

ANTÓNIOS-EMÍLIOS N. TACHIÁOS AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF BYZANTINE-SLAVIC RELATIONS¹

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Abstract: ZUZULAK, Ján – DELIKARI, Angeliki. *Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos and His Contribution to the Research of Byzantine-Slavic Relations*. Contemporary Slavic studies and Byzantology records many important researchers dealing with Byzantine-Slavic relations, who brought new knowledge in the given area and significantly advanced the research of the Slavic cultural environment in relation to the Eastern Roman (Byzantine) Empire and the perception of the depth of the heritage of the Thessaloniki brothers Constantine-Cyril and Methodius for the whole Slavic world. One of the most important personalities that deserve attention is Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos, professor at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, whose contribution to the research of Byzantine-Slavic relations and the related Cyrillic-Methodist issue is significant and unquestionable in scientific circles. In this study, we will analyse the life and work of this important personality, who can be classified as a Slavist or a Byzantologist. Some of his works have been translated into several languages, but the texts he published in his native Greek remain inaccessible to the international scientific community. On the basis of his most important studies, which resonated the most in Greek and international scientific circles in recent decades, we will approach four main areas of research that Professor Tachiáos has devoted himself to in depth during his academic career: the influence of Byzantine hesychasm on the spiritual life of the Slavs, the Athos state and monasticism, Byzantine-Slavic relations and the Christianization of the Slavs through the missionary work of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius. He perceived the values of the cultural heritage of the Thessaloniki brothers and their sustainability in a broader context, which enabled him to bring a new dimension to the understanding of the relations between Byzantium and Great Moravia.

Keywords: *Slavic studies, Byzantology, Mount Athos, Byzantine hesychasm, monasticism, Constantine the Philosopher, Methodius*

Introduction

In this study, we focus on the life and work of professor Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos, “one of the most important scholars in the field of the history of Byzantine-Slavic relations and in fact one of the founders of this scholarly discipline in Greece” (Vavřínek 2018, 314), who was one of the most important personalities at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in the second half of the 20th century. He developed his academic career at the Faculty of Theology, where he worked as a professor of the history and literature of the Slavic Orthodox Churches from 1967 to 1998. He actively mastered several Slavic languages, which he used in his scholarly work.

Professor and academician Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos (Αντώνιος-Αιμίλιος Ν. Ταχιάος) was born on May 20, 1931 in Thessaloniki as a descendant of a rich merchant family of Wallachian

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origin from Kruševo. He studied theology at the Faculty of Theology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, graduating in 1954. During his short postgraduate stay at Château de Bossey, near Geneva, Switzerland, he attended, among others, the lectures of two visiting professors, Lev Aleksandrovich Zander and Pavel Nikolayevich Evdokimov, both of whom he also met two years later at the *St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute* in Paris, where he studied from 1954 to 1956. There he came into contact with many well-known Russian theologians who, after the October Revolution in 1917, took refuge in the French capital and founded mentioned Institute. He was mainly influenced by the rector Kassian Bezobrazov, Cyprian Kern and *Anton Vladimirovich Kartashev*, under whose supervision he worked at the *Institute*.

In Paris, he attended lectures on ancient Slavic languages and Slavic philology by professor André Vaillant at the *Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* and *Collège de France* and lectures on the ancient Georgian language by professor Charles Mercier at the Faculty of Ancient Oriental Languages of the *Catholic Institute* (Institut Catholique) (Αντώνιος-Αιμίλιος 2019-2020, 11). He maintained close contacts with professor André Vaillant (1890 – 1977) even after his return to Greece, where he defended his dissertation entitled *Effects of Hesychasm on church politics in Russia 1328 – 1406* (Tachiaos 1962a) at the Theological Faculty of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, published in 1962. He also addressed the influence of Byzantine hesychasm on the spiritual life of the Slavic people in another study entitled *Paisios Velichkovsky (1722 – 1794) and his school of Ascetic philology* (Tachiaos 1964), which he published two years later, in 1964. The personality of Paisios Velichkovsky, whose work is associated with spiritual renewal in Slavic countries and Romania, was also discussed in the books *The Revival of Byzantine mysticism among Slavs and Romanians in the XVIIIth century. Texts relating to the life and activity of Paisios Velichkovsky (1722 – 1794)* (Tachiaos 1986) and *Saint Paisios Velichkovsky (1722 – 1794). Biographical sources* (Tachiaos 2009b).

The influence of Byzantine Hesychasm on the spiritual life of the Slavic peoples

In his works, Antónios-Emílios N. Tachíaios systematically dealt with the transfer of the Byzantine hesychast tradition to the Slavic cultural environment and focused primarily on the personality of Paisios Velichkovsky (1722 – 1794), whose influence is associated with the Philocalic movement of the second half of the 18th century and the subsequent spiritual revival that followed the Byzantine hesychast tradition of the 14th century, led by its most prominent representative, Gregory Palamas (1296 – 1359).

In 1746, Paisios Velichkovsky went to the Holy Mount Athos, where he became acquainted with the Byzantine niptic texts (Tachiaos 1964, 41), which he became interested in and studied. Thus began his philological activity,² which lasted eighteen years on Athos. When Paisios decided to translate the Byzantine niptic ascetic texts from Greek into the Slavic language, he gathered around him a group of collaborators who translated with him or rewrote the translations he had made himself. It was significant in his work that in most cases he applied the critical method of examining the text, which was almost unknown in the Christian East at that time (Tachiaos 1964, 55-71). Over the course of a few years, Paisios and his collaborators created a rich library of translations of ascetic books. After leaving Athos and returning to Moldova in 1764, he expanded this library with other manuscripts.

² See Житие и писания молдавского старца Паисия Величковского, 214-216.

Professor Tachiáos repeatedly emphasizes in his texts that Paisios Velichkovsky made available a great wealth of thought and experience of niptic ascetic writers to the Slavs. This became the impetus for the rediscovery of the hesychast tradition and the return to Byzantine spiritual values. He translated from Greek into the Slavic language the Greek manuscripts of niptic authors on spiritual questions, which were named Dobrotolubije (Philokalia in Greek), and which created the prerequisites for understanding the true meaning of human life. Despite the fact that niptic authors addressed their texts primarily to monks, their advice is useful for any person who seeks the path to spiritual perfection. These experienced ascetics became important leaders in the spiritual life of monks and laymen over many centuries, because they strengthened the morals of Christians with their wise teachings, which had a positive impact on the whole society. The monks of the hesychast tradition still profess the “highest values of Byzantine Christian culture” (Pirivatrič 2019, 52) and emphasize the importance of purifying a person from passions, because the basic feature of Byzantine hesychasm, based on Byzantine anthropology, is the effort to achieve human perfection through the cultivation of virtues through asceticism and spiritual vigilance (νήψις).

Research on the Athos state and monasticism

The history of Mount Athos as a monastic centre dates back to the 9th century, which is evidenced by the fact that in 843 the monks of Mount Athos participated in the council convened by Empress Theodora. An important monastic centre gradually began to form at Athos, where Byzantine hesychasm was cultivated. Monasteries became centres of spiritual and cultural life, and their influence spread beyond the borders of Athos. Monastery libraries quickly began to fill up with liturgical, theological, historical and other books. Transcription and translation workshops were established in the monasteries of Athos, where translations into various languages were created. Three Slavic monasteries, in particular, became the centres of Slavic translation activities (Iljinskiy 1908. Tachiaos 1978. Tachiaos 1964), and had a great influence on the Slavic countries: the Bulgarian Zograf Monastery, founded in 973, the Russian Saint Panteleimon Monastery, founded in the 10th century, and the Serbian Hilandar Monastery, founded in 1197.

On the basis of preserved testimonies, it is possible to follow the translation activities of Bulgarian and Serbian monks who translated texts from the Greek language. For example, the critical edition of 95 Slavic documents from the period 1230 – 1734 consists of 39 documents in the Bulgarian or Serbian language and 56 documents of Moldavian or Wallachian origin written in the Bulgarian language, which is strongly influenced by the syntax of the Romanian language and the terminology used in the two Transdanubian principalities. The Serbian and Bulgarian documents included in this edition are kept in the archives of the Karakallou, Konstamonitou, Agiou Pavlou, Vatopedi and Xenophontos monasteries at Athos (Pavlikianov 2018).

Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos often sought spiritual peace on Mount Athos, which he visited as a young student in the second year of university studies. In various monasteries on the Holy Mountain, he spent endless hours studying archives and manuscripts, which is also reflected in his scholarly research of the Athos state and monasticism. He was the first to compile a catalogue of Slavic manuscripts of Saint Panteleimon Monastery on the Mount Athos (Chados 2023) and wrote several books and articles related to the Athos environment. The most important of them include: a) *The Georgian Question (1868 – 1918). Contribution to the history of Russian politics in Mount Athos* (Tachiaos 1962b), b) *Slavic manuscripts of the Saint Panteleimon monastery (Rossikon) on Mount Athos* (Tachiaos 1981), c) *Mount Athos and European Community* (Tachiaos 1993), d) *Vasilios Grigorovich Barsky. The marvelous monasteries of Mount Athos* (Tachiaos 1998), e) *Unknown Athonite neomartyrs* (Tachiaos 2006a), f) *Byzantium, Slavs, Mount Athos. Reflection on reciprocal*

relationships and influences (Tachiaos 2006b), g) *The Athonite monk Maximus the Greek. The last of the Byzantines in Russia* (Tachiaos 2008b), h) *In the Shadow of Athos* (Tachiaos 2016).

Professor Tachiáos observes that the destruction of Byzantine power in Constantinople after the fourth Crusade in 1204 meant a significant weakening of the Byzantine emperor's authority. The consequence was that the Slavic monarchs started to protect the Holy Mount Athos and its monasteries. The Serbian king and brother of Saint Sava, Stefan the First-Crowned (1217 – 1228), for example, issued documents securing the ownership of the Hilandar Monastery. A similar strategy was chosen by the Bulgarian Tsar Ivan Asen II (1218 – 1241), who called himself the Tsar of the Bulgarians and Greeks (Tachiaos 2006b, 456-457). The Serbian king Stefan Dušan (1331 – 1355) confirmed the old rights of the monastic state of Athos at the request of its monks.

This protection of Mount Athos by Slavic rulers did not only concern Slavic monasteries, but also extended to Greek monasteries. The ethnically diverse Holy Mountain thus became a place that was not only under the protection of the Byzantine emperor, but also under the protection of Slavic rulers. Since the 14th century, this protection has been generally accepted.

The interventions of the Slavic rulers in the organizational structure of the Holy Mount Athos did not affect the spiritual life of monks, which was focused on constant prayer and observance of God's commandments. Monks of Mount Athos of various nationalities tried to preserve the intact Orthodox tradition and solve various issues related to the Holy Mountain together. This place has become a unifying point for monks of all nationalities, as Tachiáos shows in his studies.

Byzantine-Slavic Relations

Relations between Russia and Mount Athos go back to the 10th century. The first evidence of the existence of a Russian monastery on the Holy Mountain dates from 1016 (Lemerle 1970). Based on historical information about the life of the Russian monk Antony Pechersky, who in the 11th century lived for a while on Mount Athos as a hermit, it is clear that Russian monks were more attracted to the eremitic than to the cenobitic way of life. It is not known what *typikon*³ was used in the oldest Russian monastery on the Holy Mountain, in which Antony lived. However, based on the fact that after returning to Russia he preferred the ascetic-hesychast way of life to the cenobitic one, it can be assumed that he did not have personal experience with the monastic *typikon* of Athanasius of Athos from the Great Lavra, which is why he did not bring it with him after returning to Russia. Later, with his blessing, the monk Theodosius became the igumen of the Kiev-Pechersk Lavra⁴, who in this first Russian cenobitic monastery, founded in 1051, introduced the *typikon* of the Studite monastery in Constantinople (Tachiaos 2006b, 452).

Despite the fact that the Holy Mountain *typikon* was not introduced in Russia, in *the Kiev-Pechersk Patericon* (Shakhmatov 1897. Abramovich 1902. Olshevskaya – Travnikov 1999. Kosheleva 2009) it is repeatedly emphasized that Antony Pechersky brought the blessing of the Holy Mount Athos to Russia. On the basis of this mention, it can be assumed that respect for the Holy Mountain monasticism became the impetus for the departure of many monks from Russia to the Holy Mountain, where they lived a monastic way of life. Relations between Russia and the Holy Mount Athos began to deepen, as a result of which Greek spirituality was gradually transferred to the Russian cultural environment.

³ A *typikon* contains instructions about the internal order of the monastery.

⁴ The name *Kiev-Pechersk Lavra* is derived from the word пещера, meaning cave. In the beginning it was a complex of caves where monks lived. Currently, these caves are connected into long, narrow underground passages.

It is also necessary to take into account the fact that the Studite typikon was established by the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus Geórgios (Abramovich 1911, 19-20) (around 1065 – around 1076). He was a Greek by origin, who, as a former member of the imperial senate of the Byzantine capital, certainly considered a verified typikon of an ancient monastery more authentic. Moreover, he wanted to keep Russia connected with the Byzantine capital of Constantinople (Tachiaos 2006b, 456).

Relations between Serbia and Mount Athos go back to the 12th century and are associated with the founding of the Serbian monastery of Hilandar in 1198 by the Serbian prince Stefan Nemanja and his son Rastko. When Stefan Nemanja became convinced that the Serbian state had consolidated, he abdicated in 1196 and handed over the throne to his second-born son Stefan (1196-1228). Subsequently, he decided to dedicate his life to God and in the Studenica monastery, which he himself founded, he took the monastic vows and the name of Symeón (Ćorović 1928, 151-175).⁵ Two years later, he went to Mount Athos, where he founded the Hilandar Monastery in 1198 (Živojinović 2000, 101-113). He died on February 13, 1200 and was buried in the Hilandar Monastery (Slijepčević 1962, 60). The co-founder of the monastery was his son Rastko, who took the monastic name Sava (1169-1236),⁶ and later became the first archbishop of the independent Serbian Orthodox Church (Kadas 1989, 57).

Christianization of the Slavs through the missionary work of Constantine-Cyril and Methodius

At a time when Slavic studies was generally taboo in Greece, professor Tachiáos dared to delve into the study of Byzantine-Slavic relations and became a pioneer in this field. Through research, he still considered it his duty to improve Greek-Slavic relations and maintain communication with scholarly centres abroad. Therefore, in 1971, together with a group of professors at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (S. Papadóoulos, M. Setátos, A. Thavóris), he decided to publish the foreign-language academic journal *Cyrrillomethodianum*, which under his editorship reached a high academic level with an international impact and became one of the most important scholarly periodicals in the field. In 1975, he founded the *Hellenic (Greek) Slavistic Society*, which was the official representative body of Greece at the International Committee of Slavists, and he remained its president until 2005. In June 2011, he founded the *Centre for the Study of the Cultural Heritage of Cyril and Methodius*, the aim of which is to promote the study of the life and activities of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Greece and abroad.

Until then, the absence of a similar centre created the impression that the work of these two great personalities, who are respected by the entire Slavic and European world and about whom thousands of books and articles were written in different languages (more than twelve thousand in total), was not sufficiently known in Greece. The centre has a purely scholarly character and ensures cooperation with scientific institutions in Greece and abroad. The aim of the centre is to publish academic and popular books that are devoted to the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Greek world and its relationship with the Slavs. Publications in the Greek language, as well as in Western and Slavic languages, are of a purely academic nature. One of the centre's first publications is a re-edition of the foreign-language academic journal *Cyrrillomethodianum*.⁷

⁵ Symeón's biography was written by his son Sava.

⁶ On the life of Saint Sava, see Domentijan 1938. Teodosije 1984. Velimirovič 2016.

⁷ On the website of the Centre for the Study of the Cultural Heritage of Cyril and Methodius: www.kyrrillos-methodios.gr, 21 volumes of the journal *Cyrrillomethodianum* are freely available.

Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos experienced the multicultural atmosphere of Thessaloniki from childhood and was aware of the significant role of Saints Cyril and Methodius in the Christianization of the Slavic people and the development of written Slavic culture. The respect he showed for both saints led him to dedicate many works to these great personalities, their translation and writing activities, but above all their legacy for the Slavic cultural world. The following studies on the Thessalonica brothers received international recognition: a) *Cyril and Methodius from Thessaloniki. Byzantine education among the Slavs* (Tachiaos 1989), b) *Cyril and Methodius. The founders of ancient Slavic writing* (Tachiaos 1992), c) *The nationality of Cyril and Methodius according to Slavic historical sources and testimony* (Tachiaos 1968), d) *Cyril and Methodius of Thessaloniki. Acculturation of Slavs*. (Tachiaos 1989), e) *Cyril and Methodius. The earliest biographies of the Thessalonian civilizers of the Slavs* (Tachiaos 2008a), g) *The life and work of Cyril and Methodius. The Byzantine cultural legacy to the Slavs* (Tachiaos 2009a).

International recognition of Antónios-Emílios N. Tachiáos

Professor Tachiáos was a corresponding member of the *Academy of Athens*, a foreign member of the *Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts*, the *Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*, the president of the *Institute for the Study of the Aimos Peninsula (Balkans)*, an honorary member of the Union for Slavic and Bulgarian Studies of Bulgaria and the Association of Byzantologists of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg, as well as an honorary chairman of the Union of Greek Slavists. He supported the establishment of the International Institute of the Athonite Legacy in Ukraine and contributed to the establishment of the International Association for the Study and Dissemination of Slavic Cultures at UNESCO. He maintained contacts with leading Slavists in Europe and the USA. He lectured at the American universities of Yale, Arizona State University, University of California in Los Angeles and as a visiting professor at the University of New York (Αντώνιος-Αιμίλιος 2019 – 2020, 11-12). He also lectured at the Institute of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington, D.C., at the Institute for Slavistics at the University of Vienna, at the Krakow Academy of Sciences, the Bulgarian and Serbian Academy of Sciences, and other institutions in Slavic countries. He also participated in organizing international conferences dedicated to the work of Saints Constantine-Cyril and Methodius, from which academic proceedings were subsequently published (Anastasios 1966).

In 2013, on the occasion of the jubilee of 1150 years since the arrival of the Thessaloniki brothers to Great Moravia, he organized an important international conference entitled *Cyril and Methodius: Byzantium and the World of the Slavs*, at which, in addition to Greek experts, participated also researchers from twelve European countries and the USA. This magnificent conference, organized with the support of the Municipality of Thessaloniki, was a culmination of his organizational and scholarly activity. The contributions analysing the significance of the Cyril-Method mission for the cultural development of the Slavic people, published two years later (Delikari 2015), represent an important contribution to the research on Cyril and Methodius and at the same time “*a tribute to the lifelong work of its initiator and organizer, Professor A.-E. N. Tachiáos*” (Vavřínek 2018, 317).

During his lifetime, professor Tachiáos was honored with many titles and awards in Greece and abroad for his work. On September 6, 2013, the Slovak Academy of Sciences awarded him the Slovak Academy of Sciences international prize for outstanding work in the field of social and cultural sciences⁸, and his lecture, which he gave on this occasion, was published in *Historický časopis* (Tachiaos 2014, 385-391).

⁸ See Reports of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Issue 49, number 9, 2013, p. 1.

Although he was internationally recognized as a scholar and became the recipient of many awards, he considered his journey as a person, husband, father, grandfather, brother, uncle, friend and a teacher to be more important. He always spoke with love and pride about his family, friends and students. He was aware that his rich experience aroused the interest of the listeners, whom as a teacher he was able to inspire. He knew how to reflect on what he experienced, and he wrote about his past in the books *Recalling Memories* (Tachiaos 2017), *In the Shadow of Athos* (Tachiaos 2016), *My Russian world. Memories – Reminiscences – Experiences* (Tachiaos 2015) and others. In these publications, he described in detail different periods of his life, and the principles and morals that his family taught him in his childhood. He also wrote about his loved ones who influenced his life, as well as the personalities who helped to shape his professional career. His scholarly activity was in complete harmony with his personal life.

Professor Antónios-Emílios N. Tachíaos died on April 10, 2018 in Thessaloniki.

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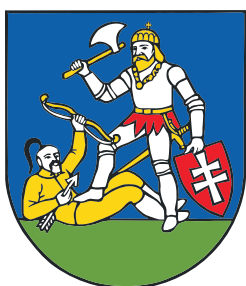
Cyril and Methodius
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