

# *Tomos*

Unknown author

DATE April 1180

ORIGINAL LANGUAGE Greek

## DESCRIPTION

The *Tomos* (a decree of a religious character made with the participation and confirmation of the imperial power) is no more than one and a half pages long (61 lines) in Darrouzès' edition. It was the result of a religious controversy in which the Byzantine Emperor Manuel I Comnenus (1143-80) opposed the clergy led by the patriarch of Constantinople, Theodosius Boradiotes, in April 1180.

In order to become Christians, Muslims had to abjure their faith, pronouncing 22 anathemata (see the entry on 'Ritual of abjuration' in *CMR* 1). In the last of these, the prospective convert had to condemn Allāh, as defined by a Greek version of Q 112, 'And furthermore, I anathematize the God of Mahomet, of whom he says: He is the one God, *holosphyros*, who neither begat nor was begotten, and no one has been made like him'. One of the controversial points was the translation of the Arabic *al-Ṣamad* (a *hapax* of the Qur'an, translated by Arberry as 'the Everlasting Refuge') as *holosphyros* ('made of solid beaten metal', i.e. 'solid', 'compact'), which is earlier found in Nicetas of Byzantium (q.v.). The Arabic term, which perhaps underlines the absolute singleness of God as opposed to the Trinitarian Christian God, was interpreted in a distorting manner by Nicetas and other Byzantine polemicists (see e.g. Sahas, 'Holosphyros', pp. 110-14).

In the *Tomos* it is said that Muslim converts were uneasy about condemning God in this way, not being aware that a god *holosphyros* is not God, and therefore the Emperor Manuel I Comnenus proposed in a long letter (*graphē*) to the synod that Anathema 22 be abandoned, so avoiding offense against the true God. The synod agreed to replace this anathema with a harsh condemnation of Muḥammad and his doctrines (ll. 41-54).

The main source of information about this dispute, apart from the *Tomos* itself, is Nicetas Choniates (c. 1155-1217) (q.v.), both in his *History* (*Nicetae Choniatae Historia*, pp. 213-20) and in his *Panoplia*

*dogmatikē*, Book XXVI (still unpublished, but partly given by van Dieten in his *apparatus criticus* to the *Historia*). Nicetas narrates the whole background of the dispute, which is otherwise unknown because all the other items of the dossier are lost.

From his *Panoplia* (see the *apparatus* to the *Historia*, p. 213) we learn that the problem of Anathema 22 was raised by an important Turkish emir, Ḥasan, adoptive son of a certain Gabras. The phases of the dispute may be summarized as follows, according to the *Historia*: The emperor composes a first *Tomos*, but the patriarch opposes it; a new, shorter *Tomos*, accompanied by a letter to the patriarch and the clergy, is presented by an envoy of the emperor to the delegates of the synod, who approve it, though Bishop Eustathius of Thessaloniki reacts harshly; the next day the whole synod rejects it; corrections are made and the synod approves a new version of the *Tomos* in which the anathema is replaced by a new version against Muḥammad and his teachings. According to Nicetas, the dispute ended in May (1180). Of all these documents, only the *Tomos* that concludes the dispute is preserved, dated April 1180 (in a 14<sup>th</sup>-century copy; the original had the signatures of the members of the synod and of the emperor).

It should be noted that the first edition of Grumel's *Regestes* (1947), based on Nicetas' narrative, was not correctly updated after the publication of the *Tomos* by Darrouzès; therefore the revised edition (Grumel-Darrouzès, *Regestes*, n. 1153) continues to give the text as 'lost' and dates the *Tomos* to 'May 1180' (correct dating in Dölger and Wirth, *Regesten*, n. 1534d). Most of the bibliography that deals with the dispute ignores the *Tomos* (e.g. Hanson, 'Manuel'; Sahas, 'Holosphynos'; Magoulias, 'Disputes'). The best treatment of the *Tomos* is in Darrouzès, *Tomos*, pp. 187-93.

#### SIGNIFICANCE

The dispute can be considered as arising from an attempt by an open-minded emperor (perhaps also influenced by political motives) to respond to the requests of his Muslim subjects who wished to become Christians. Alternatively, when it is remembered that the Ritual of Abjuration (q.v.) contained another 21 very harsh anathemata against Islam, and Anathema 22 was replaced by a condemnation of Muḥammad and his teachings, the importance of this gesture may have been minimal. Yet, the core of the question is that to condemn not only the beliefs of Muḥammad but also 'the God of Muḥammad', 'seemed to imply that Christians and Moslems did not, in fact, believe

in one and the same God' (Meyendorff, 'Byzantine views', p. 124). Manuel aimed to avoid such an extreme position.

The term *holosphynos* of Sūra 112 was certainly one of the elements in the dispute, but apparently there was no real interest in clarifying the meaning of this epithet and of the notion of God that it implied; nor were Arab sources or different Greek translations consulted.

Finally, the decision to eliminate Anathema 22 and to introduce a new one had no practical effect, as no manuscript registers the substitution of this new anathema for the original.

This dispute testifies to the diffusion of conversions from Islam to Christianity in the Comnenian period, when the Byzantine Empire regained some of its political, military and economic power, and set up significant resistance against the Seljuk Turks of Anatolia.

#### MANUSCRIPTS

MS Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery – Gr. 1117, fol. 334rv (14<sup>th</sup> century; see Benešević, *Catalogus*, no. 482, pp. 266-93 [p. 287])

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