THE BYZANTINE HELLENE

The Life of Emperor Theodore Laskaris and Byzantium in the Thirteenth Century

DIMITER ANGELOV

The Byzantine Hellene

This book tells the extraordinary story of Theodore II Laskaris, an emperor who ruled over the Byzantine state of Nicaea established in Asia Minor after the fall of Constantinople to the crusaders in 1204. Theodore Laskaris was a man of literary talent and keen intellect. His action-filled life, youthful mentality, anxiety about communal identity (Anatolian, Roman, and Hellenic), ambitious reforms cut short by an early death, and thoughts and feelings are all reconstructed on the basis of his rich and varied writings. His original philosophy, also explored here, led him to a critique of scholasticism in the West, a mathematically inspired theology, and a political vision of Hellenism. A personal biography, a ruler's biography, and an intellectual biography, this highly illustrated book opens a vista onto the eastern Mediterranean, Anatolia, and the Balkans in the thirteenth century, as seen from the vantage point of a key political actor and commentator.

DIMITER ANGELOV is Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History at Harvard University. His publications include *Imperial Ideology and Political Thought in Byzantium, 1204–1330* (Cambridge, 2007) and *Church and Society in Late Byzantium* (edited, 2009).

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Harvard University, Massachusetts

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List of Historical Figures

Alexios Strategopoulos: a general blood-related to the imperial Komnenos family; a small expeditionary force led by him resulted in the surprise recapture of Constantinople on July 25, 1261

Anna, Nicaean empress: daughter of the emperor Alexios III Angelos; wife of the first Nicaean emperor Theodore I Laskaris; mother of the Nicaean empress Irene; see Table 1, p. 36

Basil Vatatzes: putative father of the Nicaean emperor John III Vatatzes and grandfather of Theodore; provincial official in Asia Minor and high general (d. 1194); married to an anonymous lady who was a great-granddaughter of Alexios I Komnenos and a first cousin of Isaac II Angelos and Alexios III Angelos

Constantine: chamberlain (*koubouklarios*) of Theodore and addressee of a theological work

Constantine Strategopoulos: son of Alexios Strategopoulos; married to a niece of John III Vatatzes

Constantine (Komnenos) Tornikes: son of Demetrios Komnenos Tornikes; general and high court official

Constanza-Anna of Hohenstaufen, Nicaean empress: daughter born out of wedlock to the Western Roman emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen and Bianca Lancia; second wife of John III Vatatzes; stepmother of Theodore; sister of Manfred, King of Sicily

Demetrios Komnenos Tornikes: long-term chief minister in the empire of Nicaea from at least 1216 until his death between 1248 and 1252

Eirenikos family: a prominent family before and after 1204; Theodore Eirenikos was head of the imperial chancery in Constantinople before 1204, "consul of the philosophers" in Nicaea, and patriarch of Constantinople in exile (1214–16); Nicholas Eirenikos was a court poet in Nicaea; Theodore's head tutor at the court may have belonged to this family

Elena Asenina: Nicaean empress and wife of Theodore from 1235 until her death in 1252; daughter of Tsar Ivan Asen II of Bulgaria

Germanos II: patriarch of Constantinople in exile (1223–40); born in a village on the Bosporus; deacon of the patriarchal clergy before 1204; influential orator and homilist

George Akropolites: born in Latin-held Constantinople (1217) and educated under Nikephoros Blemmydes, he was one of Theodore's influential tutors and correspondents; imperial secretary, teacher, and civil servant in the empire of Nicaea; Theodore promoted him to the office of grand logothete (*megas logothethes*), which he held until his death (1282)

George Mouzalon: one of three brother pages who were sons of a palace functionary and were raised at the court; talented musician and faithful courtier; addressee of many of Theodore's letters and works; he held a number of offices during Theodore's rule and served as his chief minister

Irene, Nicaean empress: eldest daughter of the Nicaean emperor Theodore I Laskaris and the empress Anna; first wife of John III Vatatzes; mother of Theodore; see Table 1, p. 36

John III Vatatzes, emperor of Nicaea (John Doukas Vatatzes): father of Theodore; see Table 1, p. 36

John Phaix: imperial secretary; addressee of letters and a theological work

Joseph Mesopotamites: imperial secretary and close friend and correspondent of Theodore; his influential family included Constantine Mesopotamites, head of the imperial chancery before 1204 and later metropolitan bishop of Thessalonica

Hagiotheodorites: private secretary of Theodore and a descendant of a powerful twelfth-century family of imperial ministers

Laskaris family: the family rose in prominence in the twelfth century and intermarried with the ruling dynasty of the Komnenoi; the Laskaris were quite possibly descendants of a foreign grandee naturalized in Byzantium in the eleventh century from the Shaddadid family, which ruled Dvin and Gandzak in Armenia

Michael of Epiros: Michael II Komnenos Doukas, ruler of Epiros; illegitimate son of Michael I Komnenos Doukas, the founder of the state of Epiros; nephew of Theodore Komnenos Doukas (Theodore of Epiros); see Table 1, p. 36

Michael Palaiologos: son of Theodora Palaiologina and the general and *megas domestikos* Andronikos Palaiologos, who served the Nicaean emperors for more than twenty-five years; grandson of Despot Alexios Palaiologos who was married to a daughter of Alexios III Angelos; hence a second cousin of Theodore by matrilineal descent (see Table 1,

p. 36); political rival of Theodore; the high aristocratic family of the Palaiologoi had intermarried with the imperial dynasties of the Komnenos and the Doukai in the twelfth century

Nikephoros Blemmydes: the leading philosopher and teacher in the empire of Nicaea

Nikephoros Pamphilos: archdeacon in the imperial clergy; later metropolitan bishop of Ephesos (1243/1244–60) and patriarch of Constantinople in exile (1260)

Theodore (Theodore Laskaris, Theodore Doukas Laskaris, Theodore II Laskaris, the younger Theodore): crown prince and emperor of Nicaea

Theodore the elder (Theodore Komnenos Laskaris, Theodore I Laskaris): founder and first emperor of Nicaea; father of the empress Irene and grandfather of Theodore II Laskaris

Theodore of Epiros: Theodore Komnenos Doukas, ruler and briefly emperor of the state of Epiros; see Table 1, p. 36

Theodore (Komnenos) Philes: Nicaean governor of Thessalonica and the surrounding region; he had a bitter conflict with Theodore, whom he accused of sexual misconduct

Zabareiotes: a teacher who may have been Theodore's head tutor at the court

List of Rulers in Byzantium and Beyond

Byzantine Emperors before 1204

Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118)
John II Komnenos (1118–43)
Manuel I Komnenos (1143–80)
Alexios II Komnenos (1180–83)
Andronikos I Komnenos (1183–85)
Isaac II Angelos (1185–95)
Alexios III Angelos (1195–1203)
Alexios IV Angelos (1203–04)
Nicholas Kanavos (1204)
Alexios V Doukas Mourtzouphlos (1204)

Byzantine Emperors and Rulers after 1204

Nicaea
Theodore I (Komnenos) Laskaris (1204–21)
John III (Doukas) Vatatzes (1221–54)
Theodore II (Doukas) Laskaris (1254–58)
John IV Laskaris (1258–61)
Michael VIII Palaiologos (1259–82), ruling in Constantinople after 1261
Epiros
Michael I Komnenos Doukas (1204–c. 1215)
Theodore Komnenos Doukas (1215–30, c. 1237–53)
Manuel Komnenos Doukas (1230–c. 1237)
John Komnenos Doukas (c. 1237–44)
Demetrios Komnenos Doukas (1244–46)
Michael II Komnenos Doukas (c. 1231–c. 1267)
Trebizond (the Grand Komnenoi)
Alexios I (1204–22)
David (1204–12)
Manuel I (1238–63)

Latin emperors of Constantinople
- Baldwin I (1204–05)
- Henry (1206–16)
- Peter of Courtenay (1217–18)
- Yolanda (1217–19), regent
- Robert of Courtenay (1221–27)
- John of Brienne (1229–37)
- Baldwin II (1240–61)

Sicily and Italy
- Frederick II Hohenstaufen, King of Sicily (1198–1250) and Western Roman emperor (1220–50)
- Conrad IV, King of Sicily (1250–54)
- Conradin (1254–58), underage King of Sicily (in absentia)
- Manfred, Prince of Taranto (after 1250) and King of Sicily (1258–66)

Seljuk sultans of Rum
- Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I (1192–96, 1205–11)
- Rukn al-Dīn Süleyman II (1196–1204)
- ʿIzz al-Dīn Kılıç Arslān III (1204–05)
- ʿIzz al-Dīn Kaykāwūs I (1211–19)
- ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād I (1219–37)
- Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw II (1237–45/46)
- ʿIzz al-Dīn Kaykāwūs II (1246–56, 1257–61)
- Rukn al-Dīn Kılıç Arslān IV (1248–54, 1256–65)
- ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn Kayqubād II (1249–57)

Tsars of Bulgaria
- Peter and Asen (1185–97)
- Kaloyan (1197–1207)
- Boril (1207–18)
- Ivan Asen II (1218–41)
- Koloman (Kaliman I) (1241–46)
- Michael Asen (1246–56)
- Kaliman Asen II (1256)
- Mitso (Micho) Asen (1256–57)
- Constantine Tikh (1257–77)

Kings of Cilician Armenia
- Leo I (1187–1219), king after 1199
- Hetoum I (1226–69)

Author's Note

I have used a mixed approach in rendering Byzantine names into English. Whenever possible, the English equivalent of personal names has been preferred: thus, Theodore, not Theodoros; John, not Ioannes. I have adhered to the practice of transcribing Byzantine family names and not Latinizing them: thus Palaiologos, not Palaeologus; Kantakouzenos, not Cantacuzenus. In the case of Byzantine court titles and offices, I have again attempted to strike a balance. I have provided the standard translation of many titles, with the Greek term left in parenthesis: thus, grand logothete (*megas logothetes*) and consul of the philosophers (*hypatos ton philosophon*). Court titles whose translation is especially problematic or impossible, such as *mesazon* and *sebastokrator,* have been given in transcription. The discussion of the sources as well as various supplementary and technical matters has been confined to the notes and the appendices, which lay out the evidentiary basis of this book in great detail. All references to the Old Testament follow the nomenclature and numeration of the Greek Septuagint. References to classical Greek texts are based on the standard editions.

Introduction

One year before he passed away at the age of thirty-six, the subject of this biography sent a polemical letter to his teacher and spiritual father. The letter ended on a note of hope that his arguments "would be judged by future generations."[1] The author called for the judgment of history because he was conscious of criticism of him as a public personality. Throughout his life, he had observed with rising concern the vilification of rulers before and after their deaths. The inevitable lot of the individual vested with royal authority, he reasoned, was "to be the target of reproach."[2] He had a good reason to fear that he would suffer the same fate, for his policies had upset many among the ruling elite and had troubled his former teacher, the addressee of the letter. He wished his lone voice to be heard through the ages and intended his writings to become a lasting monument. "I know," he wrote over a decade earlier, "that in this way I will gain an icon of remembrance before the eyes of the future generations and a clearing of my name."[3]

The author of these poignant words was the Byzantine ruler and philosopher Theodore Laskaris (1221/22–58). He is known as Theodore II Laskaris and his full official name is Theodore Doukas Laskaris, but we will be referring to him in the following pages with the shorter version of his name that was already circulating while he was alive.[4] Theodore Laskaris ruled over the "empire of Nicaea" (1204–61), a polity established in exile in Asia Minor after the dramatic fall of Constantinople, the imperial capital of the Byzantine (Eastern Roman) Empire, to the Latin armies of the Fourth Crusade in April 1204. *Nicaea,* like *Byzantium,* is a Western calque and a misnomer for a state that always named itself "the empire of the Romans." Attested already in a contemporary thirteenth-century Latin text, the designation originates from the main city of the Byzantine successor state: Nicaea, today's Iznik, in northwestern Asia Minor.[5] This biography takes up the challenging task that Theodore Laskaris prepared for us seven and a half centuries ago through his own writings. It tells the story of a single person that is also the story of the transformation of his native culture, Byzantium.

Why should we, as moderns, respond to a cry for attention by an individual who lived long ago and had experiences different not only from

our own but also from those of the common people in his time? The first and simplest reason is the extraordinary opportunity it provides for empathy with a real human being from the distant past. Thanks to his vivid and self-revealing prose, Theodore Laskaris emerges before our eyes as a man of flesh and blood – with attachments to family and friends, with emotions and mood changes, with anxieties about the direction of his life, and with an interest in the principles of the universe and God's role in it. His impulsive self-confidence and his curiosity that bordered on naïvité are easily recognizable and timeless features of youth. "Let me say something most unusual," he loved to exclaim.[6] He readily invoked his young age and commented, not always with due reverence and respect, on the seniority of people around him.[7] His writings reveal details of his daily life and create a fully human portrait.

All this is hardly insignificant. Medieval history suffers from a shortage of private lives due to the inadequacy of our sources.[8] Biographies of men and women of the Middle Ages tend to present us with their deeds and actions rather than their thoughts, ideas, and emotions. Only rarely do utterances of medieval people, including royalty, survive in sufficient quantity to enable the reconstruction of their evolving thoughts and characters in a coherent biography. One historian concluded with unconcealed frustration his meticulous study of the reign of the seventh-century Byzantine emperor Heraclius: "We can never know what was inside Heraclius' head."[9] Theodore Laskaris belongs to a very small number of premodern individuals who have left an autobiographical record of their life, such as Augustine of Hippo in late antiquity or the fifteenth-century merchant of Prato, Francesco Datini. His literary confessions reveal the unique personal voice of an emperor in Byzantium, a voice whose scope and depth is unmatched until a century and a half later when we encounter the scholar-emperor Manuel II Palaiologos (1350–1425). We see Theodore torn between politics, philosophy, and artistic angst. We see him feeling anguish on account of a demanding life and grappling to reconcile old theories with lived experience and practices.

The gripping historical setting, of which Theodore Laskaris was a part, is another attractive aspect of the life of this little-known figure of the past. The Fourth Crusade was a turning point in Mediterranean and world history, when the relations between the medieval East and West entered a new phase. Latins settled on the territory of a wounded Byzantine Empire by right of conquest. Their arrival brought about the emergence of new polities, colonial as well as irredentist, and a territorial fragmentation that would terminate only under Mehmed the Conqueror in the fifteenth century. Byzantium

ended its traditional political and economic dominance in the Christian northern Mediterranean. The personal story of a key contemporary opens up a vista on these phenomena. Tracing the events of his life means retelling some of the well-known episodes of the political history of the eastern Mediterranean, Asia Minor, and the Balkans from the unique vantage point of a contemporary leader and eyewitness. Theodore Laskaris held distinctive opinions on many aspects of this political transformation. Indeed, it is the eloquent and engaged voice of the historical character that makes this biography so special. His writings cover a variety of genres and consist of epistles, orations, essays, polemics, theological works, discourses addressed to saints and holy figures, hymns, philosophical tracts, political treatises, and a newsletter – a written output of more than 960 pages of printed editions and, if these are still lacking, manuscript folios. These works form a rich and substantial body of evidence. They are the basis for reconstructing his life and penetrating his thought world. They enrich our knowledge of the historical setting. They reveal new forms of identity construction, which cannot be adequately understood without a focus on the individual himself.

The oeuvre of Theodore Laskaris generates methodological insights into the opportunities and challenges of basing a historical biography on letters and other texts written in the living tradition of Byzantine rhetoric and literature. Starting most prominently in the eleventh century, with Michael Psellos being the foremost example, Byzantine authors embedded their own personae and I-voice in letters, orations, histories, and other kinds of works. Much attention has recently been paid to the construction of the self in these texts. This productive discussion, which has understandably been driven and dominated by literary scholars, has advanced our knowledge of the themes, models, and ploys of authorial self-fashioning.[10] We are approaching a better understanding of the Byzantine author, yet we still lack coherent portraits of the individuals behind the words. Two questions naturally arise. What are the main methods of extracting biographical information from the letters, orations, and hymns written by a learned Byzantine author? Can the themes and devices of self-presentation contribute to our understanding of the historical self?

Theodore Laskaris did not write a narrative autobiography, yet many of his works are markedly self-referential and autobiographic, in the sense that he wrote, in the first person, about his experiences, feelings, and thoughts – that is, about himself.[11] The most important type of self-descriptive texts, as well as the largest single body of his writings, are his more than 200 letters. His letters do not form a continuous narrative. They represent capsules of information in a developing story and pieces of a puzzle that need to be

assembled to tell the story. Considered in their totality, the letters form a rich and variegated canvas. They vary widely in theme and content: narrative, confession, polemic, satire, consolation, and ordinance. They allow us to learn about his studies, travels, daily routine, diet, friendships, campaigns, and the reception he granted to distinguished foreign visitors.[12] Some of the letters are long and informative. For example, a series of letters to his childhood friend, confidant, and chief minister George Mouzalon dating from a campaign in the Balkans (1255) relate the movements of the army. Other letters are shorter and deal with trifles, such as "keep in touch" and "missing you" notes accompanied by philosophical musings. Theodore's twenty-seven correspondents represent the political and intellectual elite of the empire of Nicaea: officials, secretaries, teachers, and churchmen, including the patriarch and leading bishops, as well as a Roman pope and his cardinals. Letters give us insights into affairs of church and state and into Theodore's duties and activities as a coemperor and a ruling emperor.[13]

The letters enable us to trace Theodore's relationship with three individuals in particular. Mouzalon tops the list of his correspondents with sixty-five letters. He was also the dedicatee of a treatise on friendship and politics, and the philosophical treatise *Explanation of the World*. He is followed by Theodore's teachers Nikephoros Blemmydes (1197–c. 1271), the addressee of the polemical epistle quoted at the outset, with about forty-eight letters and George Akropolites (1217–82) with about forty-two letters.[14] The reading audience of Theodore's literary and philosophical works intersected with the circle of his correspondents. The author often announced by letter that he was sending a composition to Mouzalon, Blemmydes, Akropolites, a metropolitan bishop, and secretaries.[15] He himself received and read works written by his correspondents. An urban official from Philadelphia, thus, shared with Theodore a church hymn and an abbot dispatched a prayer of blessing for the food on his table. Blemmydes sent Theodore Laskaris his mirror of princes (instructive book on kingship), *The Imperial Statue*, and addressed to him theological treatises.[16] The correspondents formed an active, critical, and interconnected group of readers and writers.

The letters are marked by the features of the genre of the epistle in Byzantium.[17] One of these features is the phenomenon of the edited collection. Authors in Byzantium kept copies of their letters and valued them as literary products. At a certain stage of their lives, they made a selection of letters with the aim of preserving the texts, advertising their relations with specific individuals, and presenting an authorial self-portrait. The creation of a collection is the equivalent of publication today.

Theodore Laskaris followed this practice. His main epistolary collection was prepared in early 1254 when he was thirty-two years of age.[18] It has come down to us in a single fourteenth-century manuscript in the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence (Cod. Laur. plut. 59, 35). The "Laurentian collection," as it is called hereafter, arranges the 133 letters in batches by correspondent. One of Theodore's agendas was to display his closeness with and intellectual lineage from his two main teachers, because the collection opens with his letters to them. Epistles addressed to the same correspondent form thematic clusters – clusters in which they usually follow chronological sequence and form a quasi-narrative. As was the common practice, his edited letters lack any indication of the time of their composition.

The process of editing the letters into a collection meant the introduction of revisions that we, as historical detectives, must attempt to identify and interpret.[19] One sign of editorial intervention was the removal of unnecessary factual detail, a phenomenon known as "de-concretization." Thus, the name of a Latin individual was replaced in a letter to the pope with the phrase "so-and-so" in order to conceal his identity.[20] Another sign of revision was the removal of diplomatic components from letters that originally served an official purpose. Two of his letters are orders issued by him as a coemperor (he refers to himself as "my imperial majesty") to metropolitan bishops, but they still bear the hallmarks of his writing style. He was clearly the author rather than secretaries in the imperial chancery. One is a letter of command addressed to the metropolitan of Ephesos and refers to itself as "an order" (*prostagma*), a specific kind of imperial charter. This epistolary ordinance is unusual from a diplomatic point of view because it lacks the standard closure (eschatocol) that includes the date of issue.[21] The ordinance must have featured this ending, but at the time of the production of the epistolary collection the author – with the help of his editor – removed the eschatocol.[22] Interestingly, two letters dating to the period of his sole rule (and incorporated into a collection produced after the Laurentian one) retain signs of their diplomatic origins. The first letter has his signature at the end.[23] The second one, addressed to the pope, contains a standard diplomatic component at the beginning: the name and title of the recipient, the sender's name and title, and a salutation.[24] The presence of these features in only two surviving letters confirms the impression that Theodore made an effort to fashion his edited letters as pieces of personal correspondence in accordance with the Byzantine literary tradition, even though some letters had served earlier as "official" communications. In this regard, his letters differ greatly from the charters and epistles of the

contemporary Western emperor Frederick II Hohenstaufen (1194–1250), with whom Theodore Laskaris has been compared.[25]

The letters of Theodore Laskaris are not easy texts to read and understand. Couched in a learned language with many rare words and composed in an idiosyncratic style, they abound in quotations, circumlocutions, allegories, learned allusions, and philosophical digressions. The text of the letter was only one part of the message in the interpersonal interaction based on epistolary exchange. The letter-bearer delivered an oral report, which could be the gist of the communication. The messenger will "tell you precisely all matters pertaining to me," Theodore wrote on one occasion, and on another urged his correspondent to "accept as if from me what the (letter bearer's) mouth says to you."[26] The letter-bearer served as an explicator of opaque letters.[27] The epistolary communication was accompanied by the dispatch of gifts – hunting trophies, cheese, butter, and sour milk, for example – and the exchange of manuscripts and works composed by Theodore Laskaris and his addressees.[28] Frustratingly, the author often resorted to using code names. He chose wittily, using nicknames from among ancient heroes such as Nestor or Guneas the Arab. Animal species stood for specific people and human types.[29] The anonymity of ridiculed individuals was justified through the authority of Hermogenes (second century AD), the chief theoretician of rhetoric for the Byzantines.[30] Comic neologisms served as code names for specific individuals – "a scion of goats" (*tragophylon*) and "a ram-bearer" (*kriophoros*), for example. Today it is regrettably impossible to identify the people Theodore had in mind, except for cases when he made puns on personal and family names. The "scion of goats" was a playful reference to the surname of Theodore Komnenos Philes, the governor of Thessalonica. The "ram-bearer" appears to have been his attendant and companion Christopher, a play both on his name and the individual's physical characteristics.[31]

These features of the Byzantine epistle explain why historians have traditionally refrained from using them as sources for biography. We have been warned that "the mist of rhetoric is the besetting sin of Byzantine epistolography."[32] This book takes a different view. The rhetorical features of the letters, if approached with due consideration of genre and authorship, are an opportunity rather than obstacle for historical biography. Theodore Laskaris skillfully manipulated the conventions of self-fashioning. In Byzantium, the epistle was understood as an "image" (*eikon*) of one's soul – hence, letters focused on feelings and impressions rather than recordkeeping.[33] The same is true of Theodore's letters, which tend to convey emotional reactions to events and situations. He aestheticized the literary expression of youthful

feelings – love and hatred, attraction and repulsion. He poured out his feelings without inhibition. He writes in grief, for example: "My hand is numbed, the flesh shivers and my soul is overcome by great commotion."[34]

Friendship is a common trope in Byzantine letter writing.[35] A brief guide to epistolography dating to the last two decades of the twelfth or the first half of the thirteenth century defines the letter as "a report and communication from a friend to a friend."[36] Accordingly, Theodore portrayed many of his correspondents as his friends and called them his equals, alter egos, and soul mates.[37] But he also became deeply interested in the sociology and psychology of friendship. Another characteristic of the Byzantine letter is the ample use of quotations from admired ancient Greek and Christian texts. The guide to epistolography recommends the inclusion of "maxims of wise men, the so-called apothegms, proverbial sayings," as well as verses from Homer and other poets. Theodore judiciously selected the quotations and textual allusions so as to convey his thoughts and emotions. When he begged for pardon after being unjustly accused, he wrote in contrition: "I was given a thorn in my flesh (2 Corinthians 12:7), so that Satan can torment me in an abusive way and I cannot rise toward the first fruits of the intellect. Heaven, lament for me! Earth, cry! Sun, weep!"[38] Grief drove him to elaborate on a phrase from the Book of Proverbs (14:30): "A sensitive heart is a moth in the bones."[39]

As in his letters, so in many of his other writings Theodore adopted an autobiographical approach and brought a personal touch to old themes and traditional rhetorical strategies. Genres and generic expectations supplied loose templates for recounting past experiences. He wrote and structured his *Satire of the Tutor* as an invective (*psogos*), a reversed encomium, in accordance with the recommendations of Aphthonios (fourth century AD), another influential late Roman theoretician of Greek rhetoric.[40] He drew themes from the religious poetry of compunction (*katanyxis*) in order to channel feelings and thoughts of the moment. There is no doubt that the self in his eminently literary works, such as orations and many of his epistles, reflected his individuality. Outspokenness and a sense of immediacy are two hallmarks of his writing. As an heir to the throne and emperor, he felt no need to dissimulate and boasted of "the imperial character of my free spirit."[41] The only limit was his own sense of literariness and the boundaries of literary convention.

The impression of immediacy emerges not only from Theodore's vivid language and developed sense of the dramatic, but also from the free and seemingly improvised flow of his prose. Theodore Laskaris had a rare authorial gift. The historian George Pachymeres, born in Nicaea in 1242,

tells us that he had "a writing talent by nature rather than education, so that he could compose a lot with great fluency should he start."[42] While the cantors were singing the introductory psalms before matins, he improvised church hymns suitable for the feast day. He was able to compose the poetic works so speedily that the cantors, joined by his chamberlains and bodyguards, performed the new piece during the same service. The manner in which Theodore wrote "with great fluency" corresponds to a characteristic stream-of-consciousness style that he cultivated and cherished. Its features are loose syntax, floating rhythmical clauses, figurative language, wordplay, idiosyncratic expression, and a marked fondness for neologisms that seem to have been coined during the creative process of composition. A work replete with new usages is his theological treatise *On the Divine Names* (the sixth book of his *Christian Theology*), which consists of more than 700 designations for God. Words derived from the spoken register served a literary function and occasionally contributed to a comic effect.[43] One critic has judged this style to be clumsy due to the disregard for the rules of classical grammar and syntax, but this view is unduly harsh.[44]

The massive textual production of Theodore Laskaris is explainable also in light of other aspects of the writing process. He often devoted himself to creative work at night, in spite of the warning of court physicians, because public responsibilities occupied him already in his twenties.[45] He had no qualms in admitting that he practiced composition by dictation. Both as a coemperor and a sole emperor, he was surrounded by secretaries and scribes. His trusted companion Hagiotheodorites served as his recording secretary. Theodore describes him as "the expert connoisseur of my tongue, of my heart and of the thoughts of my mind, and an admirable secretary."[46] His teacher Akropolites helped him to prepare for publication his main epistolary collection (the Laurentian collection) and wrote a versified preface introducing the author. The particularly loose structure of some of Theodore's works, especially the treatise *Representation of the World, or Life*, can be explained as the result of dictation. Nonetheless, he kept tight authorial control and oversight, as is seen in a brief essay on the difficult and unhealthy life of rulers. The piece concludes with a comment suggesting composition by dictation: "He (the author) presented the maxim after having examined these things with a far-seeing eye."[47] The phrase "with a far-seeing eye" is a quotation from Aristophanes' *Clouds* featured in the influential mirror of princes by Blemmydes and could have come only from the pen or mouth of Theodore Laskaris. The remarkable consistency in style and vocabulary of his works precludes the possibility that he used the professional ghostwriters who assisted emperors between

the eleventh and the early thirteenth century in the composition of speeches and newsletters.[48]

Theodore Laskaris cared deeply about his written word reaching future generations. Five known editions of collected works were produced under his auspices. Characteristic manuscript headings point to the approximate chronology of composition of individual works included in the collections. Narrower timeframes of composition can be suggested in a number of cases.[49] The Laurentian epistolary collection and another collection of nine religious and theosophical *Sacred Orations* were prepared in early 1254. His letters to Mouzalon are conspicuously missing from the Laurentian collection, which suggests that Theodore was somewhat apprehensive at the time about advertising the close relations with his confidant. A collection of ten secular works dates to the later months of the same year, 1254, but before his accession as sole emperor in November. Another collection, titled *Christian Theology*, consists of eight religious works that were mostly composed during the period of his sole rule (1254–58). To the year of his death (1258) belongs another collection that includes letters, the philosophical treatise *Explanation of the World*, essays, and other works.[50] The deluxe manuscript of the philosophical treatise *Natural Communion* – BnF, Parisinus Suppl. gr. 460 (Fig. 26), with its gilded headings, initials, and elaborate drawings executed also in gold – was part of the same editorial project.[51] None of the original codices of the five collections has come down to us, with the possible exception of BnF, Parisinus Suppl. Gr. 472, an expensive and carefully made parchment codex of his ten secular works. There are good reasons to suspect, however, that there were other costly productions prepared in scriptoria close to the court.[52] No working copies are attested, in contrast to the manuscripts of the works of Manuel II Palaiologos, the other famous late Byzantine scholar-emperor.[53] The absence of revisions and additions is partly a reflection of Theodore's confidence as an author, but is also due to his early death, which deprived him of the opportunity to revisit the composed texts.

Writing a biography of Theodore Laskaris would have been impossible without other sources that fill in gaps and complement – while often challenging – his own voice. First and foremost, they include narrative accounts written by his teachers Blemmydes and Akropolites. Blemmydes' autobiography borders on self-hagiography and consists of two accounts completed in 1264 and 1265.[54] Akropolites was the author of the main historical work on the period of the empire in exile.[55] The two authors tend to have different opinions about events and characters from those held by their royal tutee, immersing us directly in the controversies of his reign.

Blemmydes and Akropolites had frictions with Theodore and, for reasons that will become clear at the end, they painted a negative portrait of him. The exact opposite – highly positive – view of Theodore is found in *Synopsis chronike,* a world chronicle that relies faithfully on Akropolites for the period after 1204, but occasionally makes precious additions. The anonymous author, a clergyman in Theodore's entourage who followed him on military campaigns, removed all of Akropolites' criticisms. He has traditionally been identified as Theodore Skoutariotes, metropolitan bishop of Kyzikos during the second half of the thirteenth century, but this remains uncertain.[56]

George Pachymeres wrote a history of the period from 1258 to 1309, with flashbacks into the empire in exile. Pachymeres grew up in Nicaea and derived some of his information from people who knew Theodore personally, such as Gregory, the archbishop of Mytilene, who administered the last rites and received the confession of the dying emperor.[57] The masterfully written work of Pachymeres has to be treated with caution. The historian idealized the emperors in exile as a foil to their less competent successors, whom he blamed for weakening the defenses of western Asia Minor in the later thirteenth century and facilitating its conquest by the Turks. A similar critical agenda informs the account by the fourteenth-century historian Nikephoros Gregoras, who provides details missing from other sources. [58] Relevant information on prosopography, land-ownership, and social relations can be derived from documentary evidence preserved in the cartularies of the monasteries of Lembos near Smyrna, St. Paul on Mount Latros, and Hiera-Xerochoraphion on Mount Mykale, and in a collection of forty formularies for notarial documents used in the empire of Nicaea.[59] Few charters of Theodore Laskaris have survived in the monastic archives – acts issued by his chancery rather than "epistolary ordinances" and foreign correspondence included in his letter collections. Two ordinances (*prostagmata*) of 1256 have been copied in the cartulary of the Lembos monastery.[60] Latin, Seljuk, Armenian, Bulgarian, and Mamluk sources add valuable details of the historical context of Theodore's life from the dynamic world of international affairs in Europe, Asia Minor, and the Mediterranean.

The intriguing personality and writings of Theodore Laskaris have long made scholars aware of the potential for a biography. In 1897, Karl Krumbacher, the founder of Byzantine studies as an academic discipline, recommended in the second expanded edition of his *History of Byzantine Literature* the "highly enticing task of producing an overall literary and psychological portrait in finest detail."[61] August Heisenberg, his professorial successor at the University of Munich, remarked three years later that

"the presentation of the life and writings of the emperor Theodore Doukas Laskaris is one of the most fascinating tasks of Byzantine cultural history."[62] In Krumbacher's view, the Nicaean ruler was a larger-than-life individual and a mirror image, even if a distorted one, of Frederick II Hohenstaufen, the *stupor mundi* ("wonder of the world").

> As a statesman, author, and a human being, Theodore Laskaris is one of the most interesting phenomena in Byzantium, a sort of oriental counterpart to his great contemporary Frederick II, yet doubtlessly a type of degenerate: spiritually highly endowed, bodily weak, without power of the will and with a corruptive predominance of the nervous system.[63]

Following the medical explanation of Theodore's gifted mind given by the historian Pachymeres, Krumbacher and others after him have inaccurately viewed the Nicaean emperor as a man affected by chronic epilepsy.[64] Theodore Laskaris seemed a neurotic to Krumbacher, yet this is a trap set by the medieval author's intensely emotional style. There is no evidence whatsoever that Theodore Laskaris suffered from a chronic disease or a psychological disorder.[65] Otherwise, Krumbacher's comparison between the two thirteenth-century emperors is fully justified, even though Theodore Laskaris never benefited from the massive modern interest in the figure of Frederick Hohenstaufen.[66] Both were eccentrics, with distinctive personalities. Both were patrons of scholars and education. Both left a legacy of social division, such as a politically tinted church schism in thirteenth-century Byzantium and the conflict between Guelfs and Ghibbelines: the factions supporting, respectively, the pope and the Western Roman emperor in the Italian city-states. Furthermore, their courts were connected through a strategic alliance. Theodore felt solidarity with Frederick, whose daughter was his stepmother, and responded to his death with a thought-provoking memorial speech.[67]

The project recommended by Krumbacher was postponed for several reasons. For one, it began with a false start. In 1908 Ioannes Papadopoulos published *Théodore II Lascaris, empereur de Nicée*, a short biography that painted a glowing and crudely reconstructed portrait of its subject.[68] The book scratched the surface of Theodore's writings, most of which were unpublished at the time. Only relatively recently did key works by Theodore Laskaris become available in critical editions by Luigi Tartaglia. Another hindrance – the difficulty of understanding the author's idiosyncratic vocabulary – has largely been overcome thanks to the advances in the study of medieval Greek lexicography and the completion of the monumental *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität* (Vienna, 1994–2017). But the main

cause of the delay has been the tendency of modern historians of Byzantium to direct their energies toward the study of aggregate groups formed by class, economic status, or gender, leaving little room in the process for biography. Only aspects of Theodore Laskaris' thought that fit into diachronic frameworks, such as his Hellenism and his political philosophy, have consistently received attention.[69] The relative lack of scholarly interest in the fate of Byzantium and its elite in the aftermath of 1204 has also helped to push Theodore Laskaris to the margins of history. The period of exile has often appeared unattractive in comparison with the achievements of late antiquity and the cultural vibrancy of the twelfth century.

The structure of this book is chronological, with the voice of the main character continually helping us to tell key historical episodes. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the context of his life and times: his family, the world of living memory before his birth, and the physical and human geography of Byzantine Asia Minor, especially as he saw and interpreted them. Chapters 3 and 4 reconstruct his childhood and upbringing, his early education, and the kindling of his love for philosophy. Chapter 5 pieces together the evidence of his duties in governance as a coruler in his twenties. Chapter 6 examines his circle of companions, his views on friendship, and his ideas on reforming the aristocracy. Chapter 7 discusses seminal episodes in life that led him to reflections on the meaning of love, human existence, and relations with the Western world. Chapter 8 focuses on his four-year reign as a sole emperor, when he led a long military campaign and launched political reforms that were cut short by his untimely death. The concluding chapters 9 and 10 focus on his contributions to the intellectual life of his time, in particular his involvement in philosophical debates and his passionate Hellenism. The book weaves together strands of personal, political, and intellectual biography in the hope that the resulting multifaceted portrait would do justice to a complex and gifted individual who appealed to the judgment of the "future generations."

1 Byzantium in Exile

In 1204 the political elite of the Byzantine Empire faced for the first time in its centuries-long history the prospect of a forced relocation from Constantinople, the city of New Rome, to the former provinces. This move led to ruptures with the past and shaped the world in which Theodore Laskaris was born. The fall of Constantinople to the crusaders on the night of April 12, 1204, was traumatic and unexpected. Medieval Christians and Muslims were in rare agreement that Constantinople was a city of wonders. Its concentration of power and wealth was unparalleled: a population of as many as 400,000 inhabitants in the twelfth century, splendid palaces, spectacular public squares adorned with monuments of antiquity, and churches packed with holy relics.[1] For centuries the Byzantines knew Constantinople as "the queen of cities," "the eye of the inhabited world," and "the navel of the earth" – just a few of the expressions of admiration for the metropolis of New Rome.

The capture of Constantinople was marked by violence and destruction. Two fires started by the foreign army and the native mob raged in July and August 1203, and together with a third one in April 1204, ruined as much as one-sixth of the built environment of the city.[2] The acts of pillage and plunder belong to the darkest annals of history. One rank-and-file crusader reckoned that the wealth of Constantinople surpassed the forty richest cities in the world taken together and estimated the captured booty as three large towers filled with silver. Another complained that poor knights were allowed to keep only the silver chamber pots of the Constantinopolitan ladies.[3] The looting did not spare ancient statues on open display, especially at the Hippodrome, a large public venue where the populace gathered to attend ceremonies, chariot races, and hunts with exotic wild animals. The crusaders melted down into coins the colossal bronze statue of Hercules at the Hippodrome, the work of the great ancient sculptor Lysippus.[4] Byzantine contemporaries, including Theodore's father, who was a mere child in 1204, noted the irony that the Muslims had treated crusader-held Jerusalem less brutally when it fell into Saladin's hands in 1187.[5] The outbursts of Constantinopolitans added to the damage. In January 1204 a crowd shattered the large bronze statue of Athena

Promachos, a famous work of the ancient sculptor Phidias displayed on a pedestal at the Forum of Constantine, because they interpreted the figure's beckoning gesture toward the west as welcoming the crusaders.[6]

The Westerners saw themselves as masters by the right of conquest. Before the sack of Constantinople, they struck agreements on the division of territory. The large island of Crete, for example, had been promised by the Byzantine prince Alexios – a key player in the diversion of the crusade to Constantinople – to Boniface, the marquis of Montferrat. Several months after the fall of Constantinople, on August 12, 1204, Boniface ceded his rights to Venice, which in the following decades established its grip on the large island and ruled it until its conquest by the Ottomans in the seventeenth century. In March 1204, before the final assault, the leaders of the crusade agreed on the principles of division and the manner of election of a Latin emperor of Constantinople. Soon after the conquest, most probably between April 12 and May 9, they issued a detailed partition document, the *Partitio terrarum imperii Romaniae*, which was based, as it has been argued, on the proceeds from taxation for the fiscal year ending on August 31, 1203.[7] Even though most of the *Partitio* could not be put into effect, it showed the far-reaching conquering ambitions of the Latins in the Balkans, Asia Minor, and the Aegean. Soon after its capture Constantinople became the seat of a Latin emperor and patriarch. The first emperor, Baldwin of Flanders, was anointed and crowned in the church of St. Sophia on May 16, 1204. The patriarch Thomas Morosini, a Venetian, arrived in Constantinople in midsummer 1205, and a hierarchy of Latin bishops was introduced. A Venetian plenipotentiary (*podestà*) became resident in the city and defended the interests of the republic of St. Mark.

The events of 1204 confronted the Byzantines with the almost unthinkable. Eschatological imagination and the scriptures provided some, but not all, of the answers. The fall of New Rome was considered in certain twelfth-century circles to be one of the possible cataclysms presaging the end of the world.[8] The Second Coming was slow to arrive, however, and the disaster was soon attributed to communal sin and compared to the well-known biblical example of the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. Exile, after all, had a scriptural precedent with an eventual happy ending. Born seventeen years after 1204, Theodore Laskaris felt seething anger about the loss of Constantinople – "the city of Constantine," "the queen of cities" and "Byzantis," as he called it in a way traditional for medieval Greek authors.[9] Like other contemporaries, he referred to the event simply as "the capture" (*halosis*).[10] Like them, he grappled with understanding its long-term significance. Reports of the violence that accompanied the crusader capture of

Constantinople stirred his emotions. In 1256 he described ongoing warfare with the Latins as entirely motivated by vengeance. He declared with pride: “Now the sword of the Hellenes has taken a double revenge for the massacre of the Hellenes in Constantinople by shedding the blood of the perpetrators.”[11]

A flood of refugees, both common folk and aristocrats, streamed out of the densely populated metropolis in 1204. They included Niketas Choniates, a high civil minister and judge, who was the author of the main historical account of events in Byzantium between 1118 and 1207.[12] He provides us with the human side of the story. After witnessing five days of looting, he decided to leave and joined a large party of people, including courtiers and judges, who were swarming “like ants” as they made their way out of Constantinople. As he walked out through the Golden Gate, the parade entrance for Byzantine emperors returning from campaign, he was struck by the contrast between the impregnable fortifications and the captivity of the city. He writes that he knelt on the ground and cried out in desperation: “Queen of the queen of cities, song of songs and splendor of splendors, and the rarest vision of the rarest visions of the world, who is it that has torn us from thee like darling children from their adoring mother? What shall become of us? Whither shall we go?”[13] An answer to the last question was already forthcoming. Those who left the city in the search of protection and shelter were already setting up centers of resistance against the Latins.

The Elder Theodore Laskaris

Ambitious commanders in the former provinces established lordships, three of which developed into irredentist kingdoms claiming to be the legitimate heirs to the twelfth-century empire: the kingdoms of Epiros, Trebizond, and Nicaea. One successor state was centered on Arta in the Epiros region in western Greece. It owed its swift rise to the enterprising rebel Michael Komnenos Doukas, who was a bastard son of the *sebastokrator* John Doukas (a high court title second only to that of despot), a brother of the emperors Isaac II Angelos (r. 1185–95) and Alexios III Angelos (r. 1195–1203).[14] The Pindos Mountains separated Epiros from the main route of crusader campaigns and settlement. The principality grew into an imperial polity ruled by self-styled “emperors of the Romans” in the years 1224–46, when Thessalonica, Byzantium’s second city, became its capital. Epiros was to have a long political history. Traditionally known

as the "despotate of Epiros," because many of its rulers titled themselves despots, it submitted to Constantinople only temporarily in the fourteenth century and was incorporated into the Ottoman Empire in 1449.[15]

Another splinter state with Byzantine political identity, which was even longer-lived (it did not fall to the Ottomans until 1461) arose at Trebizond, on the southeastern shore of the Black Sea. Its founders, Alexios and David Komnenos, the Grand Komnenoi, were sons of a Georgian princess and grandsons of the emperor-usurper Andronikos I Komnenos (r. 1183–85). Scholars have debated whether the rulers of Trebizond assumed the Byzantine imperial title in April 1204, or later, by the middle of the thirteenth century. What is certain is that in 1282 John II Grand Komnenos consented to exchange the title of emperor for that of despot and married into the governing dynasty in Constantinople. In the fourteenth century the ruler of Trebizond titled himself "Emperor and Autokrator of the Entire East, the Iberians and Perateia (that is, the overseas territory in the Crimea) Grand Komnenos."[16]

The third principality was closest to the Bosporus and was established in western Asia Minor. The walled city of Nicaea, around 56 miles (90 kilometers) away from Constantinople as the crow flies, became a center of anti-Latin resistance and attracted politically powerful refugees. Nicaea had excellent natural defenses thanks to its location on the eastern shore of Askania, a large freshwater lake, and lay at the intersection of major routes leading into inner Asia Minor.[17] The founder of the state of Nicaea was Theodore Komnenos Laskaris, a.k.a. Theodore I Laskaris, the grandfather and namesake of the subject of this biography. He is designated here as "the elder Theodore Laskaris" so as to distinguish him from his homonymous grandson, who will be called "the younger Theodore Laskaris" or simply Theodore. The younger Theodore Laskaris admired the elder's spectacular achievements, even though he never knew him as he was born a few months after his death. He lauded his grandfather as a dynamic man and a founding figure who turned the city of Nicaea into the beating heart of the revived Byzantine state: "the great-hearted, eagle-swift, great emperor."[18]

The elder Theodore Laskaris was born between 1171 and 1176.[19] Very little is known about his family. He had at least six brothers: Constantine, George, Alexios, Isaac, Manuel, and Michael. The names of his parents, grandparents, sisters, or any twelfth-century members of his family are not recorded.[20] The silence of the sources confirms the impression that his ancestors climbed the social hierarchy from the provincial "second-tier" aristocratic elite through intermarriage. His mother belonged to an unknown

side branch of the Komnenos family, for the elder Theodore advertised his royal surname. His father may have been called Nicholas, a name that he gave his firstborn son following the common Byzantine practice of papponymy, the naming of a child after the grandparent. His father may have remarried, for two of the elder Theodore's brothers, Manuel and Michael, had the additional surname or nickname Tzamantouros and long outlived him.[21] By the late twelfth century, the Laskaris were connected with western Asia Minor and Constantinople. An early seal of the elder Theodore, which identifies him as the *sebastos protovestiarites* Theodore Komnenos Laskaris (Fig. 4a), and a similar seal of his brother Constantine (designated on it as Constantine Komnenos Laskaris) give clues as to the family's local ties. Both seals represent on their obverse St. George described by the accompanying inscription as "Diasorites." The monastery of St. George Diasorites was located in the town of Pyrgion (Birge) in the Kaistros valley. The Laskaris family, thus, advertised its association with the region.[22] The monastery makes an appearance in a letter of the younger Theodore Laskaris, who mentions its abbot-elect as a messenger between him and the patriarch.[23] The Laskaris brothers were close to the Phokas family, which around the year 1200 resided in the region of Palatia (Miletos) in the lower Maeander valley. In 1209 a certain Theodotos Phokas who bore the high honorific title of *panhypersebastos* is called an "uncle" of the elder Theodore Laskaris – he may have been married to his aunt – and served as his *megas doux*, a title given to the commander of the fleet in the twelfth century.[24]

The origins of the Laskaris family in the eastern provinces is confirmed by the etymology of the name. The root is most probably Persian (from *lashkarī*, "warrior"), but a derivation from Arabic (from *alašqar*, "the blond one") has also been suggested.[25] The name is first attested in Byzantine sources during the eleventh century. In 1059 the magnate Eustathios Boilas, who was exiled to the theme (province) of Iberia, manumitted a slave named Laskaris and bequeathed him a small plot of land.[26] The frontier theme of Iberia – a melting pot of Armenians, Georgians, and Greek-speakers – was formed after the death c. 1000 of the local Georgian client ruler, the *kouropalates* David, and grew after the annexation of the Armenian Bagratid kingdom in 1045. The other Laskaris known from the eleventh century was a naturalized foreign grandee and a descendant of the Kurdish noble family of the Shaddadids, who ruled Dvin and Gandzak in Armenia from the second half of the tenth century onward. The Persian name Lashkari was common among the Shaddadids and was rendered into Greek as Laskaris. The introduction of the name in Byzantium

is illustrated by an important representative of the family who was incorporated into the empire's elite. A certain Lashkari ibn Musa, the governor of Gandzak between 1034 and 1049, had a son by the name of Artasir who was sent as a hostage to Constantinople. Artasir's lead seal demonstrates his acculturation and cooption into the Byzantine military administration. Found at Kličevac on the Danube near Braničevo, the seal identifies him as "Artasir, the son of Laskaris," *patrikios anthypatos* ("patrician and proconsul"), and *strategos* ("general"). The "son of Laskaris" held a high title and was transferred from the empire's eastern to its western frontier with Hungary.[27] He must have been a Christian, a precondition for holding an office, and seems never to have returned to his homeland, because the invading Seljuk Turks annexed the last independent Shaddadid territories in 1075 and put an end to the theme of Iberia. Artasir's identification as the son of Laskaris was the first step in the emergence of a family name, because aristocratic surnames were formed from a foreign first name. The aristocracy of the empire of Nicaea provides plenty of examples: the Tornikes (Tornikios) family descended from Tornik, an Armenian integrated into Byzantium during the tenth century; the Nestongoi were the issue of Nestong, a Slav who entered Byzantine service in the early eleventh century; the Raoul family stemmed from Rudolfus, a Norman of the later eleventh century.[28] Even though the evidence is inconclusive, it is quite possible that the Shaddadid governor of Gandzak whose son settled in Byzantium was the eponymous ancestor of the elder Theodore.

The Laskaris family gained importance during the twelfth century through its marriage into the Komnenian dynasty established by the emperor Alexios I (r. 1081–1118). Documents, letters, inscriptions, and seals consistently render the surname of the elder Theodore as "Komnenos Laskaris."[29] His parents had sufficient connections with the imperial court in Constantinople to secure him a job in the palace guard of the emperor Alexios III Angelos, which was the platform for his meteoric rise to power. The inscription on the elder Theodore's early seal featuring St. George Diasorites (Fig. 4a) mentions his holding the title of *sebastos* and the office of *protovestiarites*. *Sebastos* was introduced as a court rank in the late eleventh century as a mark of special distinction for the emperor's relatives. The title was greatly devalued by the late twelfth century. Choniates writes sarcastically that Alexios III offered the rank of *sebastos* for sale to foreigners and baseborn people, such as moneychangers and linen merchants.[30] But taken together with the family name Komnenos, the title offers supporting evidence that the elder Theodore Laskaris belonged at the time to the social and political elite. As *protovestiarites*, the elder Theodore headed

a cadet regiment of palace guards which had been set up in the eleventh century and was known as the *vestiaritai* (literally "attendants of the *vestiarion*," the imperial wardrobe and treasury).[31] Contemporaries referred to the military career of the elder Theodore by describing him as "an officer and a commander" and "a daring youth and fierce in military matters."[32] Both *protovestiaritai* and *vestiaritai* could perform the function of imperial agents and tax officials in the provinces during the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries.[33] The elder Theodore was probably not charged with such responsibilities given his military duties in the capital, but *vestiaritai* subordinate to him would have traveled to provincial areas for ad hoc tasks and kept him abreast of news from outside Constantinople.

Shortly before the fall of Constantinople, the praetorian Theodore became involved in the politics of succession and usurpation. The imperial office in Byzantium was based on the Roman model, which meant there were no laws of succession. Emperors made arrangements for their sons or other coopted individuals to become their heirs (for example, by proclaiming them as coemperors), but nonetheless gaining the throne often resulted from power struggles among leading generals, with the occasional involvement of civil officials, churchmen, and the populace of Constantinople. In 1195 Alexios III Angelos deposed his brother Isaac II Angelos, the ruling emperor for the past ten years, who was blinded and kept in comfortable confinement in a suburban palace. Alexios III had no male offspring. By 1200 his two eldest daughters, Irene and Anna, were widowed, and the third, Eudokia, resided at the Serbian court. The lack of a designated heir fired the ambitions of Alexios III's relatives. The elderly *sebastokrator* John Doukas, the brother of Isaac II and Alexios III, saw himself as a potential heir. Nephews of the two emperors borne by their sisters also had designs on the imperial crown.[34]

The young widows Irene and Anna were tools for solving the problem of the succession, and in the late winter of 1200 were married in a double wedding to Alexios Palaiologos and the elder Theodore Laskaris.[35] Alexios Palaiologos, who wed Irene, the firstborn daughter, received the title of despot (literally, "lord"), the highest court rank after the emperor. Since its introduction into the court hierarchy in 1163, this title was granted to the emperor's son-in-law and heir to the throne.[36] Anna became the wife of the elder Theodore. The impressive genealogical credentials of Alexios Palaiologos and the former, deceased sons-in-law of Alexios III suggest indirectly that the Komnenos Laskaris family was considered aristocratic and worthy of special honors. Anna's first husband had been the *sebastokrator* Isaac Komnenos Vatatzes, a grandson of the general Theodore

Vatatzes and Eudokia Komnene who was a daughter of the emperor John II Komnenos (r. 1118–43).[37] Despot Alexios Palaiologos was the great-grandson of George Palaiologos, Alexios I's loyal general married to his wife's sister, and the son of the *megas hetaireiarches* George Palaiologos, a prominent diplomat.[38] As the designated heir, Despot Alexios Palaiologos was the second man in command after the emperor. Soon after the wedding he was charged with calming the unrest of the artisans of Constantinople and crushing the sedition of a certain John Spyridonakis, the rogue governor of the theme of Smolena in Macedonia.[39] Alexios' seal flaunts his marriage, identifying him as "an in-law of the ruler of all the Roman land" married to "the firstborn imperial princess." The couple had vast economic resources at their disposal. The *Partitio* refers to "the estates of the Lady Irene, daughter of the emperor Lord Alexios" in the western Peloponnese.[40]

The elder Theodore Laskaris did not remain long in the shadow, because Despot Alexios Palaiologos passed away before 1204 in unknown circumstances. Theodore was elevated to the first position in the line of succession and assumed the vacant title of despot. This important twist of events is evidenced by a fragmentary seal that features the warrior saint Theodore and the inscription "Despot Theodore Komnenos Laskaris, husband of the emperor's daughter Anna." The choice of the saint on the seal matched both the name and the military vocation of the elder Theodore. The same saint would appear on his imperial seal (Fig. 4b). His grandson would follow in his footsteps by placing an image of St. Theodore on seals and coins (Figs. 17a, 17b, 21c).[41] The arrival of the armies of the Fourth Crusade transformed the political landscape and made it possible for the elder Theodore to embark on a risky adventure that made him the celebrated rebuilder of the Byzantine state. The young prince Alexios, Isaac II Angelos' son who had fled to the West in 1201, joined the crusader army in May 1203 at Corfu as it sailed to the Levant aboard Venetian ships. The strategic goal of the expedition was an attack on Egypt, the heartland of the Ayyubid kingdom, but the leaders of the crusade owed massive debts to Venice and had welcomed the proposition of the fugitive prince Alexios to provide them with the required funds if they helped him to gain the throne and redress the injustice suffered by his father. Around twelve thousand of the thirty-one thousand seaborne crusaders, both Franks and Venetians, were fully equipped for battle.[42] On July 6, 1203, the army captured the fortress of Pera (Galata) and the ships entered the bay of the Golden Horn.

From the upper apartments of the Blachernae Palace, Alexios III and his family observed the alarming sight of the Latin army positioned before the

city walls. The elder Theodore led harassing sallies from Constantinople and had his first taste of battle with the crusaders. His brother Constantine Laskaris (Constantine Komnenos Laskaris), also a commander stationed in Constantinople, followed his example but was captured by the Burgundian knight Gautier de Neuilly during a skirmish opposite the Blachernae Palace; he was soon released. The situation took a turn for the worse on July 17, 1203, when the Venetians scaled the seawalls and set fire to the adjacent neighborhoods, while the emperor Alexios III, with the elder Theodore Laskaris by his side, brought the Byzantine army outside the land walls seemingly in order to attack the crusaders. At this crucial moment Alexios III made the fateful decision to avoid pitched battle. Fearing that his grip on power was slipping away, he left the city during the night of July 17–18, with a few trusted men and the entire imperial treasury. Choniates remarks that the emperor shared his plans only with his daughter Irene, but kept them secret from his wife, Euphrosyne, his daughter Anna, and her husband, Theodore. The fleeing emperor sought to consolidate his authority outside Constantinople. He moved first to the fortress of Develtos in northeastern Thrace and later to Adrianople and Mosynopolis in Thrace.[43]

His desertion meant the surrender of the city. A peaceful transfer of power took place on the morning of July 18, 1203, and Alexios III's blinded brother Isaac Angelos was released. The young prince Alexios received the imperial crown, reigning as Alexios IV, and took revenge on those responsible for his father's dethronement. Organizers of the coup of 1195 were summarily hanged. Alexios III's son-in-law, Despot Theodore Laskaris, was thrown into prison.[44] Alexios IV was unable to keep his promise to pay the crusaders who raised him to the throne, because his fugitive uncle (Alexios III) had appropriated the treasury. His reliance on the Latin army encamped around the city roused ever-growing public discontent. Constantinopolitans of every walk of life gathered in the church of St. Sophia between January 25 and 28, 1204, and refused to be governed by the Angelos family any longer. A young man, Nicholas Kannavos, was acclaimed emperor, but lacked the backing of the army. Alexios Mourtzouphlos ("the bushy-eyebrowed") – a former rebel against Alexios III and now a general and confidant of Alexios IV – benefited from the turmoil and the anti-Latin sentiment. He usurped the throne, had Alexios IV and Isaac II cruelly murdered, and speedily dispensed with Kannavos.[45] The crusaders found a convenient justification to take Constantinople by force.

The younger Theodore Laskaris heard stories told by eyewitnesses about the rapid turnover of emperors before the fall of Constantinople. His elderly tutor frequented the court of the Angeloi and was close to an

emperor who was imprisoned and murdered with poison. This was none other than Isaac II Angelos who assisted his son Alexios IV during their ill-fated and brief joint rule (1203–04). The usurper Mourtzouphlos is known to have offered a poisoned drink to the imprisoned Alexios IV, whom he in the end ordered to be strangled. Evidently, Isaac died of poisoning.[46] Such stories of palace intrigue and betrayal taught lessons to the younger Theodore. One was the value of unflinching loyalty. Another was the heavy burden of his royal responsibilities and the consequences following from the poor judgments made by those in power. The Angelos emperors were held accountable for the events of 1204. An instructive book on kingship composed by Theodore's main teacher in the late 1240s places the blame for the fall of Constantinople – "our shrine, the city exceeding over all others" – on the "infamous conduct of its protectors."[47]

The crusaders made their final assault on the city between April 9 and 12, 1204, once again breaching the seawalls facing the Golden Horn. Mourtzouphlos fled in panic to Mosynopolis, to join Alexios III, but the latter showed no mercy – punishing him with blinding and banishment from his camp. Ultimately Mourtzouphlos was taken captive by the Latins and brought back to Constantinople as a prisoner. As the crusaders were pouring into the city on the night of April 12, another emergency assembly gathered in the church of St. Sophia to choose an emperor. There were two candidates: Constantine Laskaris, the brother of the elder Theodore, and Constantine Doukas.[48] The choice was not obvious, and the dilemma was resolved by lot, in favor of Constantine Laskaris. The latter declined to accept the imperial insignia under such extraordinary circumstances and urged resistance against the crusaders. Only the Varangian Guard, consisting mostly of Englishmen and Danes, took his call to heart, but gave up the fight once they realized that they were alone and surrounded by fellow Latins. Constantine Laskaris had no option but to board a boat bound for the coast of Asia Minor. A crusader of the rank and file wrote: "When the Greeks saw that their emperor (Mourtzouphlos) had fled, they took a high man of the city, Laskaris was his name, straightaway that very night and made him emperor. When this man was made emperor, he dared not remain there, but he got on a galley before it was day and passed over the Arm of St. George (the straits) and went off to Nicaea the great, which is a fine city. There he stayed and he was lord and emperor of it."[49] What the Latin knight did not realize was that the Laskaris who reigned in Nicaea was not the man chosen to be emperor in Constantinople, but his brother, Theodore Laskaris, who had already begun consolidating anti-Latin resistance before the fall of the city.

From Constantinople to Nicaea

The elder Theodore did not see the fall of Constantinople. Before September 1203 he slipped away from prison, helped by acquaintances from the imperial guard or by another means. Several years later, at the beginning of Lent in 1208, he would tout his providential deliverance in a speech ghostwritten by Choniates that addressed soldiers, clerics, and others who had flocked to Asia Minor to support him: "God miraculously 'removed me from prison and the hands of another Herod' (Acts 12:11) as He did with the ancient disciple (St. Peter) 'who walked on the waves' (Matthew 14:29) and guided me toward the areas here."[50] The prison escape appeared in hindsight to be a heroic and divinely ordained act. Another glorified account of the same event, of which a fragment survives, refers to the elder Theodore finding safety in a church dedicated to St. Michael.[51] In the words of yet another author, he fled Constantinople without any military backing and "armed only with practical wisdom and a brave spirit."[52]

The choices the elder Theodore made in the summer months of 1203 bear witness to his independent-mindedness and ancestral connections with Asia Minor. He felt bitterly disappointed with Alexios III, who had left him and his family in the lurch during his disgraceful escape, and decided not to take refuge with him in Thrace – preferring to set out for his native Anatolia. He must have boarded a ship bound for Bithynia, if we take the expression "he walked on the waves" to allude to a brief sea journey. From now on he played a double game with his father-in-law Alexios III. His public image was that of a legitimate heir.[53] But his actions were those of a lord in his own right, for in the eyes of many imperial subjects Alexios III had forfeited the title of emperor by abandoning Constantinople to the foreign army. The fleeing party included his wife, his three daughters Irene, Maria, and Eudokia (all under the age of four), and possibly a handful of trusted servants and soldiers from his guard regiment.[54] Travelers normally disembarked at a Bithynian port on the Sea of Marmara, such as Pylai (near Yalova), a day's horse ride from Nicaea.[55] As the elder Theodore arrived before the imposing gates of Nicaea, he must have looked at the fortifications with the hope of finding safety and using the city as a base for challenging the crusader-supported regime in Constantinople.

Byzantine Asia Minor had been a region rife with revolt in the years leading up to 1204 – "the breeding ground of eager champions of resistance," in Choniates' words.[56] The urban elite of Nicaea anxiously followed

the news of the recent coup in Constantinople and made the decision to admit Anna and her three daughters, but refused entry to her husband.[57] The citizens followed the least hazardous choice in a volatile situation; less than twenty years earlier they had been punished with death and exile for supporting an insurrection against the emperor Andronikos I who usurped the throne between 1183 and 1185.[58] If Alexios IV solidified his rule in Constantinople, the refusal to receive the elder Theodore could be cited as an act of loyalty. But if Alexios III regained the throne, he was likely to thank the Nicaeans for helping his daughter and granddaughters, and for turning a deaf ear to the request of his son-in-law who had avoided joining forces with him in Thrace.

In fact, most of the Anatolian insurrections in the late twelfth century broke out not in Bithynia, but in the valleys of the Maeander and Hermos rivers. The rebels were both defectors from the Komnenian family and local grandees. During the brief reign of Andronikos I, for example, the governor (*doux*) of the Thrakesion theme, John Komnenos Vatatzes, who had been a leading general of his maternal uncle Manuel I Komnenos (r. 1143–80), raised the flag of rebellion in the city of Philadelphia. He passed away peacefully from illness and the Philadelphians surrendered their city to the government in Constantinople.[59] In 1188–89 a certain Theodore Mangaphas, a native of Philadelphia, proclaimed himself emperor and even minted silver-copper (billon) coins in his name. This rarest of acts for a provincial rebel may suggest an agenda of establishing a local territorial state and anticipates the fragmentation of the Byzantine empire in the thirteenth century. Mangaphas was compelled by a display of military force to lay down the imperial title and took refuge among the Seljuks, but the sultan arrested him and sent him to Constantinople as a prisoner.[60] In about 1200 Michael Komnenos Doukas, the illegitimate son of the *sebastokrator* John Doukas and the governor (*doux*) of the theme of Mylassa, south of the Maeander River, rebelled. The emperor Alexios III, his cousin, forced him to flee to Seljuk territory, from where he led forays across the frontier.[61] Michael would regain prominence shortly after the fall of Constantinople; he joined forces with Boniface, marquis of Montferrat, and eventually carved out his own lordship in the Balkans, founding the principality of Epiros.[62]

In late 1203 and early 1204, many cities and regions in Asia Minor were already under the authority of local lords. Conspicuously missing from the *Partitio* are Smyrna, Nymphaion, Magnesia, and Philadelphia, which apparently fell again under Theodore Mangaphas.[63] The document omits the Kaystros valley and the town of Pyrgion connected with the Laskaris family, as well as Nicaea and the neighboring Bithynian cities of

Prousa and Lopadion. The island of Rhodes, also absent from the *Partitio*, was already under the authority of Leo Gavalas, its real or nominal ruler for most of the first half of the thirteenth century.[64] There were nevertheless areas still loyal to Constantinople: cities, such as Nikomedeia, Achyraous, Atramyttion, Chliara, Pergamon, and Laodikeia; islands, such as Lesbos, Samos, and Chios; and entire themes, such as Optimatoi, Paphlagonia and Boukellarion, Mylassa and Melanoudion, and Neokastra.[65]

This fluid situation was riddled with risks and filled with opportunities for a charismatic adventurer. In his Lenten speech of 1208, ghostwritten by Choniates, the elder Theodore remembered the difficulties of trying to restore Byzantine imperial rule in Asia Minor: "You all know my travails, my sleepless nights, my moves from one region to another, the traps and evil designs by some people, my frequent journeys to the neighboring peoples, and the help I got from there."[66] The "moves" and "frequent journeys" took him to the Seljuk sultan, a traditional ally of Anatolian rebels. The elder Theodore already had financial resources at his disposal (possibly including tax revenues from areas unregistered in the *Partitio*) and reportedly offered a large amount of money to Sultan Rukn al-Dīn Süleyman II (r. 1196–1204) before the latter's death in the summer of 1204. A treaty with Rukn al-Dīn's underage son, the sultan ʿIzz al-Dīn Kılıç Arslān III (r. 1204–05), followed. After the fall of Constantinople, Seljuk soldiers assisted him in repulsing the invading Latin knights.[67]

The need for protection from the crusaders tipped the balance in western Asia Minor decisively in favor of the elder Theodore Laskaris. In the autumn of 1204 the Latin emperor Baldwin I enfeoffed Count Louis of Blois with the "duchy of Nicaea" and Stephen of Perche with the "duchy of Philadelphia." The knight Peter of Bracieux received Pegai on the Asiatic coast of the Sea of Marmara and immediately began to strengthen its defenses.[68] Key ports on the European side of the Hellespont, such as Herakleia, Rhaidestos, and Kallipolis (Gallipoli), were granted to Venice, which also acquired Lampsakos facing Kallipolis across the Hellespont.[69] The elder Theodore Laskaris is said to have crisscrossed western Asia Minor in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the local population. He spoke at assemblies and dinner parties, raising the "fallen Roman spirit" and encouraging resistance. In an encomium written in 1206, Choniates remarked in the present tense: "You journey around the eastern cities, converse with their inhabitants, and make them realize the horrible things they will suffer if they do not speedily obey you."[70] His efforts paid off as Nicaea and other cities recognized him to be their overlord, even though he

failed in his first battles with the invading Latin knights. On December 6, 1204, Peter of Bracieux defeated him on the plain near Poimanenon and took control of Bithynian fortresses.[71] On March 19, 1205, Henry, the brother of the emperor Baldwin, dealt a crushing blow to the army commanded by Constantine Laskaris and Theodore Mangaphas before the walls of Atramyttion.[72] An unexpected respite occurred due to the forays of the Bulgarian ruler Kaloyan (r. 1197–1207) into Thrace, which necessitated the withdrawal of Latin knights.[73] Years later the younger Theodore would stress the importance of right timing for the success of a ruler by remarking that "in the right moment inaction is also action."[74] On April 14, 1205, near Adrianople, Kaloyan and his formidable Cuman cavalry won a resounding victory in a pitched battle, in which the flower of the crusader nobility perished, including Louis of Blois and Stephen of Perche, the dukes of Nicaea and Philadelphia. The Latin emperor Baldwin was captured and died in the Bulgarian royal capital of Turnovo.[75] His brother Henry assumed the regency. When news of Baldwin's death reached him, he was crowned on August 20, 1206, in the church of St. Sophia as the second Latin emperor of Constantinople.

The withdrawal of Latin troops to the Balkans and the demise of internal rivals motivated the elder Theodore Laskaris to claim the imperial title. In the autumn of 1204 the blinded ex-emperor Mourtzouphlos escaped from his detention in Constantinople and tried to cross into Asia Minor, but the Latins apprehended him and sentenced him to death by public execution.[76] In early 1205 the crusaders captured the wandering emperor Alexios III at Halmyros in Thessaly and forced him to give up his imperial insignia.[77] Not long afterward David Komnenos, one of the two Grand Komnenos brothers who had established themselves in Trebizond before the fall of Constantinople, invaded the Bithynian lordship of the elder Theodore, but his troops were defeated.[78] In the following year the forces of David, based in Amastris and Pontic Herakleia on the Black Sea shore of Paphlagonia, now allied with the Latins, suffered another military setback near Nikomedeia.[79] Also in 1205, the ambitions of yet another powerful adversary, Manuel Mavrozomes, were thwarted. A grandson of the emperor Manuel I through an illegitimate daughter, Mavrozomes left Constantinople after its capture in the company of his son-in-law, the Seljuk sultan Ghiyāth al-Dīn Kaykhusraw I (r. 1192–96, 1205–11).[80] The elder Theodore Laskaris detained both of them in Nicaea temporarily in late 1204 or early 1205. Once reinstalled in Konya, Kaykhusraw gave full support to his ambitious ally Mavrozomes, who plundered the Maeander valley with the help of Turkish warrior bands. Mavrozomes was swiftly defeated and

had to content himself with the status of Seljuk governor of the frontier fortresses of Chonai and Laodikeia. On his victory over the blue-blooded Mavrozomes, in the spring of 1205, the elder Theodore Laskaris put on the imperial purple buskins and had himself acclaimed emperor in all cities under his control. From now he was not merely a local lord: he was an emperor of the Romans.[81]

The transformation of the elder Theodore from an Anatolian lord to a rebuilder of the Byzantine state was a piecemeal and multifaceted process. He gained allies from among local urban and landed elites, whom he coopted by the recognition of their rights and the bestowal of titles. He is said to have "skillfully pursued" Theodore Mangaphas of Philadelphia and Sabbas Asidenos, a lord over the lower Maeander valley who controlled Sampson (ancient Priene) and Palatia (Miletos).[82] Mangaphas surrendered his lordship over Philadelphia peacefully, while his family remained well-off proprietors in the city and its environs.[83] Asidenos' lordship was absorbed before April 1214 through a marriage alliance that made him an in-law of the elder Theodore Laskaris. Asidenos was granted the court title of *sebastokrator*. Nikephoros Kontostephanos who belonged to a landowning family in the Maeander valley was enticed in a similar fashion. We find him decorated with title of *sebastokrator* in a document dated March 24, 1216.[84] The elder Theodore kept inviting prominent members of the twelfth-century elite to help him in the reestablishment of the imperial government. In return he promised political and religious freedom from the Latins. The fugitive metropolitan bishop of Athens compared the emperor's call to settle in Nicaea to Christ's words, "Come to me all . . . and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).[85] The accommodation of refugees was to become one of the missions of the empire in exile. The younger Theodore Laskaris would consider the welcoming of "newcomers from among the brethren" to be one of his duties as a ruler and would personally take care of displaced individuals.[86] The families of twelfth-century officials, including those with ancestral Balkan connections such as Raoul, Vranas, Kantakouzenos, and Palaiologos, were incorporated into the Anatolian Byzantine state.[87]

The generals and civil officials who relocated to Asia Minor brought with them much needed expertise, as is seen in the case of four individuals who entered the service of the elder Theodore soon after 1204: John Steiriones, Basil Kamateros, Andronikos Palaiologos, and Demetrios Komnenos Tornikes. The admiral John Steiriones was a former Calabrian pirate who had been Alexios III's commander of the fleet. In 1207 we find him operating along the Aegean coast of Asia Minor and assisting Nicaean

military operations in the Sea of Marmara.[88] A brother of Alexios III's wife, Euphrosyne, Basil Kamateros was the son of Andronikos Kamateros, a high judge and a diplomat, and had served in the twelfth century as logothete of the drome, a minister responsible for foreign relations.[89] In the trying times of Andronikos' reign he was blinded and exiled among the Rus, but he returned to Constantinople after the death of the "tyrant." Kamateros remained an influential figure in Nicaea. He was credited with the reestablishment of the imperial government and the patriarchate, and led an embassy to Cilician Armenia in 1213.[90] Toward the end of his reign, the elder Theodore appointed as chief commander of the field army (*megas domestikos*) Andronikos Palaiologos. The son of a twelfth-century head of the navy (*megas doux*), Andronikos Palaiologos would serve as Nicaean *megas domestikos* for more than twenty years. He married his distant cousin Theodora, the orphaned daughter of Despot Alexios Palaiologos, thus uniting two branches of the powerful Palaiologos family.[91]

Another appointee, Demetrios Komnenos Tornikes, served as the chief minister and head of the imperial chancery (a position known as *mesazon*) from at least 1216 until his death between 1248 and 1252. He was a third-generation civil servant. His grandfather, Demetrios Tornikes from Thebes, held the chancery office of keeper of the inkstand (*epi tou kanikleiou*) and was logothete of the drome for ten years, until about 1200. His father, Constantine Tornikes, married to a Komnene, had served as master of petitions, eparch (mayor) of Constantinople, and logothete of the drome. Constantine Tornikes preferred to remain in Constantinople and join the administration of the Latin emperor Baldwin, but had the misfortune to fall into Bulgarian captivity at the Battle of Adrianople in April 1205 and did not come back alive.[92] Constantine's brother Euthymios Tornikes settled on the island of Euboea and maintained close contacts with bishops in the state of Epiros.[93] The fate of the Tornikes family exemplifies the dispersal of the twelfth-century Byzantine elite and the split loyalties of its members – a challenge that the younger Theodore Laskaris kept facing in the 1250s.

Key Byzantine institutions were revived with remarkable rapidity. The patriarchate of Constantinople found its new home in Nicaea. In June 1206 the last patriarch of Constantinople ordained before the fall of the city passed away in Didymoteichon in Thrace and in March 1208 the elder Theodore Laskaris selected as his successor Michael Autoreianos, a former patriarchal official. The latter immediately performed Theodore's coronation and anointing.[94] The empire in exile came to resemble a legitimately constituted Byzantine polity, ruled by an emperor of the Romans and with