Inventing Byzantine Iconoclasm

This is the first comprehensive and up-to-date history of Byzantium to appear in almost sixty years, and the first ever to cover both the Byzantine state and Byzantine society. It begins in A.D. 285, when the emperor Diocletian separated what became Byzantium from the western Roman Empire, and ends in 1461, when the last Byzantine outposts fell to the Ottoman Turks. Spanning twelve centuries and three continents, the Byzantine Empire linked the ancient and modern worlds, shaping and transmitting Greek, Roman, and Christian traditions—including the Greek classics, Roman law, and Christian theology—that remain vigorous today, not only in Eastern Europe and the Middle East but throughout Western civilization. Though it has never yet been matched in maintaining a single state for so long, over a wide area inhabited by heterogeneous peoples. Drawing on a wealth of original sources and modern works, the author treats political and social developments as a single vivid story, told partly in detailed narrative and partly in essays that clarify long-term changes. He avoids stereotypes and rejects such old and new historical orthodoxies as the persistent weakness of the Byzantine economy and the pervasive importance of holy men in Late Antiquity. Without neglecting underlying social, cultural, and economic trends, the author shows the often crucial impact of nearly a hundred Byzantine emperors and empresses. What the emperor or empress did, or did not do, could rapidly confront ordinary Byzantines with economic ruin, new religious doctrines, or conquest by a foreign power. Much attention is paid to the complex life of the court and bureaucracy that has given us the adjective "Byzantine." The major personalities include such famous names as Constantine, Justinian, Theodora, and Heraclius, along with lesser-known figures like Constans II, Irene, Basil II the Bulgar-Slayer, and Michael VIII Palaeologus. Byzantine civilization emerges as durable, creative, and realistic, overcoming repeated setbacks to remain prosperous almost to the end. With 221 illustrations and 18 maps that complement the text, A History of the Byzantine State and Society should long remain the standard history of Byzantium not just for students and scholars but for all readers.

Traditional and still prevalent accounts of late antique literature draw a clear distinction between 'pagan' and 'Christian' forms of poetry: whereas Christian poetry is taken seriously in its contribution to culture and society at large, so-called pagan or secular poetry is largely ignored, as though it has no meaningful part to play within the late antique world. The Myth of Paganism sets out to deconstruct this view of two contrasting poetic traditions and proposes in its place a new integrated model for the understanding of late antique poetry. As the book argues, the poet of Christ and the poet of the Muses were drawn together into an active, often provocative, dialogue about the relationship between Christianity and the Classical tradition and, ultimately, about the meaning of late antiquity itself. An analysis of the poetry of Nonnus of Panopolis, author of both a 'pagan' epic about Dionysus and a Christian translation of St John's Gospel, helps to illustrate this complex dialectic between pagan and Christian voices.

"Interpretation" is a term that encompasses both the most esoteric and the most fundamental activities of our lives, from analyzing medical images to the million ways we perceive other people's actions. Today, we also leave interpretation to the likes of web cookies, social media algorithms, and automated markets. But as John Frow shows in this thoughtfully argued book, there is much yet to do in clarifying the social organization of interpretation. On Interpretive Conflict delves into four case studies where sharply different sets of values come into play—gun control, anti-Semitism, the religious force of images, and climate change. In each case, Frow lays out the way these controversies unfold within interpretive regimes that establish what counts as an interpretable object and the protocols of evidence and proof that should govern it. Whether applied to a Shakespeare play or a Supreme Court case, interpretation, he argues, is at once rule-governed and inherently conflictual. Ambitious and provocative, On Interpretive Conflict will attract readers from across the humanities and beyond.

Iconoclasm, the debate about the legitimacy of religious art that began in Byzantium around 730 and continued for nearly 120 years, has long held a firm grip on the historical imagination. Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era is the first book in English to survey the original sources crucial for a modern understanding of this most elusive and fascinating period in medieval history. It is also the first book in any language to cover both the written and the visual evidence from this period, a combination of particular importance to the iconoclasm debate. The authors, an art historian and a historian who both specialise in the period, have worked together to provide a comprehensive overview of the visual and the written materials that together help clarify the complex issues of iconoclasm in Byzantium.

The rich and diverse architectural traditions of the Eastern Mediterranean and adjacent regions are the subject of this book. Representing the visual residues of a "forgotten" Middle Ages, the social and cultural developments of the Byzantine Empire, the Caucasus, the Balkans, Russia, and the Middle East parallel the more familiar architecture of Western Europe. The book offers an expansive view of the architectural developments of the Byzantine Empire and areas under its cultural influence, as well as the intellectual currents that informed their creation. The book also contains chapters that address chronological or regionally-based developments with thematic studies that focus on the larger cultural concerns, as they are expressed in architectural form.

A groundbreaking history of how the Christian "West" emerged from the ancient Mediterranean world, In this acclaimed history of Early Christendom, Judith Herrin shows how—from the sack of Rome in 410 to the coronation of Charlemagne in 800—the Christian "West" emerged as an ancient Mediterranean world divided between the Roman west, the Byzantine east, and the Muslim south. Demonstrating that religion was the period's defining force, she reveals the clash over graven images, banned by Islam, both provoked iconoclasm in
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Constantinople and generated a distinct western commitment to Christian pictorial narrative. In a new preface, Herrin discusses the book's origins, reception, and influence.

Trends and Turning Points presents sixteen articles, examining the discursive construction of the late antique and Byzantine world, focusing specifically on the utilisation of trends and turning points to make stuff from the past, whether texts, matter, or action, meaningful.

Originally presented as the author's thesis (doctoral)—University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002.

"Anyone interested in understanding the contemporary Middle East should read this book." Tony Judt --

A winged centaur with the spotted body of a leopard playing a lute; a naked man with an animal head; a goat-footed Pan; a four-bodied lion; sphinxes, and hippocamps. Few would associate these forms of art with the Byzantine era, a period dominated by religious art. However, an art of strikingly secular expression was not only common to Byzantine culture, but also key to defining it. In Other Icons, Eunice Dauterman Maguire and Henry Maguire offer the first comprehensive view of this unofficial Byzantine art, demonstrating the role it played and its dialogue with traditional Christian Byzantine art. This beautifully illustrated book creates an entirely new understanding of the whole of Byzantine art and culture. With its wide-ranging examples, the book vividly demonstrates how the surprise of this profane art is not only in its subjects of mythic creatures, exotic imagery, and eroticism, but also in the ubiquity and beauty of their placement—within churches and without, woven into silk, illuminated on manuscripts, engraved into pottery, painted in frescoes, and taking life in marble, bone, and ivory. By presenting and exploring this profane art for the first time in a scholarly book in English, Other Icons will change the way we look at the art of an entire era.

The phenomenon of iconoclasm, expressed through hostile actions towards images, has occurred in many different cultures throughout history. The destruction and mutilation of images is often motivated by a blend of political and religious ideas and beliefs, and the distinction between various kinds of ‘iconoclasm’ is not absolute. In order to explore further the long and varied history of iconoclasm the contributors to this volume consider iconoclastic reactions to the use of images of objects, both in the very recent and distant past. The majority focus on historical periods but also on history as a backdrop for image troubles of our own day. Development over time is a central question in the volume, and cross-cultural influences are also taken into consideration. This broad approach provides a useful comparative perspective both on earlier controversies over images and relevant issues today. In the multimedia era increased awareness of the possible consequences of the use of images is of utmost importance. ‘Iconoclasm from Antiquity to Modernity’ approaches some of the problems related to the display of particular kinds of images in conflicted societies and the power to decide on the use of visual means of expression. It provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of the phenomenon of iconoclasm. Of interest to a wide group of scholars the contributors draw upon various sources and disciplines, including art history, cultural history, religion and archaeology, as well as making use of recent research from within social and political sciences and contemporary arts. Whilst the texts are addressed primarily to those researching the Western world, the volume contains material which will also be of interest to students of the Middle East.

In this study, Henk Th. van Veen reassesses how Cosimo de’ Medici represented himself in images during the course of his rule. The text examines not only art and architecture, but also literature, historiography, religion, and festivity culture.

A revised edition of Anna Komnene’s Alexiad, to replace our existing 1969 edition. This is the first European narrative history written by a woman—an account of the reign of a Byzantine emperor through the eyes and words of his daughter which offers an unparalleled view of the Byzantine world in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Images increasingly saturate our world, making present to us what is distant or obscure. Yet the power of images also arises from what they do not make present—from a type of absence they do not dispel. Joining a growing multidisciplinary conversation that reconstructs an understanding of images as lifeless objects, this book offers a theological meditation on the ways images convey presence into our world. Just as Christ negates himself in order to manifest the invisible God, images, Natalie Carnes contends, negate themselves to give more than they literally or materially are. Her Christological reflections bring iconoclasm and iconophilia into productive relation, suggesting that they need not oppose one another. Investigating such images as the biblical golden calf and paintings of the Virgin Mary, Carnes explores how the distinction between iconoclasm that maintain fidelity to their theological intentions and those that lead to visual temptation. Offering ecumenical reflections on issues that have long divided Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions, Image and Presence provokes a fundamental reconsideration of images and of the global image crises of our time.

Acclaimed historian Leslie Berlin’s “deeply researched and dramatic narrative of Silicon Valley’s early years...a meticulously told compelling history” (The New York Times) of the men and women who chased innovation, and ended up changing the world. Troublemakers is the gripping tale of seven exceptional men and women, pioneers of Silicon Valley in the 1970s and early 1980s. Together, they worked across generations, industries, and companies to bring technology from Pentagon offices and university laboratories to the rest of us. In doing so, they changed the world. “In this vigorous account...a sturdy, skillfully constructed work” (Kirkus Reviews), historian Leslie Berlin introduces the people and stories behind the birth of the Internet and the microprocessor, as well as Apple, Atari, Genentech, Xerox PARC, ROLM, AWA, and the iconic venture capital firms Sequoia Capital and Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers. In the space of only seven years, five major industries—personal computing, video games, biotechnology, modern venture capital, and advanced semiconductor logic—were born. “There is much to learn from Berlin’s account, particularly that Silicon Valley has long provided the backdrop where technology, elite education, institutional capital, and entrepreneurship collide with incredible force” (The Christian Science Monitor). Featured among well-known Silicon Valley innovators are Mike Markkula, the underappreciated chairman of Apple who owned one-third of the company; Bob Swanson, the cofounder of Genentech; Al Alcorn, the Atari engineer behind the first successful video game; Fawn Alvarez, who rose from the factory line to the executive suite; and Niels Reimers, the Stanford administrator who changed how university innovations reach the public. Together, these troublemakers rewrote the rules and invented the future.

Iconoclasm was the name given to the stance of that portion of Eastern Christianity that rejected worshipping God through images (eikones) representing Christ, the Virgin or the
sainta and was the official doctrine of the Byzantine Empire for most of the period between 726 and 843. It was a period marked by violent passions on either side. This is the first comprehensive account of the extant contemporary texts relating to this phenomenon and their impact on society, politics and identity. By examining the literary circles emerging both during the time of persecution and immediately after the restoration of icons in 843, the volume casts new light on the striking (re)construction of Byzantine society, whose iconophile identity was blantly redefined by the political parties led by Theodoros Stoudites, Gregorios Dekapolites and Empress Theodora or the patriarcha Methodios, Ignatios and Photios. It thereby offers an innovative paradigm for approaching Byzantine literature.

Byzantine ‘iconoclasm’ is famous and has influenced iconclast movements from the English Reformation and French Revolution to Taliban, but it has also been woefully misunderstood: this book shows how and why the debate about images was more complicated, and more interesting, than it has been presented in the past. It explores how icons came to be so important, who opposed them, and how the debate about images played itself out over the years between c. 680 and 850. Many widely accepted assumptions about ‘iconoclasm’ – that it was an imperial initiative that resulted in widespread destruction of images, that the major promoters of icon veneration were monks, and that the era was one of cultural stagnation – are shown to be incorrect. Instead, the years of the image debates saw technological advances and intellectual shifts that, coupled with a growing economy, concluded with the emergence of medieval Byzantium as a strong and stable empire.

The cross stirs intense feelings among Christians and non-Christians alike. Robin Jensen takes readers on an intellectual and spiritual journey through the 2,000-year evolution of the cross as idea and artifact, illuminating the controversies and forms of devotion that central symbol of Christianity inspires.

The first major study of the relationship between liturgy and historiography in early medieval Rus.

9th-century Byzantium has always been viewed as a mid-point between Iconoclasm and the so-called Macedonian revival; in scholarly terms it is often treated as a ‘dead’ century. The object of these papers is to question such an assumption. They present a picture of political and military developments, legal and literary innovations, artisanal production, and religious and liturgical changes from the Anatolian plateau to the Greek-speaking areas of Italy that are only now gradually emerging as distinct. Investigation of how the 9th-century Byzantine world was perceived by outsiders also reveals much about Byzantine success and failure in promoting particular views of itself. The chapters here, by an international group of scholars, embody current research in this field; they recover many lost aspects of 9th-century Byzantium and shed new light on the Mediterranean world in a transitional century. The papers in this volume derive from the 30th Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies, held for the Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies at the University of Birmingham in March 1996.

The acclaimed author of Byzantium and the Crusades "offers a fresh take on this fabled but hidden civilization" across 11 centuries of history (Colin Wells, author of Sailing from Byzantium). For more than a millennium, the Byzantine Empire provided over the juxta between East and West, as well as the transition from the classical to the modern world. Rather than recounting the standard chronology of emperors and battles, leading Byzanthologist Jonathan Harris focuses each chapter of this engaging history on a succession of archetypal figures, families, places, and events. Harris's introduction presents a civilization rich in contrasts, combining orthodox Christianity with paganism, and classical Greek learning with Roman power. Though frequently assailed by numerous armies, Byzantium survived by dint of its unorthodox foreign policy. Over time, its society, art, and especially architecture flourished, helping to establish a deep sense of Byzantine identity in its people. Synthesizing a wealth of sources to cover all major aspects of the empire's social, political, military, religious, cultural, and artistic history, Harris's study illuminates the heart of Byzantine civilization and explores its remarkable and lasting influence on the modern world.

This important and overdue book examines illuminated manuscripts and other book arts of the Global Middle Ages. Illuminated manuscripts and illustrated or decorated books—like today's museums—preserve a rich array of information about how premodern peoples conceived of and perceived the world, its many cultures, and everyone's place in it. Often a Eurocentric field of study, manuscripts are prisms through which we can glimpse the interconnected global history of humanity. Toward a Global Middle Ages is the first publication to examine decorated books produced across the globe during the period traditionally known as medieval. Through essays and case studies, the volume's multidisciplinary contributors expand the historiography, chronology, and geography of manuscript studies to embrace a diversity of objects, individuals, narratives, and materials. Asia, Africa, and the Americas all contribute to the emerging field of scholarly inquiry known as the Global Middle Ages. Featuring 160 color illustrations, this wide-ranging and provocative collection is intended for all who are interested in engaging in a dialogue about how books and other textual objects contributed to world-making strategies from about 400 to 1600.

Between the late seventh and the mid-ninth centuries, a debate about sacred images — conventionally addressed as ‘Byzantine iconoclasm’ — engaged monks, emperors, and popes in the Mediterranean area and on the European continent. The importance of this debate cannot be overstated; it challenged the relation between image, text, and belief. A series of popes staunchly in favour of sacred images acted consistently during this period in displaying a remarkable iconophilia or ‘love for images’. Their multifaceted reaction involved not only council resolutions and diplomatic exchanges, but also public religious festivals, liturgy, preaching, and visual arts — the mass-medial of the time. Embracing these tools, the popes especially promoted themes related to the Incarnation of God — which justified the production and veneration of sacred images — and extolled the role and the figure of the Virgin Mary. Despite their profound influence over Byzantine and western cultures of later centuries, the political, theological, and artistic interactions between the East and the West during this period have not yet been investigated in studies combining textual and material evidence. By drawing evidence from texts and material culture — some of which have yet to be discussed against the background of the iconoclastic controversy — and by considering the role of oral exchange, Iconophilia assesses the impact of the debate on sacred images and of coeval theological controversies in Rome and central Italy. By looking at intersecting textual, liturgical, and pictorial images which had at the time a concrete role in communicating God and his human mother Mary, the book demonstrates that between c.680–880, by unrelentingly maintaining the importance of the visual for nurturing beliefs and mediating personal and communal salvation, the popes ensured that the status of sacred images would remain unchallenged, at least until the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Publisher Description
"This publication is issued on the occasion of the exhibition Book of Beasts: The Bestiary in the Medieval World, on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center, Los Angeles, from May 14 to August 18, 2019."

This is an unprecedented collection of nearly seventy Late Antique primary religious texts. These texts—all in new English translation and many appearing in English for the first time—represent every major religious current from the late first century until the rise of Islam. Produced through the efforts of thirty-six leading scholars in the field, they constitute a comprehensive view of religious practice in Late Antiquity. Religious life and performance during this period comprised diverse, often unusual practices. Philosophical, ascetical, magic, legal pronouncement, hagiography, dietary and sexual restriction, and rhetoric were all part of this deeply fascinating world. Religious and political identity often intertwined, as reflected in the Roman persecution of Christians. And a fluid boundary between religion and superstition was contested in daily life. Many practices, including ascetic training, crossed religious boundaries. Others, such as "incubation" at specific temples and certain divination rites, were distinctive practices of individual groups and orders. Intrinsically interesting, the practice of religion in the Late Antique also edifies modern-day religious life. As this volume shows, the origins of the contemporary Western religious terrain can be gleaned in this period. Rabbinic Judaism flourished and spread. Christianity developed still-important theological categories and structures. And even movements that did not survive intact—such as Neoplatonism and the once-powerful Manichaean churches—continue to influence religion today. This rich sourcebook includes discussions translated from lesser-known languages advance the study of religious history in several directions. A strong interdisciplinary orientation will reward scholars and students of religion, theology, gender studies, classical literatures, and history. Each text is accompanied by an introduction and a bibliography for further reading and research, making the book appropriate for use in any university or seminary classroom.

Alongside annals, chronicles were the main genre of historical writing in the Middle Ages. Their significance as sources for the study of medieval history and culture is today widely recognised not only by historians, but also by students of medieval literature and linguistics and by art historians. The series The Medieval Chronicle aims to provide a representative survey of the on-going research in the field of chronicle studies, illustrated by examples from specific chronicles from a wide variety of countries, periods and cultural backgrounds.

Late Antiquity witnessed a major transformation in the authority and power of the Episcopate within the Church, with the result that bishops came to embody the essence of Christianity and increasingly overshadow the leading Christian laity. The rise of Episcopal power came in a period in which drastic political changes produced long and significant conflicts both within and outside the Church. This book examines these problems in depth, looking at bishops' varied roles in both causing and resolving these disputes, including those internal to the church, those which began within the church but had major effects on wider society, and those of a secular nature.

What has Alexander the Great to do with Jesus Christ? Or the legendary king's conquest of the Persian Empire (335–23 BCE) to do with the prophecies of the Old Testament? In many ways, the early Christian writings on Alexander and his legacy provide a lens through which it is possible to view the shaping of the literature and thought of the early church in the Greek East and the Latin West. This book articulates that fascinating discourse for the first time by focusing on the early Christian use of Alexander. Delving into an impressively deep pool of patristic literature written between 130–313 CE, Christian Thrue Djurslev offers original interpretations of various important authors, from the learned lawyer Tertullian to the 'Christian Cicero' Lactantius, and from the apologist Tatian to the first church historian Eusebius. He demonstrates that the early Christian adaptations of the Alexandrian myths created a new tradition that has continued to develop and expand ever since. This innovative work of reception studies is important reading for all students of Alexander the Great and early church history.

Introduction to Byzantium, 602–1453 provides students with an accessible guide to medieval Byzantium. Beginning with the near collapse of Byzantium in the seventh century, the book traces its survival and development through to its absorption by the Ottoman empire. As well as having an overall political narrative, the chapters cover a wide range of topics including society and economy, art and architecture, literature and education, military tactics and diplomacy, gender and education. They also explore themes that remain prominent and highly debated today, including relations between Islam and the West, the impact of the Crusades, the development of Russia, and the emergence of Orthodox Christianity. Comprehensively written, each chapter provides an overview of the particular period or topic, a summary of the ongoing historiographical debates, primary source material, and a 'points to remember' section. Introduction to Byzantium, 602–1453 provides students with a thorough introduction to the history of Byzantium and equips them with the tools to write successful analytical essays. It is essential reading for any student of the history of the Byzantine empire.

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The Byzantines used imagery to communicate a wide range of issues. In the context of Iconoclasm – the debate about the legitimacy of religious art conducted between c. AD 730 and 843 – Byzantine authors themselves claimed that visual images could express certain ideas better than words. Vision and Meaning in Ninth-Century Byzantium deals with how such visual communication worked and examines the types of messages that pictures could convey in the aftermath of Iconoclasm. Its focus is on a deluxe manuscript commissioned around...
880, a copy of the fourth-century sermons of the Cappadocian church father Gregory of Nazianzus which presented to the Emperor Basil I, founder of the Macedonian dynasty, by one of the greatest scholars Byzantium ever produced, the patriarch Photios. The manuscript was lavishly decorated with gilded initials, elaborate headpieces and a full-page miniature before each of Gregory’s sermons. Forty-six of these, including over 200 distinct scenes, survive. Fewer than half however were directly inspired by the homily that they accompany. Instead most function as commentaries on the ninth-century court and carefully deconstructed both provide us with information not available from preserved written sources and perhaps more important show us how visual images communicate differently from words.

With new surges of activity from religious, political, and military extremists, the destruction of images has become increasingly relevant on a global scale. A founder of the study of early modern and contemporary iconoclasm, David Freedberg has addressed this topic for five decades. His work has brought this subject to a central place in art history, critical to the understanding not only of art but of all images in society. This volume collects the most significant of Freedberg’s texts on iconoclasm and censorship, bringing five key works back into print alongside new assessments of contemporary iconoclasm in places ranging from the Near and Middle East to the United States, as well as a fresh survey of the entire subject. The writings in this compact volume explore the dynamics and history of iconoclasm, from the furious battles over images in the Reformation to government repression in modern South Africa, the American culture wars of the early 1990s, and today’s cancel culture. Freedberg combines fresh thinking with deep expertise to address the renewed significance of iconoclasm, its ideologies, and its impact. This volume also provides a supplement to Freedberg’s essay on idolatry and iconoclasm from his pathbreaking book, The Power of Images. Freedberg’s writings are of foundational importance to this discussion, and this volume will be a welcome resource for historians, museum professionals, international law specialists, preservationists, and students.

In this book, Liz James offers a comprehensive history of wall mosaics produced in the European and Islamic middle ages. Taking into account a wide range of issues, including style and iconography, technique and material, and function and patronage, she examines mosaics within their historical context. She asks why the mosaic was such a popular medium and considers how mosaic work as historical ‘documents’ that tell us about attitudes and beliefs in the medieval world. The book is divided into two part. Part I explores the technical aspects of mosaics, including glass production, labour and materials, and costs. In Part It, James provides a chronological history of mosaics, charting the low and high points of mosaic art up until its abrupt end in the late middle ages. Written in a clear and engaging style, her book will serve as an essential resource for scholars and students of medieval mosaics.

A study of the theocratic constitution of the Byzantine Empire.

A major contribution to both art history and Latin American studies, A Culture of Stone offers sophisticated new insights into Inka culture and the interpretation of non-Western art. Carolyn Dean focuses on rock outcrops masterfully integrated into Inka architecture, exquisitely worked masonry, and freestanding sacred rocks, explaining how certain stones took on lives of their own and played a vital role in the unfolding of Inka history. Examining the multiple uses of stone, she argues that the Inka understood building in stone as a way of ordering the chaos of unordered nature, converting untamed spaces into domesticated places, and laying claim to new territories. Dean contends that understanding what the rocks signified requires seeing them as the Inka saw them: as potentially animate, sentient, and sacred. Through careful analysis of Inka stonework, colonial-period accounts of the Inka, and contemporary ethnographic and folkloric studies of indigenous Andean culture, Dean reconstructs the relationships between stonework and other aspects of Inka life, including imperial expansion, worship, and agriculture. She also scrutinizes meanings imposed on Inka stone by the colonial Spanish and, later, by tourism and the tourist industry. A Culture of Stone is a compelling multidisciplinary argument for rethinking how we see and comprehend the Inka past.

According to a longstanding interpretation, book religions are agents of textuality and logocentrism. This volume inverts the traditional perspective: its focus is on the strong dependency between scripture and aesthetics. Holy books and material artworks, sacred texts and ritual performances. The contributions, written by a group of international specialists in Western, Byzantine, Islamic and Jewish Art, are committed to a comparative and transcultural approach. The authors reflect upon the different strategies of «clothing» sacred texts with precious materials and elaborate forms. They show how the pretypographic cultures of the Middle Ages used book ornaments as media for building a close relation between the divine words and their human audience. By exploring how art shapes the religious practice of books, and how the religious use of books shapes the evolution of artistic practices this book contributes to a new understanding of the deep nexus between sacred scripture and art.

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