

JOHN KINNAMOS AS A HISTORIAN OF THE SECOND CRUSADE

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After the fall of Edessa 1144, Pope Eugenius III (1145-1153) announced the Second Crusade. For some reason Conrad III, King of Germany (1138-1152), at the head of his army came first, followed by Louis VII King of France, (1137-1180) with his army.

They planned to reach Jerusalem by land route through Hungary and the Byzantine territory. A fleet of the northern countries planned to gather in Dartmouth harbor, in south-west England, to reach the Holy Land by sea through Gibraltar (Jebel-Tarik)¹.

The events of the second Crusade which occurred in Asia Minor were recorded by some historians. Otto of Freisingen, who came with the German army, wrote some lines². The French historian Odo of Deuil recorded good details about the Crusade in Asia Minor only³. The Latin historian William of Tyre reported the events of the Crusade in Asia Minor on some pages⁴. The other Latin, Arab and Syrian historians wrote little about Asia Minor's events.

The main Byzantine historians of the second Crusade were John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. I selected the first as a historian of the second Crusade to be subject of my research.

Our historian was born after the death of the emperor John Comnenus (1118-1143) in April 1143, but probably not long after⁵.

¹ The Conquest of Lisbon, tran. Charles Wendell David, New York, 1936.

² Otto of Freising, The Deeds of Frederick Barbarussa, tran. K. Charles Christopher Mierow. New York 1966, pp. 79, 102.

³ Odo of Deuil, De Protectione Ludovici VII in Orientem, tran. Virginia Gingerick Berry, New York, 1948.

⁴ William of Tyre, A History of Deeds Done Beyond the Sea, 2 vols., New York 1943. pp. 165-173.

⁵ John Kinnamos, Deeds of John & Manuel Comnenus, trans. Charles M. Brand, New York, 1976. p.2.

He was very much an ordinary Byzantine bureaucrat and was reasonably well-read in the classics. We can notice that when he speaks about the emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1143-1180), he says "I myself, who frequently discussed the works of Aristotle with him, observed many of deeply debated problems naturally resolved, something I think had never been possible for anyone else"⁶.

We can also observe that Kinnamos was well-read in history, especially in the early Byzantine period, when he refers to the emperor Constantin the Great (305-337) as the first Christian among the Roman emperors. He also mentions Belisarius and Narses, generals of the Romans in the period of Justinian (518-565), Theodric I, the ruler of Ostrogoths (493-526), and Procopios, who narrates of that age⁷.

Kinnamos was an eyewitness of some military operations which took place in the epoch of the emperor Manuel I. We can notice that, when he says "Before I was even a youth I accompanied him [Manuel I] on many of his expeditions into both continents, such is my purpose, were the occasions suitable"⁸.

Kinnamos was keen on recording the events of his age. He says that frankly and reports "Yet we must not, therefore, be entirely silent about deeds which indeed happened in our age, rather, since a favorable opportunity is presently at hand, we must take care, lest one should not return again to us"⁹.

We notice that he uses the term "the Roman Empire", not "the Byzantine Empire" as we say nowadays. Sometimes he uses the term "Barbarian" for the Crusaders, Turks, and Arabs.

About the Crusaders he says "Hitherto the barbarians had been in difficult country..., the barbarians continued on their march..., being still cautious about the barbarians..."¹⁰.

⁶ Ibid os, op.cit., p.217.

⁷ Ibid., pp. 165-6.

⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁹ Ibid., p. 13.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 60-1, see also p.63.

For the Turks, the reports that Romans, do not let barbarians' trickery turn your shrewdness to fear...¹¹.

Kinnamos refers to "Palestine"¹² not to the "Kingdom of Jerusalem", and to the "barbarians" instead of the "Arabs" when he says "the King of Palestine [Baldwin IV, 1173-1185], together with the Prince of Antioch [Bohemond III, (1163-1201)] moved against the barbarians of Aleppo [1173] and did great damage to them"¹³.

The Byzantine historian John Kinnamos, whose works consist of seven books, took up the task where Anna Comnena left off, and his work breaks off during 1176¹⁴.

Kinnamos starts his records of the second Crusade when the Byzantine army was camped at Ikonion in 1146 and says, "Also there increased daily a rumor which warned that the nations to the west... would invade the Roman Land in full force"¹⁵. He refers to the Sultan Seljuk Masud (1116-1156) and his commander Suleiman, and how the Sultan sent envoys to the Byzantine emperor when he found out about the second Crusade, asking for peace in 1147. "The purport of the embassy was to restore Prakana to the emperor and whatever else had previously been taken from the Romans. So they agreed there would be peace in the future between Turks and Romans. Accepting these [terms], the emperor concluded the war and turned to Byzantion¹⁶. Odo of Deuil gives us new details and says: "The emperor had an agreement with the Turks and that every man who had written to our King [Louis VII] that he was going to accompany him in fighting the infidels and had won a recent and renowned victory over them had actually confirmed a twelve-years armistice with term".

About the nationality of the crusaders, their motive, and their numbers, Kinnamos refers to the Normans, the French, the nation of Gauls, whoever lived around old Rome, the British, the Bretons and simply the whole western army which had been set in motion. On the handy excuse that they were going to cross from Europe to Asia to fight the Turks enroute, recover

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 42.

¹² Ibid., pp. 71-2, 151-2, 188.

¹³ Ibid., p. 217.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 42.

¹⁶ Odo of Deuil, op.cit., p.55.

the church in Palestine, and seek the Holy places, they were truly intending to gain possession of the Romans, land by assault and trample down everything in front of them; their army cannot be true count. Kinnamos adds that King Conrad of Germany, and Kings of Czechs and Poles were at the head of the army which counted over ninety myriads¹⁷. Odo of Deuil records about the same number of the German troops and says, "We heard from the Greeks, who counted them as they crossed, that he [the army] went across with 900, 566 men"¹⁸. We can remark that this number was beyond the truth. Niketas refers to the German troops and says "I speak of the campaign of the Germans, joined by other kindred nations, females were numbered among them riding horseback in the manner of men, not on coverlets sidesaddle but unashamedly astride, and bearing lances and weapons as men do, dressed in masculine grab, they conveyed a wholly martial appearance, more mannish than the Amazones"¹⁹.

Kinnamos gives us some descriptions of the Crusaders' soldiers and their arms when he says that "the Germans' physiques were excessively large and totally armored, but their cavalry was not at all swift; observing that they practiced great disorder on the march, and supposing that their force would be very easily overcome by Romans who engaged scientifically"²⁰. He compares between the German and French saying "the French are particularly capable of riding horseback in good order and attacking with speed. The Germans, however, are able to fight on foot better than the French and excel in using the great sword"²¹.

Kinnamos tells us that when the Byzantine "emperor" learned that the German troops were close to the Hungarian borders, he dispatched envoys to investigate their intent, and whether they had come for the Romans' ill or not. To confirm the matter by oath, the Crusaders assembled by the tent of King Conrad because he possessed the principal position among the nations of the west, and stated that they had not come for the Romans' ill; should the matter need to be guaranteed by oath, the Crusaders asserted they would very readily do so²². Niketas says that the Crusaders declared and

¹⁷ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, pp. 58-60, 70.

¹⁸ Odo of Deuil, *op.cit.*, p.51.

¹⁹ Niketas chuniates, *O City of Byzantium*, tran. Harrus J. Magoulias, Michigan, 1984, p.35.

²⁰ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.62.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.70.

²² Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, pp.58-9.

affirmed by oath that Jerusalem was the motive for their expedition; later events proved their declarations were not false²³.

Our historian mentions that when the Crusaders passed through Nis, and reached Sofia, the representatives of the emperor welcomed them suitably and furnished them necessities²⁴. He says nothing about the markets in Constantinople, but Niketas says that when the Germans approached the gates of cities, the citizens did not display their wares but rather let ropes down from the wall so that they could first pull up the money in payment for whatever they were hawking and then let down only as much as suited them, whether it was bread or any other salable foodstuff. By knowingly committing these unlawful acts, they incensed the All-Seeing Eye, for cheating at the scales and for taking no pity on them as strangers, and for not even setting before them, as coreligionists, any of their own household stores, instead seizing from their throats that which was necessary to sustain the body. The worst of the inhabitants, especially those motivated by inhumanity, did not let down even the tiniest morsel but, drawing up the gold or silver, deposited the coins in their bosoms and disappeared, not to be seen again on the walls between the towers. Some, mixing lime with the barley groats, concocted a fatal mixture²⁵.

The historian tells us that when the German troops reached Adrianople, they burned a monastery, and adds that the Byzantine forces made a great slaughter of the barabrians, and drove Frederick²⁶ back. He recorded that this was the reason why the emperor advised King Conrad to proceed to the ferry-crossing at Abydos, but the King refused. Niketas wrote in detail about the Adrianople events²⁷, but said nothing about the advise to King Concad to cross at Abydos²⁸.

Kinnamos says that after Manuel had known that the Germans would come to Constantinople he decided to make preparations. So troops at once garrisoned the capital, waiting until they more openly attempted violence²⁹.

²³ Niketas Choniates, *op.cit.*, p.36.

²⁴ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.60.

²⁵ Niketas, *op.cit.*, pp.38-9.

²⁶ Frederick of Suabia in the time of the second Crusade, German's emperor (1153-1190).

²⁷ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.62.

²⁸ Niketas *op.cit.*, p.37.

²⁹ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.62.

The Romans set up ambushes in strategic places and along the defiles of mountain passes³⁰.

The historian reports that King Conrad gave some excuses about his forces' damage at Adrianople, when he said to the emperor: Do not impute to us the causes of damages lately wrought by the commonality of our army in your land, nor be worth on that account, since we ourselves have not been causes of such things, but the mob's impulse, recklessly hastening onwards, was capable of doing this of its own will". But the emperor gave him sarcastic replies³¹.

Kinnamos hints at a calamity that occurred in the Germans' camp when he says that the barbarians continued on their way till they reached the plains west of Constantinople, described as full of grass where a disaster beyond description happened to them. The Divinity was angry at them because they falsified their oaths and practiced great inhumanity toward the Romans, and added how the spirit of the emperor moved to compassion toward them³².

Niketas refers to this floodwater in the same meaning and adds that Conrad, deeply aggrieved over this misfortune, set aside his petty arrogance, for he marvelled that the very elements should obey the Romans. Thus, he yielded to their wishes, seeing that even nature served their needs, and departed thence to continue on his way³³.

Kinnamos also mentions the fortifications of Constantinople when he says that "King Conrad hastened to Byzantion; when he reached the imperial dwelling opposite to the walls ... he gave his attention to the city's wall from there. As he observed the towers mounting to considerable height and saw the great size of the deep moat which encircled it". He also hints at the inner walls, the bridge which joins the two banks of the Golden Horn, the Black Sea, and mentions the spacious port of the capital³⁴. He does not, however, mention the chain which blocked the mouth of the Golden Horn in the case of emergency³⁵.

³⁰ Niketas, *op.cit.*, p.38.

³¹ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.64-5.

³² *Ibid.*, p.63.

³³ Niketas, *op.cit.*, p.38.

³⁴ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, pp.63-4.

³⁵ Theophanes, *The chronicle*, tran. Harry Turtledove, Philadelphia, 1982, p.89.

Our historian refers to the German defeat in a battle with the Byzantine troops despite the much smaller number of the Byzantines. From these events we detect some Byzantine tactics, in that period at least, when Kinnamos says that the common part of the Byzantine army stood far forward, in four units; thereafter, the well-armed and armored; then those who rode swift horses; and finally, behind the line of battle, the Cumans with the Turks and Romans' archer force. He added that the emperor Manuel blamed King Conrad and asked him to chastise the mob's irreverence³⁶.

Kinnamos reports that King Conrad demanded that the imperial dromond and the usual triremes be sent by the emperor, to use for the crossing. Should they not speedily come to him, he threatened to encompass the city with many thousands on the morrow. He adds that the emperor told Conrad that he must consider that he would never embark on the imperial gallery nor fulfill amongst the Byzantines what he sought, but his horses' legs would bear the king back on the same road. Then Conrad was obliged to board a wretched skiff, and crossed the strait to Damalis (Uskudar). Manuel tried to corrupt with money some reputed Germans to withhold their allegiance to Conrad³⁷.

Niketas says that as Conrad approached the queen of cities [c.10 September 1147], he was forthwith compelled to ferry his troops across the straits, although at first he was overbearing and stupidly refused to cross over, saying that it was against his judgement to do so and that he did not wish to encamp in Peraia at the place called Ta Pikridiou (Hoskoy). Every rowboat, ferryboat, fishing boat, and horse transport was commandeered for the crossing of the Germans³⁸.

Kinnamos shows us how Conrad asked Manuel to send one of his subjects to guide him on the route and conduct him in security. Manuel made his request and also sent an officer to discuss an alliance with the king to fight the Turks. After Conrad had taken counsel with his followers, he rejected the alliance, and chose the route which led to Philomilion³⁹.

³⁶ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, pp.65-6.

³⁷ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, pp.66-7.

³⁸ Niketas, *op.cit.*, p.38.

³⁹ Kinnamos: *op.cit.*, pp.67-8.

Conrad confirmed the choice of the route through his letter to Wibald of Corvey. To finish his expedition quickly, he took a short-cut through the mountain which the guides showed them⁴⁰. Odo of Deuil gives good details about the three routes which led to Syria through Asia Minor and says that, Three routes unequal in length and unlike in character, lead to Antioch. The one bearing to the left is the shorter-it could be traveled in three weeks. Conrad and the majority of the German army took it through Iconium. The middle route was longer but safer and Frederick took it with the rest of the army. The third was the coastal route"⁴¹.

Kinnamos summarizes the events which occurred in Asia Minor to the German army and says that as far as Melangeia and Dorylaion, nothing unpleasant blocked the Germans. When they arrived there, a small Turkish force attacked their vanguard, to test their strength and learn what kind of formation they kept. When the Turks first appeared before them, the Germans advanced in disorder; seized by great eagerness and confusion, they rushed at them. Since the Germans were not far from their own camp, the Turks turned tail and pretended flight; but when the Germans' cavalry was exhausted and they were far from camp, the Turks made rapid charge and slew horses and men. This same thing which happened frequently cast them into immeasurable terror. Then it was possible to observe those who were formerly rash braggarts, who attacked in the fashion of irresistible brutes, cowardly and ignoble, and incapable of either doing or planning anything. Then Conrad rushed against the Turks, lost the particularly swift horses which the emperor had presented him, and came close to being captured by the Turks⁴². He adds that the Germans had been frequently defeated by the Turks and lost many of their men; once they abandoned the passage through Philomilion, and hastened back to Nikaia⁴³. Niketas says that Manuel betrayed the German army and did his best to harm it, and adds that it also occurred to the Turks to act similarly against the Germans once Manuel had stirred them up with letters and incited them to make

⁴⁰ Conrad, letter to Wibald of Corvey, of R.H.G.F.XV ed. by Bouquet and other Paris 1878, p.533.

⁴¹ Odo of Deuil, op.cit., p.89-91.

⁴² Kinnamos, op.cit., p.68.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p.70.

war⁴⁴. Odo of Deuil⁴⁵ and William of Tyre⁴⁶ went on in the same tone with details.

The truth is that the Turks suffered much from the first Crusade, and they had no need to stir against the second Crusade or any crusaders. The Turks acted normally against their foes in the three routes with the Germans and French.

About the French army, Kinnamos says that King Louis crossed the Danube, advanced without trouble, and was welcomed by the emperor's representatives. After he ended his march, he enjoyed a very great reception given by the emperor. When he drew near Constantinople, he sent envoys to the emperor, promised still further friendship, and agreed to cooperate with him in important matters⁴⁷.

When Louis arrived, there met him men close to the emperor in family and station, who then controlled the more important offices, to conduct him in splendor to the emperor and accord him appropriate honors. When he came inside the palace, the emperor was seated on high, and a lowly seat, which people who speak Latin call a chair, was offered to him. After he had been seated on it, he said and heard what was proper, and then departed to the suburb outside the wall which as stated is termed Philopation by the multitude, to be lodged there. A little later, along with the emperor, he went to the palace [Blachernai] south of the city, to investigate the things there worthy of awe and behold the holy things in the church there: I mean those things which, having been close to Christ's body, are signs of divine protection for Christians. After he had accomplished this in Byzantion and had given pledges on oath to be friend and ally to the emperor so long as he lived, he also crossed to Asia⁴⁸.

At Nikaia, the Germans and the French armies united after King Louis found out about what had happened to the German army⁴⁹.

⁴⁴ Niketas, *op.cit.*, p.39.

⁴⁵ Odo of Deuil, *op.cit.*, pp.84, 89 ff.

⁴⁶ William of Tyre, *op.cit.*, 11, pp.167-172.

⁴⁷ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.68-9.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, *op.cit.*, p.69.

⁴⁹ Niketas, *op.cit.*, p.38.

Kinnamos reports that when the armies united, a certain by word, which used to be uttered by the French to the Germans, was then openly applied, which verbally runs something like "Budge German". He adds, so whenever the Germans campaign against the French, they feel doubtful of their cavalry and determine to wage war on foot. Encountering their undisciplined cavalry, the French defeat it; charging the more expert part of the Germans, they drive back those who go on foot, although they are greatly inferior to them in number, they mock them with the said expression, because while it is possible to fight with horses, they choose warfare on foot. As stated, this was then repeatedly applied by the French to the Germans and greatly vexed them⁵⁰.

About the march of the Crusaders on the costal route and the return of Conrad to Constantinople Kinnamos says "Because the risk of taking second place to the French on the rout threatened them, they marched as far as Philadelphia together, from there Conrad, unable to endure being slighted by the French and unwillingly followed them, determined to return: he wrote to the emperor and revealed his plan. As Manuel desired to separate the kings from each other, and sympathized with the king, he accepted Conrad's request. When Conrad reached the Hellespont, he crossed to Thrace by the ferry there. He encountered the emperor who was making a stay there and returned to Byzantion with him [winter 1147-8]. There amusements succeeded one another: imperial residences, varied spectacles, horse races, and splendid receptions, whereby his exhausted body recuperated⁵¹.

Kinnamos tells us about Conrad's journey by sea to the Holy Land and says "Furnished with sufficient funds, he set out to Palestine with triremes, Nicephorus Dasiotes commanded his ship and provided other service. There he met the other kings and preformed appropriate rites at the life-giving tomb of Christ; while the others set out for their individual homelands as best they might, he left there with the said ships and landed at Thessalonita. He saw the emperor for a second time, and again joined in discussions and conversations with him". The emperor reminded him of what had been previously agreed on; this was, that Apulia and Calabria should be restored to the empress [Bertha] Irene as her marriage-gift, as she was Conrad's

⁵⁰ Kinnamos, *op.cit.*, p.70.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *op.cit.*, pp.70-1.

relative and he had betrothed her to the emperor. After Conrad and Frederick had pledged their agreements with additional oaths, they had departed from the Romans' land⁵². Kinnamos says nothing about the events which occurred in Syria or even the siege of Damascus.

Kinnamos points out the Sicilian raid in the Byzantine land⁵³, referring to King Roger's⁵⁴ fleet that launched a direct attack on the Byzantine empire in the autumn of 1147 and seized Corfu and took Corinth and Thebes⁵⁵. He considers it a part of the Second Crusade, when he says "The incursion of the western nations into the Romans' land concluded there"⁵⁶.

Niketas gives a further detail and says that Roger, who then ruled Sicily, either in contact with Conrad as it was said, or on his own accord, initiated an attack coincident with the German expedition, by sending swift sailing ships against the Roman seacoast. The fleet sailed from Brindisi and put in at Kerkyra (Corfu), meeting no resistance⁵⁷.

Kinnamos hints at the second Crusade captives of Nur-ed-Din when referring to an alliance between the latter, and Manuel in 1159, when he says that Nur-ed-Din released upwards of six thousand, who had been taken captive by him out of the German and French army when they campaigned in Asia⁵⁸.

To conclude, Kinnamos gives good information about the events ended in Asia Minor for the second Crusade. This information was not given by the Byzantine historian Nicetas Choniates, who in turn gives some information not mentioned by Kinnamos. We notice that the French historian Odo of Deuil gives us full details about the French forces in the second Crusade in Asia Minor, but the Latin Historian William of Tyre gives bad information about the behavior of the Byzantine emperor with the Crusaders. The Arab historians hint at the event in Asia Minor, but report good information about the Crusade in Syria.

⁵² Ibid., 71-2.

⁵³ Ibid., p.72.

⁵⁴ Roger II Guiscard, the first king of Sicily (1130-54).

⁵⁵ Ostrogorsky, History of Byzantine state, Oxford, 1956, p.340.

⁵⁶ Kinnamos, op.cit., p.72.

⁵⁷ Niketas, op.cit., p.43.

⁵⁸ Kinnamos, op.cit., pp.143-4.