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THE TURKS WITH THE GRAND CATALAN COMPANY, 1305 - 1312

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The campaigns of a band of Spanish mercenary soldiers, under the terrifying Roger de Flor, in the Byzantine lands of the early fourteenth century are fully documented by medieval and contemporary historians.¹ Less well known is the story of their former enemies, the Turks, who joined the Grand Catalan Company in 1305 and shared its fortunes for six years until they decided to leave their Latin comrades, who had settled in Athens, and to return to Anatolia.

Francisco de Moncada, a Catalan statesman, undertook to describe this unlikely joint enterprise in his *Expedición de los catalanes y aragoneses contra los turcos y griegos*, published in Barcelona in 1620.² In this history, based on research in the reports of Pachymeres, Nikephoros Gregoras, John Cantacuzene, Ramon Muntaner, and other contemporaries to the events, Moncada intended to glorify the remarkable deeds of his ancestors in the Company. He is, of course, biased for them, but able to criticize objectively their barbaric depredations around the Eastern Mediterranean, observing, for example, that "they habitually lived with dissipation and ignored the laws of orderly people."³ The book is a minor masterpiece of Spanish literature and significant in the genre of the literary chronicle in the Western tradition.

Roger de Flor and his army of 6000 men had arrived at the Blachernae Palace on the Golden Horn in September of 1303 to enter the employ of Emperor Andronikos II Palaeologus. For two years they had been deployed in the Aegean provinces of Asia Minor to do battle against Turkish chieftains in such cities as Magnesia (Manisa), Philadelphia (Alaşehir), and Tire. They penetrated as far east as Kula⁴ against Karasi and the Ottomans before returning to winter quarters at Cyzicus (Erdek) on the peninsula in the Sea of Marmara. There they got into scuffle with another group of the Emperor's hired soldiers: the Alans, or Massagetes, a nomadic people from the Caspian Sea area. In the fracas, the son of Girkon, the Alanic chief, was killed. The consequences of that incident were to occur several months later on April 5, 1305, in Adrianople, now Edirne.

Michael IX Palaeologus, son of and co-emperor of Byzantium with Andronikos II, had his court established in that ancient city near the European frontier of the empire. Assembled there with him were tribes known as the Romanics under their primiserio, Casiano; Girkon and his Alans; and a company of Christian Turkes with their leader,

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Basila the Bulgar, and the chief, Melek.⁵ Roger, summoned to confer with Michael and the other forces on the defense of Greek territory, reported in with 200 to 300 knights, a proud warrior in the splendor of his reputation at the age of thirty-seven, already titled *caesar*⁶ in the empire and married to Andronikos's niece. The feasting and talks went on for days, while Girkon watched his opportunity for vengeance. At last at a banquet he attacked Roger savagely, cutting off his head, while his Alans ranged through the city, killing and mangling any Spaniards they came across.⁷ Neither Duke Casiano's Etruscan Company nor the Turks under Melek, however, entered the fray.

In the weeks after Roger's death, the remaining members of the Catalan Company at their headquarters at Gallipoli (Gelibolu) went through an agonizing period. They despatched three envoys to Andronikos to demand wages that were in arrears, but the emperor refused payment on the grounds that their outrages against Greek citizens outweighed their services. When the Catalans turned to extracting their sustenance from the countryside, the Greek populace rose against them all over the empire, and Michael ordered out his *primiserio* with the main body of the army to besiege Gallipoli. When the garrison remaining in the fortifications heard the commotion below in the town's lowlands and the outlying lodgings, some of them believed that the Turks of Anatolia had crossed the sea and were attacking them. But before Michael's forces, an army of 3,000 foot soldiers and 14,000 mounted men comprised of Greeks, Alans, and the converted Turks, were moving, the Catalans massacred all of their neighbors at Gallipoli.

Then, realizing that they had little opportunity against such overwhelming punishment as marched toward them, the Company once again sent out ambassadors to Andronikos, this time challenging him 100 men to 100 for combat, or ten to ten, in true chivalric style. Andronikos assured the envoys that he and his son were not responsible for the Alans' attacks on their people. He admitted, however, that the emperors had subsequently ordered the deaths of their admiral, Fernando Aonés, and all his men of the four Catalan galleys that had recently transported Roger de Flor's Greek wife, Maria, with her mother and brothers of the imperial family back to Constantinople. In an appropriate gesture, Andronikos assigned a guard to accompany the messengers on their road of return down the peninsula. But the party reached only as far as Rhodosto, now Tekirdağ, before the escort turned back and the envoys were imprisoned by the inhabitants in the public slaughter house.

In the Catalan Company, meanwhile, another crisis was occurring that would have greater effect on the Turkish contingent that was then considering joining forces with its former enemies. A power struggle developed between the two major contenders for the leadership vacant at Roger's death: Berenguer de Entenza, an eminent knight from a princely Catalan family, and Berenguer de Rocafort, Roger's trusted seneschal and chosen son-in-law. They now argued over the course the Company should take for its preservation in this distress. Entenza counselled separating into raiding parties to seek supplies; Rocafort insisted that they must not divide forces while they were so weak, but go out together to meet the imperial army. The latter was the most popular plan among the men, but Entenza refused to concede and prepared to set sail with his followers.

At this juncture a third potential leader unexpectedly appeared: Prince Sancho of the royal House of Aragon, the natural rulers of the Spaniards. Coming from Sicily,



D.^r FRANCISCO DE MONGADA

which was then ruled by King Fadrique of Aragon,⁸ he was quickly recognized by the contentious Catalans as their chief. But his service with them was short-lived. Before the threatening Greek army could reach Gallipoli, or Entenza could embark with his flotilla of five galleys, two caravels, and sixteen boats to sack the towns along the Marmara coast, Sancho suddenly abandoned the Catalans. He probably realized that he was in an untenable position in taking part in a rebellion against allies of the Aragon-Cataluña dynasty. At any rate, Entenza wrote to King Jaime II of Aragon, Sancho's uncle and the most powerful reigning monarch of the house, to complain of the prince's defection. Shortly afterward Entenza himself was forcibly separated from the Catalan Company when he was taken prisoner through treachery by the Genoese sea captain, Eduardo d'Oria. Although the two noblemen had been on friendly terms, one can suppose that the Italian could not resist the opportunity to seize such a valuable captive when he came within his power. Although treated with the courtesy due his rank, Entenza was taken to the Genoese enclave at Pera, where Andronikos was informed of the prize. The emperor eagerly undertook to purchase his former retainer, sending a large shipment of money that was demanded for the ransom. But the canny Genoese carefully weighed the coins, found their metal short of the claimed value, and returned them to the disappointed ruler. Next, they informed the Catalans of the location of their captain, at which Muntaner responded immediately by meeting the Genoese at the southern mouth of the Bosphorus to discuss terms. But the captors found the amount that the quartermaster had to offer insufficient and sailed off to their settlement at Trebizond (Trabzon) on the Black Sea, where Entenza could be more safely guarded.

Meanwhile, the remaining Catalans at Gallipoli, now under the effective leadership of Rocafort, withstood the onslaught of the Greek army under Calo John, the oldest son of Andronikos and Irene of Montferrat. The attackers were beaten back on May 31, almost two months after Roger de Flor's death. In their desperate situation, the survivors of the Company wrangled over their alternatives. Finally they reorganized their government, electing twelve counsellors to confer with Rocafort and resolving to follow his continued urging to go out into the field against their enemies. With grim determination, 1500 soldiers and horsemen scuttled their ships against any defections and marched out on Saturday, June 21, to meet Calo John's forces where they were camped about two miles away near Brachialium on the north side of the peninsula. In a violent encounter involving perhaps 40,000 men, the Catalans were decisively victorious, suffering remarkably few casualties.⁹ It is at this point in the history of the Company that the destinies of the Catalan mercenaries and the Turkish tribesmen already in Thrace were conjoined.

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Several bands of Turkish mercenaries had been employed by Emperor Michael VIII Palaeologus, father of Andronikos, who early recognized the fighting capabilities of these fierce nomads from Asia Minor. He sent them into the Peloponesian peninsula in the thirteenth century to head off the Latin invaders who were headed inexorably for his capital. But as so often happened with hired combatants, they deserted him for a better offer from a Frankish prince there in the area. Their descendants were settled among the Greek inhabitants when Andronikos signed on more tribesmen to serve in his dwindled empire at the beginning of the fourteenth century. These Turks, most Moslem but some converted to Christianity for the sake of convenience in the Greek territory,



watched with wonder the exploits of those new Latins, the Catalans, whose reputation as the fiercest warriors in the Middle East was rivaling their own. After the defeat of, Calo John's army, they heard reports that the victors were on their way to Adrianople to confront Emperor Michael's forces, including five squadrons of Alans and converted Turks under Basila. The defending army sallied forth under the command of the emperor's kinsmen, Theodore and Senancarip Angelo, with Michael himself in the rearguard.

But at the trumpet blast for battle, the Alans and Turks stood aside from the first charge, declining to support Andronikos against the Catalans. There is some disagreement about whether they defected before or after the command to attack, but Moncada concurs with Nikephorus that there was a prior arrangement with the enemy. At any event, the Greeks retreated to Apros without pursuit until the next day when the Catalans returned to take the stronghold after vast slaughter. Michael escaped from Apros, however, though thousands of his soldiers did not, and found refuge with his father at Didymoteikhon. From then on the Catalans, augmented by Italian, French, and Spanish soldiers of fortune who were drawn to their base at Gallipoli, raged through Greek provinces almost unresisted for five years.

In 1309 there was again a movement of understanding between the Christian Turks and the Catalans. The Company, implacable in its desire for revenge upon the Alanic tribesmen for their attacks at the time Roger de Flor was killed, were moving up the Bosphorus and into the Black Sea. They went in quest of Girkon's Alans from the imperial army, who had left the service and were living their nomadic life in the area of Mount Hermos on the Greek-Bulgarian border. Nikephoros claims that the Catalans tried to persuade the Turks to join them on this expedition on the ground that they also had a grievance against the Alans, who had not been fair in their division of spoils with the Turks in their past campaigns together. Ramon Muntaner of the Catalans maintains that the Turks willingly went along out of simple admiration for the Catalans.¹⁰ Moncada reports that, at any rate, the Turks informed the Catalans of the Alans' movements. After the Catalans caught up with their quarry, killed Girkon, and massacred most of his followers, many of the Turks joined the Company. A few weeks later the rest of them, under their captain, Melek, formally left the employ of Andronikos and committed themselves to Rocafort.

Meanwhile, since the departure of Roger de Flor from Asia Minor, the Turks had continued their rapid erosion of the Byzantine Empire. By 1306 they were absolute masters of the east side of the Bosphorus, the Greeks having abandoned all efforts to defend their holdings in the Aegean provinces. The Turks began to look toward Europe, but lacked the ships to make their entrance. Consequently, they sent envoys to Gallipoli to suggest a treaty. The Catalans were not displeased by this approach from the former enemies they had fought so energetically about six years earlier; they sent back the ambassadors in an armed frigate to convey Himeliş with ten advisors for the conclusion of the agreement. According to the contract, 800 mounted and 2000 foot soldiers pledged oath of fidelity to the Catalan general in return for a guarantee of separate quarters for the Turkish families; half the amount of spoils allotted to Catalan soldiers; and the freedom to return to their homeland without hindrance whenever they chose to depart. They were accepted by common consent of the members of the Company, who took oath for their stated rights.

By this time the Catalans had been in Thrace for almost seven years, during which period they had stripped it of all available food supply and so terrorized the farmers that little cultivation was undertaken. Consequently, all the factions of the Company, in-



cluding the Turks, agreed that they must move to another province to find sustenance. they decided to head for Macedonia and asked Prince Fernando, who had not dared

Himeliş returned through the Straits to prepare his people for the Catalan galleys that would bear them across with all their possessions. Moncada speculates on varying reports of the date and number of persons involved in this transfer; according to some sources, 500 Turks joined the Company before the defeat of Emperor Michael at Apros; another said that Entenza had enlisted 1500 horsemen before he was taken prisoner. Moncada points out that the Turks came in not long after the contingent of about 1000 Christian Turks, rebels against Andronikos, had come into the army under the same contract conditions, but with somewhat more privileges because of the religion they shared with their new comrades.¹¹ All of these new recruits recognized Rocafort as the chief of the Company, which was now greatly increased. It as a loyalty that was not to waver.

But within a few months after the improvement of their prospects, the Catalans were again wracked by a crisis of leadership. Entenza was finally freed from his Genoese prison through the efforts of his native sovereign, King Jaime. To save face in the investigation of the incident, Entenza's abductor, Eduardo d'Oria, claimed that he had been forced by his mutinous crewmen to perform the outrage. In return for his compliance with the king's desire and his lost opportunity for ransom, the Genoese begged Jaime to order his subjects of the Catalan Company to get rid of their new comrades, the Turks, who were deeply feared by the Latins of the Levant. He also suggest that it would be helpful if the Catalans could be persuaded to leave Thrace, where the Genoese had established most of their trade routes and contacts. Jaime agreed to undertake these results, on the condition that Entenza be recompensed for all the ships and possessions he had lost during the imprisonment. But this restoration was never accomplished; Entenza was forced return to Catalunña and to sell some of his family holdings there in order to collect and equip 500 men and one large vessel for the return to Gallipoli. His loyalty to and sacrifice for the Company was not appreciated, however, by Rocafort, who was now firmly entrenched as the leader. In the subsequent struggle over the command, the Company was split into two groups.

Fernan Jiménez de Arenos, an Aragonese nobleman among the Catalan knights, took his followers to Entenza's side, while all the Turks stayed with Rocafort. They removed to a new camp at Nona on the Thracian coast about seventy miles northwest of Gallipoli, while Entenza's faction remained at Megarix, thirty miles to the east on the same shore. Muntaner continued to be in charge at Gallipoli, guarding the possessions and keeping the accounts, as well as the confidence, of all the Company. Suddenly, as had happened before in a similar impasse over the leadership, another scion of the House of Aragon appeared at Gallipoli with four galleys. This was Fernando, the younger brother of Prince Sancho, who had come at the behest of their uncle, King Fadrique of Sicily, six years earlier. Entenza and Jiménez de Arenos received him happily, but Rocafort sent his regrets to the ceremonies in the prince's honor. Fernando, therefore, started off for the Nona outpost to visit him. With an uncharacteristically subtle approach, Rocafort persuaded his own men not to accept Fernando as a representative for Fadrique, pointing out that the king had done nothing to save them from their desperate plight when they had asked him for aid in 1305. He suggested that it would be to the advantage of the Company to have a royal chief of their own, who was not simply a stand in for a distant sovereign with other affairs uppermost in his mind. The Turks of his faction backed him completely, relying on his demonstrated abilities as a captain and not understanding the complicated politics of the Spaniards.



to accept Rocafort's attractive offer to repudiate his uncle in his own behalf, to remain with them until they had gained a satisfactory foothold elsewhere. Rocafort departed first on the migration westward along the coast with his Turks and Almugavars,¹² followed a day later by Entenza and the prince. They traveled this way in order to keep the antagonistic groups apart, but a disastrous accident occurred within a few days. Entenza's group, which had risen early to move before the heat of the day, unintentionally overtook Rocafort, whose followers had delayed to harvest fruit at their camp site. A scuffle resulted from mutual suspicion upon finding themselves on the trail together, during which Rocafort's brother killed the unarmed Entenza. When Fernan Jiménez de Arenos, coming up behind with his small band of men, realized what had happened, he left immediately to surrender to the Greeks in a nearby castle. It was a prescient response to the dangerous situation, because Rocafort's aroused men killed every one of Entenza's faction except the prince himself. Arenos, on the other hand, eventually returned to the service of Andronikos, married the emperor's widowed niece, Theodora, and rose to the rank of archduke the only knight of the Catalan Company who ultimately escaped a violent end.

Prince Fernando, with ample reason to feel uncomfortable in Rocafort's company, sailed for the island of Thasos, about six miles off the coast of Thrace where the Nestos River enters the sea. Muntaner arrived there about the same time, with the fleet of the Company containing its dependents and possessions. He set about distributing property to each man on the roster, giving a detailed account to all. He arranged to send families of the Entenza and Arenos factions to the castle where Fernan Jiménez had taken refuge, or anywhere else they wished to go, in fifty carts, escorted by fifty knights and 200 Turks. Muntaner castigated Rocafort for the death of Entenza, boldly expressing himself because he knew that he could depend on the protection of Turks. Greatly impressed by his even-handed fairness to all members of the Company, they affectionately called him "Kata" and begged Rocafort to prevail upon him to stay with the army. But Muntaner returned to Thasos and Prince Fernando. Together they sailed southward to Negroponte on the island of Euboea.

There Prince Fernando suffered the same kind of adventure as had Entenza, being taken prisoner by a host he had trashed: the French knight, Tibaut de Sipoy. Tibaut was on a mission for King Charles to seek new alliances and confederations in Greece. He conducted the young Spaniard, with a retinue of eight knights, four squires, and Muntaner to the Duke of Athens, who kept him as an unwilling guest in the great castle of St. Omer for several months.¹³ Tibaut's motive was bargaining power with Rocafort, to whom he delivered Muntaner and Garcia Gomez Palacin. The latter, an Aragonese nobleman who had been a loyal follower of Entenza, was immediately executed by Rocafort. But Muntaner was greeted with respect, assigned the best house in the town, and recompensed with twenty horses and a purse of a thousand coins by the grateful Turks. Everyone gave him something; the chiefs discussed with him Rocafort's plan of offering the services of the Company to King Charles through Tibaut in agreement for good wages and wide privileges. Muntaner sensed increasing restiveness of the Catalans under Rocafort's rule, though he retained the blind loyalty of their Turkish comrades.

It was now late in the autumn of 1309. The Company had traveled on westward along the Thracian coast after the loss of the faction of Entenza and Arenos, crossing

the Nestos River, passing by Christopolis, traversing the forest of Rhodope along the sea, and coming out into the fields of Macedonia. Finally they had settled for the winter in the ruins of the ancient city of Cassandria. Muntaner found them fairly secure and

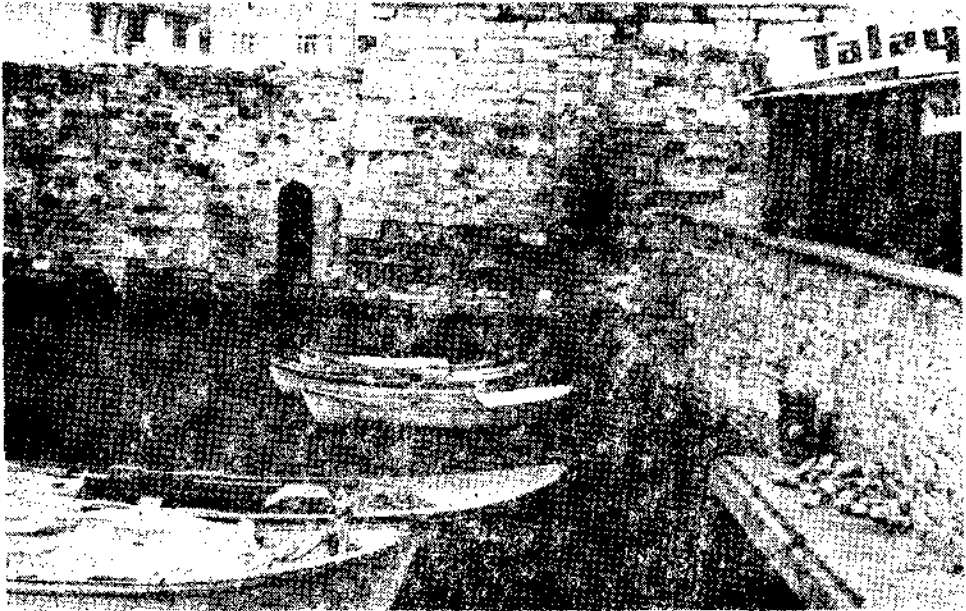


prosperous, with Rocafort apparently considering raising his dignity to that of a king. On the seal of the Company, he had replaced the image of Saint Peter with that of a crowned head and he had made some inquiries for a bride among the noble families of Greece. His intention to commit the Company to the service of King Charles would not have been considered treachery by his contemporaries, however, so long as he did

not bear arms against his own native kings. Tibaut soon learned that Rocaford would not take orders from him, and Muntaner knew that he would be in peril from the vindictive chief; they left the Company. At Tibaut's command, Gian Tari, the Venetian admiral, put one of his galleys at Muntaner's disposal, who asked to make a visit to Prince Fernando at his prison in Thebes. The ship's captain courteously allowed him



four days to complete the journey that was only twenty-four miles inland. There the determined Catalan soldier consoled the young prince in his irksome captivity, bearing away letters for King Fadrique that he subsequently delivered to the court at Palermo. The king interceded for his nephew with Charles, who asked the Duke of Athens to



convey Fernando to the custody of King Robert the Wise of Naples. There his retention was far more palatable, as Robert was married to Fernando's sister, the Princess Yolanda of Majorca. Then at last he was set free.

The Catalan Company remained at Cassandria, suffering under Rocafort's growing tyranny and irascibility. Contention increased until at length some of the chiefs sent word to ask him to intercede for them with their rulers. The French nobleman responded, but Rocafort, with his peculiarly fierce resentment of anyone born to higher social rank, refused to talk to him. Eventually Tibaut decided to get rid of him. At a meeting of the governing council, the knights in the conspiracy rose upon signal to seize Rocafort and his brother, Gisbert, who had killed Entenza. When the camp realized what had happened, the Turks, both Christian and Moslem, were stunned. Then noise, riot, and confusion filled the stronghold. While Tibaut stole out with his prisoners in his galleys under cover of night, the Turks and Almugavars attacked all those who were suspected of taking part in the conspiracy. Berenguer and Gisbert de Rocafort were delivered to King Robert, but they found him a less benign host than Prince Fernando had. Tibaut was again seeking influence for King Charles, because he knew that Robert and the Rocaforts had long been enemies. Rocafort had once been in Robert's service earlier in his mercenary career, when the customary quarrel occurred over unpaid back wages. Rocafort had seized some castles in Calabria, which he held until the king was forced to pay him what he demanded. For this offense the Rocaforts were starved to death in a miserable dungeon of the castle at Aversa.

After the death of Rocafort, who had been the effective leader of the Company for five years since Entenza was taken prisoner by the Genoese, the Turks in the ranks felt less secure in their position in the army. Leaderless again, the Catalans elected a committee to rule: two knights, an Almugavar, and a chief. The Council of Twelve also remained in force, but the Turkish tribesmen found no powerful captain with whom to identify, no quartermaster to trust as their "little father" after the departures of Rocafort and Muntaner. At this point the Company received envoys from the Duke of Athens, headed by a Catalan knight from Roussillon: Roger Deslau. He treated with them about entering the service of Gautier de Brienne, offering then six months' pay in advance if they would undertake the hazardous journey up through Macedonia, across Thessaly, and down into Attica. The chiefs were interested, but replied that they would prefer to move by water, which would require a fleet. Deslau departed, leaving the Catalans to contemplate their next move. They considered attacking the capital of the province at Thessalonika, where the wives of both of the Greek emperors were living apart from their husbands and their courts were reputed to be full of treasure. Finally they did march against the well-fortified city with 8000 men, but the siege failed. While they were thus engaged, Andronikos heard of the undertaking and ordered that a huge wall be constructed in the mountain pass above Christopolis to cut off their retreat into Thrace again. He did not wish to suffer from the plague of the Company again under any circumstances.

Giving up their assault on the Empreses Irene and Maria, the Catalans began to move eastward again toward Thrace. But one of their prisoners of the locality warned them about the new wall that blocked their progress. They turned, consequently, to the other direction and traveled across Macedonia and traveled across Macedonia and south into Thessaly. By wintertime they had followed the Aegean coastline into the famous, benevolent Vale of Tempe of the River Peneios between Mounts Olympus and Ossa. There they passed a comfortable season, moving into Thessaly when spring returned. The province was ruled by the duke who had married Irene, the illegitimate daughter of Andronikos. John II of Thessaly used a novel approach to deal with the Company; he sent courteous envoys with gifts, blandishments, and guides to conduct them on through toward Achaia. They agreed to keep moving, though they soon entered difficult areas through hostile geography and populations. They fought their way through Phourkas Pass and then through the strait of classical renown at Thermopylae, arriving exhausted in Attica to spend the fall and winter among the Locrenses tribes along the Euboan channel. The Turks had struggled along valiantly with their Latin comrades over terrain that was soon to become all under Turkish domination. Duke Gautier heard that the Company was coming down through the Attic peninsula as he had invited them to do many months earlier through Roger Deslau. He sent out officers to greet them, increasing the offers of wages and privileges that Deslau had been empowered to make—as the terrible Company appeared to have increased in capability through the arduous passage.

Duke Gautier de Brienne began his relationship with the Catalan Company that he accepted into his service with singular rapport. He had spent many years of his youth in the Sicilian castle of Agosta, so that he spoke Catalan like a native and understood the ways of these rough, proud Latins from the northeastern mountains of the Iberian Peninsula. Their contract was closed with the same conditions as the one with Andro-

nikos had been, and the ambitious Gautier sent them out immediately to launch war against three of his neighbors: Angelo of the Vlachs; the duke of Neopatra who was allied with Andronikos; and the Greek *despota* of Epiros. In a relatively short time the Company satisfied its new employer by taking thirty forts and reducing his enemies to making advantageous treaties with him. Then, as had so often happened in their wandering career before, the mercenaries became an unwanted burden in the country. Duke



Gautier evolved a plan for getting rid of them; he selected two hundred knights with their personal followers and three hundred infantrymen, to whom he gave modest land holdings scattered throughout the state. While the others were waiting for similar settlements, he suddenly issued an order for the remainder to leave the kingdom of Athens within a brief grace period. There was confusion and dismay among the Catalans, but they agreed to go if they were paid the six months' wages that they had originally been promised when they signed their contract, which they needed to buy ships for their

transport. But the duke replied with threats, and the Company moved out into strategic locations. A fatal crisis in the destinies of both sides had been reached. The Turkish members of the Company reacted with apprehension to this strange development of events between their comrades and an employer who seemed so closely related in religion, language, and customs.

The resulting Battle of Kephissos on March 15, 1311, is one of the most significant events in the history of the Latins in the East.¹⁴ Gautier collected a huge force among all his allies and tributaries in the region, many of whom had recently suffered the severity of the Catalans. He assembled 6400 knights and some 8000 infantrymen—at an expense that was far beyond what the payment of the wage demands of the Catalans would have been. On the other side, the five hundred former members of the Company who had been selected for reward in the duchy relinquished their new estates and went out to join their own people. The army then numbered around 3500 on horse and 4000 on foot. They pitched their camp on the swampy Boeotian plain, the basin of Lake Copais, close to the illustrious battlefield of Chaironeia, where, sixteen centuries before, Philip of Macedon had destroyed the freedom of classical Greece. Irrigation ditches cut the meadow, which was overgrown with foot-high grass. The Catalans flooded the whole area, leaving only the dry section that they occupied. The next morning the assembled Latins were upon them, the flower of chivalry in the Eastern Mediterranean flamboyantly massed and led by Duke Gautier's lion banner and a vanguard of 200 of the most brilliant French horsemen in the province. It was an overwhelming moment for the Turks of the Company, who were intermixed among their Catalan comrades of the infantry.

Suddenly the Turks drew aside, refusing to take part in the battle. They explained their fears that an attack of Gautier upon the ranks that had served him so well defied logic—and therefore must be read as a scheme to destroy the Turks because of their Islamic faith. No time remained for persuasion; the advancing cavalry had plunged unsuspecting into the marsh and was already bogged down in the mud and the weight of its glistening armor. The fast Almagavars were dragging them down with their accurate darts and swords; Gautier de Brienne, Count of Lecce, who had fought the Catalans in Sicily on behalf of the House of Anjou many years earlier, was among the first to die. When the Turks observed that the Catalan and Aragonese soldiers were indeed rigorously closing in on the vanguard on both sides, killing all of its knights in floundering confusion, they were no longer suspicious of their fellows and hurled themselves into the struggle. Moncada reports that of the 700 knights enlisted for Gautier that day, only two came out alive: Bonifacio da Verona and Roger Deslau.¹⁵ With the demise of the Latin hierarchy on that day, little resistance was left in the Greek provinces of the western Aegean and Mediterranean. The Grand Catalan Company moved out to capture Thebes and Athens within a few days, becoming masters of the province of Attica three years after they had entered it. This point they decided to end their career as wandering mercenaries and settle on the land they had conquered. Still without a strong captain to rule them, they invited Bonifacio da Verona to head their government. But, on the basis that he was a foreigner and their former prisoner, the Theban lord decided that he would have no more control over them than had Tibaut de Sipoy after they had pledged fealty to him, so that Bonifacio declined. Then they petitioned Roger Deslau, the Catalan knight who had first come to them as ambassador from Duke Gaut-

ier, and he accepted the charge. Deslaur ruled them successfully in their new role as established citizens until he was replaced by representatives of the House of Aragon. The Catalan Company prevailed in Athens for almost seventyseven years.

Toward the end of 1311 the Turks of the Company, both Moslem and Christian, decided to return to their homeland. Their Catalan comrades offered them generous holding in lands and villages, but they preferred to enjoy their riches among their re-



latives in Anatolia. They started back toward Gallipoli by the same tortuous route that they had come over, but this time they reached Thrace without encountering opposition. As they approached the territories of Andronikos, the converted Turks under Melek realized that they did not wish to return to their former service of the emperors. They understood that they would be in danger among the Greeks, in spite of any official agreements they might make with them, because of their former defection from Michael at the time of the Battle of Apros and of their six subsequent years with the Catalans.

Melek, consequently, accepted an offer of permission to reside in his country from the king of Serbia, with the stipulation that the Turks would never bear arms again except at his command. They agreed to the terms and stayed on permanently.

Kalel led the rest of the Turks, some 1300 horsemen and 800 foot soldiers with their dependents and possessions, to a temporary settlement in Macedonia, where they would rest until they could arrange for shipping to take them across the Aegean Sea to Anatolia. They caused much havoc in the area as they demanded sustenance from the inhabitants, until the natives bargained with them for their departure. Finally Kalel agreed to move on, if the army was assured of the opening of the pass at Christopolis and the provision of ships for their transport. Promises were made, so that the army traveled on eastward along the coast, but no ships appeared, and when they reached Andronikos's wall, they could not break through its heavy defenses. The chief sent messages to Turks on the other side of the sea, but they also lacked ships to send, since they had never been a seafaring nation.

At length Andronikos heard of the impasse and decided that it would be to his advantage to speed the Turks on their way out of his domain. He wanted to hurry them eastward toward the Hellespont, where they could cross more easily, and away from Thessalonika, where they might undertake another siege, this time probably with more success. Therefore, he acted to have the pass at Christopolis opened to them and arranged for ships to meet them near the old headquarters at Gallipoli. He even ordered out an escort of 3000 Greek horsemen under Senancarpus Estratopedorca, a dignitary of the empire, to discourage any dallying along the way. The caravan moved on peacefully through the pass and along the Thracian coast to Gallipoli, where it assembled for embarkation over the narrow channel to Asia Minor.

But there treachery brought disaster to their hopes. While Greeks and Turks were gathered along the shore waiting for the arrival of the ships, the Senancarpus's men appraised the belongings of the tribesmen, which they knew had been stolen from their countrymen. At last they conspired to attack during the night that group they had been sent to protect. But the Turks heard about the plot and escaped under cover of the same obscurity to the nearest castle. With their plan discovered, the Greeks were bemused about what step to take next, but they finally decided to tell Andronikos the truth. He delayed in responding, while the Turks tried to contact their countrymen on the other side of the water. The Anatolian Turks began to pour across the strait in a stream of small craft until a large group had collected on the European side. Together with the former members of the Catalan Company, they resolved to take the offensive. At last, word came from Andronikos commanding the Greeks to attack. His son, Michael, appeared with an undisciplined crowd of villagers, who were primarily interested in the spoils, to reinforce the Greek escort. Then the Turks, led by about 700 horsemen, rode out to meet their attackers, who were surprised by the men they had expected to be defending the castle. As a result, the Senancarpus's force broke and ran, followed by Michael, who again found himself pursued by members of the fearful Company. The emperor escaped again with his life only because a few loyal body guards turned to cover his retreat. The Turks, whose possessions had motivated the misfortune, fell upon his tent, which they found filled with money and jewels. The imperial crown, studded with dazzling gems, came to the hands of Kalel, who placed it on his own head and laughed at the irony of high estate.



After their plan to return to Anatolia was contravened, the Turkish tribesmen rampaged through Thrace for two more years, finding very little opposition. Andronikos despaired of stopping them, convinced that they were a curse from God to punish his sins. At length, one of his kinsmen, Philes Palaeologus, requested from him the commission to defeat the Turks. Philes had always been a quiet, peace-loving man who preferred the privacy of his home. The emperor reegarded his unexpected offer as a miracle sent to reprieve him, and Philes behaved accordingly, making elaborate religious preparations for the campaign. He required that his soldiers attend confession and distributed most of his funds to the poor and the monasteries before starting out. Then he despatched scouts to locate Kalel and his 1200 riders who were raiding the Bessian countryside. With the reports in, he traveled for three days out of Constantinople, then rested two more until word came that the Turks were near. He went out at sunrise; when both sides saw each other, the nomads hastily drew their carts into a circle around their possessions and took position for their defense. Moncada reports that they prayed, prostrating themselves so fervently on the earth that their heads were covered with dust.¹⁶ Philes opened the attack by leading his right flank in against the enemy and killing two Turks with his own hands. Soon afterward, however, he was wounded in the foot and left the battle, which disheartened his troops, though he continued to encourage them from the sidelines.

The battle raged for hours on end, until both sides were exhausted--the Turks falling back to their castle and the Greeks resting on the field. But Philes was back to lay siege within a few days, while Andronikos despatched Genoese galleys to guard the channel against the arrival of more supporters from the other side. Finally the Turks resolved to leave the fortress again and come out during the night to face battle. Philes's army was now augmented by 2000 more tribal horsemen and some Genoese sailors. When the Turks attacked the camp quarters, they were beaten back with severe losses. The next night they tried once more, reaching the tents, reaching the tents and lodgings of their besiegers, but again they were defeated. Finally they abandoned the castle altogether and on a very dark night made a rush for the Genoese ships, hoping to win the sympathy of the seamen to carry them across. Some fell into the hands of their Greek enemies on the way; others plunged into the water. The Genoese killed several and took more as captives. Muntaner reports that they were first lured on board the vessels with offers of safe delivery to Anatolia, and then thrown into chains and murdered.¹⁷ So died the Turkish comrades of the Catalan and Aragonese mercenaries almost three years after their separation from the Grand Company. They had crossed the five hundred miles between Athens and Gallipoli to look upon their homeland once more-- but failed tragically to reach it, after arriving at last, after their years of adventure, within sight of it across the Hellespont.

NOTES

- 1 Of the latter, the most important are the researches of the Catalan historian, Antoni Rubio y Lluch, in the nineteenth century and those of William Miller, George Ostrogorsky, and Kenneth M. Setton in the present one.
- 2 The work is being published this year for the first time in English translation : Frances Hernandez, **The Catalan Chronicle of Francisco de Moncada** (Press of the University of Texas at El Paso).
- 3 **Moncada**, Chapter XX.
- 4 Moncada is somewhat vague about the location of this last location of Catalan warfare, but it was clarified by Professor W. M. Ramsay, **The Historical Geography of Asia Minor** (Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1962). The Byzantine name was Opsikion.
- 5 Moncada's word for this group is **turcoples**, originally a designation for the sons of Turkish fathers and Greek mothers, and later a term for liges horsemen. Moncada uses it to mean Christianized Turks.
- 6 Roger was the last person in the empire to receive the title of **caesar**. Before him it had been borne by Alexius Strategopulus, the general under Michael VIII Palaeologus who had retaken Constantinople from the Latins in 1261, and by John and Constantine Palaeologus, theuncles of Andronikos II.
- 7 The Massagetes or Alans were a wild, warlike tribe of central Asia above the east end of the Black Sea, roaming north of the Syr River and the lake called the Aral Sea. The name includes most of the nomad peoples of the Caspian Sea area.
- 8 The powerful House of Aragon developed from the Counts of Barcelona in the thirteenth century. At the time of the time of the Catalan Company three monarchs ruled: Jaime in Aragn-Cataluna; his brther Fadrique in Sicily; and his cousin Jaime in Majorca.
- 9 Moncada claims one knight and two men for the the Catalans (Chapter XXIX), a statistic that defies belief.
- 10 **Moncada**, Chapter XLI.
- 11 Chapter XLIII.
- 12 The Almogavars were an ancient, primitive tribe of mountain people in the Pyrennees of northern Spain. They were reputed to have developed no livelihood but war and may have descended from Teutonic groups that entered the peninsula in the fifth and sixth centuries.
- 13 The great castle of the Kadmeia, later named for one inhabitant, Nicholas de St. Omer, it is famous for the frescoes on its walls depicting the exploits of crusaders in the Holy Land.
- 14 See Kenneth M. Setton, **The Catalan Domination of Athens, 1311 - 1388**. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Medieval Academy of America, 1948.
- 15 Setton, **op. cit.** It appears that there were two more : Jean de Muisy, eldest son of the duke of Noxes, and Antoine de Flamenc.
- 16 **Moncada**, Chapter LIII.
- 17 Chapter LXIX.

ÖZET

Ondördüncü asır Bizans İmparatorluğunun bir parçası olan kuzey doğu İspanya'dan hareket eden «Büyük Katalan Kumpanyası» isimli bir avuç misyoner askerin yaptıkları, beş asırdan beri şövalye folkloru ve akademik araştırma konusu olmuştur. Bu hâdîsenin en az bilinen yönü, 1306 yılında Trakyada bu kumpanyaya küçük bir Türk kabilesinin katılması on yılı aşan bir süre içinde onlarla servetlerini paylaşmasıdır. Bu olay artık yazarın «The Catalan Chronicle of Francisco de Moncada» isimli kitabının El Paso'da Texas Üniversitesi Matbaası tarafından basılması ile İngilizce literatüre de girmiş bulunmaktadır.