

### **Nicaea: The New “Ark” of Basileia\***

The conquest of Constantinople by the Fourth Crusade on April 13, 1204 brought about the dismemberment of the Byzantine Empire. According to the partition treaty, known as the *Partitio Romaniae*, drawn up between the leaders of the Fourth Crusade and the Venetians, Byzantine territories were divided among them<sup>1</sup>. Baldwin of Flanders was elected Emperor of Constantinople and was crowned “Emperor of Romania” in the Church of Saint Sophia on the 16<sup>th</sup> of May. Boniface of Montferrat became King of Thessaloniki, while the Venetians claimed Epiros and the Ionian islands; the remaining provinces were allotted to the rest of the Crusaders as fiefs and principalities. Baldwin’s troops invaded Asia Minor and conquered many territories, while Boniface set out from Thessaloniki to conquer Central Greece and Peloponnesus<sup>2</sup>.

The capture of Constantinople was a consequence of the mutual hatred and suspicion between the Latins and the Byzantines and the economic interests of the Westerners in the East, but it was mainly due to the deep political and moral crisis that Byzantium underwent in the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. The deposition and violent change of

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<sup>1</sup> A critical edition by A. Carile, *Partitio terrarum imperii Romaniae, Studi Veneziani* 7 (1965) 125-305, p. 217-222. About the ratification of the treatment see B. Hendrickx, *Οι πολιτικοί και στρατιωτικοί θεσμοί της Λατινικής αυτοκρατορίας της Κωνσταντινουπόλεως κατά τους πρώτους χρόνους της υπάρξεώς της*, PhD dissertation, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessalonike 1970, p. 27-40. — *Idem*, *Régestes des empereurs latins de Constantinople (1204-1261/1272)*, *Βυζαντινά* 14 (1988) 7-222 (hereafter: B. Hendrickx, *Régestes*), especially nos. 1 (the Convention of March 1204) and 16 (Constantinople, October 1204), which is the text known as the *Partitio Romaniae*, drawn up by the *repartitores*, six Venitians and six Francs.

<sup>2</sup> See K. M. Setton, *The Papacy and the Levant (1204-1571)*, vol. I: *The Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* [Memoirs of the American Philosophical Society 14], Philadelphia, PA 1976, p. 21 ff.

emperors led to the destabilization of the Empire<sup>3</sup>. Many provincial governors in Asia Minor and Greece became independent from the weak central authority<sup>4</sup>. It was in 1185 when the rebellion of the Vlachs and the Bulgarians under the leadership of the two brothers Peter and Asen led to the creation of the Second Bulgarian State.

Poor provincial administration, oppressive taxation, the abuses of tax commissioners, piracy and the lack of army and navy increased the indignation of the provincial populations, who had been alienated from the capital and its aristocracy<sup>5</sup>. Refugees from Constantinople, who

<sup>3</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, ed. J.-L. van Dieten, vol. I [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XI/I], Berolini - Novi Eboraci 1975, p. 423.6 ff., 637.34-40 (hereafter: Nicetas Choniates). Cf. Alkmini Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια και Ήπειρος τον 13<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα. Ιδεολογική αντιπαράθεση στην προσπάθειά τους να ανακτήσουν την αυτοκρατορία* [Εταιρεία Βυζαντινών Ερευνών 7], Thessaloniki 1990, p. 49-53, 92 ff. (hereafter: A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια*). — N. Oikonomidès, La décomposition de l'empire byzantin à la veille de 1204 et les origines de l'empire de Nicée: à propos de la Partitio Romaniae, in *Actes du XV<sup>e</sup> Congrès International d'Études Byzantines, Rapports et co-rapports*, vol. I: *Histoire*, no. 1: *Forces centrifuges et centripètes dans le monde Byzantin entre 1071 et 1261*, Athènes 1976, p. 3-28. — J. Hoffmann, *Rudimente von Territorialstaaten im byzantinischen Reich (1071-1210). Untersuchungen über Unabhängigkeitsbestrebungen und ihr Verhältnis zur Kaiser und Reich* [Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 17], München 1974, p. 5-8, 77-79. — Alkmini Stavridou-Zafraka, Η δυναστική κρίση στο Βυζάντιο, in N. G. Moschonas (ed.), *Η Τέταρτη Σταυροφορία και ο Ελληνικός κόσμος* [National Hellenic Research Foundation. Institute for Byzantine Research, Byzantium Today 5], Athens 2008, p. 147-164 (= A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Βυζάντιο 13<sup>ος</sup> αιώνας. Από την κατάρρευση στην ανασυγκρότηση. Κράτος της Ηπείρου - Αυτοκρατορία της Θεσσαλονίκης*, Thessaloniki 2016, no. I [hereafter: A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Βυζάντιο*]).

<sup>4</sup> For the situation in Asia Minor and the islands see A. G. C. Savvides, *Βυζαντινά στασιαστικά και αυτονομιστικά κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία (1189-ε. 1240 μ.Χ.). Συμβολή στη μελέτη της υστεροβυζαντινής προσωπογραφίας και τοπογραφίας την εποχή των Αγγέλων, των Λασκαριδών της Νίκαιας και των Μεγαλοκομνηνών του Πόντου*, Athens 1987.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Choniates, *Υπομνηστικὸν εἰς τὸν βασιλέα κύριον Ἀλέξιον τὸν Κομνηνόν*, ed. Sp. Lampros, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ σωζόμενα*, vol. I-II, Athens 1879-1880 (repr. Groningen 1968) (hereafter: Sp. Lampros, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*), vol. I, p. 308. — *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, ed. Foteini Kolovou [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XLI], Berolini - Novi Eboraci 2001, p. 27.19-67, 46.1-63, 81.1-15, 116.30-33 (hereafter: *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*). Cf. Hélène Ahrweiler, *Byzance et la mer. La marine de guerre, la politique et les institutions maritimes de Byzance aux VII<sup>e</sup>-XV<sup>e</sup> siècles* [Bibliothèque byzantine, Études 5], Paris 1966, p. 288-289. — K. Setton, Athens in the Later Twelfth Century, *Speculum* 19 (1944) 179-207 (= *Athens in the Middle Ages* [Variorum Collected Studies Series 41], London 1975, no. III), p. 192. — Judith Herrin, Realities of Byzantine Provincial Government: Hellas and Peloponnesos (1180-1205), *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 29 (1975) 253-284, p. 279. — C. G. Hadzidimitriou, *The Decline of Imperial Authority in Southwest Central Greece and the Role of Archontes and Bishops in the Failure of Byzantine Resistance and Reconquest 1180-1297 A.D.*, PhD

made their way to Asia Minor and the western provinces, were not received with sympathy by the locals<sup>6</sup>. Yet, from the remnants of the Byzantine Empire three independent Greek States were established by relatives of the imperial family: the Empire of Trebizond on the Black Sea, founded shortly before the fall of Constantinople, the Empire of Nicaea in Bithynia, and the State of Epiros in continental Greece. They soon became centres of resistance against the Latins; since their main goal was the recovery of Constantinople, this led them to an ideological controversy and open conflict<sup>7</sup>.

The Empire of Nicaea was founded by Theodore Laskaris, the son-in-law of the Emperor Alexius III, who had been honoured with the title of *despot*<sup>8</sup>. He fled with his family from Constantinople before its fall to the Crusaders and established himself at first in Prousa and finally in Nicaea<sup>9</sup>. He was defeated by the Franks, who conquered many districts in Asia Minor, but were withdrawn urgently, because of the Bulgarian threat in Thrace. A rising of the Greek aristocracy in Adrianople gave the opportunity to the Bulgarian King Kalojan to invade Thrace and help the Greeks against the Franks, who were obliged to withdraw their forces from Asia Minor. The Franks suffered a great disaster at Adrianople on April 14, 1205. The ferocity of Kalojan’s campaigns

dissertation, Columbia University, New York 1988, p. 67-69, 108-117. — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nίκαια* 50.

<sup>6</sup> Nicetas Choniates 593.70 ff.

<sup>7</sup> See Hélène Ahrweiler, *L'idéologie politique de l'Empire byzantin*, Paris 1975, p. 103-128 (hereafter: H. Ahrweiler, *Idéologie*). — D. Angelov, Byzantine Ideological Reactions to the Latin Conquest of Constantinople, in Angeliki Laiou (ed.), *Urbs Capta. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences / La IV<sup>e</sup> Croisade et ses conséquences* [Réalités Byzantines 10], Paris 2005 (hereafter: *Urbs Capta*), p. 293-310 (hereafter: D. Angelov, Reactions). — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nίκαια* 92-102. — *Eadem*, The Political Ideology of the State of Epiros, in *Urbs Capta*, p. 311-323, esp. 316 ff. Cf. *eadem*, Πολιτική ιδεολογία του κράτους της Ηπείρου, *Βυζαντιακά* 31 (2014) (= *In memory of Prof. Vasiliki D. Papouli*) (with some additions) 55-178. — *Eadem*, Byzantine Culture in Late Mediaeval Greek States, *Βυζαντιακά* 32 (2015) (= *In memory of Prof. Emmanuel Kriaras*) 201-216 (hereafter: A. Stavridou-Zafraka, Byzantine Culture), p. 209-212 (State of Nicaea).

<sup>8</sup> George Akropolites, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, vol. I: *Historia, breviarium historiae, Theodori Scutariotae additamenta*, Lipsiae 1903 (hereafter: George Akropolites), p. 10.17: “καὶ δεσπότην ὑπ’ ἐκείνου (= Alexios III) τετιμημένον”. — Theodore Scutariotes, ed. C. N. Sathas, *Μεσαιωνικὴ Βιβλιοθήκη ἢ Συλλογὴ ἀνεκδότων μνημείων τῆς Ἑλληνικῆς Ἱστορίας (Bibliotheca Graeca Medii Aevi)*, vol. VII, Venice 1894, p. 451.22 (hereafter: Theodore Scutariotes). For the title of *despotes* see Alkmini Stavridou-Zafraka, Το αξίωμα του “δεσπότη” και τα δεσποτικά έγγραφα της Ηπείρου, in C. N. Constantinides (ed.), *Medieval Epiros: Proceedings of a Symposium* (Ioannina, 17-19 September 1999), Ioannina 2001, p. 73-97 [= *eadem*, *Βυζάντιο*, no. V], esp. 81 (hereafter: A. Stavridou-Zafraka, Το αξίωμα του “δεσπότη”).

<sup>9</sup> George Akropolites 10.14 ff. — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Nίκαια* 53 ff.

against Thrace and Macedonia (former *theme* in Thrace) made the Greeks of Thrace ask for help from Nicaea. Kalojan was murdered outside Thessaloniki in 1207<sup>10</sup>. His death was a great relief both for the Greeks and the Franks. The same year Boniface of Montferrat was killed in Thrace.

The withdrawal of the Latin forces from Asia Minor and their defeat at the battle of Adrianople gave the opportunity to Theodore Laskaris to suppress his Greek rivals in Asia Minor and come to terms with the Sultanate of Iconium. In 1206 he was proclaimed and in 1208 was crowned Emperor of the Romans in Nicaea by the new Patriarch Michael IV Autoreianos, “*βασιλεὺς Ῥωμαίων ὑφ’ ὅλων τῶν ἐφῶν ἀναγορεύεται πόλεων*”<sup>11</sup>. However, there were some discrepancies. Although he was proclaimed and crowned as Emperor of the Romans, his dominion was restricted in the East, in Asia Minor. In his speech (*σιλέντιον*) written by Nicetas Choniates, Theodore is called “*ὁ κρατῶν τῶν ἀνατολικῶν χωρῶν*”<sup>12</sup>. He was addressed *basileus* but with titles that denoted the actual situation of his realm. Michael Choniates, addressed a letter to the emperor from his exile on the island of Kea, “*τῷ βασιλεῖ τῷ Λάσκαρι τῆς Ἀνατολῆς*”<sup>13</sup>. Later on, in 1227 George Bardanes called him “*ὁ τῆς Ἀσίας ἄρξας, ὁ προβεβασιλευκῶς ἐν τῇ Ἀσίᾳ*”<sup>14</sup>. The Patriarch Theodore II Eirenikos (1214-1216) was called “*Πατριάρχης οἰκουμενικῶς ἐν Νικαίᾳ*”<sup>15</sup>; in 1214 he reprimanded the metropolitan of Ephesos and exarch of Asia Nicholas Mesarites, because the latter in his negotiations with the papal legate Cardinal Pelagius of Albano in Constantinople did

<sup>10</sup> George Akropolites 21.6-24.4. See also G. Prinzing, *Die Bedeutung Bulgariens und Serbiens in den Jahren 1204-1219 im Zusammenhang mit der Entstehung und Entwicklung der byzantinischen Teilstaaten nach der Einnahme Konstantinopels infolge des 4. Kreuzzuges* [Miscellanea Byzantina Monacensia 12], München 1972, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> Nicetas Choniates 626.53.

<sup>12</sup> *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. J.-L. van Dieten [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae III], Berolini – Novi Eboraci 1972 (hereafter: Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*), Or. 13, p. 120.1: “*Σελέντιον γραφὴν ἐπὶ τῷ ἀναγνωσθῆναι ὡς ἀπὸ τοῦ Λάσκαρι κυροῦ Θεοδώρου, κρατοῦντος τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν ἀνατολικῶν χωρῶν...*” and Or. 14, p. 129.2: “*Λόγος ἐκδοθεὶς ἐπὶ τῷ ἀναγνωσθῆναι εἰς τὸν Λάσκαριν κῦρ Θεόδωρον βασιλευόντα τῶν ἐφῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν πόλεων, ὅτε οἱ Λατίνου κατεῖχον τὴν Κωνσταντινούπολιν...*”.

<sup>13</sup> *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, no. 179.1-7.

<sup>14</sup> Georges Bardanès, *Ἀντίγραμματα*, ed. R.-J. Loenertz, Lettre de Georges Bardanès, métropolitte de Corcyre, au patriarche œcuménique Germain II, *Ἐπετηρὶς Ἐταιρείας Βυζαντινῶν Σπουδῶν* 33 (1964) 87-118 (= *Byzantina et Franco-Graeca* [Storia e Letteratura 118], Rome 1970, p. 467-501), p. 113.280 ff., 115.371, 375 (hereafter: Georges Bardanès, *Ἀντίγραμματα*).

<sup>15</sup> A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, Θεόδωρος Εἰρηνικός, πατριάρχης οἰκουμενικῶς ἐν Νικαίᾳ, *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 10 (1901) 182-191, p. 192.

not react to his calling him patriarch τῶν Γραικῶν and not patriarch of Nicaea (ἀρχιεπίσκοπον τῶν Γραικῶν, τὸ Νικαίας παραξέσας)<sup>16</sup>. It has been supported that “at earlier times the designation Γραικοί had been preferable to Ἕλληνες, which was connoted with paganism, but later on and after 1204 it became a common way to distinguish the Orthodox Byzantine population from the Latins”<sup>17</sup>. That is partly true. Γραικός was used for those speaking the Greek language and Ῥωμαῖος for the citizens of the Roman Empire with Constantinople as its capital. Hence the name *Romania* for the eastern part of the Empire<sup>18</sup>. Anyway, the official title of the Patriarch was Θεόδωρος ἐλέω Θεοῦ ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Νέας Ῥώμης καὶ οἰκουμενικὸς Πατριάρχης<sup>19</sup>.

Many refugees, mostly high political and ecclesiastical officials, found refuge in Nicaea and the emperor was considered as “πατῆρ” of all Romans<sup>20</sup>; Theodore Lascaris signed as *Theodorus in Christo Deo fidelis imperator et moderator Graecorum Comnanus Lascarus* in the *chrysobullum verbum*, a *treva* with the Venetian colony in Constantinople (August 1219). In the *intitulatio* he is mentioned as: “*Theodorus in Christo Deo fidelis imperator et moderator Romeorum et semper Augustus Comnanus*

<sup>16</sup> A. Heisenberg, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion*, vol. III: *Der Bericht des Nikolaos Mesarites über die politischen und kirchlichen Ereignisse des Jahres 1214* [Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse 1923, Abh. 3], München 1923 (= *Quellen und Studien zur spätbyzantinischen Geschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze* [Variorum Collected Studies Series 22], London 1973, nos. I and III), p. 47.6-10. Cf. also the extant and outstanding study by I. Giarenis, *Η συγκρότηση και η εδραίωση της αυτοκρατορίας της Νίκαιας. Ο αυτοκράτορας Θεόδωρος Α΄ Κομνηνός Λάσκαρις* (with an English summary) [National Hellenic Research Foundation. Institute for Byzantine Research, Monographs 12], Athens 2008, p. 257 (hereafter: I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση*).

<sup>17</sup> See D. Angelov, Reactions 300-301 with sources and literature.

<sup>18</sup> E.g. *Theophanis Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor, vol. I, Lipsiae 1883 (repr. Hildesheim 1963), p. 307: (Emperor Heraclius speaking to his army in the Persian war) “αἰδεσθῶμεν τὸ τῶν Ῥωμαίων αὐτοδέσποτον κράτος” and p. 455: The Byzantine notary Elissaios remained in Charles’ the Great court “πρὸς τὸ διδάξαι (the Royal princess) τὰ τε τῶν Γραικῶν γράμματα καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν καὶ παιδεῦσαι αὐτὴν τὰ ἥθη τῆς Ῥωμαίων βασιλείας”. See Aikaterini Christophilopoulou, *Βυζαντινὴ Ἱστορία*, τ. Β΄: 610-867, Thessaloniki 1993<sup>2</sup>, p. 243-244. — P. Chrestou, *Οι περιπέτειες των εθνικῶν ονομάτων των Ἑλλήνων*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2003<sup>6</sup>, esp. ch. 10 (Γραικοί).

<sup>19</sup> Cf. the *intitulatio* of Manuel Sarantenos, in V. Laurent, *Les registes des actes du Patriarcat de Constantinople*, vol. I: *Les actes des patriarches*, fasc. 4: *Les registes de 1208 à 1309*, Paris 1971, no. 1224.

<sup>20</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*, Or. 13, p. 121.13-15: “εἰς πατέρα γὰρ θεόθεν τοῦ ῥωμαϊκοῦ πληρώματος ἡ βασιλεία μου τέτακται”. Cf. A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 106, 202.

*Lascarus*<sup>21</sup>. However, the new centre of the empire was considered as temporary. Without Constantinople members of the imperial family were treated as *ἀπόλιδες*, the polymath historian George Pachymeres wrote in his historical work after the recovery of Constantinople by Michael VIII Palaeologus in 1261<sup>22</sup>.

Thus Nicaea, a historical town in Bithynia, became the seat of the political and ecclesiastical authorities, of the Emperor and the Patriarch. Theodore signed as the Emperor of the Romans; he minted his own coinage (mainly silver and copper — only a few gold coins have been found)<sup>23</sup> and was hailed by Greek rhetoric as the saviour and deliverer of the Greeks, as another Noah<sup>24</sup>. His imperial majesty was considered as the Ark of Noah that preserved the seeds of the imperial power. His realm became the shelter of Greek refugees, and Asia (Nicaea) the new Arc of Noah that saved what had remained from the Roman realm (*διέσωσε τὰ τῆς ῥωμαϊκῆς πολιτείας ὑπολείμματα*), according to Michael Choniates<sup>25</sup>

<sup>21</sup> J. and P. Zepos (ed.), *Jus Graecoromanum*, vol. I-VIII, Athens 1931, vol. I, p. 482 (= F. Dölger – P. Wirth, *Regesten der Kaiserurkunden des oströmischen Reiches von 565-1453*, 3. Teil erweiterte und verbesserte Auflage, München 1968, no. 1703 [hereafter: F. Dölger – P. Wirth, *Regesten*]). Cf. F. Dölger – I. Karayannopoulos, *Byzantinische Urkundenlehre I. Die Kaiserurkunden*, München 1968, p. 96. — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 96.

<sup>22</sup> Ed. by J. Failler (French translation V. Laurent), *Georges Pachymères. Relations historiques, livres I-VI*, vol. I-II [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XXIV/1-2], Paris 1984 (hereafter: Georges Pachymères), vol. I, p. 211.5 ff. (a speech by Michael Palaiologos): “Πλὴν ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τούτων ἦν ἀσφαλῶς ἔχειν, λειπούσης τῆς βασιλίδος. Ποῖος γὰρ ἡμῖν οὐ προσκρούων ὠνειδίσειν, εἴ που καὶ διαπρῶσθενσαίμεθα, ὡς ἀπόλισι καὶ πόρρω τοῦ βασιλείου θρόνου κατ’ ἀνάγκην διάγουσιν;”.

<sup>23</sup> M. Hendy, *Catalogue of the Byzantine Coins in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection and in the Whittemore Collection*, vol. IV: *Alexius I to Michael VIII, 1081-1261*, Washington, D.C. 1999, p. 453. Cf. I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση* 208-209, 290.

<sup>24</sup> J. D. Polemis, *Μία ανέκδοτη διδασκαλία του «Διδασκάλου του ψαλτηρίου»* Σεργίου, *Ελληνικά* 43 (1993) 65-75, p. 71.18-19: “οὐδὲ τὴν ἀνάκλησιν ἐθαρορήσαμεν, ἀβύσσω κακῶν ἀπλέτων σοβούμενοι ὡς ἐν κατακλυσμῷ ὑδάτων πολλῶν; Ἄλλ’ ὁ καὶ νῦν δευτέρου κόσμου σπέρμα διασωσάμενος καὶ ὡς ἐν ἀσήπτῳ καὶ ἀσφαλεῖ κιβωτῷ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ μεγαλοσθενεῖ χειρὶ καταθέμενος ἐκ τοῦ ὑπερθέου ἔνθεος βασιλεύς ...”. Cf. I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση* 291-292. Michael Doukas was also considered another Noah, as he had permitted the installation of refugees in the castle of Arta despite the hostile reactions of the natives: A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Περὶ συνοικισμοῦ τῶν Ἰωαννίνων μετὰ τὴν φραγκικὴν κατάκτησιν τῆς Κωνσταντινουπόλεως, Δελτίον τῆς Ἱστορικῆς καὶ Ἐθνολογικῆς Ἑταιρίας* 3 (1889) 451-455. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros*, Oxford 1957, p. 42, 106 (hereafter: D. M. Nicol, *Despotate*). — M. S. Kordosis, *Τα βυζαντινά Γιάννενα. Κάστρο (πόλη) – Ξώκαστρο. Κοινωνία – Διοίκηση – Οικονομία*, Athens 2003, p. 68-74.

<sup>25</sup> *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, no. 94.28-30: “μᾶλλον δὲ ἄλλην ἐτεκτίνῳ κιβωτὸν τὴν Ἀσίαν κατὰ θεῖον δῆπον ἐπίταγμα ἐν ἧ τὰ τῆς ῥωμαϊκῆς πολιτείας ὑπολείμματα τε ἅμα καὶ δευτέρου κόσμου σπέρματα αὐτῇ Ἀσίᾳ διέσωσας”.

and Nicholas Mesarites<sup>26</sup>; it became the ecumenical harbor for the rescue of the “blessed people”<sup>27</sup>.

By his investment of the imperial title, Theodore claimed to be the sole heir of Byzantine emperors and the continuator of the Roman imperial idea. He surpassed all his Greek rivals in Asia Minor and he became a symbol of unity, the person who could bring “one fold under one shepherd”<sup>28</sup>. “God gave us the Empire as the monarchical institution, in the likeness of his own government, thus setting aside for all time the disorder that results from polyarchy”, the Patriarch wrote to him in 1208<sup>29</sup>. His main task, according to Nicetas Choniates, was to unite the Greeks of Asia Minor like a New David or Moses so that “their native land, their first dwelling, the City, the joy of the whole world ...” could be restored<sup>30</sup>. By this recovery the emperor of Nicaea would become a New Moses, the new founder of the City of Constantine<sup>31</sup>. Theodore’s great victory over the Seljuks at the battle of Antioch-on-the Maeander in spring of 1211 consolidated the east border with the Seljuks<sup>32</sup> and made him worthy of comparison with Alexander the Great<sup>33</sup>. The invasions of Asia Minor by the Latin troops were put to an end only in 1214, when a treaty was signed between the Latin Emperor Henry and Theodore

<sup>26</sup> Nicholas Mesarites, *Δητήριον* to the Augusta Ann Angelina, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Neue Quellen zur Geschichte des lateinischen Kaisertums und der Kirchenunion*, vol. II: *Die Unionsverhandlungen vom 30. August 1206. Patriarchenwahl und Kaiserkrönung in Nikaia 1208* [Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philologisch-philologische und historische Klasse 1923, Abh. 2], München 1923, p. 32.5 f.: “ἄλλος γὰρ οὗτος Νῶε τοῖς χριστιανοῖς ἡμῖν ὁ κρᾶτιστος οὗτος ἐχαρίσθη παρὰ Θεοῦ, ὃς καὶ τὴν καταγίδα τῆς κοσμηκῆς ταύτης συγγύσεως ... πεποιθαιμεν, στήσειεν”. Cf. A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 95, 109.

<sup>27</sup> *Michaelis Choniatae Epistulae*, no. 179.4-7.

<sup>28</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*, Or. 13, p. 128.28-31: “ὅτε καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ θρέμματα τῆς φωνῆς ἀκηκούτα τῆς βασιλείας μου ὡς εἰς μάνδραν μίαν τὴν προτέραν ἀρχὴν ἀλισθήσονται, ἃ τῷ τέως οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς ἀλλῆς ταύτης καὶ γενήσεται μία ποιμήν”. Cf. A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 99, 101.

<sup>29</sup> N. Oikonomidès, Cinq actes inédits du patriarche Michel Autôrianos, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 25 (1967) 113-145, p. 118.37-38. Cf. A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 100.

<sup>30</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*, Or. 13, p. 128.24-26. Cf. H. Ahrweiler, *Idéologie* 111.

<sup>31</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*, Or. 14, p. 134.14.

<sup>32</sup> George Akropolites 15.26-28: “ἦν γὰρ καὶ ἀληθὲς ὡς εἰ ταύτης ἐκράτησεν ὁ σουλτάν (= Kaihosroe I), οὐδὲν ἂν ἦν αὐτῷ ἐμποδὼν τοῦ μὴ πᾶσαν τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων χειρῶσασθαι”. Cf. *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, vol. I [Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae], Bonn 1829, p. 18.12-15 (hereafter: Nicephoros Gregoras).

<sup>33</sup> Nicetas Choniates, *Orationes*, Or. 16, p. 172.1-3: “καὶ σὺ δέ, μεγαλοκινδυνότατε βασιλεῦ, κατ’ Ἀλέξανδρον ἀνδραγαθίζομενος βέβλησαι πῶς καὶ καταβέβλησαι μυρίων ἕνα διειληφῶτων”. Cf. I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση* 79, 295.

Laskaris at Nymphaeon<sup>34</sup>. The treaty was of great importance, because it specified territories that were ceded to each part and the state of Nicaea was de jure recognized. After the death of Henry in 1216, Theodore was able to profit by his diplomatic skill. By his third marriage to Henry's niece and daughter of the Latin Empress Yolanda of Courtenay, he made an overture to the Franks with the regency as a target<sup>35</sup>. This marriage was criticized by John Apokaukos in his letter to the Patriarch Manuel I<sup>36</sup>. After Yolanda's death in 1219 Theodore proposed the betrothal of one of his two daughters, Eudocia, to his brother-in-law Emperor Robert, but he met great opposition from the Patriarch, the Franks and the Latin Patriarch<sup>37</sup>. The same year, Sava, the brother of the king of Serbia Stephen the Firstcrowned, was consecrated archbishop of the autocephalous Church of Serbia by the Patriarch in Nicaea. By this ordination the Patriarch and the emperor of Nicaea were recognized as the heirs of Byzantine political and ecclesiastical authorities<sup>38</sup>. In 1220 Theodore tried to convene an ecumenical synod in Nicaea for a discussion over the union of the Churches, but his plan was repudiated<sup>39</sup>.

Theodore Laskaris died in 1222 and was succeeded by his son-in-law John III Vatatzes (1222-1254). During his long reign Vatatzes made profit of the political circumstances and increased his territories both in Asia Minor and Europe through his diplomatic and military efforts. He was considered even by his enemies to be “στρατηγικώτατος ... και ταῖς

<sup>34</sup> George Akropolites 27.4-28.11. — Theodore Scutariotes 462.17-463.2. — F. Dölger — P. Wirth, *Regesten*, no. 1684. — B. Hendrickx, *Régestes*, no. 129. Cf. A. Meliarakes, *Ἱστορία τοῦ Βασιλείου τῆς Νικαίας καὶ τοῦ Δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἡπείρου (1204-1261)*, Athens 1898 (repr. 1994), p. 93 (hereafter: A. Meliarakes, *Ἱστορία*). — Alice Gardner, *The Lascarids of Nicaea. The Story of an Empire in Exile*, London 1912, p. 84-86 (hereafter: A. Gardner, *Lascarids*). — J. Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée*, Paris 1949, p. 128. — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 57. — I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση* 107-109.

<sup>35</sup> George Akropolites 27.1 f., 31.1 f. — Nicephoros Gregoras 21.20 f. Cf. A. Meliarakes, *Ἱστορία* 132. — D. M. Nicol, *Despotate* 60 and 86-87. — M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Lascarids of Nicaea (1204-1261)*, Oxford 1975, p. 15 (hereafter: M. Angold, *Government*).

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Apokaukos' opposition: G. Vasiljevski, *Epirotica saeculi XIII, Vizantijskij Vremennik* 3 (1896) 233-299, no. 15, p. 265.4 ff. (hereafter: *Epirotica*).

<sup>37</sup> George Akropolites 31.2-12. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *Despotate* 60. — A. Meliarakes, *Ἱστορία* 134. — A. Gardner, *Lascarids* 94-95. — A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Νίκαια* 58.

<sup>38</sup> For the administration and ecclesiastical policy of the emperors of Nicaea see M. Angold, *Government*. — *Idem*, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081-1261*, Cambridge 1995.

<sup>39</sup> *Epirotica*, no. 14, p. 264.10-20.



κατ' ἐχθρῶν μάχαις εὐμεθοδώτατος”<sup>40</sup>. After the death of Ivan Asen in 1241, John Vatatzes recaptured many towns and strongholds from the Bulgarians in Thrace and Macedonia. In 1242 John Doukas, the emperor of Thessaloniki, was forced to lay aside the imperial insignia and be honoured with the title of *despot*; in 1246, with the removal of his brother Demetrios, Thessaloniki became part of the empire of Nicaea<sup>41</sup>. With Vatatzes' administrative talents and economic policy<sup>42</sup> the empire of Nicaea became a strong and well-organized state, a factor of stability in Asia Minor.

According to the imperial ideology as depicted in the preamble of the emperors' charters and documents, coins and seals, inscriptions, rhetoric, epistolography, autobiographies etc. the Byzantine emperor was expected to possess a strategic mind, resourcefulness, piety, courage, administrative competence. Apart from their successful campaigns against the external enemies Nicaean emperors placed great emphasis on economic<sup>43</sup> and educational policies<sup>44</sup>. Nicaea became a cultural centre and it was regarded as “new Athens”; scholars used the word “Hellenes” and “Helenikon” or “Hellas” for Nicaeans and their empire especially

<sup>40</sup> George Akropolites 45.5-6: “(John the King of Jerusalem) καὶ γὰρ ἐπέγνων τὸν βασιλέα Ἰωάννην στρατηγικώτατόν τε ὄντα καὶ ταῖς κατ' ἐχθρῶν μάχαις εὐμεθοδώτατον” and 48.8 ff.: “ἀλλ' ἢ τοῦ βασιλέως περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα οἰκονομία καὶ στρατηγικωτάτη δεινότης τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων δειλίαν τότε ἀπετινάξατο καὶ εἰς ποίαν μᾶλλον τοὺς Λατίνους ἐνέβαλε”.

<sup>41</sup> George Akropolites 60.10 ff., 67.13-25: “(John Doukas) ἐγένοντο αἱ σπονδαὶ καὶ οἱ ὄρκοι προέβησαν. τὰ μὲν γὰρ ἐρυθρὰ πέδιλα ἀπεβάλετο καὶ τὴν περιμάργαρον πυραμίδα, εἰς ἣν καὶ λίθος ὑπερκάθηται κόκκινος, βασιλικά ταῦτα σύμβολα. τετίμηται δὲ πρὸς τοῦ βασιλέως τῷ δεσποτικῷ ἀξιώματι καὶ εὐνοῦς ἀνεφάνη τῷ βασιλεῖ” and 70.15-18, 79.16-83.14 (Demetrios Doukas). Cf. A. Stavridou-Zafra, *Νίκαια* 86-87. — *Eadem*, Το ἀξίωμα του “δεσπότη”, 87 notes 87 and 88 (with relevant literature).

<sup>42</sup> See J. S. Langdon, *John III Ducas Vatatzes' Byzantine Imperium in Anatolian Exile, 1222-1254: The Legacy of his Diplomatic, Military and Internal Program for the Restitutio Orbis*, PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles 1978. For his agrarian and economic policy see Hélène Glykatzi-Ahrweiler, *La politique agraire des empereurs de Nicée, Byzantion* 28 (1959) 51-66 and 135-136 (= *Etudes sur les structures administratives et sociales de Byzance* [Variorum Collected Studies Series 5], London 1971, no. IV). — Ekaterini Mitsiou, *Untersuchungen zu Wirtschaft und Ideologie im Nizänischen Reich*, PhD dissertation, Universität Wien, Wien 2006.

<sup>43</sup> See no. 42. Especially for Theodore's I kingship see also I. Giarenis, *Συγκρότηση* 190-209.

<sup>44</sup> For education see the extensive and systematic study by C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries (1204-ca. 1310)* [Cyprus Research Center. Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus XI], Nicosia 1982 (hereafter: C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education*). See also P. Ch. Schinas, *Η Παιδεία στην αυτοκρατορία της Νίκαιας (1204-1261)*, MA Thesis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Thessaloniki 2006.

during the brief kingdom of Vatatzes' son, Theodore II Lascaris (1254-1261). He supervised himself the progress of students, he founded libraries and promoted the production and copying of manuscripts etc. Nicaea was seen as “*σχολεῖον πάσης Ἑλλάδος*” and the abundance of scholars made a city equal to ancient Athens, according to Gregory the Cypriot in his autobiography<sup>45</sup>.

I have not traced in sources whether Nicaea was ever called *βασιλεύουσα*. On the contrary, later on Thessaloniki was called *βασιλεύουσα* and the emperor of Thessaloniki Theodore Doukas was *ὁ αὐτοτελῶς ἀνάσσειν*, wrote George Bardanes to the Patriarch in 1227<sup>46</sup>. On the other hand, the archbishop of Achrida Demetrios Chomatenos made a contemptuous remark that there could not be any comparison between Constantinople (*ἡ τοῦ Βύζαντος, ὁ ἐνδοξος Βύζας*) and Nicaea (*ἡ Βιθυνῶν, ὁ εὐτελής Βιθυνός*), which “boasts of having the tops of the Empire and Church” (*ἐναβρύνεται, τῆς βασιλείας δηλαδή καὶ τῆς ἱεραρχίας τὰς ἀκρότητας φέρουσα*)<sup>47</sup>. We must keep in mind, though, that Nicaea had been the city where two Ecumenical Councils, the First and the Seventh, had been convened. Those who had found refuge in Nicaea cling to the hope of their return to their homeland, Constantinople, as the historian George Pachymeres wrote in the Preface of his *Histories*: “*Γεώργιος Κωνσταντινουπόλιτης μὲν τὸ ἀνέκαθεν, ἐν Νικαίᾳ δὲ γεννηθεὶς καὶ τραφεὶς, ἐν Κωνσταντίνου δὲ καταστάς αὐθις, ὅτε Θεοῦ νεύματι ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους αὐτῆ ἐγένετο, ἔτη γεγονὼς εἴκοσιν ἐνὸς δέοντος τηνικάδε τάδε ξυνέγραψεν*”<sup>48</sup>. George Akropolites was addressed *εὐγενῆς* (noble) by his pupil Theodore II Laskaris because of his birthplace, the city of Constantine. At the age of sixteen he was sent by his parents to Nicaea for further studies: “*Τότε καὶ αὐτὸς πρὸς τῶν γονέων ἐκ τῆς Κωνσταντίνου ἀπεστάλην τῷ βασιλεῖ, ἐκκαιδεκέτης ὢν καὶ νῦν τῆς ἐγκυκλίου ἀπηλλαγμένος παιδεύσεως, ἣν γραμματικὴν κατονομάζουσιν οἱ πολλοὶ*”<sup>49</sup>. Although his father wanted to escape from Constantinople, after two years in bed he died; so George was hosted in the

<sup>45</sup> Γρηγορίου τοῦ ἀγιοτάτου καὶ μακαριωτάτου οἰκουμενικοῦ πατριάρχου περὶ τοῦ καθ' ἑαυτὸν βίου ὡς ἀπ' ἄλλον προσώπου, ed. W. Lameere, *La tradition manuscrite de la correspondance de Grégoire de Chypre, patriarche de Constantinople (1283-1289)* [Etudes de philologie, d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne publiées par l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome II], Bruxelles 1937, p. 177-191.

<sup>46</sup> Georges Bardanès, *Ἀντίγραμμα* 116.391-393.

<sup>47</sup> *Demetrii Chomateni Ponemata diaphora*, ed. G. Prinzing [Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae XXXVIII], Berolini - Novi Eboraci 2002, p. 150.262-267.

<sup>48</sup> Georges Pachymères, vol. I, p. 23.2-8.

<sup>49</sup> George Akropolites 46.12-15. Cf. C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education* 5-10.

palace (αὐτὸς δὲ ἐναπελείφθη τῷ ἀνακτόρῳ προμηθείας βασιλικῆς ἀξιούμενος) until his seventeenth year of age<sup>50</sup>.

Nicaea had not only been the shelter of refugees from Constantinople and other territories, which were under Latin rule. Dignitaries and prelates of higher education had been invited by the Emperor Theodore I Lascaris (1204-1222) and joined the Government and the Church in Nicaea, e.g. the *grand logothete* Nicetas Choniates, Nicholas Mesarites, the rhetor and ἐπὶ τοῦ κανικλείου Theodore Eirenikos, who became *chartophylax* of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and before his election to the Patriarchal throne (1214-1216) he held the high office of the ὑπατος τῶν φιλοσόφων, some though did not accept the invitation (i.e. Michael Choniates, Euthymios Tornikes et al.)<sup>51</sup>.

A unique and very precious source for education under Theodore I Laskaris and John III Vatatzes is the double autobiography of the famous scholar Nikephoros Blemmydes, who was born in Constantinople in 1197; he fled with his family in Bithynia, he studied in Prousa and Nicaea, and became the teacher of many intellectuals and of the prince Theodore II Lascaris<sup>52</sup>. The historical work of George Akropolites, who had been the pupil of Theodore Hexapterygos and Nikephoros Blemmydes and later on the teacher of Theodore II Lascaris together with Blemmydes, reveals not only the historical events but also friendship and mutual respect between the teacher and his student. A most impressive is the *Ἐγκώμιον* of Theodore II Doukas Lascaris, the son of the highest emperor John Doukas, "εἰς τὸν μέγαν φιλόσοφον κυρὸν Γεώργιον τὸν Ἀκροπολίτην"<sup>53</sup>. In 1252 Theodore in his *Ἐγκώμιον εἰς τὴν μεγαλόπολιν Νίκαιαν*, compared Nicaea with ancient Athens in the study of philosophy, rhetoric and paideia, with the only difference that in Nicaea all are in the service and glory of God and the emperor<sup>54</sup>.

Concerning the education in Nicaea, George Akropolites reveals the great interest of the emperor John Vatatzes in him and the other sons of

<sup>50</sup> George Akropolites 47.1-3. He also describes his studies by Theodore Hexapterygos and Nikephoros Blemmydes and the demands of the emperor to prove his talents especially in philosophy: 49.6-50.7.

<sup>51</sup> C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education* 5-6.

<sup>52</sup> *Nicephori Blemmydae Curriculum vitae et carmina*, ed. A. Heisenberg, Lipsiae 1896 *passim*.

<sup>53</sup> *Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris Opuscula rhetorica*, ed. A. Tartaglia, Monachii - Lipsiae 2000, p. 95-108 (hereafter: Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, *Opuscula*). Cf. C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education* 14-18. — Ruth J. Macrides (ed.), *George Akropolites: The History. Introduction, Translation and Commentary*, Oxford - New York 2007.

<sup>54</sup> Theodorus II Ducas Lascaris, *Opuscula* 67-84. Cf. C. N. Constantinides, *Higher Education* 20-21.

aristocratic families. By that time teaching of the *ἀρχοντόπουλα* took place most probably in the palace<sup>55</sup>. This was not something new. It was rather a traditional practice e.g. in the court of Manuel I Comnenos in the 12<sup>th</sup> century<sup>56</sup>.

I will present on this occasion the case of Gregory, bishop of Assos in Asia Minor. According to his *Vitae*<sup>57</sup>, he was born with the name George in Acorna on the island of Lesbos. His father was George Anastasopoulos and his mother was called Mary. Initially, he was taught the “holy Scriptures” (*τὰ θεία καὶ ἱερὰ γράμματα*) by a teacher (*παιδευτήν, γραμματιστήν*), who was paid most probably by his parents. Then, at the age of fourteen, together with other children that came from rich families (*τῶν κρειπτόνων τῆς νήσου, τῶν πρωτευόντων*) he went to Constantinople for three years, in the palace (*ἐν τοῖς βασιλείοις*), at the time of the Porphyrogennitos Manuel (*τὰ σκήπτρα Ῥωμαίων ἔχοντος τότε Μανουὴλ τοῦ πορφυρογεννήτου*), i.e. Manuel I Comnenos (1143-1180). There he was totally devoted to the *ἐγκύκλιον παιδευσιν*, without being distracted by his classmates to any kind of entertainment. His teacher was the “*most holy and great Agathon*”. His nutrition and other expenses were covered by the palace, “*ἐπέπερ πάντες οἱ Λεσβόθεν παῖδες τοῖς βασιλείοις ἀπὸ τῶν βασιλικῶν σιτηρεσίων πάσας εἶχον τὰς διατροφὰς καὶ ἐξόδους*”. It was usual for children of good families who were supposed to pursue a career in the Government or the Church, after the preliminary education (*προπαιδεία, γράμματα, πεζὰ γράμματα, ἱερὰ γράμματα*) in their native town, to continue their studies in Constantinople and other centres. A good example is that of Michael and Nicetas Choniates<sup>58</sup>. After three years George followed his teacher Agathon to

<sup>55</sup> See A. Stavridou-Zafraka, *Byzantine Culture* 209-212 (Nicaea).

<sup>56</sup> For the crucial and complicated problem of higher education in Constantinople and the schools that were under the control of the Patriarchate or/and the Emperor in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, see B. Katsaros, *Ιωάννης Κασταμονίτης. Συμβολή στη μελέτη του Βίου, του έργου και της εποχής του* [Βυζαντινά Κείμενα και Μελέται 22], Thessaloniki 1988, p. 163-209.

<sup>57</sup> *Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος επίσκοπος Άσσου ο Θαυματουργός. Πρακτικά Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου* (7-12 Ιουλίου 2005), Mytilene 2006: D. Z. Sophianos (ed.), *Τα αγιολογικά κείμενα του Αγίου Γρηγορίου Άσσου. Εισαγωγή - Σχόλια*, p. 381-438. — J. M. Fountoules (ed.), *Του Αγίου Γρηγορίου επισκόπου Άσσου, Βίοι κατ' επιτομήν («Συναξάρια»)*. Εισαγωγή - Κείμενο - Σχόλια, p. 439-483. — *Idem*, *Ύμνοι προς τιμήν του Αγίου Γρηγορίου επισκόπου Άσσου*, p. 485-587; see also Alkmini Stavridou-Zafraka, *Ιστοριογεωγραφικό πλαίσιο: Λέσβος, Κωνσταντινούπολη, Άγιοι Τόποι, Άσσος κατά την εποχή του Αγίου Γρηγορίου Άσσου (ΙΒ΄ αιώνας)*, p. 67-89. — P. I. Skaltses, *Βίος και πολιτεία του Αγίου Γρηγορίου επισκόπου Άσσου*, p. 127-148.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Choniates, *Μονωδία εἰς τὸν ἀδελφόν*, in Sp. Lampros, *Τὰ σωζόμενα*, vol. I, p. 347.17-22: “*Κάμῃ μὲν ὁ φιλόστοργος καὶ φιλολόγος πατὴρ ἐξ Ἀσίας εἰς Βυζάντιον κατ' ἔρωτα παιδεύσεως ἀπαγαγών, ἤδη τῇ τῶν ἐφήβων ἡλικίᾳ προβαίνοντα,*

Asia Minor, probably on mountain Ide. When he was twenty years old, he went to Jerusalem and after he had lived in the Jordan desert as a hermit for fifteen years, he took his vows as a monk, and the name Gregorius. That must have been before the Holy Land was conquered by the Sultan Saladin in 1187. He was then ordained bishop of Assos in Troad by the metropolitan of Ephesos. Unfortunately his career was not smooth. Malicious slander, originating even from within the clergy, forced him to march to Constantinople twice in order to prove his innocence. At last he returned with his student Leontius to his motherland, Lesbos, where he passed away. The case of this little-known historical figure sheds light on educational practices and traditions that predate the Latin occupation and continued to exist in the empire of Nicaea.

*διατριβαῖς διδασκόντων τήν τε γραμματικὴν προπαίδειαν καὶ τὴν τοῦ ἐπικοῦ κύκλου χρηστομάθειαν παραδίδωσι*”. Cf. Photeini Ch. Kolonou, *Μιχαὴλ Χωνιάτης. Συμβολὴ στη μελέτη τοῦ βίου καὶ τοῦ ἔργου του. Το Corpus των ἐπιστολῶν* [Πονήματα. Συμβολές στην ἔρευνα της ἐλληνικῆς καὶ λατινικῆς γραμματείας 2], Athens 1999, p. 10-11.

### Νίκαια: η νέα «κιβωτός» της βασιλείας

Λίγο πριν από την άλωση της Κωνσταντινούπολης από τους Φράγκους στις 13 Απριλίου 1204, διάφοροι Βυζαντινοί τοπάρχες αυτονομήθηκαν, ενώ ο Θεόδωρος Α΄ Λάσκαρης, γαμβρός από θυγατέρα του έκπτωτου Αλεξίου Γ΄, κατέφυγε και εδραίωσε την κυριαρχία του στη Νίκαια της Βιθυνίας. Αναγνωρίζεται ως σωτήρας και ελευθερωτής, χαιρετίζεται ως Νέος Νώε και η Ασία (η Νίκαια) ως η κιβωτός, η οποία διέσωσε «τὰ τῆς ῥωμαϊκῆς πολιτείας ὑπολείμματα» (Νικόλαος Μεσαρίτης στο *Δητήριον*), και ως λιμάνι της Οικουμένης (Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτης). Ο ίδιος διακηρύσσει σε επίσημο λόγο του (*σιλέντιον*) ότι η βασιλεία θα είχε χαθεί, αν ο Θεός δεν εγκατέλειπε σαν σπέρμα τη βασιλεία του. Μετά και την εκλογή Πατριάρχη στη Νίκαια και την κατάνικηση των αντιπάλων του στην Ασία ακολούθησαν η αναγόρευση και η στέψη του σε αυτοκράτορα, «*βασιλεύς Ῥωμαίων ὑφ' ὅλων τῶν ἐῶων ἀναγορεύεται πόλεων*».

Ο Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτης απευθύνει επιστολή του από την Κέα το 1208 «*τῷ βασιλεῖ τῆς Ἀνατολῆς τῷ Λάσκαρι*». Με τη συρροή προσφύγων και ανώτερων πολιτικών και εκκλησιαστικών αξιωματούχων η Νίκαια αναδεικνύεται «*ἡ ἀκρόπολις τῶν ῥωμαϊκῶν πραγμάτων*», ο αυτοκράτορας «*ὁ πατὴρ ὅλων τῶν Ῥωμαίων*», «*πιστὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ Ῥωμαίων*», πρότυπο για τους υπηκόους. Το νέο κέντρο της αυτοκρατορίας ωστόσο δεν ήταν παρά προσωρινό. Χωρίς την Κωνσταντινούπολη ήταν *ἀπόλιδες*, γράφει ο Παχυμέρης μετά τη «θείω νεύματι» ανακατάληψη της Πόλης από τον Μιχαήλ Παλαιολόγο, το 1261.

Δεν γνωρίζω (δεν το έχω ερευνήσει) αν η Νίκαια αναφέρεται ως βασιλεύουσα, αντίθετα προς τη Θεσσαλονίκη (Γεώργιος Βαρδάνης, *Ἀντίγραμμα*, σ. 113 στ. 227), ενώ ο Δημήτριος Χωματηνός κάνει μία απαξιωτική σύγκριση ανάμεσα στην Κωνσταντινούπολη και τη Νίκαια («*ὁ ἔνδοξος Βύζας ... τὸν εὐτελῆ Βιθυνόν*»), καθώς η τελευταία «*ἐναβρύνεται, τῆς βασιλείας*» «*καὶ τῆς ἱεραρχίας τὰς ἀκρότητας φέρουσα*». Δεν πρέπει να ξεχνούμε ωστόσο ότι η Νίκαια ήταν μια

«ιερή πόλη», όπου είχαν συγκληθεί δύο Οικουμενικές Σύνοδοι (η πρώτη και η εβδόμη). Όσοι είχαν καταφύγει στη Νίκαια κρατούσαν άσβηστη την ελπίδα της επιστροφής. Χαρακτηριστικοί οι λόγοι του ιστορικού Γεωργίου Παχυμέρη στους πρώτους στίχους του Προοιμίου των *Συγγραφικών Ιστοριών*: «Γεώργιος Κωνσταντινουπόλιτης μὲν τὸ ἀνέκαθεν, ἐν Νικαίᾳ δὲ καὶ γεννηθεὶς καὶ τραφεὶς, ἐν Κωνσταντίνου δὲ καταστάς αὐθις, ὅτε Θεοῦ νεύματι ὑπὸ Ῥωμαίους αὕτη εγένετο, ἔτη γεροντῶς εἴκοσιν ἑνὸς δέοντος τηνικάδε ... τάδε ξυνέγραψεν».

Η Νίκαια δεν υπήρξε μόνο καταφύγιο των προσφύγων της Κωνσταντινούπολης και άλλων φραγκοκρατούμενων περιοχών. Αξιωματούχοι και ιεράρχες που είχαν λάβει υψηλή μόρφωση είχαν προσκληθεί από τον Θεόδωρο Α΄ να έλθουν στη Νίκαια, πολλοί όμως δεν αποδέχθηκαν (Μιχαήλ Χωνιάτης, Ευθύμιος Τορνίκης κ.ά.). Μοναδική πηγή για την εκπαίδευση επί Θεοδώρου Α΄ και Ιωάννη Βατάτζη η διπλή αυτοβιογραφία του περίφημου λογίου Νικηφόρου Βλεμμύδη. Η Παιδεία γνώρισε μεγάλη ανάπτυξη στη Νίκαια κατά τη βασιλεία του Θεόδωρου Β΄ Λάσκαρη (1254-1261), ο οποίος εξήταζε και παρακολούθουσε την πρόοδο των μαθητών, ενδιαφέρθηκε για την ίδρυση βιβλιοθηκών, την παραγωγή και την αντιγραφή χειρογράφων κ.ά. Η Νίκαια αναδείχθηκε σε *σχολεῖον πάσης Ἑλλάδος* και η αφθονία σοφών ανδρών την ανέδειξε ισάξια της παλαιάς Αθήνας (Γρηγόριος Κύπριος, Αυτοβιογραφία).