

= Geoffrey of Briel =

Geoffrey of Briel , in older literature Geoffrey of Bruyères , was a French knight and the third lord of the Barony of Karytaina in the Principality of Achaea , in Frankish Greece . He led a colourful and turbulent life , narrated in detail in the Chronicle of the Morea . Accounted the finest knight in the Principality , he fought in the wars against the Byzantine Greeks , was captured in the Battle of Pelagonia in 1259 , and was sent back to Achaea bearing the Byzantine terms in 1261 . Geoffrey was twice deprived of his barony , once for rebelling against his uncle , the Prince of Achaea William II of Villehardouin , and then for abandoning the Principality without leave in order to spend time with a mistress , the wife of one of his feudatories , in Italy . He was pardoned both times , but henceforth held his title as a gift of the Prince . He died childless in 1275 , and the Barony of Karytaina was split up .

= = Origin = =

Geoffrey was the son of Hugh of Briel and Alice of Villehardouin , a daughter of the Prince of Achaea , Geoffrey I of Villehardouin . The family , which hailed from Briel @-@ sur @-@ Barse in the French province of Champagne , is variously named in the sources , e.g. Brieres or Prieres (????????? or ????????? in Greek) , Bruières , Briers , Briel or Brielle . Geoffrey 's father inherited the Barony of Karytaina sometime around 1222 from his brother , Renaud of Briel . The Barony was the third largest (after Akova and Patras) in the Principality of Achaea , counting 22 knights ' fiefs and being responsible for keeping watch over the rebellious inhabitants of the mountainous Skorta area .

= = Baron of Karytaina and revolt against William of Villehardouin = =

Geoffrey was born in Greece , possibly in Karytaina , soon after his father 's arrival there (about 1222 / 3) . Hugh of Briel died in early 1238 , not yet forty years old , and was succeeded by the young Geoffrey . The main source on Geoffrey 's life are the various versions of the Chronicle of the Morea , which , in the words of A. Bon , " narrates with so much detail and indulgence " the " many and colourful adventures " of " a peculiar and charming figure , very representative of the generation of Frankish seigneurs born in Greece " . The Chronicle credits Geoffrey with the construction of the castle of Karytaina , the " Greek Toledo " as William Miller calls it . Geoffrey enjoyed a high reputation as a warrior , and was deemed to be the " best knight in the Morea " . According to the Aragonese version of the Chronicle he maintained a school of chivalry at the castle Karytaina , where the sons of the Greek nobles were trained as knights in the Western manner .

Geoffrey married Isabella de la Roche , daughter of the Great Lord of Athens and Thebes , Guy I de la Roche . In 1256 ? 58 , he became involved in the War of the Euboeote Succession , at first as a lieutenant of his uncle , Prince William II of Villehardouin , leading an army that laid waste to Euboea and recovered the town of Negroponte for the Prince . Later , however , he sided with his father @-@ in @-@ law Guy de la Roche and the other Frankish lords who opposed William 's hegemonic ambitions . William however prevailed in the Battle of Karydi in 1258 , and a parliament was assembled at Nikli to judge the defeated lords . Geoffrey was pardoned by the Prince and his confiscated lands returned , but this time as a personal grant , rather than a fief held in right of conquest .

= = Pelagonia , Byzantine captivity and sojourn in Italy = =

In 1259 , Geoffrey participated in the princely army that joined the Achaean ? Epirote ? Sicilian alliance opposing the Empire of Nicaea . The allied forces , riven by distrust between the Latins and the Epirote Greeks , were dealt a crushing defeat in the Battle of Pelagonia . Prince William and most of his barons , including Geoffrey , were captured in the aftermath of the battle .

The Frankish lords remained in captivity until 1261 , when , following the recovery of Constantinople

by the Nicaean Greeks , the Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos offered to release them in exchange for an oath of fealty to him , and the cession of a number of fortresses in the southeastern Morea . After William agreed , Geoffrey was released in order to convey the emperor 's proposals to the nobles of the Principality . A parliament was once again held in Nikli , in the presence of Geoffrey , Guy de la Roche , and the Principality 's chancellor Leonard of Veroli . The captive lords were represented by their wives , whereby this assembly became known as the " Parliament of Ladies " . The parliament agreed to the terms , Geoffrey handed over the castles to the Greeks , and returned to Constantinople along with a number of hostages , whereupon Prince William and his barons were released .

The surrender of the fortresses began a long period of conflict between the Greeks of the reconstituted Byzantine Empire and the forces of the Principality for control of the Morea . Prince William was absolved by the Pope of his oaths to Palaiologos , and warfare began almost as soon as he returned to the Principality . Despite this precarious situation , Geoffrey absented himself from the Morea , without William 's permission , and spent the years 1263 ? 65 in Italy , ostensibly on a pilgrimage , but in reality living with the wife of one of his feudatories , John of Katavas . His absence allowed the inhabitants of Skorta to rise up and aid the Byzantine troops in their offensive , which was halted by the same John of Katavas in the Battle of Prinitsa . Geoffrey was again deprived of his barony for this act , but was pardoned and restored to it on his return .

= = Final years and death = =

Geoffrey is mentioned again in the campaigns of the early 1270s , when Palaiologos sent a new commander to the Morea , Alexios Doukas Philanthropenos . In 1270 , Geoffrey and his neighbour , the Baron of Akova , joined the Prince 's army with 150 horsemen and 200 infantry . The Latin force raided the Byzantine holdings in Laconia , but Philanthropenos avoided being drawn into a pitched battle . A period of relative peace followed due to the ongoing Second Council of Lyon , but in 1275 , the mutual truce was broken by the Greeks . Prince William entrusted a force of 50 horse and 200 crossbowmen to Geoffrey , who stationed them to keep watch over the defiles of Skorta , but he died of dysentery in late 1275 . After his death , Karytaina was increasingly subject to the attacks of the Byzantines , and finally fell to them in 1320 .

Geoffrey died childless ; the barony , held by grant , was inheritable only by Geoffrey 's direct descendants , and consequently was split upon his death : one half remained with his widow , Isabella de la Roche , who married Hugh , Count of Brienne , before her death in 1279 , and the other reverted to the Prince 's domain . Two pretenders to Geoffrey 's inheritance appeared over the next few years : a certain John Pestel , who achieved nothing , and Geoffrey 's nephew , Geoffrey the Younger , who after much persistence managed to obtain the fief of Moraina .

= = Fictional portrayals = =

Geoffrey is the eponymous subject of Alfred Duggan 's 1962 novel , *Lord Geoffrey 's Fancy* . A sympathetic but flawed hero , observed by his distant cousin , an admiring but increasingly disillusioned narrator , the baron of Karytaina is portrayed as a supreme exemplar of both the qualities and the limitations of Frankish chivalry .