



Summary :

The school at the Church of St. Tryphon of Nicaea was founded in 1255 by Emperor Theodore II Laskaris on the occasion of the church's inauguration ceremony. It was the only school in the Empire of Nicaea exclusively maintained by state subsidies. It had two departments (grammar and rhetoric) and approximately six students. Operation was suspended shortly after the death of Theodore II (1258).

Date

1255-1258

Geographical Location

Nicaea

1. Foundation and Operation of the School

As part of the wider policy of the Laskaris dynasty of reorganising educational structures and favoring the study of [sciences](#) in the [Empire of Nicaea](#), Emperor [Theodore II Laskaris](#) made a significant contribution. The new emperor aimed to continue the work of his father, [John III Vatatzes](#), in the field of letters. Therefore, immediately after he ascended the throne (1254) he promoted the foundation of a state school for high studies. The school was founded beside the Church of [St. Tryphon](#), near Lake Ascania; the church was inaugurated around 1255 by Theodore II in honour of the martyr and patron saint of [Nicaea](#) St. Tryphon.

Information about the foundation and operation of the school is mainly derived from the emperor's correspondence and [Synopsis Chronike](#) of [Theodore Skoutariotes](#). According to the latter, the school at the Church of St. Tryphon was backed by state subsidies, while various commodities and foodstuff were also offered to the institution.¹ More information about the organisation and the curriculum of the school is included in a letter sent by Theodore II to the "teacher of poetics" Andronikos Phrangopoulos and the teacher of rhetoric [Michael Kakos](#) (Senacherim).² As indicated by the available evidence, the school had two chairs: one of "poetics" (actually meaning grammar) and one of rhetoric. There must have been only six students, while the level of knowledge was quite high for that period, as some of the graduates finally returned to Nicaea, although they tried to continue their studies in other places. The studies were organised at two levels. The first included the basic subjects ([enkyklios paideia](#)) and the second rhetoric. The institution had a large library with several codices including ancient texts. As for the curriculum, it is known that it included reading and analysis of ancient writers.³ In order to serve the needs of teaching, Senacherim prepared an annotation about [Homer](#) described by his unique rhetorical style.⁴

The operation of the school and the course of the lessons were closely supervised by the emperor, who was satisfied with the students' progress. The main objective and direction of the institution was without doubt to provide important skills to the young people who were going to assume high state or ecclesiastical positions. However, it seems that the operation of the school was interrupted shortly after the death of Theodore II Laskaris (1258), when the state abolished its subsidies.⁵ The head of the school, Michael Kakos (Senacherim), followed the new emperor [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) to Constantinople after 1261.

In chronological order, the school at the Church of St. Tryphon of Nicaea was the last educational institution founded in the Empire of Nicaea after the schools of [Theodore Hexapterygos](#), Demetrios Karykes, [Nikephoros Blemmydes](#) and [George Babouskomites](#).

It should be noted that the school was the only fully state school for high studies where emphasis was placed on rhetoric, a subject traditionally taught at private schools.

1. Heisenberg, A. (ed.), *Theodorus Scutariota, Additamenta ad Georgii Acropolitae historiam* (Leipzig 1903), p. 291: "καὶ σχολεῖα γραμματικῶν



καὶ ῥητόρων ἔταξεν ἐν αὐτῷ, διδασκάλους καὶ μαθητὰς ἀποτάξας ἐκ βασιλικῶν θησαυρῶν τὰ σιτηρέσια τούτους ἔχειν διορισάμενος φιλοτίμως”.

2. Festa, N. (ed.), *Theodori Ducae Lascaris Epistulae* (Firenze 1898), pp. 271-276.
3. See also Browing, R., “Homer in Byzantium”, *Viator* 6 (1975), p. 29.
4. See also Κωνσταντινόπουλος, Β., “Σεναχηρείμ. Υπόμνημα στον Όμηρο”, *Ελληνικά* 35 (1984), pp. 152-153.
5. See also Andreeva, M.A., *Ocerki po klul'ture vizantijskogo dvore v XIII veko* (Praha 1927), p. 135.

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	Andreeva M.A. , <i>Ocerki po klul'ture vizantijskogo dvore v XIII veko</i> , Praha 1927
	Browning R. , "Homer in Byzantium", <i>Viator</i> , 6, 1975, 15-33
	Θεόδωρος Β΄ Λάσκαρις , <i>Επιστολές</i> , Festa, N. (ed.), <i>Theodori Ducae Lascaris Epistulae</i> , Firenze 1898

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	Theodor II. Laskaris



http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/t/theodor_laskaris_ii.shtml

Glossary :

 enkyklios education

The secondary education in Byzantium. The students, from 12 years old, were taught grammar, rhetorics and eloquence.

Sources

Festa, N. (ed.), *Theodori Ducae Lascaris Epistulae* (Firenze 1898), 275.140-276.157.

Quotations

From a letter of Emperor Theodore II to Michael Kakos (Senacherim) and Andronikos Phrangopoulos, teachers at the school of St. Tryphon

“διὸ τοὺς νέους ὑποδεξάμενοι καὶ προφητικώτερον τῆς διανοίας τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς ἀνατείναντες καὶ ὅτι ἐν βραχυτάτῳ χρόνῳ ἐκ τούτων μεγίστη ἀνθήσει εὐρεσις ἐπιστήμης νοήσαντες, μετὰ φιλοτιμίας τῆς προσηκούσης ἀντιστρέφωμεν ἐπὶ τὸν παράδεισον, ἵν’ ὅπως οἱ κλάδοι τῆ ῥοῆ τῶν λογικῶν ὑδάτων εὐτραφέστεροι γένωνται καὶ ἐκβλαστήσωσι τοὺς καρπούς, καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς, ὅτε δὴ καιρὸς, τὴν ἡδονὴν τῶν ἐπαίνων ἀντιμισθίαν προσάξωσιν, ὑμῶν προὑποδεχομένων ὡς δευτέρων φυτουργῶν ἐξ ἡμῶν τὰς πρώτας τιμάς. τούτων οὕτως ἐχόντων, ὦ σοφώτατοι ἄνδρες, ὑποδέξασθε τοὺς νέους ἀσμένως, οὐκ ἀποδεδοκιμασμένους (οὐ μὲν οὖν), οὐδὲ μὴ ἀξίους τῶν ἄθλων καὶ τῶν γερῶν (οὐκ ἔστιν)· ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς πατρικῆς ἐμοῦ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὑπονοστούσης φιλοστοργίας καὶ πρὸς τὴν αὐξησιν τῶν λόγων σπουδάσατε. ἐντελεῖ γὰρ καὶ ἀνελλιπῆ τὰ χρειώδη τοῖς διδάσκουσι καὶ διδασκομένοις πεποιηκότες, ὑπετυπώσαμεν ἐν τῷ ἡμετέρῳ συντάγματι, ὅπερ δὴ τυπωτικῶς τῷ μεγαλομάρτυρι ἀνεθέμεθα Τρύφωνι, ὦ Σεναχηρεῖμ κάλλιστε πολλοῖς καὶ λόγοις ὀνομαστέ τε καὶ πράξεσι, καὶ Ἀνδρόνικε τῆς γραμματικῆς ἀκριβείας διάδοχε.”

Festa, N. (ed.), *Theodori Ducae Lascaris Epistulae* (Firenze 1898), pp. 275.140-276.157.