



Summary :

Manuel Laskaris was a member of the Laskaris family and one of the six brothers of Theodore I Laskaris (1204-1222). In the years of John III Vatatzes (1222-1254), he was in disgrace, while when Theodore II Laskaris assumed the throne (1254-1258), he was recalled along with the rest of his relatives. He became an important trusty counselor of the emperor and was honoured by him with the notable title of protosebastos. He was not a successful fighter in the battlefield, though. After Theodore II died in 1258, he did not support the election of Michael Palaiologos as the regent of John IV Laskaris and, as a result, was exiled in Prousa.

Other Names

Manuel Komnenos Laskaris, Manuel Tzamanturos, Maximos

Date and Place of Birth

late 12th / early 13th century

Date and Place of Death

third quarter of the 13th century

Main Role

protosebastos

1. Biography

Manuel Laskaris was the youngest brother of the emperor of Nicaea [Theodore I Komnenos Laskaris](#), and the last of all six Laskaris brothers. The Laskaris brothers from the eldest to the younger were: Isaac, Alexios, Theodore (I Komnenos Laskaris, emperor in the exile of Nicaea), Constantine (XI Laskaris, uncrowned Byzantine emperor), Michael and Manuel.¹ The activity of Michael Laskaris is also mentioned by [George Akropolites](#), [Theodore Skoutariotes](#) and [George Pachymeres](#), who calls him ‘Tzamanturos’ (Τζαμάντουρος).² There is information about his life and work until [Michael VIII](#) assumed the throne; Michael Laskaris must have died in exile in [Prousa](#).

2. Activity

2.1. First Period: until Theodore II Laskaris

Manuel Laskaris was not offered any important position or title during the reign of his brother Theodore (1207-1222), which may have been due to his very young age at the time.³

Manuel was probably imprisoned (or under restraint) almost throughout the reign of [John III Doukas Vatatzes](#) and, in particular, between 1223 and 1254, when [Theodore II Doukas Laskaris](#) assumed the [imperial throne of Nicaea](#).⁴ Probably the restraint was in relation with the [movement of the Laskaris](#) brothers (instigated by his elder brothers Isaac and Alexios) against the new Emperor John III Vatatzes. During the reign of John Vatatzes, Manuel must have turned to monastic life, where he was given the monastic name Maximos.

2.2. Second Period: in the Years of Theodore II Doukas Laskaris

After the end of Vatatzes’ reign (November 1254), Manuel (Maximos) Laskaris was again involved into the Byzantine public affairs. During the brief reign of Theodore II Doukas Laskaris (1254-1258), Manuel served as an important trusty counselor of the emperor and was honoured by him with the notable title of [protosebastos](#) (1255).



According to Byzantine sources, Michael and his brother, Manuel Laskaris, seem to have assumed important military and wider administrative jurisdictions in the years of Theodore II. Vivid example of his responsibilities are depicted in his activity during the operations of the army of Nicaea, launched in the regions of Macedonia and Thrace in 1255-1256.

In particular, during the military operations against the Bulgarians in the late autumn 1255, Manuel (Maximos) was sent by Emperor Theodore II, together with [Constantine Margarites](#), to spy the region of Batkunion in Rhodope. He was then awarded the title of protosebastos and was appointed commander of the imperial army (with wide political-military jurisdiction) in Didymoteichon.⁵ However, he did not manage to keep the city; he was soon defeated by the Cumans, allies of the Bulgarians. He managed to escape thanks to his fast horse and fled to Adrianople, as ironically comments George Akropolites in his work [Chronike Syngraphe](#). It seems that the scholar and senior official, who participated actively in the events, disapproved of Michael Laskaris' placement at the headquarters, at the head of the military force of Didymoteichon, because Manuel lacked military experience.

Following the end of Theodore II Laskaris' reign and the massacre of [George Mouzalon](#) (24 August 1258), Manuel Laskaris along with other aristocrats asserted the regency and guardianship of young Emperor [John IV Laskaris](#). When Michael VIII Palaiologos was appointed regent and guardian (1259-1282), Manuel Laskaris refused to support him. The founder of the Palaiologos dynasty, Michael, confronted Manuel Laskaris in a completely different way, as he considered him a part of the Laskarides, whom he wanted to eliminate. Thus, Manuel was imprisoned in Prousa and remained in exile from 1258 until Constantinople was recaptured in 1261. The historian George Pachymeres writes that Manuel Laskaris became a monk during his imprisonment. However, according to George Akropolites, Manuel had become a monk under the name Maximos a long time before he was imprisoned.

There is no evidence about his later activity and his life or the year he died.

3. Other Information

According to information from documents of the monastery of St. John the Theologian in [Patmos](#), Manuel Laskaris at an unknown time was given by Emperor Theodore II Laskaris land in the area of Miletus as [pronoia](#).⁶ According to the same documents, Manuel Laskaris was brother-in-law of Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos, since he was married to the emperor's niece, Maria Komnene.

1. Kazhdan, A-. Cutler, A., *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* (New York – Oxford 1991), vol. 2, pp. 1180-1181, see entry 'Laskaris'.

2. See sources in other sections.

3. About the period and the role of Manuel Laskaris, see Angold, M., *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Lascariids of Nicaea (1204-1261)* (Oxford 1975), pp. 77, 82, 190, 331; Ahrweiler, H., 'L' histoire et la géographie de la région de Smyrne entre les deux occupations torques (1081-1317), particulier ment au XIIIe siècle', *Travaux et Mémoires* 1 (1965), pp. 138-139.

4. According to the testimony of George Akropolites, Manuel Laskaris left the country and wandered in the courts of several sovereigns along with his brother Michael.

5. Γιαννόπουλος Φ., *Διδυμότειχο. Ιστορία ενός βυζαντινού οχυρού*, Peloponnesian Folkloric Foundation (Athens 1989), pp. 65-66.

6. Βρανούση, Ε., *Βυζαντινά έγγραφα της μονής Πάτμου. Α': Αυτοκρατορικά* (Αθήναι 1980), no. 14, l. 48; no. 27, l. 65-66, no. 28



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Webliography :

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Glossary :

	pronoia
("care", "forethought") An institution that goes back to the 11th century. It refers to estates granted to a prominent military official or to the Church; it also designates in general the right of an individual of a religious foundation to receive directly from citizens of farmers whatever dues they would normally be obliged to pay to the state. The holder of a <i>pronoia</i> was called <i>pronoiaros</i> . The <i>pronoiai</i> could not be inherited by the family of military officials after their death, while when a donation was made to the Church, the <i>pronoia</i> was considered full and permanent.	
	protosebastos
High-ranking title usually bestowed upon close relatives of the emperor. The title was introduced by Alexios I Komnenos. In the 12th century it was awarded to close associates of the emperor and to members of aristocratic families, such as the Palaiologos, Tarchaneiotos, Raoul and Metochites families.	

Sources

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Quotations

Akropolites evaluates the military incompetence of Manuel Laskaris

‘αὐτόθι γοῦν εἰς ἡγεμόνας τάξας τόν τε Λάσκαριν Μανουήλ, ὄν καὶ πρωτοσεβαστὸν κατωνόμασεν, ἀνθρώπιον ἀφελέστατον καὶ κακῶς εἰδὸς στρατηγεῖν ...’

Heisenberg, A. (ed.), in *Georgii Acropolitae opera* 1 (Leipzig 1978), I, 123.3-6