CHAPTER TEN
COURT CEREMONIES AND RITUALS OF POWER IN THE LATIN EMPIRE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

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In the great hall of the Major Council in the doge's palace in Venice, several highly indicative pictures illustrate the Fourth Crusade, displaying the conquest of Constantinople and the establishment of the Latin Empire in 1204: The gathering of the crusaders in San Marco (painted by Jean Leclerc), the arrival of Alexios IV in Zara (by Andrea Vicentino), the conquest of the city (by Domenico Tintoretto) and the fictive coronation of Baldwin of Flanders by Enrico Dandolo (by Aliense).1 In the sixteenth century this event became part of the glorious past of the Venetian Republic and belonged to the well known cultural heritage of La Serenissima.2 However, the Latin Empire itself had disappeared. No one—apart from a few Belgian historians—remembered its glory and just in recent years it was rediscovered from oblivion.3 What are the reasons for this neglect

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1 W. Wolters, Der Dogenpalast in Venedig: Ein Rundgang durch Kunst und Geschichte (Berlin, 2010), illus. 103, p. 141; illus. 104, p. 142; illus. 105, p. 142; illus. 107, p. 143.
of an important part of Mediterranean history? On the one hand, only few sources offer an insight into the history of the Latin Empire. Apart from about sixty charters and much more letters, the Byzantine chronicles of Choniates and Akropolites, for instance, describe the capture of Constantinople and the first period after this shocking experience—comparable to the chronicles of Villehardouin and Clari for the Latin point of view. The best source is the chronicle of Valencienne which gives detailed impressions of the reign of Emperor Henry I.

On the other hand, German and French scholars concentrated on the great examples of their splendid rulers—the Roman emperors and the reges christianissimi—or the history of their nation. The interest of modern research may be part of a shift in priorities—away from a historiography regarding the individual nations towards the investigation of transcultural/intercultural entanglement and “postcolonial issues”: “identities,” “religion,” “economic interchange,” “conflicts,” and “violence” are in the focus of attention. The region of the Latin Empire of Constantinople


