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THE EFFECTS OF REGIONAL SEPARATISM ON LATE ROMAN IDENTITY IN
FOURTEENTH-CENTURY BYZANTIUM

By

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B.A. University of Maine at Presque Isle, 2020

A THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirement for the Degree of
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This thesis explores how tendencies of regional separatism affected the political and ethnic contexts of late Roman identity during the course of the fourteenth century in the Byzantine Roman Empire. Fourteenth-century Byzantium was characterized by political fragmentation, significant sociopolitical changes and alterations, and subsequently a crisis of the Roman identity. The major question that the research will answer is: who was considered to be a Roman during the fourteenth century, and what did it mean for someone to hold that identity? The thesis will focus on two major and important geographical areas in the fourteenth century: the Principality of Achaia (Morea) and the Despotate of Epirus through the analysis of the writings of historians such as John VI Kantakouzenos (d. 1383 A.D.) and Nikephoros Gregoras (d. 1360 A.D.), as well as the chronicles of Morea and Tocco. The goal of this thesis is to prove that Roman identity during the fourteenth century developed strong territorial and political elements that resulted in a disjointed and fluid affiliation with the Roman ethnonym. There was no longer one unified understanding of “Roman” identity throughout the empire, but rather Romanness differed from region to region.
DEDICATION

I dedicate all my work and efforts to my amazing family. A special gratitude to my adoring parents, George, and Virginia, whose sacrifices and dedication allowed me to be who I am today, and my brother Vasileios (Billy) who has always been there for me.

I also want to dedicate this thesis to my partner Tiffany who has been by my side throughout graduate school and supported me through long nights of research.
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Lastly, I would also like to thank all my friends and family who have helped me throughout this process and who have always believed in me.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The subject of identity in the Eastern Roman Empire (or Byzantium) has been a topic of continuous research and reexamination due to the turbulent and complex lifetime of that identity along the empire’s geopolitical and cultural historical developments. Who was considered to be a Byzantine Roman? And who was to hold that identity? The answers to these questions changed over time according to various shifting values that were associated with that identity. Byzantine Roman identity underwent various reassessments throughout its existence, while during the later years of the empire in the periods of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and with the fall of Constantinople in 1204 by the Fourth Crusade, the Byzantine Roman identity transformed from an imperial and universalist concept to a compilation of fragmented and regional definitions of Roman identity.

The fragmentation that occurred during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was according to historian Donald Nicol, “The most shattering break with their past that the Byzantines had ever experienced”¹ while this new state of things within the empire influenced to a great extent the state of the Byzantine Roman identity. While the imperial and universalist powers were no longer at the forefront, Romans throughout the provinces felt vulnerable and their identity came into constant question. This vulnerability caused by fragmentation brought forward issues of identity that many Roman communities had not experienced before. During these two centuries the image of the once imperial and powerful Constantinople was less relevant to a sense of Roman identity, while political loyalties and power became increasingly more localized. The newly powerful different regions of the old Byzantine Empire throughout the

thirteenth to fourteenth centuries developed separate identities and interests. This regionalization both politically and culturally shaped the way the once formidable empire was operating in the region, while it also created new ways for assessing one’s identity and belonging.

The period of the fourteenth century is chosen for two reasons. First, for the opportunities that the political and social instability which existed in the Eastern Mediterranean region offer to the developing study of ethnic identity formulations in the Eastern Roman Empire. And second, for the at large absence of scholarly attention on Byzantine Roman identity during this century in particular. There have been recent studies on early Byzantine Roman identity and during the centuries of the fall of Constantinople in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but not extensive research on identity during the fourteenth century through sources from that period. Although this thesis will only cover a tiny fraction of the political, social, and source-based evidence from that period, it offers a renewed attention, interest, and analysis on late Byzantine Roman identity during a time where studies of ethnicity and identity are not particularly specific.

**Purpose of the Study**

My goal in this project it to explore how the political and regional fragmentation of the fourteenth century influenced the properties of Roman identity. How it was used, by whom, when was it not used, and how did using or identifying with the Roman identity change during this century in comparison with previous centuries? In other words, who was a Roman during the fourteenth century according to the sources and why? A defining characteristic of Roman identity during this period is the strengthening division between the political and ethnic identification of Romanness. The Roman political and ethnic identities were previously more or less unified, while after the fall of Constantinople in 1204 and during the later centuries these
two identities became more distinct from each other with the political identity expressed within a political loyalty to the state, separated by previous ethnic markers that would formerly characterize someone’s Roman identity as this research will explore in more detail. In the fourteenth century the definition of a Roman identity is not as clear and defined as previous centuries. There is a detectable confusion from the sources as to when this identity is used and for which groups of people. This study is aiming to shed new analysis to certain aspects of this change and the presence of the Roman identity in the fourteenth century.

Sources

To explore and evaluate these questions this thesis examines two particular geographical and political areas of interest from the fourteenth century: the Despotate of Epirus and the Principality of Achaia (Morea). The sources used to analyze these areas include two major primary sources through the writings of Constantinopolitan historians such as Nikephoros Gregoras (ca. 1295-1360) and John VI Kantakouzenos (ca. 1292-1383). These two chroniclers provide for the majority of historical works from the early and middle parts of fourteenth-century Byzantium. Although both Gregoras and emperor Kantakouzenos moved in similar Roman elite Constantinopolitan circles, their works had separate allegiances and viewpoints. Gregoras was from the Black Sea region, while Kantakouzenos was from the Peloponnese. Both were raised and moved in the highest circles of the Constantinopolitan elites. Kantakouzenos was in the court of emperor Andronikos II Palaiologos, and Andronikos III Palaiologos. He became the Grand Domestic of the empire during the civil wars of the 1320s, and an emperor in 1347. Kantakouzenos wrote his Histories while he was in the Peloponnese after he stepped down as an emperor later in his life. His work covers the period from 1320-1356 and is divided in four
books. These works have an interesting history and are contested texts since many historians have varying opinions on the honesty and reliability of Kantakouzenos’ work, but none deny their importance as one of the few remaining works of fourteenth-century Byzantium. Gregoras on the other hand, was a widely recognized scholar, statesman, and a diplomat. His *Roman History* focuses on the period after the Fourth Crusade until the late 1350s.

Since sources during this century are not plentiful and provide for a set of drawbacks, using just these two historians of a particular elite background would certainly point out the limitations of this period. In order to take account of more available source material from that century, the *Chronicle of Tocco* and the *Chronicle of Morea*, both written around the fourteenth century, will also be used to provide further insight on identity within the political and cultural areas of Epirus in the north, and Morea in the south (See Figure 2). The *Chronicle of Tocco* is written in Greek vernacular political verse, while its author has been anonymous. The *Chronicle* describes the history of the Tocco family, with an emphasis on the history of Carolo I Tocco and the events which took place in the western parts of Greece during the years 1375-1422. The text is a great source for understanding the political, economic and cultural life of the region of Epirus, especially the centers of Arta and Ioannina. The *Chronicle of Morea* is the main narrative source of the conquest and occupation of the former provinces of the Byzantine Empire.

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2 “…Kantakouzenos’ work has varying opinions amongst scholars. Donald Nicol views his work as honest and truthful, while other historians such as Ljubarskij views his work as fiction over history and as the work of an emperor which produced a biased work to make himself look favorable. Jill Page concludes that many historians agree that Kantakouzenos’ work whatever each historian’s stance is on it, it is overall a remarkable and rare autobiographical exercise in Byzantine Roman literature and an invaluable glimpse into the world view and asocial attitudes of the Byzantine aristocracy. She further states that we need to be careful when using his works as a guide for events.” Gill Page, *Being Byzantine*, 145-146.


4 “Political verse or πολιτικὸς στίχος, the preponderant verse-form found in late medieval vernacular Greek poetry, is composed in lines of fifteen syllables, divided into two hemistichs of eight and seven syllables.” Teresa Shawcross, *The Chronicle of Morea*, 169.

in the Peloponnese by the Frankish forces after the partition of the empire, while also providing detailed information on the creation and governance of the Principality of Morea by Geoffroy I de Villehardouin and the foundation of his ruling dynasty. It is one of the most valuable and important narrative sources that describe the western occupation of Greece during the crusader states of the late Middle Ages. Teresa Shawcross in her landmark work *The Chronicle of Morea* speculates that the chronicle was composed originally in Morea by a Grecophone Frank employed by a Frankish noble family, presumably the Le Maure family that lived in Morea. Currently, the work survives in eight manuscripts translated in four languages: Greek, French, Aragonese, and Italian. The original version, unlocated, is presumed to have been written in Greek. Lastly, of significant interest in this analysis will be the work of a non-Byzantine Roman historian, Marin Sanudo Torsello (ca. 1270-1343) and his work *Istoria Di Romania* composed in the first half of the fourteenth century, and which, like the *Chronicle of Morea*, provides valuable insight on the Latin occupied Romania. Through these sources and with these particular geographical comparisons in mind, the question of what makes a Roman during the fourteenth century in the Eastern Roman Empire will be evaluated through the lenses of ethnic and political identity, and regionalism.

**Historical Background**

The most important symbol of the Roman continuity, power, and identity in the Mediterranean and beyond was the city of Constantinople. This was a visible symbol with a clear

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presence both physically but also mentally, especially to the Roman citizens and their various neighbors. The Byzantine Empire was the most powerful polity in the eastern Mediterranean up until the eleventh century. The centralized and integrated system of governance and defense had broken up, while the empire was losing land and control in the Balkans and the rising threat of the Turks from the east was ever-growing. By the twelfth century, the empire was reduced to a significantly smaller state with its main important hub being the capital of Constantinople. The provinces had broken up into isolated centers of power controlled by local lords fighting and protecting their own local interests and territories; here some first signs of a regionalization had been clearly visible. The events of April 1204 were, according to many historians, the worst shattering break with their past that the Byzantine Romans had ever experienced. The fall of the imperial capital of Constantinople in 1204 to the forces of the Fourth Crusade was a momentous event for the subjects of the empire and the surrounding powers since it was the first time the city had ever fallen to an enemy. Once Constantinople was captured, the crusaders elected Baldwin of Flanders as the emperor in Constantinople and then they proceeded to divide the empire’s lands amongst themselves according to a document that they drafted known as the Partitio Romanae or the Partition of Rome. The plan was that the provinces of the empire in Greece, the Greek islands and Asia Minor were to be parceled out among the crusaders and the Venetians under a feudal tenure like the ones in effect in Western Europe with the Latin Emperor in Constantinople as the sovereign lord. The Latin emperor would receive a quarter of the empire, including Constantinople, while everyone else would receive three-eighths each. On top of that, Venice would receive the maritime districts that it had chosen. Accordingly, the empire of what

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is now mainland Greece was divided between various rulers to the Principality of Achaia (Morea), the Duchy of Archipelago, the kingdom of Thessalonica, the duchies of Athens and Thebes, and the county of Cephalonia. These provisions were not carried out completely since there were active organized resistance centers against the Latin conquerors in the provinces. These centers developed into political rallying points for refugees from Constantinople and other areas who refused to accept the Latin rule. Certain areas of the empire had developed anti-centrist tendencies and movements before 1204, while the imperial government had for quite some time no power or influence over these areas since the command and power was directly tied to the local lords. Some of these lords found it beneficial to side with the invaders, while others preferred to establish their own areas of resistance.

The Roman Empire continued to exist in a sense through the establishment of the three so-called Greek successor states. These were counterclaimants to the imperial throne, and they asserted their positions of power against each other and against the Frankish kingdoms for many years well into the late fourteenth century. In northwestern Greece, the ruling aristocrat Michael Doukas from the Komnenos-Doukas clan carved out his domain centered around the city of Arta with its focus on the geographical extent of Epirus; this entity lasted in various forms up until the fifteenth century. On the eastern side of the Aegean in western Asia Minor, Theodore Laskaris from the Laskaris family fled from Constantinople in 1204 and like his counterpart Doukas, he gathered together with refugees from the city and organized resistance around his capital, the city of Nicaea. There he claimed the title of Emperor of the Roman Empire in exile, and also appointed an orthodox Patriarch. In other words, Laskaris and the Nicaea Empire thought from

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12 Many of these local lords were related to the imperial families in Constantinople. Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 10.
the start that they were the legitimate rulers of the old Byzantine Roman Empire. Lastly, the third and least conflict prone state was the Empire of Trebizond, ruled by the Komnenos dynasty, which established their more-or-less autonomous empire in central-eastern Pontos on the southern shores of the Black Sea.\footnote{Haldon, The Palgrave Atlas, 118.} The Empire of Trebizond remained mainly independent from the conflicts between the other two empires while its rulers supported from the beginning that they were also the true claimants to the imperial throne and title which they did claim for many years. The Despotate of Epirus had every intention to recover Constantinople as well, but the Empire of Nicaea in 1261 ended up recovering the capital and re-establishing the imperial Byzantine Roman rule once again. Thus, with the restoration of the capital and with its long-lasting claims for legality, the Empire of Nicaea sealed its legitimacy from the other counterclaimants.

By 1261, the newly established Nicaea emperor in Constantinople had to face many challenges from all corners of the once unified and formidable empire. The new empire in the thirteenth century extended to western Asia Minor, some Aegean islands, while also including most of Byzantine Thrace and part of Macedonia including the city of Thessalonica. The independent kingdoms of Serbia and Bulgaria were on the rise, while central and southern Greece, Athens and Morea were still under Frankish rule. The trade routes were controlled heavily by the Venetians and the Genoese, and most importantly, separatist Byzantine Roman principalities and their rulers refused to acknowledge that the empire was re-established. As historian Donald Nicol had stated, “Epirus in North-western Greece and Trebizond on the Black Sea, their spirit of independence was too strong to eradicate.”\footnote{Ibid., 17.} As demonstrated here, most of the problems of the disintegrating political structure which existed before 1204 were much more
visible and active after 1261, while the occupation can be seen as a trial which brought to the front the fragility of the Byzantine imperial power and its ideology.

Despite the recovery of the empire by Nicæa in 1261, the last two centuries of recovered imperial Byzantine rule were challenging and followed a slow process of power and territorial contraction. Scholars have also characterized these two centuries as “periods of decline marked by political fragility and economic scarcity.” Characteristically, the fourteenth-century historian Nikephoros Gregoras, wrote that in 1204 the Byzantine Empire had been broken into many small pieces like a “freight boat during the storm.” This was the state of the once formidable empire during the fourteenth century, decentralized and always in conflict.

Under the new Roman emperor after the Latin rule, Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259-1282), the empire expanded into the Peloponnese and was also able to forge some alliances with other kingdoms providing for a renewed sense of international influence and power. The first emperor of the fourteenth century was Andronikos II Palaiologos (1282-1328), and during his reign the situation was unlike that of Michael VIII. The Asian provinces were left open to the challenge from the East, the Seljuk Turks, forcing almost all of territory over Asia Minor under Turkish rule by 1300. By 1328, the empire was unable to defend hostile attacks to its territorial holdings and was comprised of a few isolated fortress-towns. This gloomy situation became even darker with the two civil wars after the death of Andronikos II during the period from 1321-1354. Andronikos III, the grandson of Andronikos II rebelled against his grandfather in 1321, and through various conflicts and squabbling that lasted four years, he became the ruler in 1328

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up until 1341. Under Andronikos III the empire was able to see some much-needed military and diplomatic successes and the recovery of certain provinces from northern Greece.\(^{20}\) Between 1328 and 1340, the empire seemed to have enjoyed some period of revival. In 1341, Andronikos III died, and his death caused a turbulent environment in the empire for the issue of succession to the throne. His eldest son John VI Palaiologos was too young to become emperor, and the duties fell upon Andronikos’s closest friend and counselor, John VI Kantakouzenos. The shift of the imperial power from Andronikos III to Kantakouzenos was not received well by certain circles within the capital. In 1341, Kantakouzenos was declared an enemy by a regency in Constantinople and the conflict between the two lasted until 1346 when Kantakouzenos was proclaimed Emperor at Didymoteichon. The regency had collapsed and he was to return to the capital for this official coronation.\(^{21}\) This second civil war was much more destructive than the first one, according to Nicol’s description of Kantakouzenos’s thoughts it was “the worst civil war that the Romans had ever experienced, a conflict that destroyed almost everything, reducing the great Roman Empire to a feeble shadow of its former self.”\(^{22}\) In addition to these political divisions, other religious and social rifts such as the hesychasm controversy\(^{23}\) further polarized the empire and challenged its recovery.

After these conflicts, the empire was in a desperate situation. The Serbian ruler Štefan IV Dušan had taken Byzantine lands in eastern Macedonia, Albania, and Thessaly, while the Byzantine Empire was left with Thrace and Constantinople, the city of Thessalonica, some lands

\(^{20}\) Nicol, *The Last Centuries*, 178.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 190.
\(^{22}\) Ibid., 191.
\(^{23}\) “A conflict within the church, between those who adopted a mystical attitude, that posited the possibility of experiencing the Divine Light through a special form of prayer (the hesychasts), and those who believed that God may be experienced in his manifestations but not in his essence.” This controversy divided both church and members of society. Angeliki Laiou, “The Palaiologoi and the world around them (1261-1400),” in Jonathan Shepard, *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire*, 2008, 823.
in the Peloponnese and some norther Aegean islands.\textsuperscript{24} The economic situation in these areas deteriorated, with the provinces not having enough resources to pay taxes to the capital. In other words, these regions were “more or less autonomous provinces, constituting together an empire only in the name and by tradition.”\textsuperscript{25} What these events show us so far is that the situation during the fourteenth century was that of a struggling empire trying to reclaim and restore lands which have been lost and which belonged to the previous territorial expansion of the Roman Empire before 1204.

While these events were unfolding, the situation within the regional powers which claimed their independence from the imperial influence was also facing turbulent sociopolitical transformations. This study looks at the two geographical and political regions which were still claiming independence from the new imperial crowns: Epirus and Achaia (Morea).

So far, the image of fourteenth-century geopolitical developments is that of increasing localization of power in the hands of Roman states such as Epirus or some of the most successful remnants of the Latin and Frankish rule in southern Greece. The later wished to remain independent from the newly reestablished Byzantine imperial rule, while the other were also trying to sustain their political control over the encroaching Byzantine reclaiming policy of its lost lands. In the second half of the fourteenth century in particular, the new Byzantine Roman Empire was a “tiny and disjointed state in a Mediterranean world that was undergoing its own crisis.”\textsuperscript{26} The recovery of Constantinople in 1261 had reinstated a dream of reconstitution of the old glory of the empire; however, this proved to be a sad reality since decentralization, separatism, and smaller political entities had formed strong units of resistance to any attempts of

\textsuperscript{24} Haldon, \textit{The Palgrave Atlas}, 122.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26} Shepard, \textit{The Cambridge History}, 827.
a new form of homogenization and reunification under the new imperial power in Constantinople.

These numerous challenges of centrifugal and localist tendencies which faced the new imperial agenda stigmatized the final years of the empire. According to Dimiter Angelov in his *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330*, from approximately 1211 to 1328 there were around twenty attempted usurpations against the imperial rule.⁵⁷ So far, this historical background snapshot has talked about some of the major events which took place during the fourteenth century, while the concepts of regional separatism and imperial and urban relations have been used widely without any major analysis. The following paragraphs will attempt to provide such an explanation, focusing on the power relations between the imperial and the urban/local powers and the development of regional separatism during the fourteenth century. This in turn will support the argument of this research in that it will provide nuanced explanations about the settings in which Roman identity was able to change and take different forms during this century in particular.

The Eastern Roman Empire throughout its long life maintained a continuous imperial government for over a thousand years. This imperial government and its outreaching administration was not deeply in control of provincial society, but it maintained the only monopoly in the sovereignty of that local community, while at the same time allowing for local provincial households to regulate their societies.⁵⁸ According to Leonora Neville in *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society, 950-1100*, the objectives of the imperial government towards the provinces were the maintenance of a strong imperial sovereignty, the suppression of a possible

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revolt, and the collection of taxes. These objectives could be attributed to the ability of the imperial administration and forces to reach these provinces to regulate their affairs. The presence of an imperial authority depended very much on regional conditions such as socio-economic frameworks and topographic locations. The spatial extent and intensity of imperial rule was fluid and varied depending on conditions out of the imperial political control. Thus, according to Neville, from a provincial perspective, the imperial administration “appears both apathetic about regulating provincial society and determined about maintain a monopoly on sovereignty in Constantinople. The imperial administration intervened in the provinces to serve its own limited interests, not to regulate provincial life.” In simpler terms, the imperial administration did not care about what happened in the provinces if they paid their taxes and remained loyal to the imperial rule. This in return allowed for these local provincial peoples and local elites to order their enclosed societies to their liking, which led to significant events and changes as the thirteenth and the fourteenth-century historical analysis have showcased. More scholars have touched upon this issue of the imperial and local power hierarchies, which were also influential to the later establishment of the Ottoman Empire, and which originated in part from these last Byzantine centuries. Karen Barkey in Empire of Difference: The Ottomans in Comparative Perspective, explained that the imperial state does not exercise absolute monopoly of power in the provinces, but rather shares that control with local elites, religious and other intermediate bodies: “To rule over vast expanses of territory, as well as to ensure military and administrative cooperation, imperial states negotiate and willingly relinquish some degree of autonomy.”

30 Neville, Authority, 39.
order for the imperial office to secure the loyalty of its frontier powers and individual kinship houses, it made consistent efforts to ensure that the emperor in Constantinople was seen as the legitimate ruler. Provincial authority was further based on elements such as membership to a successful provincial household, wealth, and support from a network of royal and elite households.\textsuperscript{32} All of this accumulated to a significant amount of provincial freedom when it pertained to its own provincial society, but at the same time when events and developments such as the fall of the empire in 1204 happened, these provinces faced considerable insecurities, which lead to the separatist movements and attempts from the twelfth century onward.

During the fourteenth century, the provinces and the capital had already since the previous two centuries lost much of what used to connect them politically. Constantinople lost much of its ability to control its provinces, and separatist activities had grown exponentially.\textsuperscript{33} The provinces, and in particular the provinces of Epirus and Achaia, engaged actively in rebellion against the “oppression” of the distant center, and throughout the century they sought to keep that independence intact. Radić names these developments as a chaotic state in the provinces of continental Greece.\textsuperscript{34} With the continued resistance against Constantinople and a possible reunification with the empire, at least within the Roman separatist states, the provinces viewed the capital as an unjust, corrupt, and illegitimate institution. What fourteenth-century events showcase is that the local elites, using the already struggling system of imperial/provincial relations, grappled to sustain their independence within their established localities and states. Doing this caused issues with identity and identification. How could Roman citizens in Epirus or Morea, which were considered Roman under the Byzantine Empire but were now part of a

\textsuperscript{32} Neville, Authority, 166.
\textsuperscript{33} Radić, “The Divided Empire,” 43.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
separatist state or Frankish states, still refer to themselves as Romans? What makes a Romans at this point? When Romans are not connected to the capital and the emperor, did they still count as Romans? This question is often dependent on the point of view of the source. As the next chapter will showcase, local individuals and communities still referred to themselves as Romans, while sources from the side of the imperial administration and the capital are selective in their use of the ethnonym Roman, choosing when to attribute such an identity based on the current political situation and the beliefs of the recorder of the source.

**Historiography**

In contemporary Byzantine studies, unlike the rest of the medieval field, identity as a tool of analysis and close study became a popular topic during the end of the twentieth century. In more recent years scholars have explored the identity of the Romans of Byzantium and have attempted to dissect and analyze concepts such as ethnicity, and imperial and local identities. According to Nikolaos G. Chrissis, there have been older studies on Byzantine identity from as far back as the 1970’s but what these studies lacked was serious consideration from the social sciences on the subject of identity formation.35 Most of these earlier works on Byzantine identity rather looked at the subject with a set criteria in mind, trying to prove or disprove certain traits of a true Byzantine identity based on how “Greek” that identity really was. Stepping away from those scholarly habits, more contemporary works by Gill Page,36 Anthony Kaldellis,37 and

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Yannis Stouraitis,\textsuperscript{38} have looked at the actual constructions and representations of identity through new methodological reconsiderations. Where these authors differ is that unlike previous historians of the field, they did not adopt an ideology of denial of Roman identity, but rather chose to look at the sources and reexamine the presence of a Byzantine Roman identity.

Historians of the field have for a long time adopted an ideology that denied that the Byzantines called themselves Romans, and they have engaged in a practice where their Romanness has been replaced by other identities such as Greeks and Byzantines. The sources, on the other hand, are clearly use the term Romans. Anthony Kaldellis, one of the leading scholars on Byzantium and one of the most prominent scholars to address this issue in recent years, claims that the Byzantines called themselves Romans, and their state the polity of the Romans, or Romania.\textsuperscript{39} The label “Byzantine” conceals the difference between the subjects of the empire who were ethnically Roman, and those who did not belong in that category. Kaldellis here states that this way of thinking about Byzantium and its inhabitants is “making it impossible for us to study ethnicity, which in turn makes it impossible to study this state as an empire.”\textsuperscript{40} Such questions and deconstructionist approaches to figuring out the identity of the Romans of Byzantium has created a growing interest in the Roman identity of the East. Kaldellis also makes the argument that what it meant to be a Roman varied largely by the period, the geographical region, and the sociopolitical context - an approach that proved to be useful for the study and understanding of Roman identity in certain periods, contexts, variety of peoples and places.


\textsuperscript{39} Kaldellis, \textit{Romanland}, ix.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., xiv.
The work *Romanland* by Kaldellis is currently one of the most recent extensive publications on Roman ethnicity in Byzantium; it offers a broad understanding of identity and ethnicity in the Byzantine context. Kaldellis’s work, both recent and previous, sparked renewed interest in the perception and study of medieval Roman identity; still, it has not gone unchallenged by other scholars such as Yannis Stouraitis and his works “Reinventing Roman Ethnicity in High and Late Medieval Byzantium” (2017) and “Roman Identity in Byzantium: A Critical Approach” (2014). Stouraitis argues that Roman identity was not a national identity and that it was held exclusively in various ways by the elite in Constantinople. It was used only by that same elite and projected to the rest of the population throughout the empire, while the empire was a so-called system of provincial exploitation. Identity formation according to Stouraitis’s work was an elite-driven discursive phenomenon drawing heavily on education and state propaganda. This idea of the Byzantine elite identity was refuted by Kaldellis’ *Romanland* and “The Social Scope of Roman Identity in Byzantium: An Evidence-based Approach” (2017). Although Stouraitis supports his elite identity approach, Kaldellis argues that the sources refute the idea that Roman identity was exclusively used and manipulated by an elite extensively: “Romans shared the same religion, language, art and architecture, history, state and laws, customs, and probably material conditions. They were not split into ethnic groups of social castes. They were subject to the same laws and each of them could theoretically occupy any office in the state. Official power derived from the state and its offices and not from clan or caste. As an identity, *Romanitas* ‘subsumed or replaced local allegiances [and] ethnicities.”

This scholarly conversation as to the nature of Roman identity showcases the complexity of the

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41 Stouraitis, Yannis. “Reinventing Roman Ethnicity”, 70-94.
issue and the different approaches that contemporary scholars have adopted in order to study the
different approaches that contemporary scholars have adopted in order to study the
issue of a Roman identity creation from a constructive and evidence-based method.

Using these scholarly ideas and theories by Kaldellis and Stouraitis, this thesis also
follows in the scholarly footsteps of another historian that worked on the topic of Byzantine
Roman identity, Gill Page. In particular, Page’s approach and analysis of the separation between
an ethnic and political identity is also used in this research. Gill Page’s earlier work titled Being
Byzantine: Greek Identity before the Ottomans (2008) argues that the Latin conquests of 1204
and the Fourth Crusade transformed Roman identity from an unmarked political identity (subject
to the emperor and residence in the empire) into new ways of identifying with the Roman
identity (religious, linguistic, cultural). Such differences varied through the fragmented empire
and through the various provincial powers. Page, like Kaldellis, takes a different approach from
previous scholars of Byzantine identity based on a selection of primary sources. Her major
argument is that being Roman had developed into two different senses, the political and the
ethnic. In this way Page offered a new way of looking at Roman identity and its survival after it
was cut off from the center of the state: Constantinople and the emperor. This approach was
successful for the discussions of identity in these contexts because it went beyond the traditional
scholarship within the Byzantine studies field. Page used modern understandings of ethnicity to
study Roman ethnic groups in the post-1204 world, an attempt which was a fresh approach for
the field and the topic.

These particular studies appeared to analyze concepts of ethnic and imperial identities in
Byzantium, in particular looking at the identity of the Romans and the formation of such identity
while also trying to battle with preconceptions of the past and move the field forward.44

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44 Identity and the Other in Byzantine Studies: An Introduction by Koray Durak and Ivana Jectić in Identity and the
Other in Byzantium, 2019, 5.
According to Durak and Jevtić in *Identity and the Other in Byzantine Studies* (2019), the study of group identities in Byzantium is a field with many future prospects and with new identity categories that have only until recently began to be analyzed by scholars. Such fresh approaches to identity categorizations under the broader umbrella of Byzantine identities include the provincial, civic, and Constantinopolitan identities, which are a major part of the analysis for conducting this research. With such new approaches to the study of identity when looking at the politically fragmented fourteenth century and the later Byzantine periods in general terms, new opportunities arise to observe conflicting identities and their renegotiations by groups, individuals, and political, social, and religious forces. In this research, the concept of provincial local separatism is used as a primary categorization for the study of the formation of Byzantine Roman identity.

The study of regional separatism in late Byzantium is also an interesting and engaging topic with several scholars that have explored the various developments during the period. The periods of the late empire from the late twelfth to the early fifteenth centuries are fully impacted by political destabilization and a set of recalibrations of the Byzantine Roman identity. In this fragmented world, political associations did not necessarily coincide with ethnic, religious, or other identities, which make questions of belonging complex but also open to further investigation. Authors that have looked at the late centuries of the empire have often included topics and discussion on provincial society, politics, kinship, regional identities, questions of center and periphery, and imperial power. There has not yet been a general, mainstream extensive work on identity through the lenses of local separatism. Donald M. Nicol’s *The Last Centuries of Byzantium 1261-1453* (1972) and *The Despotate of Epiros 1267-1479* (1984), for

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example, are great works that analyze the life of the empire and its periphery during the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, although they do not extensively mention identity formation or change as a primary historical category of analysis in their narratives. To this end, more recent works on the late empire have extended their narrative and analysis to include identity to a certain extent. Nevra Necipoglu’s work *Byzantium Between the Ottomans and the Latins* (2009) provides a concise study of the late empire, the characteristics of political fragmentation and dismemberment of political power, while at the same time including in that argument a discussion of how such events and developments influenced decisions within society. Although this work still does not make clear the influence of such events on the Byzantine Roman identity, the analysis that it provides leads the discussion of identity to a much clear path for connecting the dots between these sociopolitical events and the process of identity formation. Similarly, Dimiter Angelov’s *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204-1330* (2007) also looks at imperial ideology and political thought in late Byzantium but in this case, he successfully includes discussions of identity and influences on identity from the events that took place after the fall of the empire in 1204. Through a discussion of continuity and change, Angelov’s work is one of the first major attempts to look at how these events from the late empire can and did influence identity through various societal settings and events. Similarly, looking at anti-centrism and regionalism, Vlada Stanković in his chapter “In the Balkans ‘without’ Constantinople: Questions of Center and Periphery” (2016) approaches the later years of the empire through the lenses of regionalism as a tool of analysis, offering new perspectives on the study of fluctuating entities such as identity. Such process he argues proves to be useful for better understanding Byzantium and its transformation after the aftermath of the capture of Constantinople on 1204, since the associations that bonded Constantinople and the peripheral
regions had complex interregional and inter-peripheral relations which after the fall unveiled certain flaws between them. The center of these interactions was located on the regional level, hidden in many ways underneath the previously unchallenged and oriented political sphere of a power center. By paying attention to the regional situation, the functioning of Byzantium as a political and cultural entity is better defined, especially between geographically fluctuating polities.46

Here it is worth mentioning the works of Leonora Neville’s *Authority in Byzantine Provincial Society 950-1100* (2004), and Nathan Leidholm’s *Elite Byzantine Kinship, 950-1204* (2019). These works have been important ‘steppingstones’ for looking at the relationships and inner workings between Byzantine authority in the provinces and the elite central powers. Although written with a focus on the early Byzantine Empire, both works provide much needed information about the structure of Byzantine society and the relationships between various sociopolitical groups. What we gather from these works is a complex relationship between the provinces and the center of the empire at Constantinople which influenced their development and progress through their communication and negotiation of power. This research study focuses on a specific time and space - fourteenth-century Epirus and Morea - to study Roman identity particularly during this timeframe to better understand certain aspects of its usage, adoption, and presence in the sociopolitical environment of the late Byzantine Empire.

Having introduced some of the most significant secondary works and conceptual frameworks that this research will engage with, the question that arises is why choose the fourteenth century specifically to analyze Roman identity? The simple answer to this question is

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that the fourteenth century has not yet been completely analyzed within the new Byzantine Roman identity frameworks.\textsuperscript{47} How was Roman identity during this century functioning, and in what areas? Did regionalism had anything to do with identity formation? Questions like these, influenced by the works and the turn in the ways in which identity is looked at, provide for the opportunity to synthesize studies on Byzantine Roman identity and regional separatism together providing new ways at understanding how Byzantine Romanness functioned. The fourteenth century is also chosen for this research because it is the century after the turbulent thirteenth century where the Byzantine world faced the fall of its previous power and prestige. Due to the great importance and impact that the thirteenth century had on history of the Byzantine Empire, it seems that the fourteenth century is either consciously or unconsciously been left out from the studies and discussions, especially when it comes to Roman identity.

The ways in which this thesis differs from other works, and the ways in which it adds to the discussion of Roman identity in Byzantium has to do with the emphasis on fourteenth-century Roman identity and the ways in which the regional separatism affected what it meant to be a Roman. The politically fragmented period of the fourteenth century and the ethnically and linguistic diverse Byzantine Empire and Eastern Mediterranean offer opportunities to observe how conflicting identities are negotiated by individuals and groups.

\textsuperscript{47} There is one major work that uses identity as a framework of analysis during the previous century (thirteenth century) in Byzantium, \textit{Identities and Allegiances in the Eastern Mediterranean After 1204} (2011) by Judith Herrin and Guillaume Saint-Guillain. This study discusses certain aspects of identity specifically during the thirteenth century that looks at how major sociopolitical changes also aided in a way to the fragmentation and the political complexities of the empire.
Outline

Chapter 2 introduces the necessary theoretical frameworks which I employ in this project. The chapter is divided in three parts with the goal of briefly explaining and analyzing the issue of Byzantine Roman identity both prior to 1204 and after 1204. Of primary significance is the subject of the differentiation between the political and ethnic Roman identity which is important for my study of fourteenth-century identity and for understanding the machinations of Byzantine Roman identity broadly.

Chapter 3 explores the primary questions of my thesis about Byzantine Roman identity during the fourteenth century. Through the use of the primary sources discussed above, I will delve into the question of who is considered to be a Roman within the two focus areas of Epirus and Morea. Finally, in Chapter 4, I provide some concluding thoughts, while also a short discussion about future directions for the study of ethnicity and identity during the Late Byzantine Roman period, including the sources used in this research.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I explore the theoretical frameworks of ethnicity and Byzantine Roman identity. The first general framework of ethnicity is related to the understanding of group formation and belonging which will aid in the understanding of regionalism employed throughout this research.

Medieval Ethnicity

It will be wise to start this chapter and study of Byzantine Roman identity with a brief analysis of what we mean when we refer to medieval ethnicity and ethnic groups, in relation to our understanding of Roman identity. The term ‘ethnic’ survives from the Greek word ethnos, ethnikos which was used to refer to a heathen, a barbarian or an outsider.\(^{48}\) Ethnicity as a term gained much attention with the work of sociologist Max Weber and the birth of the subsequent field of ethnic studies in the 1970’s.\(^{49}\) Weber states that our current understanding of ethnic groups consists of those groups which “entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or both, or because of memories of colonization and migration; this belief must be important for the propagation of group formation; conversely, it does not matter whether or not an objective blood relationship exists.”\(^{50}\) This is useful for this and every study on ethnic identities because it allows for a nuanced understanding that ethnicity is a social construct, similar with Roman identity in this case. Similarly, Fredrick

\(^{48}\) R. Williams, *Keywords* (Flamingo, 1976), 119.
Barth and his influential studies on ethnicity reject the notion that ethnic groups were rigid and bounded entities formed through responses to ecological factors, biological determination, and defined by territorial boundaries. Barth introduces the notions that ethnic groups were socially constructed with no a priori existence or stability. Boundaries also play a major role in ethnic group formations, according to Barth, ethnic groups cannot exist in isolation but only in contrast to other such groups.51

The current understanding of ethnicity or ethnic identity then boils down to a shared belief between members of a group that they are similar, and that similarity is deeply rooted in social and cultural markers (language, dress, faith, etc.), and sometimes in (imaginary) biological values. At the same time this belief is reenforced by positioning the group against an ‘other’ which is different and is usually positioned as a threat. Furthermore, Anthony Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (1991) defined an ethnic group as having a collective name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, more than one element of common culture, an association with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity among significant sectors of the population.52 Although Smith refers to a much more generalized and contemporary understanding of ethnicity, his description of ethnic identity is still useful and allowed other scholars to explore ethnic identities in various contexts and timer periods.

Building on this idea of ethnicity, medieval ethnicity as a social construct is best described by Robert Bartlett where he devotes his attention to the significance of dress fashion, haircuts, beards, diet, festivals, warfare, language and other social practices and traditions for the formation of ethnic identity. Thus, for medieval ethnicity the factors that define its formation are

again social, cultural, legal, political, economic, religious, and regional.\textsuperscript{53} Bartlett further suggests that the understanding of ethnicity in the Middle Ages was that culture creates ethnicity, while in other situations ethnic relationships were invoked in an attempt to create political alliances.\textsuperscript{54} Patrick Geary and Bartlett also referred to the concept of situational ethnicity. Medieval ethnicity according to Geary was a subjective concept where groups and individuals chose their identification within specific contexts and for particular reasons.\textsuperscript{55} That identification could also be further molded and manipulated to accommodate certain situations or events, thus, forming an identity in the “service of politics.” Bartlett also supports this idea: “…those making the appeals calculated that there was some strength and meaning in calling up common descent and language and that a feeling of ethnic and linguistic solidarity might shape and direct political action.”\textsuperscript{56} This concept of situational ethnicity will help to better analyze the events and alteration of the Roman ethnic identity in late Byzantium, where a Roman identity was divided, redefined, and reassigned based on political situations.

To conclude, a nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of ethnicity helps set the scene for the discussion and understanding of Byzantine Roman identity and ethnic belonging. Since Roman identity as an ethnic identification has been the subject at hand, understanding ethnic identities and their function will help us better understand and frame Roman identity in Byzantium.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 589.  
\textsuperscript{56} Bartlett, “Concepts of race and ethnicity,” 51.
**Byzantine Roman Identity**

One of Antony Kaldellis’s critiques about the field of Byzantine studies states that “The study of Byzantium as an empire is, therefore, blocked by the field’s refusal to engage critically and directly with ethnicity.” Kaldellis claims that the concept of ethnicity is a problem for Byzantine studies at a time when other disciplines and fields are fully engaged with the concept. Identity in the study of Byzantium has suffered from what he mentions as a ‘Roman denialism’. This denialism has used an invented and opaque term, Byzantine, and Byzantium, in place of the actual definition found in the sources: Roman. The denialism of Roman identity emerged from as far back as medieval prejudice and was carried through modern scholarship. The medieval denialism was that the Romans living in what is now referred to as the Byzantine Empire, were not truly Romans but rather “Greeks”, while that Greek identity for the Byzantine Roman population changes again in the nineteenth century and in place of the term medieval “Greeks” they were framed as Byzantines. The reasons behind such attitudes encompass a variety of political motives from the Middle Ages all the way to nineteenth-century nationalism. The Byzantines spoke Greek, did not rule in Rome, and were not Roman Catholics. Thus, they had nothing to do with Rome in terms of language (and so ethnicity), geography, or religion.

Western medieval observers and polemicists constructed a set of distortions that stripped Byzantium of its claim to Rome, making it available for conquest and exploitation. The Byzantines did not refer to themselves as Greeks; it is only late on during the life of the empire (twelfth-thirteenth centuries) when a Hellenic identity and the attachment to the Hellenic (ancient Greek) past was used by the Nicaean elite for geopolitical and cultural issues after the fall of

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57 Kaldellis, *Romanland*, xi.
58 A recent work titled *The Invention of Byzantium in Early Modern Europe* (2021) focuses exclusively on this topic. More about this can also be found at Kaldellis’s work *Byantium Unbound* (2019).
Constantinople. The Byzantines saw themselves as the Romans that were carrying through the Roman legacy; at the end of the day they believed that they were the true and direct continuation of the ancient Romans and their empire. There is of course the debate raised by Stouraitis for the extent of this knowledge of a Roman identity and identification of the wider population of the empire versus the use of that identity by an educated eastern Roman élite. Certainly, the theory that an elite both at Constantinople but also at the provinces helped create an identity, supports the argument of the social construction of such identity in addition with political influence. At the same time Kaldellis and his argument is that the Roman identity in Byzantium was a national one and not restricted to an elite in Constantinople. Once again, this is a long-debated issue, with good points from both sides of the spectrum. The current research falls somewhere in between, attributing a sense of truth to both theories. Indeed, Roman identity was framed in the sources by the elite that wrote those texts, but it was also passed down to the wider population establishing a sense of Roman belonging.

The Byzantine Romans were an ethnic group, and they used the Roman label in an ethnic way. Just like the previous definitions of ethnic groups, Roman ethnicity in Byzantium was the result of social constructions that emerge, disappear, fuse, and break up. What defined the Romans of Byzantium was their customs, traits, practices, and their bounded geographical location. Furthermore, Byzantine Romans being the majority within their empire, had their very own ethnonym, language, customs, laws and institutions, a homeland (Romania), and a sense that they were different from other ethnic groups. According to many scholars, this Byzantine

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63 Kaldellis, Romanland, 44.
Roman identity was shaped around three areas of focus: the political and imperial standing (Romans), the religious (Orthodox Christian) and cultural (Hellenic) elements. The significance and order of these vary from scholar to scholar and their different interpretations.

Roman identity had a territorial character as well. What today we call Byzantium, the Byzantine Romans called Romanland or Romania, the land of the Romans. Romania encompassed lands under imperial Roman authority, what the Byzantine Romans referred to as Oikoumeni or the inhabited land. Some similar and earlier ways of expressing the realm of the Roman rule were words such as, Rhomaion arche, Rhomaion basileia, and Rhomaion politeia. The Byzantine Romania, according to Kaldellis, was a name of popular origin and a part of the mental landscape of the average Roman. In the territory of Romania, the imperial jurisdiction was imposed, while citizens were meant to labor for and defend this homeland. This Byzantine universalism followed a particular pattern which tied in various ways the geographical range of the Byzantine state with the Byzantine Roman identity. This territorial and spatial aspect of Roman identity was associated with the people who inhabited the land. People are the identifiers of the territories that they occupy, while they are identified by their genos. For example, if a region was historically inhabited by Roman subjects to the emperor and it was lost to foreign rule, that land and its inhabitants would still be considered in many cases as belonging to Romanland and the Roman imperial authority. This theoretical understating of what constituted Roman land changed with the course of the centuries to encompass different versions and extends of where the borders were to be drawn. This mode of spatiality of identity and authority

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64 Chrissis, “Worlds apart?” 258.
65 Kaldellis, Romanland, 84.
67 Kaldellis, Romanland, 85.
plays a significant role in the post-1261 world, where Byzantine emperors and patriarchs were trying to concretize the rightful dominations of Constantinople over the lost lands of the empire.\textsuperscript{69}

**Byzantine Roman identity prior to and after 1204**

From what scholars like Page, Chrissis, Shepard, Nicol, and many others have analyzed, 1204 and the fall of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade was an event which prompted a wave of sociopolitical changes that altered the empire for the remainder of its life. When studying Byzantine Roman identity, especially during the later centuries, it is to our benefit that we look at how Byzantine Roman identity changed after 1204 which will then provide for a sufficient step into the fourteenth century.

Roman identity prior to 1204 was imperial, territorial, religious, cultural, and linguistic. A Roman citizen was someone that had to live within Romanland and thus to live under the Roman Emperors’ rule and administration; they had to be a part of or convert to Orthodox Christianity and speak or learn Greek. Pre-1204, the Byzantine Empire was an ethnically diverse and expansive state. Foreigners who entered the empire either individually or in large groups could and usually did assimilate within the larger Roman population and “became” Roman, removing (as much as possible) their previous identities. Romanness was a cultural and political identity that allowed for larger and expansive narratives of belonging.\textsuperscript{70} On many occasions it took numerous generations for a complete assimilation, while the opposite is also true for the Romans living outside their empire where they could retain their Roman identity for a certain

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{70} Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 272.
number of generations.\textsuperscript{71} Thus, prior to 1204, the people living in Romanland were subjects of
the emperor, called themselves Roman, obeyed the Roman law, and followed the state religion
and culture. This was in its totality a political identity attached to the imperial state.

Before the events of 1204 and twelfth century more generally, there is an argument to be
made that the empire and subsequently Roman identity was already going through a subtle crisis,
and that that crisis only exploded after 1204. In other words, the identity crisis was like a forest
fire ready to burst, and 1204 was the spark. With the coming of the twelfth century, increasing
threats from the Turks in the east, the Normans in the west, and the Bulgarians in the north, and
an increasing number of different ethnic groups settling within the empire, many Byzantine
Romans began fearing the western powers and other increasing threats.\textsuperscript{72} This vulnerability
posed new economic, social, and identity challenges within the empire that were also based upon
geographical aspects and differences.\textsuperscript{73} As the empire was shrinking, it faced some of its first
major signs of regionalism. This regionalism between the provinces and Constantinople brought
forward cultural and territorial issues. The provinces developed different interests from the
capital, while due to the geographical extent of some of these provinces there were cases where
the provincial populations would find better security and stability from a foreign power rather
from the centralized Byzantine capital. As was stated previously by Neville, the capital had no
interest in regulating provincial life, only maintaining its allegiance, which allowed for other
powerful powers to intervene and gain the allegiances of these localities over Constantinople.
For example, “When the Seljuk Turks captured lands in the Maeander valley, some subjects of
the empire voluntarily migrated to live under Turkish rule.”\textsuperscript{74}

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid, 63.
\textsuperscript{72} Shepard, The Cambridge History, 750.
\textsuperscript{73} Page, Being Byzantine, 69.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 70.
At the eve of the Fourth Crusade, the imperial administration was ineffective and degraded. This corruption of the heads of the state weakened the Roman faith and respect for the imperial office and system of administration, while strong displeasure at how the administration was handling the issues with the provinces had grown.\textsuperscript{75} In addition to an imperial office corruption, and increasing threats at the borders all around the empire, there were also economic issues that undermined the empire’s ability to maintain the state in order, forcing in their way Roman identity to shift and take other forms. The capital was increasingly out of step with the provinces over taxation, minimal representation, and protection. This forced the provinces to seek other solutions as to their governance. These pre-1204 developments served as a pretext for the changing meaning of Roman identity after the events of 1204, where the previous political identity was no longer relevant like before, and where new identities were becoming more prominent. According to Stouraitis Roman identity had to adapt to new challenges and needs through the events of 1204, but also later during the events of 1261 when the empire was regained in part from the Latins.\textsuperscript{76} The ways in which the capital acted as the center for the argument over ethnicity and identity emphasized the importance of Constantinople over many centuries around the meaning of Romanness.

Roman identity after 1204 developed into a destabilized entity with many centers of reference as to its legitimacy based on the Greek successor states that were established after the fall of the empire in 1204. With no head of a singular state, and with many leaders from these successor states thinking of themselves as the legitimate Roman emperor, Roman identity was now divided between multiple points of legitimacy, while also it was used in rhetoric by various sources to denote or to support someone’s legitimacy over that identity. Michael Angold states

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{76} Stouraitis, “Byzantine Romanness,”135.
that after the fall “…Constantinople itself became less and less relevant to the sense of identity that evolved during the period of exile. Political loyalties became more localized… there was a devolution of authority.”\textsuperscript{77} What it meant to be a Roman in the post-1204 world of the empire was a complex and regionalized subject, with communities having to reinvent their identity and allegiances based on sociopolitical changes around them.\textsuperscript{78}

**Political and Ethnic identity**

With a visible chaos within Byzantine Roman society after the capture of Constantinople there is a new dichotomy which must be mentioned, and which was influenced by Gill Page’s work *Being Byzantine*. What it meant to be a Roman varied by period, region, and sociopolitical context.\textsuperscript{79} When looking at this later post-1204 period of the empire’s life, we need to mention the variable uses of the Roman identity and the two ways in which they can be differentiated based on their use by the sources.

Byzantine Roman identity was tightly bounded with the sense of the imperial authority from the emperor at Constantinople. This association of identity with political power is referred to as the political Roman identity. When an individual or a group was referred to as a *Rhomaios* or *Rhomaioi* with this political identity, their identity was attached to the millennial old tradition of imperial rule from the capital. That identity was tightly bounded with their loyalty to the emperor and administration in Constantinople. This understanding of what it meant to be a Byzantine Roman changed tremendously during the later years of the empire, where sociopolitical changes affected that meaning and the ‘ingredients’ for someone’s Romanness.

\textsuperscript{77} Shepard, *The Cambridge History*, 752.
\textsuperscript{78} Stouraitis, “Reinventing Roman Ethnicity,” 87.
\textsuperscript{79} Kaldellis, *Romanland*, 25.
The other identification of Byzantine Roman identity is the ethnic Roman identity. This identity allowed for the selection of some subjects of the empire to be counted at truly Roman based on their genealogy whereas, in the political Roman identity, all were theoretically equally Roman as long as they lived under the political rule of the capital. The reasons behind a distinguishable otherness amongst Romans will be analyzed further with primary source examples when the discussion focuses on how regional separatism affected the view of Roman identity amongst Byzantine Romans. This distinction between the political and ethnic Roman identities is important to note because when our sources mention certain divisions within Romans for political reasons, they are employing this view of Romanness.

**Regional Separatism**

So far there has been a lot of discussion about regional separatism. For this section, the concept of regional separatism will be introduced in broad theoretical terms as to its function and its outcomes, but also to the uses of such framework and the new possibilities that it allows for historical research.

Region as a concept is an entity that constantly changes political and geographical boundaries, political and socioeconomic interdependencies, and scope and goal of its regional identities. A region, being a social construct, required some sort of political or cultural recalibration of the need for common symbols, mythologies, and other similarities to bind its members together against conflicts and difficult situations. This was mostly done by local leaders

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80 Page, *Being Byzantine*, 47.

and elites that represented the most influential heads of their community. As this research will show, during the fourteenth century the identity of local elites and provinces in Epirus and the Peloponnese changed radically to accommodate new political and social challenges. Their identities became strongly localized but they seemed to retain certain previous identifications. When looking at regions during turbulent historical times, Wiszewski states that “Communities might shift from regional to national or quasi-national then to subregional and again become regional. At the same time political needs may create regions and destroy them.”82 With this in mind, this research considers closely the fluidity of regions and regional identities as communities that shaped and re-shaped their identities to accommodate local and personal needs according to the political situation.

For many centuries Constantinople was the center of southeastern Europe, with a strong political grip over the entire region. The status of the imperial political centralism has been easier to document and study in contrast with questions of how the periphery functioned before and while under such a dominant centralized power. Vlada Stanković argues that anti-centrism in Byzantium brought the destruction of the empire.83 The term further indicates attempts to create new local centers of power and influence breaking from the imperial relationships with Constantinople. The relationships between Constantinople and the peripheral regions were complex, and this complexity came to the forefront with the power vacuum created after the fall of the capital.84 Once the central capital was gone, these regional powers fought over dominance with each other, creating new alliances, borders, and ideologies. Regionalism as a theoretical concept provides new

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82 Ibid, 291.
84 Ibid.
answers to questions about peripheral Byzantium, but also about identity formation and structure in the peripheral provinces. It can also prove useful for the understanding of the Byzantine Empire and its development after the 1204 crisis.

With growing tensions between the provinces and the capital well before the fall of the empire, the instability of the imperial power caused many provincial areas and local leaders to become centers of opposition to imperial rule from the capital. Some of these centers of opposition were led by either disaffected imperial members, or by local leaders (archontes) that looked at supporting their local and provincial power, security, economy, and interests.85 Examples of strong local oppositionist leaders include Leo Sgouros (ca. 1198-1208) in the Peloponnese and Michael I Komnenos Doukas (ca. 1205-1214/15) in Epirus. This regionalism is also visible in provincial versus Constantinopolitan architecture from the eleventh century onwards, with a strong preference for local private family chapels, new styles and designs that showcased a growing development of towns and regions developing their own sense of identity.86 Furthermore, this distinct regionalism also becomes visible in provincial architecture with towns and regions in the empire which developed their own sense of identity alongside powerful families.87

During the fourteenth century, Romanness as a collective identity became increasingly regional and replaced a homogenizing discourse of imperial centralization.88 It created a so-called ‘Balkanization’ of the Roman identity, into individual centers of power and cultural influence that used the same identity (Roman) but with their own interpretations for its meaning.

86 Ibid., 159.
87 Leidholm, Elite Byzantine Kinship, 159.
and adoption. As this research argues, regional separatism affected the meaning of Romanness, creating new identities and new communities around the adaptation of Roman identity to accommodate their newly attained political and social realities.
CHAPTER 3

BYZANTINE ROMAN IDENTITY DURING THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

This chapter’s aim is to provide an adequate answer to a question: who was considered a Roman during the fourteenth century? Over the fourteenth century, the presence of a Roman identity varied based on location and political ideology. This idea is developed in the scholarly work of Kaldellis, who argues that Roman identity varied by context, period, and location. The emergence of a multiplicity of centers of political power influenced the identity formation of the people, and the areas which they controlled. The different regions of the old Byzantine Empire developed separate identities and interests, while also upholding the ethnonym ‘Roman’ according to their own differentiation from within their political groups. For example, sociopolitical expectations of who was a Roman in Constantinople differed from those of someone from Epirus or the Morea. Both would still use the ethnonym Roman to identify themselves but with different expectations for that identity use and its meaning. For example, a Roman in Morea was able to remove the place of the capital at Constantinople as a necessary ingredient for someone’s Roman identity, while a Roman in Constantinople theoretically did not.

In offering these hypotheticals, I follow scholars such as Page and Shawcross who have studied in some ways that chronicles from this time period imply the existence of contests over Byzantine Roman identity among local and regional groups, even in the absence of other evidence.

The available sources are in their overwhelming majority from Constantinople and the imperial court which indicates a strong connection of our current understating of Roman identity with that understanding that emerged from the capital. Here this thesis partially agrees with the

89 Kaldellis, Romanland, ix.
work of Stouraitis and his claim that Roman identity was the work of the highly educated elite in Constantinople and that it was based on state propaganda. This claim has a strong basis since most of the sources throughout the history of the empire, but especially during the later centuries, come from highly educated elite from the capital. For example, during the thirteenth century scholars of the empire like George Akropolites (ca. 1220-1281) and George Pachymeres (ca. 1242-1310) wrote about Roman identity from their Constantinopolitan and centralist perspectives. They and some earlier scholars from the twelfth century paid particular attention to the significance of the political aspect of Roman identity. During their time they experienced unprecedented geopolitical changes. This according to Gill Page forced some of these scholars to manipulate the meaning of political Roman identity to account for some of these changes around them.90

Such attempts made the use of Roman identity conditional and one-sided. That meant that there were certain kinds of subjective ‘true’ Romans who matched certain set characteristics, such as being under the Nicaean political influence. During this period there were also certain practices of removing Roman terminology and identity and using alternative terms for people that “used” to be Roman under the old imperial order, but now were no longer bound within the new influence of the new empire. For example, Roman identity developed strong political and territorial connections, while also regional differentiations grew apart widely. During the fourteenth century the political identity became more powerful and significant, while the ethnic identity was expected to coincide with that set political identification.91 Historians viewed Roman identity as synonymous with imperial authority while many of the identity developments of the fourteenth century created what Page calls in her book as “The nightmare of the fourteenth

90 Page, Being Byzantine, 122.
91 Ibid.
century.” Page refers to the fourteenth century as a nightmare not only because of the tumultuous sociopolitical, religious and economic state of the empire, but also because of the many puzzling representations of Roman identity in the available sources. Page’s claim in her book is that Roman identity was more complex to define during the fourteenth century because the sources offer no simple answer.

Thus, being a Roman seemed to be a much more complicated process during this period. The increasing importance for a distinction between a Constantinopolitan versus a provincial Roman identity became complex as to its practice and reference from the sources. This seems to be an interesting phenomenon since according to Kaldellis, earlier Roman identity or Romanitas used to replace local identities and allegiances. What changed? A possible answer to this change was the vanished universality of the Roman identity due to the regionalization of the empire.

Prior to 1204 Roman identity overcame challenges and reigned supreme within a framework of imperial strength through Constantinople and the emperor that were always known to be powerful and most important not defeated. This idea of the Roman identity being fundamentally altered after the fall of the empire in 1204 originates from Gill Page and her arguments that the event of the fall of the empire to the Latin conquests transformed Roman identity with no return. Roman identity according to Page ceased to be subject to the emperor and his residence in the empire, and it adopted new elements, such as the sociocultural markers seen in the regionalized regions in western Greece. This idea by Page is then connected with the analysis of Stanković on regionalism after the fall of the capital and the creation of new fluctuating identities throughout the empire.

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92 Ibid., 138.
With a careful consideration and analysis of these contemporary works and ideas, the goal of the following pages is to analyze how regional separatism enabled this change of Roman identity in the fourteenth century. Through the case studies of the presence of Roman identity when associated with the Despotate and region of Epirus and the Principality of Achaia (Morea), this chapter aims to provide another avenue in understanding Roman identity during the fourteenth century. As mentioned previously in the introduction, this research looks at two Constantinopolitan historians (Gregoras and Kantakouzenos), two chronicles (Chronicle of Tocco and Morea), and one non-Roman source (Sanudo). These sources enable comparison of contrasting points of view for the fourteenth century, and for these two case study areas.

The first source is Kantakouzenos’ *Histories*, which covers the period of 1320-1356 and which was written during Kantakouzenos’ years as monk in Morea after his reign as emperor. This work is divided in four books. The first one covers the first civil war between Andronikos II (ca. 1259-1332) and Andronikos III (ca. 1297-1341) Palaiologos. The second book covers the reign of Andronikos III, while the third and fourth books cover the second civil war, Kantakouzenos’ rise to the throne in 1347, his reign and abdication. The second major source from a Constantinopolitan historian is Gregoras’ *Roman History* which covers the period from the fourth crusade to 1358, and which was composed towards the end of the author’s life. Similar to Kantakouzenos the books one to eleven cover the reign of emperor Andronikos III, while his later books switch their coverage to religious matters within the empire. Due to the huge scale of these works, this research looked at the references that these works made to Roman identity, especially in the regions of Epirus and Morea. The other two local sources represent voices for each locality, the anonymous *Chronicle of Tocco* which covered the events and the political and social circumstances in Epirus from 1375-1422. This text is one of the few remaining chronicles
that describe the life of the Despotate of Epirus and its people. Similarly, the also anonymous 
*Chronicle of Morea* is the main narrative source from the Principality of Achaia (Morea) and it similarly describes the sociopolitical events in the region from 1204 to the mid fourteenth century. The final primary source is the work of a non-Byzantine Roman historian. This was the *Istoria Di Romania* by the Venetian statesman Marin Sanudo Torsello (ca. 1270-1343). This work describes events in the Latin occupied lands of the Byzantine Empire during the fourteenth century. Torsello’s work provided for another perspective from the fourteenth century and one that used the Roman identity regularly throughout its content. Unlike the two chronicles, the author here is known, and his background is also important throughout his narrative. This information and context for the source offered for a surely western European source which provided its own unique case for the use of the Roman identity in the empire. Just like in Kantakouzenos and Gregoras, these three works were also analyzed on their usage of Roman identity throughout their content.

Before the analysis of the case studies, a short explanation on the territorial aspect of Roman identity is necessary for the understanding of identity awareness. Both Gregoras and Kantakouzenos have a strong conception of Roman territory; their empire had a territorial expression of Romanness which was transgenerational. Gregoras for example when it comes to the island of Chios after a Genoese expulsion, he claims that “for the island belonged to the Romans.”93 Similarly in another situation when talking about the territory of Epirus he states that “the whole of the province of the previously old Epirus came back to the rule of the Romans.”94 The key words here are returning to the Roman fold, since Epirus was not a new land, but it was

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94 “Τη των Ρωμαίων ηγεμονία πάσα η της παλαιάς ονομαζομένης Ηπείρου επαρχία, και ουδέν ην ἐτι το αντιπράττον εκεῖθεν” Roman History, XI.553.19-21.
lost and then came back to the territory of Roman rule. As the previous chapters alluded to, during the early 1340s under Emperor Andronikos III and Kantakouzenos, there were a series of restoration and recovery efforts from their part to the lands of Epirus. During this period there was a sense of territorial identity. The lands that belonged to Epirus were according to the imperial administration still part of the imperial fold, and those who were in control were rebels and illegitimate rulers. This is seen clearly in the accounts of both Kantakouzenos and Gregoras. In his Histories, Kantakouzenos for example provides a speech that he delivered to those that rebelled against the restoration efforts of the Constantinopolitan administration. In this speech Kantakouzenos makes clear the territorial aspect of Roman identity and its “geographical loyalty” to the emperor in Constantinople. In the following quote Kantakouzenos provides a brief excerpt from one of his speeches on the political and geographic situation in the empire after 1204 and then following the recapture of Constantinople by the Empire of Nicaea. Here he refers to the Angeloi and the Palaiologoi. These were the main elite families which governed the Empire of Nicaea and Epirus. The Angeloi were the ones that established the Despotate of Epirus, while the Palaiologoi established the Empire of Nicaea and recaptured Constantinople in 1204. In the excerpt, the Angeloi are viewed as the ones that have done the largest wrongdoing against the empire. According to Kantakouzenos, the lands of Epirus belonged to the emperor at Constantinople and the Angeloi should have returned that land back to the empire once it was retaken. In this case since the Palaiologoi were viewed as the legitimate rulers of the empire, it was wrong for the Angeloi to keep a land which according to Kantakouzenos, did not belong to them.
The Empire of the Romans, has been the fatherland of these people from the time of the Caesars, and they have done wrong in imposing the rule of the Tarantines, the barbarian men… The Angeloi did not acquire Akarnania by freeing it from barbarian peoples, they were the subjects of Roman emperors and received their yearly rule over the lands from the emperors, but they usurped the rule for themselves from the war which was waged by the Latins on the Romans. While the Latins after the fall of the mightiest Byzantium, controlled all of Thrace and most of the cities in Macedonia, the Roman Empire withdrew to the east. The Angeloi grasped the rule of Akarnania for themselves, and others grasped other lands from the western provinces which had been governing since then… after many years the empire of the Romans came under the guidance of the Palaiologoi. The Latins again, with the help of God, were expelled from the hegemony of Romans in both Asia and Europe… The Palaiologoi demanded Akarnania from the Angeloi, but they were unable to take it, but rather unjustly and with violence they deceived them and repeatedly sent armies against them and brought barbarians for allies.95

This speech demonstrates the belief that the territory of Epirus and of the neighboring regions was historically Roman the “Roman hegemony land”96 and that it still belonged to the Roman emperor. Kantakouzenos implies that the rulers (local rulers) who took over these lands after the Latin rule had made a huge mistake, and the fact that they did not return the lands to the emperor once he was installed back at the capital were actions of great deceit and injustice. Besides the fact that this demonstrates a territorial identity, it also illustrates the divisiveness between the provincial separatist rulers and the imperial forces. Page states that the “continued subversion of

95 “Αντί της Ρωμαίων βασιλείας, ή σχεδόν αύτοίς έκ των Καίσαρος χρόνων πάτριος έστι, την Ταραντίνων αύτοίς άνθρώπων βαρβάρων ἐπάγοντες αρχήν… Άγγέλους γάρ ούκ ἀπό βαρβάρων Ακαρνανίαν ἠλευθερώσαντας κτήσατα συνέβη την αρχήν, α᾽λλ᾽ύποχειρίους οντας Ρωμαίων βασιλεύσει και παρ᾽εκείνων επήσουν αρχήν τής χώρας επετραμμένους, σφετερίσασθαι την αρχήν διά τον επενεχθέντα τότε παρά Λατίνων Ρωμαίοις πολέμον. Ὡν δή τού κρείττονος συγχωρήσει Βυζαντίου κρατησάντων και Θράκης απάσης και των κατὰ Μακεδονίας πόλεων πολλών, βασιλεύει μεν ἂς Ρωμαίοις ισχυρόρησε προς έω. Ακαρνανίας δε τὴν αρχήν Άγγελοι προσποιήσαντό εαυτοίς και άλλοι άλλας των εσπερίων επαρχιῶν, ὃν ἠκατοί έτυχον επιτροπεύοντες, διὰ το βασιλεύει Ρωμαίοις δίδον ούκ είναι προς αυτούς διὰ Θράκης και Μακεδονίας ούσων ύπο Λατίνως. Ύστερον δὲ έτεσι πολλάκις ύπο τῶν Παλαιολόγων ισχυρότητος τῆς Ρωμαίων βασιλείας, Λατίνους μὲν αύτος, τοῦ θεοῦ συναρμομένου, τῆς Ρωμαίων εξήλασαν ηγεμονίας καί Ασίαν καί Ευρώπην, ὅσης ἤρχον, εἰς ἐν συνήψαν. Ακαρνανίας δε Άγγελοις απαιτοῦντες, ούκ ἡδύοναν απολαβείν, ἀλλ᾽άδικα καί βίαια ποιοῦντες, απετέρουν καί στρατίων πολλάκις επ᾽ἐκείνους πέμψαν ὁπλά αντίρροντο καί τοὺς περιοίκους συμμάχους επήγοντο βαρβάρους. Histories II.520.1-521.12. The translation was made by the author of this paper.

96 Την Ρωμαίων ἡγεμονία γην (Histories, II.523.13-14)
such rule on a local basis constituted fraud against imperial rule.”97 Furthermore, the empire and Roman identity according to such sources constitute a rule which had many components of the political Roman identity, and which was dominant during the fourteenth century.98 Lands that had once belonged to the empire, always remained in the imagined extent of the empire’s geography. While referring to the pre-1204 times, if someone lived in Romanland, then they must follow the political Roman rule to be considered Roman.

**The case of Epirus**

The Despotate of Epirus during the fourteenth century was a geopolitical power which faced many challenges to control of its sovereignty and territorial expansion. Epirus as a geographical and political entity was not protected by Constantinople due to its remote location, which led to certain administrative developments and ideologies such as alliances with foreign powers, and separatist tendencies, that differed from other provinces within the empire. Before 1204, Epirus was a “forgotten” region within the Byzantine world.99 The state of Epirus became a desirable destination for many Byzantine Roman refugees from Constantinople and elsewhere after the Fourth Crusade. The influx of refugees continued even after the reestablishment of the capital of Constantinople by Nicaea in 1261. Most of these refugees established themselves in the city of Ioannina, which was one of the two major cities in Epirus together with Arta. The city of Arta remained more independent, while due to its Constantinopolitan refugees, the city of Ioannina developed into a center of support for the traditional Byzantine Roman imperial ideology. These two centers had similar aspirations of reclaiming the capital of the empire, but

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98 Ibid., 153.
during the fourteenth century they were no longer united in this shared goal. Arta was concerned more for the autonomy and stability of the state of Epirus, while those at Ioannina were concerned with reuniting with the restored empire, seeing Epirus’ independence only as an obstacle towards that goal. In 1318 Ioannina reunited with the empire while Arta remained independent as the capital of the despotate with various unsuccessful attempts by the imperial forces to capture it. Epirus was governed by local Roman despotai (despots) from 1264 until 1318, when it came under the control of the Orsini family from Italy. Then followed a short Roman recovery from 1337 until 1348, when it was taken by the Serbs under the leadership of Stefan Dušan.\footnote{Aleksandr Každan, “Epiros, Despotate Of.” In The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium I, I: (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1991) 716.}

Fourteenth-century Epirus was a place of perpetual conflict, but also a complex mosaic of populations who remained isolated from each other.\footnote{Epiros was extensively populated by Slavic settlements before 1000 a.d. with the majority of these Slavic populations assimilating to the local Roman culture. These will come to be known as the Vlachs and the sources point out that they were well-integrated, with no visible rebellions against the local Romans. Similarly, Epirus had Jewish communities, the newly Constantinopolitan and other Roman populations after 1204, while during the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries Albanians, Serbians, and Italians appear to migrate in large numbers. Osswald, “The ethnic compositions of medieval Epirus,” 126-154.} The geographical situation of Epirus played a major role not only in its political and social life, and its separatism. The despotate was cut off from the rest of the Byzantine Empire by the spine of the Pindos range on the east and the Adriatic Sea on the west. This geography provided a significant degree of independence due to the rough mountainous terrain and the absence of major roads, which made it difficult for an army to pass through.\footnote{Ibid., 133.} This independence continued until the fifteenth century and the Ottoman conquest.
Most rulers of Epirus were viewed as rebels by the Constantinopolitan elite and the imperial government. These views were due to the belief that emperors of Constantinople always had, that the rights to the lands and titles of Epirus belonged to them under the imperial fold. For most of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, regional separatist powers were seen as rebels and as illegitimate. During the two civil wars between 1341-47, Andronikos III and John Kantakouzenos attempted to accomplish the ultimate goal of reuniting the “lost” lands back to the imperial power structure. According to Brendan Osswald, the Romans of Epirus were not influenced by the “theoretical debates of the Byzantine elite, and their opinions differed according to the city in which they lived, their social status, and their personal political options.” This further points out to a strong sense of regional identity and the importance of local interests over imperial ones, while the rulers of Epirus faced many challenges in their pursuit of legitimization and territorial sovereignty. According to Leonela Fundić, these rulers where “attempting to protect their territory from Latin enemies… while trying to maintain their Byzantine and Orthodox identity, they were also highly antagonistic towards the rest of the Byzantine world, especially Nicaea.”

Epirus faced challenges from multiple fronts constantly, which forced or allowed for certain alliances with the powers that would guarantee their regional independence.

The Despotate of Epirus and its local despots and rulers persisted in protecting its independence since the establishment of the Principality. During the fourteenth century, Epirus went through a fluctuation of territorial independence, sometimes inching back into the imperial

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fold, while in others remaining independent under a variety of rulers, Roman and non-Roman alike. For example, the despotate was under independent French and Italian ruling families until 1337 when it was brought under the Byzantine Empire until 1348. Then it was captured by Serbian forces and then brought back under Italian control again in 1384. This independence and fluctuation in the ruling powers was not received favorably by the administration in Constantinople. As historians such as Kantakouzenos and Gregoras show us, there was a strong connection between Roman identity and political affiliation. In the fragmented world of the fourteenth century, the political affiliation of a Roman subject was not necessarily tied to their loyalty to the emperor and the capital; power continued since 1204 to become more localized. The question that should be asked at this point is: who was Roman? Did the local citizens feel Roman even after Constantinople was sacked and reconquered by a power which was antithetical to the one that was governing them, or did their identity change into something else? How did historians of the time view people who had broken away from the imperial political control and thus the Roman identity that was associated with it prior? Kantakouzenos provides many answers and further questions for such inquiries when it comes to his discussions about people and communities inside and outside his vision of a Roman identity.

Kantakouzenos’ views are interesting to look at when he describes the identity of the people of Epirus and the ways he is comparing that identity to other areas where Romans lived. He was able at certain times to accept that Romans existed outside of the Byzantine Roman imperial state, even when his vision of a Roman identity was still firmly tied to the Roman state and the loyalty to the emperor and the capital through the Roman political identification.\(^\text{106}\) When he refers to multiethnic contexts and situations, he defines ethnic identities more strongly

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\(^{106}\) Page, *Being Byzantine*, 163.
and with definite labels such as Romans, Latins, Serbs, etc. At the same time, he refers to groups that were not placed in contrast to a multiethnic context, for example Roman within other groups such as Latins, Bulgarians, etc. These groups were known to be historically and culturally Roman. In such situations when he compared Romans to Romans he is very careful when he decides to call someone Roman. For example, he refers to the Romans of Lesbos, Chios, and Phokaia, but he uses only toponyms when he refers to the Peloponnesians, the Verrhiotes, and the Epirots. Such groups are never called Roman like the other groups were, and since the context of his descriptions is not within a multiethnic setting, this deliberate choice of attributing Romanness to a what seems like a favoring or allegiance with certain groups, certainly raises many questions as to the views of Kantakouzenos and the Byzantine Roman state on the Roman identity. What is interesting with Epirus is that Kantakouzenos viewed the lands of Epirus and the people of Epirus as an ancient part of the Byzantine Roman Empire. Why then did he refer to the people of these lands with local toponyms such as Artans, Rogioi, Akarnanians, and in some cases Epirots, rather than Romans while at the same time refer to people from Lesbos as “Our Romans”, the people of Chios also as “Romans from Chios” and “Romans that lived in the island”, and people from Phokaia as “Roman citizens.”?

The first example comes from his description of the people of the area of Verrhoa in Macedonia, who were historically and culturally Roman. Kantakouzenos called them Verrhoiotes when blaming their leaders for being corrupt because they surrendered to the Serbs:

107 Βασιλεύς δὲ Άρταν επολίρκει αυτῶς πάρων, Αρταίοι (Histories, 512.7-9), Αρταίους (Histories, II.522.17) Αρταίοι (Histories, II.522.19, Histories, II.529.20)
108 Αυτὸν μὲν εν Ρωγοΐ κατέλιπεν αὐθίς. (Histories, II.515.11-12) Ρωγούς (Histories, II.516.19), Ρώγιοι (Histories, II.529.20)
109 Οἱ γάρ εξελαθέντες τοῦ ἁστεοῦ ὑφ᾽ὑμών Ρωμαῖοι, ὃν αὐτοῖς τα επιτήδεια λαβόντες χρήσθε, τὸ μέτρον τῆς τροφῆς πρὸς τοὺς πολιορκουμένους πλῆθος λογιζόμενοι (Histories, II.487.17-19)
110 Ρωμαίους τῆς Χίου, (Histories, II.371.20), Ρωμαίων τε τοις τὴν νήσον κατοικοῦσι (Histories, II.376.8)
111 Εἰς Φώκαιαν τὴν νέαν ἤλθεν, αυτὴ δὲ Ρωμαίους μὲν οικούντας εἶχεν εἰς αὐτίας δὲ τὸν νὸς ὀσπέρ Ζαχαρίας (Histories, II. 388.23-24)
“The Roman incoming rule… but also the Verrhoiotes, the strongest financially and corrupted by the big commands.”112 What is of interest in this description is the distinction of the people of Verrhoia from the Romans which indicates a difference, and the words used to Kantakouzenos’s writing that despite their wealth, the Verrhoites’s corruption led them to surrender to the Serbs. This kind of action for Kantakouzenos was unacceptable. He uses the local name to contrast the Verrhoiotes against the standard for proper Roman honor. Their dishonor made them unworthy of any claim to Roman identity. This indicates a political bias towards his side of the story which is tied with the imperial Byzantine Roman goals and aspirations against these regions and localities that they were trying to bring back to the imperial fold. The fact that the Verrhoiotes had rejected his rule as the Roman imperial force and had embraced the Serbian rule, influenced his negative and hostile presentation of the people of Verrhoia. As Gill Page mentions, Kantakouzenos knew that these people were Roman, but he rejects their Roman identity because they rejected their Roman political identity, which corresponded with loyalty to the empire. He was “only concerned for their political identity.”113

This similar view of people from the areas of Macedonia, Epirus, and other such areas that were politically antithetical with Kantakouzenos’ views occurs and with the description of other native peoples from the region such as the Akarnasi or the people of Akarnania in Epirus. Here once again, the accusation against them is that they decided to side with the Angevins, refusing their political Roman identity, and thus committing a horrible wrongdoing against the Roman imperial power:

112 “της Ρωμαίων παρείλετο αρχής… ἀλλὰ καὶ Βερροιωτῶν τοὺς δυνατοτάτους χρήμας καὶ μεγάλας επαγγελίας διαφθείρας,” (Histories, IV.31.11-13.)
113 Page, Being Byzantine, 167.
The lords of Akarnania granted, Vontitzis and Naupaktos and Vothrentou, to have them as allies in the war against the king of the Romans. The Akarnasi could no longer unevenly fight on their own… Akarnasi fight together with the Tarantines.\footnote{Οι Ακαρνανίας ἄρχοντες παρεχώρησαν, Βοντίτζης καὶ Ναυπάκτου καὶ Βοθρεντοῦ, ὡστε ἔχειν αὐτούς συμμάχους προς τὸν πρὸς βασιλέα Ρωμαίων πόλεμον. Οἱ οὖν Ακαρνάσι μόνοις πολεμοῦντες ουδὲν ἡδυνήθησαν αὐτοῖς πλέον…Ακαρνάσιαν ομοῦ καὶ Ταραντίνους πολεμεῖν (Histories, II.529.12-18)}

As the passage makes clear, the people from Akarnania were no longer politically affiliated with the Roman Empire, but they rather decided to side with foreigners from the west to fight against the Romans. This for Kantakouzenos is an action worth denying their Roman identity, while in the following passage, his negative view is additionally enforced: “The Akarnasi recruited a large army and then treated the land badly as much as it was possible.”\footnote{Ακαρνάσι στρατώ μεγάλη επεστράτευσαν καὶ τὴν χώραν εκάκωσαν όσα μάλιστα ἔξην (Histories, II.529.7-8)} Here the accusation of treating the land badly is closely connected with the fact that the wrongdoers were the people of Akarnania, and he is adamant at making that clear during his argument. Similarly, he also uses this formula of identity reference for the people of Arta. The political affiliation of the people of Arta was that of retaining their independence from the imperial fold and sustaining their separatism. Arta was also a town which acted for many years as the capital of the Despotate of Epirus, and it worked as its political and economic center. Both Arta and the city of Rogo are referred to as being from the region of Epirus and are characterized as Epirotic cities: “Arta and Rogo are from Epirus,” Kantakouzenos wrote, “long enduring the famine due to the siege.”\footnote{Άρτα δὲ καὶ Ρωγώ ούσαι ηπειρώτιδες, πολλήν ὑπέμενον τὴν ἐνδείαν εκ τῆς πολιορκίας (Histories, II.511.21-22)} In the following example, Kantakouzenos described the people of Arta as traitors, avaricious, corrupt, and spiteful towards the Romans, who were then besieging the city of Arta during the Roman imperial attempts of subjugate the independent rulers of Epirus under Kantakouzenos’ reign.
The besieged in the city of Arta, seeing the King (Cabasilan) and the Rogioi approaching to take over the city and reign under the authority of the emperor, attacked them, they insulted them, like traitors looking towards their mutually beneficial and self-serving common interests, and knowing about their maliciousness and the wickedness that they had harassed them, either by fear of the evils of war, or by the promise of thousands of good men.\textsuperscript{117}

Here Kantakouzenos is clearly using political motives to describe the people of Arta. He only portrays them with negative connotations that align with their political stance and their nature under their toponym, Artaoi, and once again disregarding their ethnic identity as Romans, by not calling them with that ethnonym. In other words, the avoidance of the Roman terminology for the people of Epirus and Macedonia; who were independent or politically allied with others, was for Kantakouzenos a form of denying their Roman identity, while identifying them as rivals. For Kantakouzenos, the most important was the political, not the ethnic.\textsuperscript{118} Their separatist political status was a deterrent for them actually to be referred to as Romans. Kantakouzenos’s perspective represents the view of the imperial power-structure in Constantinople over those Romans in the provinces who refused to side with the empire.

On a similar note, Nikephoros Gregoras talks about the people and region of northern Greece and Epirus in comparable terms and uses definitions favoring a political identity over the ethnic one for those Gregoras saw as rebels and political enemies. Once again, when in a multiethnic setting; Romans within other non-Roman populations, Gregoras uses ethnonyms to describe the different \textit{ethnoi} such as \textquotedblleft Illyrians, and Triballoi (Serbians) and local ethnic Romans

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\item[\textsuperscript{117}] Οι πολιορκούμενοι δὲ κατὰ τὴν Άρταν Καβασίλαν καὶ Ρωγίους ορώντες προσκεκυρηκότας βασιλεῖ, υβριζόν τε εἰς αὐτούς ὡς προδότας τῶν κοινῆς λυσιτελούντων καὶ ἰδίων ἔνσει κερδῶν τα κοινή συμφέροντα προϊεμένους, καὶ πολλήν κατεγίνωσκον την μοχθηρίαν καὶ την φαυλότητα αὐτοῖς τῶν τρόπων, ἠσάν τε οὔτω παρεσκευασμένοι ὡς οὐκ ενδώσοντες πρὸς τὴν πολιορκίαν οὔτε φόβω τῶν εἰκ του πολέμου κακῶν οὐθ᾽ υποσχέσεσι μυρίων αγαθῶν. (Histories, II.517-158. 22-5).
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] Page, \textit{Being Byzantine}, 166.
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such as Akarnanes and Thetthaloi.”  At the same time he is adamant when it comes to the presence of Romans in the region since these nations are described as “The Macedonian Romans’ neighboring nations.” As for Kantakouzenos, the use of toponyms is significant with Gregoras. When talking about the makeup of Epirus; Gregoras uses a variety of toponyms but makes no mention of any Roman population, despite the presence of ethnic Romans in the region.

Divides then all the territory in two parts, on the one land, the old called Epiros, leaving Nikephoros as the Despot. It included inside the territory Thesprotians and Akarnanas and Dolopas, and Kerkyraious and Kefallinas and Ithakians, the lands defined to the west by the Adriatic and Ionian seas, to the distinct mountains high by the Pindos and the Akrokeravnioi named, from the east by the Acheloos river, and by the West by the Corfu Island and Kefalonia.

In this passage, besides the territorial description of the boundaries of the Despotate of Epirus by Gregoras, there is a clear political affiliation with the various toponyms that he mentioned. Because Nikephoros was a member of the rebel separatists, there is no possible association with the Roman identity, hence the use of only local names. All these people were ethnically Romans for all the existence of the empire, but now being part of a geographical and political area that denied its allegiance to the emperor and imperial sovereignty, it seems that that identity has ceased to exist for them, at least in the eyes of the elites in Constantinople whom Gregoras and

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119 Ἰλυριοί τε δηλαδή καὶ Τριβαλλοί καὶ Ακαρνάνες καὶ Θετταλοί (Roman History, VII. 247. 11-12.)
120 Τα τοις εν Μακεδονία Ρωμαίοις ομορούντα έθνη (Roman History, VII. 247.9-10).
121 Σχίζει μέντοι καὶ την όλην αυτού επικράτειαν είς δύο μερίδας, ὥν την μίαν, η δή καὶ παλαιά ονομάζεται Ἡπειρος, αφίησι Νικηφόρω τω δεσπότη. Περιέχει δε αυτή Θεσπρωτούς και Ακαρνάνας και Δόλοπας, και προς τούτοις Κερκυραίους και Κεφαλλήνας και Ιθακησίους ορίζεται δε προς μέν δύσεως Αδριατικό τε και Ιονίω πελάγει, προς δέ άκρων όρεσιν υψηλοίς το τε Πύνδο και τοις Ακροκεραυνίοις ονομαζομένοις, εκ δ’ ἀνατολῶν Αχελώο τῷ ποταμῷ, εκ δέ μεσημβρίας τῇ Κερκυραίων νήσῳ καὶ τῇ Κεφαλληνία. (Roman History, IV. 110.7-15)
122 To be ethnically Roman during this period means that the sources distinguished between Romans and non-Romans when they were referring to groups of people. For example, the sources mention Romans in contrast to other non-Roman groups such as Latins or the Serbians, etc.
Kantakouzenos represented. This does not necessarily mean that they had given up on repatriation and reintegration efforts, but that they were rather antithetical to the current political powers in these regions.

But what did people from the Epirus region think about themselves? Did they continue to refer to themselves as Romans, carrying over the ethnic and political traditions from their past, or did their identity change? This question is difficult to answer due to the lack of available sources, especially from official administration from Epirus. One of the available sources from fourteenth-century Epirus is the *Chronicle of Tocco*, the anonymous text which recounts the territorial expansions of the Italian Carolo of Tocco, Dule of Leukas and Count of Cephalonia into the region of Epirus. The chronicle pays particular attention to events in the Epirot capitals of Ioannina and Arta.123 For this inquiry it provides a great deal of insight into the Roman identity of the local Epirots that lived in the area. The chronicle speaks only of Romans from Epirus, “The Romans from the whole Despotate.”124 When the ethnonym Roman is used throughout the chronicle it refers to local Romans from Epirus, not imperial Romans from the East. Beyond its praise for the Tocco, the chronicle emphasized that the lands of Epirus belonged to the Romans of Epirus. The author distinguishes Romans from Franks, Serbs, Albanians, and Turks (the text describes events of the later fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries when the Turks had begun conquering lands in the west). Although these groups are posed as an antithesis to what it meant to be a Roman as different, but equal-standing tribes: “Franks, Romans, Serbs, and the Albanians.”125 The positioning of Romans alongside these other groups indicates another

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125 Φράγκους, Ρωμαίους, Σέρβους τε, μάλλον τούς Αλβανίτας (A.230.137).
claim of ethnicity in this Chronicle. But for the most part these groups are placed in contrast to the Romans: for example, when the Albanians are seen as lesser than the local Romans. “The Albanians shouldn’t start feeling like that they are the masters, that they are tough humans, masters over the Romans.”

This was also accompanied with praise for the despotate as a geographical and political place. The Chronicle states that “The land [is] more beautiful and stronger than all others and having many more gifts, and many more preferences.” Furthermore, the local people of Epirus are referred to as Romans throughout the Chronicle and rarely with localized names. When it comes to the citizens from the city of Ioannina, the Chronicle states that “The Ioannina origin of the Romans from the despotate, the Ioannina have the honor from all others for being the root of the Romans from the whole Despotate.”

Why would the Chronicle here call them Romans and not Ioannites, or Romans of Ioannina as did Gregoras or Kantakouzenos? Here they are called simply Romans, the ethnonym that the previous two historians used for those that were attached politically to their imperial political ideals. In the Chronicle there was also the notion of continuity from the “old” Romans and the use of that identity all the way to those from the current localities of the area. The Chronicle mentions that “Arta and Ioannina, that were divided from the rule of those Despots from the Romans, to be united and become one, with the island to be single-ruled and for all the Romans of the despotate to come together.”

To the Chroniclers, all citizens and people belonged to a Roman identity and ethnicity, and they did not lose that

126 Άλβανιτας μη κομπωθούν και κάμουν τους αφέντες, ότι είναις άνθρωποι σκληροί, δυνάστες των Ρωμαίων (D.306.1178-79).
127 Η χώρα ομορφότερη και δυνατή εξ όλες και άλλα χαρίσματα πολλά, προτίμησες μεγάλες (G, 378.2115-16).
128 Τα Ιοάννινα ρίζα των Ρωμαίων του Δεσποτάτου, Τα Ιοάννινα έχουν την τιμήν εξ όλον του το κράτος αυτού είναι η ρίζα των Ρωμαίων, το Δεσποτάτο όλο. (IA, 450.312-13).
129 Την Άρταν και τα Ιοάννινα, όπου ήσαν χωρισμένα εκ την αρχήν των δεσποτών εκείνων των Ρωμαίων, να τα ενώσουν αυτοί και να γενούν το έναν, με τα νησία να γενούν όλα μοναφεντία να συναχθούσιν οι Ρωμαίοι όλοι του Δεσποτάτου (I, 442.3026-30).
identity due to their location. The local citizens of Epirus were Romans because they were ethnically Roman, and it is assumed here that they called themselves Romans. This did not stop with the Romans of Epirus; the Chronicle also refers to the people of Morea as “Romans of Morea”¹³⁰ instead of using localized names such as the ones used by Gregoras and Kantakouzenos.

These examples from Kantakouzenos, Gregoras, and the *Chronicle of Tocco* point to a clear use of the political Roman identity for the case of the Romans of Epirus. The two historians from the imperial fold filtered Roman identity through their political convictions, while the *Chronicle of Tocco* had other sorts of interest from the foreign Tocco family and its rule over Epirus. Both perspectives on Roman identity were influenced by the authors’ political affiliations. What is clearly shown here is that the source which had no affiliation with the imperial fold and thus no political affiliation to the Roman ethnic and political identity was not gaining anything by not calling the local subjects Romans. According to Shawcross, these chronicles were meant to be read by the local Romans,¹³¹ so calling them with their name would have made sense. On the other hand, Kantakouzenos and Gregoras’ calling Epirot Romans with localized names instead of the Roman ethnonym prioritized political Roman identity. Thus, separatists no longer counted as “true” Romans in many respects, while their Romanness developed into a fluid concept. In addition, the localized identifications of Roman identity based on the regions from which they came from developed a multiplicity of Roman identities. The

¹³⁰ Οἱ Ρωμαῖοι εκείνου του Μορέως (G, 382.2166).

¹³¹ “Texts written in the Greek vernacular, employing the mnemonic devices, bold diction and vibrant narratorial voice of oral storytelling, would have been especially well-suited to getting the message of the occupying regime across to their native subjects.” Shawcross, *The chronicle of Morea*, 234. This whole part of Shawcross’ book is useful when looking at the vernacular Greek as a propaganda tool during this period. (232-237).
Romans in Epirus had different needs, loyalties, and sociopolitical attributes from the Romans in the Peloponnese (Morea) which had their own set of attributes for the makeup of their Roman identity.

**The case of Achaia (Morea)**

In southern Greece and the Peloponnese, the Byzantine Roman authority faced long and continuous struggle against the well-established Latin Principality of Achaia (Morea). The Byzantine imperial authority was already weak in the Peloponnese even before 1204, with local landlords having control over local administration and loyalty of the residents. With the blow of 1204, Constantinople lost access to the lands of Morea. The Principality of Achaia (Morea) was established around 1205 by William de Champlitte and Geoffrey de Villehardouin, Frankish leaders of the Fourth Crusade who set about conquering their allotted lands after the fall of the empire. The principality was the third major Frankish state of Latin-occupied Romania. It encompassed the entire Peloponnese peninsula of southern Greece, and lasted for about 170 years.\(^{132}\) The Villehardouin dynasty ruled the lands of the Morea with little resistance from 1205 until 1262, when Byzantine forces made their way back to the area.\(^{133}\) The Principality was most successful during 1246-1278 under the leadership of William II Villehardouin. Reconquest efforts began in the early years of the fourteenth century. The Byzantine encroachment and the loss of three powerful castles in the southern Peloponnese in 1261 forced prince William II of Villehardouin (ca. 1211-1278) to seek new alliances from the West. His strongest ally was


Charles of Anjou (ca.1226/27-1285), who later claimed suzerainty over the principality.\textsuperscript{134} From the 1370s internal squabbles weakened resistance to the Byzantines, who claimed strategic fortresses in the southern part of the Principality.\textsuperscript{135} The short version of the development of the principality during the fourteenth century is that of territorial dwindling and the fighting for supremacy between the western forces which had occupied these lands since 1205 and which had developed strong ties with the local Roman lords, and the reinstated Byzantine forces which after 1262 had established the imperial outpost of the Despotate of Mistra.\textsuperscript{136} The Byzantine imperial power controlled most of the Peloponnese by the end of the fourteenth century through allegiances, marriages, and other political and military approaches, up until the fifteenth century and the conquest by the Ottoman Turks.

Comparably to Epirus, events were not so different in Morea. The region of Morea in the Peloponnese peninsula in southern Greece was a place that since after 1204 was in flux between Roman and Latin control. While the Byzantine Romans had lost control of the Morea immediately after 1204, their imperial territory grew slowly at the expense of the Latin princes of Achaia right after 1259, while by 1349, Emperor John VI Kantakouzenos was able to appoint the first Despot, his own son Manuel at the fortress city of Mistra.\textsuperscript{137} Roman identity here seemed to have its own difficulties both between the local populations and the imperial authority, but also between the locals and the foreign Latin and Frankish rulers. From the few chronicle sources that we have from that time, such as the Chronicle of Morea, it seems that the local Roman populations had embraced localized regional autonomies even before 1204. A bright example is

\textsuperscript{134} Shepard, \textit{The Cambridge History}, 768.
\textsuperscript{135} Haldon, \textit{The Palgrave Atlas}, 124.
\textsuperscript{137} Haldon, \textit{The Palgrave Atlas}, 124.
Leo Sgouros and his ambitions for an independent government in the Peloponnese. This trend seemed to be similar in Epirus as well where tendencies for local separatism allowed for the development of autonomous identities based on geographical location. Identities took the names of places such as cities or locations; Artaioi, Ioannites, etc. Local leaders sought security and prosperity for themselves and the region from the best candidate available. That is why, according to the Chronicle of Morea, local citizens and rulers accepted the Latin conquerors if they respected local autonomy, religion, and culture. The question of local Romanness here is different from the case of Epirus due to the longer and more stable presence of Latin power in the Principality. Just like identity and its perceptions in Epirus, Roman identity in Morea also differed according to the sources and their affiliations and goals.

Kantakouzenos condemned the local ethnically Roman population in the Peloponnese because they showed signs of disloyalty since they decided to side with the Frankish and Latin princess of Achaia. As was pointed out with the case of Epirus, Kantakouzenos seemed to deny in many respects Roman identity from those Romans that were no longer politically affiliated or loyal to the imperial authority and the power of the Roman emperor. For him these were still ethnic Romans, but he refused to call them that in his writings, he rather chose to use localized names to refer to them. This practice seems to be similar here as well where he deliberately avoids calling them Romans but chooses to call them as the people of the Peloponnese, Peloponnesians, or simply the residents. This is not the same as calling someone a Roman,

138 Leo Sgouros was a local archon (lord) in the Peloponnese (Morea). In around 1198, together with his brother revolted against the empire and maintained their regional independence in southern Greece for many years. Revolts like Sgouros’ went against the central government because they represented the interested of the provinces. He is one of the early examples of local rulers seeking regional autonomy. Leidholm, Elite Byzantine Kinship, 158.

139 Reference to paragraph 106 in “The Chronicle of Morea (Το Χρονικόν Του Μορέως).” https://www.kastra.eu/infxrngr.php. The local lords seem to accept the foreign rule when securities for their wealth and culture are promised.

140 Πελοποννησίων (IV.85.20, 86.4, 86.10), οίκείους (IV.85.17.), “ἀρέξοντα Πελοποννησίων και πρόνοιαν ποιησόμενον την δυνατήν.” (Histories, IV. 85.13-14.)
since he uses that exact word countless times before and after mentioning these names to refer to
those associated with the Roman Empire. The context in which he chooses to call them
Peloponnesians rather than Romans is also part of a negative political development in his
narrative which framed the locals as ill-behaved and politically antithetical to the well-behaved
Romans, which are framed as politically fair. At the same time, Kantakouzenos does not
challenge the position of the Franks of the Peloponnese, his identity questions originate with
those populations that seemed to have a politically predetermined path. The local Romans were
expected to be loyal to the empire and not the foreign rulers. Lastly, he could have also called
them “Romans of the Peloponnese” since he could contrast them with the Latins that lived in the
same areas, but he does not do that. Being a Roman seems to be a form of privilege. These locals
were ethnically and culturally Roman, but because they were not politically Roman.

A source which was allegedly produced in the Peloponnese, has a completely different
view of Roman identity. The anonymous Chronicle of Morea calls the locals Romans. At the
same time, it also shows signs of anti-Roman sentiments to those Romans of the imperial fold,
but it also demonstrates positive attributes to those local Romans that side politically with their
rule. Teresa Shawcross calls this a fourteenth-century polemic. This polemic portrays as hostile
and wicked those Romans from Constantinople, and as friendly those Romans who decide to
listen to the tale that the Chronicle wants to showcase. The local Romans of the Peloponnese
seemed to have lost their allegiance to the empire, and it was no longer necessary as an
ingredient for their Roman identity. This was a basic element for someone to being a Roman
prior to 1204, while it was no longer the case in the fourteenth century. Shawcross further states
that both Franks and Romans according to the Chronicle felt a sense of a localized identity which

expressed itself powerfully under moments of incoming threat, either from the west or the
east. Following this process, when the Chronicle refers to Romans, it refers to the enemy
Romans from the Byzantine Empire that were encroaching on the Peloponnesians lands. These
references included, the “king of the Romans,” the “genos of the Romans,” the “malice of
the Romans,” and the “rule of the Romans.” The use of the Roman ethnonym in this context
follows a long analysis by scholars that talks about the contested purpose of the *Chronicle of
Morea*. Through Shawcross’s research, the idea that the Chronicle was written in Greek by a
Grecophone Frank who was employed by a noble Frankish lord from the Morea, would indicate
a form of early pre-modern propaganda tool. This ‘tool’ was meant to showcase the good side of
the Latin rulers, and to vilify the Romans from Constantinople. The conclusion to such thought
comes from the fact that the text was written in the vernacular Greek, and not the traditionally
used Greek of the capital, the language that Kantakouzenos was writing in. This in addition with
the text that at certain points uses the first person, would indicate that it was meant to be read out
loud to a local audience. The purpose for such an action would be to influence public opinion
favoring the Latin rulers and their version of history, since they are always portrayed as saviors
and as benevolent rulers. The Roman label in this case is used in opposition to what the sources
from Constantinople are showing. In fact, it is the exact opposite. For Kantakouzenos, being a
Roman is a privilege and it has certain characteristics that tie the person with that identity back to
the imperial fold, the emperor, and the extent of the old geographical determination of Roman
expansion. In the *Chronicle of Morea*, being a Byzantine Roman from the imperial fold is seen

142 Ibid.
143 Ο βασιλεύς γαρ των Ρωμαίων (3.48, 26.448, 96.1467).
144 Το γένος των Ρωμαίων (45.593, 49.670, 61.914, 84.1297, 132.2090).
145 Την κακοσύνην των Ρωμαίων (52.727).
146 Τον νόμον των Ρωμαίων (132.2095).
as a negative title and identity that was used to characterize the ‘invaders’ to a land where the Latins and the local Romans had succeeded in cooperating for many years since the fall of the empire. At this point it is also interesting to mention that we don’t have a source from Morea written by a local Roman from that period, which would have shed more light into what the actual local Romans believed about their identity, thus the Chronicle is the closest source available for such an inquiry and it must be used carefully and with particular attention to its possible history and goals as a political text. In general terms, of major interest here is the fact that the Chronicle calls the local citizens Romans, indicating in a way that they call themselves Romans, since it is suggested that the text was meant to be read to the local population. These are understandably assumptions that scholars like Shawcross have made but are nonetheless assumptions which try to make sense of a turbulent area and time with the few sources available.

To include another perspective on Roman identity to this conversation besides Kantakouzenos and the Chronicle of Morea, the text Istoria Di Romania by Marin Sanudo Torsello (ca. 1270-1343) is also included in this analysis. The Istoria Di Romania is a chronicle from the first half of fourteenth century which talks about the Latin occupied lands in Greece. In Torsello’s work, Romania is the lands of the Latin-occupied locations of the Byzantine Empire. Morea in this case was only a small part of Romania, and Torsello makes many references to the local populations of Morea and their identity. For Torsello, a Roman is a Latin or a Frank and not a what he calls Greek. The Byzantines for Torsello and for the majority of the Latins and their western perception were not Romans, but rather Greeks. For example, the Roman identity is only used in scenarios when referring to the Latin king as “The respectable Latin King of the Romans,” while on the contrary to the Byzantine imperial forces as “the Greeks that came

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148 Ελληνες (106), Στον αυτοκράτορα των Ελλήνων, τον ονομαζόμενο Μιχαήλ Παλαιολόγο (114)
149 Σεβαστό Λατίνο βασιλιά των Ρωμαίων. (160)
with many forces to Morea.\textsuperscript{150} Torsello distinguishes between the “King of the Romans” and the “Emperor of the Greeks”, while interestingly, attributes independence to the “Despotate of Arta.”\textsuperscript{151} This use of Roman identity which in this case is only attributed to the Latins and Franks serves as a testament to the alternating issues with Roman identity during the fourteenth century. Within these three completely different perspectives, one calling Romans those that are loyal to the emperor at Constantinople, the second calling Romans those that were maliciously invading the Despotate of Morea and had nothing to do with its local population, and the third one referring to Romans as those ‘true’ Romans that came from the west. Each attribution suggests a different idea of Romanness. Today we could say that each tried to claim that title for themselves.

Finally, Torsello makes an interesting argument which could provide a possible clarification of the identity of the local Romans in the Peloponnese by stating that in certain islands which are under Frankish control, the locals are submissive to the foreign rule, but when they are free to express themselves, they are always Greek (meaning Byzantine Romans).

In the islands Cyprus, Crete, Euboea, Rhodes and to other islands and the Principality of Morea, although these areas are submissive to the Frankish rule and belong to the Church of Rome, however, almost all their inhabitants are Greeks and they embrace this heresy while their hearts are devoted to the Greek customs and when they are free to express themselves, they will do so.\textsuperscript{152}

\textsuperscript{150} Ο Μορέας αντιμετώπιζε δυσκολίες, γιατί οι Έλληνες προέλασαν με πολλές δυνάμεις ώς την Ανδραβίδα και πολλούςπρέπει στα ελεύθερα. (124)

\textsuperscript{151} When talking about the Kings of the area he includes the, Kings of the Romans, King of the Franks, King of Castile, King of England, Emperor of the Greeks, the two Kings of the Georgians, the King of Trabzon, the two Kings/Dukes of Russia, the Emperor of Bulgaria, King of Serbia, and lastly the Despotate of Arta. 166.

\textsuperscript{152} Στα νησία Κύπρος, Κρήτη, Εύβοια, Ρόδος και σε άλλα νησία και στο πριγκιπάτο του Μορέα, μελόντες αυτές οι περιοχές είναι υποταγμένες στην Εκκλησία της Ρώμη, ωστόσο σχεδόν όλοι οι κάτοικοι τους είναι Έλληνες και ασκάζονται την αίρεση αυτή και η καρδία τους είναι αφιερωμένη στις ελληνικές συνήθειες και, όταν μπορέσουν να εκδηλωθούν ελεύθερα, θα το κάνουν. (168)
Here although the inhabitants or the local Romans from these historically Roman areas are under the Frankish rule, it is to some extent known that they are still embracing their Greek (Byzantine Roman) traditions, religion, and customs when they are allowed to do so. This emphasizes a possibility that the local populations called themselves Roman. It could also serve as another insight as to why the Chronicle of Morea sometimes called them as local Romans and used their Greek language. What the example of Morea showcases is that Roman identity was extremely fluid during the fourteenth century. Local Romans from the area that wanted local separatism prior to 1204, it is believed that they still maintained their Roman identity through culture, language, and religion, but removed the political affiliation which used to be a large part of Roman identity prior. This is showcased by looking at the reference of these communities where they are still identified as Romans even when they have removed the political loyalty to the Byzantine Empire. In this stage, being a Roman during the fourteenth century can said to be dependent upon the perspective of the source, while still making the case that those areas and communities that lost their political affiliation with the Byzantine imperial empire, maintained their Roman identity although it varied according to the geography, and the various diverse sociopolitical environments.

There is a significant amount of scholarship on the process of introducing Romanness to a group and the hierarchy of references for provincial Romans. As Kaldellis states with the example of Prokopios which he refers to the people of the city of Tralleis in Asia Minor not with their ancient Pelasgians ethnic origin but rather stating that these people should no longer be referred to as Pelasgians but rather Romans. Kaldellis mentions that this is a great reference of Romanogenesis, turning a different ethnic group into the Roman ethnicity. If this process was

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153 Kaldellis, Romanland, 55.
true with the references of provincial peoples as Romans in the text, the reverse as we have seen with these examples from Epirus and Morea could also be argued to be a process of a removal of Roman identity. What I mean by that is that when provincial populations are reduced in many ways from the Roman ethnonym in these texts and are now referred to with their local toponym (Verrhiotes, Artans, Peloponnesians, etc.) they are excluded from their political identification as Romans. This should not indicate that the situation on the ground was a reflection of these few chronicles, but it could prove as a useful start to a larger study on local identity. Quoting Kaldellis, “Stripping Romanness of any specific cultural or ethnic content in this way is another way of denying it.”¹⁵⁴ This is certainly a topic which needs to be studied and analyzed further, but this thinking of using political tools and ideas to influence identity and its perception of others is something that can be seen clearly with the case study of Roman identity through the centuries.

The takeaway from this analysis is that Roman political identity when emphasized and separated from the ethnic sense of Romanness was done deliberately by those in power. This was done to regain power from the center of Constantinople to the periphery. From sources like Kantakouzenos and Gregoras, there is an indication that this process was not necessarily done in the villages and localities in Epirus and Morea, but rather was used by those writing these sources back in the capital. This supports Stouraitis’s previous claim of an elite influencing the Roman identity of the empire. This does not mean that their writings influenced those locals from Epirus and Morea that identified with the Roman identity, but it rather shows how the imperial side might have viewed to a certain extent the use of Roman identity. Kantakouzenos and Gregoras’s writings represent both their ideological beliefs, but they are also representative

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 58.
of certain factions of the Byzantine Roman elite at the capital and their views and beliefs. This research focus on the use of toponyms versus the use of the Roman ethnonym is a direct continuation and expansion of the idea of Jill Page and her work *Being Byzantine*, where Page correlates the use of the Roman identity as an extension of expressed loyalty to the imperial power of the Byzantine Empire. In situations of descriptions of war, diplomacy, or anything that related with the influence of the imperial state in the provinces, most of the uses of anything but the Roman identity was synonymous to rebellion, disloyalty, corruption, and other negative connotations. This study followed this methodology to analyze in more detail how the Roman identity changed during the fourteenth century. The findings confirm Page’s work, while additionally add more sources in the mixture of the previous analysis. By placing the local chronicles in contrast to the sources of scholars from the capital, the analysis added more voices and perspectives to the discussion of the use of Roman identity during the fourteenth century.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Roman identity in the fourteenth century seems to be complex since there appears that there was no single Roman identity but rather a discourse of late Romanness where different sociopolitical communities could claim that same identity based on the experiences that each had and the political aims that might had influenced those experiences. This of course should be seen through the views of the different writers that deployed the Roman identity in their narratives. The open question that remains is to what extent did these writers reflect the opinions of the wider sociopolitical community which they represent. The political and regional fragmentation which influenced late Romanness should be seeing through the creation of an assortment of mutable meanings of what being “Roman” meant and to whom. At the core of this alteration of meaning of that identity was the basic breaking down of a major unified experience among all Romans who lived in the empire, such as the emperor as ruler over all others, and the importance of the capital as the center of the empire. The emperor was now not recognized by many, while foreign powers had supported the separatist states against reunification. There was also a multiplicity of centers of importance over the capital of Constantinople, such as Arta in Epirus.

According to Louise Revell in *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities*, a shared Roman identity after the fall of the Roman Empire became an elite phenomenon, “One they could manipulate and restructure, while the communities especially in the provinces could participate in a wider more fluid sense of that same identity.”155 As we have seen with these previous examples from Epirus and Morea, a certain elite seemed to also be behind this new form of manipulation and restructuring of the Roman identity since it was that elite who chose the

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political affiliation of the whole of the region. Once again the evidence that the local commoners viewed their Roman identity as important in this context is also an open question. What regionalism did to Roman identity was that it resided with practical and social knowledge that people from the provinces had to participate in and adopt. This was an important factor in these various centers where the meaning of Roman identity varied according to the sources. When Kantakouzenos and Gregoras decided when to use the Roman identity based on the political association of each group and locality, they were either actively or subconsciously ethnicizing and de-ethnicizing Roman identity. Those that were described with the local toponyms instead of the Roman identity were still known to be culturally Roman by the writers of the sources. In many ways they sustained their ethnic Roman identity but not the political Roman identity which was based on loyalty to the empire. In other words, to answer the question of who was a Roman during the fourteenth century, we need to look at the political affiliations and connections of the sources.

During the fourteenth century, the division between the political and ethnic identification of Romanness grew wider from earlier centuries where it seemed to be cohesive. This multiplicity of Roman identification with the title ‘Roman’ had something different in its identity make-up from place to place. We could also claim that Roman identity became more negotiable and fluid. While there is still much work to be done with looking at the political aspects and influence of the works of Kantakouzenos, Gregoras, and the Chronicles of Morea and Tocco, throughout these works there is a strong identification with a purposeful reconstruction of a community’s local historical past, influenced by variables of political action and objectives.

At this time, it will be unwise not to mention, even briefly, the emergence of the Hellenic identity through all these developments of the last Byzantine centuries. The Hellenic identity,
which is the primary identity for today’s Greeks and the national consciousness of the country of
Greece, originates from the time when the Empire of Nicaea was flourishing independently on
the East of the captured by the Latins capital of Constantinople. Many scholars point to an
ideological reinvention of the collective identity which prioritized in many aspects a Hellenic
identity for the people of the empire. Chrissis stated that “The identity label of Hellene was at the
time reappropriated, reinterpreted, and propagated, especially through the writings of the scholar-
emperor Theodore II Doukas Laskaris.” 156 The argument is that the use of a Hellenic identity
was invented to distinguish the Nicaeans from other claimants to the capital such as Epirus, or to
establish some form of cultural supremacy over others. This new label did not erase the previous
dominant Roman identity which was still used. Thus, there seemed to be a certain fluidity and
multiplicity of these identities, especially the Roman one that originated and operated by the
Empire of Nicaea and by later scholars and imperial powers. These reassessments of Romanness
served as responses to the challenges posed on the Roman identity and political system by the
Latin Empire of Constantinople, but once again by other centers of influence which were
actively using a form of Roman identity, namely the areas of Epirus. 157 Roman identity seemed
to be in a process of reassessment and redefinition since the fall of the empire in 1204, the
reclaiming of the capital in 1261, and continuously after that well into the fourteenth century.

How did regional separatism influence Roman identity during the fourteenth century? As
we have seen so far, Roman identity was defined between an ethnic and a political distinction.
This was one of the outcomes of regional separation and diversification of Roman identity into a
multiplicity of meanings. Political goals operated in the background and influenced the
development and practice of fourteenth-century Roman identity. For the historians and the elite

156 Chrissis, Byzantium and the West, 214-15.
157 Ibid., 115.
from the imperial Byzantine Empire, someone could be a Roman ethnically while not being a subject of the Roman Empire and emperor but could not be a “full” Roman when disloyalty to the Roman rule was explicit. As Page mentions, there was a primacy of the political identity over the wholistic ownership of Roman identity.\textsuperscript{158} This disloyalty from the side of the Byzantine Roman Empire was associated with regional separatist tendencies for example in Epirus, and with siding with the enemy such in the case of Morea. In both examples, the sources assume that people on the ground in these local communities which were ethnically Roman, seem to have kept that title and call themselves Roman, while in the sources of the empire they were referred to with local toponyms so that their Roman identity is not shown. Since regional separatism in various understandings influences the political identity of a Roman, in the writings of Kantakouzenos and Gregoras we see a necessity for the political identity which was influenced by political affiliations. According to these perspectives from the empire, it seems that someone was a “full” Roman when both the political and ethnic identities were centered around the idea of the Byzantine Roman imperial power. This of course was not true for the Romans of Epirus and Morea since they still called themselves Roman but had only some of these ingredients and not the one that the imperial power structure wanted them to have, namely obedience and loyalty. By focusing on the fourteenth-century developments, Roman identity is a concept which has a multifaceted development. The takeaway from an identity analysis such as this one is that due to the sociopolitical events that occurred in the fourteenth century, the political and ethnic identities were further divided and separated far more than the empire had ever seen, while Roman identity witnessed a devolution with a multiplicity of meanings and settings.

\textsuperscript{158} Page, \textit{Being Byzantine}, 168-9.
Previous and current scholarship on late Byzantine Roman identity is a topic that as this short research study has showcased, was complex and enthralling. The effects that political affiliation had on the identity of the subjects of the empire is a case of increasing interest for the study of the Byzantine Roman Empire. Understanding what it meant to be a Roman is a subject that only recently has been resurfacing within the scholarly field. Future critical analyses such as looking at the effect of local separatism will allow us to see into an important and long disregarded aspect of the history and makeup of the Eastern Mediterranean under the Byzantine Roman Empire.

159 Two recent works that were published this year (2022) have to do with the subject of identity in Byzantium, and provide some of the most recent and comprehensive studies of the subject. The Routledge Handbook on Identity in Byzantium edited by Michael Edward Stewart, David Alan Parnell and Conor Whately, Routledge, 2022. And “The Lands of the Rhomai: Imagines geographies in Byzantium before and after 1204” by Stouraitis, in Imagined Geographies in the Mediterranean, Middle East and Beyond (Cambridge, MA, forthcoming 2022) by D. Kastritis, A Stavrakopoulou and A. Stewart.
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Figure 1. Map of the Byzantine Empire in 1203 AD. Credit: map by Ichthyovenator, CC BY-SA 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0>, via Wikimedia Commons.
Figure 2. The borders of the Latin Empire and Byzantine Empire after the 4th crusade (1204) up to the Treaty of Nymphaeum in 1214. Borders are approximate. Credit: map by Varana, CC BY-SA 3.0 <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>, via Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 3. Map of Eastern Mediterranean region — with Near East and southeastern Balkans, c. 1263. Credit: map by 1263_Mediterranean_Sea.PNG:Gabr-el at en.wikipediaderivative work: Hoodinski, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.
BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR

Evangelos (Evan) Zarkadas was born in Kozani, Greece on July 13, 1998. He was raised on the island of Lesbos, and in 2013 he moved to the state of Rhode Island with his family. He graduated from Portsmouth High School in 2016 and then attended the University of Maine at Presque Isle. He graduated in 2020 with a bachelor’s degree in History and Political Science. In 2020 he entered the history program at the University of Maine, studying medieval identity and ethnicity. After receiving his master’s degree, Evan will be working as an educator while simultaneously pursuing his PhD studies. Evan is a candidate for his Master of Arts degree in European History from the University of Maine in May 2022.