



Summary :

A merchant from Ioannina, Tsakalof was one of the leading figures of the Society of Friends (Filiki Etaireia). After determined society activity in Paris, he participated in the founding of the Etaireia in Odessa; this was followed by intense conspiratorial actions and his descent to the rebelled Greek area. He ended up in Moscow where he died.

Other Names

Tzakaloglou-Tekelis

Date and Place of Birth

1790, Ioannina

Date and Place of Death

1851, Moscow

Main Role

Merchant, founding member of the Society of Friends (Filiki Etaireia).

1. Youth

The youngest of the three founders of the [Filiki Etaireia](#) (Society of Friends) was Athanasios Tsakalof who was born in Ioannina in 1790 and was a member of the prosperous Tekelis family. Following in the footsteps of settlers from Epirus he sought his fortune outside the Ottoman dominion.

His father Nikiphoros Tekelis came from Tyrnavos and became involved with the fur trade in Ioannina. There he married Vasiliki Gogou, who belonged to one of the area's distinguished families. Athanasios attended the Maroutsia School run by Athanasios Psalidas. Under unresolved circumstances,¹ however, he left Ioannina and fled to Moscow to be near his father. He later went to Paris in order to study physical sciences. There he came into contact with the [Ellinoglosson Xenodocheion](#) circle headed by count Choiseul Gouffier whose members included both Greeks and French philhellenes and of which he became a member. He also participated in the founding of another society with activities within the Greek Diaspora, the Benevolent Society (*Philanthropos Etaireia*). Tsakalof's associational activity in Paris played an important role in the later establishment of the Filiki Etaireia.

In 1813 Tsakalof left Paris and went to Moscow where his family lived. During the same year he travelled for business to [Odessa](#) where he met [Nikolaos Skoufas](#). Through him he also met [Emmanouil Xanthos](#). He later worked as supervisor in an Odessa firm, possibly after his family became bankrupt.

In September 1814 Skoufas and Tsakalof departed for Moscow in order to perfect, according to Xanthos and his memoirs,² the Society's charter while the latter in December of the same year departed for [Constantinople](#) (Istanbul). Tsakalof's contribution to the perfection of the charter, because of his aforementioned activities in Paris, was particularly important.³

2. Constantinople: Reactivation within the Society

Apart from his contribution to the configuration and perfection of the Charter of the Filiki Etaireia, Tsakalof did not develop notable political activity in Moscow. He returned to Odessa in July 1817 more mature but lacking the enthusiasm of a youthful revolutionary. He met Skoufas who revealed his vision for opening out the Society to the population and armed factions in Greece and the transferral of its headquarters to Mani in the Peloponnese. Tsakalof was hesitant. He suggested that they think things through better and, if necessary, dissolve the Society temporarily. Skoufas' enthusiasm however finally convinced Tsakalof to continue toward the realization of their aim. He later departed for Constantinople in order to meet Xanthos.⁴



His arrival in Constantinople essentially signaled his active participation in the Society. During his short stay he developed intense conspiratorial activity, changed houses and names and worked for the Society's aims. At the end of 1817 he departed for Milies on Mount Pelion with Anthimos Gazis. He later toured the coast of the Pagasitikos Gulf, Macedonia and Thrace, in order to initiate new members.

In April 1817 he travelled to [Smyrna](#) on Society business. Events however forced him to hasten his return to Constantinople a few days before the death of Nikolaos Skoufas. His loss resulted in Tsakalof and Xanthos taking over the reigns of the Society. Among the problems they faced was the search for a leader, as well as the case of Nikolaos Galatis who was blackmailing Society members, threatening to inform the Ottoman authorities.⁵ Galatis' behavior had gone too far and for this reason the leading group decided to eliminate him. On the contrary, E. Moraitinis-Patriarcheas, in his monograph on Nikoloas Galatis, supports that disputes around the issue of leadership of the Society following Nikolaos Skoufas' death were what led to Galatis' execution.⁶

3. Ermioni – Mani – Pisa

As a pretense for Galatis' elimination, a mission to Morea was devised in December 1818. Athanasios Tsakalof, Panagiotis Dimitropoulos, Nikolaos Galatis and the servant Dimitrios Koutmas took part in the mission. On Ermioni beach Galatis and Koutmas were both executed by Panagiotis Dimitropoulos in Tsakalof's presence. After Galatis' execution, Tsakalof and Dimitropoulos decided to flee to Mani.⁷

Petrobeis Mavromichalis, who was expecting financial support from Tsakalof for the organization of the military struggle and initially was unaware of events, asked the fugitives to depart for Italy where they would be safer.

In November 1819 Tsakalof and Dimitropoulos arrived in Pisa and came into contact with Alexandros Mavrokordatos and the bishop of Hungro-Wallachia, Ignatios, as well as Kostakis Karatzas, son of the prince of Wallachia Ioannis Karatzas, whom Tsakalof initiated into the Society. A few months later (April 1820) Panagiotis Anagnostopoulos also arrived in Pisa. Tsakalof and Anagnostopoulos' contact with the so-called "circle of Pisa"⁸ alienated the two leading members of the Filiki Etaireia from the Ypsilantis faction.

4. Participation in the Revolution

Following the declaration of the Greek Revolution in the Principalities, Tsakalof and Anagnostopoulos departed for Moldova and Wallachia. Because of a sudden illness, however, Tsakalof remained in Vienna for some time before his arrival at Alexandros Ypsilantis' camp; there he was declared second commander of the Sacred Band (*Ieros Lochos*). After the battle of Dragatsani during which, according to one opinion, he was injured, he travelled to the Peloponnese and offered his services to Dimitrios Ypsilantis.

There is no information on his activity during the Greek War of Independence apart from the report that in September 1823 he was appointed a member of the "Three-member Provincial Judiciary of Salamina". During Ioannis Kapodistrias' government he served as officer of the [Genikon Frontistirion](#) while he was also a representative of Epirus at the 4th National Assembly in Argos.

5. The final period of Tsakalof's life

After Ioannis Kapodistrias' assassination, a frustrated Tsakalof departed for Moscow (summer 1832) where he married and remained until his death "living in peace and quiet".⁹ The only contact he kept with Greek reality was his sparse correspondence with Emmanouil Xanthos.

Ioannis Filimon, who knew Athanasios Tsakalof personally, has spoken of a "man of great discretion, who was always thoughtful and avoided pretension".¹⁰ It is indicative that until the end of his life he never referred publicly to his activities as a member of the Filiki Etaireia.



1. According to a tradition which cannot however be checked for accuracy, the young man's beauty attracted the attention of Muhtar paşa, whose men kidnapped Athanasios. His mother however, with the intervention of one of Ali's officers managed to free him and hide him for several months in a secure place, from where his father managed to take him to Moscow. See Γούδας, Α., *Βίοι παράλληλοι των επί της αναγεννήσεως της Ελλάδας διαπρέψαντων ανδρών*, Ε (Athens 1872), p. 23-24, and Πρωτοψάλτης, Ε.Γ., *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, (Athens 1964), p. 22-25.
2. See Ξάνθος, Εμμ., *Απομνημονεύματα περί Φιλικής Εταιρείας*, (Athens 1845), p. 4. Regarding Tsakalof and Skoufas' passage to Moscow, Filimon states that Skoufas was summoned there by the Commercial Bank because of the bankruptcy of his family's business (Φιλήμων, Ι., *Δοκίμιον ιστορικών περί Φιλικής Εταιρείας*, (Nafplio 1834), p. 178), while Svolopoulos mentions that while in the Russian town, they defined the framework and processed the plan of action of the Society which was essentially inaugurated a year after Moscow and, mainly in Odessa; Σβολόπουλος, Κ., «Η σύσταση της Φιλικής Εταιρείας: Μια επαναπροσέγγιση», *Τα Ιστορικά* 18:35 (2001), p. 291.
3. The Filiki Etaireia had much in common regarding its structure and organization with the "Ellinoglosson Xenodocheion" of which Athanasios Tsakalof was a member. It has been suggested that Tsakalof transplanted the idea behind the Parisian society to Odessa because in the secret code of the members of the Filiki Etaireia he is mentioned with initials A.B. which express his top position in the Society. See Πρωτοψάλτης, Ε.Γ., *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, (Athens 1964), p. 24.
4. The leading group's journey to Constantinople could be connected to their fear of possible arrest following Galatis' activity in Petersburg and the Danubian Principalities which had attracted the attention of the Russian police.
5. See Ξάνθος, Εμμ., *Απομνημονεύματα περί Φιλικής Εταιρείας*, (Athens 1845), p. 13.
6. Μωραϊτίνης-Πατριαρχάς, Ε., *Νικόλαος Γαλάτης ο Φιλικός: Ιστορική Μονογραφία*, (Athens 2002).
7. At the same time, the representative of the Ottoman governor of the Peloponnese (*Mora valisi*) asked the dignitaries of Hydra for information on the incident following the account by Antonis Kalogiannis, a boatman from Kranidi. Tsakalof hid at the house of the Spetsan Georgios Panos and escaped to Monemvasia and then to the Mani in his boat.
8. In 1819, Alexandros Mavrokordatos, while accompanying his uncle Ioannis Karatzas, ex-prince of Wallachia, who had fallen out of favour with the Sultan, arrived in Pisa, Italy. He stayed at the house of the bishop of Hungro-Wallachia Ignatios. Events connected to Alexandros Mavrokordatos' and Konstantinos Karatzas' initiation are mentioned in a letter from Theodoros Negris from Iaşi to the Authority on 12 April 1819: «... Mavrokordatos and prince Karatzas were initiated...» Despite their initiation into the Etaireia, both Alexander Mavrokordatos and bishop Ignatios were opposed to the proposed date for the declaration of the Revolution and openly criticized Alexandros Ypsilantis' personality and actions. The group which consisted of Mavrokordatos, Ignatios and Theodoros Negris was named "the circle of Pisa" and was, throughout the struggle for independence, the opposing force to the Ypsilantis faction. See Πρωτοψάλτης, Ε.Γ., *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, (Athens 1964), p. 12 ff.
9. Γούδας, Α., *Βίοι παράλληλοι των επί της αναγεννήσεως της Ελλάδας διαπρέψαντων ανδρών*, Ε (Athens 1872), p. 42.
10. Πρωτοψάλτης, Ε.Γ., *Η Φιλική Εταιρεία*, (Athens 1964), p. 22-25.

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Glossary :

	Ellinoglosson Xenodocheion Secret society established in 1809 by Greeks of the Paris Diaspora. The association's official purpose was the study of the ancient Greek civilization. In fact, the association was the cover for conspirational activity within the secret society framework. Its president was Choiseul Gouffier, the French philhellene, while Athanasios Tsakalof, following founding member of the Filiki Etaireia was member of the leadership.
	Genikon Frontistirion Controlling body of the military financial services. It was instituted in 1828 by Ioannis Kapodistrias.

Sources

Ξάνθος, Εμμ., *Απομνημονεύματα περί Φιλικής Εταιρείας* (Athens 1845).