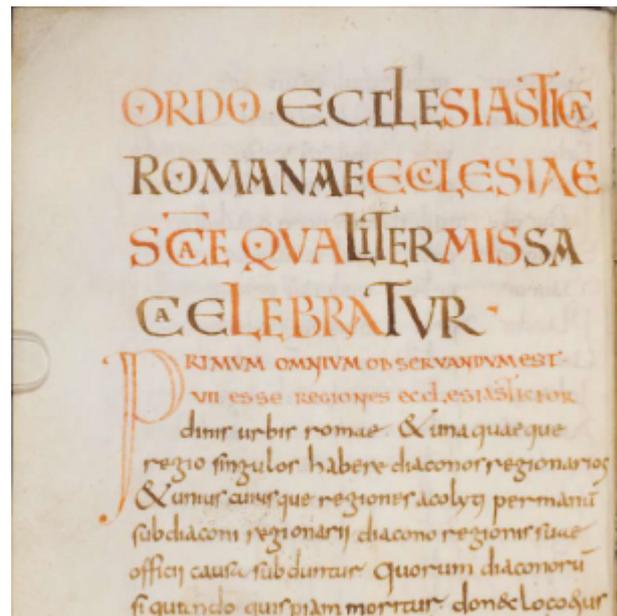


Tools and Methods for the History of Churches between East and West (5th-19th Century)

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In the Middle Ages, the liturgy was a most effective and ubiquitous medium for the transmission and solidification of ideas. Ritual texts, prayers and *ordines*, defined the Church as community, as priesthood and as holy space. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the manuscripts which transmit the liturgy were complex and multifaceted. Far from a static tradition handed down by authority and received unquestioningly, these manuscripts show continued creativity as new texts and rituals were developed, written down and redeployed. Such manuscripts were not read simply as instructions for how to perform a ritual, but also how to understand it, and why it mattered. They often consciously argued for usages they contained, or were designed to encode authority or history. This complex evidence and its rich variation stand against simplistic ideas of “liturgical reform” common to historiography of



the early middle ages, relying on the assumption of a single liturgical tradition imposed by a central authority. The liturgy was certainly a means for the Church to reflect upon itself, and individual churches themselves to improve, but the manuscript evidence shows that these mechanisms were more often individual to those churches, drawing on their own resources and traditions and processing texts self-reflectively. In the Carolingian period, for example, the liturgical example of the Roman Church was transmitted for imitation in manuscripts which laid out their liturgy upon the urban setting of the city of Rome itself, attaching the churches of the stationary liturgy the Pope performed through the year to each feast day, or in the texts known as *ordines romani* which recommended liturgical usages common or unique to Rome, giving the city of Rome as the stage for them. Details of Roman history and papal writings attached themselves to such manuscripts, allowing liturgy to be a means for any celebrant to write himself into the story of the universal Church, perceived as centred upon Rome. These manuscripts assumed more than mere imitation upon their readers and users and their reinterpretation across many manuscripts reveals the rich processes and mechanisms of liturgical change, whether highly peculiar to a single manuscript or copied more widely. It is these mechanisms which are the object of my current study, looking through manuscripts as individual responses or recommendations to the Church as a whole. Of especial interest are the early “pontifical” manuscripts, books which transmit the rituals peculiar to the office of bishop: ordination, church dedication, episcopal blessings at Mass and so on.

Individualised by their users, and emblems of episcopal authority, these books have much to reveal about the writing, reception and complex role of written liturgical texts in the early middle ages.