



The Embodied Icon: Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium (Oxford Studies in Byzantium)

By Warren T. Woodfin

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In spite of the Orthodox liturgy's reputation for resistance to change, Byzantine liturgical dress underwent a period of extraordinary elaboration from the end of the eleventh century onwards. As part of this development, embroideries depicting holy figures and scenes began to appear on the vestments of the clergy. Examining the surviving Byzantine vestments in conjunction with contemporary visual and textual evidence, Woodfin relates their embroidered imagery both to the program of images used in churches, and to the hierarchical code of dress prevailing in the imperial court. Both sets of visual cross-references serve to enforce a reading of the clergy as living icons of Christ. Finally, the book explores the competing configurations of the hierarchy of heaven as articulated in imperial and ecclesiastical art. It shows how the juxtaposition of real embroidered vestments with vestments depicted in paintings, allowed the Orthodox hierarchy to represent itself as a direct extension of the hierarchy of heaven.

Drawing on the best of recent scholarship in Byzantine liturgy, monumental painting, and textile studies, Woodfin's volume is the first major illustrated study of Byzantine embroidered vestments to appear in over forty years.

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Review

"The Embodied Icon is an essential study of the liturgical (and imperial) vestments that were used in the Byzantine Empire and by the Eastern Orthodox Church. Woodfin lays out, in a clear and concise manner, the types, decoration, and function of sacred clothing, as well as how these served in liturgical settings and also in the balance of power in the empire."

--Academy for Temple Studies

"[*The Embodied Icon*] will not only serve as a great resource but will also reorient many readers' view of liturgical garments to one that shows them in conversation with the complicated language of Byzantine dress more generally." --Jennifer Ball, *Bryn Mawr Classical Review*

"*The Embodied Icon* is an erudite work that is accessible and engaging." --Justin Rose, *Comitatus*

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About the Author

Warren T. Woodfin is a specialist in the art and ritual of Byzantium and its neighboring cultures. He currently holds the post of Kallinikeion Assistant Professor of Byzantine Art and History at Queens College, the City University of New York, and is Postdoctoral Fellow at the Kunsthistorisches Institut, University of Zürich, Switzerland.

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