

Call for Papers

Conference in Mainz (Academy of Sciences and
Literature)
17.-20. June 2024

Creating Holiness: Books, Scrolls and Icons as Carriers of Sacredness

Every written culture has its sacred texts. Through the regular reading of these texts, which is usually guided by a fixed rite in the same direction, a group of people reassures themselves of their community and constructs a place of cultural identity beyond the profane. The sacred text not only defines the respective beliefs, but also represents the physical expression of divine revelation, and is often itself revered as a representative of the divine in ritual. Such a text has a special quality as a manuscript, since its value can be increased not only by the high quality of the material and decoration, but also by the extraordinary virtues of the scribe and the circumstances of the act of writing itself. There are notions of what requirements such a scribe should fulfill and what rituals writing itself is subject to. The process of writing becomes a sacred act, a divine service, or an ascetic practice.

This conference will address the questions of what turns a book – or an icon of the Eastern churches – into a sacred object in Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Buddhist cultures, and how is sacredness connected to the material.

- Are there material elements – writing surfaces, inks, colors, letterforms – that are preferred in the making of the sacred artifact? What expectations, memories, or theological concepts are associated with the material?
- Is the manufacturing process subject to ritual rules? What requirements are imposed on the scribe? Is the scribe distinguished by a certain way of living or a special position within society?
- What does the special handling of the sacred writings and icons, their veneration and performative choreography within the liturgy or prayer tell us about their functions within the religious community?
- How are the sacred artifacts received? Are there legends about the scribes and the documents they produced? How are narratives about the magical potential of sacred objects to be assessed?

Travel and accommodation costs can be covered by the organizers on behalf of the *ToRoll* project.

Please send your abstract (150-200 words) to PD Dr Annett Martini by **December, 15th 2023**: amartini@zedat.fu-berlin.de. Visit our website for more information about the research project *ToRoll: Materialized Holiness*: <https://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/materialisierte-heiligkeit/index.html>

