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**Il "Commonwealth" veneziano tra il 1204 e la fine della Repubblica – identità e peculiarità
The Venetian "Commonwealth" between 1204 and the end of the Republic - identity and specificities**

Il 'commonwealth' veneziano sui mari verso il Levante
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Abstract

Between 1082 and 1172 Venice obtained quarters in Constantinople, Acre and Tyre, and a *fondaco* in Alexandria, all of which were included in foreign states. A striking feature of Venetian commercial expansion and settlement in the eastern Mediterranean is the absence of Venetian governmental structure or permanent representation in the region until the thirteenth century. This absence raises several questions that beg to be answered: how did Venice manage its outposts, what alternatives to state administration did it use, were these successful or did they fail?

Following the Fourth Crusade, which ended in 1204, Venice extended for the first time its own rule over several regions of the eastern Mediterranean, namely a section of Constantinople and other territories within the Latin Empire of Constantinople, the island of Crete, Corone and Modone in the southern Peloponnese, and a quarter in the city of Negroponte in the island of Euboea. This development appears to have generated a major change in Venetian attitude toward the building of permanent state institutions overseas. Differing political, military and commercial considerations induced Venice to establish them in its colonies in the former territories of the Byzantine empire, along the shore of the Middle East in its outposts of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, Cyprus, Egypt and Cilician Armenia, and in the Black Sea. The consolidation of the Venetian state apparatus overseas proceeded slowly. Its nature, stages and pace, enhanced from the 1220s, differed from one region to the other. By the late thirteenth century a large degree of uniformity had been achieved, and the Venetian state administration overseas operated smoothly under the strict supervision of the central government.

The Venetian documentation from the late eleventh to the late thirteenth century bearing on the process outlined above is unevenly distributed over space and time. As a result, the reconstruction presented in this paper faces serious obstacles and remains fragmentary.