



Summary :

Member of the Komnenoi family and co-founder of the Empire of Trebizond. In 1204 David and his brother Alexios I Grand Komnenos (1204-1222) occupied Trebizond and founded an empire, supported by Tamar, queen of Georgia. He then attempted, without success, to expand the borders of the Empire of Trebizond to the west, allying himself with the Latin emperor of Constantinople against Theodore I Laskaris of Nicaea. He became a monk in Sinope in 1208 and lived there until his death in 1212.

Other Names

Daniel

Date and Place of Birth

1183/1184, Constantinople

Date and Place of Death

13 December 1212, Sinope

Main Role

general (*strategos*) (1204-1207/1208), monk (1208-1212)

1. From Constantinople to Trebizond

David Komnenos was born in ca. 1183/1184 in [Constantinople](#). He was the youngest son of the **sebastokrator** Manuel [Komnenos](#), grandson of the Byzantine Emperor [Andronikos I Komnenos](#) (1183-1185) and brother of [Alexios I Grand Komnenos](#) (1204-1222), first emperor of [Trebizond](#). In 1185, after the rebellion of September the 12th against Andronikos I,¹ Alexios and David fled to Iberia (Georgia), to the court of Tamar, their blood relative from the house of the Komnenoi.² Almost nothing is known for the life and activities of the two brothers in Iberia.

Alexios and David Komnenos re-emerge in 1204, when, at late March or early April they led the Iberian army, given to them by Tamar, into occupying [Trebizond](#), without much resistance.³ They founded an empire of the same name and Alexios was proclaimed emperor. David, as a general, focused on expanding the borders of the new empire to the west.

2. From Trebizond to Sinope

The Trapezuntine army led by David invaded in [Paphlagonia](#), which were also claimed by the [Empire of Nicaea](#). This resulted in an immediate and long conflict with Emperor of Nicaea [Theodore I Laskaris](#) (1204-1222); it lasted, with certain pauses, until 1207/1208. After Laskaris succeeded in occupying Paphlagonia, David retired in [Sinope](#), where he became a monk and was renamed Daniel. He died on 13 December 1212.⁴

3. David's military expeditions

David Komnenos was in charge of expanding the Empire's borders to the west, aiming to strengthen the position of Alexios I Grand Komnenos (1204-1222) in north-eastern [Asia Minor](#). His main goal was to capture Paphlagonia and a large part of north-eastern [Bithynia](#), detaching these territories from Nicaea's control. He was also aiming to establish his control in regions that now belonged to the [Latin Empire of Constantinople](#).

He initially took over a number of coastal towns in the end of 1204/beginning of 1205: Sinope, [Amastris](#), Kromna, Kytora and [Heraclea Pontica](#). He then endeavoured to control Prouusias, a town that would enable him to command the [road network](#) of Bithynia-Paphlagonia-[Pontos](#),⁵ and also impede Theodore I from accessing the coast. David's plan proved unsuccessful and the



Trapezuntine army was thoroughly defeated by the army of Nicaea; the **strategos** [Synadenos](#) was taken captive and led to [Nicaea](#).

After this defeat, David Komnenos returned to Heraclea Pontica, and he was besieged by Theodore I Laskaris. He did not hesitate asking for help from the Latins of Constantinople, thus managing to defend the city, after the Latin Emperor Henry I (1205-1216) sent a small number of troops in the area. He even pursued a closer [collaboration](#) with Henry, requesting to be included in the treaty between Nicaea and the Latin Emperor, with the territories he had conquered as the latter's subject.⁶

Toward the end of 1206 and the beginning of 1207, after an agreement had been signed between the Empire of Nicaea and the Latin Empire of Constantinople, David once again attacked the area of Prouusias. His Latin allies came to his aid, but were defeated in the area of Tracheiai by the armies of Theodore I Laskaris; the Nicaean army was led by Andronikos Gidos, the future son-in-law and heir of Alexios I Grand Komnenos (1204-1222) [Andronikos I Grand Komnenos](#) (1222-1235). After another unsuccessful attempt to invade north-eastern Bithynia in the middle of the following year, David was forced to retreat in Sinope, where he remained until his death. Meanwhile, Theodore I Laskaris gradually attached Paphlagonia to the Empire of Nicaea.

4. Dispute between David and Theodore I Laskaris in the subject of ecclesiastical policy

The conflict between the two empires did not only involve military aspects but also ecclesiastical differences, causing an unofficial schism between the Churches of Nicaea and Trebizond. David Komnenos and Alexios I Grand Komnenos (1204-1222) were envisioning an independent [Church of Trebizond](#), released from the control of the Nicaean Church and the Patriarchal Council, which was led by the future [Patriarch of Constantinople](#) Manuel (1217-1222). Thus, David dismissed the bishops of Amastris, Bosphoros, [Cherson](#) and Sougdoufoulla.

This caused a reaction even among the Trapezuntine clergy, especially after Alexios and David illegally attempted to assign clerics from Trebizond to high offices, without the approval of the Patriarchal Council in Nicaea. The unavoidable rift between the two Churches took place during the years 1212-1214 and again in 1222. It was ended in 1260/1261 by the Emperor of Nicaea [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) (1261-1282) and the Emperor of Trebizond [Manuel I Grand Komnenos](#) (1238-1263), when in January 1260 the metropolis of Trebizond recognised the bishop of Nicaea Nikephoros II (1260-1260/1261) as Patriarch of Constantinople.⁷

1. This rebellion was started by the feudal aristocracy, who had gained power under the rule of the Angeloi (1185-1204). A representative of this family, Isaak II, rose to the throne, while Andronikos I Komnenos met an unfortunate end by the people of Constantinople and his son Manuel was blinded. See Σαββίδης, Γ.Κ.Α., *Βυζαντινά στασιαστικά και αυτονομιστικά κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία, 1189-σ. 1240 μ.Χ.* (Athens 1987), p. 262.

2. There are different views concerning the date of their flight in Iberia (Georgia). Lampsides believes that they left Constantinople shortly after its fall to the soldiers of the Fourth Crusade (July 1203) and that they founded the Empire of Trebizond at the beginning of April of the following year. See Λαμπρίδης, Ο., «Περί την ίδρυση του κράτους των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 31 (1971-1972), pp. 3-18, especially p. 17. Kuršanskis believes that they left Constantinople in 1201. See Kuršanskis, M., "Autour des sources georgiennes de la fondation de l'empire de Trébizonde", *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 30 (1970-1971), pp. 107-115.

3. Queen Tamar of Georgia played a crucial role to the foundation of the Empire of Trebizond. This led some scholars to believe that the new state was subject to Georgia, at least in the first years of its existence, at the beginning of the 13th century. See Vasiliev, A.A., "The Foundation of the Empire of Trebizond 1204-1222", *Speculum* 11 (1936), pp. 3-37. Ostrogorsky, G., *Ιστορία του Βυζαντινού κράτους Γ'*, Παναγόπουλος, Ι. (trans.) (Athens 1981), pp. 102, 305. For the peaceful surrender of Trebizond to the Komnenoi from the duke Nikephoros Palaiologos, appointed as *toparches* in 1165 by Manuel I Komnenos, see Σαββίδης, Γ.Κ.Α., *Βυζαντινά στασιαστικά και αυτονομιστικά κινήματα στα Δωδεκάνησα και στη Μικρά Ασία, 1189-σ. 1240 μ.Χ.* (Athens 1987), p. 265.

4. Many scholars believe that David was killed during the siege of Sinope or after its fall to the Seljuk Turks of Ikonion and their sultan Kaykaus I in 1214. See Miller, W., *Trebizond. The Last Greek Empire* (London 1926), 18. Angold, J.M., *A Byzantine Government in Exile. Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204-1261* (Oxford 1975), p. 98.



5. Since the road connecting the towns of Nicomedia, Gangra, Amastris and Sinope passed near Prouusias.
6. In exchange for the help of the Latins, David sent to Constantinople large quantities of food supplies. See Γουναρίδης, Π., «Η χρονολογία της αναγόρευσης και της στέψης του Θεοδώρου Α' Λασκάρεως», *Σύμμεικτα* 6 (1985), pp. 59-71, especially p. 62-63.
7. According to the agreement, the bishop of Trebizond could be elected and ordained in Trebizond, provided that the patriarch's representative was in agreement. See Λαμφιδής, Ο., «Ο ανταγωνισμός μεταξύ των κρατών της Νίκαιας και των Μεγάλων Κομνηνών διά την κληρονομία της βυζαντινής ιδέας», *Αρχαίον Πόντου* 34 (1977-1978), pp. 3-19, especially p. 16.

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Glossary :

	sebastokrator
Honorary title of the Byzantine court. The office was established in 1081 by Alexios I Komnenos for his elder brother Isaac, equivalent to the one of regent	
	strategos ("general")
During the Roman period his duties were mainly political. Office of the Byzantine state's provincial administration. At first the title was given to the military and political administrator of the themes, namely of the big geographic and administrative unities of the Byzantine empire. Gradually the title lost its power and, already in the 11th century, strategoi were turned to simple commanders of military units, responsible for the defence of a region.	

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Quotations

Theodore I Laskaris prevails over David Komnenos in Paphlagonia

Δαβίδ Κομνηνός Παφλαγονίας ὄλης,
Ἀλεξίου σύναϊμος ὦν τοῦ πρὸ χρόνων



κατατυραννήσαντος Τραπεζουντίων,
ὅστις ἐπωνόμαστο Κομνηνὸς μέγας·
κατηγέτην ἄμφω δὲ σειρὰν τοῦ γένους
ἐξ Ἀνδρονίκου τοῦ βεβασιλευκότος,
ἐκ τοῦδε παιδὸς Μανουήλ πεφυκότες.
ἀλλ' εὐχερῶς μὲν Θεόδωρον καὶ Σάβαν
ἀναξ μετήλθε τῆ Θεοῦ συμμαχία,
κάντεῦθεν ὦπτο Κελβιανοῦ δεσπότης,
Φιλαδελφείας Μαιάνδρου, Νεοκάστων.
καὶ Παφλαγονίας δὲ κρατεῖ τῷ χρόνῳ,
καταπαλαίσας Κομνηνὸν Δαβὶδ μάχη·
ὅθεν παρεστήσατο σὺν Ἡρακλείᾳ
Ἀμάστριδα, Κύτωρον, Κρῶμναν τὰς πόλεις
πρὸς τοῖς πέριξ ἅπασι καὶ πολιχνίοις,
καὶ κατεκυρίευσε καὶ Παφλαγόνων.

Εφραίμ Αίνιος, *Χρονογραφία*, 7545-61, ed. O. Lampsides, *Ephraem Aenii, Historia Chronica* (Athens 1990).

Chronological Table

1183/1184: Birth of David Komnenos in Constantinople

1185: David and his brother Alexios flee to the court of Tamar, queen of Iberia and their aunt

March/April 1204: David and his brother Alexios occupy Trebizond. Alexios I Grand Komnenos becomes the first emperor of Trebizond

End 1204/beginning 1205: David occupies Sinope and the Paphlagonian cities. He also sends his army in Bithynia, but is defeated by Theodore I Laskaris

End 1206: David attacks the area of Prousius. His army is defeated by Theodore I Laskaris in the area of Tracheiai

Mid 1207: David Komnenos retreats in Sinope

1208: David is censured a monk in Sinope and is renamed Daniel

1212-1214: The Empires of Trebizond and Nicaea dispute over ecclesiastical matters

13 December 1212: Death of David Komnenos (Daniel)

Auxiliary Catalogs

List of the emperors of Trebizond

Alexios I (1204 -1222)

Andronikos I (Gidon) (1222 - 1235)

John I (Axouchos) (1235 -1238)

Manuel II (1238 -1263)



Andronikos II (1263 -1266)

George (Planos) (1266 - 1280)

John II (1280 -1285)

Theodora (1285)

John II (again 1285 - 1297)

Alexios II (1297 -1230)

Andronikos III (1330 -1332)

Manuel II (1332)

Basil (1332 -1340)

Eirene Palaiologina (1340 - 1341)

Anna (Anachoutlou) (1341-1342)

John III (1342-1344)

Michael (1344 -1349)

Alexios III (1349 - 1390)

Manuel III (1390 -1417)

Alexios IV (1417 - 1429)

John IV (1429 - 1458)

Alexios V (1458)

David (1458-1461)