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Venerable Anatolie Tihai: Romanian missionary to Japan commemorated at Balti



Bishop Antonie of Balti last Thursday officiated a memorial service for Archimandrite Anatolie Tihai at the Nativity of the Lord Church in the city of Balti, Republic of Moldova, marking the 126th anniversary of the repose of this important Romanian Orthodox missionary to Japan.

Venerable Anatolie was born in 1838 in the village Tărăsăuţi in Hotin County (Bukovina). He attended the primary school in Balti. He graduated from the Theological Seminary in Chisinau and the Kiev Theological Academy founded by Saint Peter Mogila.

He lived in Mount Athos for four years, where he received the monastic tonsure in 1865 at Zographou Monastery. There he learned Greek and Bulgarian, as well as Byzantine painting.

He was later sent to assist the Equal-to-the-Apostles Saint Nicholas Kasatkin in his missionary work to Japan, becoming his closest collaborator.

Hieromonk Anatolie arrived to Japan in December 1871, while St Nicholas's activities were still concentrated in the Hakodate area, Hokkaido Island. He was a

parish priest of the Orthodox Church and superior of the Hakodate Missionary Centre (1872-1878), a professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Japan (Surugadai Kanda, Tokyo), the founder of the Osaka church (1878), a leader of the Russian Orthodox Mission in Japan (1879-1881), professor and director of the Osaka Catechetical School (1882-1889).

In 1880, Venerable Anatolie was elevated to the rank of archimandrite. In the late 1880s, his health began to worsen, and in the summer of 1890 he returned to Russia, where he reposed in the Lord on November 28, 1893.

When he went to Japan, the Anatolie found only 50 Orthodox Christians, but when he left Japan, the congregation comprised over 20,000 Orthodox faithful.



Venerable Anatolie Tihai was a polyglot, knowing, besides the mother tongue, several foreign languages including Russian, Greek, Japanese, Bulgarian, English and Church Slavonic, having good knowledge of French, German and Chinese.

He undertook several missionary trips throughout Japan, including one to China (1888). Two journals written by Anatolie Tihai are available today. The first missionary journal of Anatolie Tihai was published in a bilingual Romanian-Japanese edition, at the Publishing House of the Diocese of Balti, in 2018, with the blessing of His Grace Bishop Antonie.

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