

Fr. Dr. Lucian Petroaia, *Hieratikon, Treasure of Orthodox Culture and Spirituality*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2014, 526 p.

Not long ago Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos published, under exceptional graphics and an agreeable format, the Phd thesis in theology of Father Lucian Petroaia, lecturer at the Faculty of History, Philosophy and Theology of the University “Dunărea de Jos” from Galati and administrative vicar of this Archdiocese. It is a dense work that reflects the hard labour of research during many years in major Romanian libraries. It is an exceptional thesis in theology, made under the direct supervision and care of Fr. prof. dr. Nicolae D. Necula from the Faculty of Theology “Justinian Patriarhul” – University of Bucharest. His Holiness attested it is a “very valuable doctoral thesis” (p. 12), being “one of the best dissertations have been written lately” (p. 13). The author can be considered “one of experts in the Hieratikon, whose cooperation was sought even by Patriarch Daniel of the Romanian Orthodox Church ...” (p. 13). Based on these assessments, the work has been appreciated with grade 10.

As His Eminence Prof. Univ. PhD. Casian Crăciun Archbishop of Lower Danube appreciates for the achievement of his doctoral thesis; the author “has designed a vast building site of research and work, covering all stages of Hieratikon evolution”. The Reverend Father Lucian Petroaia’s thesis constitutes thus “a document of knowledge and awareness for faithful and servants about the spiritual and cultural beneficence of the most popular service books after the Holy Gospel” (p. 5).

In the *Introduction*, the author presents the role and importance of Hieratikon in the liturgical life of the Church, milestones from the history of this book of worship, and the current state of research on the Hieratikon in the Romanian theology. Also, Father Lucian Petroaia makes a foray into Hieratikon history, by analyzing the old Hieratikon from the Apostolic and post- Apostolic Christian periods, codices, manuscripts, old editions – sources of nowadays Hieratikon and other editions of reference in the Orthodox Churches of today.

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In the *first chapter* Father Lucian Petroaia makes a historical and liturgical overview of the evolution of Hieratikon in Romanian, making a foray – research study of codices and manuscripts that circulated prior to the first printed edition of this book of worship. It is a chapter of “maximum value and importance, by the richness and uniqueness of information, being the first presentation and analysis of this kind” (p. 9-10) as Rev. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula, coordinator of the work appreciates.

Then the research of all the editions of the Hieratikon in Romanian Orthodoxy is of great importance, being a thorough analysis made by the author in *Chapter II*. In fact this part is the densest of the research. The five centuries of the printed Hieratikon existence on Romanian soil are envisaged. In this chapter the author describes in detail the 86 editions of printed Hieratikon, starting with 1508 and ending with the last, the jubilee in 2008. A broad space is reserved for first Hieratikon printed on Romanian land (1508) and an index of editions during the 500 years that have elapsed since then until now. The author’s attention is therefore concentrated on the most important editions in the history of Romanian Hieratikon: the Hieratikon printed by the monk Makarios (Târgoviște, 1508), that of deacon Coresi (Brasov, 1570) of the Holy Metropolitan Dosoftei (Iași, 1679) and of the Holy Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul (Târgoviște, 1713). The author notes that one of the important achievements recorded in the development of Romanian Hieratikon is the release of „sacred language despotism”, the priests and the people having the chance to serve and pray in the Romanian language. An absolute novelty is the appearance of sign language Hieratikon, unique in the Christian world, published in Bucharest in 2008. In this chapter the author makes a competent and relevant analysis on the evolution of the text of the 3 Byzantine Liturgies, especially the differences in liturgical forms. He makes a huge work of selecting differences that arise from one edition to another, to affirm and impose the forms that make up the most successful literary text of the Divine Liturgy.

In *Chapter III*, the author enters the theological and liturgical content of the Hieratikon, exposing a number of spiritual and linguistic elements of the Liturgy. He presents the evolution of Romanian Hieratikon, highlighting the differences between the editions, by noting the natural evolution of the Romanian language, to its current stage. He compares different editions from different eras, aiming at the evolution of language, the way it was improved and the text variations concerning the typikon.

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In *Chapter IV*, Father Lucian proposes a careful analysis of the Hieratikon missionary role, presenting statistics of the Romanian editions and a meaningful interpretation of the data contained in this chapter. Afterwards it is presented the circulation of Hieratikon and its “mission” in the Romanian spaces affected by various influences and confessional offensive and finally the Holy Synod decisions on this book of worship.

Chapter V of the paper presents Hieratikon as treasury Romanian culture and spirituality by dwelling on the historical, cultural, theological and missionary aspects which helped spreading this monumental book in the spiritual life of the Romanians. The author shows that Romanian Hieratikon was essential to the evolution and maturation of the Romanian language. This chapter contained valuable information on the cult book of the Liturgy as a key factor in the evolution and maturation of the Romanian language, on the personalities (bishops, princes, rulers, kings, printers and book binders), events, news from the history of the Romanian people, contained in the prefaces, dedications and rosin Hieratikon published in Romanian. There are summarized very interesting notes about the autographs in the Hieratikon, its price in different times, the copies of the Hieratikon preserved in libraries and rare book collections in Romania and rare copies of this religious books in the world museums.

The concluding chapter, entitled suggestively *A study that will generate other studies* actually contains the conclusions of the paper. The author makes a very carefully designed synthetic statement of the main ideas of the thesis, which gives more distinction to the work.

It follows an abstract in English, a glossary, a bibliography general and three annexes, 2 of which comprise specialized papers on this thesis work of co referents (Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Sava and Pr. Prof. Dr. Nicu Moldoveanu) and a word of the author, entitled *Hieratikon, means of confession of the true faith and the promotion of Romanian language*.

For this work, the author used 720 footnotes and 411 bibliographical works, which highlights the author’s good information, thus revealing the undeniable value of this work.

By answering the obvious question: What is new about the Hieratikon herein? His Eminence Archbishop, Dr. Casian Crăciun of Lower Danube, makes the following remarks: “First we are presented with an overview of a church book. Hieratikon appears as a monumental work of the Church with multiple meanings in the spiritual life, in the liturgical, pastoral and

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missionary work, but also in Romanian and pan-Orthodox culture “, highlighting the” indissoluble link between cult and culture”. Then we learn “more news about the foundations of spirituality that are benefactors of the nation” and “contributions of faith and culture centres where Romanian Hieratikons were printed”. Finally, “it highlights the role sanctified or holy readers of Hieratikon. **This paper helps us therefore to better know the Hieratikon**, by presenting a comparative study of its editions and church ministry role from one province to another to the realization of Autocephaly act”. On the other hand „through its sacramental value, the Hieratikon goes from the priest hands to those of the researcher and of ordinary believer, especially as a gift brought Romanian culture and life” (p. 7-8).

We also note the praising words to the work of Rev. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula, its scientific coordinator: „Father Lucian Petroaia is a church servant with experience as deacon and priest, having a very pleasant voice, I say even exceptional, a good connoisseur of worship rites, endowed with brilliance and with solid theological training. He leaned with particular interest on the treated theme suggested by his spiritual patron Archbishop dr. Casian of the Lower Danube, whom he is cultural adviser. The language of the work is that of a researcher accustomed with academic writing and speaking, using a true-born Romanian vocabulary and dodging the danger of neologisms abundance. The plan and content are very clear, with chapters and subchapters arising from each other and logically bonding. He is updated with everything written in the field, even citing recent works that have appeared on the subject „(p. 12-13).

The natural conclusion from reading the book is that we face a worthwhile scientific endeavour. According to Rev. Prof. Viorel Sava, co referent of this work, Father Lucian Petroaia’s thesis “constitutes an act of great courage” (p. 513). This is because it is not easy to write about Hieratikon, after Fr. Prof. Vintilescu and Fr. Prof. Petre Ene Braniște studied this issue. Nevertheless, Father Lucian Petroaia managed to find his own way, thus affirming his own identity.

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