



Summary :

An imperial school for higher studies under George Babouskomites operated in the state of Nicaea towards the mid-13th century. The exact location of the school remains unknown, probably outside Nicaea. It had a secular and an ecclesiastical department and trained its students for careers as officials of the Church or the administration.

Date

mid-13th century

Geographical Location

Empire of Nicaea

1. Biography of George Babouskomites

Information on the life and works of George Babouskomites is only provided by his correspondence,¹ as no other source mentions his name. The surname Babouskomites probably indicates the birthplace of his family, some village called Babo, the exact location of which remains unknown.² George Babouskomites was active in the last years of the reign of [John III Vatatzes](#).

2. The School

The letters he exchanged with scholars and officials, dated to the mid-13th century, provide a vague picture of the operation of the School of George Babouskomites in the [Empire of Nicaea](#). Most information is included in the letter to [John XI Bekkos](#), one of his students and subsequent [patriarch of Constantinople](#). In that period (ca. 1250) Bekkos had completed his *enkyklios paideia* and, having left to find new teachers and continue his studies,³ now asked to return to his former teacher. Babouskomites' reply shows that the school he ran had both a secular and an ecclesiastical direction and provided its students with adequate training for a career as officials of the Church or of the imperial administration.⁴

The school must have been posterior to the schools of [Theodore Hexapterygos](#), [Demetrios Karykes](#) and [Nikephoros Blemmydes](#) (in [Smyrna](#)), while it was earlier than the [School at the Church of St. Tryphon](#) in [Nicaea](#) (ca. 1255). According to Babouskomites, renowned teachers gave lessons in his school.⁵ But the exact location remains unknown. The letters exchanged between Babouskomites and officials and scholars of Nicaea reveal that the school was far from the capital.⁶ However, it had a remarkable library with a large number of ancient literature works. The scholar and imperial official Makrotos asked at some moment to be sent a manuscript codex including works of Aristotle.⁷

Although there is no direct evidence, it is very likely that the school was supervised by the emperor and was funded by the state. This view may be confirmed by the general educational policy pursued by Vatatzes, which aimed at re-establishing educational structures and promoting letters, as well as by the fact that a number of the persons mentioned in Babouskomites' correspondence were top state officials connected with the imperial circles.⁸

The available evidence concerning the School of Babouskomites provides information about the level of studies in the schools of Nicaea in that period, as well as about communication among literary figures in the mid-13th century. In the letters he exchanged with his close friend Babouskomites, the imperial functionary Theophilopoulos stated that he had studied rhetoric, geometry, astronomy and Aristotelian physics.

Moreover, there is important information included in the correspondence of Babouskomites concerning communication among scholars. Based on cooperation and friendship, the scholars of that period formed small groups where they discussed various issues



concerning science and knowledge and corresponded frequently. There is evidence that in the mid-13th century George Babouskomites along with a group of friends (imperial officials) promoted the exchange of books.⁹

The existence of the school evidences the development in letters in the Empire of Nicaea under John III Vatatzes. The operation of the school was an important step in the transition towards a more organised educational system, established under [Theodore II Laskaris](#), with the School at the [Church of St. Tryphon](#) in Nicaea, which was succeeded by the [Imperial School of Philosophy](#) and the Patriarchal School.

3. Correspondence

The correspondence of Babouskomites includes 11 letters addressed to five friends of his, all scholars and officials. They were his student and subsequent Patriarch John XI Bekkos, Libdikes, a scholar and close friend of Babouskomites, and three notaries of the court: Michael Theophilopoulos, John Makrotos and Nikolas Kostomeres. The letters have been preserved only in an unpublished codex including various works or excerpts from works of ancient and posterior writers and notable philosophers (Aristotle, [Dio](#), Dionysios of Antioch, etc.), dated to the 14th century.

It is difficult to explain why this collection also included the particular letters of Babouskomites.¹⁰ The correspondence should be dated to the mid-13th century, seeing as John XI Bekkos was born circa 1230 and is supposed to have been among Babouskomites students.

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1. The correspondence with a detailed commentary on the activity and the circle of Babouskomites has been published by Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), pp. 83-100.
 2. Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), pp. 88-89, including other persons named Babouskomites, probably relatives of George.
 3. Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), p. 5.16.
 4. Constantinides, C.N., *Higher Education in Byzantium in the 13th and Early 14th Centuries (1204-ca.1310)* (Nicosia 1982), p. 16.
 5. In his letter to Bekkos, Babouskomites talks about his colleagues who were more educated than he was. See Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), p. 5.12-13.
 6. Cf. Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), p. 87 and letters no. 6 and 7.
 7. Constantinides, C.N., *Higher Education in Byzantium in the 13th and Early 14th Centuries (1204-ca.1310)* (Nicosia 1982), p. 16, 141.
 8. Constantinides, C.N., *Higher Education in Byzantium in the 13th and Early 14th Centuries (1204-ca.1310)* (Nicosia 1982), p. 17.
 9. Constantinides, C.N., *Higher Education in Byzantium in the 13th and Early 14th Centuries (1204-ca.1310)* (Nicosia 1982), p. 150.
 10. Laurent, V., "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935) suggests that the correspondence of Babouskomites was accidentally included in the codex and considers the assumption that the writer was a friend of the 13th century teacher and scholar ungrounded.



Bibliography :

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| | "Βέκκος Ιωάννης XI", Trapp, E. – Beyer, H. – Leontiades, I. (eds), <i>Prosopographisches Lexicon der Palaiologenzeit</i> , 2, Wien 1977, 51-52 |
| | Laurent V. , "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", <i>Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου</i> , Αθήνα 1935, 83-100 |
| | Ξεξάκης Ν.Γ. , <i>Ιωάννης Βέκκος και αι θεολογικά αντιλήψεις αυτού</i> , Αθήνα 1981 |
| | Bréhier L. , "Notes sur l'histoire de l'enseignement supérieur à Constantinople", <i>Byzantion</i> , 3, 1926, 73-94 |
| | Browning R. , "Recentiores non deteriores", <i>Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies</i> , 7, 1960, 11-21 |

Glossary :

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

Sources

Γεώργιος Βαβουσκωμίτης, *Επιστολές*, Laurent, V. (ed.), "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην Σπυρίδωνος Λάμπρου* (Athens 1935), p. 5.1-26.

Quotations

A letter of George Babouskomites to his former student John XI Bekkos referring to the latter's studies

"Τοῦ Βαβουσκωμίτου τῷ Βέκκῳ κύρ Ἰωάννη τῷ ὕστερον χρηματίσαντι πατριάρχῃ Νέας Ρώμης.

† Πανευφύεσάτε Ἰωάννη μου. Οἶδας τὴν πρὸς σέ μου διάθεσιν, οἶδας τὸ φίλτρον, οἶδας τὴν ἐξ ἐμοῦ κατὰ λόγον σὴν ἀναγωγὴν τε καὶ ἐπιμέλειαν εἰ καὶ ἤμιν ἐβάσκησεν ὁ Τελχὶν ἄλλοτε ἄλλας προξενούσας νοσηλείας, περιστάσεις βιωτικές, λύπας μυρίας καὶ ἑτεράττα ὧν ἐν εἰδήσει γέγονας καὶ αὐτός· ἐπεὶ γοῦν τούτων ἀπαλλαγείς τὴν σὴν μετὰ χεῖρας ἐδεξάμην ἐπιστολήν, ἡγαλλιασάμην μὲν οὐ μικρῶς ἤσθεις ταῖς ἐν ταύτῃ λογικαῖς σου καὶ χάρισι καὶ ἡδύτησιν· ἀντεπιστέλλω σοι δέ, ὡς, εἴπερ πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐπαναδράμης καθάπερ ἐγραψας, καὶ τὰς καρδιακάς σοι πτυχὰς ὑπανεπτύξομεν καὶ τροφῆς λογικῆς καὶ πόματος ἀφθόνως σοι μεταδώσομεν· ἀφείς οὖν τὸ περιπλανᾶσθαι τόπον ἐκ τόπου, κατάλαβε τὴν ἐνεγκαμένην σε καὶ νάματος ἐμφορηθῆση καὶ πηγῆς λογικῆς παρ' ἡμῶν τε αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν οἷς σοφίας μέτεστι πλείονος· εἶτα δύο σοι προκεισομένων τιμῶν, τῆς μὲν ἡδυπαθεστέρας καὶ σωματικωτέρας τῆς κοσμικῆς, τῆς δὲ τραχυτέρας δῆθεν καὶ πνευματικωτέρας τῆς ἐκκλησιαστικῆς, ταῖν δυοῖν ἦν θελήσεις ἐλοῦ, ὡς νῦν γε οὐκ ἀγαθὸς ἐγὼ σοι σύμβουλος τοῖς αὐτοῦ πού σε συμπεριπολεῖν μήπω τῆς λογικῆς ἐμφορηθέντα παιδεύσεως· εἰ γὰρ καὶ ἀγαθῆ κοσμοῦμενος εὐφυῖα ὀξὺς καθέστηκας τὰ ἐς νοῦν, ἀλλ' αὐτὸ τοῦτο πλείονά σοι τὸ μετὰ ταῦτα παρξέεται μεταμέλειαν ὄνησαν οὐδὲν τῶν σοφῶν μαθημάτων καταμελήσαντι· τὸν γοῦν προμηθεῖα εἰσοικισιάμενος πρὸς αὐτοῦ τοῦ λόγου, μὴ καθυβρίσαι θελήσεις τὴν ἐκ Θεοῦ δοθεισάν σοι μεγαλοφυῖαν τῆ ἀμαθία, ἵνα μὴ τὸν ἐπιμηθεῖα ἐσούστερον σχῆς ἀνόητά σοι μεταμελούμενον, ἀλλ' ἐπανήκοις ἡμῖν ὁ φίλτατος τάχιον, κορεσθεῖς τοῦ λόγου, ἐμπλησθεῖς παιδεύσεως, οὐ μόνον τῆς θύραθεν ἀλλὰ δὴ καὶ τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς· πρὸς τούτοις βίω λάμψοις ἐπαινετῶ καὶ εἰς ὕψος ἀναχθεῖς τιμῆς ἀρεσκομένης τῷ κρείττονι, ὡς ἂν καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐπὶ σοι ἐγκαυχώμεθα καὶ τιнос διὰ σέ ἐπαῖνον μετέχοντες καὶ ἐνηδυνόμενοι, ἐπ' ἄρκων δῆθεν ὀνύχων βαίνωμεν. Ἐρῶωσο."

Γεώργιος Βαβουσκωμίτης, *Επιστολές*, Laurent, V. (ed.), "La correspondance inédite de Georges Babouscomitès", in *Εις μνήμην*



Σπυρίδανος Λάμπρου (Athens 1935), p. 5.1-26.