The Byzantine *Euchologion*

by

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The *Euchologion* is a codex that contains a collection of prayers. The composite word is made from the Greek words *εὐχή* (prayer) and *λόγιον* (collection). It is the Prayer Book used bishops, priests and deacons for all kinds of *Ἀκολουθίαι* in the Byzantine Rite, such as the Holy Mysteries, the Offices and other Prayers.

In this article Filias first discusses the content of the Euchologion followed by its origins, evolution and history. He places the manuscript tradition into groups according to textual content. Focus is then given to the liturgical function of the Euchologion and related codex structures with examples of problems concerning nomenclature. The article ends with an outline of scholarly research in particular most recent studies along with a useful appendix exhibiting the contents of a Euchologion.

The text of each Prayer in the Euchologion almost always contains references to scriptural passages and biblical events, as well as praises and thanksgiving to God for His benefactions, and finally petitions to God. Every single Prayer is constructed in a dialogical form between God and man. Prayers are usually written down in small groups, each group constituting a different Service, such as the Holy Liturgy, the rite of Baptism, Vespers, Matins, the Great Blessing of Waters on Theophany, the rite of Matrimony, and the Burial Service. A *Euchologion* also includes rubrics or liturgical instructions for the proper performance of Services, independent from the rest of its contents.

During the first five centuries there was freedom in the recitation of Prayers, and writing them down for reciting was unnecessary. Gradually, standard Prayers were written, as in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolyte of Rome (third century) and in the *Sacramentary* of Serapion (Egypt, fourth century). The oldest Greek manuscript of the *Euchologion* is Codex Barberinianus graecus 336 of the Vatican Library (8th century). Byzantine manuscript *Euchologia* can be divided into two periods: from the eighth to the fourteenth century and after the fourteenth century. Used in monasteries for the Eucharist and for all the other regular daily or special Services the *Euchologion* became more and more monastic in character as the Palestinian Hours introduced by the Studite monasteries of Constantinople gradually merged with elements of the Cathedral Hours to form a new hybrid monastic office in Constantinople.
Apart from the complete *Euchologia* and those *Euchologia* that contained everything else except the Holy Liturgies, portions of *Euchologia* were also in use, which contained for example only the Burial Services or only the Services of the Monastic Tonsure or various other collections or combinations of Services. There were also manuscripts, many of them in the form of scrolls containing only the Holy Liturgies, just one of them or even more than one. Some of the *Euchologia* include readings from the Epistles and the Gospels recited during the liturgical year. Also several *Euchologion* manuscripts have hymns and verses from the Psalter inserted between Prayers.

Recent advances in the study of Byzantine *Euchologion* manuscripts (Parenti and Velkovska 2000, Arranz 1996) confirm that Iconoclasm was a watershed in Byzantine liturgical history thus one may refer to a pre-iconoclastic and post-iconoclastic Euchology. The sources show clear traces of a liturgical reform, which began apparently with the victory over Iconoclasm, during the brief patriarchate of Methodios I (847). This reform gradually spread to the periphery where it was more conservative. The author follows Parenti in his division of “post-iconoclastic Euchology” in three traditions (Constantinopolitan, Italo-Greek, Byzantine-Palestinian) and several distinct types (cathedral, parochial, monastic, mixed, pontifical or presbyteral).

What was the liturgical function of the Euchologion? To answer Koumarianos turns to a note in *Euchologion* gr. 213 of the Coislin collection at the National Library of Paris, written in 1027 by a presbyter at the Great Church of Constantinople and the Patriarchal churches. From this note we learn:

a) every presbyter could also have his own *Euchologion*, which he would take wherever he would be invited to offer his liturgical services, and

b) kontakia or scrolls were used, in which one or more than one of the two Holy Liturgies and their related and special Services usually of the Great Lent, the *Tritoekti* and the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts, were written separately and exclusively. These kontakia, as shown here, were used during the celebration of the Liturgy not only by bishops but also by presbyters.

Two recently published scientific editions of the *Euchologion* provide a concise register of the titles and nomenclature of each Ακολουθία or Τάξις (Ordo, Service, Office) and each Εὐχή (Prayer) from the *Euchologion* manuscript tradition, which reveal the problems that contemporary scholars face in respect to nomenclature. Some Ordos do not have titles for example the Offices of the Day and Night Cycle, which are recorded in manuscripts as a series of related Prayers under titles that are similar to each other (Εὐχὴ α’ τοῦ λυχνικοῦ, Εὐχὴ ἐωθινὴ α’ and so on).
There are examples of similar Prayers found in varying forms such as a) The Vesting Prayers, which in later times appear in a more elaborate form as *Εὐχὴ τοῦ καιροῦ*; and b) The Prayers for Repentance and Confession, *(Μετάνοια, Ἐξομολόγησις)* which are found in several variants.

Early landmark studies on the Euchologion were those carried out by Panagiotis Trembelas (1935) followed by André Jacob (1965) and Miquel Arranz (1969). The two most recent published works on the content of Euchologion are by the Miquel Arranz (1996) and by Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska (2nd edition in 2000). However, there is still a lot of work to be done in the research field of each individual Ordo: its origin, its structure and its historical development. Another area of research is the relation of an Ordo with older forms of the Holy Liturgy as well as the issue of changes an Ordo has undergone as a result of its detachment or non-separation from the context of the Holy Liturgy.