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THE VENETIAN CRUSADE OF 1122-1124

On 8 August 1122 a large fleet left Venice for the East. The Venetians, who had taken the cross<sup>1</sup>, paused to attack Byzantine Corfu in retaliation for an attempt by the Emperor John Comnenus to reduce their privileges, but they abandoned the siege of the city there on learning that King Baldwin II of Jerusalem had been captured by the Muslim prince Belek of Kharput. The coast of Palestine was reached in May 1123. An Egyptian fleet was destroyed off Ascalon, Christmas was spent in Jerusalem and Bethlehem, Tyre was besieged on 15 February 1124 and fell on 7 July. The Venetians were rewarded with a third of Tyre and its territory and with important commercial privileges, which had probably been promised them already by Baldwin of Jerusalem as inducements to crusade<sup>2</sup>. They returned home by way of the Aegean, sacking Greek islands and territory as they went. Their pillaging brought the Greek government to heel and in August 1126 John Comnenus confirmed and extended their privileges<sup>3</sup>. The story of their crusade is well-known and I do not intend to spend much more time on it. Instead, I want to consider the background to it and its wider implications.

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<sup>1</sup> *Historia Ducum Veneticorum*, in MGH SS 14:73; *Chronicon Altinate* ed. A. Rossi, in *Archivio storico italiano* 8 (1845), 153; MARTIN DA CANAL, *Les Estoires de Venise. Cronaca veneziana in lingua francese dalle origini al 1275*, ed. A. Limentani (Florence, 1972), pp. 30, 32; ANDREA DANDOLO, *Chronica*, in RIS NS 12, 1:232. See also Fulcher of Chartres, *Historia Hierosolymitana*, ed. H. Hagenmeyer (Heidelberg, 1913), p. 657.

<sup>2</sup> William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, in RHC Oc. 1:551.

<sup>3</sup> F. THIRIET, *La Romanie vénitienne au moyen âge* (Paris, 1959), p. 41; S. RUNCIMAN, *A History of the Crusades*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, 1951-54), 2:166-71.