

Abstract for the Book:

Byzantine Silk on the Silk Roads: Journeys Between East and West, Past and Present

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Byzantine, silk, Silk Roads, cultures, woven, brocade, samite, images, patterns, East and West.

Book Abstract:

'Byzantine Silk on the Silk Roads: Journeys between East and West, Past and Present' demonstrates the visual appeal of historical woven silk patterns from the Byzantine era (330 to 1453 CE). The civilization and culture of Byzantium lasted over 1,100 years and had strong links with the infamous Silk Roads. Along these routes different cultures borrowed from one another, in all directions, manifesting an international fusion that had influence.

This book celebrates the East meeting the West by focusing on the aesthetics of silk brocades, and particularly a woven structure called 'samite' that, due to its complex construction, holds rich and varied patterns. Evocative imagery of this time includes mythical, hybrid creatures – humans, animals and birds, exotic plants and bold geometrics. 'Byzantine Silk on the Silk Roads' traverses the ancient trade routes, crossing continents and observing a mixing of cultures. Sumptuous colours symbolized power and incited desire while silk was seen as the ultimate precious

commodity. The applications of woven silk are wide-ranging including the sartorial - from ceremonial costume within Imperial courts through ecclesiastical vestments to special occasion dressing, and decorative furnishings, diplomatic gifts and currency exchange between the people.

With its visually stimulating imagery this book comprehensively ties together worldwide collections from over thirty museums, cathedrals and archives from the UK, Western Europe, America, the Near East, the Middle East and the Far East. 'Byzantine Silk on the Silk Roads' reveals a sophisticated melting pot of inspirational imagery and patterns and brings Byzantium alive to a contemporary audience.