The socio-administrative organisation of Latin Greece forms an exceedingly composite research field, on account of the great complexity and constant fluidity of the prevailing political scene. The present study will focus, among the numerous Latin dominions in Greece, on that of Venice, the longest-lasting and most stable of them, which imposed upon the Greek lands a distinct social regime of urban character directly linked to its administrative system, and particularly to the institutions of self-government. However, in order to provide a more comprehensive overview of the subject, the study will include a brief description of the socio-administrative regime in other Latin-ruled Greek regions whose characteristics differed considerably.

The chronological frame of the study spans the 13th to the 18th centuries, the starting point being 1204, the year of the capture of Constantinople by the Frankish Crusaders and the Venetians, although certain regions, such as Cyprus and the Ionian Islands, had already come under Latin dominion some years earlier. The study concludes with the 1797 surrender of Venice itself and subsequently of its last possessions in the Levant—the Ionian Islands—to Napoleon, which is beyond the conventional limits of the medieval period. It should, however, be noted that the Venetian Stato da Mar comprised an exception within the general history of Latin Greece, since the rest of the Latin dominions in the Greek lands had already fallen to the Ottomans by the 16th century.

Moreover, the 16th century was also an exceptionally decisive period for the Venetian Stato da Mar, since it was during this time that three Veneto-Ottoman wars were waged (the second, third and fourth), which resulted in Venice’s loss of major territories, the only counterbalance being the annexation of the islands of Cephalonia and Ithaca in 1500. Meanwhile, the

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16th century was additionally a turning-point in the social history of the Venetian-ruled Greek regions and, directly linked with this, in the running of the local administration. More specifically, the second half of the century witnessed the institutionalisation of the system of the “closed” civic communal councils and the implementation of a strict social stratification modelled upon that of the metropolis, Venice, accompanied by the parallel decline of the local feudal system, the first signs of which are already evident in the 14th century.

A crucial aspect of any research into the socio-administrative history of Latin Greece is the examination of the “rulers” and the “ruled”. In a generalised sense, the former category was comprised of Latins, that is, Catholic western Europeans, who assumed the governance of the various regions and who at the outset constituted, broadly speaking, the new upper socioeconomic class.

On the other hand, their subordinates were in their majority Orthodox Greeks—a term which describes the populous indigenous folk whose chief mark of identity was their religion, though they additionally displayed social but also early forms of “ethnic-Greek” characteristics, one of the principal ones being the Greek language.

It must be stressed nevertheless that these two categories were not absolutely distinct and exhibited striking internal differences. The Latin rulers, already from 1204, were characterised by their non-uniformity, their multiple ethnic backgrounds and their constant clashes amongst themselves, but also internally by differences in their socioeconomic status. On the other hand, a good proportion of the Greeks gradually acquired the right to participate along with the Latins in the local administration and eventually came to form an essential part of the local ruling class.

The ruling side was strongly identified with the original Latin powers of the Frankish crusaders and the Venetians who had settled in the Byzantine lands in 1204 as well as of later powers that succeeded them from the 13th century onwards, such as the Angevins, Catalans, Florentine Acciaiuoli, but also new ones such as the Genoese and the Hospitallers.

The establishment of the Latin dominions in Romania produced strikingly novel political, ecclesiastical, economic and cultural realities, a special place in this system being occupied by the newly installed structures of socio-administrative organisation. These dominions may be classified into two large categories further divided into a number of sub-categories.

The first category comprises the great majority of the Latin dominions in Greece, the so-called Crusader States, which were created after 1204. Its main characteristic was the institution of imperial succession and of vassalage, while