ExFonte
Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy

Volume 5 | 2026

Review

Stefano Parenti, Storia regionale del rito bizantino, vol. 1: Constantinopoli e dintorni (Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 47), Münster 2025

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How to Cite

Fittipaldi, Diego R., Review: Stefano Parenti, Storia regionale del rito bizantino, vol. 1: Constantinopoli e dintorni (Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 47), Münster 2025, in: Ex Fonte – Journal of Ecumenical Studies in Liturgy 5 (2026) 485–504.

DOI 10.25365/exf-2026-5-16

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Reviewed Book

Author	Stefano Parenti
Title	Storia regionale del rito bizantino
Subtitle	Vol. 1: Constantinopoli e dintorni
Series	Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 47
Place	Münster
Year	2025
Publisher	Aschendorff
Pages	342
ISBN	978-3-402-11082-9

Review

Stefano Parenti, Storia regionale del rito bizantino, vol. 1: Constantinopoli e dintorni (Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 47), Münster 2025.

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The present volume, *Storia regionale del rito bizantino, vol. 1: Costantinopoli e dintorni*, is the first instalment of a projected two-volume synthesis devoted to the regional history of the Byzantine Rite. The focus here lies on Constantinople and its surrounding area, tracing the formation, development, and transformations of the rites associated with the imperial capital.

Rather than offering new primary editions or archival discoveries, Parenti provides a critical synthesis of current scholarship. The aim is to present the most reliable conclusions available concerning liturgical, secular, and monastic practices in Constantinople, while clearly distinguishing between well-established results and more hypothetical reconstructions. The discussion regularly engages contested questions and openly acknowledges points where the evidence remains insufficient for definitive conclusions.

A guiding concern of the book is the transition from a local urban rite to a liturgical tradition that acquired supra-regional authority and eventually spread far beyond its original cultural and geographical context. This process is situated within the broader framework of Late Antique and medieval liturgical history, with particular attention to reform movements and moments of structural reconfiguration.

The volume is organised according to a clear and persuasive periodisation of the Constantinopolitan liturgy: from its formation in Late Antiquity, through the Justinianic era and the so-called “Dark Ages”, to the

post-iconoclastic reforms and the Middle and Late Byzantine periods. A parallel historical framework is proposed for the development of monastic liturgy, especially in relation to the Studite and Sabaite traditions. This double perspective allows the author to integrate cathedral and monastic practices without collapsing their distinct historical trajectories.

The *Introduction* (29–53) explains the aim and method of a regional history of the Byzantine Rite. It situates the work within the growing field of liturgical studies and adopts a historical-comparative approach, focusing on how liturgies develop over time. A key idea is that Christian liturgies did not originate from a single source but from many local traditions that gradually became unified, especially around major centres like Constantinople. At the same time, regional diversity persisted, making a regional perspective necessary. The chapter highlights the importance of comparative liturgy (Anton Baumstark) and later methodological developments, such as the study of structural changes and the distinction between cathedral and monastic rites. It also notes ongoing challenges, including distinguishing between organic evolution and deliberate reform. After reviewing earlier scholarly models, the author proposes a synthetic, regionally grounded history, focusing in this volume on Constantinople. Finally, it clarifies that the term "Byzantine Rite" is a modern scholarly label for a complex and evolving liturgical tradition.

The first two chapters deal with the beginning of the history of the Byzantine Rite, the first one (*The Birth of a Liturgy [330–451]. I: Space and Time*, 55–73) examines the early development of the Constantinopolitan liturgical tradition, showing how the Byzantine Rite emerged through historical processes, reforms, and adaptations rather than a fixed origin. A central theme is that liturgy evolves in two ways: through gradual, spontaneous change, and through deliberate interventions by church authorities. The chapter illustrates this with concrete cases, such as: the development of ordination rites, shaped by editorial work and theological influences, institutional decisions like the abolition of the sole confessor priest (ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς μετανοίας πρεσβύτερος) under Patriarch Nektarios, showing how discipline and liturgy interact. It also highlights the complex relationship between liturgical practice and written sources, warning that liturgical books do not fully reflect real celebrations, other sources (e. g. hagiography) are necessary to reconstruct lived practice. Overall, the chapter argues that

the Byzantine Rite in Constantinople was formed through a dynamic interplay of tradition, reform, and historical context, rather than a single coherent plan.

The second part (*The Birth of a Liturgy [330–451]. II: The Celebration of the Mysteries*, 75–98) explores how the liturgical tradition of Constantinople emerged gradually out of earlier Christian practices rather than being created from scratch. Its roots lie especially in major centres such as Antioch and Jerusalem, but as Constantinople rose to prominence as the imperial capital, its liturgy began to acquire a distinctive character of its own. In its early phase, worship was primarily cathedral-based, meaning public, communal, and centred in the great urban churches. It emphasized processions, psalmody, and active participation by the whole city. At the same time, the presence of the emperor and the imperial court strongly shaped liturgical life, giving it a more formal, hierarchical, and ceremonial style that reflected the political and symbolic importance of the capital. Over time, the main structures of the Byzantine liturgy began to take shape, with more regular patterns of readings, prayers, and chants, as well as a clearer organization of the Eucharist. However, this system was still developing and not yet fully standardized. Constantinople also remained open to outside influences – especially from Jerusalem and Syrian traditions – which enriched and diversified its practices. By the end of this formative period, Constantinople had developed a recognizable liturgical identity: a synthesis of inherited traditions and local innovations. This evolving tradition laid the foundation for what would later become the dominant form of Byzantine liturgy.

The *Excursus: The Liturgical Prayer of Monks in Early Constantinople (4th–5th centuries)* (99–109) explores the liturgical prayer of monks in early Constantinople (4th–5th centuries), a topic documented only through scarce and often problematic sources, especially hagiographical texts. Despite these limitations, two general features emerge: monastic communities were largely urban, and many monks originated from the Eastern provinces, which helps explain the strong influence of Eastern traditions on their practices. The chapter presents three main case studies. The first concerns Auxentios of Bithynia, whose community took part in public church vigils. This suggests that early Constantinopolitan monasticism did not initially develop a clearly distinct liturgical system but remained

closely integrated with the cathedral and urban liturgy of the city. A second example is Hypatios of Ruphinianai, whose Life describes a well-structured daily cycle of prayer (*cursus*) organized around seven canonical hours inspired by Psalm 118. This cycle included psalmody, fixed times of prayer (morning, third, sixth, ninth, evening, and night), and a substantial number of psalms and short prayers, reflecting a highly organized monastic office comparable to other major Eastern traditions, such as that of the Lavra of Saint Sabas.The most distinctive case is that of the Akoimetoi, or "Sleepless Monks," founded by Alexandros. They developed a system of continuous, uninterrupted prayer by dividing the community into groups that alternated in order to sustain worship day and night. Their liturgical practice combined psalmody, readings, repeated hymns, and prostrations, embodying the ideal of unceasing, angelic praise. However, the sources describing them are imprecise, and the exact structure of their liturgy remains unclear; over time, their practices likely adapted to the broader liturgical context of Constantinople. Overall, the chapter demonstrates that early Constantinopolitan monastic prayer was diverse, fluid, and still in formation, ranging from participation in public liturgy to fully developed daily offices and even radical forms of continuous prayer. These practices were deeply rooted in biblical models and Eastern monastic traditions, with the Akoimetoi representing the most extreme realization of the ideal of perpetual prayer.

Chapter III (*Before and After Justinian: Continuity and Change*, 111–138) examines the further development of Constantinopolitan liturgy in the 6th cent., especially under Emperor Justinian I, presenting it as a decisive period of both continuity and transformation. During this time, the liturgical calendar expanded with new feasts, and important forms such as the kontakion emerged as central elements of hymnography. Theological reflection on the liturgy also deepened, notably through figures like Pseudo-Dionysios the Areopagite and Maximos the Confessor. At the same time, the construction of Hagia Sophia provided a monumental setting that encouraged increasingly elaborate and symbolically rich celebrations. Under Justinian, the liturgy took on a more explicitly imperial character, shaped by the presence of the emperor and marked by heightened ceremonial, visual, and acoustic elements. This "imperialization" contributed to the prestige of Constantinopolitan worship and later influenced

other regions. The period also saw important reforms: developments in baptismal and penitential practices, changes in eucharistic prayers, and the gradual organization of liturgical structures. A key innovation was the introduction of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed into the Divine Liturgy – likely in the early 6th cent – transforming it into a communal profession of faith placed before the anaphora. Another major shift was the growing practice of silent recitation of priestly prayers, especially the anaphora. Although Justinian attempted to enforce audible prayer, this quieter mode gradually prevailed and became standard. The emperor also intervened directly in the liturgical calendar, promoting uniformity by fixing feasts such as Christmas (December 25 in Jerusalem) and supporting others like the Annunciation. Overall, the 6th cent. emerges as a formative era in which Constantinopolitan liturgy became more structured, theologically articulated, and ceremonially elaborate, laying foundations for its later development.

The development of Constantinopolitan hymnography is explored in Chapter IV (*Constantinopolitan Hymnography: Troparion and Kontakion*, 139–162), focusing especially on the troparion and the kontakion as the fundamental poetic forms of Byzantine liturgy. The chapter argues that hymnography was already deeply integrated into the worship and theology of Constantinople from the fifth cent. onward and that, contrary to older assumptions, monastic circles in the capital were not generally hostile to liturgical poetry. The troparion originally functioned as a short refrain, often connected with psalmody, though many early examples also circulated independently of psalms. Biblical and non-biblical troparia gradually evolved into more elaborate hymnographic compositions. Their liturgical use reveals a transition from fully antiphonal psalm structures toward autonomous hymns, as seen in examples such as the Trisagion and the Paschal troparion "Christ is risen from the dead". The chapter then examines the kontakion, a long metrical hymn composed of a prooimion and multiple stanzas connected through refrains and acrostics. Conceived as a sung homily performed by a soloist with congregational responses, the kontakion became one of the most sophisticated literary forms of Byzantine worship. Special attention is given to Romanos the Melodist, whose kontakia combined biblical exegesis, theological instruction, and liturgical performance. Parenti also emphasizes the probable Syriac influence on

the origins of the genre. Finally, the chapter studies the relationship between hymnography and doctrinal controversy through hymns such as the Trisagion and the "Only-Begotten Son." These hymns were not only liturgical texts but also theological and political instruments shaped by the christological debates of the fifth and sixth centuries. The chapter shows how Byzantine hymnography served simultaneously as worship, doctrinal expression, and ritual interpretation.

Chapter V (*From the Mystagogia to the Historia mystica*, 163–187) examines the development of Byzantine liturgy between the 7th and early 8th centuries – often described as the "Dark Ages" – and challenges the traditional view of this period as one of simple decline. Although the Byzantine Empire faced significant political and cultural crises, the liturgical tradition reveals a more complex picture marked by both continuity and transformation. Rather than disintegration, this phase is characterized by processes of adaptation, reinterpretation, and gradual consolidation. A central focus of the chapter is the changing interpretation of the liturgy. The *Mystagogia* of Maximos the Confessor illustrates the earlier symbolic-theological approach, yet it proves difficult to associate with any single concrete rite. Maximos, likely influenced by multiple traditions – Constantinopolitan, Palestinian, and others – seems to describe a more universal or idealized liturgy rather than a specific local practice. In contrast, the *Historia Mystica*, traditionally (though uncertainly) attributed to Germanos I of Constantinople, represents a shift toward a narrative and representational understanding of worship. Here, the liturgy is interpreted as a dramatic re-enactment of Christ's life, with each ritual moment linked to events in salvation history, reflecting a more accessible and popular theological perspective. An essential witness to liturgical practice in this period is the Barberini *euchologion* (*BAV, Barberini gr. 336*), the oldest surviving Byzantine liturgical book (late 7th – early 8th cent.). It preserves a wide range of prayers and rites – covering the Eucharist, daily offices, sacraments, blessings, and ceremonies connected to imperial and social life – and reveals a complex synthesis of traditions, including Constantinopolitan, Jerusalemite, and Alexandrian elements. At the same time, ecclesiastical authorities sought to regulate and standardize liturgical life. The Council in Trullo (691/692), for example, issued canons addressing sacramental discipline, fasting, Eucharistic practice, and relations with

other traditions, demonstrating an effort to impose greater coherence, even if these norms were not always consistently applied. Significant structural developments also took place within the liturgy itself, especially in the Eucharist. These include a simplification of rites following the decline of the catechumenate, a reorganization of prayers and litanies, the emergence of penitential and "apology" prayers, the increasing use of fixed liturgical formulas, and a reinterpretation of ritual gestures such as the offering of the gifts. Altogether, the chapter shows that this period was not one of decay, but rather a crucial phase of reconfiguration in which Byzantine liturgy became more systematized, more richly interpreted, and more standardized, laying the foundations for its later medieval form.

Chapter VI (*The Liturgical Tradition of the Monastery of Stoudios [9th–11th cent.]*, 189–208), examines the liturgical tradition of the Monastery of Stoudios and challenges the widespread assumption that the so-called Studite liturgy was simply the result of a fusion between Palestinian monastic prayer and the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite. Instead, the chapter argues that the Studite tradition developed gradually and internally, was never fully uniform, and exercised only a relatively limited and short-lived dominance before being overshadowed by the Sabaitic tradition. The origins of this tradition lie in Bithynia, at the monastery of Sakkoudion, under the leadership of Theodoros the Studite. Already at this stage, the liturgy was shaped by Constantinopolitan practice rather than being later imported from elsewhere. It was characterized by a strong coenobitic structure, a complete cycle of daily offices (including minor hours, Vespers, and Compline), and a clear rejection of individual or eremitic models of prayer. This suggests that what is often called the "Studite Synthesis" likely predates the move to Constantinople rather than resulting from it. After the transfer to the monastery of Stoudios in 798, the community continued to use a Jerusalem-type horologion, adapted to its own needs. Liturgical life remained firmly communal and structured around fixed hours and psalmody. There is no convincing evidence that Theodoros introduced any radical liturgical reform; rather, continuity and adaptation seem to have been the guiding principles. This is further confirmed by debates such as that on the monastic habit, where Theodoros opposed the practice of a "small habit" preceding the "great habit," insisting instead on a single, definitive monastic profession analogous to baptism. This po-

sition highlights differences between Constantinopolitan and Palestinian traditions and indicates that Theodoros initially had limited familiarity with the Palestinian Rite.

The chapter also reassesses the supposed influence of Palestinian hymnography. Contrary to common assumptions, there is no evidence that Theodoros actively sought hymnographers from Jerusalem or deliberately imported Sabaitic liturgical practices. Instead, the monastery developed its own hymnographic production, adapting earlier Jerusalem materials such as the tropologion, removing elements that did not fit its context, and composing new hymns for Constantinopolitan feasts. In this way, Theodoros and his circle appear not merely as transmitters but as active creators within the liturgical tradition.

The question of vigils further illustrates the flexibility of Studite practice. Although the typika generally exclude night vigils because of their tension with coenobitic discipline, evidence shows that they were occasionally celebrated, for example on major feasts such as that of St. Sabas. This indicates that practice was not rigidly fixed but allowed for adaptation. At the same time, the frequency of the Eucharistic celebration was notably high, often occurring daily, which in turn required the development of expanded lectionary systems, including readings for weekdays. This points to an intensely structured and liturgically rich monastic life.

A series of key texts contributed to shaping and transmitting the Studite tradition. The Hypotyposis combined liturgical prescriptions with monastic discipline and became an influential model for other communities, even if it was later replaced by Sabaitic norms. The menologion and lectionaries defined the calendar of saints and reflected the monastery's distinctive commemorations, thereby reinforcing its liturgical identity. The *typikon* coordinated the various liturgical cycles – fixed, movable, and weekly – and, although it survives mainly in Slavonic translation, it demonstrates the wider diffusion of Studite influence beyond Constantinople. A disciplinary *typikon* further regulated daily life, including food, behaviour, hierarchy, and liturgical roles, and was partially preserved in South Italian monastic contexts.

Finally, the chapter traces the transmission of the Studite tradition to Mount Athos through figures such as Athanasius the Athonite, whose rule adapted the Studite model. Later Athonite typika preserve modified

forms of this tradition while also reflecting a transition toward new liturgical syntheses. In conclusion, the Studite liturgical tradition emerges not as a fixed or universal system but as a dynamic and adaptive formation, shaped by local needs and historical circumstances. It played an important yet ultimately temporary role in the history of Byzantine liturgy, before being superseded by the Sabaitic tradition, which would become dominant in the later medieval period.

Chapter VII (*The Post-Iconoclastic Liturgical Reform*, 209–242) analyses the liturgical transformation that followed the end of Iconoclasm (late 8th–9th cent.), arguing that it should not be understood as a single, clearly defined reform, but rather as a broad and gradual process of change. Although it was initiated "from above", its effects are visible primarily in the evolution of liturgical books – such as *euchologia*, lectionaries, and hymnographic collections – rather than in formal decrees. This period marks a decisive phase in the consolidation of the Byzantine Rite, characterized by restructuring, expansion, and increasing standardization.

One of the most significant developments concerns the Eucharistic liturgies. While the Liturgy of St. Basil had previously been more prominent, it gradually gave way to the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, which became the dominant and most frequently celebrated form, eventually used almost daily. This transition involved not only practical changes but also textual revisions – especially in the anaphora – along with a reorganization of rubrics and the incorporation of theological nuances shaped by the iconophile context.

Parallel changes can be observed in the *euchologion*. A clear distinction emerges between pre-iconoclastic collections, such as *BAV, Barberini gr. 336*, and post-iconoclastic ones, like *Paris, BNF Coislin 213*. The latter reflect the introduction of new prayers and rites, including those for Holy Week and church dedication, as well as revised rubrics. At the same time, however, the period shows signs of what has been described as "euchological atrophy", with fewer newly composed prayers and a greater reliance on the reuse and adaptation of earlier material.

Liturgical life also responded to new pastoral needs. There was a notable development of rites related to conversion and reconciliation, particularly for heretics and for converts from Islam or other religious groups.

These practices reflect the historical realities of the time, including conflict, forced conversion, and the reintegration of individuals into the Church.

Another important feature of the period is the expansion of liturgical reading cycles. Gospel books and lectionaries begin to include weekday (ferial) readings, indicating a more frequent celebration of the Eucharist and a more systematic liturgical structuring of the entire week. This development is closely connected with broader changes in the liturgical year, which saw the introduction of new feasts, most notably the Sunday of Orthodoxy following 843. Initially commemorating the restoration of icons, this feast gradually evolved into a more general affirmation of doctrinal identity, reinforced by texts such as the Synodikon of Orthodoxy, which publicly proclaimed orthodoxy and condemned heresies.

At the same time, hymnography underwent a profound transformation. The older form of the kontakion declined, while the kanon – originating in Jerusalem – rose to prominence as a more complex and structured hymnographic genre. This shift reflects not merely aesthetic preference but deeper changes in the organization and theological interpretation of the liturgy.

More broadly, the period is marked by the growing influence of Jerusalem (Hagiopolite) practices, especially in the daily office, and by the emergence of hybrid forms that combine elements of cathedral and monastic traditions. The overall trend points toward greater uniformity, increased frequency of celebration, and a deeper integration of theological, ritual, and textual components.

In conclusion, the post-iconoclastic transformation represents a major turning point in the history of Byzantine liturgy. It reorganized texts, rites, and calendars, established the predominance of the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, expanded liturgical practice across both the week and the year, and reshaped hymnography and theological expression. Rather than a single reform event, it is best understood as a long process of consolidation and development that laid the foundations for the mature medieval Byzantine Rite.

Chapter VIII (*Cathedral and Monastic Worship in the Mid-Byzantine Period*, 243–271), examines liturgical life in Constantinople between 843 and 1204, focusing on the interaction between the cathedral (urban) litur-

gy centred on Hagia Sophia and the monastic liturgy, especially of Studite and Jerusalem (Hagiopolite) origin. A central theme is the gradual emergence of hybrid and even "bi-ritual" practices, in which different liturgical traditions coexist and combine rather than simply replacing one another.

The liturgy of the Great Church is preserved primarily in lectionaries, synaxaria, and rubrical manuscripts, which together document a highly organized, station-based urban liturgy celebrated across various churches of the city. These sources reveal a detailed structuring of readings, processions, and ritual actions. Over time, the synaxarion evolved from a simple calendar into a more complex liturgical-hagiographical book, as seen in key manuscripts such as *Patmos gr. 266* and *Jerusalem Tim. Staurou gr. 40*. This development is closely linked to imperial initiatives, particularly under Emperor Constantine VII, who promoted the compilation of a more systematic synaxarion that standardized the commemoration of saints and was likely used in liturgical contexts.

At the same time, biblical manuscripts such as lectionaries and praxapostoloi became important vehicles for transmitting liturgical practice. They contain not only readings but also rubrics, topographical indications, and ceremonial instructions, demonstrating that liturgy was preserved and communicated not only through prayer books but also through scriptural texts used in worship. This period also saw the expansion and increasing complexity of liturgical reading cycles. New systems emerged, such as the cycle of eleven Resurrection Gospels for Sunday Matins and the twelve Passion Gospels for the Holy Week vigil, which, together with hymnography, created a more elaborate and dramatic liturgical narrative. Additional readings for Lent, Holy Week, and special vigils further contributed to the enrichment of the liturgical year.

The interaction between cathedral and monastic traditions led to the formation of hybrid liturgical forms. In such cases, the structural framework of the cathedral rite was combined with monastic elements, especially in psalmody and hymnography – for example, in the celebration of Vespers. In some contexts, this coexistence took the form of bi-ritualism, where two distinct liturgical system – the Constantinopolitan cathedral rite and the Hagiopolite or monastic rite – were used side by side. Manuscripts sometimes indicate which form should be followed depending on the occasion, such as weekdays versus Sundays, reflecting a tran-

sitional stage before the eventual predominance of a more unified system. Evidence of this dual practice is also found in psalters, which preserve both cathedral divisions into antiphons and monastic divisions into kathismata, sometimes within the same manuscript. A particularly important witness to these developments is the praxapostolos Dresden gr. A 104, which preserves reading cycles, rubrics, and mixed liturgical forms, illustrating both strong Studite influence and the increasing integration of monastic elements into cathedral worship.

Overall, the Middle Byzantine period emerges as a time of dynamic interaction, adaptation, and gradual synthesis. Liturgical traditions did not develop in isolation but influenced one another, leading to more complex reading systems, expanded ritual practices, and a growing tendency toward standardization. The chapter thus shows that Byzantine liturgy in this period was not uniform but evolving, shaped by the coexistence and fusion of different traditions, ultimately giving rise to a hybrid system that would define later Byzantine worship.

In Chapter IX (*The "Neo-Sabaitic Synthesis" and the Diffusion of the Typikon of St. Saba*, 273–292), the so-called "neo-Sabaitic synthesis" and the spread of the *typikon* of the Lavra of St. Sabas throughout the Byzantine world is examined, especially within the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It offers a critical reassessment of the traditional narrative, arguing that the idea of a deliberate and coherent "neo-Sabaitic reform" is largely misleading. Rather than a planned transformation imposed from above, the developments usually described under this label are better understood as the result of gradual processes of interaction, adaptation, and exchange. The concept of a "neo-Sabaitic synthesis," associated in modern scholarship with Robert Taft, posits that Palestinian monks reshaped the Studite liturgy into a stricter and more monastic system, characterized by features such as the restoration of night vigils (*agrypnia*), the regular use of full nine-ode kanones, and an increase in psalmody. The chapter challenges this interpretation by showing that these elements do not, in fact, represent innovations of a reform. Vigils, for example, had never entirely disappeared; the nine-ode kanon was already part of the Jerusalem tradition; and variations in psalmody reflect parallel liturgical systems rather than a deliberate restructuring. Consequently, there is no evidence for a single, intentional reform movement.

Instead, what occurred was a gradual fusion of different liturgical traditions, particularly those of Jerusalem (Sabaitic) and Constantinople (both cathedral and Studite). This process was facilitated by ongoing cultural and liturgical exchange, as well as by the "Byzantinization" of Jerusalem liturgy after the 10th cent. A key witness to this development is the *typikon* of St. Sabas as preserved in the manuscript *Sinai gr. 1096* (12th cent.), the earliest Greek example of this tradition. Far from representing a purely Palestinian model, it displays a hybrid character, combining Constantinopolitan structures – such as calendar, readings, and euchology – with elements of local Jerusalem practice.

The diversity of this tradition is further illustrated by the work of Nikon of the Black Mountain, an important 11th-century monastic author who compared various typika from Constantinopolitan, Studite, and Palestinian contexts. His observations make clear that the Sabaitic *typikon* did not exist as a single fixed form but rather in multiple local versions. This variability helps explain how the tradition spread across the Byzantine world: not through a centralized reform, but through a combination of factors, including the spiritual prestige of Palestine as the land of monastic origins, the mobility of monastic networks linking regions such as Palestine, Asia Minor, and Constantinople, and historical events such as the Crusades and Islamic conquests, which prompted the migration of monks and the transfer of liturgical practices.

The adoption of the Sabaitic *typikon* in different regions confirms this pattern of gradual and selective reception. In Patmos, for instance, the monastery of St. John the Theologos explicitly adopted the Sabaitic *typikon* in 1091, while in Asia Minor and Greece its influence spread through monastic foundations and personal networks, often resulting in mixed practices that combined Studite structures with Sabaitic elements. Even in cases such as the monastery of Theotokos Euergetis, often cited as evidence of strong neo-Sabaitic influence, closer analysis shows that apparent similarities – such as the use of vigils – can be explained by older cathedral traditions rather than direct borrowing from Jerusalem. Likewise, the palimpsest *typikon* in *Sinai gr. 966* reveals a mixture of influences, possibly linked to Nikon's tradition, and further confirms the absence of a single standardized model.

Over time, many monastic communities did move from the Studite to the Sabaitic *typikon*, but this transition was neither uniform nor imposed. It unfolded gradually, was adapted to local conditions, and in some cases encountered resistance. The evidence thus points to a "bottom-up" process of liturgical change rather than a top-down reform.

In conclusion, the chapter overturns the traditional narrative of a unified "neo-Sabaitic reform." Instead, it demonstrates that the evolution of Byzantine liturgy in this period was shaped by long-term interaction between Jerusalem and Constantinopolitan traditions, resulting in hybrid forms and diverse local adaptations. The eventual predominance of the Sabaitic *typikon* can be explained not by deliberate imposition, but by its prestige and the mobility of the monastic networks that transmitted it.

In Chapter X (*From the Restoration in 1261 to the Fall in 1453*, 293–315), Parenti examines the liturgical life of Constantinople from the Byzantine restoration in 1261 to the Ottoman conquest in 1453, arguing that this period does not represent a simple revival of the earlier cathedral rite but rather a profound transformation marked by the definitive adoption of the Sabaitic (monastic) *typikon* and by ongoing processes of adaptation and creativity. Before the Latin conquest of 1204, sources such as the Book of the Pilgrim of Anthony of Novgorod attest to the vitality of the traditional cathedral liturgy of Constantinople, with its processions, solemn Matins in Hagia Sophia, and well-established "ecclesiastical" rite. The situation changed drastically after the Fourth Crusade, when Hagia Sophia was converted to Latin use and Byzantine liturgical structures were disrupted. In exile, particularly in Nicaea, Byzantine liturgical life continued, but with an increasing influence of the *typikon* of St. Sabas, signalling a gradual shift away from the older cathedral model.

The restoration of Constantinople in 1261 marked a new beginning, but not a return to the past. Although Hagia Sophia was physically restored, the pre-1204 cathedral rite was not revived. Instead, the Sabaitic *typikon* was introduced and became normative. This shift is reflected, for example, in the Synod of 1276, whose decisions reveal reduced patriarchal roles and the adoption of practices derived from monastic usage, such as the prohibition of the Presanctified Liturgy on Good Friday. Liturgical books from this period, including important *euchologia* preserved in manuscripts such as *Grottaferrata gr. Γ.β. 1* and *Athens EBE gr. 662*, often

present themselves as restorations of older traditions, yet in reality they reflect later developments and selective reinterpretations of the past.

At the same time, new forms of liturgical regulation and practice emerged. Numerous *diataxeis* – practical manuals governing the celebration of the liturgy, monastic life, and clerical roles – were produced, contributing to a greater standardization of worship. In parallel, significant changes took place in liturgical music, including the adoption of new notational systems (the so-called "round notation") and the emergence of new books such as the akolouthia, while older cathedral musical traditions declined. These developments reflect the increasing "monasticization" of liturgical life.

The Sabaitic *typikon* eventually achieved complete dominance, even being adopted by the Monastery of Stoudios in the 13th cent. and spreading throughout Constantinople, Mount Athos, and the wider Orthodox world. Yet this process did not entail mere uniformity. New ritual forms continued to develop, including more dramatic and symbolic elements, such as the Good Friday rites with their reenactment of Christ's burial, indicating a growing tendency toward liturgical mimesis. Similarly, what has sometimes been described as an "Athonite reform" in the 14th cent. appears, upon closer examination, not as a clearly defined reform movement but as a gradual evolution shaped by continuity and adaptation.

Important figures contributed to this process of consolidation. Patriarch Philotheos Kokkinos, for instance, produced liturgical regulations and composed hymns and prayers, but his role was primarily editorial and codifying rather than innovative. At the same time, the period witnessed a remarkable musical renaissance, exemplified by John Koukouzelis and the development of "kalophonic" chant, which introduced greater artistic complexity even within a spiritual climate influenced by hesychasm.

Liturgical life also remained closely connected to the imperial court. Texts such as De officiis attributed to Pseudo-Kodinos reveal the continued importance of court ceremonial, though with a shift from the older, public stational liturgy toward a more palace-centred form. In the later Byzantine period, further developments included new liturgical texts and regulations, the influence of theologians such as Nicholaos Kabasilas on Eucharistic interpretation, and the introduction of new feasts, for example

that of Gregorios Palamas. Ritual elaboration and symbolic dramatization continued to increase, as seen in practices like the "Furnace rite," demonstrating that liturgical creativity persisted until the very end of the Byzantine Empire.

In conclusion, the period from 1261 to 1453 should not be understood as a simple restoration of earlier forms or as the result of a single reform. Rather, it represents a new phase in the history of Byzantine liturgy, characterized by the definitive replacement of the cathedral rite with the Sabaitic *typikon*, the formation of a hybrid liturgical culture combining monastic and imperial elements, and a sustained capacity for adaptation and innovation.

Parenti concludes (317–319) with a synthetic interpretation of the history of the Byzantine Rite in Constantinople, arguing that it cannot be understood as a linear sequence of successive replacements, but rather as a complex, plural, and evolving process shaped by coexistence, adaptation, and interaction among different liturgical traditions. From its origins, the Byzantine Rite is rooted in an Antiochene liturgical background, yet Constantinople quickly developed its own distinctive features, at times preserving archaic elements from as early as the fourth cent. that disappeared elsewhere. In this sense, it initially functioned as a creative "periphery" within a broader liturgical world.

Over time, the liturgy of Constantinople evolved from a local urban practice into a patriarchal model with wider influence. Nevertheless, this development did not eliminate diversity. On the contrary, a variety of liturgical forms continued to coexist, especially within monastic settings, so that even within the same city multiple traditions could be practiced simultaneously. This reality calls into question the traditional "replacement model," which posits a neat succession from the Akoimetoi to the Studites, the Euergetis monastery, and finally the Sabaitic tradition. Instead, the evidence points to a medieval liturgical landscape characterized by pluralism and interaction rather than simple succession.

The chapter also revisits key historical periods. The age of Justinian, often regarded as a "Golden Age," already shows signs of developments such as increasing clericalization and the growing importance of the sanctuary, features once thought to belong to later centuries. Similarly, the so-called "Dark Ages" of the 7th to 9th centuries appear not as a period

of decline but as one of continued organization and transformation, in which figures like Maximos the Confessor may have played a less central role than previously assumed. These observations call for a revision of traditional periodisations.

Particular attention is given to the Studite and post-iconoclastic phases. The so-called "Studite Synthesis" likely began earlier than often supposed, already in Bithynia, and involved both the integration of cathedral elements and the adaptation of Jerusalem (Hagiopolite) hymnography. After the restoration of icons in 843, a significant phase of liturgical reorganization took place, marked especially by the growing influence of Jerusalem practices. At the same time, the chapter critically reassesses the idea of a later "neo-Sabaitic reform," showing that many of the features attributed to it either predate it or have been misinterpreted. Likewise, there is no convincing evidence for a systematic liturgical reform driven by hesychasm on Mount Athos. Liturgical change appears instead as gradual, organic, and cumulative rather than programmatic.

The chapter concludes with an important methodological reflection. The accumulation of sources does not automatically lead to better understanding; rather, progress in the study of liturgy depends on rigorous methods, careful analysis of manuscripts, and critical interpretation. Scholars such as Juan Mateos and Robert Taft are cited as examples of this approach. Ultimately, the Byzantine liturgy of Constantinople emerges as a dynamic and multilayered tradition, shaped by continuous interaction among different practices and resistant to simplistic narratives. Its history is best understood as an ongoing process of adaptation and coexistence, rather than as a sequence of clearly defined reforms or ruptures.

One of the book's methodological strengths lies in its careful reflection on comparative liturgy. Parenti explicitly defines its purpose as identifying convergent developments among Christian liturgical traditions that arose independently but followed analogous historical paths (31). This methodological awareness underlies much of the analysis and guards against overly schematic reconstructions.

A few critical remarks may nonetheless be offered. The absence of chapter summaries slightly limits the usability of the volume as a reference work. Given the breadth of the material, concise synopses would

have facilitated consultation. Moreover, the ambitious scope of the project inevitably raises the question of whether certain sections might have benefited from a more collaborative approach, though this in no way diminishes the author's achievement.

With regard to comparative liturgy, while Parenti frequently refers to Robert F. Taft's (1932–2018) reassessment of Anton Baumstark (1872–1948), the volume does not explicitly discuss Baumstark's methodological "laws" themselves. A brief systematic presentation might have enhanced clarity, particularly for readers less familiar with the tradition of comparative liturgical studies.

Among the numerous case studies discussed, particular attention is given to the palimpsest *typikon* identified by Giulia Rossetto at St. Catherine's Monastery on Sinai. In chapter IX.7 (286–289), Parenti critically examines Rossetto's proposed dating to the late 11th or early 12th century, and her attribution to an eastern (Palestinian or Syrian) milieu. The discussion highlights both the promise and the limitations of the available evidence and underscores the need for further comparative work, including systematic consideration of non-Greek witnesses and a complete transcription of the palimpsest.

Several bibliographical clarifications are also provided. Notably, the edition of Ephraim the Syrian cited on p. 104, n. 30, edited by Konstantinos G. Phrantzolēs, is essentially a reprint of Assemani's 18th-century edition and should not be regarded as a critical edition of the Greek corpus.

In conclusion, this volume represents a major contribution to the historiography of the Byzantine Rite. Its synthetic scope, methodological clarity, and critical engagement with the sources make it an indispensable point of reference for future research. Parenti's final desideratum – that the liturgical portions of many Byzantine manuscripts still await a treatment comparable to that once provided by Hippolyte Delehaye[1] – aptly captures both the achievements of the present work and the challenges that remain for the field. It is to be hoped, that a second, improved edition may also be translated and published in English.

1 Cf. Hippolyte Delehaye (ed.), Synaxarium Ecclesiæ Constantinopolitanæ e Codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi adiectis synaxariis selectis, Brussels 1902 [reprint 1954].