

THE LITURGICAL FUNCTIONS OF CONSECRATED WOMEN IN THE BYZANTINE CHURCH

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[Although the ordained order of deaconesses vanished in the Byzantine Church, some women continued to fulfill, either informally or formally, various liturgical functions in public church life. The author examines¹ the art-historical and textual evidence of three groups of women: noblewomen who participated as incense-bearers in a weekly procession in Constantinople; matrons who helped organize and keep order in a monastic church open to the public in Constantinople; and the possibly ordained order of myrrhbearers in the Church of Jerusalem.]

WOMEN CONTINUED TO PLAY active and ecclesiastically recognized liturgical roles in the processions, vigils, and services of the Byzantine Church even during and after the decline of the ordained female diaconate by the late twelfth century.² The Byzantine Church, following historical

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¹ This article is developed from a chapter of the dissertation, Valerie A. Karras, "The Liturgical Participation of Women in the Byzantine Church" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2002) 136–63.

² It is impossible to date precisely the disappearance of the ordained female diaconate, but Theodore Balsamon, canonist and patriarch-in-exile of Antioch, writing from Constantinople in the late twelfth century, claimed that the office had devolved into an honorary title for certain nuns (Theodore Balsamon, *Scholia in concilium Chalcedonense*, in PG 137.441) and that deaconesses had no access to the altar (*Responsa ad interrogationes Marci* 35, in PG 138.988). By contrast, the ordination rite preserved in eighth-century to eleventh-century *euchologia* (books with collections of liturgical services) describes the ordination of the female deacon in a

Christian tradition,³ excluded women from the ordained orders of the presbyterate (priesthood) and the episcopate based on an anthropology of separate and unequal roles for the sexes,⁴ and grounded biblically in the Pauline prohibition against women speaking in church (1 Corinthians 14: 34), and particularly on the deutero-Pauline injunction against women teaching (1 Timothy 2:11-12), the latter argued as a result of woman's role in the Fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. The argument from 1 Timothy 2 was used, for example, by the late fourth/early fifth-century archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, specifically to justify the exclusion of women from the priesthood.⁵

manner virtually identical to that of the male deacon, including ordination at the altar during the liturgy and reception of the Eucharist there at the hands of the bishop. The eighth-century Barberini *euchologion*, the earliest extant, is published in *L'eucologio Barberini Gr. 336 (Ff. 1-263)*, ed. Stefano Parenti and Elena Velkovska, *Bibliotheca Ephemerides Liturgicae, Subsidia*, vol. 80 (Rome: C.L.V.—Edizioni Liturgiche, 1995) 185–88; the ordination rite for female deacons from the Grottaferrata G.b.I. manuscript (also known as the Bessarion Codex) is published in the 17th-century *Euchologion sive rituale Graecorum*, ed. Jacobus Goar, reprint 1960 (Graz: Akademische Druck-U. Verlagsanstalt, 1730) 218–22. For a fuller discussion, see Valerie A. Karras, “Female Deacons in the Byzantine Church,” *Church History* 73 (June 2004) 272–316, especially 309–14.

³ Although scholars such as Giorgio Otranto of the University of Bari, Italy, have argued on the basis of limited epigrammatic evidence that women were ordained to the priesthood and episcopacy in the early Christian Church, their views have not won wide acceptance within the academic community. Giorgio Otranto, “Note sul sacerdozio femminile nell’antichità in margine a una testimonianza di Gelasio I,” *Vetera Christianorum* 19 (1982) 341–60; Giorgio Otranto, “Il sacerdozio della donna nell’Italia meridionale,” in his *Italia meridionale e Puglia paleocristiane: Saggi storici* (Bari: Edipuglia, 1991) 95–121. An English translation of the former article appears in Mary Ann Rossi, “Priesthood, Precedent, and Prejudice: On Recovering the Women Priests of Early Christianity,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (Spring 1991) 75–94. See my evaluation of the arguments of Otranto and others in Valerie A. Karras, “Priestesses or Priests’ Wives? The *Presvytera* in Early Christianity,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* (forthcoming). I have not had the opportunity to review the evidence and analysis presented in a forthcoming book on this subject, *Ordained Women in the Early Church*, ed. and trans. Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, forthcoming spring 2005).

⁴ “Au total, dans ces brefs textes canoniques, l’exclusion du sacré apparaît plus comme un aspect de la répartition sexuelle (et inégale) des fonctions que comme une incapacité liée à la faiblesse féminine, qui serait, de la sorte, comparable aux prohibitions du droit impérial” (Joëlle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance [4e - 7e siècle]*, vol. 2, *Les pratiques sociales*, Trauvaux et mémoires 6 [Paris: De Boccard, 1992] 285). Similarly, Beaucamp asserts that “[I]’affirmation d’une répartition des rôles sociaux entre les deux sexes, si elle est moins fréquente que la référence à la faiblesse féminine, semble plus prégnante” (ibid. 289).

⁵ Chrysostom declared that “the divine law excluded women from this ministry. . . . Topsy-turvy . . . ‘the followers lead their leaders’—bad enough, if they were

However, the biblical injunctions against women speaking and teaching were not, even in apostolic times, interpreted as a complete exclusion of women from all liturgical and pastoral functions, including charismatic preaching and ecclesiastical offices. For example, the context of 1 Corinthians 14:34 clearly indicates that the “speaking” that was prohibited to women was of the question-and-answer variety, since the following verse instructed women to ask their husbands at home if they needed to know something. That the injunction was contextual is further supported, only three chapters earlier (1 Corinthians 11:5), by Paul’s directing women who prophesy to cover their heads. “Prophesying” was, of course, public preaching, particularly on moral issues, and the office of prophet was a charismatic office of the early Church.⁶ As for 1 Timothy, chapters 3 through 5 outline the qualifications and responsibilities of various clergy or officials in the church community. Among those discussed by the writer of the pastoral epistle are two groups of women: Widows (1 Timothy 5:1-16) and female deacons (1 Timothy 3:11)⁷. The consecrated, or “enrolled” (1 Timothy 5:9), order of Widows⁸ disappeared, judging from the lack of

men; but they are women, the very ones who are not even allowed to teach. Do I say ‘teach’? St Paul did not allow them even to speak in church” (*On the Priesthood* 3, 2 [PG 48.633]; English translation in John Chrysostom, *Six Books on the Priesthood*, trans. Graham Neville [Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1984] 78).

⁶ The literary evidence and single epigraphical example of female prophets in early Christianity are presented and discussed in Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity: Epigraphical and Literary Studies*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville: Liturgical, 2000) 63–87.

⁷ Dispute continues over the meaning of the phrase “[the] women likewise.” However, the placement of this phrase, in the very middle of the section on the diaconate, mitigates against interpreting it as a reference to the wives of deacons, particularly since no such reference to wives (or “women” in general) appears with respect to the episcopacy. See Martimort, *Deaconesses* 20–22, for a summary of the problems of interpretation. Kyriaki Karidoyanes FitzGerald reads it as a reference to female deacons, arguing in part on the basis of patristic interpretations of the passage (*Women Deacons in the Orthodox Church: Called to Holiness and Ministry* [Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox, 1998] 5–6, 9–10).

⁸ The most complete study on this consecrated order of older women is Bonnie Bowman Thurston, *The Widows: A Woman’s Ministry in the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); other studies include Steven L. Davies, *The Revolt of the Widows: The Social World of the Apocryphal Acts* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University, 1980); and Dennis MacDonald, “Virgins, Widows, and Paul in Second Century Asia Minor,” in *SBL 1979 Seminar Papers*, vol. 1, ed. Paul Achtemeier (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1979) 169–84. Roger Gryson discusses Widows as well as other orders (*The Ministry of Women in the Early Church*, trans. Jean Laporte and Mary Louise Hall [Collegeville: Liturgical, 1976]). My article follows the practice of several scholars in distinguishing, through the use of capitalization, between a generic “widow” (a woman whose husband has died), and a “Widow” (a woman who belongs to the consecrated order by that name).

extant evidence, sometime after the middle of the sixth century.⁹ In their lifestyle, their spirituality, and their pastoral and liturgical roles, though, they provided important links to two other women's orders on the rise from the late third or early fourth centuries: female monasticism and the ordained order of female deacons.¹⁰ Moreover, the liminal nature of the Widows—"enrolled" or consecrated, and with certain liturgical functions, but not ordained¹¹—prefigured the nature of consecrated or enrolled women serving similar functions in the Byzantine Church.

In the early Christian period, the various ordained and consecrated orders and informal roles that women played in church life reflected a variety of needs and concerns, including: (1) performance of pastoral and liturgical activities serving the needs of women in the community, particularly those needs created by the restrictions of Eastern Mediterranean societies that segregated and secluded women;¹² (2) recognition of women's historical

⁹ Justinian's Code provides specific penalties for the rape of women belonging to female ecclesiastical orders, including Widows. CJ 1,3,53; 9,13,1; in Joëlle Beaucamp, *Le statut de la femme à Byzance (4e - 7e siècle)*, vol. 1, *Le droit imperial* 119. Section 3 of the statute deals with virgins and nuns, section 4 with deaconesses, and section 5 with virgins, nuns, and others, including Widows. However, by this time, there is no longer any evidence of Widows serving liturgical or specifically mandated pastoral functions. It is likely that the order had already died out earlier in many places.

¹⁰ Susanna Elm, "Vergini, vedove, diaconesse: alcuni osservazioni sullo sviluppo dei cosiddetti 'ordini femminili' nel quarto secolo in Oriente," *Codex Aquilarensis* 5 (1991) 77–90. Much of this material is re-presented in Susanna Elm, "Virgins of God": *The Making of Asceticism in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University, 1994) chap. 5, "Parthenoi, Widows, Deaconesses: Continuing Variety" 137–83. See also Thurston, *Widows* 114–15.

¹¹ At least one exception to this rule appears in the Syrian community that was the source of the *Testamentum Domini*, a fifth-century document adapted from the third-century *Didascalia Apostolorum*. This church order gives an ordination rite for Widows, who rank higher than deaconesses in this particular community and actually seem to be the equivalent of deaconesses in other church orders, such as the *Apostolic Constitutions*. See *Testamentum Domini nostri Jesu Christi*, ed. and trans. Ignatius Ephraem II Rahmani (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1899; reprint Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1968) 95–99.

¹² Female deacons particularly served these functions in the areas of baptism of adult women and the conveying of the Eucharist to the homes of ill women. These liturgical and pastoral duties are discussed in a number of studies of the female diaconate in addition to those already cited including J. G. Davies, "Deacons, Deaconesses and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 14 (1963) 1–15; A.-A. Thiermeyer, "Der Diakonat der Frau," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 173 (1993) 226–36. Earlier works on the female diaconate include Jan Chrysostom Pankowski, *De diaconissis* (Regensburg [Ratisbonae]: George Joseph Manz, 1866); and A. Kalsbach, *Die altkirchliche Einrichtung der Diakonissen bis zu ihrem Erlöschen* (Freiburg im Breisgau, 1926).

contributions to the ministry of Christ and to the apostolic Church;¹³ and (3) formal ecclesiastical acknowledgement of the contributions of contemporary women, especially those with money and influence.¹⁴ Many of these needs and concerns, such as the baptizing of adult women converts and the conveying of the Eucharist to the homes of housebound women, were met through the order of the female diaconate. With the apparent demise of that order, these continuing needs and concerns had to be met in other ways.

In the Byzantine period, there were women who usually bore some sort of formal ecclesiastical title and who were organized more or less formally into consecrated or ordained orders. These consecrated women functioned in public settings, either associated with the metropolitan church, or, in one case, with a *male* monastery that provided for liturgical participation by the faithful, both male and female, of the surrounding neighborhood. All of these ecclesiastical women have one thing in common: they reflect the Byzantine Church's recognition that the various needs of a mixed community require the pastoral and liturgical participation of women as well as men.

My article examines three "orders" or groups of women active in Constantinople or in Byzantine Jerusalem in the tenth through thirteenth centuries: (1) a trio of women whose unique contributions to the orthodoxy of the Church were recognized by their special participation as incense-bearers in the most important and well-known weekly liturgical procession in Constantinople; (2) a quartet of women who assisted in the public liturgical functions of a men's monastery in Constantinople; and (3) an order of women in the Church of Jerusalem called the *myrophoroi* (myrrhbearers).

PROCESSIONAL INCENSE-BEARERS

Although active liturgical roles for women were ecclesiastically prescribed and thus recognized in the forms of titles and specific consecrated or ordained orders for the other two groups of women examined in this article, such does not appear to be the case in this instance. A fresco¹⁵ preserved in a monastery church in the Epirote city of Arta in northern

¹³ Eisen provides an inscription, probably from the fourth century and from the Mount of Olives that refers to a woman deacon named Sophia as "a second Phoebe," clearly a reference to Romans 16:1 (*Women Officeholders* 158–60).

¹⁴ Using as an example the wealthy noblewoman and patron of John Chrysostom, the deaconess Olympias, Susanna Elm asserts that "special recognition for services rendered—irrespective of whether or not a woman fulfilled the prerequisites laid down by the bishops themselves . . ." (Elm, *Virgins of God* 182).

¹⁵ A photograph of the processional fresco from the monastery church of the Panaghia Vlachernitissa, Arta, Greece, is provided in *Women and Byzantine Mo-*

Greece depicts a weekly procession in Constantinople, providing an interesting piece of artistic evidence of the rare processional role of a few select women based on their personal, historical connection with certain important ecclesiastical events in the late 13th century.

The Arta monastery of the Panaghia Vlachernitissa, originally a male monastery, was converted to a women's monastery sometime before A.D. 1230. A few decades later, the monastery church, most likely constructed originally in the tenth century, was expanded into a three-domed and three-aisled basilica, and decorated with Byzantine frescoes and other artistic and architectural elements.¹⁶ Among the 13th-century decorations of the convent church extant today are a sculpted marble *templon*, a mosaic floor, and, most outstandingly, a unique fresco, preserved in fragmentary form on the southernmost arch on the west side of the narthex, depicting the procession (or litany) of the famous icon of the Theotokos *Hodegetria* in Constantinople.¹⁷ The weekly Tuesday procession of the city's palladium through the capital is described in numerous sources, both Byzantine and foreign, over a period of at least three centuries, with the earliest accounts dating to the twelfth century.¹⁸

The fresco is remarkable for two reasons. First, it is unusual to find depicted in a church a historical religious ceremony, particularly an outdoor procession. Most frescoes depict scenes from the life of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints. Benefactors are occasionally shown with Christ or a patron saint, but usually set against a gold background, i.e., outside of

nasticism, ed. Jacques Y. Perreault (Athens: Canadian Archeological Institute, 1991) pl. 2 fig. 9.

¹⁶ *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3 vols., ed. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York: Oxford University, 1991) 1.191–92.

¹⁷ Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou has published several articles on this monastery church. For a detailed discussion of this processional fresco, see “The Basilissa Anna Palaiologina of Arta and the Monastery of Vlacherna,” in Perreault, *Women and Byzantine Monasticism* 43–49. Acheimastou-Potamianou (“Basilissa Anna Palaiologina” 48) dates the fresco, both stylistically and in terms of content (see below), to the late 13th century. The fresco is explicitly identified as a representation of the Hodegetria procession in an inscription which reads: “*ē chara tēs yperagias th(eoto)kou / tēs of[dē]gētrias tēs en tē / Konstantinoupolei* (ibid. 46).

¹⁸ Acheimastou-Potamianou, “Basilissa Anna Palaiologina” 44; R. Janin, *Les églises et les monastères*, La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin, vol. 3 (Paris, 1953, 1969, 1975) 203 ff.; George P. Majeska, *Russian Travelers to Constantinople in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, *Dumbarton Oaks Studies* 19 (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1984) 16, 36, 138, 362–66; A. Vasiliev, “Pero Tafur, a Spanish Traveler of the Fifteenth Century and His Visit to Constantinople, Trebizond and Italy,” *Byzantion* 7 (1932) 106 ff. Majeska notes that the icon was also brought to different locations in the city, including the Great Church of Hagia Sophia, the Pantocrator Church, and the imperial palace (*Russian Travelers* 364).

any historical or social context. Secondly, the occasional religious events that are depicted in icons and frescoes, such as the ecumenical councils, generally do not contain women. The icon depicting the final restoration of the icons following the Council of Hagia Sophia in A.D. 843 is an exception because the Empress Theodora is shown, but she herself convoked the council; moreover, it is Patriarch Methodios who takes center stage, not Theodora. Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou theorizes that the reason for the unusual iconographic subject in this monastery church far from Constantinople, and in particular the prominent presence of three women at the forefront of the procession, has to do with the connection of the monastery's patron to two significant synods held in the Vlachernae church in the capital and in Adramyttion, and to the "celebrity" status attached to the mother of the patron, who opposed the emperor, her own brother, for the sake of the orthodoxy of the Byzantine Church.

In 1274,¹⁹ the Byzantine emperor Michael VIII Paleologos for political and military reasons submitted himself formally to the pope and the Church of Rome at the Second Council of Lyon, and promised that the Byzantine Church would immediately follow his steps by reuniting itself with Rome as well. Instead, the Byzantines, clergy and laity alike, vociferously rejected the agreement. Michael's attempts to win forcibly the approval of his Church and Empire led him to persecute and imprison those opposed to the union, including his own sister, Irene-Eulogia. Epiros, with Arta as its functional capital, had been independent of Constantinople since the Latin conquest of 1204, and hence became a haven for opponents of Michael's policies who were fleeing potential imprisonment.

When Michael died in 1282, his son Andronikos reversed his father's religious policies, immediately releasing those imprisoned by Michael, such as Irene-Eulogia. A game of "musical chairs" ensued, with the patriarchal throne as the prize, that pitted John Bekkos, a pro-unionist elected under Michael, against Joseph, who both succeeded Bekkos and preceded him (Joseph had resigned earlier, under Michael, in protest of the union). Finally, the following year, Gregory II of Cyprus was elected as the new patriarch, in part thanks to the Bishop of Kozyle in Epiros, who was serving as ambassador to Constantinople for the Despot of Arta, Nikephoros.²⁰ Not coincidentally, Nikephoros's wife, Anna Kantakouzena Palaeologina, was the daughter of the recently released Irene-Eulogia. Also not coincidentally, the new patriarch, Gregory, convoked in April of 1283, at the Church of the Vlachernae in Constantinople, a synod that condemned Bekkos and deposed all unionist bishops; later that same year another

¹⁹ For a fuller discussion of these events, see J. M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (New York: Oxford University, 1986) 220-49.

²⁰ Acheimastou-Potamianou, "Basilissa Anna Palaiologina" 43.

synod met in Adramyttion, cementing the victory of the anti-unionists.²¹ Pachymeres records that Irene-Eulogia, her daughter Anna, and her other daughter, Theodora, were in attendance.²²

Acheimastou-Potamianou finds the confluence of these events significant evidence of the probable rationale for the depiction of the procession of the Theotokos *Hodegetria* and the prominent place given to three women in that procession on the wall of the monastery church in Arta:

There is no doubt that at this time the established Tuesday procession in Constantinople took on greater magnificence and meaning. We may firmly state that the pious Eirene-Eulogia, a “celebrity” following her imprisonment, could not have failed to take part, along with her two daughters, in the procession of the icon of the *Hodegetria*, the palladium of the Capital, either in one or more of the Tuesday processions or in a special litany of the icon conducted to celebrate the events that had taken place. The memory of the ceremony in Constantinople in which the three ladies participated is, perhaps, preserved in the fresco of the Vlacherna monastery. Very likely, the recent death of Eirene-Eulogia in 1284 while Anna Palaiologina was still in Constantinople prompted the selection of this particular scene with its emotional charge. The representation of the litany in the women’s monastery of the Vlacherna, the burial church of the family of the despots, was probably intended as a memorial service for the mother of Anna, and served to immortalize Eirene-Eulogia with her two daughters at a propitious time in the position of Orthodoxy, on behalf of which she had struggled with such great zeal.²³

Thus, an important liturgical procession in Constantinople remarkably included women in a visibly prominent role. It was unusual for women to play an active role in liturgical processions since the Byzantine practice of secluding women, especially upper-class women, meant that they were discouraged even from appearing in public outside of church and at im-

²¹ Gregory would hold another synod the following year which condemned the Latin Church’s addition of the *Filioque* to the Creed, while articulating a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between the Son and the Spirit. See Aristeides Papadakis, *Crisis in Byzantium: The Filioque Controversy in the Patriarchate of Gregory II of Cyprus (1283–1289)* (New York: Fordham University, 1983; reprint, Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir’s Seminary, 1996), for a detailed exposition of Gregory II of Cyprus and his theology.

²² George Pachymeres, *De Michaele et Andronico Palaeologis libri tredecim*, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, ed. Immanuel Bekker et al. (Bonn, 1835) II, 59; cited in Acheimastou-Potamianou, “Basilissa Anna Palaiologina” 45. Acheimastou-Potamianou also notes that a fresco of the two councils, which appears on the west side of the south arch, depicts two women in attendance (they are wearing the traditional head-and-shoulder covering of Byzantine noblewomen known as the *maphorion*). She suggests that this might be an iconographic attestation supporting Pachymeres’ account of the presence of these women at the anti-unionist councils (*ibid.* 47–48).

²³ *Ibid.* 45–46.

portant events such as funerals.²⁴ Matrons would have had more freedom than young, unmarried women, who were much more rigorously secluded, so it was probably not unusual for married women to participate in the weekly procession. Nevertheless, to have such a visibly public and active role was extraordinary. Even the deaconesses of the Great Church in Constantinople do not appear to have taken part in the elaborate procession that occurred during the part of the Divine Liturgy known as the Great Entrance. Thus, Eirene-Eulogia and her daughters Anna and Theodora were honored in this striking way as women of wealth and privilege who exhibited strong and self-sacrificing dedication to the Byzantine Church.

Part of the unusual public nature of their participation is represented in their holding some sort of liturgical vessels. Unfortunately, the poor state of preservation of the fresco and the small size of the figures makes it unclear what exactly the women are holding in their hands.²⁵ It is likely from their shape that the objects held by the two women in front of the third are either incense burners, as Acheimastou-Potamianou believes,²⁶ or pyxes (incense holders).²⁷ Their holding either of these vessels would further underscore their prominent liturgical position in the procession. Moreover, their role as incense-bearers would also recall the myrrh-bearing women of the Gospels, who remained steadfast in their loyalty to Jesus Christ. Thus, these women's dedication was recognized by the Byzantine Church's placing them prominently in an important procession, and doing so in a manner that equated them with the apostolic women of Scripture. Interestingly, their liturgical participation linked them to another group of

²⁴ On the seclusion of women in Byzantine society, see Michael Angold, *Church and Society in Byzantium under the Comneni, 1081–1261* (New York: Cambridge University, 1995) 426; Alice-Mary Talbot, "Women," in *The Byzantines*, ed. Guglielmo Cavallo, trans. Thomas Dunlap, Teresa Lavender Fagan, and Charles Lambert (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1997) 117–43, at 132. Michael Psellos, an eleventh-century writer and imperial official, claimed that his mother lifted the veil from her face for the first time at her daughter's graveside. While this is likely rhetorical hyperbole, it nevertheless is useful as a gauge of the ideal behavior of a noblewoman in the Byzantine period. See José Grosdidier de Matons, "La femme dans l'empire byzantin," in *Histoire mondiale de la femme*, ed. Pierre Grimal (Paris: Nouvelle librairie de France, 1967) 28.

²⁵ A detail of the fresco focusing on the women and the vessels they are holding may be found in Perreault, *Women and Byzantine Monasticism* pl. 3 fig. 12.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 45. Alternatively, he suggests the women may be holding lamps.

²⁷ The domed shape of the vessels may indicate that they are incense-burners. However, it is also possible that they are pyxes. Some were decorated with images of the myrrh-bearing women, and incense was one of the contents they might hold, as evidenced by the Council of Narbonne in A.D. 589. See W. F. Volbach, *Elfenbeinarbeiten der Spätantike und des frühen Mittelalters*, 3rd ed. (Mainz, 1976), nos. 89–106 and 161–201a; cited in the "pyxis" entry in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 3.1762.

women who also deliberately imaged these same women recorded in Scripture: namely, the myrrhbearers of the Church of Jerusalem, who will be described later after the *graptai*.

THE *GRAPTAI* OF THE PANTOKRATOR MONASTERY

As already noted, although the order of Widows and later the order of deaconesses died out in the Byzantine Church, the pastoral and liturgical needs that they met continued to exist. One group of women who partially met those needs served, curiously, at the male monastery of the Pantokrator in Constantinople.

The monastery of Christ the Almighty (Pantokrator) was founded by either the Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos or his wife, Irene, in the 1130s.²⁸ An interesting feature of the monastery was its triple church: three physically connected churches built at different times and dedicated, respectively, to Christ Pantokrator (south), the Theotokos *Eleousa*, or "Merciful" (north), and the Archangel Michael (center). A hospital and an old age home were also attached to the monastery.²⁹

As with Byzantine women's monasteries, so too the Pantokrator monastery followed the principle of seclusion or *abatos*,³⁰ that is, it did not admit members of the opposite sex into the monastic foundation proper: "Women will not enter the monastery and the monastery will be a forbidden area for them, even if they are distinguished ladies and are adorned by a devout life and a noble birth."³¹ Because the clergy needed for the sacramental life of the monastery could be found within it, a male monastery was, of course, able to exclude women far more than a female monastery could exclude men. Nevertheless, although a monastery needed a certain amount of seclusion from the world in order that its members could devote themselves to their spiritual practices, Byzantine monasticism was

²⁸ The *typikon* (rule) of the monastery is dated to October 1136; see Paul Gautier, "Le typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator," *Revue des études byzantines* 32 (1974) 1–145. An English translation of the *typikon* and an introduction are provided in "Pantokrator: Typikon of Emperor John II Komnenos for the Monastery of Christ Pantokrator in Constantinople," trans. Robert Jordan, in *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, ed. John Thomas and Angela Constantinides Hero, with the assistance of Giles Constable, vol. II (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2000) 725–81.

²⁹ Jordan, "Pantokrator" 725.

³⁰ Alice-Mary Talbot, "Women and Mt Athos," in *Mount Athos and Byzantine Monasticism*, ed. Anthony and Mary Cunningham Bryer (Aldershot, Hampshire, 1996) 67–79; E. Papagianne, "Hoi klērikoi tōn byzantinōn gynaikeiōn monōn kai to abato," *Byzantiaka* (in Greek) 6 (1986) 77–93.

³¹ Jordan, "Pantokrator" 749 sec. 18; Gautier, "Le Typikon du Christ Sauveur Pantocrator," 61, ll. 530–32.

no more removed from the world than was medieval Western monasticism. As Rosemary Morris has remarked, monastic “contacts with the secular world were often close and frequent and, though monastic tradition might decree the opposite, complete seclusion—a life ‘in the world but not of it’—was, in fact, rarely practiced.”³²

In fact, while never developing the mendicant orders that became prevalent in the West, neither did the Eastern Christian monastic tradition practice the complete seclusion found in Western cloistered orders, except in the most extreme type of anchorite (solitary) monasticism. From the beginnings of monasticism in Egypt and Palestine, there was a steady intercourse between monks and laypersons. Hospitality was a basic monastic virtue; the Basilian (and Macrinan) style of monastic life included charitable activities for the lay faithful in the neighboring community; and, as Morris has also noted, “[c]entral to the relationship between monks and laity was the role of the monk as spiritual guide.”³³ This social, philanthropic, and spiritual monastic outreach was particularly true of coenobitic monasteries in urban areas, such as the Pantokrator in Constantinople. Its hospital, old age home, and off-site sanatorium for lepers showed its founder’s commitment to monastic philanthropy.

Pantokrator’s spiritual leadership, too, was obviously important to its founder. The outermost church of the monastic complex, the *Eleousa*, served as a liminal area between the *abatos* of the monastery and the world outside the monastery walls,³⁴ providing spiritual nurture to the public with a regular calendar of services. The *typikon* (monastic rule) for the monastery mandated for the *Eleousa* church a large number of clergy, whose duties included celebrating for the people of the city a weekly Friday night vigil, replete with a procession of banners into the church.³⁵ The section

³² Rosemary Morris, *Monks and Laymen in Byzantium, 843–1118* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995) 90.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Thus, for example, sec. 18 of the *typikon* forbids women’s entering the monastery, but makes the following provision: “But if some must enter, perhaps for the burial of their relations or their commemoration, they will not enter by the monastery gate but by the gate of the church of the *Eleousa*” (Jordan, “Pantokrator” 749).

³⁵ “On Friday of each week a vigil should take place with the night office when the banner of intercession with all the rest preceding and following it, together with all the clergy and people, will be invoked on the way by the members of the clergy of the *Eleousa* and will be met with all reverence and fitting honor and in faith brought into the church and all men and women, that is as many as follow these revered banners, will make an *ektenes* [litany or supplication], banners and people alike in the appropriate order, for the pardon and remission of our sins. *Kyrie eleison* [Lord, have mercy] will be repeated fifteen times for each banner and then they will go forwards again towards the holy tomb” (Jordan, “Pantokrator” 754–55,

enumerating the clergy attached to the *Eleousa* listed a total of 50 clergy: priests, deacons, chanters, lamplighters, etc.³⁶ In addition to the 50 clergy, the section also mandated extra orphans to serve as alternate lamplighters when there were not enough “certified” orphans. Finally, completing the section on clergy, but excluded from the clergy count of 50, was the founder’s description of four women “with the rank of *graptai*”:³⁷

[W]e decree that four respectable women of propriety, mature in age and character and with the rank of *graptai*, should carry out their duties, two in one week and the other two in the next, and the four of them should be present on a Friday evening and watch over the church and what happens there. For we have decreed that these orphans and *graptai* should exist for this reason, that they should conduct the procedure of the meeting of the holy banners every week, carry out the service to those brothers who gather by refreshing them all with water, and see to the oversight of the church and the things connected with it.³⁸

So, according to the *typikon*, people were needed to care for a monastic church that was open to the public on a regular basis, in order to offer visitors appropriate hospitality, and especially to ensure order during what was obviously a popular and well-attended weekly vigil. In earlier times, consecrated Widows or ordained female deacons would have served such functions as doorkeepers and maintainers of order.³⁹ However, as mentioned above, by the 13th century, both of these orders had disappeared from the Byzantine Church. Therefore, the emperor or empress, recognizing the pastoral and liturgical need, given the social segregation of the sexes in Byzantine culture mentioned earlier, for women as well as men to fulfill these tasks, appointed four women “with the rank of *graptai*” to serve the faithful visiting the monastic church throughout the week, rotating in teams of two on a weekly schedule, with all four *graptai* serving during the Friday evening vigil processions, which much have attracted a large crowd.

In fact, these *graptai* were the equivalent of deaconesses or Widows, in terms of both their eligibility requirements and their duties. With respect to eligibility, it is unclear whether the requirement that the *graptai* be proper or chaste (*semnas*) necessarily meant their being widowed, as were dea-

sec. 31). This service may have had a philanthropic aim as well and been intended primarily for poorer citizens since the *typikon* also stipulates that “those taking part will receive for their own consolation twelve *hyperpyra nomismata*.” *Nomisma* means “coin,” generally, but *hyperpyron* was used specifically for the standard Byzantine gold coin. See *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* 3.1490.

³⁶ Jordan, “Pantokrator” 754, sec. 30.

³⁷ The possible meaning of the title will be discussed later.

³⁸ Jordan, “Pantokrator” 754; Gautier, “Pantocrator” 77, ll. 785–90.

³⁹ For the doorkeeping and maintenance of order functions of the deaconess, see, e.g., the fourth-century *Apostolic Constitutions* II, 57 in Francis X. Funk, *Didascalia et Constitutiones Apostolorum* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1905) 201.

conesses and Widows, or virginal, as were deaconesses, but the general tenor is the same: the *graptai* had to be older women who were above reproach.⁴⁰ As to their functions, although there is no indication that they shared the sacramental duties connected to baptism and Eucharist that female deacons performed in earlier times, the duties of maintaining order and seeing to the needs of the faithful during church services were the same.

Were these *graptai* ordained? Were they considered clergy? There is no indication that they were ordained, and, since their duties had less to do with active participation in the liturgical services than with the peripheral liturgical duties of overseeing the banner procession at the Friday vigil and keeping order in the church, it is unlikely that they were ordained, particularly since, as previously mentioned, they were not included in the enumeration of the 50 clergy of the *Eleousa*. On the other hand, they were listed together with the clergy in that section, and were counted as part of the clergy rather than as servants in the section that set forth the remuneration scale for the various clergy.⁴¹ So, why were the *graptai* listed with the clergy but not officially counted as part of them?

The answer may be twofold. First, the absence of ordained women by this time, due to the disappearance of the ordained female diaconate, may have led the founders and the capital's clergy to entertain not even the possibility of considering the *graptai* to be ordained, even to a minor order. Note, by contrast, that the certified orphans/lamplighters were listed as part of the clergy.⁴² Secondly, the very title, the "rank" (*taxis*) or order of *graptai*, accorded them by the monastery's imperial founders may provide a clue. This term or office is unknown: it appears in no ancient, patristic, or Byzantine Greek lexicon, nor in any standard Byzantine reference works,

⁴⁰ Enrolled Widows had to be at least 60 years old, according to 1 Timothy 5:9; the general qualifications in the Pantokrator *typikon* are reminiscent of this biblical passage. Deaconesses in the early church also had to be at least 60 years old originally, but the minimum age was later lowered to 40. See Karras, "Female Deacons" 274–75 and 294. Women in both orders could not have been married more than once and had to be of honorable reputation.

⁴¹ "We decree that the clergy [*klērikous*] of this church should receive as their [cash] allowances and grain allowances the following: the leading priests should each receive fifteen *hyperpyra nomismata* and twenty-five maritime *modioi* of grain each, the four precentors six similar *nomismata* each and fifteen similar *modioi* of grain each, the eight orphans or lamplighters the same amount, the four *graptai* four similar *nomismata* each and twelve maritime *modioi* of grain each." Just below this, the *typikon* continues, "A weekly allowance should also be given to the servants [*douleutais*] . . ." (Gautier, "Pantocrator" 77–9; "Pantokrator" 755, sec. 32).

⁴² Beyond the difference in clerical categorization, it appears that the Comneni desired that their monastery adhere to the Hebrew prophetic injunction to care for the widows and orphans (the most vulnerable members of society) by providing them with salaried ministries.

such as the *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. However, the literal sense of the term, “written,” may relate these women to the Widows of the early Church as opposed to the female deacons. Although the writer of the First Epistle to Timothy uses a different word, *katalegesthō* (to count among, or to enroll), the meaning is identical: these were enrolled women who had an established pastoral, spiritual, and semi-liturgical church ministry and hence were supported by the church (or monastery, in this case), but they were not part of the clergy who participated more centrally in the liturgical services as celebrant, chanter, etc. Thus, they were indeed clergy in its broader sense, but were consecrated as opposed to being ordained to either major or minor orders.

MYROPHOROI — THE MYRRHBEARERS

The Patriarchate of Jerusalem, although autocephalous ecclesiastically, in reality was very closely linked to the Byzantine Church throughout most of the middle Byzantine period, particularly in liturgical terms. The hymnography emanating from the monastery of St. Sabas outside Jerusalem, and certain liturgical practices, especially paschal ones, were exported to Constantinople and other places by pilgrims wishing to recreate the rituals of this most ancient and apostolic of churches.⁴³ By the turn of the first millennium, Jerusalem had an elaborate and well-established set of rites surrounding the celebration of Easter. One unique element of the Jerusalem rite, of which traces appear in other places (such as the incense-bearing women in the Arta fresco), is the order of *myrophoroi*, myrrhbearers, who participated in the Holy Saturday and Resurrection services of the Church of Jerusalem.

All four Gospels⁴⁴ record that several female disciples of Jesus,⁴⁵ unlike the Twelve, attended his Crucifixion and burial, and returned early on Sunday morning with myrrh and spices to anoint his body, only to find the empty tomb and hence become the first evangelists of the Resurrection. These myrrhbearing women, or *myrophoroi* in Greek, were celebrated in

⁴³ Pilgrims from both the Latin West and the Greek East brought back to their home communities descriptions of the Lenten and paschal rites of the Jerusalem church. These descriptions often led to the incorporation of certain Jerusalem rituals (particularly surrounding the Crucifixion and Resurrection) into the rituals of their own local and regional churches. One of the most famous of such pilgrims in late antiquity was the late fourth-century Spanish nun, Egeria, who kept a diary of her pilgrimage to Egypt, Palestine, and Syria. *Éthérie. Journal de voyage*, ed. H. Pétré, Sources chrétiennes 21 (Paris: Cerf, 1948); English translation in *Egeria's Travels*, ed. and trans. John Wilkinson (3rd ed.; Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999).

⁴⁴ Matthew 27:55–28:10, Mark 15:40–16:11, Luke 23:49–24:11, John 19:25–20:18.

⁴⁵ The number of women and their names vary in the accounts, but all include Mary Magdalene; the three Synoptic Gospels also list Mary the mother of James.

the early Church for their courage and selfless devotion. The Eastern Church even gave Mary Magdalene the title *isapostolos*, or “equal to the apostles.”⁴⁶ In the Byzantine period, the development of the *Pentecostarion*, the cycle of hymns for the period from Easter to All Saints (the week after Pentecost) included the special commemoration of the Myrrh-bearers on the third Sunday after Easter. At approximately this same time, a special order of women developed in the Church of Jerusalem who were named after these female disciples of Jesus Christ.

It is not known when exactly the order of *myrophoroi* developed in the Jerusalem Church; when they disappeared is equally unknown. They are not mentioned in early church documents relating to the paschal celebration in Jerusalem, including the detailed description given by Egeria in the late fourth century. However, there are numerous references to these women in a *typikon*⁴⁷ (liturgical rule) of the Church of Jerusalem, contained in a twelfth-century manuscript that apparently is a copy of an earlier work from the late ninth or early tenth century.⁴⁸ Egeria’s diary and the dating of the original *typikon* on which the twelfth-century manuscript is based thus provide us with a *terminus post quem* of the fifth century and a *terminus ante quem* of the ninth century, since the *myrophoroi* were clearly an established order by the time the *typikon* was written. It is likely that they still existed in the 13th century when the extant manuscript was copied from the lost original, although it is also possible that they had become defunct by that time but still existed within institutional memory. Their disappearance thus may coincide with, or postdate by a century or so, the disappearance of the female diaconate in the Byzantine Church.

⁴⁶ The epithet *isapostolos* was given in the early Church to women such as Saint Thecla, companion to the Apostle Paul, and Saint Nina/Nino, apostle to the Georgians, as well as to men (e.g., Constantine the Great) who were deemed by the Church to have played an important role in propagating the Christian faith.

⁴⁷ Note that there are two distinct types of *typika*: monastic and liturgical (although a monastic *typikon* may include elements of a liturgical *typikon*).

⁴⁸ The text of this *typikon*, *Typikon tēs en hierosolymois ekklēsiās*, is reproduced in A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta hierosolymitikēs stachyologias* [in Greek], vol. II (St. Petersburg, 1894), esp. 179–99. The manuscript dates to A.D. 1122, but in the prologue (p. iii) Papadopoulos-Kerameus argues that it is a copy of an earlier work from the late ninth or early tenth century, based on a prayer commemorating Patriarch Nicholas, whose patriarchate lasted from A.D. 932 to 947 (the two Latin patriarchs named Nicholas reigned several decades after the written date of the manuscript, so the commemoration cannot refer to either of them). The *typikon* provides the texts and rubrics (some of which may have been added in the twelfth century) for the liturgical services of the Church of Jerusalem. A summary of the material on the *myrophoroi* contained in the Jerusalem *typikon* can be found in Gabriel Bertonière, *The Historical Development of the Easter Vigil and Related Services in the Greek Church*, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 193 (Rome: Pontificum Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1972) 50 n. 108.

Unlike the confusion over the use of the term *myrophoroi* by certain Russian travelers describing the Great Church in Constantinople,⁴⁹ these women definitely cannot be identified with deaconesses, since that order is separately mentioned in the *typikon*'s description of the paschal services. Thus, the *myrophoroi* were a distinctive order unique to the Church of Jerusalem. Their liturgical functions are quite clearly spelled out in the Jerusalem *typikon*, and largely mirror, in a stylized and liturgical fashion, the activities of the biblical myrrhbearing women.

The Jerusalem *myrophoroi* began their liturgical service early on Holy Saturday morning, when they accompanied the patriarch and his clerical assistants, such as the archdeacon and chanters, to the Holy Sepulcher. The myrrhbearers were to clean and prepare the oil lamps in the Holy Sepulcher, chanting the canon and the liturgy of the hours while they worked. When they had finished cleaning and preparing the lamps, they chanted the "Glory to the Father . . ." and a hymn in plagal second tone.⁵⁰ A deacon then would chant the litany, and the patriarch would lock the Holy Sepulcher after extinguishing the lamps.

It cannot be stated for certain whether the *myrophoroi* were included as part of the clergy in the vesper service and for the Divine Liturgy of St. James,⁵¹ since they are not individually mentioned in the rubrics. However, it is likely that their inclusion should be inferred since, at the end of the liturgy, the *typikon* mentions that the myrrhbearers remained behind and reentered the Holy Sepulcher in order to cense and anoint it.⁵² The Church of the Holy Sepulcher was then locked until the return of the patriarch and clergy early the following morning.

⁴⁹ I am indebted to George Majeska, who has brought to my attention that some Russian travelers to Constantinople, such as Anthony of Novgorod, mentioned "myrrhbearing women" who sang and who had a special place near the Great Church's "prothesis chapel," or *skeuophylakion*, which was located just outside the north door in the northeast bay. Despite Anthony's identification of them as myrrhbearers, however, Majeska believes that the reference is to the deaconesses of the Great Church, who, according to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, *De ceremoniis* 44 (35) were located in the "women's narthex." Majeska theorizes that the confusion of titles is due to the Russians' not having deaconesses; the title "myrrhbearer," however, was frequently used for women serving a wide variety of non-ordained functions in the Russian Church.

⁵⁰ See original text in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 179, ll. 5–11. The manuscript mistakenly uses the masculine plural on occasion rather than the feminine plural when referring to the *myrophoroi*. It is likely that the copyist was confused by the (masculine) second declension ending of the title for these women, although the term *myrophoroi* occurred commonly in Byzantine hymnography. The text of the hymn appears in the manuscript shortly before these rubrics.

⁵¹ The patriarch presided over the second half of the liturgy from within the Holy Sepulcher, using the Holy Stone as an altar.

⁵² See original text in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 189, l. 11–14.

For Easter matins, the clergy, which apparently included the *myrophoroi*, gathered early in the morning at the patriarchate, in the *secretion*,⁵³ where they changed into white vestments before presumably returning to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Although the text does not give a full list of clerical orders included, the rubrics for the paschal matins service make it impossible not to understand the term “clergy” to include the myrrh-bearers. Outside the church, the clergy chanted the Easter *apolytikion*,⁵⁴ “Christ is risen,” several times as a refrain to psalm verses intoned by the patriarch, who then called out: “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I shall confess the Lord as I enter in,” to which the archdeacon responded with another “Christ is risen.” Then,

The doors of the church are immediately opened and the patriarch together with the clergy enter the church, chanting the ‘Christ is risen’. And the patriarch and the archdeacon immediately enter into the Holy Sepulcher, those two alone, with the *myrophoroi* standing before the Holy Sepulcher. Then the patriarch shall come out to them and say to them [the *myrophoroi*]: “Rejoice! [or “Greetings!”] Christ is risen.” The *myrophoroi* then fall down at his feet, and, after rising up, they cense the patriarch and sing the *polychronion*⁵⁵ to him. They [then] withdraw to the place where they customarily stand.⁵⁶

The matins service then proceeded normally with the chanting of the canon for Easter, the *exaposteilarion*, the praises (lauds), and the Easter *aposticha*.⁵⁷ Near the end of the service comes the final reference to the *myrophoroi*.⁵⁸ Following the deacon’s chanting of the *epakousta*, there was a procession to the *bema*⁵⁹ with two of each clerical order: deacons, subdeacons, deaconesses, and *myrophoroi*.⁶⁰ The deacons held censers, the

⁵³ *Secretion* means office or private room; perhaps this was the private office or vestry of the patriarch of Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ The *apolytikion* is the dismissal hymn(s) for vespers. It is chanted again toward the beginning of the matins service, and during the small entrance of the Divine Liturgy.

⁵⁵ The *polychronion* (literally, “many years”) was a hymn of praise sung for either an emperor or a patriarch.

⁵⁶ See original text in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 190–91.

⁵⁷ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 191–99. The *exaposteilarion* is a hymn chanted at matins and connected to the particular Gospel reading for that Sunday (there is a cycle of Gospel readings for matins). The *aposticha* are a set of hymns normally done near the end of vespers; the paschal *aposticha*, however, are sung at matins through the Ascension.

⁵⁸ See original text in Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 199.

⁵⁹ The *bema* was a type of raised platform or pulpit that was located in the center of the *solea*, the part of the nave immediately in front of the sanctuary and iconostasis.

⁶⁰ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 199. The text is not very clear as to the order of clergy in the procession since it treats the subdeacons together with the deacons and before the *myrophoroi* and deaconesses, but it also says that the

subdeacons and deaconesses held *manoualia*,⁶¹ and the *myrophoroi* each carried a *triskelion*.⁶² The two *myrophoroi* took up position one on each side of the Holy Sepulcher, censuring throughout the second deacon's reading of the Gospel. At the end of the reading, the myrrhbearers entered the Holy Sepulcher and censed and anointed it.

It is clear that the activities of the *myrophoroi* in the liturgical services of Holy Saturday and Sunday mimicked those of the original myrrhbearing women: they were present at the tomb, they censed and anointed Christ—in the person of the patriarch—and the tomb, and they even recreated the myrrhbearing women's encounter with the angel(s), or the risen Christ, at the tomb early on Sunday morning.⁶³

The *typikon* leaves many questions unanswered. For example, it is unclear whether there are a number of *myrophoroi* or only two. Since the rubrics at the end of the matins reads "the two *myrophoroi*" as opposed to "two of the *myrophoroi*," it is possible that there were only two in this order. However, only two of each order participated in the matins procession, so, for example, it also says "the two deacons," although there were undoubtedly more than two connected to the church. Therefore, it is possible that there were more than two *myrophoroi* attached to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, although for practical reasons only two participated liturgically, at least for the Easter matins. In fact, given the Jerusalem Church's propensity to recreate the Passion events as closely as possible, it is likely that there were more than two *myrophoroi* since the gospel accounts generally list more than two women at the crucifixion, if not at the tomb itself.⁶⁴

myrophoroi follow the deacons. The probable order is deacons, *myrophoroi*, deaconesses, and subdeacons.

⁶¹ The *manoualion* is a single candlestick used in processions. Peter D. Day, *The Liturgical Dictionary of Eastern Christianity* (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1993) 180.

⁶² The *triskelion* is a "portable lectern from which the Gospel may be read. It is so called because it is made up of three shafts, whereas the lectern, which is made of two shafts to form a large X-shaped structure, is called the *diskelion*" (Day, *Liturgical Dictionary* 294).

⁶³ "In keeping with the principle of imitation of the activities described in the Gospel, the Jerusalem liturgy has the *myrophoroi* greet the patriarch when he emerges from the tomb after the entrance of Orthros and then incense and anoint the tomb after the Vigil Liturgy and again after the Gospel at the end of Orthros" (Bertonière, *Easter Vigil* 50 n. 108). The patriarch may be understood either as Jesus, in the Johannine account, or as the one or two angels in the Synoptics (and John), but presumably he represents the risen Lord.

⁶⁴ Matthew and Mark name at least three women at the Crucifixion but only two at the tomb early Sunday morning; Luke does not give the names of the women at the Crucifixion but names three women at the tomb along with an indeterminate

A second unanswered question concerns where the particular location⁶⁵ was within the church for the *myrophoroi* when they were not actively participating in the services. Bertonière finds the reference significant because it suggests that “their role was something of a permanent office.”⁶⁶ This raises perhaps the most important unanswered question, namely, whether the *myrophoroi* were ordained. They probably would not have been considered a major order since (1) they do not appear to have had the type of sacramental functions associated with major orders,⁶⁷ and (2) they would not have fit into the threefold system of major orders, deacon(ess), presbyter/priest, and bishop, already well entrenched in church practice at least five centuries earlier. Therefore, either they were “consecrated” but not ordained, such as the Widows in the early Church, and probably the *graptai* already mentioned, or they were ordained to a special minor order of clergy, akin to the level of reader. This latter option seems more likely, given the myrrhbearers’ important liturgical functions during the Easter services and the *typikon*’s assumption that they are part of the clergy.

Thus, although there is no ordination rite extant for the *myrophoroi*, either in the Jerusalem *typikon* or elsewhere, one may hypothesize that some sort of tonsure, or minor-order ordination (*cheirothesia*), was likely done for the *myrophoroi*, for two reasons. First, it would fit with the early and Byzantine Church’s practice of clearly restricting liturgical functions to clergy, of either major or minor orders. Eirene-Eulogia and her daughters indeed participated in a liturgical procession, but it was an out-of-doors procession that was not part of a standard liturgical service. Laypersons traditionally did not participate in the worship of the Byzantine Church beyond the activities common to all the faithful; even chanters and readers were ordained as members of the minor orders of clergy. Secondly, as previously discussed, although the *typikon* gives no definition of the term “clergy,” it is apparent from the rubrics at the beginning of the paschal matins service⁶⁸ that the term must include the *myrophoroi* since they enter the church with the patriarch and immediately stand at the entrance to the Holy Sepulcher while he enters it with the archdeacon. Thus, while the *myrophoroi* may have been consecrated by a simple prayer, it appears more likely from their functions as described in the Jerusalem *typikon* that they were in some way ordained to a type of minor order.

number of other women; and John gives the names of three women at the Crucifixion but only Mary Magdalene at the tomb.

⁶⁵ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 191.

⁶⁶ Bertonière, *Easter Vigil* 50 n. 108.

⁶⁷ E.g., deacons and deaconesses took the Eucharist to the sick and received it themselves at the altar; they also assisted in the baptism of converts.

⁶⁸ Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *Analekta* 190–91.

CONCLUSION

While early female church orders such as Widows and deaconesses vanished by the later Byzantine period, meager but important literary evidence demonstrates that women in the Byzantine Church, at different times and in different parts of the Empire, continued to be specially designated for particular liturgical roles, and were even ordained, consecrated, or “enrolled” into various orders. These roles or orders served one, or usually more, of three functions: (1) they honored certain women for their particular devotion to the church; (2) they provided a means for women faithful to be properly cared for during church services, while attending to the demands of social convention; and (3) they evoked the scriptural witness of the apostolic ministry of women to Jesus Christ.

Eirene-Eulogia and her daughters served in a semi-liturgical role that honored them personally by positioning them prominently in a popular weekly procession with the palladium of the city. Moreover, the nature of their liturgical role evoked the myrrhbearers of Scripture, who did not abandon their Lord at his Crucifixion and who later went with myrrh and incense to attend to his body. The *myrophoroi* of the Church of Jerusalem explicitly imaged the myrrbearing women of the Gospels during the Easter services at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, recreating in a stylistic and liturgical manner the actions of the biblical women for whom their order was named. As for the *graptai*, they demonstrate that, even after the decline of the orders of Widows and female deacons, the need for a liturgical and pastoral ministry by and for women was recognized even in a male monastery, which responded by essentially recreating the early order of Widows in these older, well-respected women “with the rank of *graptai*.”

The existence of these various orders and groups of women in the Byzantine Church, as with their predecessors in early Christianity, reveals the ambivalence of a male-dominated ecclesiastical hierarchy toward the active liturgical participation of women as more than lay faithful. This ambivalence resulted from, on the one hand, theological notions of women’s subordination to men combined with social conventions that limited women’s activity to private, domestic space, and, on the other hand, the theological recognition of the spiritual equality of women combined with a pastoral desire to ensure that the Church met the full spiritual needs of its women faithful. Thus, women continued to be excluded from the leadership ranks of presbyters and bishops, and even the female diaconate disappeared with no formal indication in the extant literature of how, when, or why.⁶⁹ On the

⁶⁹ I have proposed that the disappearance of the ordained female diaconate in the Byzantine Church was connected to the rise in the middle Byzantine period of

other hand, the service of women in formally recognized liturgical roles continued to fulfill a combination of needs and interests arising from such disparate factors as (1) a culture that imposed sexual segregation and the seclusion of women, (2) a desire to honor publicly and formally those who had contributed much to church life, and (3) the Byzantines' fondness for recreating liturgically the important events in the life of Christ. Thus, while the theology and practice of the Byzantine Church disallowed the ordination of women to most major orders, its pastoral and liturgical concerns for its faithful, specifically for its women faithful, led to diverse and unique roles and orders for some women—as processional incense-bearers, wardens of a public vigil hosted by a male monastery, and liturgical representations of the myrrhbearing women who ministered to Christ.

notions of ritual impurity associated with menstruation. See Karras, "Female Deacons" 309–14.



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