

WHAT WAS THE BOOK OF THE OKTOECHOS USED BY ST. JOHN OF DAMASCUS  
LOOK LIKE?

*(Summary)*

It is believed that in medieval literature the earliest preserved hymnographic book is the book of the Tropologion that came down to us in Georgian under the name Iadgari. The latter was a translation from Greek. John of Damascus played an active role in the compilation of this book. The arguments in favour of this are the following. First: the genres of the sticheron and kanon that appeared by the 7th–8th century are present in this book for the first time; second: the names of the authors that are immediate predecessors or contemporaries of Damascus are found in this book for the first time; and third: the Iadgari is the book that is based on material included in the Georgian Lectionary written no later than the first half of the 8th century, which means that the Greek prototype of the Iadgari might have been compiled after the dissemination of the Lectionary, that is by the mid-8th century, the time of the Damascene. John of Damascus might have revised an existing chant book with hymns (maybe a copy of a book preserved in Syriac compiled by the patriarch Severos of Antioch). In all probability it was John of Damascus who rearranged this book, editing the yearly and weekly cycles for the liturgical purposes of his time, adding the new genres of the stichera and kanons, at the same time arranging the Resurrection repertory for eight consecutive Sundays and the texts for the Common offices in consecutive modal order. This rearranged book might have been the Tropologion as we know it according to its version in the Georgian Iadgari, the Syriac Tropligin, and the Armenian Šaraknoc: it contains chants in a single order for the fixed and movable feasts and according to cycles arranged in the eight modes at the end. The latter cycles constitute the earliest known Oktoechos as a chapter of a larger book. Thus, it seems that the Oktoechos used by St. John of Damascus in his Church might have been the one included in the Iadgari and the books related to it, i.e. the Syriac Tropligin and the Armenian Šaraknoc.

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