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Metochites [Metoxites], Theodore [Theodoros, Theoleptos]

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Born Nicaea, (Iznik, Turkey), 1260/1261

Died Constantinople, (Istanbul, Turkey), 1332

Son of George Metochites, a cleric of the Eastern Orthodox Church during the imperium of Emperor Michael VIII Paleologos, Theodore Metochites grew up in the cultural center of Constantinople. However, because his father George favored union with the Latin Church, the family was exiled. Theodore, nevertheless, received a good education and completed his *enkyklios paideia* by the time he was 20. Favored by Emperor Andronikos II, he became a close collaborator and counselor. In this capacity he made several important diplomatic missions to Cyprus, Serbia, and Thessaloniki, among others, and was appointed to several successively more important public offices. In 1304, Metochites was appointed to the highest position of the Byzantine administration, *mezas logothetes*, or Grand Deputy, with duties equivalent to chancellor or prime minister, which he held until 1321.

Metochites's career ended when the emperor was deposed, and he was exiled by the new Emperor Andronikos III Paleologos. He died, as the monk Theoleptos, in 1332 at the Chora monastery in Constantinople to which he had donated his extensive library, and whose restoration work he had personally supported. Metochites's mosaic portrait in the monastery where he offers the Church of Chora to the enthroned Christ commemorates his extensive gifts to the institution.

Metochites was an exceptionally prolific writer and scholar, leaving behind works of rhetoric (royal eulogies and discourses), 20 poems, a literary testament in verse, a collection of philosophical texts, and two works on astronomy. His collection of texts, *Hypomnematismoi kai semeoses gnomikai* (Annotations and gnomonic notes or Personal comments and annotations), an astonishing collection of essays and texts on history, literature, and thinking, includes material on over 70 Greek authors. It contains the most extensive commentary on Aristotelian philosophy of the late Byzantine period. Metochites's commentaries on the *Dialogues of Plato* had an important influence on the Platonic renaissance of the 15th century.

Metochites's work associated with astronomy includes his paraphrases of **Aristotle's** works on natural philosophy and his comprehensive introduction to Ptolemaic astronomy. His *Stoicheiosis Astronomike* (Elements of astronomy) revived Ptolemaic studies in Byzantium and gives evidence of the significance of contacts with Persian and Arabic science in astronomy as practiced in the period of the early Paleologai. In this work, Metochites described earlier astronomical studies and made a

clear argument for the importance of astronomy over the other branches of mathematics. He clearly distinguished between astronomy and the then popular apotelesmatics (astrology), which he condemned. In his *Semeioses gnomikai* (Annotations), Metochites provided an important critique of Aristotle.

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