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THE CLERGY DURING THE FOURTH CRUSADE AS PORTRAYED IN GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN'S CHRONICLE

Abstract. An article analysing information about the clerics during the Fourth Crusade mentioned by the chronicler of this expedition, Geoffrey of Villehardouin († c. 1219), in the Old French chronicle *La conquête de Constantinople*. The author has distinguished three types of clerics, participants in the crusade, and traced mentions thereof in the work and the opinions about them.

Keywords: clergy of the Fourth Crusade, Constantinople, Geoffrey of Villehardouin

A long a multitude of knights and common soldiers, the Fourth Crusade attracted a small group of church notables. Until then, every crusade to the Holy Land included a group of clerics, natural hosts since the First Crusade. I intend to trace the source passages relating to it, deliberately relying solely on a single Old French account by Geoffrey of Villehardouin, Marshal of Champagne († c. 1219), *La Conquête de Constantinople*¹. In the chronicle, the author refers to a total of 209 figures, mainly from the Western, Greek and Bulgarian milieus. From this number, excluding Pope Innocent III (mentioned in the chronicle in paragraphs: 1, 2, 31, 105–107, 368, 377, 388), who did not physically participate in the expedition, Villehardouin mentioned by name and anonymously nine clergymen, active participants, and one involved in the crusade's preparation. They represent almost one-twentieth of all the expedition participants mentioned

¹ The author was Marshal of Champagne, so he was certainly not a serial participant in the expedition; rather, he was a part of a group of wealthy and influential barons. Critical edition: GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, *La conquête de Constantinople*, vol. I–II, ed. E. FARAL, Paris 1938–1939 (ce-tera: GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN). There is extensive literature on the chronicler and his work: E. FARAL, *Geoffroy Villehardouin. La question de sa sincérité*, RH 177, 1936, p. 530–582; J. LONGNON, *Recherches sur la vie de Geoffroy de Villehardouin, suivies du catalogue des actes des Villehardouin*, Paris 1939; Z. PENTEK, *Geoffroy de Villehardouin. Rycerz i kronikarz IV wyprawy krzyżowej*, Poznań 1996 (extensive literature there); Polish translation – GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, *Zdobycie Konstantynopola*, trans. from Old French, praef. et comm. Z. PENTEK, Poznań 2018.

by the chronicler. How does this relate to the estimated number of participants in the expedition, according to historiography? Following the recent, meticulous calculations by Donald E. Queller (1925–1995) and Thomas Madden (*1960)², the number of crusaders in the Fourth Expedition was close to 12,000, excluding the Venetians. Thus, the number of clerics-crusaders was not high, and yet, because of their exceptional religious commitment, Villehardouin highlighted the individuals and actions.

At the very beginning, in the first chapter of his chronicle, Villehardouin identified the first advocate of the Fourth Crusade, namely **Folques of Neuilly**:

Sachiez que.M. et.C.... un saint home en France, qui ot nom Folques de Nuilli (cil Nuillis si est entre Ligni sor Marne a Paris) et ile re prestres et tenoit la parroiche de la ville. Et cil Folques dont je vos di comença a parler de Dieu par France et par les autres terres entor; et Nostre Sires fist maintes miracles por lui³.

The text clearly suggests that Folques was not only a priest residing in Lagny-sur-Marne; he travelled around the area encouraging people to take part in a new expedition to the Holy Land. Moreover, Villehardouin referred to him as a holy man (*un saint home*) through whom God performed numerous miracles (*et Nostre Sires fist maintes miracles por lui*). This tone was used for a reason, validating the idea of a new crusade, as it was preached by a holy man. The following words confirm this peculiar aura around Folques: *En l'autre an après que cil preudon Folques parla ensi de Dieu...*⁴ This time, Folques was presented as a blessed (*preudon*) speaker. Folques was thus portrayed as a humble priest but one blessed by God – an advocate of a good cause. The clergyman further praised him in the 44th chapter of his chronicle: *Maintenant li evesques de Soisons et missire Folques li bons hom et dui blanc abé que il avoit amené de son pais l'enmainent a l'eglise Nostre Dame et li atauchent la croiz a l'espaule*⁵. In this case, Folques was described as a good man (*bons hom*), but the chronicler also hinted at his influence, mentioning the company of the (anonymous) bishop of Soissons (*evesques de Soisons*), and two monks (*et dui blanc abé*). To explain the origins of these two men, we need to look at the context of the part of the text which shows Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat († 1207) joining the crusaders, having taken command of the preparations for the crusade after the demise of its first leader, Theobald, Count of Champagne, in May 1201. The Marquis came from Montferrat in Piedmont, home of the Cistercian abbey in Lucedio, in the diocese of Verceil. This confirms the provenance of the 'white monks'. In the next chapter of the chronicle, Villehardouin again identified

² D.E. QUELLER, T. MADDEN, *The Fourth Crusade. Conquest of Constantinople*, 2nd ed., Philadelphia 1997, p. 282–283, end notes 29.

³ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 1.

⁴ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 3.

⁵ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 44.

Folques as a *missire*⁶ who arrived at the Cistercian abbey at Cîteaux on 14 September 1201 to preach the cross – *parler des croiz*⁷. Even this date is not coincidental, as it is linked to the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. Villehardouin recorded news about Folques in May 1202. At that time the reader learns that he died. The cause of death remains unknown but the death of the advocate of the expedition provided an opportunity for the chronicler to raise the merits and supposed sanctity of this promoter of the expedition to the Holy Land yet again: ...*que messire Folques, li bons hom, li sains hom, qui parla premierement des croiz, fina et mori*⁸.

The Bishop of Troyes, **Garnier** (1149–1205), was mentioned by name only once in the chronicle in the fifth chapter of *Garniers li évesques de Troies*⁹. He was from Traînel¹⁰. In April 1193, he became bishop of Troyes¹¹. Having embarked on the crusade, he did not seem to have played a significant role until he became elector of the first emperor of the Western world¹². Interestingly, Villehardouin did not mention him by name in the list of the emperor's electors, or at the coronation of Baldwin I (1204–1205). The chronicler did not mention the bishop's death in Constantinople, on 14 April 1205. But this can be explained as coinciding with the defeat of Baldwin I at Adrianople, which the chronicler witnessed¹³.

Névelon of Cherisi († 1207), Bishop of Soissons (1175–1207), was another cleric, a participant of the expedition to Constantinople, mentioned by the chronicler¹⁴. This cleric was mentioned six times (chapters 7, 44, 105, 107, 260, 388) which may suggest his prominent position among the other clerics. He appeared for the first time in the lists of participants in the expedition (chapter 7). He was mentioned the second time in the context of a meeting with Folques and Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat (chapter 44), during the search for a successor to Theobald, Count of Champagne. Once Zadar was captured by the crusaders (November 1202), the barons decided to send a delegation to Innocent III to explain the unprecedented attack on the Christian city, launched in fact during the crusade against the Muslims. The delegation consisted of four individuals: two knights – Jean of Friaise and Robert of Bovesi, and two clergymen. One of them was the

⁶ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 45.

⁷ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 45.

⁸ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 73. Information about the time of Folques' death in *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, ed. H. PERTZ, Leipzig 1925 [= MGH.SS, 16], p. 10.

⁹ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 5.

¹⁰ J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons de Villehardouin. Recherches sur les croisés de la quatrième croisade*, Genève 1978, p. 13–15.

¹¹ *Hierarchia catholica medii aevi*, vol. I, ed. C. EUBEL, Monasterium 1913 (cetera: *Hierarchia catholica*), p. 521; PIUS GAMS, *Series episcoporum Ecclesiae catholicae*, Graz 1957 (cetera: PIUS GAMS), p. 643.

¹² GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 258.

¹³ *Obituaires de la province de Sens*, vol. IV, *Diocèses de Meaux et de Troyes*, ed. A. LONGNON, Paris 1923, p. 228 E: *Obiit Constantinopoli Garnerus, Trecensis episcopus*.

¹⁴ *Hierarchia catholica*, vol. I, p. 493; PIUS GAMS, p. 633 – 9 August 1175 – 14 Sept. 1207; J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons...*, p. 115–116.

bishop of Névelon: *et eslistent messages.ii. chevaliers et.ii. clers, telx qu' il savoient qui bon fussent a cest message[.] Des.ii. clers du li uns Nevelons li evesques de Soissons et maistre Johans de Noyon...*¹⁵ It is clear from this text that Névelon was seen as a skilful diplomat who would convince the Pope of his reasons, so hopes were pinned on him to appease the wrath of pope Innocent III. That Névelon's message had the expected effect is evidenced by Villehardouin's words about the pope's decision: forgiveness, a show of mercy, greetings to the barons and pilgrims, and special powers of attorney until the arrival of Innocent III's legate, Peter of Capua: *et dona plain pooir a Nevelon lo vesque de Soissons et a maistre Johan de Noion delier et de deslier les pelerins trosqu'adonc que li cardonax venroit em l'ost*¹⁶. In May 1204, after the second occupation of Constantinople, Névelon was among the electors of the new emperor, and he seems to have played a leading role at the time, since the chronicler claimed that the honour of announcing the results of the deliberations on the election of the emperor fell to him:

Et cargierent lor parola, par le creant de toz les autres, a Nevelon l'evesque de Soissons [...] Seignor, nous somes acordé, la Dieu merci, de fairte empereor [...] Et nom le nomerons en l'eure que Diex fu nés: le conte Baudoin de Flandres et de Henaut¹⁷.

Although it is not directly apparent from Villehardouin's account, Névelon most likely crowned Baldwin I. Villehardouin attested the bishop's diplomatic aptitude in his subsequent election as envoy to the pope in May 1205: *Por ce secors fu envoieiz Novelons de Soissons*¹⁸. At this point, news of Bishop Névelon's participation and role in the historian's account came to a halt.

Conrad of Krosigk († 21 June 1225), bishop of Halberstadt (1201–1209) joined the expedition in Venice in August 1202¹⁹: *Et après ceste aventure lor vint une compaigne de mult bone gent de l'empire d' Alemaigne, dont il furent mult lié. Le vint li evesques de Havestat...*²⁰ There is a single reference to his participation in the expedition. Unfortunately, the historian did not mention him as elector of Baldwin I²¹.

¹⁵ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 105.

¹⁶ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 107.

¹⁷ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 260.

¹⁸ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 388.

¹⁹ D.E. QUELLER, *The Fourth Crusade. Conquest of Constantinople 1201–1204*, Philadelphia 1977, p. 11, claimed that it happened on 29 June 1202, although the anonymous chronicler of Halberstadt stated that it happened on 13 August 1202 – *Gesta episcoporum Halberstadensium*, ed. L. WEILAND, Leipzig 1925 [= MGH.SS, 23], p. 116. In the second edition of this book: D.E. QUELLER, T. MADDEN, *The Fourth Crusade...*, p. 50, the authors revised the earlier view. For an extensive article on Conrad's career biography, see the extensive analytical text by Alfred ANDREA, *Conrad of Krosigk. Bishop of Halberstadt, Crusader and Monk of Sittichenbach: his Ecclesiastical Career, 1184–1225*, ACi 43, 1987, p. 11–91; *Hierarchia catholica*, vol. I, p. 270; J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons...*, p. 242–243.

²⁰ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 74.

²¹ *Lettre de l'empereur Baudouin de Oorkonden*, [in:] *De Oorkonden der graven van Vlaanderen (1191–1206)*, ed. W. PREVENIER, Bruxelles 1964 (cetera: *Lettre de l'empereur*), p. 572, no. 271.

Jean of Noyon († 1204) was a cleric and chancellor of Baldwin, Count of Flanders. Villehardouin mentioned him relatively late, only in early 1203, during his stay in Zadar²². It seems that, as a result of a longer stay in the city, the chronicler could get to know Baldwin's chancery milieu, since Jean of Noyon was not among the crusaders from Flanders mentioned in chapter 8th of *De la conquête de Constantinople* who vowed to embark on the crusade on 23 February 1200 in Bruges²³. Jean of Noyon came from Picardy, but his presence at Baldwin's court opened up the prospect of further promotions, in the secular and ecclesiastical circles. Villehardouin recalled that Jean of Noyon, together with Bishop Névelon, were envoys sent to Innocent III: *et maistre Johans de Noion*²⁴. Villehardouin mentioned him again after his successful visit to Rome, attributing the same role to him as to his companion Bishop Névelon²⁵. While for Villehardouin Jean of Noyon was the anonymous elector of Baldwin I²⁶ he did not fail to mention his death in the second half of 1204. He fell victim to an unknown plague in Sérres (Σέρρες), Macedonia:

Lors fu morz maistre Johan de Noion ala Serre, qui ere chanceliers l'empereor Baudoin et mult bons clers, et mult sages, et mult avoit conforté l'ost per la parole de Dieu, qu'il savoit mult bien dire. Et sachiez que mult en furent li prodome de l'ost desconforté²⁷.

Bearing in mind the characteristics of the other clerics, this one is almost comparable to the description of the achievements of Folques of Neuilly. The praise given to the deceased is as much about his merits in clerical life as it is about his oratorical skills.

Peter (Pierres), bishop of Bethlehem²⁸ was only noticed by Villehardouin because he was one of the victims of the Battle of Adrianople in April 1205: *La fu perdfuz li évesques Pierres de Betleem*²⁹.

Peter (Perron, Pierre) († 1214) of Capua was a cardinal and a papal legate from Amalfi³⁰. Villehardouin wrote about him sporadically, despite the high standing of Peter of Capua. The chronicler initially attributed to him promotion of the crusade and bringing an important promise to France – forgiving the sins of the crusaders on condition of taking part in the expedition: *et après i envoia un suen charnonal, maistre Perron de Chappes, croisié, et manda par lui le pardon tel con je vos dirai: tuit cil qui se croisseroient et feroient le servise Deu un en l'ost*

²² J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons...*, p. 165–167.

²³ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 8.

²⁴ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 105.

²⁵ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 107.

²⁶ *Lettre de l'empereur*, p. 572, no. 271.

²⁷ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 290.

²⁸ *Regesta pontificum*, ed. A. POTTHAST, Graz 1967, no. 1067, p. 99; *Hierarchia catholica*, vol. I, p. 134.

²⁹ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 361.

³⁰ For a comprehensive study of his life and work cf. W. MALECZEK, *Petrus Capuanus. Kardinal, Legat am vierten Kreuzzug, Theologe* († 1214), Wien 1998.

*seroient quite de toz les pechiez que avoient faitz, dont il seroient confés*³¹. Yet again, Villehardouin did not recall his existence until April 1205. At that time, the legate was sent from Rome to Constantinople to discern the local situation on the spot. Upon his arrival, he heard the shocking news of the defeat of the Latin troops at Adrianople³². Perhaps under the pressure of the moment, the legate decided to take advantage of the pope's instructions and again grant indulgence to the Crusaders who would stay in Constantinople:

Maistre Pierre de Chappes, qui ere cardonalx de par l'apostoile de Rome Innocent [...] et o plors que il aüssent merci et pitie de la crestienté et de lor seignors liges, qui estoient perdu enla bataille, et que il demonrassent por Dieu³³.

This episode in the cardinal's life put a stop to Villehardouin's account of him.

Guy († 1223), a Cistercian abbot of the northern French town of Vaux de Cernay, is among the unnamed clerics who took part in the fourth expedition³⁴. It remains unclear why the chronicler did not mention his name, although he referred to him four times (chapters 83, 95, 97, 109) at an important moment in the crusade, and even claimed to quote from him. Possibly, Villehardouin failed to mention his name because the abbot strongly resisted attacking Zadar: *Et alors se leva un abbé de Vaux de l'orde de Cistials, et lor dist: «Seignor, je vos deffent de par l'apostoille de Rome que vos ne assailliez ceste cité, car ele est de crestiens et vos iestes pelerin»*³⁵. As a consequence of these words, the abbot began to organise opposition against the idea of Enrico Dandolo, Doge of Venice, as it was proven a little later: *Et parla l'abés de Vals, de l'ordre de Cystiaus et cele partie qui voloit l'ost depecier: et distrent qu'il ne s'i accorderoient mie, que ce ere sor crestiens, et il n'estoient mie por ce meü, ainz voloient aler en Surie*³⁶. Villehardouin attributed the abbot's attitude to his holiness and integrity: *Li Abés de Loz, qui mul tere sainz hom et prodom...*³⁷ Faced with the intransigence of Dandolo and Boniface of Monferrat, the abbot and the others left the crusaders: *...et 'abés de Vals, qui ere moine de ordre de Cistiaus...*³⁸ In view of the abbot's decisions, the chronicler automatically felt absolved from following his further actions.

³¹ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 2.

³² GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 368.

³³ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 377.

³⁴ J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons...*, p. 127–128.

³⁵ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 83.

³⁶ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 95.

³⁷ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 97.

³⁸ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 109.

Another anonymous figure from the Cistercian world was **Simon**, abbot of Loos³⁹, an abbey in northern France nearby Lille. Villehardouin's narrative is reminiscent of that on Guido. Simon appears as a holy and righteous man: *Li abbé de Loz, qui mul ere sainz hom et prodom...*⁴⁰ Unlike Abbot Guido, Simon did not leave the crusader army and continued his pilgrimage reaching... Constantinople. There, in the autumn of 1203, he died, as the chronicler reported: *...li abbés de Los, qui ere sainz hom et prodom, fu morz, et qui avoit volu le bien de l'ost; et ere moines de l'orde de Cistials*⁴¹. Although Simon's conduct was different from that of Guido's, the chronicler's opinion on both was similar.

The last clergyman mentioned by Villehardouin in 1206 was **Benoît** († 1216), a papal legate, cardinal of the Church of St Susanna in Rome. In Villehardouin's chronicle, he is also anonymous⁴²: *Li chardonaus qui ere de par l'apostoille de Rome...* and he arrived to *...et en fist pardon a toz cels qui iroient et qui moroient...*⁴³ in the future fights.

Conclusion

Villehardouin's account was deliberately detached from other documentary and narrative sources⁴⁴. The clergy and the participants in this crusade were portrayed by the chronicler as an important, symbolic, but not entirely decisive element of the crusaders' composition. The coverage of these individuals is rather selective, with the author only highlighting the leading clergymen, participants of the expedition, some of whom he met personally or knew of their existence. He provided a cross-section of the clerical world, from the cardinal-legate, to bishops, abbots, priests and clerics; not a coherent group, representing at least three types of actions. Folques was a representative of the first group – the advocates of the expedition.

³⁹ J. LONGNON, *Les compagnons...*, p. 165; *Diplomatica Belgica – Record 11089*, diplomata-belgica.be [30 XII 2022].

⁴⁰ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 97.

⁴¹ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 206.

⁴² *Hierarchia catholica*, vol. I, p. 3; *Urkunden zur älteren Handels- und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig*, vol. II, ed. G.L. TAFEL, G.M. THOMAS, Wien 1856, p. 37–42.

⁴³ GEOFFREY DE VILLEHARDOUIN, sec. 427.

⁴⁴ I mean ROBERT DE CLARI's chronicle: *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. Ph. LAUER, Paris 1924; ANONYMI SUSSIONENSIS, *De terra Iherosolymitana et quomodo urbe Constantinopolitana ad hanc ecclesiam allata sunt reliquiae*, [in:] *Exuviaesacrae Constantinopolitanae. Fasciculus documentorum minorum ad Byzantina Lipsana in Occidentem saeculo XIII^o translata, spectantium et historiam quarti belli sacri imperiique gallo-graeci illustrantium*, vol. I, ed. P. Riant, Genevae 1877, p. 3–9; *Devastatio Constantinopolitana*, [in:] *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues*, ed. Ch. HOPF, Berlin 1873, p. 86–92; GUNTHERI CISTERCIENSIS, *Historia captae a latinis Constantinopoleos*, [in:] *PL*, vol. CCXII, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1865, col. 223–256; NICETAE CHONIATAE, *Historia*, rec. I.A. VAN DIETEN, Berolini–Novi Eboraci 1975 [= *CFHB*, 11].

Guy, abbot of Vaux de Cernay and his anonymous acolytes, were another important group, representing an isolated position, fiercely and consistently opposing the further direction of the expedition. In contrast, the third group, the most numerous one, seems to have shared the political intentions of Dandolo and Boniface, intending to head for Constantinople. There is no information suggesting that this group opposed the change of direction of the expedition at all. Thus, the clerical community in Villehardouin's chronicle did not play a role as significant as that of the seniors, responsible for the military and political affairs alike.

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