

Wax Embedding as a Method for Preservation of Body Relics Used by the Orthodox Church

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Body relics of saints are important objects of veneration in the Orthodox Church. Regardless if they are considered incorrupt, practical reasons dictate that they should be protected from external influence, which may lead to their damage or destruction. This is especially true in cases when small fragments from a body are displayed to the faithful in a reliquary. The practice of the Orthodox Church has adopted the placement of such fragments in blocks of pure wax or wax-containing mixture. Per se this constitutes an impregnation, the last stage of a mummification/plastination process, following after dehydration and fixation. Herein we analyze the practice of wax embedding as a final step of preservation, known since antiquity, and remaining principally unchanged due to its efficacy.

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