



## Περίληψη :

One of the most prominent Byzantine scholars among the founders of the Palaeologean Renaissance. A historian, mathematician, teacher, statesman and clergyman, he was born in Nicaea in 1242 and died in Constantinople around 1310. He left important works in the fields of history, rhetoric and mathematics, which proved very influential after his death. His historical work is the most important source on the second half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

## Τόπος και Χρόνος Γέννησης

1242, Nicaea

## Τόπος και Χρόνος Θανάτου

c. 1310, Constantinople

## Κύρια Ιδιότητα

Scholar

## 1. Biography

George Pachymeres was born in [Nicaea](#) of [Bithynia](#) in 1242. His family, of Constantinopolitan origin, had settled in the [Empire of Nicaea](#) after the [capture of Constantinople](#) by the Latins in 1204. He received an early education, the [hiera grammata](#) and the [encyclical education](#), in Nicaea. He was one of the first to move to Constantinople after its [recapture](#) by [Michael VIII Palaiologos](#) (1261), and he continued with higher studies in the school of [George Akropolites](#), which operated under the supervision of the emperor, where he studied next to [George of Cyprus](#). Akropolites instructed him in philosophy, rhetoric and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy). He completed his studies in this school around 1267.

Approximately two years earlier, in 1265, he had joined the patriarchal clergy and became a deacon. Pachymeres' ascension, both in the ecclesiastical and in civil hierarchy, was rather rapid: in 1277 he was [didaskalos tou apostolou](#),<sup>1</sup> in 1285 he became [hieromnemon](#) and later he received the high office of the [protekdikos](#). Apart from ecclesiastical offices, Michael VIII made him an imperial [dikaiophylax](#), possibly around 1277.<sup>2</sup>

As a patriarchal official he closely watched the procedure leading to the deposition and anathematism of the patriarch Arsenios Autoreianos (1254-1259 and 1261-1265) in 1265. He also took part in the negotiations for the union of the Churches, participating in the composition of the relevant [tomos](#) on the behest of patriarch [Joseph I Galesiotes](#) (1266-1275 and 1282-1283) in 1273, while in 1277 he signed a report, whereby he accepted the decisions of the second Council of Lyon (1274). In the debate on the Union he showed spirit of conciliation: although he considered the [Filioque](#) dogmatically flawed, he did accept that the Son was not uninvolved in the procession of the Holy Spirit.

Pachymeres also made a career as a teacher. Already by 1275-1276 he was a teacher in the Patriarchal School, where he taught philosophy, rhetoric, and the Quadrivium sciences. He acquired great fame as a teacher, as indicated by the epitaph dedicated to him by one of his students, the poet Manuel Philes.<sup>3</sup>

Pachymeres died in Constantinople after 1308, probably c.1310, leaving behind a rich intellectual production. With his long teaching career and his varied oeuvre, he played a pivotal part in the Palaeologean renaissance in the Byzantine Empire. His influence on later generations was very important, while the textbooks he composed were still used, many years later, even by the Italian humanists. Pachymeres' presence in the field of letters is not that of a monk withdrawn from the world, but of a person actively interested in life and its problems, striving to discover the human limits vis-à-vis the general developments.



## 2. Oeuvre

George Pachymeres was one of the most important personalities in the field of letters in the Byzantine Empire. A polymath with wide interests, he studied most cognizable subjects. His oeuvre, most of which survives today, is very extensive, especially in the field of the liberal arts, and it is considered most significant for his time. For this reason he proved very influential on the later generations, in Byzantium as well as in the Latin West, where his works were translated. One of his most important works preserved is the chronicle of the era of the first Palaiologoi, that is the reigns of Michael VIII and [Andronikos II](#). He also composed a *Quadrivium* treatise and an epitome of Aristotle's *Logic*. The rest of his oeuvre consists in rhetorical treatises, commentaries on Classical authors (especially on Homer), poems and commentaries on ecclesiastical writers. His student, Manuel Philes, mentions that he also delved into law; there is no written evidence, however, to prove this claim right.<sup>4</sup> His works justify Pachymeres being characterized as an 'early humanist'.<sup>5</sup> They reveal his deep knowledge of Classical writers, as well as of the aspects of the Classical culture and the ideals which informed it. They also prove that he was familiar with earlier scientific works and achievements, going back to Antiquity.

### 2.1. *Syngraphikai historiai*

Pachymeres' historical account, entitled *Syngraphikai historiai*, is a continuation of the *Chronike Syngraphe* of George Akropolites and deals with the events of the period between 1260/1255-1308, i.e. the reigns of the first two Palaiologoi, Michael VIII and Andronikos II. It is divided in thirteen books, six dedicated to Michael and seven to Andronikos. Although it also treats events that occurred during the last years of the Empire of Nicaea, the author does not consider them as an integral part of his narrative. Pachymeres aims to present the 'truth', which he considers history's essential component.<sup>6</sup> On the basis of this general principle he strives to describe and interpret the events of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, a subject-matter which he is quite familiar with. Although he deals with contemporary events, being an eye-witness to many of these (he places special emphasis on this fact),<sup>7</sup> he struggles to maintain objectivity in their treatment. The fact that he describes contemporary events renders his narrative lively and detailed,<sup>8</sup> as in many cases he interjects his personal experiences and impressions without, however, being carried away into expressing personal judgements too often; when this is necessary, his comments are sober.

Pachymeres composes his history having experienced the hard times the empire went through and the painful aftermath of the expansion of Turkish tribes in Asia Minor, which the central administration failed to thwart. On the other hand, there is the issue of the Latins and the religious problems that it generates, like the debates over the union of the Churches and the so-called "Arseniates' issue". Thus the atmosphere of his work is rather gloomy, as the author expects that the worst has yet to come.<sup>9</sup> The external and internal condition of the state are described in detail, and this is the first time dogmatic disputes are considered especially significant, although Pachymeres does not allow his own positions to surface in the text. An important part of his narrative is the description of the emergence of the Ottomans into the history of Asia Minor. He gives special attention to events involving large numbers of people, battles, movements, etc. especially in the region of Asia Minor. He also describes natural phenomena in detail,<sup>10</sup> which reflects, off course, his interest in nature and the natural sciences; sometimes he does, however, imbue such matters with metaphysical significance -in the spirit of his times- treating them as omens and the like, although one can discern his critical attitude. The author also dedicates some space to phenomena he considers inexplicable, which he attributes to divine intervention.<sup>11</sup>

His narrative is also interspersed with details which are not related to historical events, but had an impact in their time,<sup>12</sup> and this gives his work the character of a chronicle. His writings prove Pachymeres' thorough knowledge of the Classical writers. His model texts are Xenophon, Thucydides, but also Pindar. His style varies depending on his subject: he employs Homeric vocabulary to describe heroic events, resorting to a Hesiodic idiom when describing natural phenomena. When narrating incidents he considers epic or describing persons he characterises as heroes, like John Palaiologos and [Alexios Philantropenos](#), his account is intense and passionate. There are also many references to Greek mythology, with which he was very conversant, but also to historical figures of Classical Antiquity. The way in which he refers to Plato's *Laws* and to Aristotle's *Ethics* indicates his thorough knowledge of these texts, which have influenced his views on civil administration.<sup>13</sup>

Pachymeres' special characteristic, which is also to be attributed to the influence of ancient Greek culture, is the use of ancient Greek



terms for Asia Minor (Alizones, Bebryces, Mysians, Carians), even when naming a new people (e.g. he calls the Turkish tribes “Persians”), but also in his descriptions (e.g. scientific thought and critical thinking are mentioned as “Anaxagorian qualities”). On the other hand, he does not hesitate to adapt his language incorporating in his vocabulary Ottoman, as well as Latin, names and terms,<sup>14</sup> a practice quite unusual for this period. Although the use of ancient names and terms is also found in earlier Byzantine historians, Pachymeres is the first to use the Attic calendar (the names of the months) when dating events. In this attempt he does occasionally makes mistakes, citing the months in the wrong order or using names of months that do not belong to the Attic calendar.<sup>15</sup> Thus his text is somewhat difficult to follow; this practice, however, proves his eagerness to incorporate ancient Greek elements into Byzantine thought.

His work was very influential on the later historiographers. [Nikephoros Gregoras](#) and John Kantakouzenos followed his example with respect to his interest in religious and intellectual debates, while Theodoros Gazes, stirred by the use of the Attic calendar, composed the treatise *De mensibus* (On the Months)<sup>16</sup> in the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.2. Syntagma ton tessaron mathematou (Quadrivium)

The *Quadrivium* (Arithmetic, Music, Geometry and Astronomy) was composed in circa 1300. It comprises four sections dedicated, as indicated in its title, to arithmetic, astronomy, music and geometry, and it was meant as a textbook for liberal education. As such it was used not only by Byzantine but by Italian humanists as well, and was particularly popular in the West up to the Renaissance.

It survives in many codices, most important among which are: cod. Paris. gr. 2438, copied by Ioannis Sanctamabra in 1594 for Lailius Rouinius; *cod. Paris. gr. 2339*, copied in 1540 by Angelus Vergetius – Konstantine Palaiokappa; and *cod. Rossianus XI, 130*, copied in 1575 by John Raseos. The great number of copies testifies to the work's wide use. Pachymeres' *Quadrivium* is the best preserved textbook of that era. The work is mostly secondary, drawing heavily on ancient writers. It could be considered a compendium of the most important achievements of ancient science, enriched, however, by Pachymeres' originality and acute perception. The writer is no mere copier: he picks out and illuminates notions he deems his contemporaries will have trouble comprehending, so that his work will live up to its educational purpose. Pachymeres places great importance on these courses, as he considers them means towards «perfecting the soul», describing them as «familiar to human intellect» and inherent in it. He draws a special pleasure from the learning process: «the pursuit of learning is a familiar and pleasurable occupation» he writes.<sup>17</sup> However, the obscurity and the verbalism of his language sometimes hamper comprehension.

In the section on arithmetic he uses Diophantus as his source,<sup>18</sup> as well as Nicomachus Gerasenus. Elaborating on Diophantus' treatment, he manages to successfully solve the problem of second degree equations. Pachymeres was apparently familiar with the use of Arabic numerals (Hindu).<sup>19</sup> In the section on geometry, his main source are Euclid's theories, while in the section on astronomy he mentions a number of ancient astronomers like Aratus, Archimedes, Aristotle, Cleomedes, Euclid, Ptolemy and Theon. In the section on music, Pachymeres follows Ptolemy's views and treats music not as a servant of poetry but as a domain intimately connected to mathematics. His basic concepts are borrowed from the Pythagoreans, while he mentions Ptolemy, Aristoxenus, Aristotle, Philolaus the Pythagorean and Archytas by name. The section on music greatly influenced Manuel Bryennius, who cites several excerpts from this work in his *Harmonics*.<sup>20</sup>

The level of his *Quadrivium* is generally considered rather high. It is also valuable for the study of the sciences in Byzantium, for it reveals the ancient writers with whom the Byzantine scholars had contact. It has led to a more general study of the period and its characterization as 'Palaeologean Renaissance'.

## 2.3. Philosophical works

One of Pachymeres' most important philosophical texts is a presentation of the Aristotelian oeuvre, which also survives in a Latin translation, published by Arsenius of Monemvasia in 1548.<sup>21</sup> Its Latin title is *In Aristotelis philosophiam epitome*. It was probably the work of [Nikephoros Blemmydes](#) that incited him to compose this epitome. It comprises 12 books, divided into 238 chapters, in



which the author also incorporates various treatises on the mathematical sciences, like one on non-intersecting straight lines. This work is no mere synopsis of Aristotelian philosophy as it is supplemented by commentary and digressions of the author; it too proved very popular and was commented upon both in Byzantium and in the West.

## 2.4. Rhetorical works

Pachymeres' rhetorical works were probably composed to be used as textbooks when he was teaching in the Patriarchal Academy. They include: a) **progymnasmata**, after the model of Aphthonius, treating subjects also taken from ancient Greek writers' sayings, like Demosthenes' memorable phrase "there is a need for money, and without it none of what needs to be done can be done", b) thirteen "Studies", i.e. works which treat in a rhetorical manner subjects taken from politics, ethics and the laws.

## 2.5. Philological works

The most important philological work of Pachymeres is his commentary on [Homer's Iliad](#), composed in 1275-1276, a period during which Pachymeres was teaching in the Patriarchal Academy. These comments on the *Iliad*, together with a series of comments on the *Batrachomyomachia*, survive in a manuscript copied in the same period by Meletios, son of Neilos, and two other copiers.<sup>22</sup> The author's interest in Homer and his meticulous study of that poet can also be seen in another of his works, a poetic autobiography in hexameters, modelled after Homer and in the *Carmina de se ipso* of [Gregory of Nazianzos](#), which he incorporated into his history. His autobiography was also included in Macarios Chrysokephalos' *Rhodonias*,<sup>23</sup> an anthology of texts and excerpts from Classical Greek and Byzantine writers compiled between 1326-1336. Pachymeres' comments on Homer are also praised by his student, Manuel Philes, in the aforementioned epitaph. A poem on physics, again in hexameters, falls into the same category.

## 2.6. Other works

Pachymeres' oeuvre also includes comments and paraphrases of speeches and epistles of Dionysios the Aeropagites, which he probably composed on the recommendation of Athanasius, patriarch and pope of Alexandria, a letter to whom survives today.<sup>24</sup>

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1. He may have held this office since 1274 having previously been *didaskalos tou psaltiros*. See Constantinides, C.N., *Higher Education in Byzantium in the Thirteenth and early Fourteenth centuries (1204-ca.1310)* (Nicosia 1982), p. 60.

2. In this office he possibly succeeded Theodoros Skoutariotis, when the latter became bishop of Cyzicus.

3. See E. Miller (ed.), *Manuelis Philae Carmina ex Codicibus Escorialensibus, Florentinis, Parisinis et Vaticanis nunc primum*, (Paris 1855-1857, repr. Amsterdam 1967).

4. See the *Epitaph* dedicated to him by Philes in E. Miller (ed.), *Manuelis Philae Carmina ex Codicibus Escorialensibus, Florentinis, Parisinis et Vaticanis nunc primum*, (Paris 1855-1857, repr. Amsterdam 1967). His knowledge on jurisprudence should be taken for granted, as for a period of time he held the office of the *dikaiophylax*.

5. See Arnakis, G.G., "George Pachymeres - A Byzantine Humanist", *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* XII, no. 2 (1966-1967), pp. 161-167.

6. «Ἰστορίας γάρ, ὡς ἄν τις εἴποι, ψυχὴ ἢ ἀλήθεια, καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀληθείας χρῆμα ἐπάναγκες ἰερόν, ὃ δὲ πρὸ ταύτης τὸ ψεῦδος ἄγων ἄντικρυς ἰερόσυλος». Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaele et Andronico Paleologis* I (CSHB, Bonnae 1835), pp. 12, verses 11-13.

7. As he claims, «ἀλλ' αὐτόπτης τὰ πλεῖστα, οὐ τω ξυμβάν, γεγωνῶς», see Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaele et Andronico Paleologis* I (CSHB, Bonnae 1835), p. 12.

8. As in the case of the description of the riots of the peasants in Trikokkia (Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaele et Andronico Paleologis* I



[CSHB, Bonnae 1835], pp. 193-201), of the panic stirred in Nicaea due to the Ottoman threat (ibid, pp. 246-250) or of the arrival of refugees to Constantinople from Asia Minor (Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaelle et Andronico Paleologis* II [CSHB, Bonnae 1835], pp. 335).

9. «Προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου τὰ χεῖρω καὶ ἔτι ξυμβαίνειν [...] εἰς τόδε ξυμορφᾶς τὰ πράγματα προελθεῖν». See Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaelle et Andronico Paleologis* I (CSHB, Bonnae 1835), p. 13.

10. Like the appearance of a comet in 1264 and in 1301 (Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaelle et Andronico Paleologis* II [CSHB, Bonnae 1835], p. 304) and a lunar eclipse in 1302 (ibid., p. 306).

11. Such paradoxes he considers the crying icon of the Virgin Mary, the bleeding icon of St George, a.o.

12. Like the description of the giraffe presented by the sultan of Ethiopia to Michael VIII in 1257. See Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaelle et Andronico Paleologis* I (CSHB, Bonnae 1835), p. 177-178.

13. Pachymeres thinks that all people should be characterized by philanthropy and graceful charity; man's mission is to benefit others. See Georgii Pachymeris, *De Michaelle et Andronico Paleologis* I (CSHB, Bonnae 1835), pp. 189, 320.

14. See Zachariadou, E., "Observations on some turcica of Pachymeres", *Revue des Études Byzantines* 36 (1978), pp. 261-267.

15. The months Pachymeres' uses are the following: Hecatombaion, Lenaios, Cronios, Boedromion, Pyanepsion, Maemacterion, Anthesterion, Poseideon, Gamelion, Elaphebolion, Mounychion and Scirophorion. On this issue generally see Arnakis, G., "The names of the months in the History of G. Pachymeres", *Byzantinisch-Neugriechische Jahrbücher* 18, pp. 144-153.

16. *Patrologia cursus completus*, ed. J.P. Migne (Series graeca 19, Paris 1857-1906), pp. 1168-1216.

17. *Quadrivium de Georges Pachymère*, ed. P. Tannery (Città del Vaticano 1940), pp. 5, 6.

18. The author had delved into Diophantus, paraphrasing the first book of his *Arithmetic*. See *Diophanti Alexandrini Opera Omnia* I, ed. P. Tannery (Leipzig 1893-1895), pp. 78-122. The paraphrase was also reprinted in the *Quadrivium de Georges Pachymère*, ed. P. Tannery (Città del Vaticano 1940), ch. 25-44.

19. See Tannery, P., "Les chiffres arabes dans le manuscrits grecs", *Mémoires* 4 (1920), pp. 199-205.

20. See *Μανουήλ Βρνεβνίου Αρμονικά*, ed. G.H. Jonker (Groningen 1970).

21. The Latin translation of this work was published by Philippus Becchius, *Georgii Pachymerii hieromnemonis in universam fere Aristotelis philosophiam epitome* (Basel 1560).

22. *Cod. Ambros. gr.* 450 (I 4 sup.).

23. *Cod. Marc. gr.* 452 (collocazione 796).

24. *Cod. Paris. gr.* 996, 275-76.

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Pachymeres, Georgios

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## Γλωσσάριο :



	<b>didaskalos tou apostolou</b>
A title denoting a cleric who taught in the Patriarchal School of Constantinople theology or secular subjects. It usually led to higher posts in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.	
	<b>dikaiophylax</b>
A title conferred by the emperor to an ecclesiastical or a civil official. The dikaiophylax acted as a judge in cases of ecclesiastical nature, demanding for a knowledge of civil and canonical right.	
	<b>enkyklios education</b>
The secondary education in Byzantium. The students, from 12 years old, were taught grammar, rhetorics and eloquence.	
	<b>filioque</b>
<i>Filioque</i> means "and [from] the son" in Latin, and it refers to the procession of the Holy Spirit. It was the diversive difference between the Roman and the Eastern Church and triggered, among other things, the Great Schism (1054): the Roman Church had added it to the Nicene Creed, but the Eastern Church never accepted the addition.	
	<b>hiera grammata</b>
(lit. holy writings, i.e. the Scripture) The term denotes the elementary education in Byzantium. Pupils began in the age of six years old and were taught reading from the Scriptures and basic math operations by a private tutor.	
	<b>hieromnemon</b>
An ecclesiastical official responsible for the public cult. On very rare occasions, the office was given to non-clerics, too.	
	<b>progymnasmata</b>
A method - compilation of models - fundamental to the teaching of prose composition and rhetorics in general.	
	<b>protekdikos</b>
An ecclesiastical official of Constantinople. Between the 12th and the 15th century, the protekdikos was responsible for the protection of those who sought sanctuary in the church of Hagia Sophia.	
	<b>tomos</b>
A term denoting the official ecclesiastical acts.	

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