

ATHANASIOS A. ANGELOPOULOS

DIMITRIOS TSAMIS KARATASOS

A SYMBOL OF GREEK, SERBIAN AND BULGARIAN FRIENDSHIP

Dimitrios or Tsamis¹ Karatasos, who was born in 1798 in the village of Dichalevri of Naoussa, was the second son of the famous Macedonian freedom-fighter Anastasios Karatasos or Yero-Karatasos, and fought alongside his father during the Greek War of Independence of 1821 in Macedonia and other parts of Greece. But his great reputation was acquired especially in the Macedonian rebellion of 1854 when he operated in the areas of Chalkidiki and Mount Athos. Tsamis Karatasos was one of the prime instigators of the revolt². He was made «General-

1. Tsiamis, Tzamis or Tsamis Karatasos according to documents of the War of Independence and later. There exist various interpretations for the name. One version is that Dimitrios corresponds to the Albanian Christian name of Tsamis which in this instance was more commonly in use. Another interpretation is that Tsamis refers to the inhabitant of Tsamouria, a district of Epirus, signifying an Albanian or Greek Christian. Yet another meaning is a handsome and tall man. The word «tsam» in Turkish signifies pine tree, and the Turks gave the name to describe unusually tall men (see M. Tsaferopoulos, *Οἱ Κατασασαῖοι, Α', 'Ο γέρο Κατασας* [*The Karatasos Family, I, Yero Karatasos*], Verria 1971, p. 22).

2. On the revolution of 1854 in Macedonia and Dimitrios Karatasos see, especially Z. Antoniadēs Dexippus, «Δημήτριος Τσάμης Κατασας», *Ἡμερολόγιον Θεσσαλονίκης Μερόπης II. Τσιώμου* 6 (1928), 56-62; A. Vacalopoulos, «Νέα Ιστορικά στοιχεία γὰ τὴν ἐπανάστασιν τοῦ 1821 καὶ 1854 στὴ Μακεδονία» [«Additional Historical Notes on the Revolutions of 1821 and 1854 in Macedonia»], *Ἐπιστημονικὴ Ἐπετηρὶς Φιλοσοφικῆς Σχολῆς Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 7 (1957), 63-103; J. Vasdravellis, «Σύμμεικτα. Ἱστορικαὶ διηγήσεις διάφοροι. Ἀφηγήσεις διὰ τὴν ἐν Χαλκιδικῇ ἐπανάστασιν τοῦ 1854» [«Miscellanei, Various Histories, Stories from the Rebellion of 1854 in Chalkidiki»], *Μακεδονικά* 4 (1960), 538-541; J. Vasdravellis, «Ἡ ἐπανάστασις τοῦ 1854 εἰς τὴν Χαλκιδικὴν Χερσόνησον» [«The Rebellion of 1854 in the Chalkidiki Peninsula»], *Μακεδονικά* 5 (1963), 102-124; P. Georgiou, *Γαλλικὸν σχέδιον ἀποσβέσεως τῆς Θεσσαλικῆς ἐπανάστασεως τοῦ 1854* [*A French Proposal for the Termination of the Rebellion in Thessaly*], Athens 1966; A. Lavriotes, *Ἄθως, ἀγῶνες καὶ θυσίαι (1850-1855). Ἐγγραφα Μακεδονικῆς ἐπανάστασεως* [*Athos, Struggle and Sacrifice 1850-1855. Documents of the Macedonian Revolt*], Athens 1924; John Mamlakis, «Ἡ ἐκστρατεία τοῦ Δ. Τσάμη Κατασας στὴ Χαλκιδικὴ τὸ 1854» [«The Expedition of D. Tsamis Karatasos in Chalkidiki in 1854»], *Χρονικά Χαλκιδικῆς* 4 (1962), 123-171; 5 (1963), 17-61, 6 (1963), 200-215; 7 (1964), 113-128; 8 (1965), 131-154; 9-10 (1965), 265-348; 11-12 (1966), 387-410; K. Papageorgiou, «Ἡ Ἡπειροθεσσα-

issimo of Macedonia»¹ while holding the rank of colonel when en route to the Chalkidiki peninsula.

Although many blows were struck against the foe, the rebellion was militarily doomed for many and various reasons; nevertheless it was instrumental in bringing about the «Hati Humayun» of 1856 by which the Greeks of Macedonia were enabled to reform and to reorganize themselves to a greater degree intellectually, administratively and religiously through the «General Statutes» drawn up by the Ecumenical Patriarch-

λική ἐπανάστασις τοῦ 1854» [«The Rebellion of 1854 in Epirus and Thessaly»], *Ἡπειρωτικὴ Ἔστια* 8 (1959), 441-448, 542-548, 640-646, 775-782, 861-866, 955-961; 9 (1960) 16-21, 117-122, 192-197, 277-283, 374-381, 470-473; S. Papadopoulos, *Οἱ ἐπαναστάσεις τοῦ 1854 καὶ 1878 στὴν Μακεδονία* [The Rebellions of 1854 and 1878 in Macedonia], Thessaloniki 1970 (with detailed bibliography); M. Papaioannou, «Ὁ Θεόδωρος Ζιάκας καὶ ἡ ἐπανάστασις τοῦ 1854» [«Theodore Ziakas and the Revolution of 1854»], *Χρονικά τοῦ Πειραματικοῦ Σχολείου τοῦ Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης* 15 (1961), 15-45; A. Popović, *O Cincarina* [On the Koutsovlachs], Belgrade 1937, pp. 47-48; V. Skafides, «Ἡ ἑλληνικὴ ἐπανάστασις τοῦ 1854 ἐν Ἡπείρῳ καὶ Θεσσαλίᾳ καὶ ἡ καταστροφή τοῦ Μετσόβου» [«The Greek Revolt of 1854 in Epirus and Thessaly and the Destruction of Metsovo»], *Ἡπειρωτικὴ Ἔστια* 3 (1954), 803-809; E. Sourlas, «Ἡπειρος καὶ αὐστριακὴ διπλωματία. Ἡ Ἡπειρωτικὴ Ἐπανάστασις τοῦ 1854 ἐπὶ τῇ βάσει διπλωματικῶν ἐγγράφων καὶ ἐκθέσεων τοῦ Ἀρχείου Ὑπουργείου Ἐξωτερικῶν Αὐστρίας (Βιέννης) τὸ πρῶτον ἐκδιδόμενον» [«Epirus and Austrian Diplomacy. The Epirote Rebellion of 1854 from Diplomatic Documents and Reports from the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Vienna), published for the first time»], *Ἡπειρωτικὰ Χρονικά* 7 (1932), 67-130; P. Stamos, *Σύνοψις τῶν ὑπὲρ ἐλευθερίας ἡρωϊκῶν τῆς Χαλκιδικῆς ἀγώνων* (ἐπὶ τῇ ἐκατονταετηρίδι τῆς ἐν αὐτῇ ἐπαναστάσεως τοῦ Τσάμη Καρατάσου) [Summary of the Heroic Struggle for freedom in Chalkidiki (on the Centenary of the Revolt of Tsamis Karatasos)], Thessaloniki 1954; A. Tzaferopoulos, *Οἱ Καρατασάοι, Α', Ὁ γέρο Καρατάσος* [The Karatassos Family, I, Yero Karatasos], Verria 1971; N. Todorov, «Dokument za balkanskoto edinstvo v nacionalnoosvoboditelnite borbi» [«Document concerning Balkan unity during the national revolutionary struggles»], *Izvestija na Institutot za Istorija* 16-17 (1966), 499-516; N. Todorov, «Bălgari i Grci v novo i najnovo vreme» [«Bulgars and Greeks in modern times»], *Iz vzaimo otnošenijata na balkanskite narodi*, vol. I, Sofia 1966; N. Todorov - V. Trajkov, *Bălgari učestnici vo borbite za osvoboždenieto na Grcija 1821-1828* [Bulgarian Participants in the Struggle for the Independence of Greece 1821-1828], Sofia 1971; G. Tozis, «American and British Sources for the Rebellion of 1854 in Macedonia», *Μακεδονικά* 3 (1956), 142-207; G. Hionides, «Ἐνας Σέρβος θρηνεῖ τὸν Τσάμη Καρατάσο» [«A Serb laments the Death of Tsamis Karatasos»], *Μακεδονικὴ Ζωὴ* 100 (1974), 31-33; *Nadgrobno Slovo Dimitriju Čamis Kara-Tasu* [Funeral Oration on the Death of Dimitrios Tsiamis Karatasos] (1862) (in Serbian, Greek, and Bulgarian). The Greek text was recently reprinted by G. Hionides, *op. cit.*, 31-33.

1. In certain documents in the early years soon after the liberation of Greece, he was referred to as «General Dimitrios Karatasos».

ate (August 1858 - February 1860), in conformity with the provision of the «Hati Humayun»¹.

A strong passion for the liberation of his compatriots in Macedonia and of the Christians of the Balkans from the Ottoman yoke led the hero to Italy, to Montenegro, Bulgaria and Serbia, with the object of establishing a favorable climate for concerted action in the struggle for freedom. Belgrade was the last stop in his crusade for liberty, but it was also the place of his death, for here he fell ill and died on October 20, 1861².

His arrival and untimely death in Belgrade occurred at a most opportune moment for cultivating Balkan cooperation, as the miscarried rebellions of Bosnia in 1858 and 1859, the ensuing wave of refugees that fled into Serbia, and the establishment by Matej Ban of his revolutionary committee, which in 1861 had become very active with the open support of Prince Michael Obrenović, had all contributed to laying the promising foundations for a fruitful Greco-Slavic rapprochement. This had been the ultimate purpose of the visit of Karatasos to Belgrade. His death set the seal, as it were, on the need for and advantage of such cooperation and unified action.

Serbian public opinion was much moved by the death of Tsamis Karatasos in Belgrade. The impressive funeral³ was an occasion that reflected the deep respect and admiration for a Greek fighter who struggled for a unity and a friendship amongst the Balkan peoples with the object of throwing off the common chains of Ottoman bondage.

Indicative of the spontaneous feelings of warmth and friendship on the part of the Serbs for the honored hero and his country are two texts. One was reprinted a few years ago in the Bulgarian periodical *Izvestija na Institutot za Istorija*⁴, and more recently in the periodical

1. S. Papadopoulos, *Οι επαναστάσεις του 1854 και 1878 στην Μακεδονία*, Thessaloniki 1970, pp. 53-54.

2. *Nadgrobnno Slovo Dimitriju Čamis Kara-Tasu*, [Beograd] 1862. See also G. Hionides, «Ένας Σέρβος θρηνεί τὸν Τσάμη Καράτασο», *op. cit.*, 31-33.

3. N. Todorov, «Dokument za balkanskoto edinstvo v nacionalnoosvoboditelnite borbi», *op. cit.*, 501. The Archbishop of Belgrade accompanied by all the clergy presided at the funeral. Also present were representatives from the political and military world and a vast crowd. Three funeral orations were delivered, one in the church, another halfway to the burial ground, and the third at the grave. The last was delivered by professor Karamarković.

4. N. Todorov, «Dokument za balkanskoto edinstvo...», *op. cit.*, 501,

Μακεδονική Ζωή published in Thessaloniki, under the title «Funeral Oration on the Occasion of the Death of Dimitrios Tsiamis Karatasos delivered at the Byzantine Gate by Matheos S. Karamarković, professor of Belgrade»¹, and the second item, which here appears for the first time in print, is an octet or verse of eight lines inscribed on the marble slab set in front of the hero's grave. This gravestone was taken to Naoussa in 1927 together with his remains.

But before dealing with the gravestone and the events associated with it, it is worthwhile examining the contents of the funeral speech, which is a unique expression of the traditional national ties and intellectual sympathies that existed between Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians.

In the funeral oration Dimitrios Karatasos is lauded as the «illustrious man», the «foundation stone and the hope of all the enslaved of Illyria», the «champion of freedom from the Turks of both Serbs and Bulgarians», the «man whose name was enthusiastically mouthed among Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians, as a leader and saviour from foreign bondage», the «friend of freedom of the Greeks and Serbs», the «brave one of blessed memory», the «hero», and the «commander of the nation»².

That which should be specially emphasized here and should be especially regarded is the sincere and spontaneous recognition on the part of the Serbian citizens of Belgrade of the fact that Dimitrios Karatasos, a brilliant Greek patriot³, lay dead in a grave in Serbia as a symbol

513-516. Pages 502-512 include a photostat copy of the original text of the speech. This was brought to my attention by J. Papadrianos, to whom I am grateful.

1. See p. 51, fn. 2.

2. See p. 51, fn. 2.

3. The texts, the funeral oration, and the octet are convincing evidence for the nationality of the hero. They speak clearly of his Greek origin and his important contribution in the struggle for the liberation of Greece from Turkish rule. In addition to the Greek and Serbian sources and the bibliography on Tsamis Karatasos, Bulgarian historical sources support his Greek origin. The view of Rakovski that Tsamis Karatasos was a Bulgar, since he called himself as much, is groundless (see N. Todorov - V. Trajkov, *Bălgari učestnici v borbite za osvoboždenieto na Grcija 1821-1828*, Sofia 1971, p. 993), since Tsamis, for the sake of Balkan cooperation, would consider himself a Serb and a Bulgar and these races as brothers of the Greeks. It is in this sense that Tsamis Karatasos is referred to by the Serbs as «Greek and Serb and Bulgar»; see *Nadgrobnno Slovo Dimitriju Čamis Kara-Tasu*, [Beograd] 1862, and Todorov, «*Bălgari i Grci v novo i najnovo vreme*», *op. cit.*, 40-41. Rakovski more specifically calls him «a distinguished Macedonian hero» (since he was born in Macedonia), who, according to the funeral speech contributed inestimable

of patriotism, liberty, self-denial, brotherhood, and sincere affection between Slavs and Greeks, particularly between Serbs and Greeks. The lot of these races was common, and it was for this reason that the deceased had felt deeply and believed that only strong and genuine bonds between Greeks and Slavs could bring freedom.

The deep feelings of the writer emerge in the moving passage from the funeral oration: «... the Illyrian peninsula itself must change and this was precisely what this brave man Karatasos struggled to bring to realization, for he well understood that the strong and sincere ties between Greeks and Slavs could bring freedom one to the other. He never considered himself apart from them. On the contrary, he blended with them, for he was a Greek as well as a Serb and a Bulgar, and he joined forces with them in both ideals and aims... this great and illustrious Karatasos has given us a rare example of patriotism, of love for freedom and self-denial, having fulfilled his task in Serbia as a hero who happily would have shed his blood for the country which affectionately receives him in its bosom. His bones shall lie among those heroes who attained glory at Kossovo, at Tsatska and at Negotina, and his spirit joins the great parade of our immortal heroes Karageorge, Miloš and Aidoni Veljko. We, the descendants of these heroes, are united in spirit today with the descendants of Karatasos, of Markos Botsaris, of Karaiskakis, of Kolokotronis. Over this body today in common mourning and bereavement meet the sons of the three sister nations, Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria, and recognize that their lot, their aims and beliefs are identical.

service to «his race, the Slavs». Yet throughout the funeral oration there is not the slightest hint that Karatasos was a member of the «Slavic race». Obviously, therefore, Rakovski misinterpreted the funeral oration, and nowhere in the speech does Tsamis hint that he is a Bulgarian; see *Dunavski Lebed* 56 (25 Oct. 1861). See also Todorov, «Dokument za Balkanskoto edinstvo...», *op. cit.*, 501. The only instance where he is not treated as a Greek is in the Bibliography of Skopje which arbitrarily maintains that the rebellion of Macedonia in 1822 was the work of «Macedonians» led by Karatasos and Gatsos. See *Istoriја na Makedonskiot Narod [History of the Macedonian Nation]*, vol. II, p. 27. This fabrication is very obvious since an important chapter of Greek history, that of the revolutionary war in Macedonia in 1822 centred on Naoussa and Chalkidiki, is described as a revolution instigated by another national group. Yet all sources, Greek, Turkish and Slavic alike, describe it in no uncertain terms as a Greek-fomented revolt without excluding the possibility of Slavic participation, just as in the case of activities in other Greek-speaking areas of participants from other Balkan nations, especially of Serbs and Bulgars, and vice versa since the struggle for liberation from Ottoman rule was a common and pan-Balkan effort, reaching its climax in the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913.

They are brothers, both in religion, and some even of blood. The bereavement shared by all is proof that Karatasos had a common goal for the three sister nations. And by this he did not mean that the patriotism of each should signify enmity for the other, but that the Greek could be a patriot and at the same time the sincere friend of Bulgar and Serb, and vice versa, and thus have the undeniable conviction that next to each other can exist three independent and free sister kingdoms, each to develop and grow, not hindering one the other, all united by strong and mutual ties of alliance»¹.

In an eloquent turn of phrase, the writer at the conclusion of the oration reflects again the feelings of deep national debt to the hero, and expresses the eternal obligations owed Karatasos by his Serbian compatriots and generally by the entire family of south Slavs, the Serbs and Bulgarians, and gives his pledge to the honored dead, in the form of a national testament, that his compatriots will by words and deeds show this gratitude. «O noble hero Karatasos! You have shown us the road, you have shown us the manner by which we can be strong by advising the Greeks and Slavs to have bonds of love and mutual care. We understand well what you mean and for this we express our deepest gratitude, and we promise that in deeds also we will worthily show you our gratitude by cultivating with great care the ties of brotherhood and sincere affection between Slavs and Greeks, so that these peoples by their strength will bring us the rich fruits of liberty of Greek and Slav which will become a flower that decorates your grave and never withers. May the earth lie lightly on your grave, blessed Karatasos»².

The transfer in 1927 of the bones and the marble slab of Dimitrios Karatasos from Belgrade to Naoussa at the initiative of the municipalities of Thessaloniki and Naoussa was the result of unusual circumstances.

In early 1927 the Belgrade cemetery was moved to another section of the city where the new burial ground now exists (Novo Groblje). The lack of interest in moving the remains of the hero to the new cemetery as were the remains of the other dead, caused a minor sensation in the press of the Serbian capital, and news of this reached Thessaloniki and the municipal councillors³.

1. See p. 51, fn. 2.

2. See p. 51, fn. 2.

3. Minutes of the meeting of the Municipal Council of 28 April 1927 (Decision No. 253/27).

The matter was officially brought before the Council in the meeting of April 28, 1927 by G. Mourikis, one of its members, who pointed out that «it would be an act of gratitude on the part of the city of Thessaloniki to the departed Macedonian hero and soldier who was a forerunner of the Greek struggle for Macedonian freedom which was fulfilled about a century later, if it undertook to transfer his remains here from Belgrade»¹. It was decided at that session to undertake the costs for carrying the remains of Dimitrios Karatasos from the Belgrade graveyard, and for this purpose there was appointed a committee of three members of whom D. Antoniadis and P. Xystris were municipal councillors and N. Pappas, municipal chief engineer. The party was to attend an international exhibition in Budapest and on the return journey was to pass through Belgrade to collect the remains of the hero. At the same time the Mayor of Thessaloniki, M. Patrikios, was to notify in writing the Greek embassy in the Serbian capital asking for cooperation with the committee to expedite the matter².

In two further meetings of the same year, on August 29 and October 5, after five months of correspondence and negotiations with the Belgrade embassy and the municipality of Naoussa, the municipal council, with eighteen members present, together with Mayor Patrikios and the president of the council K. Kammonas, decided³ that the initiative for the removal of the remains and the transfer of the gravestone be undertaken by the municipality of Naoussa⁴, where the hero was born and which was the heart of the area wherein he had first begun his revolutionary activities. And thus representatives from the Naoussa municipality finally proceeded to Belgrade, removed the bones and the marble slab from the cemetery, and carried them back to Naoussa where they were received at an official ceremony held for the occasion (see Pl. 1). The small case with the bones of the hero was reburied in the plot of ground in front of the town hall of Naoussa.

1. *Ibid.*

2. *Ibid.*

3. Minutes of the meeting of the Municipal Council of 29 Aug. 1927 (Decision No. 399) and 5 Oct. 1927 (Decision No. 405/27).

4. In Document No. 25543 of 9 Aug. 1927 and in cable dated 7 Sept. 1927 the Municipality of Naoussa requested «the surrender of the remains of the hero to the town of Naoussa». Following this, the Municipality of Thessaloniki, in the meeting of its Council on 5 Oct. 1927, instructed the Mayor to reply to the cable from the Greek Embassy in Belgrade dated 4 Aug. 27, informing the Embassy that the Municipality of Naoussa had assumed the responsibility of sending to Belgrade a committee to receive and carry back the remains of the hero Karatasos, and notifying the Municipality of Naoussa of this move.

When I first examined the marble slab in Naoussa in 1972, it was situated in the public park of the town (see Pl. 2) a few paces from the statue of Anastasios Karatasos or Yero-Karatasos, father of our hero (see Pl. 3). The municipality of Naoussa last year had the gravestone removed to a safer site within the Town Hall.

The monument in marble was erected in front of the grave of Dimitrios Karatasos soon after his death on the orders and at the expense of Prince Michael Obrenović III of the Serbians¹. The marble slab measures two meters in length and is half a meter wide. On the upper part is engraved a cross beneath which is a poem of eight lines, composed in all probability by the Prince himself². The base of the slab is mutilated at the point where the dedication is inscribed: «Dimitriju Čamisu, Kara Taso, junačkom predvoditelju grčkoga Naroda, rođenom u Njegušti u Makedoniji, 1789 godine. Spomenik podignut po zapovesti Njegove Svetosti Knjaza Srbskog Mihaila Obrenović III»³. The translation of the dedication reads: «To Dimitrios Tsamis Karatasos, gallant leader of the Greek nation, born in Naoussa, Macedonia, in the year 1789. Monument erected at the command of His Eminence Prince of the Serbians Michael Obrenović III». Due to many years of weathering and complete neglect, the inscribed octet had all but disappeared (see Pl. 2). Thanks to the efforts of the journalist Petros Deinopoulos and myself, everything possible has been done to restore the inscription (see Pl. 4).

The eight-line poem is engraved in capital Cyrillic script and is in the Serbo-Croat language before the revision of Vuk Karadžić (see Pl. 4). I transcribe the text in Latin minuscule as follows:

Putniče, kad prodješ pored mesta ovog,
Grob ovaj pozdravi. Tu junak počiva,
Junak sa bojšta velikog i svetog
Na kom se sva sreća Eladi osniva.
Pa ako kad odeš i u one strane
Gde no žive Grci braća udaljena
Kaži da junačke znamo cjenit rane,
I ova je zemlja krvlju izbavljena⁴.

1. A. Popović, *O Cincarima*, p. 47.

2. *Ibid.*

3. See *Srpski Književni Glasnik* 31 (1930), 134, 135.

4. Another version of the octet was published here, p. 135, and was reprinted by Popović, *op. cit.*, p. 47. The publication of the octet in the present monograph

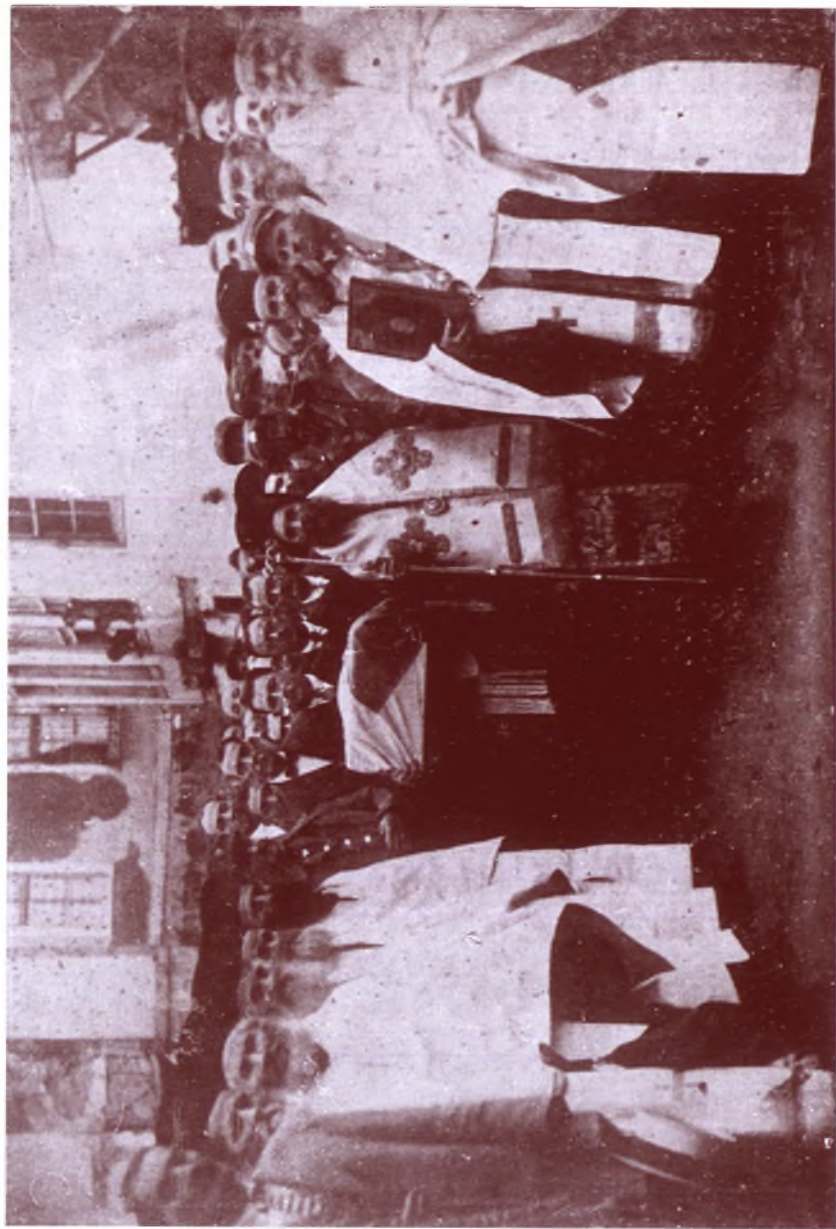


Plate 1. The formal reception of the bones and tombstone of Dimitrios Tsamis Karatasos at Naoussa in 1927.



Plate 2. The tombstone in the municipal park of Naoussa.



Plate 3. The bust of Anastasios Karatasos or Yero-Karatasos in the municipal park of Naoussa.

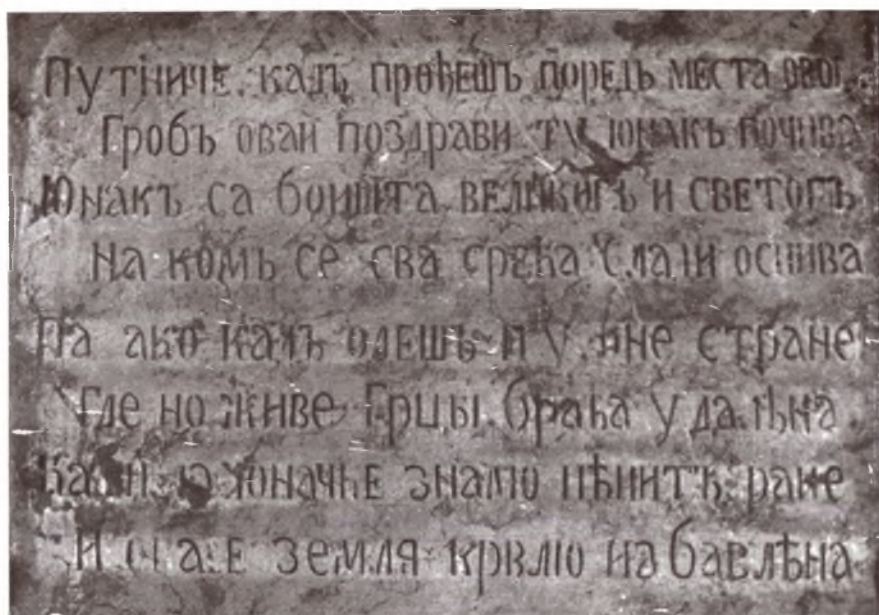


Plate 4. The octet on the tombstone after its restoration



Plate 5. Dimitrios Tsamis Karatasos.



Plate 6. The statue of Dimitrios Tsamis Karatasos in Thessaloniki.



Plate 7. The seal of Anastasios Karatasos.

The English translation, in which an attempt has been made to retain the poetic structure and flow of the verse, reads:

O stranger, when you pass through this land
Pay your respects to the tomb wherein a hero lies.
A gallant man of battle for a sacred cause
By which Greece's happiness and liberty is bound.
And should you visit those lands that lie beyond
Where fellow Greeks do dwell
Tell them that we here do know
To honour heroes whose blood in our soil did flow.

The octet is a hymn of praise to the hero of «gallant battle and sacred cause», as the poet says, of his country, a country that possesses many brilliant fighters for freedom and happiness, and for Balkan, especially Greco-Serbian, friendship, which has through history been cemented by a common struggle for liberty by their heroes and their blood. The octet and the funeral oration compose a song of praise to the hero Dimitrios Karatasos, a symbol of friendship and cooperation between the Balkan races.

was made on the basis of the original as actually carved on the gravestone, and hence is the only correct version.