

## Codifying the Academic Contribution of AIMS

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The Australian Institute of Macedonian Studies (AIMS) is celebrating its 30th anniversary; during that time its entire focus has been the history, language, heritage and culture of Macedonia from ancient to modern times. This has been achieved by organising international conferences, publishing books and academic journals, inviting noted scholars to present public lectures at Australian Universities and Greek Community and contributing to the cultural life of the Greek-Australian community.

### A: Conferences

In 1988, 1991 and 1995, AIMS organised three international conferences one at La Trobe University and the other two at the University of Melbourne. The first Conference was held at Latrobe University between February 4–12, 1988, with scholars from both Greece and Australia. There were presentations from the fields of linguistics, archaeology, political science, ancient and modern history, literature, sociology and folklore. Some notable presenters were Drs Evangelos Kofos and Polychronis Enepekidis. Besides the success of the conference, the Macedoslavs staged a large protest marching through the Agora Plaza inside La Trobe University campus with flags protesting against the staging of the conference. With banners and provocative slogans, they claimed the Greeks had no right to stage a conference using the name of Macedonia. This protest attracted wide media coverage in the mainstream press and television news in Australia.

The second conference focused on ancient Macedonia's history and archaeology which took place between July 8–13, 1991, organised in collaboration with Professor Dimitri Pantermalis. Professor Nicholas Hammond officially opened the conference in the great hall of the National Gallery of Victoria with a large audience in attendance. He described some of his archaeological work carried out in Northern Greece. Other keynote speakers included Professors E. Borza, R. M. Errington and D. Pantermalis.

The theme of the third conference was Byzantine Macedonia was held between July 10–15, 1995 and was organised in collaboration with Prof. Phaedon Malingoudis. The official opening of the conference took place at the National Gallery of Victoria with famous Byzantinist scholar. Professor Johannes Koder (University of Vienna) delivering a lecture titled: “The Macedonians and Macedonia in the Byzantine field of thought”. Professor Phaedon Malingoudis (University of Thessalonika) was the best known of the Greek scholars. There were forty-four specialists who presented papers covering economics, administration and history of Byzantine Macedonia. Some scholars from Skopje participated to highlight the scientific nature of the conference, thus avoiding any accusations of being a propaganda event.

## B: Publications

The proceedings of the three conferences have been published, making them available to scholars and the general public interested in Macedonian studies in its various manifestations. In the first case, the 1988 conference proceedings appeared under the title *Macedonian Hellenism* compiled by A. M. Tamis published by River Seine Press in 1990 which contained some of the following papers: “Post-war literary and publishing activity in Florina”; “Death of Alexander the Great: clinical reappraisal”; “Linguistic unification of Macedonia”; and “Insurrectionary movements in Macedonia during the early Ottoman period”.

The second conference proceedings titled *Ancient Macedonia an Australian Symposium* published in 1994 was edited by Peter J. Connor which contained eleven contributions. Here is a sample of some of the papers: Eugene N. Borza, “The ancient Macedonians; a methodological model”; Greg Horsley, “The Politarchs in Macedonia and beyond (pls. 7–14)”; Nicholas Hammond, “Macedonia before Philip and Philip’s first year in power”; and Ian Worthington, “Alexander and Athens in 324/3”. It should be noted the entire conference proceedings were dedicated to Nicholas Hammond.

The proceedings of the third conference titled *Byzantine Macedonia Identity, Image and History: Papers from the Melbourne Conference July 1995* edited by John Burke and Roger Scott listed nineteen papers. A sample of these included: Angeliki Laiou, “Thessaloniki and Macedonia in the Byzantine period”; Gerhard Podskalsky, “Two Archbishops of Achrída (Ochrid) and their significance for Macedonia’s secular and church history”; and Johannes Koder, “Macedonians and Macedonia in Byzantine spatial thinking”. All the conference proceedings show clearly the Greekness of Macedonia presented through the contributions of various non-Greek specialists.

Professor Anastasios M. Tamis, the President of AIMS, has written many books on Macedonian Hellenes in Australia and the Greek diaspora. His book titled *Greeks in the Far Orient* in Greek is the first publication that documents the Greek diaspora in Manchuria (China), Japan, Philippines, India and Korea using Japanese and Chinese sources from the late 19th century till recent times. He described how these expatriate Greeks managed to survive and maintain

their language, customs and religion in what sometimes was a hostile environment towards foreigners. Many of these Greeks became successful business entrepreneurs in the Far East. His book on the Greeks in Latin America depicts and documents the migration and settlement experience of approximately 40,000 Hellenes, of whom at least 4,000 were Macedonians.

Another groundbreaking book is Tamis' titled *Macedonian Hellenes in Oceania* which documents the migration and settlement of Macedonian Greeks in Australia from 1924–2005. The former Victorian State Premier, Jeff Kennett officially launched this book on Greek Independence Day on 25 March 2015, at Alphington Grammar school. This publication describes community life, the establishment of community organisations, networks and prominent community members and also ventures into the realm of political science of intergroup conflict between Greeks and Macedoslavs. There are many photographs which enhance this very good publication. At the Adelaide book launch, Senator Nick Xenophon of South Australia stated that “this is a landmark book not just about Macedonian Greeks in our region but also about the broader contribution Hellenism has made. It is significant because it tells stories that need to be told and recorded in what is a historical document.”

AIMS publishes a peer review journal covering articles on different aspects of Macedonia. All submitted articles undergo a peer-review process before being accepted for publication. Its July 1994 titled *Journal of the Australian Institute of Macedonian Studies*, Volume 2, number 1 edition contained articles written both in English and Greek. One of the Greek articles is by Phaedon Malingoudis, “Linguistic Norm and National Identity” and three English ones by Costas Allimonos, “An Understanding of the ‘Macedonian Problem’”; A. M. Tamis, “Macedonia: the most blood-soaked region of Greece”, and S. Stavridis, “Asia Minor Campaign Revisited”. The Stavridis article highlighted that many Asia Minor refugees settled in Macedonia.

Since 2014, AIMS' official publication has been renamed *Macedonian Studies Journal*, Volume 1, issue 2 (2014) contained the following articles: John Melville-Jones, “The Borders of ancient Macedonia I”; A. M. Tamis, “Macedonian Hellenes”; Christopher A. Matthews, “Alexander-the Great Tactician”; Marcus A. Templar, “Skopje's Political Efficiency”; Terry Stavridis, “The Greek-Americans and Balkan Wars 1912–13”; and Eugenia Zaliou-Basiakouli, “Women and costumes of Naousa, the end of an era”.

The 2016 Volume 1, issue:3 comprised of the following pieces: Loukianos Hassiotis, “Macedonia in the Great War (1914–18)”; Ioannis Mourellos, “The Salonica theatre of operations and its parts in the outcome of the First World War”; Vlassis Vlassidis, “Constructing and maintaining Commonwealth WW1 cemeteries in Greece 1920–40”; John Melville-Jones, “The borders of Ancient Macedonia II”; Angelos A. Chotzidis, “Demonstrations in Macedonia in the era of the Young Turks”; Stavroula Mavrogeni, “Public art in FYROM; The Museum for the Macedonian Struggle”; and Evangelos Kofos, “Macedonia's name”.

It is clear that the journal articles cover Macedonia's history from antiquity until modern times.

### C. Public Lectures

AIMS invites leading scholars from Greece to present public lectures at Australian Universities and to the Greek community. During the last thirty years AIMS invited more than 200 distinguished scholars, academicians, researchers and prominent academics from all over the world. Among those who had been invited were included Prof. G. Babiniotis, Prof. M. Damanakis, Prof. Artemis Xanthopoulou-Kyriacou, Prof. I. Hassiotis, Prof. E. Chryssos, Prof. Evangelos Constantinou, Prof. A. Manthos, Rector of the AUTH. In November 2006, Professor of Linguistics, George Babiniotis held a series of public lectures and seminars in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. His visit was sponsored by AIMS and Nafsika Stamoulis Museum. Babiniotis is highly respected academician in linguistics both inside and outside Greece.

Professor Iakovos Michaelidis presented the following lectures on 13–20 November 2011: *Greece as a factor in the stability of the Balkans* at Notre Dame University, Fremantle, WA; *Greece and the Balkans: Divergence v Convergence*, Pan Macedonian House, Melbourne; a round table discussion in English and Greek with the topic: *Current trends in Balkan Politics: the case of FYROM and Greece* with Professor Michaelidis, Professor Tamis, Terry Stavridis, Panayiotis Gogidis took place at Pan Macedonian House, Melbourne; and AHEPA building in Sydney with the topic *Greece and the Balkans: Divergence v Convergence*.

Another noted Greek historian, Professor Ioannis Mourellos visited the antipodes in October 2016. He presented a series of public lectures at Notre Dame University, Melbourne and Sydney. In Melbourne, his lecture titled *Periodisation of Contemporary Greek history* gave new insights into modern Greek historiography, especially in defining and categorising particular periods. He considered the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922 as a defining moment in Greece's modern history. His presentation on the Salonika front in World War 1 was most illuminating with the involvement of great powers on Greek soil and Premier Venizelos' differences with King Constantine. The unseen fully digitised film from the French military archives greatly enhanced his lecture. It was fascinating watching this film highlighting the disembarkation of allied troops in the port of Salonika, the theatre of war on the Macedonia front, and the most notable image being the landing of French Colonial troops from Indo-China.

Other public lectures were given by Dr Theodora Constantinidis who presented *What hides behind the walls of the graves at Amphipolis* at Pan Macedonian Building on April 19, 2016, and the former Greek female Olympic gold medallist, Voula Patoulidou who gave a talk at Alphington Grammar on March 24, 2016.

AIMS committee members have presented public lectures over the years. Terry Stavridis presented two PowerPoint lectures on the Greek-American community during the Balkan Wars 1912–3 and Asia Minor in 2011 and 2015 respectively. On November 18, 2016, Dr Vasilis Sarafidis gave a wonderful lecture on Asia Minor at the Greek Center organised by Thessaloniki Association “The White Tower” in conjunction with the Greek Community of Melbourne and Hellenic Women's Cultural Association-Estia.

Our two women committee members Theofani Karabatsas and Helen Kalaboukas presented a joint lecture on Manto Mavrogenous, the heroine of the Greek War of Independence along with a short Greek film on the life of this incredible woman in March 2015. The lecture was well-received by the audience.

### C: Cultural Life

The greatest cultural event in the history of AIMS was the concert titled *Alexander the Great: Pioneering Multiculturalism* held at the Melbourne Recital Center on October 26, 2016. Composer Christos Ioannidis should be congratulated in producing a fine original piece of music which was well received by the audience. Douglas Heywood conducted the twenty-five piece *Camareta Orchestra* including a fifty-two member choir. There was a “complimentary program that all guests... [received] as a keep safe of this cultural concert with detail lyrics, songs and excerpts of poetry that ... [was] recited in both English and Greek”. It was a memorable night never to be forgotten.

This concert took twelve months of planning and discussions between AIMS and the composer. Many local Greek businesses, community and sporting organisations sponsored this event.

### D: Community Engagement

Regrettably, certain Australian politicians made comments supporting FYROM as the Republic of Macedonia which greatly angered the Greek-Australian community. The former Federal MP for Cowan in WA, Luke Simpkins told Federal parliament on March 17, 2015, urging “his colleagues in Government for Australia to recognise FYROM as the Republic of Macedonia which is its Constitutional name.” He argued that 150 nations had recognised FYROM as Macedonia and that Greek-Australians had “bigger issues in their lives than this to worry about.”

In an interview with *Neos Kosmos* on April 1, 2015, Professor A. M. Tamis regarded Simpkins comments as “superficial and provocative” and “the name issue [had] nothing to do with politics and diplomatic recognitions. It is an anthropological and ethnographic one.” The idea “that a small group of Greek nationalists are only keen and sensitive on the issue of ‘Macedonia’ is absurd and fallacious.” There is no way the Greek-Australian community would compromise their heritage and history by handing over this part of Greece to its northern neighbour.

Another politician, Alannah MacTiernan of Perth, believed that Greece’s opposition threatened “the very existence of the Republic of Macedonia” and failed to mention that Greek investment plays an important part in FYROMs economy. Drs Anastasios Panagiotelis and Vasilis Sarafidis of AIMS were highly critical of MacTiernan’s position and provided historical evidence of the Greekness of Macedonia and that Greece harboured no ill-will towards its neighbour. Athens wanted a resolution to the name issue which could not drag on indefinitely.



AIMS committee members used historical evidence and data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics to debunk the claims of Simpkins and MacTiernan and that the Greek-Australian community would not stand idly by seeing its history and the Star of Vergina being claimed by FYROM. It is important for AIMS to inform the wider Australian community through the press and social media on the Macedonian issue.

In conclusion, AIMS has accomplished many milestones in its thirty-year history through its international conferences, publications and community involvement. It has stuck to its role as an academic organisation by contributing to the study of Macedonia through various thematic perspectives. At no stage has it ever engaged in polemics or propaganda but stuck to its mission as an academic organisation.

