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REVIEW

Stefanos ALEXOPOULOS et al. (eds.),
Byzantine Liturgical Books. An Introduction
(Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts in their
Liturgical Context. Subsidia 2), Turnhout 2025

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Reviewed Book

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Review

Stefanos ALEXOPOULOS et al. (eds.), *Byzantine Liturgical Books. An Introduction (Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts in their Liturgical Context. Subsidia 2)*, Turnhout 2025.

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This volume represents the intellectual product of two conferences hosted in Athens in 2011 and 2013 under the auspices of the Catalogue of Byzantine Manuscripts Program at the Protestant Theological University in the Netherlands. Although portions of several contributions have since appeared elsewhere, the gathering of 19 studies into a single volume nonetheless constitutes a significant resource for the study of Byzantine liturgical books. The collection is loosely organized by book type, with additional contributions devoted to questions of codicological taxonomy (Radle and Parenti) and to the modern history of Greek liturgical printing (Alexopoulos and Bilalis Anatolikiotes).

Three contributions – by Job Getcha, Joan Lena, and Diego R. Fittipaldi – address the *Typikon*. Getcha offers a broad historical survey that, at times, betrays the limitations of an overly schematic application of the familiar tripartite classification of *Typika* as Constantinopolitan, Studite, or Sabaite (5–17). Lena and Fittipaldi focus more narrowly on the Evergetis (19–33) and Sabaite *Typika* (35–71), respectively, fleshing out and nuancing the larger historical contours sketched in Getcha’s contribution.

Several articles are devoted to codices containing scriptural texts. Gospel manuscripts are examined by Christopher Robert D. Jordan and Kathleen Maxwell. Jordan presents a lucid history of the Gospel lectionary, convincingly elucidating its relationship to the continuous-text tra-

dition (73–95). Maxwell, by contrast, explores the interaction between Gospel text and miniature imagery in two 13th-century manuscripts (97–117). Samuel Gibson's contribution offers an overview of the Apostolos in its liturgical setting and, much like Jordan's treatment of the Gospel lectionary, carefully traces the relationship between the liturgically arranged Apostolos and the Praxapostolos, in which the text follows its literary order (119–136).

The Prophetologion receives sustained attention in two articles, by Sysse Engberg and Alexandru Mihăilă. Engberg provides a comprehensive account of the book's historical development, revisiting earlier scholarly positions on issues such as the attribution of Old Testament lections to the cathedral rite of Constantinople. Particularly valuable here is her synthesis of debates scattered across earlier studies by herself and Robert Taft (137–165). Mihăilă takes up the discussion at this point, summarizing key conclusions from Engberg's forthcoming two-volume monograph while also examining the internal character of the book (167–191). In doing so, he challenges the assumption that the Prophetologion reflects a pure Septuagint text – pointing, for example, to the Septuagint–Masoretic mixture in Isaiah 9:5 – and highlights the ways in which the lectionary selection reflects early Christian exegetical practices.

Georgi R. Parpulov's study of psalters examines their emergence as a distinct book type, including the shifting composition of their appendices (such as the Odes), as well as the differentiation between manuscripts intended for public liturgical use and those designed for private devotion or study (193–199). Michael Zheltov's substantial contribution on the Euchologion similarly offers a historical account, tracing its development from early Christian euchologic collections found in the *Didache* and *Apostolic Constitutions* to the first Greek printed editions produced in 16th-century Venice (201–221). Of particular interest is his attention to the reception and transformation of the Euchologion beyond the Greek-speaking world, especially in its Slavonic manuscript and printed traditions.

The longest contribution in the volume is Stig Simeon R. Frøyshov's study of the Horologion (223–269). Here the author proposes a clear periodization of its development into Palestinian, Byzantine, and "Orthodox" phases (the latter corresponding to the received tradition), further subdi-

vided according to Horologion type, such as Old and New Hierosolymitan forms.

Damaskinos Olkinuora treats the Triodion and Pentekostarion together, offering not only a historical overview of their development but also a valuable survey of modern research on these books (271–286). His concluding remarks, which outline future directions for study and propose best practices for classification, will be of particular use to scholars entering this area of research.

Apostolos Spanos' contribution on the Menaion largely reiterates the typology proposed by Roman Krivko in his 2011 *Scrinium* article,¹ encompassing both Greek and Slavonic evidence (287–299). Less attention is given, however, to the earlier history of the book or to its reception outside the Greek world and its eventual stabilization in printed form.

Luigi D'Amelia's article on the Oktoechos opens with a helpful clarification of the term's polyvalence, distinguishing between the musical system, the derived organizational framework for chant, and the book itself (301–330). His historical overview of the latter is particularly clear, and the study concludes with a chronologically ordered list of Greek Oktoechos manuscripts that will be welcome to specialists.

Byzantine musical manuscripts – especially the Heirmologion and Sticherarion – are the focus of Christian Troelsgård's contribution (331–351). With notable precision, he explains the evolution of Byzantine musical notation and the changing organization of musical collections, drawing on a wide range of manuscript evidence.

Joan Lena contributes a second article, devoted to the Panegyrikon, a book type that remains relatively obscure due to both the diversity of its contents (including encomia, vitae, and discourses) and its eventual obsolescence (353–375). By examining its use and contents as reflected in the Typika of the monasteries of the Theotokos Evergetis and the Holy Savior in Messina, Lena persuasively establishes the Panegyrikon as a liturgical book in its own right.

¹ Cf. Roman KRIVKO, A Typology of Byzantine Office Menaia of the Ninth–Fourteenth Centuries, in: *Scrinium* 7–8/2 (2011) = *Ars Christiana*. In *Memoirium Michail F. Murianov*, vol. 2, ed. by Roman KRIVKO et al., Piscataway/NJ 2011–2012, 3–68.

Hagiographical collections preserved in the Menologion and Synaxarion are treated by Christian Høgel, who traces their historical development, albeit with less emphasis on individual manuscript witnesses than is found in several other contributions (377–383).

The final two articles step back from individual book types to reflect on broader methodological and historical questions. Stefano Parenti and Gabriel Radle offer a methodological assessment of liturgical research, reviewing traditional taxonomies of liturgical codices and proposing refinements that give greater weight to palaeographical and codicological evidence for dating and localization (386–400). Stefanos Alexopoulos and Dionysios Bilalis Anatolikiotes turn to the modern reception of the Greek liturgical tradition, tracing the printing history of enduring book types in the 19th and 20th centuries (401–427). Although this focus leaves an unfortunate gap between the manuscript and early printed traditions – addressed only partially elsewhere in the volume, most notably in Zheltov’s study of the Euchologion – their contribution underscores the living character of the liturgical tradition explored throughout the collection.

The breadth and scope of the volume strongly recommend it, particularly for readers seeking a structured introduction to the study of Byzantine liturgical books, a field that otherwise remains highly specialized. Several contributions – notably those on the Prophetologion (Engberg and Mihăilă), Euchologion (Zheltov), Triodion/Pentekostarion (Olkinuora), and Oktoechos (D’Amelia) – are especially accessible and well suited to non-specialists. In this respect, the volume could profitably serve as an advanced and more focused complement to broader introductory works such as the *Handbook for Liturgical Studies*. The extensive bibliographies accompanying each article further enhance its value, offering readers clear points of entry into a scholarly literature spanning multiple languages and more than two centuries.

While a single-author monograph might present a more unified – if not necessarily more accurate – narrative of the history of the Byzantine rite as reflected in its manuscript legacy, this collection is to be commended for foregrounding, perhaps unintentionally, the field’s ongoing debates and unresolved questions. The coexistence of differing perspectives – for example, both reliance upon and departure from the traditional

monastic–cathedral paradigm, which interprets liturgical development as the interaction between Jerusalem monastic practice and the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite – serves as a reminder that the history of the Byzantine liturgy and its books remains an open and contested area of inquiry. In this respect, the volume succeeds not only as a reference work, but also as a faithful representation of the current state of the discipline.