



Summary :

Remarkable prelate born in the Peloponnese. He went to Asia Minor in 1770, when he was elected metropolitan of Smyrna. In 1785 he was elected patriarch of Constantinople but was forced to resign in 1789 and was displaced to Mount Athos. He finally returned to the Peloponnese, where he remained until he died, in 1814.

Other Names

Prokopios Pelekasis

Date and Place of Birth

Alagonia (Sitsova), Messenia

Date and Place of Death

1814 (possible), Alagonia, Messenia

Main Role

Ecumenical patriarch

1. Birth – Education

Prokopios was born in Alagonia (Sitsova) of Messenia. He was born into a poor but particularly pious family. Already from his childhood he had an aptitude for letters. At the age of 12 he left his birthplace and went by his elder brother, Neophytos, the metropolitan of Ganos and Chora. After receiving the elementary ecclesiastical education, he became a priest and soon ascended the hierarchy. In October 1759 he succeeded his brother as the metropolitan of Ganos and Chora, in Serapheim's patriarchal period, where he remained for 11 years. In 1769 he travelled to [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul) for some matters of his diocese. At that time the notables of [Smyrna](#) were expressing their reaction against the then [metropolitan](#) Kallinikos. The Holy Synod decided to transfer Kallinikos to the diocese of Tirnovo in today's Bulgaria (June 1769) and elected Prokopios as the new metropolitan of Smyrna (January 1770). Prokopios claims that he accepted the decision "unwilling and tearful", since he would have to pay an amount of 48,000 kuruş to the [patriarchate](#) in exchange.¹

2. Metropolitan of Smyrna

Prokopios arrived in Smyrna on December 4, 1770. Immediately after his arrival, he made great but fruitless efforts to be permitted to build the [church of St. Fotini](#). The churches of the Dormition of the Virgin at [Burnova](#) (August 1772) and St. Charalambos at [Hacihaliller](#) (1781) were built during his tenure in the metropolitan throne of Smyrna. Furthermore, he renovated the church of St George (November 1772) and converted the pilgrimage place of St. John the Theologian into a church. He finally managed to turn the [patriarchal](#) monastery of St. John Prodromos in [Moschonisia](#) into a parish monastery of the bishopric of Moschonisia, which was under the diocese of Smyrna. It should be mentioned that Prokopios possessed the valuable Gospel written in the years of Andronikos I Palaiologos, kept at the church of St. John the Theologian in Smyrna. Between 1780 and 1782 Prokopios served as a member of the Holy Synod and lived in Constantinople.

3. Ecumenical patriarch

On June 29, 1785 the Holy Synod elected Prokopios ecumenical patriarch, while [Gregorios](#), the former [protosynkellos](#) of the diocese of Smyrna and subsequent ecumenical patriarch, was appointed metropolitan of Smyrna. Prokopios was enthroned on July 29, 1785.

He was particularly active as an ecumenical patriarch, although he served for a short period. His main interests were focused on reorganising the financial matters of the patriarchate. He also ratified the stauropegian rights of Kykkos Monastery in Cyprus and regulated its regime. However, he had serious problems mainly with two issues: the first was the economic mismanagement by secular



members of the patriarchal committee, which had been formed in 1785, and the second was the consequences for the ecumenical patriarchate after the Russo-Ottoman war that broke out in 1788. In addition, Prokopios disputed with Alexandros Mavrokordatos, prince of Moldavia, because the latter promoted the bishop Romanos Leon to metropolitan of Moldavia in ignorance of the patriarchate. Prokopios' opponents persuaded sultan Selim III to issue an edict in 1789 ordering that the patriarch fall from his throne and be exiled to Mount Athos.² According to another version, Prokopios was dethroned due to his friendship with prince Mavrogenis.

Prokopios was immediately taken to [Chalcedon](#) from where he sent his "voluntary" retirement (April 30, 1789). He was then displaced to the Megisti Lavra Monastery on Mount Athos until 1797, when he managed to retire to his birthplace, Alagonia of Messenia on the Peloponnese, where he remained until his death (at Mardakio Monastery on Mount Taygetus, possibly in 1814).³

4. Evaluations

[Adamantios Korais](#) calls Prokopios a "kind and jovial man", while [Manouil Gedeon](#) reports: "He was a decent, educated and studious man, disliked by his contemporaries for his reproachful and wrathful character".⁴

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1. Σολομωνίδης, Χ.Σ., *Η εκκλησία της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1960), pp. 179-180, including a *praktikon* of the metropolitan codex of Smyrna and a relevant account by Prokopios.
 2. *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία* 10 (Athens 1967), l. 620, see entry "Προκόπιος ο Πελεκάσης" (Πανταζόπουλος, Π.Π.).
 3. Σολομωνίδης, Χ.Σ., *Η εκκλησία της Σμύρνης* (Athens 1960), pp. 180-181. According to another view, Prokopios died before 1810; see *Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία* 10 (Athens 1967), l. 620, entry "Προκόπιος ο Πελεκάσης" (Πανταζόπουλος, Π.Π.).
 4. Γεδεών, Μ., *Πατριαρχικοί Πίνακες. Ειδήσεις ιστορικά, βιογραφικά περί των Πατριαρχών Κωνσταντινουπόλεως από Ανδρέου του Πρωτοκλήτου μέχρι Ιωακείμ Γ' του από Θεσσαλονίκης* (Constantinople 1890), p. 571.

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	Σολομωνίδης Χ., <i>Η Εκκλησία της Σμύρνης</i> , Αθήνα 1960
	Πανταζόπουλος Π., "Προκόπιος ο Πελεκάσης", <i>Θρησκευτική και Ηθική Εγκυκλοπαιδεία</i> 10, Αθήνα 1967, 619-620
	Χρυσόστομος, Μητροπολίτης Μεσσηνίας, <i>Ο Πατριάρχης Κωνσταντινουπόλεως Προκόπιος ο Πελοποννήσιος</i> , Αθήνα 1961

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http://www.ec-patr.org/	

Glossary :

	patriarchal monastery (stauropegion)
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A monastery under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate, autonomous from the administration of the local bishop. The term stauropegion applied also to villages, meaning that in tax matters (mostly in regard to ecclesiastical taxes) they were under the control of the Patriarchate and not of the local diocese.



protosynkellos

The protosynkellos was the assistant and often the successor of the Patriarch or the archbishop, as he was a person with great influence. Until the 5th c. the title of the synkellos was used for the same office. In the course of time, the synckllos undertook more responsibilities and this resulted in the creation of the titles of the protosynkellos and the great protosynkellos. The latter in the Paleologean era signified the protosynkellos of the Patriarch.

Sources

Μαθάς, Ζ., *Κατάλογος ιστορικός των πρώτων επισκόπων και των εφεξής Πατριαρχών της εν Κωνσταντινουπόλει Αγίας και μεγάλης του Χριστού Εκκλησίας* (Athens 1884).