–1204* (Cambridge, Mass., 1968), chapters 1–4 *passim*.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



Alexius II in about 1183 and then rebelled after Andronicus Comnenus' *coup d'état* towards the end of that year. For support Isaac turned to the Sicilians whose invasion of the Byzantine empire in 1185 precipitated Andronicus' overthrow. In 1187 the Sicilian admiral and freebooter, Margaritone, defeated the galleys sent by the new emperor, Isaac II Angelus, to recover Cyprus. For the time being Isaac Comnenus was secure in his possession of the island, but, with the departure of Margaritone's fleet from the East in 1188 and the death of King William II of Sicily the following year, he was bereft of his one ally.[4]

The 1170s and 1180s also witnessed the almost total collapse of the Latin states in the East. In the 1160s the forces of the kingdom of Jerusalem under King Amaury had been able to take the offensive and invade Egypt in the hope of bringing it under Christian control, while further north in Syria, although Edessa had been lost in the 1140s and Muslim pressure had gradually eroded the frontiers of the principality of Antioch and the county of Tripoli, the situation was essentially stable. But Muslim unity and Christian disunity combined to lead to a complete reversal of this state of affairs. In 1174 Saladin, who had been ruling in Egypt since 1169, gained possession of Damascus, and in 1183 he added Aleppo to his rule. He was now master of all the lands surrounding the Christian possessions. Never before had the Latins found themselves confronted by a single Muslim ruler controlling all the territory beyond their own borders, and after Amaury's death in 1174 weak government and divisions among the nobility left the kingdom of Jerusalem without a consistent policy to combat the threat thus posed. In July 1187 Saladin invaded Galilee and, thanks largely to the Christian leaders' mutual distrust and indecision, was able to outmanoeuvre and overwhelm the forces of the Latin kingdom at the battle of Hattin. The king of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, was taken captive together with a number of other prominent figures. The victorious Muslim army then proceeded to occupy almost all the Holy Land including Jerusalem itself without serious opposition. Apart from Tripoli and Antioch, the only major city to remain in Christian hands was Tyre, saved by the timely arrival of an able and well-connected nobleman from northern Italy, Conrad of Montferrat. Guy was released in 1188, but Conrad, who had ambitions of his own, refused to let him enter Tyre. In August 1189, undaunted by this rebuff and aided by men who had remained loyal, Guy began to besiege Acre, an important port which had fallen to the Muslims in 1187 without a blow being struck. Meanwhile Europe, led by the western emperor, Frederick Barbarossa, and by the kings of France and England,

[4] For Isaac, W. H. Rudt de Collenberg, 'L'empereur Isaac de Chypre et sa fille (1155–1207)', *Byzantion*, XXXVIII (1968). For Margaritone, B. Lavagnini, 'I Normanni di Sicilia a Cipro e a Patmo (1186)', *Byzantino-Sicula*, II (1974) (= *Miscellanea G. Rossi Taibbi*); E. Vranoussi, 'A propos des opérations des Normandes dans la mer Égée et à Chypre après la prise de Thessalonique (1186–6)', *Byzantina*, VIII (1976); Brand, *Byzantium Confronts the West*, p. 172.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



had responded well, if rather slowly, to the appeal for a new crusade to recover the Christian Holy Places and re-establish the kingdom of Jerusalem.

The story of the Third Crusade (1189–92) has been frequently retold. Richard had taken the Cross as early as November 1187, but a series of dynastic quarrels in the period leading up to his accession to the English throne on the death of his father in July 1189 delayed his start.[5] In July 1190 he was ready to depart, and an advance party led by the archbishop of Canterbury duly arrived in Tyre in mid-September. The king was expected to arrive later that same autumn.[6] However, neither Richard nor King Philip Augustus of France, who had set off on crusade at the same time, managed to progress any further than Sicily. Richard, moving by easy stages, reached Messina towards the end of September, and there he found a situation that demanded his intervention. His sister Joanna was the widow of King William II who had died ten months earlier. William had had no children, and the new ruler of Sicily, his illegitimate kinsman Tancred of Lecce, had imprisoned her, withheld her dowry and impounded the legacy William had left to Richard's father, Henry II. By means of a series of high-handed actions Richard was able to exploit the precarious nature of Tancred's regime to force him to release Joanna and offer generous terms by way of compensation for his misdeeds. The affair ended with Tancred securing Richard's support against his rival, the Hohenstaufen emperor Henry VI. But these manoeuvrings took time, and final agreement between the two rulers was not reached until the season was too far advanced for a safe crossing to Palestine. The English and French crusaders therefore spent the winter in Sicily re-equipping their ships. It was not until 10 April 1191 that Richard's forces could resume their journey. Even then the fleet was caught in a storm. On 22 April Richard arrived at Rhodes where he fell ill, and, when on 1 May he set off again, it was only to run into more bad weather.[7]

Richard described what happened next in a letter dated 6 August:

> . . . as we were continuing our pilgrimage journey, we were diverted to Cyprus where we hoped to find the refuge of those of our number who had been

[5] For Richard's preparations, J. Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart* (London, 1978), pp. 110–42 *passim*.

[6] 'Epistolae Cantuarienses', ed. W. Stubbs in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I* (RS 38, 1864–5), II, 328.

[7] For Richard in Sicily, Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, pp. 143–63. Also L. Landon, *The Itinerary of King Richard I* (Pipe Roll Society NS 13, 1935), pp. 40–8. For the journey from Sicily, Ambroise, *L'estoire de la guerre sainte*, ed. G. Paris (Paris, 1897), lines 1169–1354; 'Itinerarium Peregrinorum et Gesta Regis Ricardi', ed. W. Stubbs in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I* (RS 38, 1864–5), I, 176–81; *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi Benedicti Abbatis*, ed. W. Stubbs (RS 49, 1869), II, 162–3; Richard of Devizes, *Cronicon de Tempore Regis Richardi Primi* ed. J. T. Appleby (London, 1963), p. 35.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



> shipwrecked. But the tyrant [Isaac Comnenus] . . . hurriedly brought a strongly armed force to bar us from the port. He robbed and despoiled as many as possible of our men who had suffered wreck and imprisoned those dying of hunger. Not unnaturally we were spurred to revenge. We did battle with our enemy and, thanks to divine assistance, obtained a speedy victory. Defeated and fettered, we hold him together with his only daughter. We have subjected to ourselves the whole island of Cyprus with all its strong points . . . [8]

The narrative sources for the crusade, while not always in agreement with one another, enlarge on this summary. It would appear that in the storm that struck the fleet before it reached Rhodes, a few ships were separated and ran on before the gales to Cyprus where three were wrecked. The survivors were imprisoned and maltreated on Isaac's orders, a Frankish-Syrian writer preserving a seemingly fictitious account of how his intention to kill them was foiled by the self-sacrifice of a Norman mercenary in his service.[9] Next to arrive at Cyprus was a ship bearing Richard's sister, Joanna, and his bride-to-be, Berengaria of Navarre. It anchored off Limassol, and there Isaac gave further evidence of his ill-will by trying to entice the women ashore.[10] Perhaps his intention was to hold them as hostages against the eventuality of Richard attacking the island. On the evening of 5 May Richard, with the main part of his storm-tossed fleet, rejoined Joanna and Berengaria. On learning of Isaac's depredations, he resolved to take reprisals, and on the following day he landed near Limassol.

We have conflicting reports about the course of events during the next few weeks, but the following reconstruction provides an idea of the likely sequence. Isaac made some attempt to oppose the landing, but his forces were brushed aside and Richard entered Limassol. The king then defeated the Cypriots in a skirmish nearby – one source identifying the location as Kolossi – and Isaac withdrew.[11] Richard returned to Limassol where on 12 May his marriage to Berengaria was solemnized. At this point Isaac came to offer terms on the basis that he himself would serve with Richard in Palestine. Richard, whose presence at the siege of Acre was urgently awaited, seems to have been prepared to accept such an agreement, but evidently Isaac was not in earnest or had second thoughts, because no sooner had the settlement been reached than he fled.[12] It appears to have been this incident which led Richard to embark on the total

[8] 'Epistolae Cantuarienses' p. 347.

[9] 'Itinerarium', pp. 183–6; *Gesta Regis*, II, 162–3; *La continuation de Guillaume de Tyr (1184–1197)*, ed. M. R. Morgan (Paris, 1982), pp. 115, 117 (for the Norman).

[10] 'Itinerarium', pp. 182, 186–8; *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, pp. 113, 115.

[11] Ambroise, lines 1449–1700; 'Itinerarium', pp. 189–94; *Gesta Regis*, II, 163–4; *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, pp. 117, 119; 'Eracles', pp. 163–4; *Chronica Monasterii de Melsa*, ed. E. A. Bond (RS 43, 1866–8), I, 257–8.

[12] Ambroise, lines 1735–1850; 'Itinerarium', pp. 196–9; *Gesta Regis*, II, 164–7; 'Eracles', pp. 164–7; *Melsa*, I, 258. 'Eracles' and the *Gesta Regis* place Richard's marriage after the abortive negotiations with Isaac. For a further reason for Isaac's continued resistance, see below, p. 27.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



subjugation of the island. He had his fleet sail round the coast to Kiti or Famagusta – again the sources differ – and he then moved inland towards Nicosia.[13] At the village of Tremetousha Isaac's forces were again defeated. Resistance was at an end. Richard occupied Nicosia and Kyrenia where he captured Isaac's daughter. At the end of May Isaac, who is variously said to have taken refuge in the castles of Buffavento or Kantara or at Cape St Andreas, surrendered. The island was now entirely in Richard's hands, the sources, for once in almost total agreement, recording the curious detail that Isaac was held in chains made of silver because Richard had promised not to put him in irons.[14]

Exactly a month after his arrival, on 5 June, Richard left Cyprus for Palestine. Less than six weeks later the Muslim garrison in Acre, which had withstood siege for almost two years, capitulated. The Christian forces were now able to extend their control to other areas of the Holy Land, but Saladin was far from beaten. Eventually in September 1192 a truce to last three years and eight months was agreed. By its terms the Christians were to hold the coastal strip from Tyre in the north to Jaffa in the south but not Jerusalem or the other inland areas. Richard had taken a leading part in the campaigns of 1191 and 1192. His departure for Europe in October 1192 marked the end of the crusade.

The sixteen months during which Richard was active in the Holy Land were crucial for Cyprus. Once his conquest was complete, he left the island in the custody of two of his men, Richard of Camville and Robert of Thornham, and appointed castellans. However, the precise nature of his dispositions is unclear. One writer asserted that Richard established a Greek as the titular ruler and associated Robert of Thornham with him to look after the royal interests and subject Cyprus to this new puppet government. But although Robert of Thornham was able to quell a rebellion led by a monk said to be one of Isaac's relatives, the king's arrangements proved short-lived.[15] Within a few weeks of his departure and before the fall of Acre, Richard sold his rights in the island to the Templars. A period of Templar domination then ensued, lasting until April 1192. It was rapacious and unpopular, and the Order sent insufficient troops to keep the populace under control. On 4 April, the day before Easter Sunday, the

[13] Ambroise, lines 1851–1878; 'Itinerarium', pp. 199–200 (Famagusta); *Gesta Regis*, II, 166; 'Eracles', p. 167 (Kiti).

[14] Ambroise, lines 1908–2092; 'Itinerarium', pp. 200–4 (Isaac took refuge at Kantara); *Gesta Regis*, II, 167 (Isaac at Cape St Andreas); *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, pp. 119, 121; 'Eracles', pp. 168–9 (Isaac captured at Buffavento); *Melsa*, I, 258–9 (Isaac took refuge at Buffavento, then fled to St Andreas). For further discussion, Hill, I, 317–20.

[15] *Gesta Regis*, II, 167, 172–3; cf. *Melsa*, I, 258–60. The Melsa Chronicle (from Meaux Abbey Yorkshire) is a fourteenth-century compilation which had generally been ignored by historians of Richard's crusades. Robert of Thornham's family, however, were associated with the abbey, and so the chronicler may have had access to a reliable tradition. See the editor's preface, I, pp. xxviii–xxxi. Richard of Camville soon died. *Gesta Regis*, II, 172.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



Cypriots in Nicosia attempted to rise and massacre the garrison. The small force of Templars in the town made a sally and cut down a substantial number of the insurgents. Although this incident might have appeared as a victory, the master evidently decided that Cyprus was more than the resources at his Order's disposal could manage and surrendered the island to Richard. Richard promptly sold it again, this time to Guy of Lusignan, on terms similar to those by which the Templars had held it.[16]

The sale of Cyprus to Guy of Lusignan marked the beginning of the Latin regime which was to continue for three centuries. The creation of such a regime, however, had formed no part of Richard's programme. The king was concerned only with the immediate demands of the crusade, not with the long-term future of the island. Almost certainly his initial intention in forcing a landing at Limassol was revenge – reprisals for Isaac's treatment of the shipwrecked crusaders and his attempt to capture Joanna and Berengaria. Some chronicles, by way of providing futher justification for the invasion, alleged that Isaac's hatred of the Latins extended to an alliance with Saladin.[17] This claim was probably baseless, but even if it had been believed at the time it would probably have made no difference to Richard's course of action. However, once he had landed in Cyprus, Richard must have recognized the island's potential as a supply-base. Large quantities of money and provisions were essential for a successful campaign, and, although he had gone to considerable trouble to raise enough funds before he set out, the long delay in Sicily would have used up a sizeable proportion of his resources. In his negotiations with Richard Isaac Comnenus offered cash, supplies and men. The king had already gained much booty and was later to seize Isaac's treasury at Kyrenia. The narratives agree that when he left Cyprus he took with him an immense quantity of plundered valuables.[18]

Richard's policy, however, was not to destroy the existing institutions, but to exploit them; until the breakdown of the negotiations he had been prepared to

[16] *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, pp. 135, 137, 139; 'Eracles', pp. 189–91 (indicating that the sale to the Templars took place before the fall of Acre, 12 July 1191); *Chronique d'Ernoul et de Bernard le Trésorier*, ed. L. de Mas Latrie (Paris, 1871), pp. 285–6 (establishing the date of the rebellion); Ambroise, lines 9103–9126; 'Itinerarium', p. 351.

[17] Ambroise, lines 1389–1394; 'Itinerarium', p. 183. For a discussion of the possibility that Richard's invasion may have been premeditated, J. A. Brundage, 'Richard the Lion-Heart and Byzantium', *Studies in Medieval Culture*, VI/VII (1976). Cf. J. O. Prestwich, 'Richard Coeur de Lion: *Rex Bellicosus*' in *Riccardo Cuor di Leone nella storia e nella leggenda* (Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei, quaderno 253, 1981), pp. 8–9.

[18] Ambroise, lines 1667–1700, 1777–1782, 2065–2092; 'Itinerarium', pp. 193–4, 198, 202, 203–4; *Gesta Regis*, II, 164, 166; *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, p. 119; 'Eracles', pp. 166, 169; Arnold of Lübeck, 'Chronica', *MGHS*, XXI, 178; 'Imād al-Dīn al-Iṣfahānī, *Conquête de la Syrie et de la Palestine par Saladin*, trans. H. Massé (Paris, 1972), p. 292; Neophytus, *Περὶ τῶν κατὰ χώραν Κύπρου σκαιῶν*, ed. W. Stubbs in *Chronicles and Memorials of the Reign of Richard I* (RS 38, 1864–5), I, p. clxxxvii.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



leave Isaac in control; on his departure he may have attempted to establish a Greek government under English tutelage; Roger of Howden reported that he granted a charter confirming the laws as they had been in the days of the emperor Manuel Comnenus in exchange for a levy of a half of all the possessions owned by Cypriots.[19] Initially Richard's officers in Cyprus were to forward provisions from the island to the English crusaders in Palestine, but the king very soon changed his policy and, treating Cyprus as a marketable asset, sold it to the Templars for 100,000 Saracen bezants; 40,000 were handed over at once, the balance was to be paid out of the revenues from the Order's new acquisition.[20] When in April 1192 the Templars surrendered Cyprus, it seems that Richard was able to profit from his conquest yet again. According to the most authoritative account, Richard refused to refund the Templars' original payment and, in selling the island to Guy of Lusignan, received a further 60,000 bezants. Guy, however, never paid the additional 40,000 bezants he still owed.[21] Even so, Richard had done well out of Cyprus: the island must have borne a significant proportion of the costs of his warfare in Palestine.

Richard had taken less than a month to defeat Isaac. There can be no question that tactically the English forces were superior. Isaac would have had the advantage of familiarity with the terrain, but he evidently possessed no fortified positions which were garrisoned and provisioned to withstand a siege: the possibility of his waging a defensive campaign in the hope that Richard would give up and go on to Palestine did not arise. It is also clear that Isaac did not enjoy the full support of his subjects: possibly the Armenian troops in his service were a source of friction;[22] the contemporary Greek recluse, Neophytus, roundly condemned him as a tyrant;[23] an English account noted that after his capture Isaac did not even suggest the possibility that he might be ransomed,[24] and it is doubtless significant that at an early stage in the invasion a group of Greek notables made their own peace with King Richard. Apparently the noble families from Constantinople who, it has been suggested, formed the ascendant element in Cypriot society failed to give Isaac the aid necessary to resist the catastrophe that confronted them.[25]

[19] *Gesta Regis*, II, 168.
[20] Ambroise, lines 2101–7; 'Itinerarium', pp. 204, 212; 'Eracles', pp. 189–90.
[21] *Cont. Guillaume de Tyr*, pp. 137, 139. 'Eracles' (p. 191) seems to indicate that Guy gave the Templars 40,000 bezants to compensate for their payment to Richard, but *Ernoul* (p. 286) confirms that Guy bought the island from Richard. For the superiority of the *Continuation* over 'Eracles', M. R. Morgan, *The Chronicle of Ernoul and the Continuations of William of Tyre* (Oxford, 1973). Note, however, that the latter part of the account of Richard's conquest of Cyprus in 'Eracles' (pp. 163–70) is fuller than in the text of the *Continuation* (pp. 119, 121) and contains a number of details which it lacks.
[22] Ambroise, lines 1552, 1650, 1691; *Gesta Regis*, II, 164, 166, 172.
[23] Neophytus, p. clxxxvii. [24] *Melsa*, I, 259; Neophytus, pp. clxxxv, clxxxvii.
[25] *Gesta Regis*, II, 164–5. See Mango, 'Chypre', pp. 7–9.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-45837-5 - The Kingdom of Cyprus and the Crusades, 1191-1374
Peter W. Edbury
Excerpt
More information



The conquest proved durable. After the rising against the Templars in April 1192 no more is heard of Greek insurgents for nearly two centuries. It was not until 1570–1 that another foreign army conquered the whole island, although Cyprus suffered badly at the hands of the Genoese in the 1370s and the Mamlūks in the 1420s. However, Richard's victory left a series of claimants in its wake. King Philip of France asserted his right to a half-share in the island on the grounds that he and Richard had agreed to divide between them whatever conquests they might make during the crusade. This contention was firmly rejected.[26] Isaac's family too were to assert their claim. Isaac himself seems to have made no attempt to recover Cyprus; he was held in prison in the Hospitaller castle of Marqab in northern Syria until his release in 1193 or 1194 and died about 1195, supposedly by poison while trying to incite the sultan of Konya against Byzantium. His daughter was taken to Europe by Joanna and Berengaria, and she eventually married Thierry, an illegitimate son of Count Philip of Flanders. A decade after Richard's conquest of Cyprus, Thierry joined the Fourth Crusade and then attached himself to one of the groups which left the main army to travel to Syria. In 1203 he arrived in Cyprus on his way east. He came before the then ruler, Aimery of Lusignan, and demanded the island by right of his wife. He was curtly told to leave.[27] Another claimant who apparently derived his rights from Isaac was Duke Leopold VI of Austria. During the Third Crusade Leopold's father, Leopold V, had quarrelled with King Richard and had then made the king his prisoner when he returned to the West late in 1192. Leopold V was Isaac's second cousin, and Richard's treatment of Isaac was among the charges he levelled against him. We only learn of Leopold VI's claim, which he must have made during his participation in the Fifth Crusade in 1217–19, from a remark later attributed to John of Ibelin, lord of Beirut. John is said to have reminded the young King Henry I of Cyprus that he and his family had thwarted the duke's attempt to disinherit him while Henry was a minor.[28]

Not unnaturally the authorities in Constantinople wanted to recover Cyprus. Isaac II Angelus (1185–95) had already dispatched a fleet for this purpose in 1187, but it was defeated by Isaac Comnenus' ally Margaritone. A Byzantine embassy destined for Cyprus in 1192 came to a premature end when the ship

[26] *Gesta Regis*, II, 171, 183. Cf. *Die Register Innocenz' III*, ed. O. Hagender and A. Haidacher (Graz/Cologne, 1964–), I, 327–8.

[27] For Isaac's death and his daughter's marriage, Rudt de Collenberg, 'L'empereur Isaac', pp. 154–5, 169–72. For Thierry and Aimery, 'Eracles', pp. 256–7.

[28] For Richard's quarrel and imprisonment, Gillingham, *Richard the Lionheart*, pp. 176–8, 221–5. For Leopold and Isaac, Rudt de Collenberg, 'L'empereur Isaac', pp. 128–9 and table facing p. 128. More generally, H. Fichtenau, 'Akkon, Zypern und das Lösengeld für Richard Löwenherz', *Archiv für österreichische Geschichte*, CXXV (1966). For Leopold VI, 'Les Gestes de Chiprois', *RHC Arm.*, II, 702. For a possible allusion to his claim in a papal letter of July 1218, L. de Mas Latrie, *Histoire de l'île de Chypre sous le règne des princes de la maison de Lusignan* (Paris, 1852–61), III, 610–11.

© Cambridge University Press www.cambridge.org