



Summary :

Feast held in Trebizond in memory of St. Eugenios, the patron saint of the city. Originally celebrated on the 21st of January, it was transferred to 24 June from the 9th century on. The feast was suspended in the late 11th century because of Turkoman raids and was revived in the first half of the 14th century on the initiative of Emperor Alexios II Grand Komnenos. Lots of people from the nearby areas swarmed the city during the feast, which served as a reference point for the commercial activity of Trebizond and later of the namesake empire.

Date

Until the 15th century.

Geographical Location

Trebizond

1. St. Eugenios and his Cult

Saint [Eugenios](#), the patron saint of [Trebizond](#), lived in the 3rd century and was martyred in Trebizond in the years of Emperors [Diocletian](#) and Maximian (284-310), who were notorious persecutors of Christianity. His cult started to grow in Trebizond in the 5th century. Later on the [Grand Komnenoi](#) considered him their patron saint, which explains the frequent representation of the saint on coins and emblems of the [Empire of Trebizond](#). Works in honour of the martyre have been written by [John Xiphilinos](#)¹ (Patriarch of Constantinople from 1064 to 1075), the senior official of the imperial court of Trebizond [Constantine Loukites](#),² who wrote an [Encomium of St. Eugenios](#) in the first half of the 14th century, and [Joseph Lazaropoulos](#) (metropolitan of Trebizond from 1364 to 1368).³

2. Trebizond – The Feast of St. Eugenios

Trebizond was one of the most important cities of the Black Sea in terms of population, economy and commerce. All overland [commercial routes](#) from the Caucasus, Central Asia, Anatolia and Constantinople as well as the sea routes from Kherson ended there. On the occasion of the celebration of St. Eugenios, the patron saint of the city, a famous feast⁴ was held annually and the city was visited by [Arabs](#), Armenians, Byzantines, Russians, [Jews](#), Georgians and others who wanted to sell and buy goods, while lots of officials turned up as well.⁵ The procession of the saint's relics was the main event of the feast. Many caravans, especially from Bayburt, arrived for the feast and, thus, it is no wonder that the [cult of the saint](#) spread to Bayburt as well.

3. New Date for the Celebration of the Saint and the Feast

According to the version that Joseph Lazaropoulos presents in his *Logos* about St. Eugenios, in the years of Basil I (867-86) the saint appeared before three different persons: a priest named Leo Foteinos, the abbot of the monastery called Antonios and a woman. The saint revealed the date he was born, while he expressed his wish to be celebrated on the 24th of June – celebration day of John the Baptist – as well, apart from the 21st of January – his celebration day until then. When the abbot of the monastery held the first celebration on 24 June, he and his relatives covered the expenses



and invited the ecclesiastical, political and military officials of the wider area, but not the laymen, who reacted to the exclusion. The tension was eased by Bishop Athanasios, who invited all the people to participate in the celebration of the saint on the new date.⁶ Thus, the feast of St. Eugenios, according to this hagiological version, was finally transferred to the 24th of June.

However, the necessity to establish a new date might be better understood if we took into consideration the economic and political situation in Trebizond at the time. During the 9th century, particularly in its second half, the city of Trebizond and the region of [Chaldia](#) are becoming increasingly important on political, economic, military and ecclesiastical level, having at the same time a close relationship with Constantinople. The establishment of a new celebration, especially in summer months, was directly connected with the economic and political growth of Trebizond in the same period.⁷

The establishment of a new celebration date in honour of St. Eugenios is also directly connected to the reorganisation and extension of the monastery. John, the **dux** of Chaldia, along with Bishop Athanasios, both present at the celebration, approved the new date on behalf of the local political and ecclesiastical authorities.

The establishment of a new date has been attributed to practical and economic reasons because in summer months the coasts of the Black Sea are more easily accessible by both land and sea, which was important for the turn-out of the believers in the feast. In addition, the coincidence of the above feast with the celebration of John the Baptist increased the prestige of the celebration of St. Eugenios.⁸ The memory of the Armenian St. Orentios was celebrated on the same day as well. As a result, the transfer of the celebration of St. Eugenios to the new date has been interpreted as an attempt to attract more Armenians to the feast.⁹ Besides, the [monastery of St. Eugenios](#) seems to have been under strong Armenian influence during the 9th and the 10th centuries.¹⁰ In any case, the celebration of three different saints on the same day made the 24th of June probably the most important celebration day in the wider area.¹¹

4. Suspension of the Feast

Towards the late 11th century and because Türkmen/Turkoman tribes raided the wider Asia Minor, the feast of St. Eugenios was suspended. Trebizond was temporarily occupied by Seljuks but soon it came under Byzantine rule again. However, the commercial life of the city had suffered a heavy blow. The city's commerce recovered temporarily in the 12th century but Trebizond did not reach its previous commercial prestige and prosperity until the late 13th century.¹²

5. Revival of the Feast

According to accounts by Joseph Lazaropoulos, the Emperor of Trebizond [Alexios II Grand Komnenos](#) (1297-1330) gave a fresh start to the feast of the 24th of June in the first half of the 14th century. Lazaropoulos says that the Emperor, aided by St. Eugenios, defeated on Mount Mithrion a huge dragon that was threatening Trebizond. Then Alexios II, thankful for the saint's help, visited the monastery and ordered the revival of the institution of the feast in honour of St. Eugenios. In addition, the Emperor financed the feast with money from the imperial treasury. According to Lazaropoulos, the scholar [Gregory Chioniades](#), encouraged by Alexios II, undertook the composition of a hymnody for the feast, thus celebrating the saint's birthday.¹³



However, nothing is mentioned in the **typikon**¹⁴ of the monastery about the feast of St. Eugenios on the 24th of June and its revival by Alexios II. This questions the version of Lazaropoulos and implies that it must have been fabricated later. Besides, according to another version, the victory of Alexios II against the dragon on Mount Mithrion reflects the victory of the later Emperor of Trebizond Alexios III Grand Komnenos, who triumphed over the forces of the **emir** of Bayburt at [Matzouka](#) in 1361.¹⁵

6. Fall of Trebizond and End of the Feast

The trail of the feast of St. Eugenios disappears in 1461, when Trebizond was captured by the Ottomans.

1. Παπαδόπουλος-Κεραμεύς, Α. (edit.), 'Διήγησις θαυμάτων του αγίου και ενδόξου μεγαλομάρτυρος Ευγενίου του Τραπεζουντίου, συγγραφέϊσα παρά Ιωάννου του γεγονότου πατριάρχου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως του Ξιφιλίνου', *Fontes historiae imperii Trapezuntini* (Petropoli 1897), pp. 33-51.
2. See the new publication of the "Encomium" of Constantine Loukites, *Εγκώμιον εις τον άγιον μεγαλομάρτυρα του Χριστού Ευγένιον και τους συνάθλους αυτού Κανίδιον, Ουαλεριανόν και Ακύλαν, τους εν Τραπεζούντι μαρτυρήσαντας*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 114-203.
3. *Ετι σύνοψις των του αγίου θαυμάτων μερική εκ των πλείστων*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 246-359 and Joseph, metropolitan of Trebizond, *Λόγος*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 204-245.
4. The feast was held in memory of a saint, but in most cases it turned into a commercial event of great importance. It had a religious-economic character. Feasts have their origins in the distant past and, particularly, in the great pagan festivals of the Ancient Greeks, such as the Panathenaea, the Pythian Games, the Olympic Games and the Nemean Games. As for the Byzantine feasts, see Vryonis, S.Jr., 'The Panēgyris of the Byzantine Saint: a study in the nature of a medieval institution, its origin and fate', in Hackel, S. (edit.), *The Byzantine Saint* (New York 2001), pp. 196-200.
5. See Vryonis, S.Jr., *The Decline of the Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1971), pp. 15-16.
6. Joseph, metropolitan of Trebizond, *Λόγος*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 204-215.
7. Martin-Hisard, B., 'Trébizonde et le culte de saint Eugène (6e-11e s.)', *Revue des Etudes Armeniennes*, N.S. 14 (1980), pp. 335-341.
8. See Janin, R., *Les églises et les monastères des grands centres byzantins* (Paris 1975), p. 266 and note 10. Janin's opinion was adopted by Rosenqvist, J.O., *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), p. 78, Martin-Hisard, B., 'Trébizonde et le culte de saint Eugène (6e-11e s.)', *Revue des Etudes Armeniennes*, N.S. 14 (1980), p. 339 and Bryer, A. – Winfield, E., *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of Pontos 1* (Washington, D.C. 1985), p. 169.
9. See Bryer, A. – Winfield, E., *The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontos 1* (Washington, D.C. 1985), p. 169 and Rosenqvist, J.O., 'Some Remarks on the Passions of St. Eugenios of Trebizond and their sources', *Analecta Bollandiana* 107 (1989), p. 61.



10. Rosenqvist J.O., in *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 71-72, implies that the abbot and his relatives who contributed financially to the revival of the feast probably were Armenians.
11. See Rosenqvist, J.O., *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), p. 73.
12. Vryonis, S.Jr., *The Decline of the Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley – Los Angeles– London 1971), pp. 160-161.
13. Joseph, metropolitan of Trebizond, *Λόγος*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 221-227.
14. *Typikon of St Eugenios' monastery in Trebizond* (pub. cod. Ath. Vatopedi 1199), in Dimitrievskij, A., *Opisanie liturgičeskikh rukopisej hranjaščihsj v bibliotekah pravoslavnago vostoka III, Typika II* (Petrograd 1917).
15. See Rosenqvist J.O., *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 76-77, 80-81. Rosenqvist finds similarities in the fact that the emperor beheaded the dragon and demonstrated the head in the streets of the city in the way in which Alexios II had beheaded some of his enemies and the emir himself in the Battle of Matzouka and had entered the city demonstrating his enemies' heads.

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	Janin R. , <i>Les églises et les monastères des Grands Centres Byzantins. Bithynie, Hellespont, Latros, Galésios, Trébizonde, Athènes, Thessalonique</i> , Paris 1975
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	Βρυώνης Σ. , "The Panēgyris of the Byzantine Saint: a study in the nature of a medieval institution, its origin and fate", Hackel, S., <i>The Byzantine Saint</i> , New York 2001, 197-229
	Μηλιόπουλος Ι.Π. , "Το εν Τραπεζούντι σπήλαιον του αγίου Ευγενίου", <i>Αρχαίον Πόντου</i> , 6, 1934, 159-168
	Martin-Hisard B. , "Trébizonde et le culte de saint Eugène (6e-11e s.)", <i>Revue des Etudes Armeniennes</i> , 14 , 1980, 307-343

Webliography :



Pilgrimage to St. Eugenios of Trebizond

<http://www.doaks.org/DOP56/DP56ch12.pdf>

Ανάπτυξη της λατρείας του αγίου Ευγενίου

<http://www.fhw.gr/choros/trapezounda/gr/webpages/606a.html>

Glossary :

doukas (lat. dux)

Antiquity: Roman military commander who, in some provinces, combined military and civil functions.

Buzantium: a higher military officer. From the second half of the 10th c. the title indicates the military commander of a larger district. After the 12th c., doukes were called the governors of small themes.

emir

(from Arabic amir) Emir meaning "commander" or "general", later also "prince". Also a high title of nobility or office in some Turkic historical states.

typikon

Foundation document of a monastery compiling the rules regarding its administrative organization and liturgic rituals, as well as the comportment inside a cenobitic monastery.

The monastic typika could also include the biography (vita) of the monastery founder along with a catalogue of the movable or immovable property of the monastery. They constitute an important source for the study of the monastic life, while at the same time they shed light on many aspects of the Byzantine society.

The liturgical typika were calendars with instructions for each day's services, liturgical books with rules arranging the celebration rituals.

Sources

Joseph, metropolitan of Trebizond, Λόγος, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (edit.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), pp. 204-245.

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Typikon of St Eugenios' monastery in Trebizond (έκδ. cod. Ath. Vatopedi 1199), στο Dimitrievskij, A., *Opisanie liturgiceskih rukopisej hranjascijsja v bibliotekah pravoslavnago vostoka III*, Τυπικά II (Petrograd 1917).

Quotations

Set of Saint Eugenios' birthday as a festival

«Αμέλει και ταύτη τη γυναικί εν μια ο άγιος φαίνεται κατ' όναρ, ευσεβεί τυγχάνουση τε και οσία, δήλην και αυτή καθιστών την των εαυτού γενεθλίων ημέραν ήτις και παραχρήμα τω αρχηγώ της μονής τα οραθέντα απήγγειλεν. Ος τη Τε οπτασία του Φωτεινού τη τε όψει της γυναικός τη τε του μάρτυρος προς αυτόν πρότερον επιφανεία όλη ψυχή κινηθείς, την εορτήν ην ο μάρτυς τελείσθαι επέσκηψεν, εξ ιδίων αναλωμάτων αυτός εκτελέσαι προκέκρικε».

(John Lazaropoulos, *Logos*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (επιμ.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a*



critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), σελ. 210, στ. 112-118.

On the suspension of the feast

«Ούτω μεν και κατ' έτος η γενέθλιος του μάρτυρος έκτοτε ημέρα εωρτάζετο... Οπηνίκα δε και των θείων εντολών Χριστού του θεού λήθην εθέμεθα... τότε και εις χείρας εχθρών παρεδόθημεν. Εντεύθεν σφαγαί και πόλεων αλώσεις και αιχμαλώτων συναθροισμοί και όσα λυπηρά τω βίω παρέπεται... Έκτοτε λήθης έργον βυθών η μνήμη των γενεθλίων εγένετο, και πάλιν η ετήσιος αύτη πανηγύρις επιέλησται, των αναγκαίων επιλιπόντων».

(John Lazaropoulos, *Logos*, in Rosenqvist, J.O. (επιμ.), *The Hagiographical dossier of St. Eugenios of Trebizond in Codex Athos Dionysiou 154: a critical with introduction, translation, commentary and indexes* (Studia Byzantina Upsaliensia 5, Upsala 1996), σελ. 214, στ. 190-205.

Chronological Table

9th century (during the reign of Basil I): New date set for the feast of Saint Eugenios, on the 24th of June.

latter half of the 11th century: The tradidion of the feast is forgotten due to the Seljuk invasion.

first half of the 14th century: revival of the feast.

1461: The fall of Trebizond to the Ottomans results to the end of the feast.