

= George Mouzalon =

George Mouzalon (Greek : ????????? , Georgios Mouzalon ; ca . 1220 ? 25 August 1258) was a high official of the Empire of Nicaea under Theodore II Laskaris (r . 1254 ? 1258) . Of humble origin , he became Theodore 's companion in childhood and was raised to high state office upon the latter 's assumption of power . This caused great resentment from the aristocracy , which had monopolized high offices and opposed Theodore 's policies . Shortly before Theodore 's death in 1258 , he was appointed regent of Theodore 's under @-@ age son John IV Laskaris (r . 1258 ? 1261) . He was assassinated only a few days later by soldiers , as the result of a conspiracy led by the nobles under the soon @-@ to @-@ be emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (r . 1259 ? 1282) .

= = Biography = =

= = Early life and service under Theodore II = =

The Mouzalon family is first attested in the 11th century , but produced few notable members until the mid @-@ 13th century , with the exception of Nicholas IV Mouzalon , Patriarch of Constantinople in 1147 ? 1151 . George Mouzalon was born at Adramyttium on the Anatolian coast in circa 1220 . His family was considered as low @-@ born , but he and his brothers became the childhood friends of Theodore II , being raised with him in the palace as his paidopouloi (????????? , " pages ") . It is assumed that they were also educated along with Theodore , sharing his classes under the scholar Nikephoros Blemmydes . There were also at least two sisters , one of whom was later married to a member of the Hagiotheodorites family .

When Theodore became emperor in November 1254 , he raised the Mouzalones to the highest state offices : George was made *megas domestikos* (commander @-@ in @-@ chief of the army) while two of his brothers , Andronikos and Theodore (the eldest brother) , were made *protovestiaros* (grand chamberlain) and *protokynegos* (head huntsman) respectively . According to the contemporary chroniclers , the emperor loved George " above all others " ; in some letters he calls him " son " and " brother " . During Theodore 's reign , George was the emperor 's senior minister and his most trusted advisor . Little is known , however , on his personal involvement in the governance of the state , except for his participation in the council convened to discuss the proper reaction to the invasion of Nicaea 's Macedonian holdings by the Bulgarians after Vatatzes 's death . George Mouzalon supported the majority opinion that Theodore himself should campaign against the invaders . During Theodore 's absence on campaign in 1255 , George was left behind as regent of the state . Upon his return , Theodore raised George further , naming him *protosebastos* and *protovestiaros* and instituting the new title of *megas stratopedarches* for him . Andronikos Mouzalon succeeded George as *megas domestikos* . It was an extremely high honour : the combined title " *protosebastos* and *protovestiaros* " was normally conferred only to close kinsmen of the emperor , while the offices of *protovestiaros* and *megas domestikos* had always until then been the preserve of aristocratic families .

The elevation of the Mouzalones was not only a mark of personal affection or favour , but also in line with Theodore 's policies , which aimed to curb the influence and independence of the powerful nobility . The appointment of low @-@ born " new men " to such high posts , and Theodore 's often harsh and arbitrary treatment of the nobles , aroused the ire of the traditional aristocracy , and especially the capable and ambitious Michael Palaiologos . The aristocrats ' hostility was further intensified when the emperor gave his low @-@ born favourites noble brides : George Mouzalon wedded Theodora Kantakouzene , a niece of Michael Palaiologos , and Andronikos married a daughter of the former *protovestiaros* Alexios Raoul . After Mouzalon 's murder , Theodora would marry the *protovestiaros* John Raoul Petraliphas (in 1261) . A staunch opponent of her uncle 's unionist religious policies , she was exiled and became a nun . After Michael 's death , she restored the monastery of Saint Andrew in Krisei , to where she transferred the relics of Patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos , and was a prominent member of the capital 's literary circles .

= = = Appointment as regent and assassination = = =

Shortly before Theodore II died on 16 August 1258 , he left George Mouzalon as regent and guardian of his 8 @-@ year @-@ old son John IV . Patriarch Arsenios may have shared guardianship of John : although the later historians Nikephoros Gregoras and Makarios Melissenos say the Patriarch was so named , the contemporary historians Pachymeres and Acropolites name only Mouzalon . This appointment further enraged the aristocracy , and Mouzalon 's position became extremely precarious . Mouzalon was also unpopular with the clergy because he was associated with Theodore 's high @-@ handed treatment of the Church , and with the people , who feared that he would try to usurp the throne . Most importantly , however , he faced the hostility of the army , in particular the Latin mercenaries , who had apparently been denied the usual stipends and donatives . In addition , they probably resented Theodore 's intention to raise a " national " army composed solely of Byzantine Greeks , and Mouzalon is recorded by Pachymeres to have taken measures . Palaiologos , who as *megas konostaulos* held command over the Latins , was in a good position to exploit these grievances .

To prevent any action against his testament 's provisions for his son 's succession and the regency , Theodore on his deathbed demanded an oath to be taken by Senate , army , people and clergy , both those present at court and those absent elsewhere in the state . Immediately after his death , George Mouzalon , aware of his vulnerability and his complete lack of support , called an assembly of the leading nobles , officials , and military commanders . He offered to resign from his post in favour of any person that the assembly chose , but the dignitaries , led by Michael Palaiologos , dissuaded him and encouraged him to stay on and even accepted to take an oath of loyalty to him as well as to the young emperor . It was a sham , as a conspiracy by the leading aristocratic families was well under way to depose him , in which Palaiologos apparently played a covert but leading role .

Only a few days after the death of Theodore II (the sources disagree on the exact date , although 25 August is the widely accepted date) , a memorial service was held at the Monastery of Sosandra in Magnesia , founded by John III Vatatzes (r . 1221 ? 1254) and serving as his and Theodore 's burial place . The entire court attended , while the army was encamped on the plain below the monastery . As soon as George Mouzalon , his brothers and his retinue arrived , the service began . Outside the church , however , soldiers had assembled , many of them Latin mercenaries , and they began to clamour and demand to see the young emperor . John IV went outside and raised his hand to quiet them ; the soldiers , however , allegedly mistook this as a signal . Joined by a large mob , they stormed the church aiming to kill the Mouzalon brothers . They were warned of what was going on , but George only sent his secretary Theophylact to investigate . He was mistaken for Mouzalon and killed by the crowd . The mob , however , realized its error (the secretary was wearing black shoes , while the *protovestiarios* wore green ones) and entered the church , the soldiers with swords in hand .

As the people inside the church scattered , the Mouzalon brothers tried to hide : George hid under the altar , Andronikos behind a door , and Theodore in a corner by the emperor 's tomb . The mob , however , proceeded to search the church for them , and George was discovered by a Latin soldier named Karoulos (" Charles ") . Mouzalon was dragged from under the altar and , despite pleading to ransom his life , was executed . So great was the frenzy of the crowd that his corpse was repeatedly stabbed and hacked to pieces , so that the parts had to be gathered in a sack for burial afterwards . Andronikos and an unnamed brother @-@ in @-@ law too were slain , while Theodore 's fate is uncertain : some scholars believe he survived and is to be identified with Theodore Mouzalon , a chief minister to both Michael VIII and Andronikos II Palaiologos (r . 1282 ? 1328) . The Mouzalon family 's houses were then ransacked by the mob ; and when George Mouzalon 's wife fled to her uncle Michael Palaiologos and pleaded for her husband 's life , she was brusquely told to be quiet or she would share his fate . Palaiologos 's responsibility in the whole affair is further supported by the fact that none of the Mouzalones ' murderers were ever persecuted . Indeed , the mercenary Charles appears later as Palaiologos 's confidant .

Mouzalon 's death was followed by a purge of Theodore II 's other prominent " new men " , the protostrator John Angelos and the protovestiarites Karyanites : Angelos was recalled by Palaiologos but died (or committed suicide) on the way , while Karyanites was imprisoned . Among Theodore II 's protégés , only George Akropolites survived , apparently because he at the time was a prisoner in Epirus ; eventually , he reached high office under Michael Palaiologos . Michael Palaiologos in the meantime consolidated his position , being named regent with the rank of *megas doux* . Soon he took the title of despotes , and in early 1259 , he was crowned emperor . Ostensibly still the guardian and co - emperor of John VI , after the recapture of Constantinople in 1261 he sidelined and imprisoned John , being crowned sole emperor at the Hagia Sophia and founding the Palaiologan dynasty , the last ruling house of Byzantium .

= = Treatment by historians = =

Of the contemporary sources , the history of Akropolites is the most negative towards the Mouzalon brothers , whom he calls " loathsome little men , worthless specimens of humanity " and " false of tongue , nimble of foot , peerless at beating the floor in dance " . Although otherwise reliable , Akropolites 's account on this issue is suspect : on the one hand , he evidently tries to disassociate himself from Theodore II 's " new men " , to whom he too originally belonged , while on the other he is generally strongly biased in favour of Michael Palaiologos , whom he tries to exculpate from the assassination . Other historians of the time paint a more favourable picture . The account of the near contemporary Theodore Skoutariotes , which otherwise generally follows Akropolites closely , notably fails to repeat the latter 's negative comments , and even records that it was the assembled nobles who persuaded the Mouzalones to stay in the church during the riot on the day of their murder . George Pachymeres too , whose treatment of Theodore Laskaris 's reign and the Laskarid emperors in general is far more favourable than Akropolites 's , considers the Mouzalones to have been promoted on merit , condemns their murder , and names Palaiologos as directly responsible . The later historian Nikephoros Gregoras likewise avoids negative comments , as do most modern historians .