

Tarasios Encyclopedia Article

Tarasios

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Tarasios

TARASIOS (c. 730–806), patriarch of Constantinople from 784 to 806. Tarasios was born to a prominent family in Constantinople. His father, Georgios, had served as a judge and prefect (mayor) of the capital. Tarasios was excellently trained in theology and secular learning, which helped him to rise in both the civil and ecclesiastical ranks. During the reign of Leo IV and his wife Irene, Tarasios was chief secretary (*protoasikritis*) of the imperial court, perhaps from 775 to 784, when he was ordained and elevated to the patriarchal throne. His speedy elevation to the ranks of the priesthood was not unusual in the Byzantine church even though it was objected to by several iconophiles.

As patriarch, Tarasios became instrumental in the convocation of the Second Council of Nicaea in 787, which condemned iconoclasm. Not only was he the power behind the council, but it was on that occasion that the right of presiding over a council was transferred entirely to the patriarch. Tarasios, a prudent man, proved moderate in his policies toward both the problems of the imperial house and the iconoclastic controversy. His moderation was perceived as laxity, and Tarasios was attacked by the rigorous monastic party of Theodore of Studios.

Tarasios fostered the building of social welfare institutions, including a hospital and homes for the poor. He restored good relations with Rome and upon his death was honored by both the Greek and the Latin churches. Only a few of his letters and a sermon survive. His biography, which constitutes an important source for the period, was written by Deacon Ignatios.

Bibliography

Sources for Tarasios's writings are *Patrologia Graeca*, edited by J. P. Migne, vol. 98 (Paris, 1860), cols. 1423–1500, containing his *Apologeticus ad populum*, *Epistolae*, and *Oratio*; and *Les Régestes des actes du patriarcat de Constantinople*, edited by Venance Grumel, vol. 1 (Istanbul, 1936), pp. 12–22. References to Tarasios may be found in Hans Georg Beck's *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Munich, 1959), p. 489; Iōannēs Karaiannopoulos's *Pegai tēs Buzantines historias*, 4th ed. (Thessaloniki, 1978), p. 215; and S. Efstratiades's *Hagiologion tēs orthodoxou ekklesias* (Athens, 1935), pp. 445–446.