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The Macedonian Dispute in the Activity of the Metropolitan of Thessalonica Anthimos

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The article focuses on a context rarely exposed yet significant for the analysis how the Macedonian Dispute is perceived by the Greek public opinion. The aim of the text is to show the position of the representatives of the Orthodox Church of Greece with a special attention dedicated to the Metropolitan of Thessalonica Anthimos. The extensive quotations from different statements by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Church and the Metropolitan of Thessalonica (sermons, interviews, publications) are interpreted. The idea is to help the reader with no or a weak command of Greek language to show the background, shape and key concepts of Greek criticism regarding Macedonian issue. Moreover, the aim is to show the influence of sacral and secular sphere over the politics.

KEYWORDS: Greece; Macedonia; orthodox Church; political orthodoxy; Anthimos Metropolitan of Thessalonica

The aim of this text is to present and explain the stance of the Greek Orthodox Church on the Macedonian Dispute¹ using an expressive example of Anthimos, the Metropolitan of Thessalonica. It mirrors a part of the narrative on the subject present in Greece but only rarely accessible in detail to the wider public. This narrative is explicitly vocalized in the sermons of the Metropolitan and interviews with him (Μακρής 2011).

¹ The term refers to the ongoing political conflict between Greece and Macedonia over the name, national symbols and constitution of Republic of Macedonia which in 1991 declared its independence from SFR Yugoslavia. In a simplified view the entire dispute can be explained as an aftermath of Greek fears that the application of the name Macedonia by the new independent neighbor would imply its support of irredentist tendencies among the Slavic minority inhabiting Northern parts of Greece, and would be a manifestation of intent to change the borderlines between Greece and Yugoslavia – now: Republic of Macedonia (Roudometof 2002: 29–36).

1. Anthimos, the Metropolitan of Thessalonica

Anthimos is one of 81 diocese bishops with the rank of metropolitan, and one of 36 metropolitans of northern Greece and major islands (commonly known as the so-called “New Lands“, incorporated into Greece after the Balkan Wars²).

He was born as Dionysios Roussas in Salmoni Pyrgou in Elida, in 1934. He studied at the Faculty of Philosophy and the Faculty of Law at the University of Athens, where he graduated in 1957 working also as an assistant at the Chair of Byzantine Philology. Anthimos (Dionysios) also served in the army as an Officer Designate in the Hellenic Air Force. At the same time, he signed up to study at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Athens, where he got a degree in 1963. From 1959, he worked as a teacher and the Head of Gymnasium of “Elliniki Paideia”. In 1964, he became a deacon; in 1965, as a presbyter he took the office of Archimandrite serving in Athens until 1974. In 1968, he became Head of Scholar Theology Foundation and taught future clergy until 1974, when he became episcopo. After 1968, became responsible for the publishing house Apostoliki Diakonia.

In 1974, Anthimos was elected to a post of the Metropolitan of Alexandroupoli and in 2004 he was chosen as a Metropolitan of Thessalonica. As one of the most prolific writers among contemporary Greek bishops, while serving as a Metropolitan in Alexandroupoli, he was also publishing the church periodical “Gnorimia” (“Knowledge”) until 2004. From 2003, he has been publishing the bi-monthly periodical “Evlogija” (“Blessing”) (Ιερά Μητρόπολη Θεσσαλονίκης, n.d.).

The choice of Father Anthimos as a representative for the present paper has been dictated by several reasons. Firstly, although his jurisdiction is limited (he is not in ecclesiastical charge of the entire region of Greek Macedonia, but only the diocese of Thessaloniki), the fact that he is a spiritual leader in Thessalonica is meaningful.

²Although all “New Lands” are under the nominal and spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, the supreme authority is implemented by the Church of Greece with the Holy Synod, presided by the Archbishop of Athens. The Standing Synod deals with administration issues and consists of the Primate and 12 rotating bishops, six of them representatives of the “New Lands”.

2. Methodological choices

Thessalonica holds a very strong position on the Greek *mental map*, symbolically being called the “co-capital” (right after Athens). Moreover, it is a very important city in Greece in every aspect: that of education, culture, tradition, political and economic significance. Unlike for example Athens, Thessalonica is historically and culturally meaningful for several cultures and narratives: Bulgarian, Macedonian, Turkish, and Jewish, to name only a few (there is an extensive literature on that subject, with maybe one of the most prominent recent examples of *Salonica, City of Ghosts* (Mazower 2004)).

Father Anthimos kept the issue of Macedonia and, respectively, that of Republic of Macedonia, at the key point of his interests. The keywords used by him can serve for mental mapping of terms, places and historical figures that are important in the Greek discourse on Macedonia. Among those are “Thermopylae”, “Alexander” and “Philip”, “ancient Greece” and “Byzantium”, “Parthenon” and “Agia Sophia”, “Greek language” and “Helleno-Christian civilization”, “history” and “Helleno-Orthodox tradition”, “Saint Paul the Apostle” and “Cyril and Methodius”.

From methodological point of view, the most useful category is therefore that of *realms of memory*. The scientific career of the term was possible due to Pierre Nora (LeGoff, Nora, 1986; Nora, 1986–1992) *Faire de l'histoire* and *Les lieux de mémoire*, described the history of creation of *realms of memory* understood as artifacts and events carrying a respective meaning commonly understood by the society, focusing on the reasons and ways of commemoration, research on historiography and collective memory (*mémoire collective*), and finally, on the role the realms and research on them plays in shaping the widely understood history of mentality of a people. A Polish author, Andrzej Szpociński, suggested that *realms of memory* are a research program upon events and figures from the past, as well as cultural production, communicating collective values and identity (Szpociński 1983)³. Szpociński, fascinated by archives, combatant societies, groups of researchers working on discovery of history, etc. focuses on

³ For details on methodological use of *realms of memory* regarding the Balkans, and that of Balkan *mental map* see also: (Sujecka 2006; Sujecka 2008).

mnemotechnic practices. This is also the way how I understand the cultural production (sermons, interviews, publications) of Father Anthimos upon Macedonia: as a commemoration technique, utilized in the nationalized and politically involved discourse of the institution, which he, as a Metropolitan, represents.

Considering the fixed image of Macedonia established in late 19th century, and the 20th century development of the Greek educational discourse on this subject, the dispute could also be perceived as a result of not only fear, but also of common inability to understand the stance of a newly formed neighboring country (Dragouni 2013). As a result, Greek state demanded that the Republic of Macedonia change the preamble of its constitution, national symbols (sun of Vergina), symbols referring to the word *Macedonia* and – last but not least – the name of the country so that it doesn't include the aforementioned word. The dispute is being justified and followed by intellectual and political discourses on both sides of the conflict, attempting to prove the right of individual parties to perceive the historical and cultural Macedonian heritage as their own.

Although the ongoing dispute between Greece and Macedonia – which prevents the latter country from accessing the structures of the EU, NATO, and its stable, quick development – is common knowledge, rarely is the discourse itself presented. It may seem beneficial, especially for specialists in Slavic Studies, to get acquainted with the Greek narrative built around Macedonia: both the Greek region of Macedonia⁴, comprising three administrative regions of Greece (part of East Macedonia and Thrace region with Thessalonica as its capital, Central Macedonia and Western Macedonia), and the Republic of Macedonia, unrecognized by Greece under its constitutional name.

⁴This region is also known in Bulgarian and post-Yugoslav (therefore also: Macedonian) context as Aegean Macedonia in differentiation to Vardar Macedonia (encompassing the territory of the Republic of Macedonia) and Pirin Macedonia (part of Bulgaria). Greek (both scholarly and popular) context does not use this term, describing the territory of *Aegean Macedonia* as simply: Macedonia.

3. The position of the Greek Orthodox Church

Position of the Greek Orthodox Church has been very strong since the very emergence of Greek modern country. Article 1 of the first Greek constitution (Προσωρινό Πολίτευμα της Ελλάδος 1822: 1–2) states that Greeks are “all autochthones that believe in Christ”. This is an obvious repetition of the Ottoman understanding of “nationalities” as being confession-based entities, here having an additional territorial limitation.

Nowadays, the Greek Orthodox Church sees itself as a repository of Hellenism during the so called Turkocracy (the period of Ottoman rule), especially during the years of struggle to establish the Modern Greek state (Chrysoloras 2003: 4–5). Not only does the Church function as a state-funded institution, approving political decisions of ruling parties in exchange for privileges, but it also serves as a repository of Greek tradition, identity, spirit, nation and race (*genos*). Maintaining a belief that it possesses God’s legitimization to speak, the Church happens to stress the actual divine message to a lesser extent than it does political ones. The most recent Constitution uses reference to “the Holy and Consubstantial and Indivisible Trinity” in its preamble, the President of the Republic swears an oath to it, and the Holy Republic of Athos retains large autonomy within the Greek state (Constitution of the Republic of Greece 1975: Preamble; Art. 25, 125). It is worth notifying, that in 1991, 98,2% of Greeks considered themselves to be members of the Greek Orthodox Church (cf. Chrysoloras 2003: 2).

As early as June 1992, the Greek Synod reacted to the independence of Macedonia by publishing a note against “The usurpation of the name Macedonia by the quasi-state of Skopje”⁵ (Σύνοδος 1992). In the narrative against the Republic, the Synod made a reference to the paradigm describing Slavs as eternal, barbaric enemies of Greeks. This paradigm was constructed by Greek historiography in the late 19th century for the sake of the so-called Macedonian Struggle over Northern territories, and was

⁵The document was issued in 1992 under Archbishop Seraphim. His successors did not change the approach towards Macedonian question. Seraphim held the position of Archbishop in 1974–1998. After his death the same position was held by Christodoulos (1998–2008). Since 2008 the Archbishop of Athens and entire Greece is Ieronimos II (Holy Synod of the Church of Greece).

subsequently strengthened during the Balkan Wars and the Cold War. The same spirit can be found in public speeches made by Anthimos.

4. Stance of Father Anthimos on Macedonia

Since 2004, the Metropolitan of Thessalonica has been particularly active on the issue which he understands in eschatological and moral categories – where “human relation to God emanates on the general condition of the state” (Μακρής 2011; Καλμούκος 2011). Moreover, he is a fierce advocate of a strong presence of the Church in the political matters of the state, including foreign policy⁶. Anthimos’ teachings on the subject of Macedonia were being published by the periodical “Evlogiya” (Ανθιμος 2007b) and in a leaflet about the issue itself (Ανθιμος 2007a). They are also accessible through reruns of his sermons on Greek Public TV (Channel ET3), on the website of the Metropolis of Thessalonica (Ανθιμος 2008) and in interviews given to private TV stations, including the most popular ones (Ανθιμος για “Λάθρο” & Σκόπια 2009a; Ανθιμος στο MEGA 2009b). The Metropolitan concludes: “The subsequent equation applies to all of us, Greeks”:

Wherever is the name Macedonia = Greece
 Wherever is the name Greece = Macedonia
 Now the name Macedonia belongs only to Greece.

Such politicized Orthodoxy was strengthened by a suprapolitical form of the so-called Helleno-Christian nationalism (see also Gourgouris 1996; Mackridge 1998; Chrysoloras 2003), which was legitimizing the state authority and was a potent tool for differentiating Greeks from non-Greeks. Even today, the Orthodoxy that encompasses ritualized praxis of Modern Greek society holds a position so strong that it is able to form an alternative to other ideologies, and it is the Helleno-Christian narrative that

⁶When asked what he thinks about the fact that the Vatican acknowledged the name “Republic of Macedonia”, he answered: “The stance of the Archbishop that as the Church we should not mix into that national subject is unacceptable (...) and wrong (...). In my opinion a national issue is never outside the interest of the Church. (...) just because the Archbishop has a different opinion, it doesn’t mean we will stop talking” (Μακρής 2011).

is the dominant form of national ideology in Greek political culture and public discourse. It is only in this context that an otherwise startling official statement issued by an Orthodox Metropolitan openly referring to pagan traditions may be fully understood:

Here in Thessalonica, let us think about the history and remember our heroic ancestors from the Classical times, the great creators of philosophy, poetry, fine arts, patriotism, sports, who despite their internal antagonisms were able to maintain a peaceful discussion; they were using the language that we, Greeks, inherited and use until today – sure of nationality that descended from them. The house of twelve pagan Greek gods on the top of the highest mountain of our Macedonia, the Olympus, together with the Olympic games; are an element of national identity of Greeks from Sparta, Athens, Boeotia and our Macedonia. This identity cannot be doubted or undermined. Philip, Alexander the Great and the diadochs are indisputably our ancestors: with same language, back then, same religion, and same civilization. What has to be known by every Greek patriot? We are all Greeks and we are all Macedonians. But we are also Thracians, Epirots, Thessalians, Boeots, and Athenians, and Moraits, and Cretenians and all the Islanders. Greeks from every part of Greek land... (Ανθιμος 2007a: 1–2).

The words “We are all Macedonians” underline a mystical bonding of a Greek local with his factual and spiritual fatherland. Particular regions fit a *pars pro toto* scheme of imagery, and are thus an expression of spiritual unity of Greeks.

The Metropolitan consciously addresses his words to (Slavo-)Macedonian minority and inhabitants of Republic of Macedonia, whom he naturally calls “Skopians” instead of Macedonians:

I am telling them: brothers, neighbor Skopians, please accept what Greece is telling you and I tell you, we believe that after you denounce the usage of name Macedonia, all your problems will be solved and you will have a state with all the rights and seats in International Organizations that belong to it. If you don't do it – it's only worse for you, I hope God will inspire you. We will be praying for justice, for good relations with our neighbors, and that our fatherland remains strong (...) Ανθιμος για “Λάθρο” & Σκόπια (2009a).

The rest of his speech underlines the unbreakable bond between Macedonia and “Greekness”. This bond seems to be mentally anchored in the aforementioned, Helleno-Christian national narrative, supported by the Greek Orthodox Church. An ahistorical reference to Antiquity provided by Anthimos, who tries to prove the exclusive affiliation of Macedonia with the Greek culture, may serve as proof:

Ancient Greek writers: Herodotus, Polibius, Ajschylus, Flavius Arrian, Strab, Isocrates, Plutarch and others confirm the Greekness of Macedonia. The Greek language that spread together with civilizing mission of Alexander the Great in Europe, Asia and Africa, in archeological sites of Dion, Vergina, Pella, Amfipolis, Ajani, Sindo, Herakleia, Trebenica and others, as well as Macedonians' participation in the Olympic Games and Delphic Amphictyony prove that wherever Greece is, there is Macedonia (Ανθίμος 2007a: 3).

The argument of Macedonian participation in the Olympic Games, or rather the story behind it, could rather serve as a proof that Macedonians were not Greeks – or at least were not considered to be Greeks by the Ancient Greeks themselves. Also, their participation in the council of the Great Amphictyony League was not so much a consequence of identifying “Macedonia” with “Greece”, but rather of imperial politics, expansion and de facto gradual overruling of Greek poleis by Philip II – Anthimos however seems to ignore this fact. The last statement: “wherever Greece is, there is Macedonia”, strongly excluding any Macedonian value from a non-Greek context, confirms the previous poetics in its *pars pro toto* scheme. His last argument refers solely to Christian arguments and heritage, and the holy figure of the St. Paul the Apostle who

came to Macedonia, that is, to Philippi and to Thessalonica. He wrote one letter to Philippians and two to Thessalonians. Those letters were written in Greek language and addressed to Greeks-Macedonians. Where were the Skopians back then? They did not exist (Ανθίμος 2007a: 3).

This ahistorical approach to the concept of own nation and history abolishes the right of Slavic neighbors to perform a similar action. Further on, Anthimos tries to explain that “Skopians are telling horrible lies and they have created a fantasy myth about their lineage. They are mainly Slavs who came to Balkans in 6th–7th century”. And from the “historical times when Greek Macedonians lived and our Macedonia existed, until the moment when Slavs came to Balkans, 1000 years have passed” (Ανθίμος 2007a: 3).

It should not be expected though that the Metropolitan would stop at ridiculing Macedonian claims to ancient heritage. The battle isn't fought only for the sake of gaining moral superiority over the adversary. The Slavs are perceived as a substantial threat to Greek integrity and further on he explains why (Slavo-Macedonians) are such a danger in his opinion:

They want the name Macedonia so it would become a deep root of their local, national origin. On their leaflets with maps they describe their Macedonia as a land covering today's Skopje⁷ and the entire Greek Macedonia, from Florina⁸ to river Nestos⁹, with access to the Aegean (*Ανθιμος* 2007b: 3).

The hostile actions of (Slavo-Macedonians) have been already undertaken, according to Anthimos. He enumerates them, ending his list with a dramatic call to his compatriots:

Skopians gave their airport name of Alexander the Great, and the airport in Ohrid – name of St. Paul the Apostle. The Christians from Skopje baptize their children using predominantly names such as Philip or Alexander. Their tendency to plot invasive plans at expense of our fatherland is already visible. Wake up Greeks! (*Ανθιμος* 2007b: 2).

The patterns of rhetoric used by Anthimos are strong and simple, if not simplified, referring to realms of memory already implanted on the Greek mental map through historiography and popular press discourse. Even if the leaflets published by Anthimos are not far reaching, his ideas are being broadcasted by the public (ET3) and private (i.e. MEGA) television: the first one through retransmissions of the sermons, the second media for example through interviews with Anthimos. The call to Greeks to “wake up” can be understood as a reference to the narratives of internal and external threat, ideological alarm, or cultural damage done to a group used researched by Dušan Kečmanović (1996: 61–67).

This – somewhat – hysterical call (“Wake up Greeks!”) is followed by an explanation, that Anthimos does not fight against the state of Macedonia, nor does he require anything from Macedonians (naturally, both not named in this way). He merely “expects some respect for historical truth” and appeasement that (Slavo-)Macedonians “would refrain from any vicious thoughts against Greece. Macedonia belongs solely to Greeks” (*Ανθιμος* 2007b: 2). Therefore, he underlines once again (following official narrative of Greek foreign policy), that until the issue of naming will not be solved, in a way excluding any possibility of FYRoM using the name “Macedonia”, Greek state should obstruct by veto any admission of the Republic to the

⁷ Here Anthimos means the territory of the Republic of Macedonia rather than its capital city.

⁸ Maced. Lerin (Лерин).

⁹ Maced./Bulg. Mesta (Места).

structures of EU or NATO. In addition, the Metropolitan sends a clearly political message to the international community in his leaflet:

Skopje got the name Macedonia in 1944 from Stalin and Tito with the aim of building a state that would encompass our whole Macedonia with access to the Aegean. Luckily, thanks to love for the fatherland and the sacrifice of Greek Patriots, their plans have not succeeded.

We, Greeks from entire world, expect that USA and EU will confirm the right of Greece to the name of our Macedonia, since our fatherland stood by their side during bloody fights for freedom and democracy. Let the Skopians choose any name for their own fatherland, but not the name: Macedonia. Macedonia belongs to Greeks, Greeks to whom Skopians owe so much (Ανθίμος 2007a: 4).

Apparently the arguments of the Metropolitan have found understanding among the Greek Diaspora of America, as in 2008 Anthimos was given the Aristotelean Award, established by the Thessalonikean Society of New York to distinguish people who “fight for the solution of the FYRoM name issue” (ΣΑΕ 2008) .

5. The metropolitan Anthimos and Greek politicians

In Greece Anthimos has come in conflict with leftist politicians of a rather local or marginal impact – however, it was not over the Macedonian issue (Kalmouki 2014). He has been criticized on the subject only once, after he himself expressed irredentist claims towards the Republic of Macedonia by saying that

Skopians are sly and they lay claims against Greece. We lack a part of Macedonia that they have in Manastir (Bitola) and further on. If any demands appear against us, Greece knows how to claim back its lost realms strewn with the bones of our ancestors (Κρουσάλλη 2007).

This *passus* earned him critique of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, New Democracy based Dora Bakoyanni, and the Prime Minister, Konstantinos Karamanlis¹⁰. The most fervent attack on the Metropolitan came from the

¹⁰Another controversy was caused by threats of Anthimos from 2011, saying that if a (Slavo-)Macedonian radio station is established in Florina (Lerin), he will organize a group

Greek Communist Party KKE First Secretary of that time, Aleka Papariga, who called him a dangerous chauvinist (Βήμα 2007). However, for many years KKE remained a minority party which, while having a recognizable, strong voice, does not have a real impact on the politics of the country.

From the official biography of the Metropolitan it can be assumed that he has close ties with the former leader of ND and ex-Prime Minister of Greece, Konstantinos Karamanlis, and also at least officially, Anthimos tries to maintain relatively good relations with the current Prime Minister of Greece, Antonis Samaras, also based in ND (Nikolouli 2014). In turn the ND-based Mayor of Thessaloniki, Vasilis Papageorgopoulos, who expressed his admiration for the wisdom of the Metropolitan in the Macedonian issue (Ρομφαία 2007)¹¹. Other local ND deputies of lower hierarchy also attend religious rituals performed by the Metropolitan, for example Stavros Kalafatis, who participated in the consecration of a new school (Ρομφαία 2014).

The incident, which probably best illustrates the entanglement of political and religious realm, is the visit of ND deputy Dora Bakoyanni in November 2009 (right after she stepped down from a position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in October 2009), to the Church of Holy Trinity. It was the last Sunday of the election campaign, and the Metropolitan welcomed her to the church by ordering the mass of gathered people to applaud Bakoyanni (Ρομφαία 2009).

Anthimos in turn criticized the President of the socialist party PASOK, Evangelos Venizelos, for being too soft in the negotiation process with the Republic of Macedonia over the name issue (Αγιορειτικό 2014), and became subject of criticism from other PASOK-oriented politicians (Ρομφαία 2007).

As of 2014, the Metropolitan still continues his ethnocentric sermons commenting on political matters. During the most recent political debate over the Macedonian name dispute, Venizelos, currently the Minister of Foreign Affairs, addressed Anthimos in an official letter, in which he

of people who will rent buses, smash and burn the building hosting it (*ΑΝΘΙΜΟΣ: ΘΑ ΚΑΝΟΥΜΕ ΓΥΑΛΙΑ-ΚΑΡΦΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΣΚΟΠΙΑΝΟ ΣΤΑΘΜΟ!* 2011).

¹¹The same article mentions support for Anthimos by a populist, rightist party LAOS.

tried to force the Metropolitan to accept the reality of negotiations with the Republic of Macedonia; the Metropolitan's reply was fierce (Δημοκρατία 2014). This exchange of letters, which was covered by the Greek press, has a deeper meaning: Anthimos is indeed a political force in the country: otherwise, at least two Ministers of Foreign Affairs in a row would not be eager to negotiate their position with the Metropolitan. This force is clearly derived from *vox populi*.

This, together with the fact that in 2014 the Greek state still opposes Macedonia's claims to the name, thus blocking the country from entering NATO and EU structures, can speak in favor of the claim that – at least to certain extent – the interrelation of the Church and secular politics in Greece remain entangled and affect its Northern Slavic neighbor directly.

6. Summary

It would be unjust to claim that Anthimos represents the entire Greek secular or ecclesiastical discourse, or even that he reflects the mainstream of Greek public opinion. He clearly represents xenophobic, islamophobic and anti-Semitic, and thus, extremely conservative circles. However the Metropolitan, who clearly states that his sermons are not expressing the official stance of the Church of Greece, has not been officially criticized for his views on Macedonia by the institution itself. Moreover, his teachings remain in strict accordance with the Statement of the Holy Synod from 1992 (which is quoted below) and policy of Greece towards Macedonia (Βαληνάκης, Ντάλης 1996; Βαλντέν 1994). He also has been occasionally supported by other members of the Church of Greece, i.e. Damaskinos the Metropolitan of Maroneia, for his “brave stance” on the “Skopian issue” (Πολυγένης 2007).

A symptomatic although grassroots opinion on the issue can be found on an ecclesiastic forum, where one of the anonymous users, commenting on the stance of Anthimos on the Macedonian Dispute and immediately followed by a comment quoting the official stance of the Holy Synod on the matter, writes:

The question **whether the Church should mingle into politic themes** is indeed an issue. But this here, it is not a simple political problem, but a question of survival of the

state. And always, in the important national subjects the Church would step forth and protect the Nation. What can we do? If apart from being Orthodox people, **we are also Greeks?!** (Antonios 2007)¹².

The aforementioned alignment of Anthimos' narrative with the stance of the Synod (quoted below) is based primarily on the mental constructs and keywords referring to Macedonia and pertaining in Greek popular national discourse, especially anchored in the conservative circles.

The common narrative of Anthimos and that of the Synod is: rejection of the claims of the Republic of Macedonia to the name and cultural heritage of geographic Macedonia. It is often believed that the main ideological cleavage between Republic of Greece and Republic of Macedonia referring to the cultural heritage of the territorial Macedonia focuses on the period of antiquity with the most notable example of the Alexander the Great. However, the example of both publicly expressed opinions of Father Anthimos with its internal logic, and that of the rhetoric of the Greek Synod on the matter of Macedonia show, that there are more figures of memory present here, that serve as anchor for the concept of cultural and historical "Greekness" of Macedonia. Those figures and realms of memory are Saint Paul the Apostle, the city of Salonica itself, and the Saints Cyril and Methodius, who according to Greek interpretation have enlightened the Slavs.

Appendix. The official stance of the Holy Synod

Athens, 5 June 1992

Our Children, by the Lord beloved,
the Holy Synod of the Hierarchy of the Church of Greece has gathered on the 2nd of June of the present year and, considering the existing, for the nation critical situation in which our beloved fatherland found itself – Greece sacrificed to the Holiest God, considering all this evil, and the peaceful struggle of our nation; has unanimously decided to send its message to the Orthodox Greek people wherever possible, for the sake of national unity and bravery.

It is known that our Macedonia has been subject to barbaric raids in the past, and again today the greed of neighbors endangers her by their abuse and usurpation of the

¹²Highlights of the author of quotation.

right to her name, and thus, their questioning of her Greekness. But the Greekness of Macedonia is, as it is known, inseparably connected with the history of Greece, over the past four thousand years until today. Those neighbors undermine the history of Macedonia and distort the historical truth. But Greek blood in the hardship of battles in Macedonian History, and the noble struggle of Greeks to build the days of peace and bliss, have fertilized the Greek Macedonian land throughout entire centuries.

Moreover, through centuries on Macedonian land, the Greek nation has been developed and created: thanks to the nobility of its spirit and the outstanding thought of its philosophers, it has spread to the entire world. From this Macedonian land, from Thessalonica, Saints Cyril and Methodius came, the Holy Apostles who have enlightened the Slavs.

And now, an alien state – which is a product of an atheistic, neighboring regime of Tito – is taking advantage of the general turmoil on the Balkan Peninsula and misappropriating something that does not belong to it – that is, the Greek name of Macedonia, and thus hurts the Greek dignity and historical truth.

It is in vain though, as it is through the many ages and great History that the Greek people know of fighting and defending their rights, and the honor of their nation. In the entire history of Greece, the ancient, that of Middle Ages, and the most recent, it has resisted throughout the ages, with a stern and fierce NO against anyone and any sneaking external threat.

Our beloved fatherland, Greece, has the place of a mother among peoples and nations, and looking at the highest values and her mission for freedom, the righteous and pure struggle. Precisely for this reason, the heroism of the Greek spirit is always present in the – admired above all – greatness of the Greek people (...) (Σύνοδος 1992).

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