



Scenarios of Power. Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy, Volume 2

By Richard S. Wortman

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Richard Wortman continues his unrivaled inquiry into the lavish ceremonies and celebrations of the Russian imperial court, revealing the myths, symbols, and rituals that were central to monarchical rule. In this volume, he explores the presentations and representations of tsarist power under the last three emperors--Alexander II, Alexander III, and Nicholas II--who faced increasing social pressures from modernizing forces. Coronations, funerals, the blessing of the waters, parades as well as art, architecture, and the printed word all captured the mental worlds of these men and showed how they understood the empire they ruled. Wortman describes the evolution of their scenarios during their upbringing and the early years of their reign, making clear how these symbolic settings defined their policies and goals.

The author finds that the last Russian tsars adapted the myth of the transcendent Western emperor to cope with the challenges of liberalism, nationalism, and democracy. They made use of historical celebrations, the press, art, literature, and films to disseminate their images as popular, national monarchs. Alexander III and Nicholas II presented themselves increasingly as the embodiment of the Russian people, rather than the all-Russian emperor governing a multi-ethnic empire--an image perpetuated by Peter the Great. This new means of appeal, Wortman argues, by presenting the tsar as sole representative of the Russian people, enabled him to sustain his determination to counter the Duma and to restore his autocratic privileges.

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- Sales Rank: #4434774 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Princeton University Press
- Published on: 2000-03-20
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 1.70" h x 6.46" w x 9.44" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 580 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Co-Winner of the 2006 Etkind Prize, Best Book by a Western Scholar on Russian Literature/Culture, European University at St. Petersburg

Winner of the 2000 George L. Mosse Prize, American Historical Association

"A brief review can hardly do justice to the wealth of information and sophistication of analysis here; if the outline of Wortman's story is familiar, his telling of it is refreshingly new. . . . Eschewing the kind of treacly romanticism that tends to transform [the tsars] with their many egregious faults into tragic heroes, Wortman enriches our understanding of why they made certain personal choices so ill-suited for the nation they undeniably loved."--**Louise McReynolds, *Slavic Review***

"The formidable variety of evidence Wortman has amassed in this volume for his novel conclusions about the nature of Russian autocracy and downfall of the Romanovs puts *Scenarios of Power* at the top of the reading list not just for the serious students of Imperial Russia but for all scholars interested in the power of cultural symbols to shape history."--**Priscilla Roosevelt, *Russian Review***

"This is a masterly book. It provides a penetrating analysis of the political culture of late Imperial Russia. Wortman's sophisticated and stimulating volume should provide a starting point for many more studies of the symbols and ritual of the Tsarist state."--**Peter Waldron, *Europe-Asia Studies***

"A major contribution to the history of Russia, one from which every serious student of that country's tragic destiny will learn."--**Abbott Gleason, *Journal of Modern History***

From the Inside Flap

"Together with the first volume, this second volume of *Scenarios of Power* will likely long remain the single best interpretive study of the evolution of modern monarchical ideology in Russia. It is also a superb example of the cultural analysis of monarchical politics, and therefore will interest readers outside of the Russia field. Attentive to the symbolic sources of political action, Wortman illuminates the mythic images and narratives--and the changes in these--that monarchs and elite advocates of the monarchy articulated from the middle of the nineteenth century to the final years of the Romanov monarchy."--**Mark D. Steinberg, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**

From the Back Cover

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