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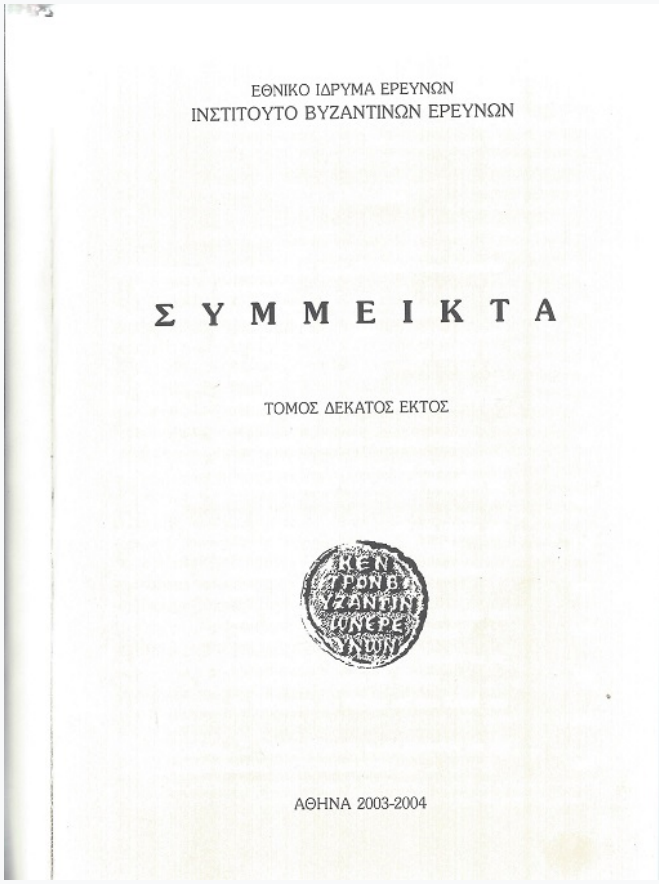

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ΤΟΜΟΣ ΔΕΚΑΤΟΣ ΕΚΤΟΣ

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Some Considerations on the Historiographical Work of Georgios Pachymeris

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STYLIANOS LAMPAKIS

SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE HISTORIOGRAPHICAL WORK OF GEORGIOS PACHYMERIS*

The prominent thirteenth-century scholar Georgios Pachymeris is undoubtedly one of the figures about which a considerable number of articles and studies on various aspects of his historiographical work have been written. In the last three decades a remarkable renewal of the interest on this important text of Byzantine historiography has been noticed, and this is mainly due primarily to the systematic and patient research of the French scholar Albert Failler. It is well known that Failler not only prepared the new complete critical edition of Pachymeris' historiographical work[1], and of its *epitome*[2], but has also written more than thirty papers dealing with chronological, prosopographical and other details of the work[3]. Yet, and in spite of all these studies, various other texts of Pachymeris were only generally known and there did not exist a synthetic contribution on the life and work of the famous Byzantine *πολυίστωρ*[4]. Anyone seeking information about Pachymeris had to consult some (older or recent) general works[5],

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1. *Georges Pachymérès Relations Historiques*, I-II. Édition, Introduction et notes par A. FAILLER, traduction française par V. Laurent, Paris 1984; *Georges Pachymérès Relations Historiques*, III-IV. Édition, traduction française et notes par A. FAILLER, Paris 1999 [CFHB 24/1-4]; V. *Index, tables générales et lexique grec*, Paris 2000.

2. *La version brève des Relations Historiques de Georges Pachymérès* I. *Livres I-VI.* II. *Livres VII-XIII.* Édition du texte grec et commentaire par A. FAILLER, Paris 2001-2002.

3. See the references in S. LAMPAKIS, *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης* (as below, note 10), 237-238.

4. As Krumbacher refers to Pachymeris in K. KRUMBACHER, *Geschichte der byzantinischen Literatur*, Munich 1897, 288.

5. See for example: G. J. VOSSIUS, *De historicis graecis libri tres*, Lyons 1624, and the more recent edition: *De historicis graecis libri tres, auctiores et emendatiores ed. A. Westermann*, Leipsig 1838, liber II, cap. XXIX, pp. 366-367; L. ALLACCI, *De Georgiis*, as appendix in his edition of Georgios Akropolitis: *Georgii Acropolitae magni logothetae historia, Joelis chronographi compendiarium et Johannis Canani narratio de*

or the manuals of the history of Byzantine Literature, Philosophy etc.[6], as well as no more than ten encyclopedic articles[7] which mostly repeat -not always without errors- the outlines sketched by Krumbacher and more recently by Hunger[8], and nothing more. Although Pachymeris' importance in the literary renaissance of the Palaeologan period[9] has been widely acknowledged, there has not been any systematic and synthetic study of his historiographical work, or even of his other writings. For these

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bello constantinopolitano cum versione e notis atque diatriba de Georgiis et eorum scriptis, Paris 1651, 364-372 (later included in J. A. FABRICIUS, *Bibliotheca Graeca. Volumen duodecimum ... editio nova variorum curis emendatior atque auctior curante G. Ch. Harless*, Hamburg 1809, 61-69, and also in *PG* 143, cols. 407-422); M. HANKE, *De byzantinarum rerum scriptoribus graecis liber autorum quinquaginta, qui de Constantinopolitanis aliisque tam civilibus, quam ecclesiasticis antiquitatibus monumenta nobis relinquerunt vitas, scripta, de scriptis iudicia distinctionem in modum recenset*, Leipsig 1677, 566-578; Ch.-E. RUELLE, Deux morceaux inédites de Georges Pachymère sur l'arc-en-ciel, *Annuaire de l'association pour l'encouragement des études grecques en France* 7, 1873, 158-187; F. LITTIG, Die Φιλοσοφία des Georgios Pachymeres, *Programm des K.-Maximilians-Gymnasiums in München fur das Schuljahr 1890/1891*, Munich 1891; G. G. ARNAKIS, George Pachymeres-a Byzantine humanist, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12, 1966-67, 161-167; Maria Elisabetta COLONNA, *Gli storici bizantini dal IV al XV secolo. I. Storici Profani*, Naples 1956, 93-95; G. MORAVCSIK, *Byzantinoturcica*, vol. I, Berlin 1958, 148-150; N. B. TOMADAKIS, *Σύλλαβος βυζαντινῶν μελετῶν καὶ κειμένων*, Athens 1961, 476-477, partial reprint (with a foreword by V. KATSAROS), in IDEM, *Οἱ λόγιοι τοῦ δεσποτάτου τῆς Ἠπείρου καὶ τοῦ βασιλείου τῆς Νικαίας*, Thessaloniki 1993, 112-113); C. N. CONSTANTINIDES, *Higher education in Byzantium in the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries (1204 -ca. 1310)* [Cyprus Research Centre. Texts and Studies of the History of Cyprus 11], Nicosia 1982, 61-64; N. G. WILSON, *Scholars of Byzantium*, London 1983, 175; Sophia MERGIALI, *L'enseignement et les lettres pendant l'époque des Paléologues (1261-1453)* [Ἑταιρεία τῶν Φίλων τοῦ Λαοῦ. Κέντρον Ἐρεύνης Βυζαντίου 5], Athens 1996, 32-33.

6. KRUMBACHER, *Geschichte*, 288-291; H. HUNGER, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, vol. 1, Munich 1978, 447-453 and passim; B. TATAKIS, *La Philosophie Byzantine*, Paris 1949, 239-240 (= *Ἡ Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία*, Athens 1976, 222-224 =*Byzantine Philosophy*. Translated, with introduction, by N. J. MOUTAFAKIS, Indianapolis-Cambridge 2002, 197-198).

7. See: V. LAURENT, Pachymère, *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique* 11, 1713-1718; F. DÖLGER, *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* 7, 1962, 1332; S. KOUROUSIS, *Θρησκευτικὴ καὶ Ἠθικὴ Ἐγκυκλοπαίδεια* 10, 238; *PLP*, fasz. 11, no. 22186; *Tusculum Lexikon griechischer und lateinischer Autoren des Altertums und des Mittelalters* 592; C. HANNICK, *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, fasz. 6, 1609; A. M. T(ALBOT), *ODB*, vol. 3, 1550; L. BENAKIS, *Παγκόσμιο Βιογραφικὸ Λεξικὸ* 8, 204 (= IDEM *Βυζαντινὴ Φιλοσοφία. Κείμενα καὶ Μελέτες*, Athens 2003, 661-662); A. SOLIGNAC, *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* 76-77, 16-17; I. G. LEONTIADES, *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexicon* VI, 1421-1423 and in the site http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/p/pachymere_shtml).

8. See above, note 6.

9. See among others, the recent synthetic treatment of the period by E. FRYDE, *The early Palaeologan Renaissance (1261-c.1360)*, Leiden 2000.

reasons I decided to look into the complexities of Pachymeris' literary *œuvre*[10], and to develop below the following considerations.

The historiographical work of the author does not provide any significant details about his personal data[11], most of which can be found in the preamble of the work. This προοίμιον certainly follows the traditional formulas of literary composition[12], but still, it gives us a hint about the author's character and attitudes[13]. It is remarkable, for example, that Pachymeris declares himself as being *Κωνσταντινουπολίτης τὸ ἀνέκαθεν*[14]: we must emphasize that the author, well known for his preference in atticising phrases and expressions, here he prefers to use a rather vernacular form, «*Κωνσταντινουπολίτης*»[15], and not the archaic «*Βυζάντιος*»[16]. This is indicative of an emotionally loaded attitude towards the lost imperial capital of Constantinople and of the expected *reconquista*.

In relation to the title of the work, *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* in Greek or *Relations Historiques* as it is translated in the new critical edition by Failler, we can observe that such a formulation is not to be found anywhere in the titles of other works of Byzantine historiography. Why did Pachymeris choose this type? First of all, it echoes clearly the Platonic phrase *συγγραφικῶς ἐρεῖν* (*Phaedo*, 102 d), that is, to describe with precision and exactitude, like an «author»[17]. We must bear in mind that Pachymeris was also copying Platonic works, some of which not only he transcribed, but also

10. See now S. LAMPAKIS, *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης, πρωτέκδικος καὶ δικαιοφύλαξ. Εἰσαγωγικὸ δοκίμιο*, [EIE/IBE, Μονογραφίες 5], Athens 2004.

11. See the references in LAMPAKIS, *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης*, 21-38.

12. See mainly H. LIEBERICH, *Studien zu den Proömien in der griechischen und byzantinischen Geschichtsschreibung*, I-II, Munich 1898-1900. Cf. R. GUILLAND, *Essai sur Nicéphore Gregoras. L'homme et l'oeuvre*, Paris 1926, 232-234; A. KARPOZILOS, *Βυζαντινοὶ Ἱστορικοὶ καὶ Χρονογράφοι (4ος-7ος αἰ.)* Athens 1997, 264-268.

13. More details in S. LAMPAKIS, *Ἐλπίζειν τὰ χείρω καὶ ἔτι ξυμβαίνειν.* Ἡ παραλλαγὴ τῆς Θουκυδίδειας πρόγνωσης στὸ προοίμιο τῶν *Συγγραφικῶν Ἱστοριῶν* τοῦ Γεωργίου Παχυμέρη, *Ἐνθύμησις Ν. Μ. Παναγιωτάκη*, Herakleion 2000, 371-377.

14. *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* I.1, ed. FAILLER, (as in note 2), I. 23, 2.

15. Comparing this to a similar case we may recall the more vernacular expression «*πολίτης*» that Pachymeris employs when referring to his father's descendance from Constantinople: *ὡς γὰρ πολῖται ὄντες ἐκεῖνοι τὰ οἴκοι ἐζήτουν καί, εἴ ποθι ἅλωσις τῆς πατρίδος* συμβαίν: *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* II.27, ed. FAILLER, (as in note 2), I, 203, 13-16.

16. As it is the case e.g. with the ninth-century scholar Νικήτας ὁ Βυζάντιος or with the famous fifteenth-century scholar Μιχαὴλ Ἀποστόλης, also known as ὁ Βυζάντιος.

17. Cfr. H. G. LIDDELL - R. SCOTT - H. St. JONES, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1940[9], s.v. *συγγραφικός*.

commented upon them[18]; so, we may assume that he was well acquainted with the work of the ancient Greek philosopher, and his way of expression. Furthermore, throughout the work, Pachymeris, when referring to himself, uses the words *ὁ συγγραφεύς, ὁ συγγραψάμενος, ὁ συγγράφων,* or other similar expressions[19], something that is undoubtedly not accidental, since the first meaning of the words *συγγραφὴ* and *συγγραφεύς,* has to do exactly with the description of facts contemporary to the writer. The title *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* then means «histories of the author» exactly in that first sense of the word and in my opinion, choosing this form Pachymeris wanted to stress once again something that he has already stated in the *prooemium* of his work: namely, that he will narrate accurately and in a truthfull way events that took place during his own lifetime[20].

As for the general character and the tone adopted in these «histories of the author», the opinion of Krumbacher[21] according to which Pachymeris places great emphasis on doctrinal and theological issues, finding in this way a kind of consolation for the unpleasing political situation of his time, is frequently repeated in the recent bibliography, but may be considered as somehow misleading. Hunger's opinion differs slightly as he thinks -like others- that Pachymeris writes as a client of the patriarchate, but nothing more[22]. This may be partly true, but it may also lead to erroneous opinions with reference to the value of the *Histories* as a historical source.

Any discussion of the matter requires first of all the use of statistics. In the first part of the *Histories*, the six books on the reign of Michael VIII, on a total number of 194 chapters, only 60 deal with theological issues, that is, less than one third of them. In addition to that, most of them refer specifically to the so called Schisme of the Arseniates[23]. The second part of the work, the seven books on the reign of Andronikos II, gives a slightly different picture. To be more precise, the seventh and

18. See details in LAMPAKIS, *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης,* 181-184.

19. See M. HINTERBERGER, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz* [Wiener Byzantinistische Studien 22], Vienna 1999, 300.

20. Bearing all these in mind, it seems that the rendering of *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* as *Relations historiques* does not transmit the meaning of the Greek phrase, since it does not regard ἱστορικαὶ συγγραφαὶ or ἀναφοραὶ but exactly the opposite: so the title «authorial histories» would be much more adequate.

21. KRUMBACHER, *Geschichte,* 288.

22. HUNGER, *Profane Literatur,* I, 447

23. See P. GOUNARIDES, *Τὸ κίνημα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν,* Athens 1999; Ἀναστασία ΚΟΝΤΟΓΙΑΝΝΟΠΟΥΛΟΥ, Τὸ σχίσμα τῶν Ἀρσενιατῶν. Συμβολὴ στὴ μελέτη τῆς πορείας καὶ τῆς φύσης τοῦ κινήματος, *Βυζαντιακὰ* 8, 1999, 177-235.

the eighth books of the *Συγγραφικαὶ Ἱστορίαι* contain a total of 70 chapters, 53 of which deal directly with the troubles in the Church during the first years of Andronikos' government, when, as a result of a completely different policy regarding the problem of the ecclesiastical union, there was a continuous changing of patriarchs, five in total, in a time span of nine years. As for the rest five books, only 30 chapters out of 172, deal exclusively with ecclesiastical matters. Most of these refer to the troubles caused by the austerity of the patriarch Athanasios Ist.

At that time the circumstances were such, that led Pachymeris to describe in detail the crucial ecclesiastical problems of his time, which, as I proposed above, were directly linked to the political developments. However, the author devotes on these matters only 143 chapters, out of a total number of 456 chapters of the thirteen books of his historical narrative. It is evident that the part devoted to ecclesiastical problems is not disproportionate as far as its length and place are concerned in the entire narration (a position that was previously held). To put it in another way, Pachymeris would have been out of place if he had not paid attention to these facts exactly, and if he had ignored them.

One more point. Behind a simple and unembellished narrative we can clearly discern how cautiously Pachymeris avoids encomiastic and laudatory expressions when referring to Michael VIII. But with reference to Andronikos II and his son Michael IX, he seems much more cautious and moderate in his criticism, recognizing the difficulties they were confronted with. Certainly this fact is related to his friendship and collaboration with the son and the grandson of Michael VIII.

In any case, Pachymeris conceived his narrative as a whole, as a complete and continuous account of 49 years of history, from 1258 up to 1307[24], when Andronikos also completed the forty-ninth year of his age. That coincidence is not accidental. It has to do with numerical considerations, since 49 is the number 7 multiplied by 7, a number with particular meaning in popular belief[25]. It was exactly in the year 1307 that some events took place, which, according to Pachymeris, seemed to promise something better for the empire, so the author decided to end his narrative exactly with that year, believing, as it seems, that the choice of this number would perhaps contribute to the long-awaited improvement of the state affairs.

Certainly we must keep in mind that Pachymeris was not only a historian. He was one of the most proliferate writers in the history of Byzantine literature. We shall not

24. On this topic see A. FAILLER, Chronologie et composition dans l'histoire de Georges Pachymère, *RÉB* 38, 1980, 85.

25. In general see J. E. KALITSOUNAKIS, Ἑπταδικαὶ ἔρευναι, *Ἀθηνᾶ* 33, 1921, 107-221.

refer in detail to other aspects of his work. Nevertheless, in conclusion, some comments must be added on his rhetorical exercises[26]. As they happen to follow the model of classical theoreticians of rhetoric, they are considered to be mere imitations of their ancient models, and apparently this is the reason why they are so little studied, remaining practically unknown. However, a careful reading reveals first of all similarities in the vocabulary employed In the exercises and the histories. Secondly, the exercises preserve thoughts and personal views of the author with reference to events that he experienced personally. For this reason I would suggest that they should be studied in detail, in order to offer the possibility of a fuller appreciation of Pachymeris' mentality and a better interpretation of his entire work.

26. For a detailed study see LAMPAKIS, *Γεώργιος Παχυμέρης,* 135-180.